



of Catholic School Families

# The Network

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The New Jersey Network of Catholic School Families exists to educate and mobilize individuals and organizations to be advocates of public policies that support the families whose children attend the Catholic schools of New Jersey.



January 29th - February 5th 2012

**The tri-fold focus makes our schools outstanding among educational institutions**

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Dear Friends,

The election results have been finalized and not much has changed in the 215th Legislature. As we enter the 'lame duck' session, there are many key elements of unfinished business that we hope will be addressed. There is much focus on education reform and of prominence on the governor's agenda is the **Opportunity Scholarship Act (S1872 / A2810)**, a revenue-neutral bill which establishes a five-year pilot program to provide tax credits to entities contributing to scholarships for certain low-income students. Governor Chris Christie has declared he will sign this bill if it reaches his desk.

To read more on the governor's education reform agenda please visit

<http://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/552011/approved/20111116b.html>

Following our recent census, the legislature campaigned a re-districted map and both houses continue to be controlled by a Democratic climate. Of particular interest to the Trenton network, the incumbents of the 15th District were re-elected with Shirley Turner to the State Senate and Reed Gusciora and Bonnie Watson-Coleman to the State Assembly. It is our hope the OSA will receive a hearing during the 'lame duck' session. To this end I ask that you continue to reach out to Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson-Coleman and **ask that she release A2810 from the caucus even if she will not vote for the bill.**

**WeCanDoBetterNewJersey** is hosting a rally for the OSA on Thursday Dec. 1st 2011 on the StateHouse Steps from 10am to 1pm. Come join us if you can. It is time to give our children of New Jersey the best quality and value-based education that your hard-earned taxpayer money can afford.

Sincerely,  
Usha Rosidivito  
& Your State Network Directors



## MAINTAINING A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE:

### A WHITE PAPER ON THE GIFT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION TO THE PEOPLE OF NEW JERSEY

[Part 2 of a 3 Part series from 2008] by Dr. George Corwell-Dir. of Ed., NJCC

**Accomplishments** :The ability of Catholic schools to provide successful graduates among poor and immigrant populations is well documented. In the largest study of New York City Catholic schools ever conducted, researchers Herbert J. Walberg and Paul E. Peterson found Catholic schools “not only achieved more, but also more successfully solved the poverty gap.” In a 2005 editorial in the *New York Sun*, Walberg noted that this fact means that Catholic schools help close the “pervasive” achievement gap between middle-income and poor children. The rates of Catholic school students graduating, as well as the rates for those attending some form of higher education, hover between 95 and 97% annually, on a regular basis. Anecdotally, the State of New Jersey is well served by Catholic school graduates working in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of state government, including current representatives on the New Jersey Supreme Court.

While numerous studies proclaim the academic success of Catholic schools with poor and minority students, a sometimes overlooked area is that of civic responsibility. In 2003, Thomas S. Dee, a researcher at Swarthmore College, presented findings at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Education on a study he had conducted which found that students who attended Catholic secondary schools were more likely than their public school counterparts to report that they had registered and voted in local and national elections. The researcher adjusted the numbers to take into account other possible explanations including parent wealth or education level, and yet the 8 – 12% differential represented a significant advantage.

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Catholic schools have continued to accept those students who are unable to achieve academic success in public education. In the process of offering such alternatives, Catholic schools have created new models, particularly geared to urban students. For example, the San Miguel School in Camden, operated by the Christian Brothers, bases its program on the implementation of some of the best educational research for urban education in the last few years focusing on reading and language arts. The school relies on the generosity of outside sources – a competitive arena in any market-driven society. Recently, the Archdiocese of Newark opened Christ the King Preparatory School in September 2007 as part of the Cristo Rey Network. The vast majority of students attending this school will qualify for a federal free or reduced lunch. The school utilizes a longer school day, academic assistance, counseling, and smaller class sizes to prepare these students for their college experience. Additionally through work study, all students gain real-world job experience and grow in self-confidence.

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A particularly vexing challenge for Catholic school educators is to provide for the needs of classified students whose parents wish them to have a Catholic school education. Some Catholic schools have developed creative ways to accommodate such students in special classes, depending upon the nature and severity of the students' handicapping condition. Catholic educators continue to examine the means by which Catholic schools can adapt to the needs of the changing population wishing to attend these schools. For example, the Diocese of Camden operates formal special education programs in four elementary and two secondary schools.

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Because Catholic education seeks to provide benefits to all members of the family unit, Catholic school administrators are attempting to expand the creative options available in urban Catholic schools. One program currently underway in the Diocese of Paterson is named PPACE (Paterson and Passaic Association of Catholic Education). The goal of the program is to create a year-round educational center, providing pre-K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade education, extended care, before and after school programs, and adult education for all members of the community. In order to realize this goal, it will be necessary to cultivate relationships, partnerships, leadership, and innovation both within the school communities and among organizations that serve these communities.

***Next issue:  
The Importance of Catholic  
Education to the Residents of  
New Jersey***

- Catholic schools will continue to provide a Gospel-based education of the highest quality.
- Catholic schools will be available, accessible, and affordable.
- The bishops will launch initiatives in both the private and public sectors to secure financial assistance for parents, the primary educators of their children, so that they can better exercise their right to choose the best schools for their children.
- Catholic schools will be staffed by highly qualified administrators and teachers who would receive just wages and benefits, as we expressed in our pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*.

[Taken from *Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*]

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***Prayer of Thanksgiving***

Give us this day our daily bread,  
O Father in heaven,  
and grant that we who are filled with good things  
from Your open hand,  
may never close our hearts to the hungry,  
the homeless, and the poor;  
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

- from the abbey of New Clairvaux, Viña, California



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