

# Education



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## Reforms could hurt private schools

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A bill to replace the U.S. Department of Education with block grants to states must make provisions for students from low-income families who attend parochial and private schools, said the U.S. bishops' education secretary.

"Those who propose radical restructuring of federal school funding must guarantee that private and parochial school students and staff share on an equitable basis in the education-

al benefits provided with federal tax revenues," said Mercy Sister Lourdes Sheehan.

Sister Sheehan's comments followed a May 24 press conference at which a Republican House Education Task Force unveiled the legislative proposal aimed at abolishing the Education Department and overhauling federal funding for education. Called the "Back to Basics Education Reform Act," the proposal calls for shutting down the department one year after

the bill is enacted.

Instead of the federal department, the government would send \$9 billion to states in the form of block grants for elementary and secondary education and \$2 billion in grants for higher education. The monies would go to the governors with the requirement that 98 percent of the money be spent directly on local schools. No more than 2 percent could be spent on administrative overhead.

Under current federal programs, educationally disadvantaged children in low-income areas can receive services for remedial reading and math whether they attend public, private or parochial schools. Current federal programs also allow private and parochial school students to use government-owned library books and audiovisual equipment in their schools.

In order to ensure all students still receive these services, Sister Sheehan called for any reform proposal to contain the following provisions:

Guaranteeing equitable participation of private and parochial school children and personnel in block grant funds.

Using federal block grant funds as much as possible for students and personnel rather than schools.

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## Stories

Continued from page 4A

ple's lives today. One way to do this is to tell stories beyond the Bible, and to use these added stories to illustrate the message contained in the Scriptures.

"If (listeners) can say, 'That's my story, too,' then that's a start," he observed.

Educators can also use stories from other religious traditions to help explain Christianity and to gain understanding of other faiths.

He cautioned, however, "I honestly don't think that you can take your stories (from other traditions) and take them into many Christian education classes without preparation."

If students are not well versed in their own faith, Biallas said, then they might be confused if they hear stories from another faith.

"To avoid that, I think it's clear that we know our Christian story first," he concluded. "Jesus' life story, that's the master story of Christianity."

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