

I. Needs Statement

St. Joseph Elementary is the fourth of the “Jubilee Schools” of the Catholic Diocese of Memphis, Tennessee. The Jubilee Schools program is re-opening Catholic elementary schools in inner city neighborhoods of Memphis; each school in the program was closed over the last thirty years due to economic problems. The Jubilee Schools Fund offers scholarships to families based on their household income; owing to the generosity of this fund, any family in Memphis, regardless of religious faith, ethnic background, or their child’s tested academic ability, can afford high-quality private education.

St. Joseph School opened in August 2001 with four grades (4K, 5K, 1st, and 2nd grades.) We currently serve 47 children. Expansion plans allow for addition of one grade annually; using enrollment patterns at the earlier Jubilee Schools as a guide, we expect to enroll 175 students when the school achieves its target expansion to 6th grade in 2005.

Population demographic information supplied by families at registration provides a dramatic picture of our children and their home situations. United States census information for the area surrounding the school (zip code 38109) shows an average household income of \$28,300; mean income in the metropolitan Memphis area is nearly \$38,000 annually. The average family income among our children is just over \$17,225. An overwhelming number of our families (72%) are headed by single women raising two or more children. Five of our 36 families are subsisting on household incomes below the federal poverty standard for 2001. Our clients are among the neediest families in an area of Memphis where the standard of living is itself below the county tendency.

The Jubilee Fund’s assets are earmarked for scholarship funds for families, and 98% of St. Joseph families receive scholarships ranging from 25% to 90% of tuition. Without tuition scholarship, yearly fees at Memphis Catholic elementary schools are \$3455. Given this level of need it is imperative that the Education Office at the Diocese maintains the Jubilee Fund for scholarships, and provides for other school needs with funds from other sources.

Recent “report cards” issued by the Tennessee Department of Education to public elementary schools in Memphis indicate that schools in the 38109 zip code have a poor performance history in mathematics. Scores published in October 2001 indicate an average performance level of 36-39th percentiles, for the five public elementaries that serve the area. If St. Joseph Elementary School is to provide parents with a significant alternative to low-performing public schools, it is imperative that we augment traditional instruction to provide effective mathematics drill for our students.

We seek a grant of \$899 to purchase Accelerated Math software for use in our school’s classroom computer centers.

II. Project Description

Accelerated Math is a software program that provides individualized practice at a self-guided pace for elementary school children. The software allows students to explore new concepts under instructor guidance at as rapid a pace as the student can progress, or at as deliberate a pace as may be needed for reinforcement purposes. Lessons are self-correcting and feedback is immediate. Before moving to a new concept students must complete a testing exercise to verify competence. The software tracks student progress and makes printed results available for teacher and parent use. The “starter program” provided with the Accelerated Math package includes disks with instructional material, a scanning program to correct student exercises, and 500 scan cards for student use. The basic software kit also includes one grade-level software package.

St. Joseph School will begin use of the program with first graders, and add additional packages in subsequent years. St. Joseph School’s classrooms include three-station “mini labs,” so that children will be able to work individually inside the classroom environment

Beginning the program with our first graders will allow the school to track these children’s progress through our elementary program. Accelerated Math record-keeping software will allow our staff to assess text effectiveness and teaching techniques.

Recognizing that children of poverty are at greater risk for lagging in academic achievement, purchase of the Accelerated Reader software would be an important part in reaching several critical objectives in our overall academic program:

1. It will provide data on effective classroom practice in mathematics.
2. It will point to any ineffective methods, and allow for timely correction.
3. It will help teachers identify students needing remediation.
4. It will allow high-ability students to obtain math enrichment while remaining inside the classroom.

The ultimate goal of this purchase, as part of a building-wide technology purchase plan, is to enhance mathematics instruction in all grades, allowing students their best possible achievement in this important area of learning.

III. Project Timeline

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Date</u>
Purchase and install classroom computer labs and network.	November/December 2001
Purchase Accelerated Math software; conduct in-service training in software usage.	January 2002
Begin first grade use of Accelerated Math program.	January 2002
Assess testing results and student progress, via tracking software.	January 2002; monthly afterwards
Conduce year-end assessment of Accelerated Math program.	May 2002
First standardized testing of students (now second grade) who used Accelerated Math as first graders.	September 2002
Begin implementation of 2 nd grade Accelerated Math program.	September 2002

IV. Project Budget Summary

Personnel costs	-0-
Contracted services	-0-
Supplies and materials	\$899.00
Other Operating Expenses	-0-
Capital Equipment	-0-
TOTAL Requested	\$899.00

Budget Justification:

The amount requested represents a highly cost-effective use of grant funds. No personnel costs or contracted services will be required, since the software is used during classroom time and requires no specialized training other than one teacher in-service meeting. The capital equipment (mini-computer labs in the first grade classroom) has already been purchased, and the computer center already established in each classroom at St. Joseph has every technical capability required for successful implementation of the project.

V. Project Evaluation

Successfulness of the Accelerated Math program can be evaluated by several ongoing methods:

1. The software package includes self-tests administered by each student at the conclusion of each activity in a unit. The software files student scores for teacher use, provides an immediate print-out for the student's use and a narrative for parent use.
2. Teachers will immediately be able to compare student activity on the Accelerated Math software with math achievement in regular classroom instruction, via periodic written unit testing.
3. St. Joseph School conducts annual standardized testing through the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS, a testing instrument used by all schools in the Catholic elementary system in Memphis.) ITBS measures student achievement in mathematics individually, quantifies success of the class as a whole, and provides comparative information on our class performance compared to students nationally.

Each of these will be an effective benchmark in measuring the success of the project.

Evaluation activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

Activity:

Date:

Self assessment by student
Periodic testing by teacher

as each lesson is completed
as each classroom unit is
completed; no less
frequently than each
six weeks period.

Standardized testing

annually, beginning
September 2002