

ACE+PA

Re: State Wide Advocates for Catholic Education in Pennsylvania (ACE – PA) Network

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The skyrocketing costs of education have a profound impact on individual families who choose to send their children to Catholic schools. Currently 180,000 students are enrolled in Catholic schools, which is the largest student population of any of the Commonwealth's nonpublic and private schools. However, in the last nine years Catholic schools lost over 25% of their total student population. This puts a strain on those who wish to keep Catholic schools open for their children. Furthermore, for the last three years Catholic schools did not receive the technology funding from the Commonwealth that all public schools did. We have to do something. If we do not speak up on behalf of Catholic school students, we will continue to be left out of key education programs.

It is time to unite. Together we will make a difference and put Catholic education as a top priority in the minds of all federal, state and local legislators. By joining together, speaking up and taking action, we can and will make a difference for our children.

The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) is the public affairs arm of the 10 Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania – eight Latin Rite and two Byzantine Rite. The PCC witnesses to spiritual values in public affairs and provides a Catholic presence in state government. PCC's eight-person staff includes policy specialists who help identify the needs of Pennsylvanians concerning morality, health, welfare, education, and human rights. They advocate for resources to meet those needs and to foster public understanding of the Church's teaching and concern. PCC's Education Department represents students in both Catholic schools and public schools regarding issues of justice and morality.

Below are a few issues that we will advocate during the 2008-2009 legislative session.

- Monitor and promote passage of a state budget that includes appropriate increases for existing programs for nonpublic schools (transportation, auxiliary services, textbooks)
- Support and promote proportionate funding for technology
- Support and promote increase in Educational Improvement Tax Credits (EITC).
- Support and promote religious childcare legislation.
- Monitor legislation that would be harmful to Catholic schools and students.
- Support and promote special education funding legislation.
- Assist the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in developing and promoting federal tax credit legislation for individuals and businesses to promote parental choice in education.
- Monitor and oppose legislative or organizational activity harmful to Catholic Schools regarding the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

The PCC's former statewide school-choice advocacy network was extremely successful in the past, but times have changed so we must modify and re-energize our network. We are reinitiating and renaming it. The new and improved Advocates for Catholic Education in Pennsylvania (ACE-PA) will be an extensive network of concerned parents, educators and taxpayers who will advocate for Catholic education issues, and inform and enlighten all Catholics in Pennsylvania. We need your assistance in implementing this statewide network.

Every Catholic diocese in Pennsylvania will have an ACE-PA Coordinator, and every Catholic school will have at least one representative (parent, teacher, employee, volunteer) who will act as the ACE-PA Director. The ACE-PA coordinator for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is Mr. Thomas Smith in the Office of Catholic Education. The ACE-PA Director will coordinate presentations and meetings about current education challenges with parents of the individual Catholic schools. Every parent can help regardless of time constraints; a computer and an email address is all that is needed. Volunteer advocates can simply log on to the PCC's web site (www.pacatholic.org) and register for our E-Alerts. Everyone will receive education emails about issues that can assist with your child's education.

If you have time to invest in this important effort and would like to get involved in ACE-PA, please complete the attached information and return to

Mr. Thomas Smith
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We welcome your energy and enthusiasm to this important new network that will advance Catholic education for our children now and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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