

DEVELOPING THE LASALLIAN SCHOOL PROGRAM

Since the close of the Second Vatican Council, there has been a growing movement throughout the entire Church to recognize the vocation of all Christians by virtue of their baptism. This movement to call Christians to full participation in the life of the Church has become particularly important for the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. As lay religious devoted to the personal education of the young, the Brothers have relied upon a close association with their fellow lay teachers and staff members, alumni, parents of students, and other supporters of the Lasallian apostolates. Recently, the Brothers have been inspired by the increasing number of colleagues and associates in and outside of the school settings who have voiced their interest and even commitment to the ideals of St. John Baptist de La Salle.

Nowhere is the growing commitment to Lasallian ideals and association seen more clearly than in the schools and institutions founded by the Christian Brothers in the District of San Francisco.

In this article I would like to describe the specific efforts being made throughout the District of San Francisco to enhance Lasallian education in the schools through greater association and collaboration among the Brothers and their colleagues. The "Developing the Lasallian School Program", as this effort has been named recently, is directed by Brother Gary York, the Director of Education, and coordinated by Mr. Gery Short, a former teacher at St. Mary's College High School, Berkeley.

Three factors seem most influential for inspiring this movement toward greater collaboration:

- a/ the sophistication of the lay faculties and staff members in terms of their identity as members in the Church, especially when complemented by theological education and other advanced degree programs;
- b/ the exposure of the Brothers' colleagues to the Lasallian ideals as lived out and experienced in the schools and programs throughout the District;

- c/ the openness of the Brothers, especially the district and school administrators, to encourage and promote the ownership of the Lasallian tradition with others outside of the Brothers' communities.

The highlights of the Developing the Lasallian School Program over the last three years can be divided into two areas: District Sponsored and School Sponsored Programs.

District Programs.

In 1985, this new effort began with a workshop for the Principals and the Directors, a panel discussion at the Brothers' Christmas Convocation, and a February workshop for representative Brothers and their colleagues from each of the District schools. The objective of each of these programs was to outline the needs of the District in order to determine the appropriate support and encouragement the District administration might offer the schools.

Some of the programs that have been developed thereafter have included the following:

1. District Orientation Program.

A set of readings, information sheets, and a slide show has been developed to introduce new school and District personnel to the Lasallian tradition and the contemporary spirit and organization of the Institute and the District;

2. Coordination of Lasallian Reading and Educational Materials.

This is a collection of articles, books, and transcribed presentations on various Lasallian themes appropriate for the continuing education of District personnel. Also on file are examples of retreats and inservice programs organized in schools throughout the District;

3. "Lasallian Vision Workshop".

This has become an annual weekend gathering at the Christian Brothers' Retreat House for 4-5 representatives from each school in the District to introduce and discuss Lasallian education;

4. "Buttimer Institute".

During the summer, 1987, the District and St. Mary's College hosted this three week regional education program on the life and spirituality of St. La Salle for Brothers and their colleagues from across the country;

5. Coordination and Distribution of Faculty and Student Prayer and Liturgy Resources.

Model prayer service and liturgy programs, suggested readings, prayers, music, etc. have been distributed to school representative to assist the

communities and schools to celebrate special events and holy days throughout the school year.

6. Justice Education Resource Distribution.

To respond to the contemporary challenges facing Lasallian and Catholic education, an extensive justice education resource program has been put in place. This program includes an ongoing collection and packaging of tailored resources for the schools, the coordination of individual school efforts toward justice education, and the preparation of programs for faculty education.

The District efforts for the 1987-88 academic year include the expansion of each of these programs and efforts to acquaint members of the District to the special gifts and needs of Lasallian educators in other districts and regions of the world.

School programs.

The most encouraging aspects of the "Developing the Lasallian School Program" have been the achievements of individual schools throughout the District. Some of these achievements include:

1. Lasallian School Coordination and Leadership.

Several of the District schools have initiated a faculty committee, named a facilitator, or incorporated the "Lasallian School" program coordination into the responsibilities of the school administration. In most cases this leadership is reflected by a partnership of Brothers and colleagues;

2. Workshops, Retreats, and In-services.

During the 1986-1987 academic year, over 20 workshops or retreats for the faculty and staff were held in schools throughout the District. Topics ranged from general discussions of the characteristics of a Lasallian School to specific topics such as prayer, discipline, etc.;

3. Faculty Prayer and Liturgy Programs.

Over the last two years, at least six of the Brother's communities have initiated regular joint Brother-colleague prayer services.

4. New Faculty Orientation Programs.

Within several of the schools, a specific and expanding effort is being made to introduce new personnel to the life of St. La Salle and the Lasallian tradition.

5. Hiring and Interviewing New Personnel.

An ongoing file of procedures and models of integrating Catholic and Lasallian ideals into the hiring and the interviewing processes has been collected from various school administrators.

6. Faculty and Staff Socials and Community Activities.

Generally, there appears to be a growing recognition of the value of both formal and informal social activities among school personnel for enhancing the Lasallian spirit in the schools.

Future Direction.

The District Administration has given its full commitment to the spirit of this program. The General Chapter has endorsed such collaboration in the Institute's world-wide network of educational apostolates. The invitation is that we share a vision and form an association.

Perhaps the spirit of the future direction of this movement was best summarized by Brother Mark Murphy at the Lasallian Vision Workshop in February, 1987. Brother Mark concluded his address on his understanding of this association with the following remarks:

Let me conclude by making reference to Saint La Salle's attitude toward Providence. In one of his later writings, called the **Memoir on the Beginning**, he says, "Apparently then, it was for this reason that God, who directs all things with wisdom and gentleness, and who is not accustomed to force the wills of men, but who wanted to lead me to take complete direction of the schools, did this in a very imperceptible manner and over a period of time, so that one commitment led me into the next without my having foreseen this in the beginning". So also for us, both Brothers and colleagues, we may not know exactly what form our commitment will take. We may not know the final shape of the educational institutions, the administrative structures, the personal implications of such a commitment. We do think we know the kind of education we want to provide. We know the kind of educators it will take to provide such an education. And so my hope and prayer for all of us is that by our common commitment, and hence our "Lasallian association" –out of that relationship we will be supportive of one another in our practical pursuit of this Lasallian vision of education.

Mr. Gery Short.