



# The Network

**The following information was recently released from the Office of Non-Public Education [ONPE]:**

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the inaugural year of the Green Ribbon Schools program, which will recognize schools for reducing environmental impact on their communities, promoting healthy school environments for their students and staff, and offering high-quality environmental education.

The award aims to encourage energy and resource conservation measures that can lead to cost savings and job creation; environmental and behavioral changes to promote health and productivity among students, staff and other school occupants; and the use of environmental and sustainability education to support students' preparedness for some of the nation's fastest growing employment sectors.

The Department plans to provide a nominee submission deadline in early 2012 and announce the first Green Ribbon Schools before the end of the 2011-12 school year.

For a fact sheet and power point overview on Green Ribbon Schools, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/green-ribbon-schools/index.html>



Dear Friends,

The autumn weather has finally arrived and has set in. No doubt, school activities are being enhanced by the fresh crisp air and beautiful Fall scenery. As your campus buzzes with activities, our legislature has been busy formulating a new agenda for education reform in New Jersey. Presently, all 120 seats are open for the 215th legislature. The network directors have been meeting with candidates that are campaigning for the open seats, presenting our position as we advocate public policies for Catholic schools. In our conversations, we are being told that the politicians need to hear from their constituents about their concerns for their schools and communities.

That being said, I remind you **Tues. Nov. 8th 2011 is Election Day**. I urge you to go out and exercise your right to vote. I invite you to visit <http://faithfulcitizenship.org/> to gain a wealth of information on the participation of Catholics in Political Life. This website will provide media resources, prayers and activities that you may use in your parish, home and school before and after election and guidance on how to take action. Most importantly, you will be informed about what the Church teaches on Faithful Citizenship by reading statements from the United States Catholic Bishops.

Above all, I cannot stress enough how vital it is that you continue to remain a vibrant part of your school and parish community by attending Mass regularly. Our school faculty does a wonderful job in educating our children in the Catholic tradition but as parents we need to cultivate those efforts at home. Teaching our children through prayer and worship that the Eucharist is central to our lives they "are enabled to express in their lives and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church." [CCC 1068]  
God bless you and be sure to send an adult with your trick-or-treaters on Halloween night.

**Usha Rosidivito and Your N.J. Network Directors**

**MAINTAINING A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE:  
A WHITE PAPER ON THE GIFT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION TO THE PEOPLE OF NEW JERSEY  
[Part 1 of a 3 Part series from 2008] by Dr. George Corwell-Dir. of Ed., NJCC**

**Background :** Since the first New Jersey Catholic school opened in Madison in 1850, Catholic elementary and secondary education has offered a wide variety of educational options for students in New Jersey. At the outset, these schools served the children of European immigrants who, because of prejudice, faced daunting prospects. Soon, thanks in large measure to these Catholic schools, the immigrants and their descendants moved quickly out of poverty and into the middle class. As the children of these immigrants attained economic success, particularly in the period after World War II, they left the urban neighborhoods of their roots, leaving Catholic schools behind. An expansion of Catholic schools in the suburbs occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, responding to the needs of this burgeoning middle class. The movement of this group created an increased number of Catholic schools in “rim districts” surrounding urban areas.

Catholic schools in the urban areas faced many challenges. Some were forced to close, but others remained open and have continued their core mission of providing an education for children who suffer from poverty and discrimination. This group of students includes a large number of African-American children, the vast majority of whom are not Catholic. The increased enrollment of Latino children in Catholic schools also continued through the last two decades of the Twentieth Century. Having accepted the challenge of addressing a new immigrant population, Catholic schools continued to face more and more vexing problems in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The demise of some inner-city Catholic schools has been caused by a convergence of factors which have created serious obstacles in the past several years. An ongoing decline of clergy and religious as administrators and teachers in these schools has created a situation by which over 90% of most Catholic schools are staffed by lay personnel (thus increasing the need for enhanced tuition revenues). At the same time, a lack of expendable income among lower-and-middle class families in urban neighborhoods has created the need for family members (in many cases single parents) to work second and third jobs to pay even the modest tuition. Aging physical plants in Catholic schools in these urban areas, some approaching 75 – 100 years of service, require significant capital expenditures for their continued existence. Furthermore, because the Catholic Church operates multiple ministries of service to New Jersey residents (including Catholic hospitals, shelters, substance abuse centers, and other broad works of charity), the amount of diocesan subsidies available to support non-self-sustaining schools has diminished drastically.

An additional factor in the closing of urban Catholic schools has been the creation of charter schools in certain urban areas, sometimes at a highly concentrated rate. Many poor families seeking relief from the problems of urban public education have chosen charters as a “free” alternative, even though their first choice would have been a values-based education in Catholic schools. For example, the plethora of charter schools in the city of Trenton (some of which have now closed) was a driving force in the closure of every Catholic school within the city limits.

A ten-year snapshot with basic enrollment data highlights the current trend in Catholic education. State-wide Catholic school enrollment for the 2006 – 2007 school year consists of over 127,000 elementary and high school students in 361 schools. Comparable figures from 1996 – 1997 reveal over 148,000 elementary school and high school students in 422 schools. Much of the loss of these students occurred within urban settings.

**[Next issue: *Accomplishments of Catholic Schools*]**