



The Seton Sentinel

The Florida Catholic Conference Education Department Newsletter

Legislative Session Preview: Lawmakers Seek to Bolster Tax Credit Scholarships for Low-Income Families in 2012

By James Herzog, Associate Director for Education

It was good to be together with the many principals, vice principals, superintendents, associates and others who convened in Orlando Oct. 5-7, 2011 for our FCC Administrators' Conference. As a staff resource to superintendents and associates, our FCC Education Desk would also like to say thank you once again to Superintendent Pat Bronsard and the St. Augustine Diocese for hosting such an outstanding and memorable gathering.

This being noted, as a segue from the conference to my main topic for this newsletter, those in attendance last month will recall one of my favorite quotes from the late Holy Father, Pope John Paul II: "Every possible effort should be made to ensure Catholic schools, despite financial difficulties, continue to provide the education to the poor and marginalized."

In recent years, one of the best ways our Catholic schools have found to achieve this vision of the Holy Father many are calling John Paul the Magnificent is this: continue participating in -- or consider participating for the first time-- as a provider school in the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. Of course, in considering this matter, we encourage each principal and Catholic school to work in close consultation with their pastor and superintendent's office to see if first-time or expanded participation makes sense for your situation. At present, there are 126 Catholic schools (elementary and secondary) participating in the FTC Scholarship Program. This means that nearly 60 percent of our schools have found the program helpful in reaching out to low-income families.

Against this backdrop, we would like to lay out the case for some good news regarding the possibility of a program expansion in 2012. In particular, we have worked closely with a group of school choice advocates who will be asking lawmakers to consider expanding the overall program cap to \$250 million.

Rationale for a "one-time bump" to address demand/ waiting lists

In considering this proposal, lawmakers will likely take a close look at the explosion in popularity for the program. In particular, during the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years, the state has seen waiting lists of 8,000 and 13,000 students, respectively. In 2010-2011, after years of steady growth, the program served approximately 35,000 students statewide. The bump up would allow the program to grow to serve thousands more students including many from our Catholic schools. To put it another way, this means we could see our current total of 4,120 Catholic students in the FTC Program doubled in less than five school years.

On a closely related note, the application window for new families coming into the FTC Program was limited to only one month in the spring of 2011 due to high demand. (In previous years, the application "window" for new parents was several months long.)

The current law allows the statewide cap to grow by 25 percent in any year after 90 percent of the overall program cap is reached. Here is the recent history of caps and what is proposed:

School Year	Cap
2010-2011	\$140 million
2011-2012	\$175 million
2012-2013 (currently)	\$218.7 million
2012-2013 (proposed)	\$250 million

The Florida Catholic Conference Education Department exists to assist you in the work of educating our young people.

As a final note, we recently did an analysis by diocese for the total dollar value of the FTC Program to our schools. As you can see in the chart below, the program provided a value of \$16.9 million to 4,120 students at our participating schools during the 2010-2011 school year.

(Arch)Diocese	Number of Participating Schools	Number of Scholarship Students	2010-2011 Scholarship Amount	2010-2011 Total Value
Miami	30	1696	\$4106.00	\$6,963,776.00
St. Augustine	25	641	\$4106.00	\$2,631,946.00
St. Petersburg	13	301	\$4106.00	\$1,235,906.00
Orlando	32	1110	\$4106.00	\$4,557,660.00
Pensacola/Tallahassee	6	173	\$4106.00	\$710,338.00
Palm Beach	8	103	\$4106.00	\$422,918.00
Venice	12	96	\$4106.00	\$394,176.00
Total	126	4120		\$16,916,720.00

A Little More about Mary Camp

I enjoyed meeting so many of our principals and assistant principals at the FCC Administrators' Conference! It was good to be able to see the people I have been communicating with over the last year. I also want to thank everyone for making me feel so welcome! A little over 15 months ago, I became the Accreditation Program Manager. In that time I have managed to spend time in each of the 8 dioceses in our program, visiting 14 schools and meeting with 21 of our principals for Third Year Conferences. I am truly enjoying my transition to Florida and getting to know all about our Catholic schools and the FCC Accreditation Program.

My husband has moved to Tallahassee, but unfortunately, our house in Ohio is still on the market. We hope to someday be able to purchase a home here. While living in Ohio I worked in the Diocese of Toledo for 23 years. I began as a mathematics teacher at St. Paul High School in Norwalk and continued as a junior high mathematics teacher, religion teacher, and assistant principal at St. Joan of Arc School in Toledo. Lastly, I was an elementary school principal at St. Gerard Catholic School in Lima. Jeff and I have two brothers and their families in Ohio and one brother and his family in Florida. Our parents split their time between Florida and Ohio. I have to say that we definitely are enjoying the blue skies and sunshine that Florida has to offer!!

In September James Herzog attended the **Seventh Annual Private School Leadership Conference** in Washington, DC. Read more about his experience in his first ever blog:

<http://www.redefinedonline.org/2011/09/seeking-a-paradigm-shift-for-private-schools-with-public-purpose/>

Governor Scott has signed a Proclamation acknowledging **November 2011 as School Choice Month**. This November, we are asked to recognize Florida's wide variety of school choice options and encourage parents and students in their academic endeavors. We ask you to please join us in recognizing November 2011 as Florida School Choice Month!! For more information about School Choice in Florida please visit: www.floridaschoolchoice.org.



A Prayer for All Saints Day: Generous and gracious God, we give you thanks for those who have gone before us who now belong to the communion of saints. We thank you for ordinary persons with laughter in their eyes and kindness in their deeds. We thank you for common ones with compassionate hearts and listening ears. We thank you for holy ones who saw light in the midst of darkness and potential when others saw dead ends. We thank you for strong ones who remained faithful in times of crisis, who endured suffering yet remained joyous, who fought for justice when they could have chosen comfort. Help us walk in the shadow of the saints who go before us, now and always. Amen. --From [Openings: A Daybook of Saints, Psalms, and Prayer](#)

For the Principal on the Go...
Easy Crock Pot Dinner from Allrecipes.com

Combine in Crock Pot: 16 ounces of salsa, 1 package of dry taco seasoning mix, juice of 1 lime, 3 tablespoons of chopped cilantro. Add 3 pounds of boneless skinless chicken breasts and stir to coat with salsa mixture. Cover, set on low, and cook for 8 hours or so (while you are at work). (Could cook on high for 4 hours.) Shred chicken and serve over rice with warm flour tortillas.

Florida Catholic Conference

James Herzog, Associate Director for Education
850-205-6823

jherzog@flacathconf.org
www.flacathconf.org

Mary Camp, Accreditation Program Manager
850-224-7906

mcamp@flacathconf.org
www.EAS-ed.org

Allison Clow, Administrative Assistant
850-205-6822

aclow@flacathconf.org
Fax: 850-224-7501

FCC ACCREDITATION: A DATA-DRIVEN PROCESS

By Mary Camp, Accreditation Program Manager

The School Improvement Plan process used in the FCC Accreditation Program is a data-driven process. During the year that a school is focusing on creating their action plans, research is completed, data is gathered, and evidence is analyzed. This leads to a unified plan specific to the school because it is based on relevant data.

The School Profile is updated (or created for schools doing this for the first time). This includes surveying many stakeholders to obtain their perspectives. Focus groups might be brought together to further detail these perceptions. Demographic information is updated, including general school information, as well as specific student statistics. Educational programs offered by the school are evaluated. Current plans (such as action plans, professional development plans, technology plans, budget, facilities plan etc.) are assessed. Student performance data (standardized tests, portfolios, awards, promotion rates, classroom performance) is reviewed. All of this school profile evidence is collected and analyzed giving the school community a current snapshot of where the school has been, what it looks like today, and some ideas of what the focus should be for the future.

With a clear picture of who and what the school is, the Mission and Belief Statements are reviewed, discussed, and promulgated. The school's mission statement should be the driving force behind everything that the school does. Therefore, all stakeholders should be involved in the development of the mission and its annual review.

During this phase school personnel also review current research on best practices of effective Catholic schools and instructional practices. The instructional and organizational effectiveness of their own school is evaluated through surveys and focus groups. Student performance and progress data is analyzed within this background.

All of this gathered, researched, and analyzed evidence leads to the creation of cohesive action plans and professional development plans that target the specific needs of the students. By using this entire host of data and research, the plans created should be tailored to the school. The plans are written in a measurable way to allow the school personnel to evaluate and assess as the plans are implemented. The process unifies the school stakeholders and maps a five-year plan for the successful student progress.