

## Local News

# Educational experience is commissioners' mark

By Rob Cullivan

Since November, 1988, the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools has been meeting biweekly to discuss the planned consolidation and restructuring of the diocesan school system.

Appointed by Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the commission members were charged with reviewing the findings and proposals of nine groups working to reorganize the diocesan school system — four quadrant planning boards in Monroe County, three cluster groups outside Monroe County, an informal group representing Monroe County's six Catholic high schools, and the Implementation Committee for Catholic Elementary School Planning for the city of Rochester and Monroe County.

The commission will soon release the results of a day-long conference on Thursday, Feb. 9, during which it was scheduled to review the Northeast Quadrant Planning Board's proposal to close six Catholic schools in northeastern Monroe County and establish a junior high program on the premises of Bishop Kearney High School.

But who are these nine commissioners whose recommendations will affect the lives of thousands of students, teachers and school employees throughout the diocese? How do they perceive their roles, and what do they have to offer the commission?

• **William Pickett, chairman** — Pickett has been president of St. John Fisher College in Rochester since 1986. Before coming to Fisher, he served as vice president for university relations at the University of San Diego. He has served on the board of trustees at Aquinas Institute, from which he resigned following his appointment to head the commission. Pickett has also taught English, speech and religion at the university and high school levels.

As a college president, Pickett said he has a vested interest in the diocesan school system, an interest that makes him well-suited to the role of commission chairman. "It's the kind of thing that a president of a college is appropriate for. I'm concerned about the quality of students sent to us," Pickett said, noting that as an outsider to the Rochester area, he will be an unbiased observer. "I don't have any personal or family involvement in the various schools. If this were in Kansas City, where I grew up, it would be different."

Pickett's colleagues on the commission have been universal in their praise of his leadership. "William Pickett has been extremely good about keeping us on track," Peter Spinelli said. "He has a difficult task and an enormous charge," observed John Crowe. "(He's) doing a great job."

The chairman said his goal is to keep the commission working on the various proposals from the perspective of creating a diocesan educational system, rather than focusing on a specific quadrant's educational makeup to the exclu-

sion of the rest of the diocese.

• **John Crowe, vice chairman** — Crowe is a partner in the Rochester law firm of Mousaw, Vigdor, Reeves, Heilbronner & Croll. He was a member of the Diocesan Oversight Task Force, a group appointed by the bishop in September, 1987, to respond to recommendations put forth by the Five-Year Financial Planning Task Force, of which Crowe was also a member.

Crowe worked on the Oversight Task Force's education subcommittee, which studied the Five-Year Planning Task Force's recommendation that the diocese develop a five-year plan to consolidate its schools. Among other things, the subcommittee called for the bishop to establish the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools.

Crowe said his experience with the education subcommittee will be valuable to Pickett's commission. "The education subcommittee gave me the opportunity to talk first-hand with governing boards of high schools, and get an appraisal of their particular problems and their particular programs."

• **Timothy Leahy** — Senior vice president at Chase Lincoln First Bank, Leahy served as chairman of the Oversight Task Force's education subcommittee, and has extensive experience in the diocesan educational system.

Leahy served as deputy superintendent of Catholic schools from 1976-78, and superintendent from 1978-1979. Prior to his appointment as deputy superintendent, Leahy was a teacher, and then principal, at Our Lady of Lourdes School.

He said he and Crowe will serve as a link between the Oversight Task Force and Pickett's commission. Since he and Crowe are "the most knowledgeable" members of the commission regarding the issue of consolidation, their presence would keep the commission "from reinventing the wheel," he said.

• **Brother David Andrews, CSC** — Brother Andrews is in his fourth year as national director of education for the eastern province of the Holy Cross Order. His duties include overseeing governing boards of each of the seven high schools in the province, including Cardinal Mooney in Rochester, and reviewing administrative performance. He recently completed working with a Washington, D.C., task force charged with a mission similar to that of the Pickett commission. During the last 18 months, he has also met with trustee groups of the six Catholic high schools in Monroe County.

Brother Andrews emphasized the need for the diocese to manage information regarding the consolidation with a great deal of care. "I'm very concerned that we take a look at the system as a system and try to avoid reacting to events as they occur in a piecemeal approach," he said. He said that through research, he has found that three phenomena often accompany Catholic school consolidations throughout the United States: rumors lead to a breakdown in informa-



tion flow; schools undergoing change experience a higher than normal level of illness among staff and students; and consolidations are accompanied by great tension.

To avoid such symptoms, a diocese moving to consolidate its school system has to be "as up front and truthful about the situation as possible," he remarked, noting, however, that the Diocese of Rochester already may have provided too much information too soon. "I'm not sure whether the (Northeast Quadrant Planning Board's proposal) should have been released to the parishes without first being seen by the commission," he said. So far, he said, he could not judge whether information regarding consolidation in the quadrant "had been managed well."

• **Sister Barbara Hamm, RSM** — Sister Hamm is principal of St. John the Evangelist School on Humboldt St., Rochester, and chairwoman of the City Catholic School Administrators Association. On Monday, Feb. 6, she was named principal of Our Lady of Mercy High School.

Sister Hamm has worked for the New York State Education Department as an evaluator of elementary schools in Brooklyn and Rockville Center, and is a past principal of St. Louis School in Pittsford. She is also a member of the Sisters of Mercy Education Network.

Sister Hamm said she will bring to the Pickett commission the perspective of a woman, a religious sister and an expert in Catholic elementary education.

• **Father Michael Conboy** — The pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church in Irondequoit, Father Conboy chaired a subcommittee on schools outside Monroe County for the Oversight Task Force's education subcommittee. He has also served as secretary to Bishop Joseph L. Hogan, who headed the diocese from 1969 to 1978.

His experience as a pastor and in chancery

work qualified him for Pickett's commission, Father Conboy said. "They wanted a pastors' quality education."

• **Constance Mitchell** — Mitchell is program director of the Program for Rochester to Interest Students in Science and Mathematics, an educational project financed by local businesses which encourages students in grades eight through 12 to develop an interest in engineering and science-related careers. She is also a member of the New York State Business Council Education Committee, which informs the council's member businesses concerning education legislation.

In 1961, Mitchell became the first black woman to be elected to the Monroe County Legislature. Since then, she has worked steadily on a variety of community issues, devoting much of the last decade to involving businesses in the educational system. Mitchell, whose daughter was educated in the diocesan school system, said her major concern is that all students get a quality education.

• **Irene Rivera de Royston** — A counselor at Monroe Community College, de Royston assists students with career and personal concerns. She has three children in diocesan schools, and was appointed to represent the diocesan Hispanic community, according to the statement released by the diocese Novem-

• **Peter Spinelli** — Chairman of the diocesan Board of Education, Spinelli also heads the board's personnel committee. One of four managing partners of Harris Beach Wilcox Rubin & Levy, Spinelli said the law firm, which represents 45 public school districts in New York state, deals with a large number of cases involving education.

Spinelli has also served as vice chairman of the Board of Education, of which he has been a member for the last eight years. He was also a member of the Oversight Task Force's education subcommittee.

## Teacher evaluations give principals chance to assess praiseworthy qualities

By Rob Cullivan

Sister Joseph Gilmery is preparing for an avalanche.

Friday, Feb. 10, is the deadline to send in teacher evaluations to the office of personnel for the diocesan Division of Education. As assistant superintendent for personnel, Sister Gilmery has the job of reading through the hundreds of biannual reviews of teacher performance from each of the diocese's elementary schools.

Sister Gilmery's office distributes evaluation forms to schools throughout the year. The evaluation consists of the principal sitting in on a teacher's class, noting observations on the evaluation form, and then discussing the review with the teacher. Following completion of the evaluation, the principal will send the review to

Sister Gilmery's office at the diocesan Pastoral Center in Gates.

The four-page evaluation forms list seven areas in which a teacher's performance is to be assessed: teaching effectiveness, classroom management, cooperation (interpersonal relations), Christian personal identity, responsibility, attendance and professional growth.

Each area has three rating categories: *Outstanding*, *Good* and *Needs Improvement*. A teacher who rates *Outstanding* in the area of teaching effectiveness, for example, "consistently exceeds the expected level of work in planning lessons," by "encouraging students to be self-motivated, and providing for individual differences." A *Good* rating means an "adequate" performance in those areas, while a tea-

cher who garners a *Needs Improvement* rating might show "insufficient effort" to "encourage students to be self-motivated."

John O'Mara, principal of St. Mary's School in Dansville, said he would give an *Outstanding* rating to a teacher who uses a personal touch with her students. "If the teacher were teaching writing, I would see if she were going around the room and working on each area with individual students," he said.

Another important category is professional growth, O'Mara noted. Teachers should take one to two courses a year to update their knowledge of their subject, he said. "If they didn't have a master's (degree), and they were working towards one, I'd consider that sufficient," he said.

## Advocate forms coalition to help low-income tenants

A housing advocate in Rochester has formed a coalition to aid tenants in state and federally subsidized projects who face losing their regulated rents and other tenant protections.

According to Sally McCoy, director of the Rochester office of the New York State Tenant and Neighborhood Coalition, the Rochester Anti-Displacement Coalition will work with tenants "who find their rent doubled overnight."

"If people think there is a homeless problem now, just wait until subsidized housing begins to disappear," said McCoy, who hopes that the Rochester group will eventually become part of an upstate coalition for displaced tenants.

McCoy said that the federal government insured many mortgages for rental and coop-

erative housing for low- and moderate-income families between 1965 and 1970. Private developers agreed to keep rents at a certain affordable level and to operate the project according to regulations set up by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Most mortgages were for 40 years; however, after 20 years, HUD regulations allowed them to be "prepaid." Thus, the owner could pay off the remaining amount on the mortgage and be free of all obligations to HUD.

McCoy said her group is in the process of gathering information on Rochester-area housing projects where this will occur. She also hopes to develop another coalition to inform tenants who face the risk of losing their rent-

stabilized apartments.

"This is a nationwide problem ... private developers can do whatever they want with the property once they are no longer under contract to provide low-income housing," said McCoy, who added that there are 28 such subsidized housing complexes in and around Rochester.

Although she added that no one individual or government office is to blame for the problem threatening tenants who live in subsidized housing, McCoy said that funds for most varieties of subsidized housing have suffered from severe federal cutbacks during former President Ronald Reagan's administration.

— Richard A. Kiley