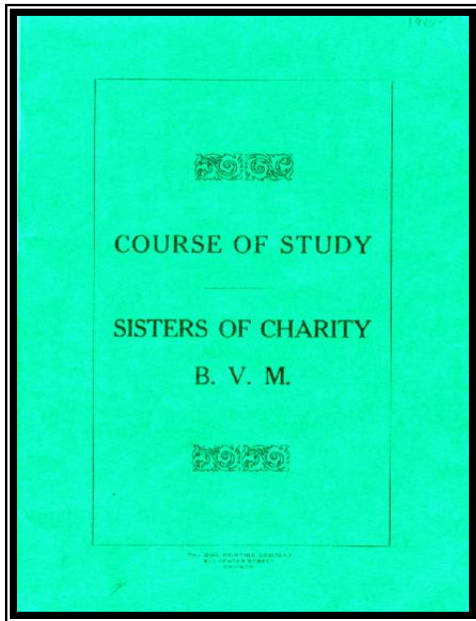


## Chapter 47

### “We’re Going to Have a Board of Education”



Course of Studies sent out with the minutes of the third regular meeting of the Board of Education at Mt. Carmel on October 1, 1917. BVM Archives.

In her preparation for the revised Rule, Mother Cecilia included a proposal for the BVM Board of Education. When her term as Mother ended in 1912 with the proclamation by Rome of Ascension Lilly’s plurality election, she continued as president of the Board of Education, successfully supporting the new section in the Rule on education. “You know,” she told her 40 postulants in 1914, “We’re going to have a Board of Education.”

The community had for years functioned with several master teachers acting as directresses, providing structure and help to BVM schools in a geographic area—visiting classes, helping new teachers and setting up courses for summer institutes. What was needed after 1912 was a central office to record credits, guide Sisters toward teaching certificates and ultimately toward degrees.

The approved 1914 Rule included a paragraph setting up frequent meetings of directresses “who are members of our Board of Education.” However, it was one thing for the Rule to tell the Board to meet and quite another to designate areas of responsibility or influence. Not only must the Rule mark off sections delegated to the Board, but also label those reserved to the Mother Superior, her Council and the provincials and indicate which remained to the already existing directresses—all designated members on the Board by the 1914 Rule.

Nor was the system self-contained. The new Board must also communicate with superiors and pastors—both a little wary of this additional step toward a unified course of studies. Pastors feared the Board might get into more sensitive areas. Suppose it was asked to handle school contracts and began to write a contract for all BVM schools? Pastors much preferred the old agreements, which were as varied as pastor and parish.<sup>1</sup> Understandably, superiors would rather negotiate themselves for additional salary. The Board needed to describe its function as well as the function of its various members.

One member surely more involved than most was the superior of Mt. St. Joseph who set up the Mount as a three-year college in 1901. Three years later the Mount, the first college for women west of the Mississippi, became a four-year college with Bertrand Foley as its first president. In this capacity, she set up a course of study for the novitiate junior college at Mt. Carmel and grew the college into four years by 1905. Bertrand scheduled courses under its umbrella to provide credits for a Course of Studies open to the Mount students and to BVM Community for degrees and certificates in education.

In 1915 the first General Chapter re-elected Cecilia when Mother. Ascension Lilly, who had declined to run again, became First Consultor. She and Cecilia continued to work together on implementing the provisions of the 1914 Rule. Cecilia immediately wrote the Rev. Edward A. Pace of Catholic U. asking how to set up the Board of Education. He suggested a method of sifting problems, discussing them and deciding at a board meeting how to proceed. As a situation arose and solutions emerged, so would a pattern and a procedure shaped by need and experience.<sup>2</sup>

The Board was not the last educational venture proposed by Cecilia. The matter of credits for teachers and accreditation for schools became more urgent as states set up new regulations.<sup>3</sup> Excerpts from Cecilia's letters indicate she involved herself in the effort for teaching certificates, personally inquiring about school records.

Sr. Macarius has her report cards but never got her certificate... Sr. Arcadia never got her credit marks although she sent in her reports last summer. She wants them. (Underlining Cecilia's. Cecilia's eyesight had

become worse and she now printed her letters to others with indelible pencil).

Summer school letters for 1917 appeared in March with a suggestion that Sisters holding 8th grade diplomas and Normal certificates:

. . . study one or two high school branches, for not very remote is the time when high school diplomas will be as necessary for grade school teachers as college degrees have already become for high school teachers.

Within a week of Cecilia's summer school letter, a notice informed teachers of a Normal course of 10 weeks offered at Dubuque College ". . . required by the school laws of Iowa and designed to prepare for teaching in rural and small town schools." Sisters were to pass on the information to lay teachers and any pupils who wished to become teachers.

The Board of Education with Mother Cecilia Dougherty as president had been hard at work since its tentative beginnings to improve communication to all BVM houses. Attached to the summer school regulations for 1917 was a note about advanced placement exams in both high school and college subjects given by Mt. St. Joseph (Clarke). The practice of passing an exam for course credit without actually taking the class was not a new one. Building toward a degree made placement exam information more relevant for most grammar school teachers.

Music teachers, apparently well organized even before 1917, were urged to complete Lumina Farrell's Progressive Course. The Board urges musicians, if possible, to finish a quarter's work during the summer at one of the four Community music centers—Annunciation, St. Mary High, Holy Name, Chicago; and ICA, Davenport.

Before the fall semester began in 1917, Cecilia and the Council voted to send Columba Donnelly, one of the directresses, with Resignata Metzler to the NCEA convention in Buffalo and then on to Catholic U. for a year's work in education.<sup>4</sup> But credits and certificates took time as one of Cecilia's letters indicates. She was in Sioux City on a routine visitation at the time.

Nov. 15, 1917

*My own loved Sister*

*I received your letter last evening and I assure you that my hearty sympathy is with you and Sr. Mary Mauritius—and whatever is in my power, I am ready to do for you both. I am not so sure I rightly understand the Mount part of your letter in dealing with S.M. Mauritius' credits. I know that at one meeting of the Board there was much discussion about (I think) some of our Sisters—rather—missions working for affiliation (?) without permission or knowledge of the Board. A resolution was drawn up against it. Perhaps Sr. Mauritius' petition came to the Mount about that time. The Mount can give the B.A. degree, but not yet the Masters degree.*

*If you will both "rake up" your credits or work and prepare for examination at the Mount according to the regulations of the Board—which must be in your possession—and if I sign your list of credit—I see no reason why you cannot secure what you want. Go to work now and I'll talk the case with the Board. Let me hear soon. I go home next Monday. Write me there and hurry!  
[underlining Cecilia's]*

*Your loving,*

*Sr. M. Cecilia*

In the spring of 1918, two moves concerning the college branch at the Mount strengthened the educational position of the congregation. First, Mt. St. Joseph was taken out of Sacred Heart Province and placed under the direction of the motherhouse with the Council as its Board of Directors. Second, the Mount gained admission to the North Central Association and listed Mt. Carmel as an affiliated junior college. As a result, classes given to novices and postulants were organized by the Mount, which also carried teachers for the novitiate on its roster.

Mother Cecilia, 80 that spring, saw most of her dearest projects established. She rejoiced in the fact of perpetual vows and in a Rule which followed canon law. At last she could count on a two-year novitiate and a junior college at Mt. Carmel. And God be praised, the new Rule delegated many of her former duties to the four provincials, letting her pay attention to the increased numbers of Sisters on the missions and their problems.

The Board of Education had already saved her time and would eventually put in order the whole business of teacher training and credits for certification. It had begun by asking Sisters to send in credits and certificates so that it could establish a central records office at Mt. Carmel. Further, it suggested that each directress keep records in the central files and in her office at the provincial house.

With the Board in operation, the educational tempo picked up. Cecilia enrolled novices at The Mount for second semester classes at Mt. Carmel. The 1918 summer school letter instructed Sisters to take the entire County Normal Exam for a certificate at the first trial. If a Sister passed the test, she had her certificate; if she failed, there was no penalty except the prospect of re-taking the exam. Sisters were also encouraged to apply for advanced standing, and were informed of special courses in domestic science at community centers like St. Joseph's Academy, Des Moines. The Board suggested that Sisters tell boys that courses in agriculture might be found at Normal schools.

Finally a sheet specifically listing summer schools named Marquette, DePaul, Creighton, St. Louis University, Dubuque College, Mt. St. Joseph (Clarke), and the Loyola University extension at St. Mary High School, Chicago. Mt. St. Joseph also offered high school courses and so did four Chicago schools—St. Mary High, Holy Name, Holy Family, and St. Vincent. Music teachers could attend centers in Chicago, Dubuque, Des Moines, Davenport, and Fort Dodge for instruction in the Mary Wood Chase Method explained “by our own Sisters.” Cecilia pushed for more.

A January 1919 letter mentions that novices were also caught up in course work and certification, a procedure possible because of affiliation with The Mount where Antonia Durkin sat in the president’s chair.

*Jan. 13, 1919*

*My loved Sister [Realmo],*

*God love you for your lovely good letter—it raised my heart, which has been low down these days. So much trouble for want of help—teachers and housekeepers. Do you have any trouble in Sioux City about teachers' certificates? We are worried to death over them. We have started out in the novitiate to prepare the young Sisters to get at least "county certificates" next summer. May God help us. They must take examinations!*

*Your anxious loving*

*Sr. Mary Cecilia*

The 1919 summer sessions given at BVM community centers and aimed specifically toward the Normal Certificate demanded no previous grade or high school diploma. All prospective teachers took a state exam for competence in the subject matter required by the state or county for a Normal certificate. Such a certificate sufficed for teachers in grammar schools. Classes in methods of teaching appeared as well among courses listed in Chicago BVM centers.

Just in time! Principals spoke of 1919 as the Year of Legislation. "Certification of teachers is an immediate and imperative need," announced the May letter on education requirements, adding that the Archdiocesan Board of Education believed that teachers of all lower grades would have to be high school graduates by September 1920. That sentence put an end to the relaxed summers of any Sisters not yet active in summer school. However, the letter continued, "Sisters not quite prepared for high school work will be given an opportunity to finish the grades."

From the start the Board of Education set out to organize the record keeping of credits by each provincial directress. As master teachers, they probably never considered this a duty of primary importance before the advent of the Board. In the wake of the Year of Legislation, (a time when all states made new demands affecting teachers), the Board, deluged with mail containing credits, certificates and courses, and questions about credits, certificates and courses, actually began to work out a method of operating.

Up to 1919, a directress worked to see that the schools were up to the best in the community. A directress served as master to apprentice. They

had been chosen for their reputation as good teachers—hands-on master teachers, not at all collectors of credits and certificates.

Before the new Rule and its provinces and Board of Education, a directress worked with teachers located in a loose circle of schools around and near her home school. She was still a teacher, one who passed on methods, tips and sometimes taught by teaching. The directress visited classes and rescued new teachers, or helped a Sister, unfamiliar with the material who had been sent into a new grade or a different school. A directress was focused on grade content, a Sister's knowledge of it and ability to pass it along to the children. Her job was to produce teachers who could teach. The directresses had been behind the effort to set up a course of studies for all BVM schools so that teachers had a familiar guide to a grade's content no matter where they taught. (See Appendix to Chapter 47 and letter from the Board concerning report cards, marking and final exams.)

After the advent of the Board, the work of the directress changed. Instead of a pod of nearby schools, she covered the length of the province, following the track of a major railroad line going west from Chicago. Her "hands on" time with teachers now limited to a few minutes in each classroom became a supervisory visit. The conversation about teaching took second place to talk about credits and certificates and courses and plans for the summer. Someone else in each school would mentor new teachers while she, the directress, collected documents and kept records. The directress became a guide through a complicated process linking a Sister's summer courses with those offered in community centers and aimed to arrive at a Normal certificate or a college degree.

By 1919, provincials also had developed a sense of what parts of Mother's former work they did. They re-assigned Sisters, visited schools and convents, advised superiors and examined financial records. Content to listen, to suggest, and to hold a light rein, Mother Cecilia was even more grateful for the division of labor. She spent the summer at Mt. St. Joseph sunning in a wheelchair, listening to the Sisters working for credits. Almost blind, she warmly greeted each Sister who came over to say hello. Everyone did. Quite frail, she said, "*My old body isn't what it used to be.*"

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## Notes to Chapter 47

1. New contracts had been in the works in 1912 and some of the hottest arguments occurred over who would keep the music money—the music teachers or the pastors? Ascension's new contract sent out to the parishes gave the music money to the Sisters to care for the old and infirm at Mt. Carmel and the infirmary. One pastor, Fr. Mahoney of St. Lawrence in Chicago, appeared on December 21<sup>st</sup> with his own contract which stipulated that the parish would keep the music money. He added a sentence that would prove his undoing, “If this contract be rejected, kindly remove Sisters before December 28.” The Council voted to leave the parish and the Sisters were notified to set everything in the house in order and go. One story has it that they left Christmas Eve and there was no sign of them Christmas Day.

In the 1970s BVMs again served at St. Lawrence. Sr. Catherine Hinchy began a retreat house in the former convent in 1979 at the request of the pastor, Fr. Larry Duras. Sr. Macarius Kuhn taught in the junior high section in the school.

2. Future sections in the files of the Board of Education show that it did indeed grow to meet needs, changing as each Mother reshaped it.

3. As early as 1912, Holy Angels Academy, Milwaukee, was accredited by Catholic U. In 1915, Holy Angels added accreditation by the University of Wisconsin, the State Normal and Marquette University. Other high schools and academies would soon affiliate with state schools to have their diplomas honored and their graduates accepted for college.

4. NCEA—The initials for the National Catholic Education Association, established in 1904. It resembled the NEA—National Education Association—and was set up by the U.S. bishops to raise the standards in Catholic schools. Not until 1906 was the education of women even mentioned in an NCEA meeting. Coogan2 345.

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## Appendix to Ch. 47

St. Joseph Convent, Mount Carmel,  
Dubuque, Iowa, October 1, 1917.



## Chapter 47

My dear Sisters:

The Third Regular Meeting of the Board of Education at Mount Carmel was opened September twenty-fifth. The ruling of the several sessions that pertained to you and your school are the following:

### I. Marking Examination Papers

- a. The markings in figures on the report card of pupils extend from 100 percent to 40 percent. And Examination Paper that merits less than 40 percent shall be marked F, which means failure. (This is to prevent such discouraging marks as 10 percent, 15 percent, etc., from appearing on report cards.)
- b. In the marking of an Examination Paper the subject matter only shall be considered under the given subject.
- c. The *Form* of an Examination Paper including paragraphing, capitalization, punctuation, penmanship, spelling, and language shall be considered apart from the subject matter of the paper, it shall appear on the report card under the head of Scholarship. For example, if an Examination Paper in Arithmetic merits 95 and the *form* of that same paper, including the six heads mentioned above, merit 85, the value of that paper is Arithmetic 95 and the Scholarship of that paper is one-half: (95 and 85) or 90 percent.

Take another illustration—If an Examination Paper in Arithmetic merits 90 percent and the *form* of that same paper, including the six heads mentioned above, merits 100, the value of that paper in arithmetic is 90 and the Scholarship of that paper is one-half (90 and 100) or 95 percent. (The Report Cards in existence now do not bear the heading Scholarship. While these Report Cards last, the work Scholarship may be inserted in pen and ink in place of some subject not pursued by the pupils. The average of the Scholarship marks of the several Examination Papers shall be the mark placed on the report card under the head of Scholarship.

### II. Group Meetings

The quarterly meeting of the grade teachers in Chicago will be arranged differently this year. Details concerning this matter will be given to the Superiors in Chicago by the Provincial Superior.

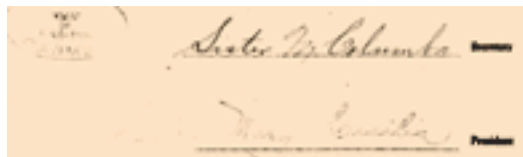
### III. Curriculum and Text Books

The subjects of Curriculum and Text Books are questions that pertain to the Board of Education, therefore changes may not be made on these without the knowledge of the Board of Education. (It is always understood that the Diocesan and the Archdiocesan regulations are to be conformed to. These regulations of Bishops and Archbishops are higher authority.)

If exceptions to the regular curriculum seem desirable, for instance the teaching of Algebra, Latin, etc., in the eighth grade, communicate with your Provincial Directress and your Provincial Superior, and they will handle the matter with you and with the Board of Education. The rulings of the Board, however, are that subjects outside of the curriculum shall not be taught within the regular school hours.

It might be well to make communications from the Board of Education and also communications on Education matters from the Provincial Superior, or the Provincial Directress, a subject of consideration in the meeting of the teachers that are held monthly in each local mission.

Affectionately in the Sacred Heart,



Although written more than 90 years ago, Mother Cecilia's signature can be faintly seen on the line for "president."