

Monroe County system framework plan

In August 1989, the Bishop announced the adoption of a System Framework for Monroe County. This plan will guide planning for the Southeast, Southwest, and Northwest Quadrant Planning Boards.

As in the Northeast, authority and financial responsibility for schools now shifts from parishes to all Catholics. Quadrant Boards will decide how many schools are needed in a Quadrant and what grade levels each should house. The System Plan recommends a K-6, 7-8 structure, but Quadrant Boards may recommend other configurations.

The system will be financed by four sources of income: tuition, parish per-pupil support, diocesan fund raising, and to the extent necessary, all Catholics through the parishes.

The new system is to be in place by the Fall of 1990. How soon parishioners will see visible change will vary from Quadrant to Quadrant. In the Southeast and Southwest, where several schools are struggling,

sions of their future direction individually.

New sources of funding to be tapped

In support of the new system, a Catholic School Endowment Fund will be established within the Catholic Foundation. The fund will be seeded with the Diocese's portion of proceeds from the sale of Cardinal Mooney

High School. In addition, businesses and individual donations will be sought. One anonymous benefactor has already stepped forward with a contribution of \$150,000. This donation will provide scholarship assistance to needy children in the city of Rochester.

We are encouraged by this evidence of support from the community, and hope it will spur others to emerge.

Need for support of all

While such changes are difficult, further delay is unacceptable. As the Declaration on Christian Education said,

"If the Catholic community is convinced of the values and advantages of Catholic schools, it must and will act now to adopt such measures and face ... challenges ... (All those involved ... should avoid a defeatist attitude which would regard present problems as a prelude to disaster. Difficult as they may be, they are not insoluble, given the will and intelligence to seek and adopt solutions."

Catholic schooling has a tradition of excellence and service that must be maintained, while adjusting to the new realities in society. The Diocese must

In the Sound of the Universe

The Catholic school should teach pupils to discern in the sound of the Universe the Creator whom it reveals, and in the achievements of science to know God and man better.

-- Declaration on Christian Education

In the next few years we have the opportunity to strengthen our schools as among the best in our area — schools that incorporate the most useful of the new educational theories and adhere to the values and beliefs that have directed us for almost two thousand years. We have the opportunity to maintain a system that treats everyone fairly — persons of all races and creeds, students, parents, educators. We have the opportunity to re-examine the place of our Catholic schools in a well-integrated catechetical plan, giving the opportunity for lifetime growth and development in faith for all of our parishioners.

These are not dreams. They are very real opportunities that present themselves to us, if we have the strength and courage and persistence to work hard enough to achieve them. What gives us an advantage is the rich heritage of Catholic education and our well-defined sense of mission — a fundamental value and faith orientation that directs our agenda and unites it to the service of our Church.

Roots in history

For well over 1,600 years the Catholic Church has educated students in her own schools. The Benedictine Order established monastery schools as early as the fifth century. Franciscans and Dominicans followed suit in the Middle Ages by establishing universities at Oxford, Cambridge, Paris and elsewhere. Many new orders of religious men and women of the 18th and 19th centuries were founded primarily for educational ministry, especially for the poor.

My dear people:

Our efforts in recent months to update our Catholic schools have been much in the news, and have elicited considerable reaction from our Catholic community. Some of you are grieving for schools that have closed; others see their schools as healthy and don't understand why there is a need for change.

Some see schools as a financial drain on other ministries and believe they are no longer needed, at least in the suburbs. Others fear a loss of community spirit as a result of consolidation. It is indeed difficult to look beyond the current events to see that this situation can be full of opportunity and promise for us all.

I invite your attention to this paper on the rich tradition and continuing contributions of our schools. I'm committed to maintaining and strengthening this option for those families who choose it, especially the economically disadvantaged.

Achieving what we envision will not be easy. Change is painful. I ask you to make this major change because when parishes stand alone, at least not schools die. I don't want that to happen, at least not without a fight, because that's not what being Catholic is all about.

I ask your continuing support and prayers in this endeavor.

Your brother in Christ,

Matthew H. Clark

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