



CHARACTERISTICS OF LASALLIAN SCHOOLS

Regional Education Board
Christian Brothers Conference
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**Regional Education Committee
Of The Christian Brothers**

Christian Brothers Conference

1986



CHRISTIAN BROTHERS CONFERENCE

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Regional Education Committee of the Christian Brothers

1 January, 1986

To: Teachers, Administrators, Superintendents, Counselors, Coaches, School Boards, Parents, and other persons interested in the Lasallian school.

From: The Regional Education Committee of the Christian Brothers (RECCB).

In the fall of 1984, the RECCB, recognizing a growing interest in the educational ideals and practices of St. John Baptist de La Salle, determined to synthesize his concepts in one document which would be brief, clear, informative, and challenging.

A writing Committee of four was named and a year of intensive work followed, with input invited from faculties in schools in which Christian Brothers work throughout the United States and in Toronto. The RECCB itself discussed the paper in four full meetings, and nine preparatory drafts were composed.

The resulting paper reflected the deliberations of the Committee, the input and reaction of school people in well over eighty very diverse institutions, and the work of scholars.

The climax of this unique effort came in a remarkable Workshop, held in Chicago in November 1985, where nearly 150 educators from virtually all the establishments of the Region met to analyze, refine, and endorse the document, and to plan for its practical implementation.

The result of all this work is the paper which follows, **Characteristics of Lasallian Schools**.

In the words of one of the Region's educational leaders, "We have here a foundational and consensual document for the entire Lasallian system, which has the support of an impressive core of leadership people throughout the Region," and the members of that Workshop demonstrated their support by subscribing their names to a statement of affirmation at the close of the program. The list of signers appears at the end of this booklet.

Characteristics of Lasallian Schools is intended to be more than a handy service instrument for occasional use. Rather, working through it, school personnel at every level and in all capacities will gain an insight into a plan for education which has been effective for over 300 years in a variety of societies and cultures, and is flexible enough to answer to current needs in the Church, and in our evolving, pluralistic society.

We, members of the RECCB, endorse the statement, **Characteristics of Lasallian Schools**.

Brother Thomas Geraghty, Chairman
Brother Gary York*, Assistant Chairman
Brother Michael McKenery*
Brother Robert Kealey*
Brother Nicholas Grahmann*
Brother John Herron
Brother Francis Walsh

Brother Daniel Casey
Brother Jerome Sullivan
Brother Lawrence Humphrey
Brother Luke Maher
Brother Neil Kieffe
Brother George Morgan
Brother Francis Huether, Executive Secretary

*Author of the Statement

Additional signers can be found on page 8.

The Lasallian Heritage 1679-1985

Saint John Baptist de La Salle (1651 - 1719) opened his first school in Reims, his birthplace in north-eastern France, in 1679. He was convinced that without Christian schools some poor children would be lost both to the Church and to civil society. His initial efforts led him to organize the teachers whose services he had secured into a religious community called the Brothers of the Christian Schools. De La Salle inspired these teachers with the following principle: "You are under the obligation to instruct the poor. You should therefore have a great tenderness towards them and supply their spiritual needs to the best of your ability, looking upon these children as members of Jesus Christ and as his much loved ones" (Meditation for the feast of St. Nicholas). Over a period of thirty years, he opened schools in several French cities and towns and worked with numerous teachers and students from various socio-economic levels. By the time of his death he had founded different types of educational institutions: primary schools, teacher training centers, boarding schools, and homes for delinquents.

Alert to the needs of his time, he was an innovator in the development of teacher training programs and in curricular and pedagogical practices. Teachers ranked with servants in seventeenth century France. De La Salle, however, recognized that teachers stand in a providential and grace-filled relationship to children. Because of the special dignity of this calling, he provided teachers with extensive pedagogical preparation and on-going supervision. In consultation with his teachers, de La Salle designed a curriculum and wrote practical and effective textbooks infused with gospel values. De La Salle was one of the early Catholic proponents of universal education. Although de La Salle's schools were primarily for the poor, they attracted children from families of differing economic backgrounds. However, he tolerated nothing of the social segregation which was the practice of the day. He prescribed uniform management procedures for the classroom instruction of students from different social and academic levels.

De La Salle regarded a school as a community of believers working cooperatively to achieve a shared vision. De La Salle envisioned teachers as ministers of grace who exercise their vocation daily by instructing youth in the principles of the gospel as well as in the various academic and vocational subjects. His teachers thus helped young people to commit themselves to the teachings of the gospel, to develop loyalty to the Catholic Church, and to prepare themselves for productive citizenship.

De La Salle's educational ideas are embodied in several major works: *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*, and *The Management of Schools*, as well as in the textbooks he wrote for students. His contributions to Catholic education led Pope Pius XII in 1950 to proclaim him the Patron of Teachers.

Today, students in more than 80 countries throughout the world receive their education in Lasallian schools which differ greatly in terms of clientele, curriculum, and methodology as well as in social and cultural conditions. These schools are unified in their Lasallian heritage.

Three characteristics form the core of the Lasallian school: (1) teaching viewed as a ministry of grace; (2) association, that is, the achievement of the school's goals through the collaborative efforts of teachers sharing the same vision and values of the gospel; (3) the effective management of the schools so as to achieve the intellectual, cultural, religious, and vocational formation of the students through a curriculum suited to their needs and based on Christian values. These characteristics provide the framework for what follows.

Part I: The Teacher as Minister of Grace

De La Salle wrote,

Let it be clear, then, in all your relations with the children who are entrusted to you that you look upon yourself as a minister of God, acting with a sincere and true zeal, accepting with much patience the difficulties you have to suffer... (Med. Time of Retreat, 9,1)

Your zeal towards the children you teach would not go very far and would not have much result or success if it limited itself only to words. To be effective, your teaching must be supported by your example... (Med. Time of Retreat, 10,3)

At the core of the Lasallian school is the teacher. De La Salle views the teacher as God's special minister of grace to students and envisions the teacher as one called to play a special part in God's providential plan for young persons. The Lasallian teacher grows in holiness by exercising the ministry of education in a zealous manner and by sharing responsibility for the effectiveness of the total school. Lasallian teachers view the ministry of education as a central component of their spiritual development. Therefore, one's personal commitment to the spiritual, academic, and vocational formation of students is a means of living a Christ-centered life. In the Lasallian school, teachers, administrators, counselors, and other personnel share this educational ministry.

De La Salle charges the teaching minister to see all things through the eyes of faith. He encourages the teaching ministers to recognize God's continual presence and His guiding spirit both in themselves and in the hearts and minds of students. Such faith expresses itself in a zeal for the spiritual and temporal welfare of students and in a wholehearted commitment to what is best for their total formation. This zeal leads the Lasallian teacher to work with all students in a loving manner and to give special attention to those students who are most in need.

Goals:

1. To manifest a spirit of faith by living in the presence of God and recognizing and responding to God's direction in all one's actions.
2. To manifest a spirit of faith in seeing one's educational ministry as enhancing one's spiritual development
3. To manifest a spirit of zeal through a full commitment to the education of students.
4. To manifest a spirit of zeal by a compassionate attitude and caring behavior toward all students.
5. To manifest a spirit of zeal in efforts for the education of the poor.

Suggested activities for implementation:*

1. Share prayer with the students in the classroom.
2. Pray for the grace to represent Christ to students.
3. Infuse well-prepared lessons with gospel values.
4. Meet students personally and listen to their concerns.
5. Assist students who are poor in their academic and social development.

* These activities are presented to suggest the formulation of additional activities, since the implementation will vary from school to school.

Part II: Association

De La Salle wrote,

Union in a community is truly a precious gem. For this reason Our Lord recommended it to His Apostles with insistence before His death. When this is lost, all is lost. Hence, if you wish your community to continue, preserve this virtue carefully. (Med. December 30,1)

In the Lasallian school, teaching ministers come together as brothers and sisters **in association** based on a common acceptance of gospel values and on a shared desire to foster these values in their own lives and in the lives of students. They work in mutual charity, that is, with tolerance, generosity, patience, humor, and humility. Lasallian teachers nourish and sustain the spiritual, personal, and professional development of each individual. They cooperate with each other in order to make possible a collegial style of administration and decision making. They witness publicly to their Lasallian charism and manifest an openness to all who wish to associate themselves with their ideals. This lived expression of shared values attracts students and others and invites participation in the life of the Lasallian school.



St. John Baptiste de La Salle was proclaimed Patron of all Christian teachers, by Pope Pius XII on May 15, 1950

Goals:

1. To foster a shared commitment to the ideals of the New Testament.
2. To live and work in mutual charity.
3. To promote the spiritual and professional development of each individual.
4. To promote a collegial style of administration and decision making.
5. To associate parents, students, alumni and friends with the Lasallian family.

Suggested activities for implementation:*

1. Participate in faculty discussions on New Testament reading.
2. Affirm one another in areas of personal talent and strength, and strive to heal and forgive failings.
3. Provide faculty programs of professional and spiritual development.
4. Meet regularly to discuss mutual concerns and school policies..
5. Facilitate parent, student, alumni, and local community participation in school service programs.

* These activities are presented to suggest the formulation of additional activities, since the implementation will vary from school to school.

Part III: The Management of Schools

De La Salle wrote,

You must, then, look upon this work entrusted to you by pastors, by fathers and mothers as one of the most important and necessary services in the Church. (Med. Time of Retreat, 7, 1)

Consider that it is only too common for the working class and the poor to allow their children to live on their own... God has had the goodness to remedy so great a misfortune by the establishment of the Christian Schools. (Med. Time of Retreat, 2, 1)

You must have an altogether special esteem for the Christian education and teaching of children... Such teaching is the very foundation and support of their religion. (Med. Time of Retreat, 7, 3)

Are you thoroughly committed to... making a strong impression on the minds of children?... From this moment take the steps to make it your main concern to teach perfectly the truths of the faith and the practical maxims of the holy Gospel... (Med. Time of Retreat, 6, 1)

You, too, can perform miracles... by touching the hearts of children... by rendering your pupils obedient to and faithful in the practice of the maxims of the Gospel... by urging them to be industrious in school and at home. (Med. Time of Retreat, 180, 3)

The Lasallian school is a Christian school which shares in the teaching mission of the Catholic Church. Among its chief concerns are the religious instruction, religious formation, academic preparation, and cultural development of its students. By examining the changing demands of society and recognizing the individual needs of students, teachers create appropriate programs of studies and activities.

The Lasallian school is characterized by the importance it gives to the education of the working class and the poor. It seeks vigorously and enthusiastically to attract students from various economic levels, academic abilities, racial communities, and ethnic backgrounds. At the same time, the Lasallian school fosters among its students attitudes of tolerance and sensitivity to the individuality of all, of genuine concern for justice and peace, and of service to fellow students and others in the community.

The Lasallian school gives priority to the Christian instruction and formation of its students. It offers a formal program of religious instruction and integrates gospel values into all subjects. The prominence of a religious atmosphere in the Catholic tradition fosters apostolic service projects, private and communal prayer, and liturgical celebrations.

The Lasallian school commits itself to academic excellence in response to the needs, goals, and abilities of the students it attracts. It provides programs which enable the students to realize their academic and personal potential and to participate productively in society. It includes a curriculum which exposes students to the humanities, physical and social sciences, mathematics, and fine arts. Teaching strategies and methodologies enable students to become flexible, inquiring, and critical thinkers.

De La Salle advises his teachers to pray for the ability to touch the hearts of the students. This gift unifies the Lasallian association in the creation of a disciplined structure which challenges young persons to accept the responsibilities of their vocation as students. Teachers, by their love and care, encourage students to grow in leadership and personal responsibility.

Goals:

1. To cooperate with and support the local church while maintaining the special character of the Lasallian school.
2. To help finance the education of the economically poor.
3. To attract students from various economic, academic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.
4. To foster values of tolerance, sensitivity, concern for the poor, justice, peace, and responsibility.
5. To give prominence to formal religious instruction within the curriculum.
6. To provide for the religious formation of students in the Christian faith.
7. To be committed to academic excellence.
8. To create a discipline and a structure which enhance personal growth, develop responsibility, and foster leadership.

Suggested activities for implementation:*

1. Motivate students to participate in service programs of the local church.
 2. Seek new sources of financial aid in order to increase tuition assistance for the poor.
 3. Recruit students from all areas of the community.
 4. Include programs of peace and justice within the curriculum.
 5. Give priority in budgetary decisions to the religious instruction program.
 6. Challenge students to see the events of their lives with the eyes of faith.
 7. Develop a curriculum suited to the personal needs and intellectual abilities of student.
 8. Provide opportunities for students to be leaders in service to others.
- * These activities are presented to suggest the formulation of additional activities, since the implementation will vary from school to school.

Regional Education Committee of the Christian Brothers Workshop
November 13 - 16, 1985
Hotel Bismarck, Chicago, Illinois

We affirm the document, Characteristics of Lasallian Schools, as developed during 1985 and at the workshop in Chicago, Illinois, from November 13 through November 16 that year.

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Teacher's Prayer Before Class

Thou, O Lord, art my strength, my patience, my light, and my counsel. It is You who makest responsive to me the children confided to my care. Abandon me not to myself for one moment. For my own conduct and for that of my pupils, grant me the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and piety, the spirit of holy fear of the Lord, and an ardent zeal, to procure Your glory. I unite my labors to those of Jesus Christ, and I beg the Most Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, the Guardian Angels, and St. John Baptist de La Salle to protect me in the exercise of my employment.

Amen.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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- Sauvage, FSC, Brother Michel and Campos, FSC, Brother Miguel. *St. John Baptist de La Salle, Announcing the Gospel to the Poor*. Lockport: Christian Brothers Conference, 1976.
- (All of the above publications can be obtained from the Christian Brothers Conference, 4351 Garden City Drive, Landover, MD 20785.)

Other Resources

St. Mary's Press, Winona, MN is the source of resources related to the teaching of religion on the secondary level in school or parish, including background materials for developing the spirituality of the educator. The latter includes:

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Bible Makes Sense*. Winona, St. Mary's Press, 1977.

Zanzig, Thomas. *Jesus is Lord! A Basic Christology for Adults*. Winona, St. Mary's Press, 1982.

The National Catholic Education Association has developed resources for the faith development of school faculties:

To Bring the Good News: Spiritual Development for Faculties, Washington DC, National Catholic Education Association, 1992. (Video tape, manual, readings)

Sharing the Faith: A Faculty Program for Catholic Schools, Washington DC, National Catholic Education Association, 1992. (Manual, audio tapes, handouts, prayer cards)

A general resource which can be used for adult faith development is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Washington DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1994.

