

# WORKSHOP WAY

## Think power in St. Mary's first grade

"The 'Workshop Way' is an elementary program being used in the first grade at St. Mary's which is geared to help children develop the power to think, to learn how to learn, to learn how to read, and to love it all," explained Sister Louisa Mogdis, the first grade instructor.

The program, which was introduced 20 years ago by Sister Grace Pilon in Louisiana, is based on the psychology that "all one learns comes to the mind through the five senses, and that the environment in which children are expected to learn must be favorable in order to

produce good attitudes."

Sister Louisa added, "Children should love school, and they will if the system of education respects them as persons. They must be free of fears and be allowed to operate without unnecessary adult interference.

"Since children have individual differences, ability to learn will come to each child at different times along the way. Each element of the 'Workshop Way' has its particular role to play in bringing about the learning conditions which make sound setting for effective instructional activities."

The five freedoms on which the "Workshop Way" is based are:

1. Freedom of fear - Children learn that we all make mistakes, that we are all human beings who do not know everything, and that it makes sense to ask for help.
2. Freedom of movement - Pupils are responsible for working the tasks (exercises for the "Workshop Way"). They must have freedom to move about to get materials or help that they may need.
3. Freedom of Location and Position - Pupils may assume the position they wish to do their work. The "Workshop

Way" gives children an opportunity to be more natural in their work, which adds to enjoyment of studies.

4. Freedom on Conversation - This system provides a place where pupils can learn how to talk and pronounce words. In the event that it may become too noisy the "Power Test" (another concept in the "Workshop Way" which requires the students stare at the clock and not move a muscle for five minutes) or thinking time may be required by Sr. Louisa.

5. Freedom of choice frequently - Many tasks in the "Workshop Way" schedule allow the pupils to choose within a given area of work.

In many cases the students can correct their own work or have a friend, who has been given permission, do it for him. Many of the tasks are said to be "self-satisfying" to the students themselves, giving them more responsibility.

Sr. Louisa assured that the students still get the basic three R's, with the most emphasis on reading. The morning is devoted to group reading and when each group has completed its work, the pupils are allowed to begin their "Workshop Way" program.

Each child must begin with the first task and may continue down through the 24 if he completes each one. He may

reason, this building trust in the child.

The tasks are divided into several categories with phonics, math, and reading receiving the most emphasis. Others include walking lines for balance, coloring, "power test," and "touch bumps," a task which helps children learn the proper way of tracing.

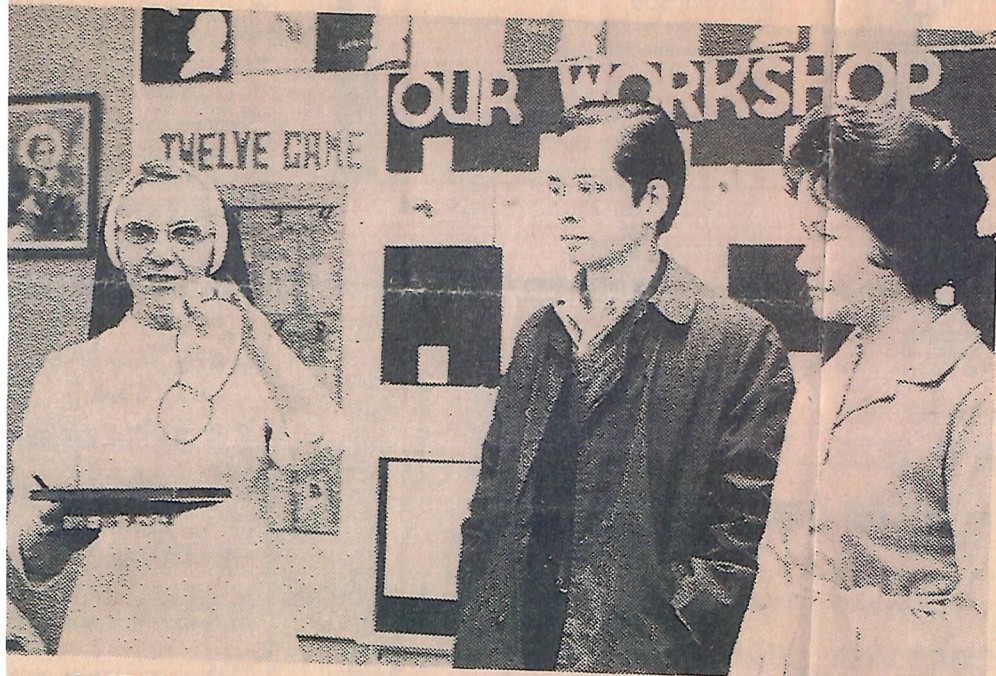
There are a few students who are capable of completing all 24 tasks in one day, but not often.

"Workshop Way" ends at 1:30 p.m. and regular math and traditional education resume.

Sister Louisa claims that the program has helped students improve, and she hopes that the program will continue to grow and expand to other grades. At present only her class receives the full "Workshop Way" program while others have some parts of it.

Sister Louisa extended an invitation to all parents or interested residents of the community to come in any day between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to observe the students in action. She said that parents are sometimes leery because they feel they will disturb the children. "But," she said, "they pay no attention to strangers and do what they normally would."

Children can learn more and be eager to learn if they enjoy what and how they learn, and that's what the "Workshop Way" is all about.



A STEP IN THE "WORKSHOP WAY" — Sr. Louisa Mogdis, first grade instructor at St. Mary's Elementary School, shows Dr. and Mrs. Guno one of the math "tasks" (exercises) that are part of the learning steps in the Workshop Way Program.