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Editors' Comments

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EDITORS' COMMENTS

The focus section of this issue addresses a topic of great and growing importance to Catholic educators: special education. For too long and in too many places, students with special needs have been turned away from Catholic schools, usually by well-intentioned leaders who concluded that such special needs were best met in the public school. We are pleased to report that such practices are changing, and special education is now a national concern for Catholic schools. We are indebted to Professor Merylann "Mimi" Schuttloffel of The Catholic University of America for her leadership role in assembling this focus section.

Special education has a long history in American education and in Catholic education as well. In the case of the latter, it dates back to residential institutions, such as St. Coletta's in Jefferson, Wisconsin. In more modern times, special education moved onto the national scene with the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. This law "defined learners with special needs, assured their right to an appropriate education, and specified the processes for accessing needed resources" (Landers & Weaver, 2004, p. 621). There have been several revisions of that legislation in recent years, and legislative initiatives are ongoing.

The first essay in the focus section points out the consistent position taken by the Vatican and the American hierarchy on issues of social justice, which includes the rights of persons with disabilities. The inclusionary model is a Catholic model, and the authors note that the Catholic school is a theological, as well as a sociological, community.

The second article traces the history of Catholic involvement with special education in this country, in the process recognizing the financial challenge currently present in implementing Gospel-based inclusion in Catholic schools. A new feature to the Journal, "Responses from the Field," enables practitioners to offer critical assessments on the topic and evaluate the helpfulness of the research at hand.

The third article is a co-authored study on the role Catholic higher educational institutions are playing and might play in the future in assisting children with special needs and their families as a matter of social justice. Recognizing that much has been done in this area, the authors posit that much more can be done.

Some sad news reached us just after the Christmas break. Catholic education has lost a "giant." Rev. Edwin J. McDermott, S.J., following a 6-month illness, died on January 5, 2006, at the age of 87. Father Ed had a long and distinguished career in Catholic education, which included stints as a school

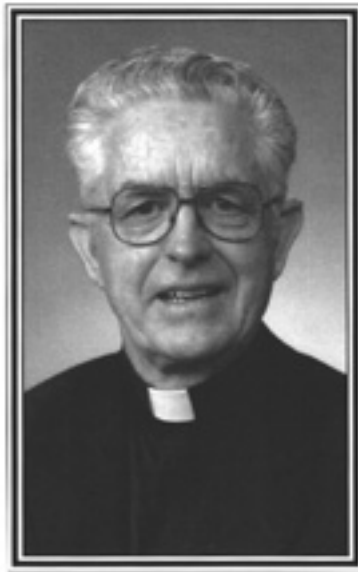
practitioner, an official of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association, and as a university faculty member – the second Director of the Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership (ICEL) at the University of San Francisco. The editors wish to acknowledge the impressive accomplishments of this man of the Church and convey their condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues. *Requiescat in pace.*

REFERENCES

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Thomas C. Hunt, Ronald J. Nuzzi, Co-Editors



Rev. Edwin J. McDermott, S.J. (1918-2006)