

STATEWIDE CELEBRATIONS MARK BICENTENNIAL OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

September 22 was a day of statewide celebration commemorating the birth, 200 years ago, of Catholic education in New York State.

Throughout the state, Catholic school students took part in prayer services, giving thanks for all who have contributed to the success of Catholic education in New York, and asking God's blessings on the future of Catholic schools.

A special celebration and prayer service was also held in New York City's Battery Park, in lower Manhattan -- where the state's first Catholic School, St. Peter's, opened in September of 1800. A message from Gov. Pataki was read, and several New York City school board members joined Church and Catholic School officials in celebrating the contributions of Catholic education.

They also joined in honoring Maria Campano, a former student of St. Paul the Apostle School in Schenectady whose poster was chosen as the Official Poster of the Bicentennial of Catholic Schools. Maria, now a seventh grader at Notre Dame Bishop Gibbons School in Schenectady, was joined at the ceremony by her parents and grandparents. In presenting her with a plaque from the state's Catholic Bishops and Catholic School Superintendents, James Cultrara, Associate Director of the New York State Catholic Conference, praised her for creating a work that "so beautifully represents the tradition and faith of our Catholic schools." Copies of her poster have been distributed for display in every Catholic School in New York State, and are also being sent to all of New York's state legislators and members of Congress.

The year-long celebration of the Bicentennial of Catholic Schools in New York State will continue with activities in every diocese, including implementation of a Bicentennial Curriculum that offers learning experiences for every grade level built around the Bicentennial theme, "We Remember, We Celebrate, We Believe."

PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS BOLSTER NATIONAL EXAM SCORES

The college Board Web site posts private school scores for each year since 1996. Between that base year and now, combined SAT scores (math and verbal) have risen 6 points for the nation as a whole, 3 points for public schools, 17 points for religious schools, and 10 points for independent schools. In each of the five years, public schools enrolled 83 percent of college-bound SAT takers from traditional schools; religious schools enrolled 12 percent, and independent schools 5 percent.

SAT Test Scores Class of 2000		
	Verbal	Math
National	505	514
Public	501	510
Religious	529	523
Independent	547	566

In 1999, the average difference between public and private school students for all subjects and age levels was 15.4 points, with a range of 11 to 21, depending on subject area and age level (see chart). To give some perspective to all of this, Education Department officials say that an increase of 10 points on the NAEP scale is roughly equivalent to an increase of one grade level.

1999 NAEP Scores by Type of School			
	All Schools	Public	Private
Reading			
Age 17	288	286	307
Age 13	259	257	276
Age 9	212	210	226
Mathematics			
Age 17	308	307	321
Age 13	276	274	288
Age 9	232	231	242
Science			
Age 17	295	293	311
Age 13	256	254	269
Age 9	229	228	239

**CSAANYS EXTENDS A
WARM WELCOME
TO ALL NEW MEMBERS!**

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Major election years bring bits and pieces of legislative action. This year candidates around the country on both federal and state levels are providing significant rhetoric on educational issues. So it's wait and see what happens on election day to numerous proposals on state ballots and the results of what appear to be close elections.

Congress has not acted to re-authorize ESEA and it is not expected to do so until the next session. A continuing resolution will keep the program moving as is. We need to be alert that sections of the law are not broken off and put as riders on other legislation. It is important that it be passed as a single package.

It does not appear that the Supreme Court will be hearing major cases in education this year. However, there are a number of Church-State cases which bear watching to get a feel for the thinking of the Court.

On the states' level, momentum is building for school choice. Polls indicate support on initiatives for vouchers in Michigan and Wisconsin. Proposition #38 in California is in trouble. Mayor Giuliani in NYC favors vouchers and a Hunter College survey reported in the NY Post discovered that almost three-quarters of city residents familiar with vouchers agree with the mayor. Nothing is on the ballot there but the responses are encouraging. The Rasmussen Research Portrait of America poll strongly supports the idea that competition - allowing parents to choose schools for their children - is the most important way to improve education. (see www.portraitofamerica.com)

In NYS Legislature there is interest and support for Assembly leader John Faso's bill for Education Tax Credit legislation. The Catholic Conference supports this as well as school choice, extension of bus legislation from 15 miles to 25 miles, and increases in the various amounts awarded for mandated services, etc.

"Parent Power" will be the force to bring many of these things to fruition. Let's watch what happens on November 7th! Then we plan our strategy for action.