



## January 11, 2008 - Dr. Mary Grassa O'Neill Named Secretary of Education for Archdiocese of Boston

**Brighton, MA** – Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley announced the appointment of Mary Grassa O'Neill as Secretary of Education and Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of Boston. Dr. Grassa O'Neill's appointment is effective this spring.

A former superintendent of Milton Public Schools and senior administrator in the Boston Public Schools, Dr. Grassa O'Neill currently serves as Director of The Principals' Center and Managing Director for Programs in Professional Education at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. The programs she oversees reach 2500 educators from all over the world from Pre-Kindergarten through higher education. Dr. Grassa O'Neill is on the faculty at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Cardinal Seán said, "Dr. Grassa O'Neill brings extraordinary skills and experience to the Archdiocese of Boston. A gifted leader who understands the challenges and opportunities ahead, we welcome her to this important position. We are grateful for Dr. Grassa O'Neill's commitment to our students and their families and her desire to strengthen, enhance, and reinvigorate Catholic education in the Archdiocese."

Dr. Grassa O'Neill said, "It is an honor and a privilege to serve the Archdiocese. I look forward to working with Cardinal O'Malley and our Catholic School leaders, faculties, staffs, parents, community members and clergy to ensure exceptional educational opportunities for all students and to make an already good school system even better."

Search Committee Chair Sister Janet Eisner, SND, President of Emmanuel College, said, "Cardinal O'Malley charged the Search Committee to recruit a vigorous and visionary educational leader, with the stature and the drive to transform the schools of the Archdiocese of Boston. In Dr. Mary Grassa O'Neill we have found such a person. Mary has the leadership experience, the inspiring presence, and the deep personal commitment – both to her faith and to children, families, and communities – to be a successful leader, builder, and champion for Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Boston."

Cardinal Seán added, "I want to extend my sincere thanks to Interim Secretary of Education Sr. Clare Bertero, OSF and Interim Superintendent Sr. Kathleen FitzSimons, CND, who have provided exemplary leadership during a time of transition."

### Dr. Grassa O'Neill's Background

Among Dr. Grassa O'Neill's many accomplishments as Milton Superintendent, where she served from 1993-2003, were improved academic achievement and award winning schools. She instituted a writing across the curriculum program for all students, quadrupled the number of Milton High School students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, and initiated foreign language programs for all grades so that 90 percent of Milton students now study a foreign language for twelve years. During her tenure, she recruited 30 administrators and hundreds of teachers and staff, and increased the number of people of color working in leadership, faculty and staff positions by 500 percent. In addition, she worked with community members to establish the Milton Foundation for Education, which raised more than \$1 million to enhance and enrich curriculum offerings.

Expert at fundraising to support school initiatives and capital needs, she also led a campaign to raise \$100 million to renovate school buildings. As a result every public school in Milton is new or like new since 2002, making this capital renewal program one of the largest in the state.

Prior to her ten years as Superintendent in Milton, Dr. Grassa O'Neill worked in the Boston Public Schools for twenty-five years (1968-1993). She served as North Zone Superintendent providing educational leadership to principals, staff, and 12,000 students in the Zone's 32 schools. She strengthened parent and community involvement in the schools by actively supporting the North Zone Parent Information Center, North Zone Planning and Advisory Council, School Parent Councils and other parent and community organizations as well as substantially increased the number



and location of extended day kindergarten programs throughout the Zone, and expanded integrated early childhood programs among her many accomplishments.

Previously she served as Principal of James P. Timilty School in Roxbury (1985-1989). She transformed the Timilty from one of the lowest performing to one of the highest performing middle schools in the system. She also served as Senior Curriculum Advisor for Boston's middle schools, responsible for all aspects of curriculum and instruction for 24 schools, and led a task force that brought about significant reforms. She began her career as a teacher at Grover Cleveland School in Dorchester.

Dr. Grassa O'Neill earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Boston State College and received her Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She also earned two Certificates from Harvard Business School. Dr. Grassa O'Neill is a graduate of St. Ann's Grammar School in Dorchester and the former Cardinal Cushing Central High School in South Boston.

Dr. Grassa O'Neill is a member of the board of the Massachusetts School Building Authority and is a Milton Hospital Corporator.

The recipient of several awards recognizing her many professional achievements, Dr. Grassa O'Neill lives in Milton with her husband, Tom, and their sons, Thomas and Joseph. They are parishioners at St. Elizabeth's Church.

#### **About the Archdiocese of Boston**

*The Archdiocese of Boston was founded on April 8, 1808 and was elevated to Archdiocese in 1875. Currently serving the needs of approximately 2 million Catholics, the Archdiocese of Boston is an ethnically diverse and spiritually enriching faith community consisting of 295 parishes, across 144 communities, educating nearly 50,000 students in Catholic schools and 156,000 in religious education classes each year, ministering to the needs of more than one million patients annually in its hospitals and 200,000 individuals through its social service outreach. Mass is celebrated in nearly twenty different languages each week. For more information please visit [www.rcab.org](http://www.rcab.org).*

Copyright © 2004-2008 Archdiocese of Boston; all rights reserved