

# Commission to revamp proposal

*Editor's note: This is the seventh and final installment in a series of articles examining Catholic Community Schools: System Framework Plan for Monroe County, the proposed plan for reorganization of Monroe County's Catholic Schools. This week's installment focuses on potential revisions of the plan's proposals for quadrant governance, tuition rates and financing.*

**By Rob Cullivan**  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — After meeting with about 150 parish representatives, pastors, principals, and staff members from the diocesan Pastoral Center, members of the Commission on Reorganization of Catholic Schools have concluded that the Catholic community schools plan needs major re-vamping if it is to work throughout Monroe County.

A second draft of the plan will probably omit an unpopular proposal to create a parish education subsidy program, may allow quadrants to determine their own tuition rates, and will likely give the grass-roots leaders of Monroe County's Catholic schools more administrative authority, according to William Pickett, commission chairman.

Monroe County's Catholic school system is divided into four quadrants — northeast, southeast, northwest and southwest. Each quadrant has a planning board working on reorganizing and reconfiguring its schools. So far, only the Northeast Quadrant Planning Board has released its final reorganization plan, which has been approved by Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

Meanwhile, members of the diocesan schools' commission are developing a plan to guide reorganization throughout the county. The plan's proposed education subsidy program would have mandated that all Monroe County parishes financially support Catholic schools in their individual quadrants. But Pickett said many parishes,

especially those without schools, oppose this proposal. Many such parishes have developed religious education programs, and fear that the subsidy would eat into money already allocated for such programs, he explained.

One pastor with a well-developed religious education program, Father John Norris, pastor of Church of the Assumption in Fairport, confirmed Pickett's observation. Because Assumption has never housed a school, Father Norris explained, asking his parishioners to now contribute to Catholic education throughout Monroe County would be nearly impossible. "This parish is nationally known for its religious education program," Father Norris said. "To undermine that by taking monies away ... would have a significant impact on the existing program."

Norris added that it would be hard to sell the parish subsidy concept to well-heeled suburban parishes who see no apparent need for their neighboring parish schools to receive additional funding. On the other hand, he said: "If there is a need for general Catholic education in areas ... considered to be poor, parishes like ours would be the first in line to subsidize situations like that."

Pickett noted that the commission may propose just such an alternative to the current subsidy plan. Convincing parishes to contribute to a general fund used for schools that serve the poor would be easier, he believes, than peddling the current proposal.

But another pastor fears that targeting poor schools for subsidy funding would leave out financially-troubled schools that serve the bulk of the Catholic school population — middle-class students. "If we want to make sure we maintain schools for all economic backgrounds, we have to be very careful not to exclude the middle class," said Father Thomas H. Wheeland, pastor of Holy Cross in Rochester, and a pastor representative to the Northwest

Quadrant Planning Board.

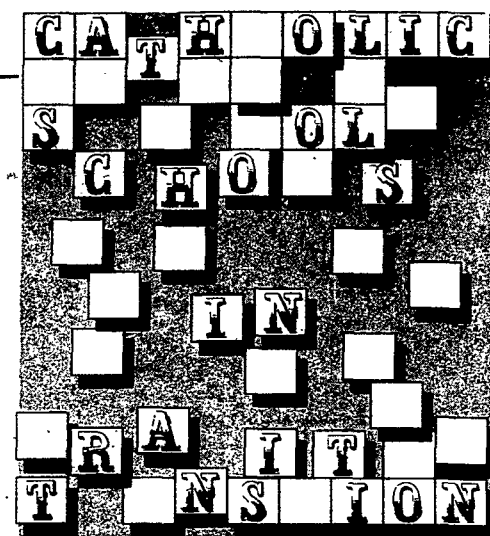
Middle-class families often will not apply for financial aid, or are not qualified, yet they still feel hard-pressed to pay for a Catholic education, Father Wheeland said. Asking parishes to support only schools which serve the poor may undercut the rest of the system's schools, he observed, as rising tuition rates force more and more middle-class families to leave the Catholic schools.

Father Wheeland proposed that each quadrant set a base tuition rate, then ask families to make as large a free-will offering on top of the base as they can. However, the commission has already concluded that voluntary support of the school system is not a feasible way to support it, Pickett said.

Nonetheless, Father Wheeland believes that Catholics — especially at parishes without schools — could be convinced to contribute to the Catholic school system if they were reminded how many of them benefited from a Catholic education.

Another of the plan's proposals that will probably fall by the wayside calls for a county-wide uniform tuition rate. The original plan envisioned a tuition rate based on the school system's total revenue, estimates of the number of children qualifying for family discounts, and the percentage of revenue raised by tuition.

Pickett noted that it is easier to sell the idea of a uniform tuition rate in a quadrant where schools are closing, such as the



northeast, than in a quadrant where schools are stable or thriving, such as the northwest. Quadrants that are financially healthy have a wide variety of tuition rates, with students at some schools paying nothing or next-to-nothing in tuition, Pickett pointed out. A uniform rate might help to stabilize enrollment in a financially-unstable quadrant, but might actually hurt enrollment in a quadrant like the northwest.

On the other hand, Pickett said, just because a quadrant is healthy at present doesn't mean it will always remain so. Thus, he suggested, quadrant planning boards might consider setting a uniform tuition rate to help avert future financial storms.

A troubled future could be just around the corner, agreed Father William Graf, pastor of Most Precious Blood in Rochester and a representative to the Southwest Quadrant Planning Board. Because he fears that urban Catholic schools will continue to suffer declining enrollment unless

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## Junior high to open in 1990; Blessed Sacrament will close

**By Rob Cullivan**  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A Catholic junior high on the premises of Bishop Kearney High School will begin serving Monroe County's northeast quadrant in September, 1990, under a plan approved by Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

The plan also calls for the closing of Blessed Sacrament Junior High in June, 1990. The Southeast Quadrant Planning Board will then consider the school building, at 546 Oxford St., in its reorganization process.

The northeast quadrant's junior high will probably be located in Kearney's south wing, according to Barbara Jablonski, a spokeswoman for Kearney. Jablonski noted that the wing is fully outfitted to house a school, having been the girls' section of the coeducational high school when classes were segregated by sex. The wing is currently being used by Kearney.

The Christian Brothers Institute of New York, which owns and operates Kearney, will rent at least 20 rooms, including a science lab and a chapel, to the diocese. The diocese will operate the junior high independently, Jablonski said.

High school and junior high students will share Kearney's gym, which can be divided by a moveable wall. Junior high and high school students will also use the same cafeteria during separate lunch periods, Jablonski noted.

The junior high proposal had originally been part of an overall reorganization plan submitted by the Northeast Quadrant Planning Board to the Commission on Reor-

ganization of Catholic Schools; headed by William Pickett, president of St. John Fisher College. The northeast plan had also called for the closing of five schools by June, 1990.

Although the commission approved the bulk of the northeast plan in mid-March, members delayed their final recommendation on the junior high pending further study. They were concerned about meeting the needs of urban students, and considered proposing that a separate junior high be established for the city.

The commission concluded, however, that creating two schools rather than one would diminish the quality of both by taxing already limited finances which, according to Pickett, could be better used to provide tuition subsidies to low-income families.

Tuition for the new junior high will be the same as that for schools throughout the northeast quadrant, Pickett said. For families already registered in a quadrant school, the rate is \$1,095 for one child, \$1,295 for two, and \$1,495 for three. For families that have not been previously registered in a quadrant school, the rate is \$1,195 for one child, \$1,395 for two and \$1,595 for three.

Pickett declined to comment on the junior high's start-up costs, noting that they have yet to be determined.

One school parent at Blessed Sacrament was disappointed that the school will be closed. "I really can't understand why the decision was made," Paulette Raniewicz said, noting it was, "discouraging," that an urban junior high is not planned.



### Correction

A photo caption accompanying last week's article "Home's founding topped news in new century" was incorrect. In the above photo, the building at the right is The Heritage, an apartment complex for senior citizens; the building at the left is St. Ann's Home. We regret the error.

File photo

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