

DIOCESAN NEWS

Parents remain on edge over special ed plans

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Responding to parental criticism, the Rochester City School District has backed off from a plan to bus children from Catholic and other nonpublic schools outside the city to public schools in the city to receive special education services.

Instead, city school officials have pledged to review students receiving special education services on a case-by-case basis. They will determine how and where each student will receive such services, whether on-site at a nonpublic school or off-site at a city school.

Nonpublic schools that have been receiving special education services on-site include Hope Hall in Gates, St. Pius the Tenth in Chili, and Our Mother of Sorrows in Greece.

Clifford B. Janey, the city's schools superintendent, told parents at an Aug. 25 meeting to disregard letters sent this summer telling them their children could only receive special education services at public schools. More than 60 children who reside in the city and attend nonpublic schools outside Rochester receive such services.

About 40 people attended the meeting at the Title I Parent Center, 875 E. Main St. Janey and other school officials also met with about 30 people at a similar meeting that morning.

Cecilia Griffin Golden, the district's chief academic officer, apologized to parents for the city's first letter sent in late July telling them that New York state law no longer required the city to



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

During a meeting at Hope Hall in Gates Aug. 24, parent Sheila Matsumoto expresses a concern about a plan to bus Catholic and nonpublic school children to Rochester city schools for special education services.

provide special education services on-site at nonpublic schools. The letter also stated that the parents had to choose between having their children receive special education services at a city school or not getting the services at all. "We believe the letter was written and sent out prematurely ...," she said to the

parents. "The letters you received were pretty much in response to the letter of the law."

Griffin Golden was referring to revisions in both federal and state laws that became effective earlier this year. Those revisions say school districts are no longer obligated to provide special ed-

ucation on-site at nonpublic schools. In an attempt to cut costs, the Rochester district originally decided to stop contracting with Monroe County BOCES teachers to give such services as speech and physical therapy to students at nonpublic schools. The plan called for the students to be bused to various public schools in the city instead.

Parents of special education students — mainly from Hope Hall — were outraged at the city's decision, claiming it would disrupt their children's learning, and protested at a school board meeting earlier in August. This protest led to Janey's decision to meet with the parents on Aug. 25.

At that follow-up meeting, school district officials solicited suggestions as to how to resolve the crisis. The suggestions included having the district hire its own teachers to teach special education on-site at nonpublic schools, and having the district examine just how far a student would have to be bused daily before determining where he or she should receive services.

Janey said the district would take the parents' input into account in formulating a new policy, and that parents would receive a letter from him dated Aug. 27, explaining how the district would determine where and how special education students receive services.

As of Aug. 31, however, parents had received no such letters, according to Terry Lewandowski, a leader of the Hope Hall school parents. School begins on Wednesday, Sept. 8.

Telephone calls to the city school district were not returned.

Nazareth, Brockport unveil innovative joint MSW program

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

Nazareth College and State University of New York College at Brockport have launched a joint master of social work (MSW) program — the first collaborative MSW program involving a state college and a private college in the United States, Nazareth officials said.

The 60-credit program will begin in January 2000 and will be directed by Dr. Estella Norwood Evans, professor of social work at Nazareth.

According to Evans, the cost of starting a MSW program — only the second MSW program in the greater Rochester area — led to the schools to work together.

"It's a very costly endeavor to start a graduate program, particularly a professional program," she said.

Such a program, she explained, requires a low faculty/student ratio and field placements with supervision.

Enrollment, which will be phased in, is expected to total 143 students after five years. The program will target students in Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans and

Wayne counties.

Eventually, the two sponsoring schools will hire seven full-time faculty members for the program. Plans are to offer concentrations in family and community practice and interdisciplinary health-care practice. Tuition will be \$350 per credit hour.

Classes will be held in the SUNY Brockport MetroCenter in the former Sibley building on East Main Street in downtown Rochester.

Evans said she became aware of the need for such a program when she moved to Rochester after having worked in New York City and in Connecticut.

"I was impressed with the range of human services in this area," she recalled.

But those human service agencies had to rely on schools outside the area for training. The nearest MSW programs at the time were at Syracuse University and the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Nazareth had actually been in discussion with a number of area colleges, Evans said. One, Roberts Wesleyan, opted to

launch its own program in 1995.

Nazareth and Brockport were the only two schools ready to proceed together, Evans said. But because Brockport is a state school, the program not only had to be approved by Brockport and Nazareth faculty and trustees, but also the state education department.

It is because of such bureaucratic hurdles that only a handful of schools across the nation have formed collaborative MSW programs, Evans said, and none before involving a public and a private college.

Students in the Nazareth-SUNY program will have three options. They may pursue the degree part-time or full-time. Those individuals who have completed an accredited undergraduate social work program may seek advanced placement and be required to take only 39 credits to complete the MSW.

Evans noted that only part-time students will be enrolled in January. Full-time study will begin in the fall of 2000, and advanced placement in the fall of 2001.

Obituary

Sister Mary Clara Johnson, 75

Sister Mary Clara Johnson, SSND, a native of Glen Cove, N.Y., died Aug. 6, 1999, in Norwalk Hospital, Wilton, Conn. She was 75.

Sister Johnson was an elementary and intermediate teacher for more than 45 years. She taught at the schools of St. Michael's, Frostburg, Md.; St. Peter's Orphanage, Irvington, N.J.; and St. Patrick's, Glen Cove, before retiring to Wilton in 1997.

Sister Johnson is survived by her sisters, Edith Johnson of Glen Cove and Ruth Kaufman of Dundee, Yates County; her nephew, E. Patrick Meyers; and several other nieces and nephews.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Aug. 10

in the Provincial Motherhouse Chapel in Wilton. Interment took place at St. Mary's Cemetery in Bethel.

Memorials may be sent to the SSND Development Fund, Wilton, CT 06897.

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