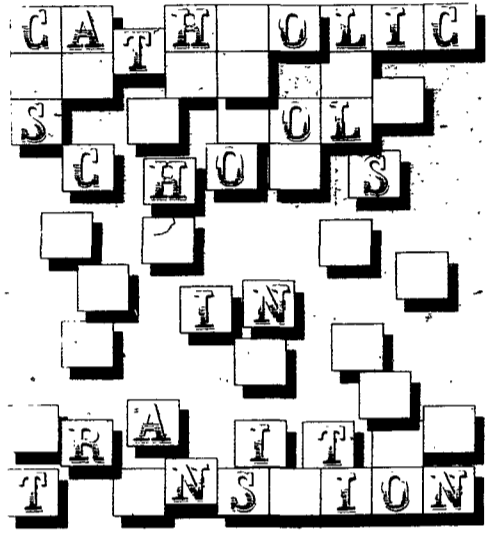


# Plan calls for expanding multi-cultural programs

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is the third installment in a series of articles examining Catholic Community Schools: A System Framework Plan for Monroe County, the proposed plan for the reorganization of Monroe County's Catholic Schools. This week's installment focuses on proposals to implement multicultural programming and curriculum.

**By Rob Cullivan**  
Staff writer

The consolidation and reorganization of Monroe County's Catholic Schools could bode ill or well for the system's two largest minority groups, blacks and Hispanics. Both groups may perceive the closing of Catholic schools in the city as an abandonment of minorities, but among the schools that will remain open, signs of hope have emerged in various multicultural programs already in place and others now being planned.



The Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools — informally referred to as the Pickett Commission after its chairman, William Pickett — has proposed that the Monroe County Catholic schools commit themselves to more teacher in-service workshops on multicultural education; more active recruitment of minority teachers; and the creation of a committee, chaired by the diocesan assistant superintendent of curriculum, that would develop multicultural curriculum. These recommendations were developed from proposals submitted by the Multicultural Subcommittee of the diocesan Oversight Task Force.

Just what is "multicultural" programming in practical terms? If you ask Father Laurence Tracy, one of two pastoral assistants from the diocesan office of the Spanish Apostolate, it means emphasizing the experiences of Hispanics and blacks in

American history, an emphasis he believes has been largely missing from elementary education until recently.

"Our whole cultural orientation, from school textbooks to TV ads, is on white, Anglo, middle-class cultural values," Father Tracy remarked. Referring to blacks and Hispanics, he noted that, "a good education includes talking about their heritage," a heritage that he said has been ignored by textbooks and curriculum planners.

To rectify the situation, the Pickett Commission's plan recommends in-service programs that "will include national speakers on curriculum, culture, minority literature (and) religious practices."

Currently, the Spanish Apostolate brings in speakers to conduct teacher in-service workshops regarding Hispanic culture, Father Tracy said. No similar workshops regarding black culture are currently being planned, according to Jacquelyn Dobson, director of the diocesan office of Black Ministries. One multicultural program has already been established in the Spanish program at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School. Instituted two years ago with a diocesan grant of \$20,000, the program employs a part-time Spanish-speaking teacher to help Hispanic students become proficient in English, and provides tuition assistance for some Hispanic students. The school has also hosted five in-service workshops over the last two years.

The Pickett Commission's proposal calls for the Spanish program to be moved from OLP, which is scheduled to close in June, to St. Andrew's and St. Stanislaus, both of which also have significant Hispanic populations. St. Andrew's already has a sixth-grade Spanish teacher and a reading clinic that, while not specifically geared towards Hispanics, may benefit them because of its emphasis on difficulties created by language barriers, according to Sister Mary Alice O'Brien, principal.

A barrier to Father Tracy's understanding of the Pickett Commission's plan is the fact that the plan doesn't specifically mention ways of implementing its proposals. Father Tracy also complained that the Pickett Commission has never met with the representatives of the Spanish Apostolate.

Pickett responded that the commission had met with the multicultural subcommittee, whose job it was to voice the concerns of a number of groups devoted to minority issues, and that the commission had drawn its recommendations from input gathered by the subcommittee.

Dobson said she was not as familiar with



**Although programs at some Monroe County schools currently address the need for education on Hispanic culture, at least one diocesan official believes more work is needed to heighten awareness of black culture in the schools.**

the commission's proposals as was Father Tracy, but described her past experience with the Division of Education's commitment to multicultural programming as a mixed bag.

On the positive side, Dobson acknowledged that the office did send teachers a list — provided by Dobson — of black educational materials. So far, four teachers have responded to the list, she said.

Dobson is also teaching a black-studies elective this year for students at Genesis Catholic Junior High School. Corpus Christi School in Rochester has already instituted a black history course in its fifth grade, and uses a multicultural religion textbook in its junior high program, according to Sister Eileen Daly, principal.

As the commitment to multicultural programming is a sign of the church's sincerity in reaching minorities, the plan states, so then should the diocese actively recruit teachers from the minority community. According to Sister Joseph Gilmary Russell, assistant superintendent for personnel of the Diocesan Division of Education, only about 5 percent of diocesan teachers are minorities. This fact doesn't sit well with Dobson. "One of the things that we have been saying for a number of years is the necessity of the diocese to hire black teachers," Dobson commented. But the diocese has not followed through on its promises to recruit black teachers, she said, noting that when she has offered to

use her contacts at black colleges to find prospective teachers, the offers have been put on the back burner by the education division.

Part of the problem, according to all parties concerned, is that the diocese does not have a full-time staff member charged with recruiting minority teachers. And Sister Russell noted that despite the Pickett Commission's proposal for the hiring of a minority teacher recruiter, the money to hire such a person is unavailable.

Ultimately, for multicultural programming to work, Hispanic and black parents must become involved in their children's education. Yet Sister Virginia Steinwachs, diocesan assistant superintendent for urban education, commented that the closing of inner-city schools may cause an enrollment drop-off among Hispanic students, whose families generally prefer to keep them in neighborhood schools and are reluctant to accept busing to centralized schools.

One way of keeping minorities in the city's Catholic schools is by continuing to provide tuition assistance to black and Hispanic families, Sister O'Brien remarked. Sister Steinwachs also suggested that black churches be approached to subsidize individual black students in the Catholic schools. Thus far, however, the diocese has been unsuccessful in its efforts to encourage black churches to fund the attendance of non-Catholic blacks at Catholic

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## Pickett Commission continues study of northeast junior high

ROCHESTER — Several questions still need to be answered before the fate of a proposed junior high program for the Northeast Quadrant can be decided, according to William Pickett, chairman of the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools.

The Pickett Commission met Thursday, March 23, to discuss a proposal submitted by the Northeast Quadrant Planning Board — one of nine groups charged with reorganizing Monroe County's Catholic schools — to establish a junior high program for the quadrant in September, 1990, on the premises of Bishop Kearney High School. The proposal was part of the quadrant planning board's reorganization plan, which was originally submitted to the Pickett Commission in January.

The northeast plan also called for the closing of five schools in its region. Portions of the quadrant plan dealing with the school closings won the approval of the commission and, subsequently, of Bishop Matthew H. Clark. Commission members did not recommend that the bishop approve the junior-high proposal, saying that they needed more time to study the proposal.

One of the questions the Pickett Commission hopes to answer is whether a junior-high program located at Kearney,

which is in the suburban town of Irondequoit, would be able to adequately serve students from the city.

In its draft proposal, *Catholic Community Schools: System Framework Plan for Monroe County*, the commission has called for the establishment of a junior high program in each of Monroe County's four quadrants — Northeast, Southeast, Northwest and Southwest. But now, Pickett said, the commission is considering whether to propose the establishment of a fifth junior high for city students.

The commission also needs to compile more data on the start-up costs of a program at Kearney, Pickett said, noting that during the next two weeks he would be meeting with officials from the diocesan schools office and the Center for Governmental Research, the consulting firm which developed the northeast quadrant plan, before the commission's next meeting on Thursday, April 6.

Pickett said he was unable to predict when the commission would submit a final recommendation regarding the junior high program to Bishop Clark.

—Rob Cullivan

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