



Parents Alliance for Catholic Education

P A C E

News

Fall 2007

Improving Student Academic Performance

Grant Funded Programs Lift Outcomes; Remove Barriers

The Parents Alliance for Catholic Education helped secure grant funding for several after-school and summer programs across Massachusetts that positively impacted hundreds of Catholic school students. We feature a few of them in this issue of PACE News.

TLC Boston | Dorchester

TLC Boston is funded federally through No Child Left Behind Title I and has run after-school tutoring programs for three years. This summer TLC Boston operated its first full-day summer program for students entering grades one through six. The first three hours of the day, TLC tutors and aides focused on targeted reading and math tutoring, supplemented with an hour of skill-building activities in the afternoon. The children also enjoyed a nutritious lunch, fun physical and enrichment activities and field trips to some of Boston's historic and cultural treasures. "Parents verbalized a major difference in their children's self-esteem, and teachers saw real academic improvement in the students," said Marilyn Jean, program coordinator.

St. Paul Catholic Schools Consortium | Worcester

The Consortium launched its first ever Math and Science Summer Enrichment program for students in grades five through eight from the six Northern Worcester County Catholic schools served by the Consortium. Held on the campus of Fitchburg State College, the six-week program was designed to challenge advanced students, as well as build proficiency for struggling learners. Students and parents praised the program and the many incredible resources available to the students through the College and through the local Boys and Girls Club, a program partner. The field trips reinforced classroom learning. For example, as part of a unit on living organisms, kids collected specimens during a trip to Singing Beach and later analyzed them under microscopes. Program Coordinator Julianne Morin noted how the students embraced many creative, hands-on approaches to learning and had fun while making measurable academic gains. The program was funded through a competitive grant from the Massachusetts Department of Education.

St. Patrick Elementary | Roxbury Blessed Mother Teresa Elementary | Dorchester Cathedral Elementary | Boston

Each school offered summer programs on their own campus in partnership with TLC Boston. At St. Patrick, Math and Language Arts specialists were hired to work in small groups with students. "The needed resources and expertise were there and the kids were so excited to have books of their own," said Alicia Reverack, who led the St. Patrick program. Students at risk of failing, and others who were struggling in Reading and Math, achieved proficiency in the programs. According to Heidi Jones, program coordinator at Blessed Mother Theresa, about 50% of her students were Vietnamese and more than half speak a language other than English at home. "The quiet students gained confidence and parents were amazed that their struggling learners were now fascinated with Math," said Ms. Jones. Marie Lennon at Cathedral said feedback from parents and teachers was 100% positive. "They all saw academic improvement and wanted to return next year." Students at Cathedral created weekly newspapers, learned how to estimate making ratatouille and expressed themselves by writing poetry while gaining language skills. "Our teachers' only regret was that the program wasn't even longer because the children benefited so much," Ms. Reverack added.

St. Joseph St. Therese School | New Bedford

The school's "After-School Clubs" have helped 70+ students per day boost their grades and self esteem. "Homework Club and the tutoring tremendously helped students' grades," said Brenda Gagon, principal. Soccer, Chorus, and Science Clubs strengthened relationships across grades and with the school community. Funding for the after-school program was provided through a competitive grant from the Massachusetts Department of Education.

SAVE THE DATE

Advocacy Day '08

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Massachusetts State House

Come and support Catholic school students

State Budget and Legislative Update

PACE Budget Recommendations Accepted



Each year, PACE and its partners work with legislators to advocate on behalf of the Catholic school community's state budget and legislative priorities. This year PACE has once again been successful in securing public resources for Catholic school students and teachers such as school nurses, early education vouchers, teacher scholarships, after-school program funds, and school breakfast programs.

There are many state budget and legislative issues under PACE's watch. They primarily have to do with the expanding need for pre-Kindergarten and out of school time programs, as well as school health services. With a rise in chronic health needs of children, such as Asthma and Diabetes, ensuring that Catholic school students have access to a nurse during the school day has become an essential part of the delivery of education.

In addition to our success in securing state budget funding for programs that benefit our students, PACE works with state agencies to advance innovative, cost-effective ways of serving all students, including Catholic school students.

For example, PACE has met with Department of Public Health officials to request that they consider granting funds to alternative school health delivery models that our schools can take part in, such as partnerships with community health agencies, hospitals, schools of nursing and privately contracted nurses. The goal is to provide more care to more students in a cost-efficient manner.

In addition, PACE was successful in ensuring that accredited Catholic schools qualify for pre-Kindergarten state grants without having to go through another layer of accreditation.

Catholic schools are accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The state requires that publicly-funded pre-Kindergarten programs are accredited by an approved accreditation agency. PACE fought for and won approval of language in the budget line item that allows Catholic schools pre-Kindergarten programs that are part of the mixed delivery system to be accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, thereby eliminating the need to go through a second accreditation process—saving our schools time and money and enabling more students to receive a Catholic education. Additionally, this language will be incorporated into the Early Education Bill, which is supported by the Patrick Administration.

PACE staff and the many parents who are actively involved in reaching out to elected officials, have once again been successful in state budget deliberations.

Approved State Budget Items

School Nursing

\$15 million - level funded

Pre-Kindergarten Grants

\$7.1 million - \$2.5 million increase

Early Education and Care Higher Education Scholarships

\$4 million - \$1 million increase

After-School Programs

\$2 million - \$1 million increase

The Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston and PACE are working together with the state to identify ways to deliver publicly-funded special education services to private school students on-site at the private school.

State regulations require that special education services must be delivered at a "neutral site" if state and local funds are being used. PACE and BJE recently submitted to the Department of Education a legal memorandum requesting that the state define a "neutral site" as, "a room in a non-public school that is set aside solely for the purpose of the provision of special education services where no religious artifacts or symbols are present and where the teaching of religion is explicitly prohibited."

Our goal is to ensure that private and religious school students who have special education requirements have access to needed services, while allowing students to receive their primary instruction in their school of choice.

There are many simple ways you as parents can improve your children's education through PACE.

Attend our Annual Advocacy Day on Beacon Hill, Tuesday, March 11, 2008. Hundreds of parents, pastors, teachers, administrators and students will converge on Beacon Hill for a half day to show their support for Catholic education and make our state budget and legislative requests known to our legislators.

In addition, PACE sends E-Alerts to your email inbox on timely issues, like seeking approval on legislation. Our free E-Alerts make contacting your legislator in support of Catholic education fast and easy. Sign up at the "Get Involved" tab on our website, www.paceorg.net.

Finally, plan to come out to one of our regional meetings near you this January, April and May. For specific dates and locations, call the PACE office at (617) 723-9890 or visit www.paceorg.net.