



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Press Release: Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins Tours Expanded Universal Pre-Kindergarten Classes at Sacred Heart School in Yonkers

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS October 16, 2014

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Yonkers, NY - Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, the Democratic Conference Leader, and Assembly Member Shelley Mayer toured expanded pre-kindergarten classrooms at Sacred Heart School in Yonkers today, made possible through the state's Universal Pre-K Funding Program that they voted for in the 2014 State Budget. Sacred Heart has been able to add 120 pre-kindergarten slots and 100 other seats were added at two other Catholic Schools also

located in Yonkers, as part of the \$2.2 million state education grant awarded to the Catholic School Region of Central Westchester.

“As a mother, a former teacher and a life-long advocate for education, I felt it was extremely important to commit the financial resources to provide districts the opportunity to expand or establish a pre-kindergarten program,” said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. “Research tells us that a strong foundation in learning at an early age provides the basis for success, and we must do all that we can as a State to make sure children are getting the best education possible.”

Assembly Member Shelley Mayor of Yonkers also joined the tour. “I have worked very hard to be sure Yonkers school children have access to full-day pre-kindergarten programs. I am pleased that there will be 220 additional seats available to Yonkers families, and I look forward to continuing to work to expand access to pre-kindergarten programming in Yonkers and across New York State.”

As part of the 2014 State Budget, Senator Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Member Shelley Mayer voted for \$1.5 billion in dedicated funding for a five-year plan to implement a statewide Universal Pre-K program. In this first year of the UPK program, \$340 million was set aside, with \$300 million dedicated to New York City. The New York State Department of Education requested applications and awarded the grants. In Westchester County, the Catholic School Region of Central Westchester received \$2.2 million, the third largest award in New York State.

“This award allows three Catholic elementary schools in Yonkers, including Sacred Heart, to offer 220 free UPK seats to Yonkers school district families,” said Timothy McNiff, Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of New York. “The Archdiocese is strongly committed to early childhood education and we have participated in Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs for more than 10 years. The Archdiocese of New York is one of the

largest private providers of early education programs in the metropolitan area with more than 10,000 students currently enrolled in early childhood programs including NYS and NYC Universal Pre- K. This grant money expands the number of seats across the Archdiocese to more than 3,400.”