

## **Boston Catholic School Connects Holds Forum**

Urban Catholic school principals and counselors came together recently with social service agencies, museums and other child-friendly organizations for the second year in a row. The purpose: to continue to find effective ways to educate the whole child in situations of intense need. The forum was sponsored by Boston Catholic School Connects, a school-based collaboration designed to alleviate barriers to learning and to promote the academic, social-emotional, and physical well-being of students in 15 Boston Catholic schools.

“The poverty level of children in these schools in many instances is 50 or 60 percent, and in some cases it is 90 percent,” said Erik Goldschmidt, Ph.D., M.Div., who serves as Program Director of Boston Catholic School Connects. “We aim to assess every child in every school to get a sense of each child’s needs and to find ways to meet those needs.”



**Joan Jackson, site coordinator, Cathedral Grammar School; Erik Goldschmidt, Program Director, Boston Catholic School Connects; Tanya Brussa-Pagan, Director, Community Relations, Suffolk County District Attorney's Office.**

Thanks to services arranged by each school’s site coordinator, who is a social worker or school counselor, principals and teachers are spending less time dealing with student behavioral problems, Goldschmidt noted. Founded and based at Boston College’s Lynch School of Education, Boston Catholic School Connects partners with the following schools: Cathedral Grammar School, East Boston Central Catholic, St. John School, South Boston Catholic Academy, Mission Grammar School, Sacred Heart School, St. Columbkille

Partnership School, St. Patrick School, St. Rose School, St. Theresa of Avila School, and the five campuses of Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy.

Representatives of organizations ranging from the Boy Scouts of America and the YMCA to the Museum of Fine Arts and the Suffolk District Attorney’s Office were introduced by Goldschmidt at the forum. Each representative spoke briefly, outlining what his or her organization could offer to urban Catholic schoolchildren. The forum was held at Sacred Heart School in Roslindale.

Sister Joan Lonergan, CSJ, who is the school counselor at St. Theresa of Avila School in West Roxbury, found the forum “very, very helpful and energizing.” She added: “It was good to learn such things as how to get funds for children to attend science programs at the Museum of Science. Now that our schools how come together through Boston Catholic School Connects, there is more that can be provided for our children in terms of resources.”