



# GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE

## DIRECT ARCHDIOCESAN DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2009  
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE HEADQUARTERS

### THE DISTRICT OFFICE OF EDUCATION REPORT

By Maria Makedon, Director

#### The Community Schools

The *Direct Archdiocesan District* is the host of **10** parochial day schools, **46** Greek afternoon schools, and **3** pre-school & day care centers. **5,593** students currently attend these parish supported schools, which employ **244** Greek teachers. In addition, the Ministry of Education of Greece has assigned **28** teachers to teach the Greek language and culture in the New York City parochial day schools.

#### The Direct Archdiocesan District Office of Education

The *District Office of Education* provides the parochial day and the afternoon schools of the *District* with the following services and materials:

- Professional development for all teachers – English and Greek Departments.
- Materials for the teaching of the Greek language and culture.
- An assessment tool: “*The Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek*” for the evaluation of student learning.

In addition, the *District Office* organizes student events that promote our Greek Orthodox cultural heritage and foster the teaching/learning experience.

#### Advocating for the NYC Greek Orthodox Parochial Day Schools

During the last five years, the *District Office of Education* has intensified its efforts to be of meaningful assistance to the principals of the 10 parochial day schools in New York City and, consequently, benefit the teachers and students of the schools.

The *District Office* is a member of the *Standing Committee of the New York City Religious Schools* headed by **Rabbi David Zwiebel**, Esq. and director of the *Agudath Israel Organization*. Rabbi Zwiebel succeeded Dr. Catherine Hickey, former Secretary for Education of the (Roman Catholic) Archdiocese of New York who retired recently.

As the advocate for the Greek Orthodox parochial day schools at the federal, state, and local education authorities, the *District Office* director participates in conferences and forums that are sponsored by the **U.S. Department of Education**, in Washington, DC, as well as by the **New York State Education Department** in Albany.

The *District Office* director participates also in meetings of the *Standing Committee of the New York City Religious Schools*, which are held regularly at the **NYC Department of Education** in Brooklyn. (*The next meeting of the Committee with representatives of the NYC Department of Education is scheduled for April 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 11:00 a.m.*)

Also, the *Committee* meets once a year with the **Chancellor of Education** of NYC, **Joel I. Klein**. (*The next meeting with the Chancellor is scheduled for Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, at 10:00 a.m.*)

### The Benefits for the NYC parochial day schools

As a result of the involvement of the *District Office of Education* with the education authorities and the **Standing Committee of NYC Religious Schools** (or faith-based as the Feds call them), the parochial day schools in New York have greatly benefited from federally funded services and resources.

This year, for example, the NYC day schools received approximately **\$78,000** in federal money for professional development and teaching materials, including software. The funds are calculated based on the number of eligible students and disseminated by the *Bureau of Reimbursable Services/ NYC Department of Education*.

### Parochial School Teachers Studying at Local Universities

Half of the funds allocated to the Greek Orthodox schools were spent for **professional development**. Five teachers currently serving in these schools are completing graduate work in school administration at **St. John's University** and at **Adelphi**. Our teachers will graduate with a Masters Degree next year, ready to undertake the position of a principal if needed.

It is worth noting that for the first time this year, the *District Office of Education* was designated by the **NYC Department of Education/ Bureau of Reimbursable Programs** as the coordinator for the equitable distribution of the funds among the NYC parochial day schools. Thus, the *District Office* was asked to affirm all teacher applications for professional development, in order for the **Bureau** to fund their studies.

## Teacher Training & the EAROBICS Software Program

Similarly, the *District Office* was requested to coordinate the purchase of materials for the parochial day schools through various vendors and organize workshops to train the teachers on how to use them.

With the remaining federal funds, the *District Office* purchased materials and offered training to **28 teachers** on **March 9 and 10, 2009**, at **St. Demetrios School in Astoria**, on the software program **EAROBICS** used for teaching English in grades K–3<sup>rd</sup>.

## The NYC Roundtable On Faith-Based Schools



The involvement of the *District Office* with the American education authorities would not have been possible without the Archbishop's approval and encouragement. **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios'** insight and advice has been the guiding light in our endeavors to help the community schools and promote Greek Orthodox education.

On **Tuesday, September 23, 2008**, **Archbishop Demetrios** attended the *NYC Roundtable* on "*Inner-City Children & Faith-Based Schools*," leading a small delegation that represented the New York City parochial day schools. A number of notable government and church representatives, educators, politicians, and businessmen addressed a select group of attendees on issues such as: *tax tuition credits, vouchers, and scholarships for students of private/faith based schools*. **Archbishop Demetrios** was applauded when he spoke on the invaluable contribution of the faith-based schools to the American society at large.

The *NYC Roundtable* was sponsored by the *U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC* and the *NYC Committee of Religious Schools* and was chaired by Rev. Joseph M. McShane, S.J., President, Fordham University.

## The Annual Conference for Administrators of Independent & Religious Schools

**His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios'** efforts to promote our parochial day school education were publicly recognized on **November 17, 2008**, at the *24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference for Administrators of Independent and Religious Schools*, in Albany. During the Luncheon and in front of an audience of more than **400** educators, who had gathered from all regions of New York State, **Archbishop Demetrios** was presented with the **Leadership in Education Award**.

The *Conference for Administrators of Independent and Religious Schools* offers the opportunity to administrators of faith-based schools to attend workshops and meet with representatives of the **State Education Department**. A delegation of 23 persons – priests and administrators – from the NYC parochial day schools attended the event. Fr. Patric Legato, dean of St. Sophia Church, Albany, gave the invocation.

## The Archdiocesan District's Annual Staff-Development Seminar



Under the auspices of **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios**, the *District Office* organized on **November 4, 2008 (Election Day)**, its annual *Staff Development Seminar* for the teachers serving in the *District's* schools.

**247** principals and teachers attended the *Seminar*, which took place at St. Demetrios High School in Astoria and featured **15** workshops that covered all levels of instruction, from pre-K to high school (English and Greek departments). The workshops

were conducted by prominent professors of education.

## The Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek for Regents Credit

The *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* is scheduled for administration on **Tuesday, June 23, 2009** (9:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m.).

The *District Office of Education* develops the *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek*, a foreign language test that assesses student proficiency in *listening, speaking, reading, and writing* Modern Greek, following the standards of the Syllabus “*Modern Languages for Communication*” of the New York State Education Department.



At this time, the *2009 Examination* is under development. **Part 1: Speaking** has already been sent to the teachers, so that they can start evaluating the oral performance of the students. The writers are currently working on the rest of the *Examination*, which will be sent to the *University at Buffalo/The State University of New York* and the **Institute of Modern Greek Studies/The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki** for further evaluation.

## The Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek placed under State Mandated Services

The **Office of School Operations and Management Services / The State Education Department** recently placed the *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* under the State's Mandated Services. This means that the New York City parochial day schools can now claim state money for the time spent for the preparation of teachers, the administration of the exam and for grading the student answer booklets as they could have done for giving any other state mandated exam – i.e. in Language Arts, Science, Math, etc.

The decision of the **Office of School Operations and Management Services/New York State Education** was based on documents that were submitted by the *Archdiocesan District Office of Education*. In a letter addressed to me as the director of the *District Office*, Mr. Charles A. Szuberla, Jr., Executive Director, wrote:

*“Thank you for sharing your very detailed records about the validity of the Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek, which the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has been developing and administering in collaboration with NYS Education Department staff since 1973.*

*The correspondence that you shared with me enabled me to confirm that students receive Regents credit for the examination. The administration of the examinations by your parochial schools is a justifiable expense and can be reimbursed from Mandated Services Aid.”*

The *District Office* considers this decision a major accomplishment, since it places the *Greek Examination* in the same category with the officially recognized by the State foreign languages (French, German, Italian, Spanish and Latin). The decision will go into effect with the *2009 Examination*.

### The Three Hierarchs Award of Excellence



Approximately **600 students** of day, afternoon, and public schools take the *Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* each year. Those who pass it receive three Regents high school credits in a foreign language.

During its 35 years of existence, the *Examination* has benefited thousand of students and is still considered a strong motive for them to continue studying the Greek language.

Every year, the *District Office of Education* recognizes the students who excel (receive a score of 100) during a special ceremony held in conjunction with the **Feast of the Three Hierarchs** on January 30<sup>th</sup>.

**15** students who excelled on the *2008 Comprehensive Examination in Modern Greek* were honored on **January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009**, at the Holy Trinity Cathedral, in Manhattan. **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios** presented the honorees with *The Three Hierarchs Award of Excellence* and an icon of the Three Hierarchs, following the Divine Liturgy.

The Archbishop congratulated the honorees and addressed an audience of **350** students, administrators, and teachers on the contribution of the Holy Fathers of our Church, the Three Hierarchs and the importance of speaking the Greek language and living the Greek Orthodox heritage.

## The Spelling Bee Competition

The *District Office of Education* organizes annually a **Spelling Bee Competition (in English)** for the students of the parochial day schools of metropolitan New York.

The District's 2009 *Spelling Bee* was held on **January 8<sup>th</sup>**, at the Archdiocesan headquarters. **Jordan Massey**, a seventh-grade student of the "A. Fantis" Parochial School of SS. Constantine & Helen, Brooklyn, won the first place. **His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America** congratulated all school champions and presented them with an *Award Certificate* and a gift card from the Barnes & Noble bookstore.



On March 24, 2009, **Jordan** represented the Greek Orthodox parochial schools at the *Daily News Spelling Bee Finals*, at Hunter College in Manhattan, and won **6<sup>th</sup> place**.

## Principals Meetings



The *Direct Archdiocesan Office of Education* holds regular meetings with the New York City parochial day school principals.

The *Office* invites officials of the **State Education Department** as well as the **NYC Department of Education** and other City agencies to come to these meetings and enlighten the principals on various issues of interest to their schools.

This year's guests were: **Ms. Sharon Spence** and **Ms. Betty Sanchez**, health epidemiologists of the *Bureau of Immunizations/NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene*, who came to the meeting of **December 3, 2008**.

**Ms. Mary Kurutz**, Senior administrative analyst, **Office of Grants Management/The State Education Department**, who joined the principals on **February 9, 2009**. **Ms. Kurutz** provided one-to-one assistance to the principals and showed them how to do the calculations on their applications for the full reimbursement of services that are mandated by the State Education Department.

## School Visitations

The day school principals had long expressed their wish for the director of the *District Office of Education* to visit their schools. To fulfill their kind request, I visited all the NYC parochial day schools within a month's period and witnessed the incredible work that is being done to offer a sound academic program that will attract students and make the schools competitive in their neighborhood.



I had the opportunity to visit the classrooms, see the teachers in action, and meet with the principals and the teachers. Our educators looked happy and eager to show me their work and expressed the wish that: “*the communication with the District Office to be a continuous endeavor.*” It was truly an experience for me.

## The Kindergarten Curriculum



The *Curriculum for the Kindergarten*, published by the *District Office of Education* is in great demand. The book is currently **out-of-stock**, but the waiting list continues to grow on the Orthodox Marketplace.

**1,000** copies have been distributed “*gratis*” to community schools around the country since the publication was made possible due to the generous support of the “*Stavros S. Niarchos*” **Foundation**.

A PDF version of the *Curriculum* is available on the *District’s* web page <http://www.education.goarch.org>

## Visit Us on Online

The *District Office* has created, with help from the IT Department of the Archdiocese, a user-friendly **web page**, <http://www.education.goarch.org>, which contains information on the Office’s *major projects; encyclicals and documents* sent to the schools; *reports* to the Clergy-Laity Congresses, the Archdiocesan Councils, and the District Assemblies; the *Curriculum for the Kindergarten*; past *Comprehensive Examinations*; a detailed *listing of all day and afternoon schools*, and useful *links*.

Visitors may also download our *Catalog* of recommended books and resource materials. However, **all book orders -- including orders for certificates and diplomas – are now being handled by the Orthodox Marketplace at [www.orthodoxmarketplace.com](http://www.orthodoxmarketplace.com).**

