

# Urban school study looks at future of Rochester city schools

By Teresa A. Parsons

At the heart of the Urban School Study is a paradox. On one hand, planning for the future of urban Catholic schools aims for the positive goal of ensuring not only their survival, but their continued strength. But on the other hand, planning implies change. And change in school parlance means somebody's school might close.

Particularly in cities, Catholic schools are being challenged by the changes in the makeup, needs and identities of those they serve. Mobility, for instance, has become a hindrance to planning. People in some areas of the city move so often that enrollment can change dramatically during the first week of school.

Rochester's 20 Catholic schools confront declining enrollment, rising costs and aging buildings, and a lack of urban parish resources according to a survey developed by Alan Taddiken, a consultant with the Center for Governmental Research.

"As good stewards, we can't support programs that drain parishes overwhelmingly, or that serve only a few students," said Sister Roberta Tierney, diocesan director of education. "What worked in 1960 is not going to work in 1990 ... things will not be the same."

School leaders have been cooperative and

open to the process according to Sister Roberta and Father John Mulligan, members of the study's steering committee. "So far, we haven't had anybody say 'No, we're going to stay exactly as we are,'" Father Mulligan said.

Throughout the summer, Catholic school principals have been meeting in small groups organized geographically, looking for answers to the challenges their schools face.

"If we look at what we can do and then find the way to do it, we're going to really have something exciting," said Thomas Bahr, principal of Our Lady of Good Counsel School, who has been meeting with two clusters. "Saying that we can't do this or that is what kills any of the good things that can happen ... Jesus never once said he couldn't. He always found a way."

The study began 18 months ago when members of the diocesan divisions of education, urban services, and finance and planning met to discuss the future of urban Catholic schools. In April, pastors, principals, parish council and finance committee members, and school board representatives met to begin designing a plan.

At the meeting, delegates from each school received Taddiken's survey. A majority of the 80 responses stated that sharing resources regionally or countywide and direct subsidy

by the diocese could solve some of their problems.

Meanwhile, Taddiken has visited each school joining in the study. He discussed with staff members strengths and weaknesses and available options, such as uniform school tuition, regional junior high or middle schools and special educational programming.

At the diocesan level, staff and the steering committee have researched alternatives developed in other dioceses to deal with the same issues.

On August 20, the steering committee met to coalesce the options identified by school leaders and the research center into several alternative reorganization plans. A report on the proposed plans will go to parish and school personnel for their evaluation in September and a conference may be held in October or November to gauge reaction to the report.

Final proposals are expected to be presented to Bishop Matthew H. Clark by December for the reorganization, which officials expect will start in fall 1986. "Changes will probably be phased over three or four years," Sister Roberta said.

Recognizing that interaction between Catholic schools doesn't stop at city lines, a conference was also held on Tuesday, August

20, to inform suburban school leaders about the Urban School Study and to explore options for joint suburban-urban planning. "We just don't have the staff to handle planning countywide," Sister Roberta said. "If an invitation to work with a city school comes as part of the plan, at least they will have the background."

"I'm concerned that the plan or process be so good that it will help people to rise above their parochialism, even when there seem to be negative impacts on their family," Sister Roberta said, admitting that while many objections families would have might be valid, families need to take into account the broader view of the Catholic elementary system.

"There is no hidden secret plan," she said. "We are making it the best process we can."

Sister Roberta is concerned that parents have a part in planning as the alternatives emerge for reorganization. "I hope some of that has happened at local levels already," she said. "They need to have a forum where they can be heard."

Sister Clare Francis Mogenhan, principal of Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, said that her cluster plans to begin involving parents in the fall. "If we can assure them that a change is best for their child, they'll accept it," she said.

## New Principals

The following have been appointed to serve as elementary school principals for the 1986-87 school year:

### MONROE COUNTY

Annunciation — Miss Shiela Marie Miller

Holy Ghost — Sister Mary Lou Brien, SSND

St. Cecilia — Miss Marilyn Dewey

St. Charles Borromeo — Mrs. Mary Glady (assistant principal)

St. Josaphat — Sister Anatole

St. Salome — Dr. Joan Kelley

### ONTARIO COUNTY

St. Mary, Canandaigua — Sister Alice Marie Kurtz, SSJ

### CHEMUNG COUNTY

St. Mary Our Mother, Horseheads — Mr. Daniel Hurlley

### LIVINGSTON COUNTY

St. Mary, Dansville — Mrs. Katherine Bacon

### STEBEN COUNTY

Corning Catholic Schools, Corning — Mrs. Sandra Andra.

## St. Boniface school gets a summer facelift

While the students enjoy the respite of a summer vacation from school, much is happening at St. Boniface School on Gregory and Whalin streets.

In addition to general "housecleaning" — floors, carpeting, washing walls, dusting, etc. — contractors are busy replacing the old windows on the south and most of the west side of the building with modern energy-saving windows. A new canopy has been affixed to the south side entrance of the school. The weeds and overgrowth around the building have been removed, and a small area adjoining the lawn on the Whalin Street side of the building has been landscaped with evergreens, rocks and pine mulch.

Carpeting is planned for the principal's office, the teachers' lounge and the new chapel. The chapel is being developed by

volunteers from the parish, with many of the furnishings coming from the old (now Becket Hall) convent chapel. Certain electrical and plumbing improvements also are being addressed.

The building, a landmark in the area for parish and neighborhood functions, should be in "A-1" condition when the students return in September.

In addition to work on the facilities, curriculum improvements will include the addition of a part-time language teacher (Spanish and/or French) and a part-time computer teacher.

Registrations for the fall term are currently being accepted at the parish rectory (473-4271) and will be acted upon promptly by Sister Blanch.

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## Cardinal Mooney offering course on prayer, St. Paul

The Adult Education Enrichment program at Cardinal Mooney High School this fall is presenting a course on "Prayer Reflections in Pauline Letters," to be taught by Sister Anne Marie Fehrenbach, SSJ.

The course will be taught in four consecutive Monday evening sessions, September 9 through September 30 at Cardinal Mooney. The course is designed to discover the meaning St. Paul attached to the word "prayer" by scrutinizing his writings for clues to the significance of prayer for him.

Sister Anne Marie has been teaching in the Diocese of Rochester for more than 20 years. She holds a master of science in education from the state University at Brockport and a master of arts in theology from St. Bernard's Seminary. She is now in her fifth year of teaching 10th and 11th grade theology at Cardinal Mooney.

Registration for the course is \$10. For information or registration, contact Sister Anne Marie Fehrenbach, SSJ, at Cardinal Mooney High School, 800 Maiden Lane, Rochester, 14615.

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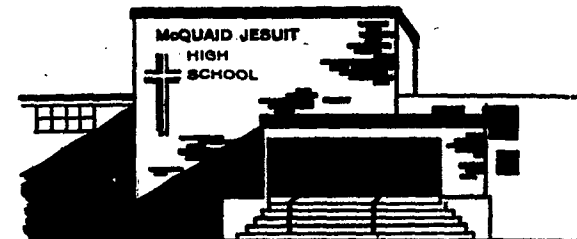
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**DATES TO REMEMBER:**

**OPEN HOUSE:** Sunday, Nov. 3, 1985, 7-9 P.M.

**ENTRANCE EXAM:** Saturday, Jan. 11, 1986 8:30 A.M. at McQuaid