

# Statistics released on U.S. Catholic schools

BALTIMORE - Enrollment figures for Catholic schools in the 2006-07 academic year show “a continued significant decline in the elementary school population and a slight increase in secondary school enrollment,” according to a report by the National Catholic Educational Association.

Total enrollment fell by 1.8 percent, or 42,569 students, said the annual statistical report prepared by Sister Dale McDonald, a Sister of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary who is NCEA director of public policy and educational research.

The 51-page report was released during the April 10-13 NCEA convention in Baltimore.

“While enrollment has declined in all regions of the country (12.5 percent since 2000), the largest decreases have been centered in the large urban areas (15 percent), principally in the Mideast and the Great Lakes, areas that were populated by high concentrations of Catholic immigrants in the late 19th and 20th centuries,” said the report’s executive summary.

“The good news is that there is a strong demand and enthusiasm for Catholic schools in areas of the Southeast and Far West,” it added. “Waiting lists now exist in 34 percent of the schools, primarily in suburban areas.”

The report put enrollment for the current school year at about 2.3 million, with 1.7 million students in elementary schools and 638,239 in secondary schools. With full-time professional staff members numbering 159,135, the average student-teacher ratio was 15 to 1.

The report also looked back at historical data on enrollment and staffing. In 1965, the peak year for Catholic school enrollment, there were nearly 13,500 Catholic schools enrolling 5.6 million students.

In the current school year, minority students make up more than 25 percent of the enrollment, and non-Catholics are 13.8 percent of the student body.

Since the last academic year, 36 new schools opened and 212 consolidated or closed, the report said.

More than 99 percent of Catholic elementary schools are coeducational, while about two-thirds of Catholic secondary schools educate both sexes.

Nearly 20 percent of Catholic secondary schools are all-female and 13.5 percent are all-male.

The states with the highest Catholic school enrollment in the 2006-07 academic year were New York, California, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, New Jersey, Florida, Louisiana, Texas and Missouri. The total enrollment of 1.4 million in those 10 states is nearly two-thirds of the entire U.S. Catholic school enrollment.

The mean per-pupil tuition in Catholic elementary schools is \$2,607, or approximately 62 percent of the actual costs per pupil of \$4,268, according to the NCEA report. In Catholic secondary schools, the mean freshman tuition is \$6,906, or about 80 percent of the actual costs per pupil of \$8,743.

Based on the average public school cost per pupil of \$8,310, as reported by the federal government last November, Catholic schools save the nation more than \$19 billion a year, the report said.