



Parents Alliance for Catholic Education

PACE

News

Winter 2005

School Health, After School Aid & Scholarship Equity 2005 Catholic Schools Advocacy Day

This year's Catholic Schools Advocacy Day, to be held on Tuesday, March 15, 2005 from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the State House will focus on the key themes of expanding school health, after-school aid and equity in scholarship and other programs for Catholic school students across the Commonwealth.

PACE has led the fight on Beacon Hill for more than a decade to expand parental choice in education and ensure that Catholic school students get their fair share of federal and state entitlements. PACE's Annual Catholic School Advocacy Day is the premier event to highlight the budget and legislative priorities of Catholic schools and to have an audience with leaders in the key State Senate and House.

This year, PACE will have an opportunity to welcome House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi and make him aware of the vital role our schools play in the educational, cultural, and economic progress of the Commonwealth.

"PACE has had an incredibly successful first ten years, but there is still much to be accomplished for our students," said Steve Perla, executive director, PACE.

"Now that we have successfully engaged with elected officials and have a 'place at the table,' PACE is in a position to really advance parental choice and educational equity in ways not conceivable when we first opened our doors in 1994," Mr. Perla added.

PACE invites parents to invest a half day of their time to make a stand for Catholic education in a way that will benefit our schools and children in the long-term.

A large parent presence at Advocacy Day speaks volumes to officials on Beacon Hill.

Help us fill the Great Hall to capacity on March 15, 2005.

Transportation is available from strategic points across the state. Check with your school office to see what may be available in your community.

A critical component of Advocacy Day is the **one-on-one meetings parents schedule with their legislators** at the conclusion of the formal

program. It's this personal touch that powerfully brings our message to lawmakers and influences their votes throughout the session – votes that can make a world of difference in our children's school day.

From after-school programs, school nursing, technology aid and transportation to school choice and educational equity overall – Advocacy Day sets the tone for a year's worth of measures that enrich our children. Please make it a priority to attend on March 15. For additional information, contact the PACE office at (617) 723-9890 or mkeane@paceorg.net.

State Early Education Initiative Holds Promise for Catholic Schools

A 2004 initiative by the state legislature to offer publicly-funded, universal early education for 3, 4 and 5 year old students over the next decade holds much promise for parents who want to give their preschool age child/ren the advantage of a Catholic school education. Presently in Massachusetts, early education and care programs are provided through a mixed system of providers including, family childcare, private centers, head start, and public and non-public schools. These various programs are governed

The Initiative Supports a Mixed System of State-Funded Early Ed. and Care that Includes Catholic Schools

and funded by multiple agencies and sources. PACE and its coalition partner, Strategies for Children, support the creation of a new Department of Early Education and Care that would coordinate, streamline, and universalize through public funds, early education programs and services for all of the Commonwealth's families. PACE's executive director, Steve Perla, was named to the Early Education and Care Advisory Committee charged with developing recommendations on how to structure this new department and its work. **"This new initiative brings to fruition a major goal of PACE: to expand parental choice in education and deny no family the opportunity for a Catholic school education,"** said Steve Perla, executive director, PACE. This March, Gov. Romney will appoint an Early Education and Care Governing Board with a goal of establishing the new Department of Early Education and Care by July 1, 2005.

PACE: Growing and On the Move for Our Students

PACE is pleased to announce our expansion into new areas that will better serve individual Catholic elementary and secondary schools statewide and bring new resources and opportunities to our students!

The PACE Executive Committee and staff recently approved a plan to create three divisions within the organization, under the leadership of Executive Director, Steve Perla. The *Advocacy Division* will continue to focus on government relations, communications and grassroots mobilization – expanding participation in our six regional parent coalitions – to advance our legislative agenda.

Berna Mann has been promoted to the newly created position of Associate Director, assisting the Executive Director in overall organizational direction and operations, while holding key

This expansion of our mission and work will bring direct aid to Catholic schools across the state.

responsibility for the new *Professional Support Division*. That division will oversee staff and programs in the areas of family literacy, after school programming, early ed. and professional development.

“These programs respond to real needs expressed by our principals and strengthen our *Urban Initiative* to serve inner-city Catholic school students and families,” said

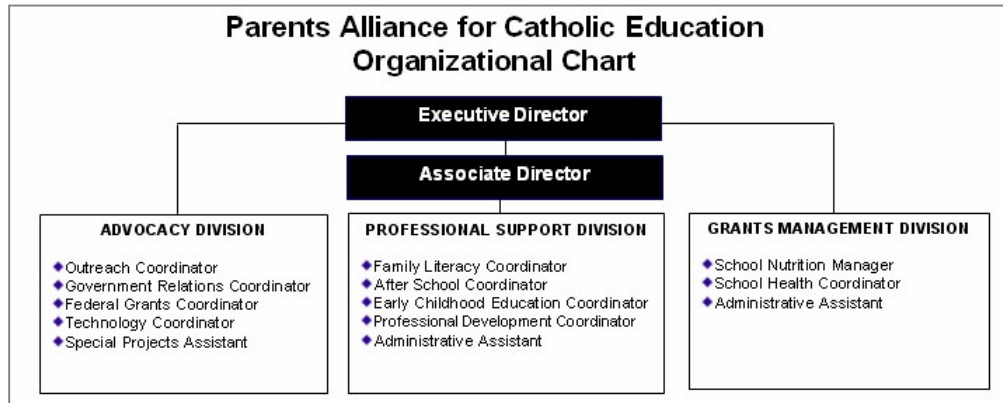
Berna Mann, associate director, PACE.

The newly created *Grants Management Division* will expand on PACE’s existing work in identifying federal and community grants that support our students in school and out-of-school-time programs.

The expansion of staff largely will be funded by public and private grants.

“This expansion of our mission and work will bring direct aid to Catholic schools across the state – helping administrators and teachers in their

unique mission to educate the whole child, and opening new programs and services to students and their families,” Mr. Perla concluded.



PACE Asks State Legislature to Restore \$4 M for School Health

Since FY’04, school health funding in the state has been cut nearly 50% - from \$25.1M to \$14M. Within the School Health Services budget line item, the Department of Public Health has reduced funding for the Essential School Health Services Program (ESHSP) from \$16M to just \$9M, impacting public, non-public and Catholic schools. The Massachusetts School Nursing Collaborative, of which PACE is a partner, has asked the legislature to restore \$4M to the ESHSP, funding it at \$13M, and increase funding to the bottom-line appropriation of the School Health Services Line Item by at least \$4M, bringing its appropriation \$18M. Budget reductions to the ESHSP have meant that thousands of school children will no longer have access to basic school nursing services. PACE will keep the Catholic school community apprised of developments on this request and whether specified grassroots mobilization is needed.

Catholic & Jewish Schools Seek Inclusion in Adams Scholarship

The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship program, available for the first time to 2005 high school graduates, provides a tuition waiver for eight semesters at Mass. state universities, colleges and community colleges. To qualify, students in the 11th grade must have taken the high school English language arts and Mathematics MCAS tests during the standard spring Grade 10 MCAS tests. Because Catholic school students do not take the MCAS, presently they are not eligible for the scholarship. PACE and our advocacy partner, the Bureau of Jewish Education, have asked the state legislature to adopt a provision in the FY’06 state budget that enables grade 10 non-public school students who reside in Massachusetts to voluntarily take the MCAS exam at no cost so that they may be eligible for the program. PACE believes Catholic and other non-public school students should not be precluded from eligibility in this statewide scholarship program.