

# Student Needs and Interests Are the Focus of Curriculum Development

By Sister M. Edwardine Weaver, RSM Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum

The Metric Conversion Act of 1975 declared that the policy of the U.S. shall be to coordinate and plan the increasing use of the metric system in this country. It is almost a certainty that students now in elementary school will be graduating into a metric world. These students should be equipped both intellectually and attitudinally to participate as effective citizens in an increasingly complex international society. Such preparation must include the new language of metrics.

This September the schools in the Diocese will enter the second phase of a four year plan for diocesan instructional programs in metrics. Training programs for primary metric leaders will be conducted in September and October. We are pleased with the cooperation and support we have received from the State Department of Education in implementing this plan.

In the past year the diocese has worked on the development of a "Guideline for Teaching the Gifted and Talented." We recognize that there is a necessity to commit ourselves to programs that identify the uniqueness of the individuals who are gifted. It is imperative to challenge these students on levels of thinking that go beyond the mere acquisition of facts. Administrators have received this guideline and will be encouraged to identify these students and to work toward the provision of differentiated programs and services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program.

Parents, as well as educators, have been quick to recognize the significance of the child's early years. Indications of this are manifested in the rising number of prekindergarten programs for three and four year olds in the nation and in our own diocese.

A major responsibility of the prekindergarten program is to help each child build a positive self-image and gain a sense of mastery over his

environment. It helps the child develop his potential in all areas of growth — intellectual, social, emotional and physical. Prekindergarten also helps us to know each child — his potential, his limitations, and his learning style. At present, the diocese is evaluating prekindergarten programs and the use of a nationally validated curriculum, COPE (cognitively oriented prekindergarten experience) in a number of schools throughout the diocese. This is part of a design developing diocesan guidelines for all prekindergarten programs.

Another aspect of early childhood education is growing stress on prekindergarten screening programs which diocesan personnel have been developing. Many educators stress the use of these programs because of their importance in determining school placement. Professionals maintain that as each child is ready for school at different levels, the "school readiness" tests give the educational facility an insight into the perceptual and

behavioral stage of each child. Other important objectives of the pre-testing or screening are the early detection of learning disabilities, and the screening of youngsters for their strong and weak points so that the school can gear education programs to meet the youngsters individual needs. Through this prekindergarten guidance and testing, not only do child and school become acquainted long before that traumatic first day of school, but the learning facility is given early direction in the education of that child.

Plans are underway for increased emphasis on the humanities in our schools. Last Fall, a new Diocesan Art Guideline was published for use in all schools in the system. Preparation for the completion of a Music Guideline with emphasis on liturgical music is in process. In-service training will be provided where curriculum changes are taking place in the use of new guidelines.

In addition to this, an "Education to Justice" curriculum, which has been piloted for two years, is being expanded to include other aspects of parish education. The program is designed to review and renew an understanding of Catholic social principles in relationship to today's society. The content is rooted in scripture and the social documents of the Church.

Teachers in our schools

help in the formulation of all diocesan curriculum guidelines. Long range plans for curriculum development

include the creation of Early Childhood Guidelines (for three and four year olds) and Health Guideline.

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## Parents Use Teamwork

The Open Court Language Arts program was initiated at St. Mary's School, Canandaigua, Sept. 1978. Materials were needed in five primary classrooms which would correlate with the new program. In response to this need, a staff member from the school organized a "Hands-On Workshop". Parents came into the school during the day and met with the Open Court Consultant who displayed and demonstrated materials that

could be easily made. Also available were teacher materials — made activities which had been successfully used by Open Court teachers in other schools. A staff member from St. Mary's arranged to have needed supplies on hand — tag board, markers, old magazines and workbooks paste, scissors. By the end of the day the classrooms had many new games and activities that

parents had enjoyed making for them.

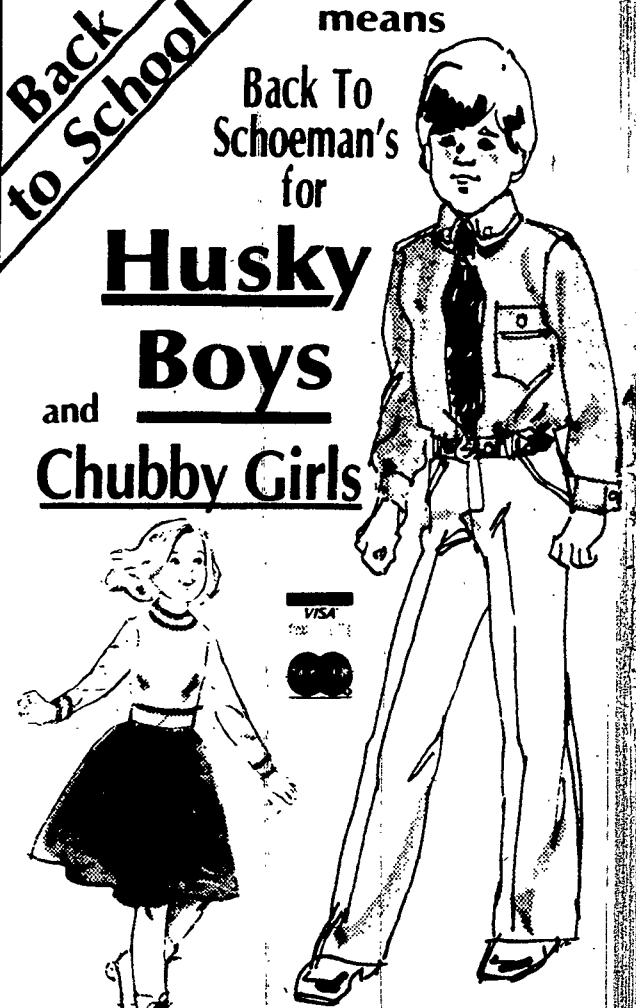
According to St. Mary's sources the parents enjoyed coming into the school and working together and they continued the practice by helping with the Spring Musical. The children needed animal costumes and parents went to work cutting out patterns, sewing designs and painting scenery and props.

## School Principals Announced

The Diocesan Education Department has announced administrative changes in elementary schools and three high schools for the 1979-80 year. The principals who will be assuming new positions are:

Sister Judith McKay, SSJ, Nazareth Academy, principal; Sister Carol Cimino, SSJ, Nazareth Academy, vice principal; Brother Brian Walsh, CSC, Bishop Kearney; Miss Helen Gerhardt, Holy Family-Holy Apostles; Mrs. Margaret Marsh, Our Lady of Mercy, Rochester; Frank Vaccaro, St. Anthony; Sister Mary Ellen Cragan, SSJ, St. Monica's; Stephen Oberst, St. Pius X, Rochester; Sister Kathryn Wahl, RSM, St. Salome in Rochester; Mrs. Margaret Nailos, St. Agnes, Avon; Sister Diane Marie Erskine, RSM; Our Lady of Lourdes, Elmira; Mrs. Marilyn Tripp, St. John of Rochester, Fairport; Sister Patricia Pullman, SSJ, St. Stephen's, Geneva; Sister Carol Wulforst, RSM, St. Joseph's, Penfield; Sister Catherine Judge, SSJ, St. Mary's, Waterloo; Sister Anne Pirang, SSJ, St. James, Waverly; Sister Rita Heberle, RSM, St. Rita's, Webster. Sister Marie Castagnaro, SSJ, will join the St. Agnes High School staff as vice principal.

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