

## Urban schools

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enough. Paul Riorden, a parent and school board member at St. Boniface, recalled that several years ago, a plan for a regional junior high school at Blessed Sacrament was rejected by his and several other parishes because parents weren't given enough information.

"We did not receive any definitive answers to curriculum requirements, no definitive answers to curriculum offerings that would be given to us at Blessed Sacrament. Transportation needs were not addressed and economic concerns were not addressed," he said.

Questioning the long-term importance of adopting requirements of the Regent's Action Plan, another parent asked whether the Catholic schools' excellent record of achievement in the basics would be sacrificed in the process. The Regents' plan, which requires additional credits in math and science and new credits in language, music and art, has been cited as one reason regional junior high schools are needed. But non-public schools are not obliged to adopt all parts of the state plan.

"I am reminded of the way in which we jumped on the bandwagon with the state syllabus for metric education," Sister Ann Collins said, noting that she still has a closet full of those materials gathering dust.

Tuition was another hotly contested area. Would parents with elementary and junior high aged children pay two different tuitions? Would they be required to work at fund raisers for both schools? If tuition collection became a centralized function of the diocesan office, who would make sure the money went to schools, asked Phil Perotta, parish council president at Most Precious Blood Parish.

Opinion appeared evenly divided over the issue of uniform tuition. Some parents said they supported the parish's right to set its own tuition. On the other hand, Father Bill Trott, pastor at St. Augustine's, called the disparity between suburban tuitions (as low as \$250 per year) and city tuitions (as high as \$800-\$1,000 per year) "unjust." Diocesan officials confirmed the higher figure as accurate, but said the lower limit was closer to \$450 or \$500.

Speakers asked the steering committee for evidence to back up several of the Urban School Study's options.

Jean Gilbert questioned how a tiered approach to school financing would work now when similar efforts have failed in the past. The tiered approach would require all parishes, with and without schools, to contribute to a parish school fund.

Other parents asked for figures to show whether the plan would save money.

"There are no numbers to indicate how the removal of potentially one-quarter of the student body will help the schools," one parent said of the proposed pre-kindergarten through grade six format.

Several parents requested proof that a class size of 25 is optimal in light of recent reports that indicate that "less is more" when it comes to class size.

"My daughter, who is in a double grade this year, is doing the best work that she has

ever done," said Kathy Englerth. "I see her class size as a distinct advantage."

Overall, some speakers characterized the lack of specific information as unfair, while others considered it manipulative.

"You're talking about people who are going to be our future," said Sam King, vice president of St. Monica's School Board. "To interrupt the system that we have now and ask us to buy into an unstable, unproven system is unfair to them and it's unfair to me as parent who only wants the best for his child."

James Cunningham, parish council member at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, noted that, ironically, the school proposal is filled with words emphasizing the responsibility of the parishes to run their schools. "In reality the diocese sets policy ... and who pays the bill? We do, not the diocese," he added, adding that the proposed plan gives no concrete assurances of a significant

increase in diocesan support.

"I'm not sure a school is an asset to a parish any longer ... the cold, hard fact is that it is, in our case, a financial anchor around our neck."

Before the hearing concluded, Bishop Clark responded briefly to the crowd. "I think I'm most deeply taken right at this point by what so many of you have said about time," the bishop said. "I'm very anxious to collect what's been said here tonight and ponder it ... I can assure you that I take this very seriously."

"I think that the issues are a lot more complicated than some of our speakers let on that they were," he explained, describing the speakers' consensus as "leave everything the same and just get more money to pay for the remainder."

"I am very willing to search for that ... but I think I must say to you that it isn't quite so easy as some at least have suggested that it is," he said.

## Steering committee 'wrung out' by hearing

By Teresa A. Parsons

By design, last Tuesday evening's hearing on the Catholic elementary plan was a time for the Urban School Study steering committee to listen. But being prepared for criticism didn't make the session easy for committee members.

"Tuesday night was not an upper," said Sister Roberta Tierney, director of the diocesan Division of Education and member of the steering committee. "It felt like being put through a wringer, especially not being able to reply ... There was a lot of misinformation."

After Sister Roberta had several days to consider the meeting, however, she had regained her optimism. Such hearings typically draw the people who are most strongly opposed to a plan. They can thus disguise the fact that there are people with other opinions, she pointed out. So far, she said, the steering committee has observed a more balanced response from written surveys distributed with copies of the plan.

"A good number of people have also since called and said they wished they had signed up to speak because they had

some very positive things to say," Sister Roberta added.

"If I had it to do over again, I would expand the membership of the steering committee — definitely," she said in response to speakers' assertions that minorities were not adequately represented.

Although she admitted that communication with suburban schools could have been better, Sister Roberta pointed out that several of those schools were included on inter-parish planning committees by request. At a meeting last August, some suburban school leaders did ask for greater participation in school planning.

"We have done a lot of communication, but we haven't reached every house," Sister Roberta said. "We can never communicate enough." At the same time, she found it difficult to believe some speakers' assertions that they had not been informed about the plan until several weeks ago.

"Sometimes we read the things we receive in the mail and just file them in the basket," she said. "Until you see

your name in print, you don't think it concerns you."

Sister Roberta agreed that much of the plan is not yet specific, but said that at this stage it's impossible to be more definite about factors like transportation and finances. "We just can't be specific until we know the reality of the situation we're working with," she said.

Sister Roberta doesn't believe the plan will be scrapped as some speakers suggested, but expects that the final plan will be affected by the insights gained at the hearing.

"We can't ignore the attitudes and feelings expressed ... but I don't expect that we will totally reverse the whole plan. If we did, we would probably have an equal number of people protesting that," she said.

Asked if the steering committee will hold to the proposed time line, Sister Roberta replied that some kind of plan would definitely be ready by February 3, but that probably less of that plan would be implemented this coming fall.

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## Mount Carmel

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working at the Gerber plant here to return and buy a house for his growing family in Puerto Rico.

Instead, he learned that he couldn't save any money supporting himself here and his household back home. So instead Ramona and their three children came to Rochester. Several years later they moved to their Scio Street home.

Raul stayed with Gerber for 17 years, then took a job at Stromberg-Carlson. He was laid off after nine years and worked for one year as a custodian for the City School District.

Those were years of great adjustment for the family. The values Raul and Ramona brought with them from Puerto Rico often conflicted with the realities of life around them.

Traditionally, a Puerto Rican wife's place was in the home, not the workplace. But as Puerto Rican parents, the Collazos were also moved by tradition to place all their hopes for the future in their eight children. In the end, one tradition was sacrificed for another. American culture taught the Collazos that giving their children the best of everything took money, so Ramona took a job as a seamstress for Hickey Freeman, where she worked for 22 years.

Six years ago, a friend who was returning to Puerto Rico proposed to sell the Collazos his grocery store. Raul and Ramona decided to accept and quit their jobs. Despite help from some of their children, the store has become a more than full-time job for both.

Collazos' Mini Market demands long hours, and being the owner of a store on the corner of Clifford and Hudson Avenues can also be risky. Once again, the children come first, and Raul is determined to keep the store as a legacy for his children.

When they first moved to the Mount Carmel neighborhood, Raul recalled that he didn't go to church often. But when his children reached school age and he tried to register them at the parish school, the pastor, Father Gennaro Ventura, told him that tuition would be lower if he became an active parishioner. Raul started attending regularly, and all eight Collazo children graduated from Mount Carmel School before it closed in 1975.

The Collazos' growing involvement in the parish paralleled the parish's growing involvement in the community, which was

becoming predominantly Hispanic. Both parish and neighborhood became a refuge from what often seemed a hostile outside world.

"You know the Americans and the Puerto Ricans back then didn't mix much together," Raul recalled. "Now it's different and everybody goes together with everybody else."

Eighteen years ago, when Father Larry Tracy was assigned to Mount Carmel as an associate pastor, the parish began to come alive for Hispanic people. Three years later, he and Father Raymond Booth became one of the first co-pastor teams in the diocese. Because Father Tracy speaks fluent Spanish, the pastors were able to offer a Spanish Mass each Sunday. The *comite*, or parish council, on which both Raul and Ramona have served for 18 years, was formed. For 11 years, Raul also served as president of the *comite*. Parishioners meanwhile found great support for their efforts to observe Puerto Rican religious traditions.

For Father Tracy and for the present pastor, Father Jim Hewes, the Collazos are stalwart pillars who keep the community alive and strong.

"They have been through great personal difficulties, yet they have survived as a family," Father Tracy said. "At the same time, they have contributed a great deal to the growth of the parish family."

Raul said that was his proudest thought as he received the award last month. Looking out over the crowd, he saw a family, not a sea of strange faces.

Despite the strong ties they have forged in Rochester, Raul dreams of someday escaping the cold weather and the grocery store to return to Puerto Rico, a suggestion that prompts a sharp nudge in the ribs from Ramona.

What would happen to the family left behind at Mount Carmel? "It would be time for someone else to step forward," Raul said.

## Fisher Math Scholarship

A \$3,000 mathematics scholarship has been introduced at St. John Fisher College. A competitive examination for the scholarship, which provides \$750 per year over four years, is scheduled Saturday, Feb. 1.