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## Schools

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and with other instructors via the Internet, the worldwide network of computer networks, and also by satellite video transmissions, faxes, radio and cable television, officials added.

Maureen Morehouse, St. Rita's computer coordinator, pointed out that her son and daughter have both used her family's home computer to access information on the Internet, and then used that information to complete homework assignments.

For example, her daughter, Dorothy, an eighth-grader at Northeastern Catholic Junior High in Irondequoit, had to write a paper about a sunken ship once owned by famed ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau.

"We were able to go online and find the date, place and circumstances of it," Morehouse said of the ship's sinking.

Morehouse added that her school recently formed a parent/teacher committee that will create a plan to integrate computer use into St. Rita's overall learning environment.

In doing so, St. Rita's echoes the desire of Catholic school officials on the national, state and diocesan level who wish to bring the high technology that surrounds children in their day-to-day world into Catholic school classrooms.

To a certain extent, the future is already here, according to Sister Margaret Mancuso, SSJ, assistant superintendent for instruction and staff development. Nearly every Catholic school in the diocese boasts both a number of computers and a technology instructor responsible for teaching the students word processing and a variety of other computer skills, she said.

Additionally, some schools have run technological "camps" for staff this summer, Sister Mancuso said. She explained that in the future teachers will be expected to attend more in-service days and seminars on classroom technology.

Indeed, teacher formation and education may be the most important factor for successfully integrating technology into the classroom, according to Tracy Nadler, assistant administrator of St. Andrew's School in Rochester.

"(Teacher formation) will make or break whether we use this stuff properly," Nadler said.

Diocesan schools still lack an overall vision of how computers and other high-tech products should be used to enhance learning, Sister Mancuso acknowledged. But she pointed out that that will soon change because the New York State Department of Education released a list of seven "Learning Standards for Mathematics, Science and Technology" last May. Those standards apply to all schools, public and non-public, in the state.

"Students will apply technological knowledge and skills to design, construct, use and evaluate products and systems to satisfy human and environmental needs," one of the standards reads.

Sister Mancuso serves on the Interdiocesan Curriculum Committee, a statewide Catholic schools officials group that sets academic standards for the state's Catholic schools. The ICC hopes to release a document by December that integrates Catholic values into the state's standards in all subject areas, including technology, she said. Such values would include encouraging students to work together to use technology to help increase respect for and knowledge of other cultures.

Meanwhile, a committee of parents and teachers from the Diocese of Rochester will begin meeting this fall to discuss three major thrusts the diocese will make in its efforts to bring technology into the classroom, Sister Mancuso said.

The committee will explore how schools can get computer hardware; how schools can train and develop their staff to effectively use technology in the classroom; and how they can integrate the use of such devices as computers into their curriculum, she said.

Initially, committee members will consist of parents and teachers drawn primarily from Monroe County, but Sister Mancuso said she wants to draw members from all regions of the diocese.

Sister Mancuso said it was likely the committee or the diocese would issue a series of general guidelines on classroom technology use, allowing schools the freedom to implement the guidelines as they are best able. Such flexibility is needed because the technology itself changes so quickly and the process of integrating it into learning will take several years, Sister Mancuso said.

Further, Catholic schools depend primarily on private funds to exist and thus the amount of money available to help purchase the needed equipment and services may not be equally available to all

schools, she and other officials said.

Nonetheless, in the next few years or so most diocesan schools will probably be able to access the Internet and one another via computers, opening up the possibility of sharing both academic resources and educational ideas across the diocese, Sister Mancuso predicted. The schools' main offices already are able to send electronic messages (e-mail) to one another via CONNECT, an online service that the National Catholic Educational Association also uses, she said.

She also pointed out that Catholic educators will be concerned about a number of related issues, including how to level the intellectual playing field between students whose parents own home computers and students whose parents don't.

"We've got to be sure that all equally have the opportunity," she said.

Toward this end, she noted that the diocese will also probably hold technology in-service days for school parents down the road.

Integrating technology into the Catholic school classroom was the subject of the seventh annual Institute on Catholic Education at the University of Rochester July 8 and 9. The event was sponsored by the university's Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development.

The conference's keynote speaker was Sister Angela Ann Zukowski, MSHS, founder of the Center for Religious Communication at the University of Dayton, Ohio. In a phone interview from her Dayton conference, Zukowski elaborated on some of the themes she discussed at the conference.

"Young people are already living in this culture ...," she said of the high-tech world. "I believe that Catholic education has a moral, religious, educational and social responsibility to participate in the formation of this culture."

At the conference, Zukowski outlined New Frontiers for Catholic Schools, a CRC program that has already helped 55 Catholic schools throughout the United States to create a classroom technology plan, she said.

School officials must apply for a scholarship from New Frontiers, whose staff then help the officials to create a technology plan and identify possible funding sources to help them meet the plan's objectives, she said.

New Frontiers also helps schools to

maximize the use of all technological products the schools already own, including telephones, cameras and radios, Sister Zukowski said.

Catholic school officials, along with their public counterparts, will soon get some help with entering the technological future. That help will come from New York's state government in partnership with several businesses and unions, according to Pat King, executive director of New York Wired for Education.

A initiative launched in June by Gov. George Pataki, New York Wired for Education is an attempt to install the wiring needed for Internet access in as many public and non-public schools and libraries as possible, King said in a phone interview from Albany. After the wiring is installed, schools can then find local on-line service providers to give them access to the Internet, King said.

According to a statement from King's office, only 20 percent of public libraries and 10 percent of public school classrooms are currently wired for Internet access. Meanwhile, less than 10 percent of the state's non-public schools can access the Internet. Wiring a school generally costs between \$5,000 and \$10,000, but this cooperative initiative will save schools and libraries almost \$100 million, the statement claims.

New York Wired for Education is coordinating the volunteer efforts of union members, business employees and others to install wiring for computers for free at various schools throughout the state in September, King said. To date, about 4,500 public and non-public schools have expressed interest in the program, and her office is still looking for volunteers and sponsors, King said.

Sister Mancuso said the diocese is attempting to get as many schools as possible interested in the Wired program.

One school participating in Wired is St. Andrew's. Nadler said King's office will link the school with a sponsor.

Participating in the Wired program is simply one of several efforts her school is undertaking to jump on the technological bandwagon, Nadler said.

"This is the society these kids are going to live in," she concluded.

EDITOR'S NOTE: To learn more about New York Wired for Education, call 1-800-NYWIRED, or access its web site at (<http://www.nywired.org>).

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