

St. Augustine: The Life Of A Parish School

"What is a friend?" the teacher said.
"A friend is someone who comes home
with you," said the kindergartener.

That exchange roughly explains the
"neighborhood school" policy adopted
four years ago by St. Augustine parish
on Chili Avenue in Rochester. This
parochial school typifies many throughout
the diocese which face severe financial
difficulties and bleak prospects because
of the recent overturning of New York's
parochial aid bill by the U.S. District Court.

St. Augustine's school, located in an
integrated area of the city, encourages
non-Catholic pupils who wish to enroll. "so
children who play together will go to
school together," says Sister Anna Louise
Staub, SSJ, principal.

"We do not charge more tuition to
people who do not attend our church,"
remarked Sister Anna Louise. "We've
really tried to integrate here." Forty-
three non-Catholic families send their
children to the 633-pupil school, which has
pupils in grades kindergarten through 8th.

Rising salaries and prices combined
with the expense of new educational
methods, have left the traditionally
independent parochial school stranded
on the rocks of a treacherous economy.
Without state aid, estimates Sister Anna
Louise, parochial schools like hers can last
only two to three more years.

There are few frills at a parochial
school like St. Augustine's, acknowledges
Sister Anna Louise, but "values are at
the heart of our education." The school has

no lunch program, physical education is
taught only once a week, and the main
building was put up in 1906.

St. Augustine's has made a virtue out
of necessity by concentrating on a solid
academic education. One of its proudest
features is a learning resources center, in
which pupils use audio-visual materials
for individualized work. The school also
has programs for remedial reading and
mathematics.

Sister Anna Louise also points out that
the school's faculty has many teachers
with long tenure. "When you keep a
stable faculty," she said, "your school is
much better educationally." Only four
of the school's 17 full-time teachers are
Sisters of St. Joseph; the rest are lay
people.

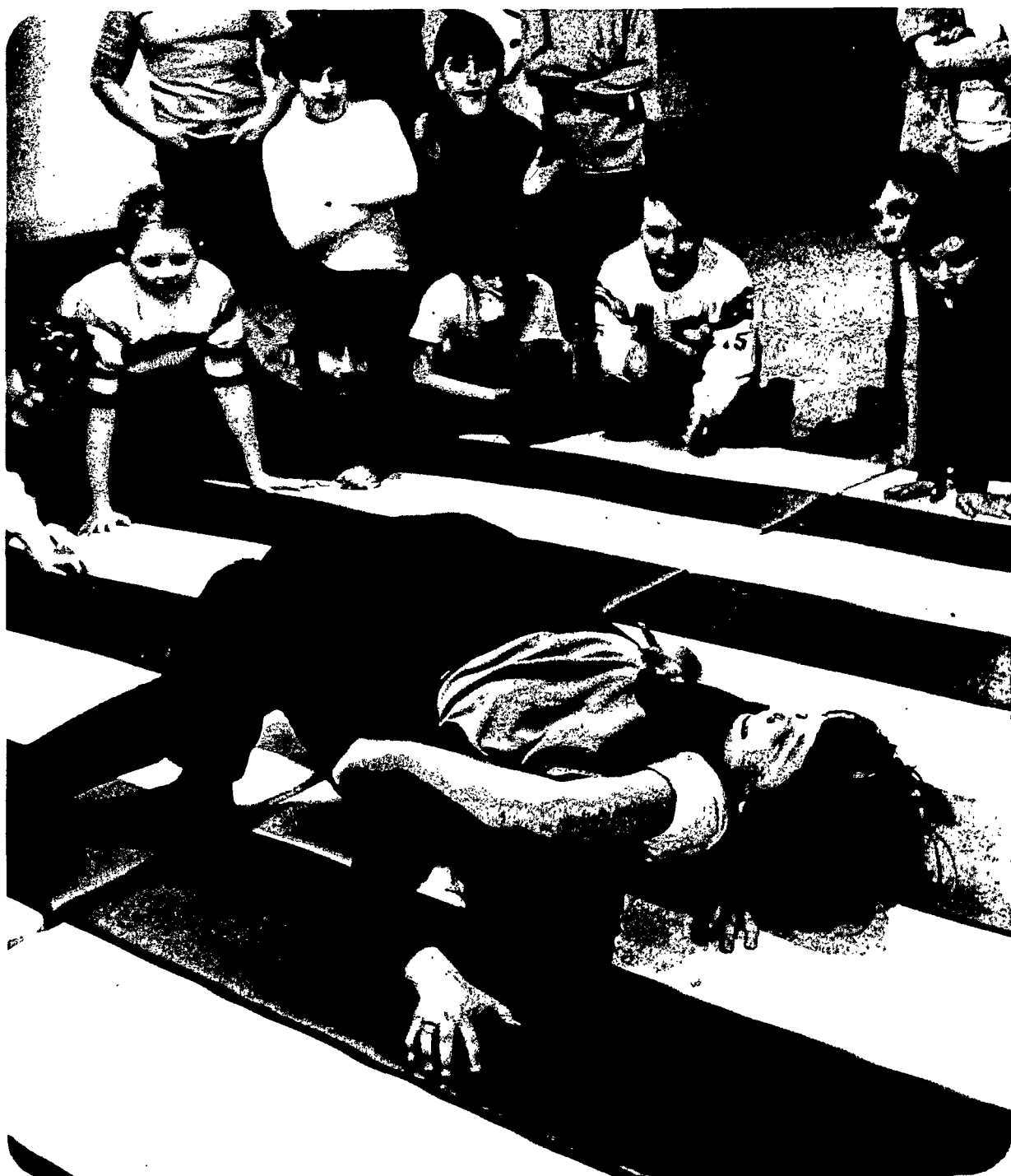
A new program being tried will give
children Wednesday afternoons off so that
teachers will have greater planning time
to increase departmental effectiveness.
Home visits also are planned by teachers.

Other assets of the school include an
addition built in 1952 and a two-classroom
building for the first grade, erected in
1958.

St. Augustine's currently gets aid
from the state for mandated services and
a limited amount of assistance in
purchasing textbooks. "We only wish
this textbook aid could be pushed down
into the 4th, 5th and 6th grades," says
Sister Anna Louise, "because the multi-
text instructional approach is now the
only really acceptable way."



A sign outside main school building, erected by St. Augustine's school board, tells passers-by on Chili Ave., "This school saves taxpayers \$739,200 a year."



Above: Mrs. Rosemary Robinson reads a story to her kindergarten class. At left: Richard Gallina bests David Summers in wrestling match held during physical education class held by instructor from CYO.