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Junior high students adjust to new school

By Barbara Ann Homick
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — The frosted-glass doors inside Bishop Kearney High School used to lead to the "A-wing" on the south side of the building.

Now commonly referred to as the "doors with snow on them" by seventh- and eighth-grade students at Northeastern Catholic Junior High, the glass doors separate the new diocesan junior high from Bishop Kearney High School.

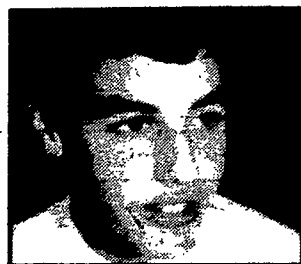
Dedicated Tuesday evening, Sept. 18, by Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the Northeastern Catholic opened earlier this

even better," she said. "The kids have great spirit and they really want to be here. I love the kids already."

Although Sister Wahl said changes in the class schedule are a daily occurrence, Northeastern hasn't encountered any major scheduling problems yet. Minor glitches have arisen, she said, because school officials have no precedents to refer to.

"You always presume that the information is there. There is no history for us yet," Sister Wahl said. "Right now we are learning how to be with each other and are establishing relationships."

She acknowledged, however, that some



Todd Race, 8th grade, St. Thomas the Apostle

"It's better than my old school. We have science labs here instead of just classes. It's more like a high school because we change classes every period. I like the uniforms. They look better than the yellow shirts and blue pants we used to wear. I like the ties; not many kids would say that. I was nervous to come here because I didn't know anybody or know where any of my classes were. Now I feel like it's my old school."

month as part of the reorganization plan for Monroe County Catholic schools. The bishop blessed the new school with holy water brought in by its 348 students from 28 Rochester-area parishes.

According to Northeastern's principal, Sister Kathryn Wahl, RSM, students and teachers at both schools are generally unaware of each other's presence. The lunch schedule was arranged so that Northeastern students eat between Kearney's two lunch periods. In addition, although the schools share the building's gym and auditorium, the two student bodies use the facilities at different times.

Northeastern students are struggling a bit to adjust to changing classrooms. Keeping track of one's belongings while shuttling between rooms is a priority, and several girls have shed tears over misplaced purses, Sister Wahl said.

The sea of new faces can be overwhelming to the new junior-high students, who primarily came to Northeastern from smaller parish schools. To help retain the family atmosphere that is traditional in Catholic education, Sister Wahl said the 348 students have been divided into three groups, each of which is taught by a team of five teachers.

Matt Fields, 7th grade
St. John the Evangelist



"This is a good experience to meet new friends, and all my teachers are new. There's a lot more people and it's bigger. I kind of miss my old school, though. I was nervous my first day here, but now it feels like my own school."

"There is a pretty clear separation at this point. We want to give this school community the chance to get an identity and get to know themselves," Sister Wahl said. The new junior high boasts 14 homerooms and a staff of 26.

Although a few students are non-Catholic, roughly 90 percent are members of the Northeast Quadrant's Catholic parishes, according to Sister Karlien Bach, the campus minister charged with organizing school prayer services and keeping the children in touch with their parishes.

Sister Bach said the atmosphere at the school has been overwhelmingly positive.

"I thought it would be great, but it's

"The students are part of a team, and the teachers get to know the students well," Sister Wahl said. "We're supposed to be models, and we'd like to keep that tradition alive."

Northeastern fields several sports teams, and offers such activities as band, dance, drama, chorus, student government and a school newspaper. Most extracurricular activities are offered during regular school hours because few students have access to transportation after school.

Faculty members and students will also be meeting in the auditorium once a week to discuss progress and problems with the new arrangement.




Lavatus Windom, 8th grade
Blessed Sacrament

"I think it (Northeastern) is pretty good. It is easier with lockers. I've met a lot of new friends. Blessed Sacrament was kind of small, and I knew everyone there. Now I get a chance to meet new people. The uniforms are better also."

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