

BACK TO SCHOOL

Educators discuss Bush education plan

By Ines Pinto Alicea
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Educators from Catholic and public schools debated July 11 whether the U.S. educational system will benefit from President George Bush's plan to allow children to attend the schools of their choice.

Under the proposed legislation — known as the America 2000 Excellence in Education Act — the government would pay for children's education whether they attended public, private or religious schools.

Educators stated their positions on the Bush plan in hearings before the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education.

Mercy Sister Lourdes Sheehan, the U.S. Catholic bishops' secretary for education, told the subcommittee that parents ought to have a right to choose among quality schools for their children whether their choice be public, private or parochial schools.

"We believe strongly that all America's children have a right to quality education and that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children," Sister Sheehan said. "It then follows logically that giving parents the means to exercise this right is in the best interest of the parents, children

and the nation as a whole."

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, told lawmakers he supports allowing parents to choose only among just public schools. He said it was a mistake to include private schools in parents' options for government-funded education, saying private and parochial schools "do no better at educating students than public schools."

"The sad fact is that neither sector is performing well," Shanker said.

He acknowledged that data from standardized tests administered to the nation's schoolchildren show that 54 percent of 12th graders in Catholic

school can do seventh-grade math, whereas only 45 percent of public-school can handle the material.

But Shanker said the tests — known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress — also show that the percentage of public-school who seniors can do college-level math is higher than that of Catholic school seniors.

About 5 percent of public-school seniors can do college level math, while 4 percent of Catholic school students can do it, he said. The difference "clearly represents a public-school advantage," he said, noting that statistics for both public and Catholic schools fall

sharply below scores from students in other industrialized nations.

Shanker said statistics show that many Catholic-school students are on an "academic track," as opposed to the vocational focus of many public-school students. Thus, he argued, a higher percentage of Catholic-school students should be able to do college-level math.

Sister Sheehan presented her own set of statistics, saying that the high school drop-out rate for Catholic schools is 3.4 percent as opposed to 14.4 percent for public schools.

She said standardized tests

show that Catholic-school students score higher not just in math but in reading and science as well, and that 83 percent of Catholic high school graduates go on to college.

President Bush's initiative, titled the "America 2000 Education Strategy" is built around several national goals: to increase adult literacy and the high-school graduation rate; to improve student competency in general; and to make U.S. students first in the world in math and science.

Bush has already asked Congress for \$200 million to encourage school districts to give parents more choices in selecting schools.

Catholic School Office releases free-milk policy

The Diocese of Rochester's Catholic School Office has announced a free and reduced-price meal (free milk) policy for students in diocesan Catholic schools.

The policy sets specific eligibility criteria based upon income levels and family sizes. A chart stipulating the eligibility figures — as well as a complete copy of the policy — can be obtained from the principal's office at each of the participating schools.

Families whose incomes fall at or below the levels stipulated for their family sizes are urged to apply for free and/or re-

duced-price meals (or free milk) by filling out application forms that have been sent to parents. Application forms also are available from the principal's office at each school.

Applications may be submitted to the school principal at any time during the school year. Changes in employment, family income or size necessitate the submission of new applications. Information provided on application forms will be held in strict confidence and will be used only for the purpose of determining eligibility.

The school district does, however, reserve the right to

verify information provided by parents at any time during the school year. If a parent declines to provide information to the school, his or her children will no longer be eligible for free or reduced-price meals (free milk).

In certain cases, foster children are also eligible for these benefits, and families interested in obtaining benefits for foster children should contact their children's schools.

Under the provisions of the policy, the designated official will review applications and determine eligibility. If a parent is dissatisfied with a ruling

made by the designated official, he or she may make a request — either orally or in writing — for an appeal hearing. Each school has designated an official to conduct hearings, and hearing procedures are outlined in the policy.

Prior to initiating an appeal procedure, a parent or School Food Authority may request a conference in which parents and officials may discuss the situation, present information and obtain an explanation of the data submitted in the family's application and of the decisions rendered.

A request for a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish a family's right to a fair hearing.

All questions on the application must be answered completely for the application to receive consideration by the school district. In addition, the form must be signed by a parent or guardian who certifies that the information is true and correct.

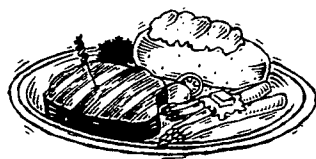
No child shall be discriminated against because of his or her race, sex, color, national origin, age or handicap. If any member of a household believes he or she had been discriminated against, he or she should write the the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

A complete copy of the policy is on file in the office of the School Food Authority District Administrator, where it may be reviewed by any interested persons.

Participating schools are: St. Agnes, Avon; Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Brockport; All Saints Academy, Corning; St. John of Rochester, Fairport; St. Francis De-Sales/St. Stephen, Geneva; St. John the Evangelist, Greece; St. Ann, Hornell; Notre Dame High School, Elmira; St. Margaret Mary, Irondequoit; St. Patrick, Owego; St. Joseph, Penfield; St. Michael, Penn Yan; St. Louis, Pittsford; Christ the King, Guardian Angels, Holy Ghost, Mother of Sorrows, St. Boniface, St. Josaphat, St. Lawrence, St. Stanislaus, St. Theodore, St. Thomas More, Our Lady of Lourdes/Seton Jr. High, Holy Trinity and St. Rita, all of Rochester; St. John the Evangelist, Spencerport; and St. Joseph, Wayland.

WEBSTER CENTRAL SCHOOLS FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT

We're now accepting applications for food service workers.
Convenient Hours • Friendly Working Environment
Regular School and Substitute Positions



Correspond with: Susanne Bilow,
Webster Junior High School,
875 Ridge Rd.,
Webster, NY 14580.
671-7520

University of Rochester School of Nursing

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦
Announcing
New Opportunities
for Graduate Education

Family Nurse Practitioner in the MS in Nursing Program

• Post-Masters Program •
to prepare Nurse Practitioners

Baccalaureate, Masters, Doctoral Programs in Nursing
Special BS and Combined BS/MS Programs for RNs

For additional information or appointment call:
School of Nursing Admissions Office
(716) 275-2375

UNIVERSITY OF
ROCHESTER
MEDICAL CENTER

Montessori

Rochester Children's House
175 Allens Creek Rd.
(located in the First Baptist
Church of Rochester)

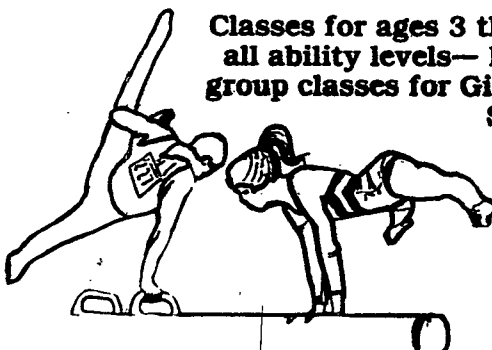
A.M.I. and N.Y.S.
certified teachers

Openings for 3
and 4 year olds,
5 half-days/week

Call 244-2453
Janice Plummer
director



Eastside Gymnastics Gymnastics For Children At Its Best!



Classes for ages 3 through teens at
all ability levels— Preschool, Age
group classes for Girls & Boys High
School & USGF
competition
program PLUS
Rochester's
only
gymnasitcs
safety pit!

Fall Classes: Boys & Girls
Ages 3 - teens
Begins September

Gymnastics for children at its best
1776 East Ave. (near Winton Rd.) 271-3517