

# Catholic schools decry funding woes

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Pleading for an estimated 170,000 disadvantaged students in non-public schools who are being denied publicly funded remedial education, a spokesman for the U.S. Catholic Conference urged a House subcommittee this spring to make funds available to aid those children.

There has been a "large-scale failure" to restore federally funded remedial programs for children in private schools since the U.S. Supreme Court discarded the most effective method of conducting such programs in 1985, said the spokesman, Joseph McTighe.

McTighe, executive secretary of the New York State Council of Catholic School Superintendents, testified on behalf of the USCC Department of Education before the House Appropriation Committee's Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Services.

The subcommittee was considering a \$40 million appropriation to help reverse the negative impact of the 1985 *Felton vs. Aguilar* decision, in which the Supreme Court said it was unconstitutional to use federal remedial-education funds for programs that brought public remedial teachers into the classrooms of religiously run schools.

Non-public students who were receiving publicly funded remedial education before *Aguilar* have lost some \$300 million in public aid since then, and studies indicate that "the number of students losing services is growing," McTighe said.

For private school students who continued receiving remedial aid since 1985, the per-pupil cost of delivering the aid program is considerably higher than before, and the average time per student in remedial programs has dropped, he said.

He said that before the *Aguilar* ruling about 180,000 non-public school students were receiving publicly funded remedial education in their own schools and about 20,000 were receiving such services "off-site in neighboring public schools."

McTighe said that in 1985-86, the first school year after *Aguilar*, only 80,000 non-public students received full services, while "60,000 students received only one-half a year of service, because of difficulties in moving their programs off site, and 60,000 students lost all services."

In 1986-87, he said, "more students lost services than regained them," and incomplete figures for 1987-88 indicate that "the problems are not improving but becoming worse in about 50 percent of the states."

An analysis of data from all states before *Aguilar* indicated that about 100,000 non-public students who should have qualified for remedial aid were receiving no services, he said. The figures since *Aguilar* "do not include the 100,000 who were never helped," he said.

McTighe said state and local public-education officials have taken three main approaches to continuing or restoring remedial aid to non-public students after on-site teaching was banned:

- About 53 percent of the students are

walked or bused to neighboring public schools or remedial education centers for the remedial programs.

- About 29 percent are reached by vans or mobile classrooms parked close to but not on the private school property.

- About 17 percent are receiving computer-based instruction at their own schools under programs that require them to leave the school only for sessions involving direct contact with their remedial teachers.

The walking or busing approach requires students to waste an average of 42 minutes a week in transportation in order to receive an average of 95 minutes a week of remedial instruction, McTighe said.

Mobile classrooms or vans cut the students' commuting time per week to 21 minutes, he said, while on-site computer instruction cuts weekly travel to and from remedial education to 10 minutes.

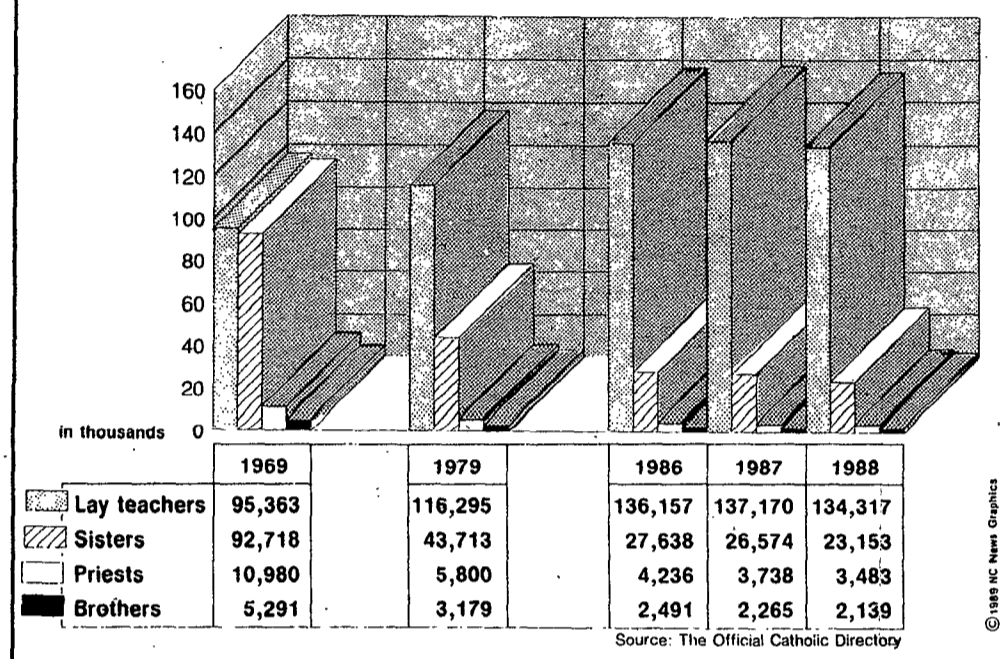
Non-public schools contributed more than \$50 million a year in classroom space for remedial education before the *Aguilar* decision, McTighe said. He said extra yearly costs in public funds for the same programs since the *Aguilar* ruling include an estimated \$35 million a year for transportation, at least \$20 million a year for vans, and at least \$5 million a year for off-site services to students in computer-related programs.

McTighe estimated that it will cost more than \$80 million in first-year costs and more than \$50 million a year after that just to restore remedial services to those who have lost them since 1985 and bring reduced services back up to their pre-1985 level.

One of the problems in reaching all non-public students who qualify for remedial education is lack of capital funds, especially in rural areas, to start up programs based on mobile vans or computer instruction, he said.

He urged the subcommittee to establish a special funding mechanism that would allow smaller school districts to overcome that initial obstacle.

## Who Teaches in Catholic Schools?



## Bush cites 'Just say no' schools

By Liz Schevtchuk  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — President Bush has commended a Brooklyn parochial school as a "drug-free oasis in a sea of crack dealers" and applauded other Catholic and public schools for fighting drugs.

The president made the comments early this summer during a Rose Garden ceremony honoring 47 Drug-Free School Award recipients, among which were seven Catholic schools from dioceses around the country.

In his remarks, he singled out St. John the Baptist School of the Diocese of Brooklyn and its principal, Sister Mary Jane Raeihle, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

"Let me tell you about St. John the Baptist School," Bush said. "Here's what one of the judges who visited the school wrote:

"This school is a total drug-free oasis in a sea of crack dealers," Bush said.

"This crusade to be a beacon of hope in a neighborhood of burned-out buildings and frequent killings is taken with serious risk. The school is almost the last life raft available to families whose neighborhood peace and quiet has been overturned by the violence of alcohol and drugs," the president said, continuing to read from the judge's report. "And if this school is not a model of a drug-free school, then no such model exists."

Bush told his audience that drug dealers recently broke into Sister Raeihle's office, "ransacking it, breaking into the safe where the school's money is kept. But they left the money on her desk like a warning — as a warning — as a message to the school to stop its activities," Bush said. "But St. John's has not stopped."

In fact, during a recent graduation practice, "the brave nuns stood between the drug dealers and the children to protect them as they marched to the church," Bush declared.

He quoted Sister Raeihle as noting that "we're very proud of the children. Even the little ones know what it's all about, which is a shame. We have good will and kids with a lot of hope. It's so hard for them and they have so much hope."

"God bless you, Sister, and God bless the children," Bush said.

"I think it was a wonderful tribute to the children," Sister Raeihle told Catholic News Service. "They were, really very happy about it, they worked hard."

"We are drug-free, thank God, but it's all around us," she said.

The other Catholic schools he honored

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