

# Lasallian Professional Development

Monthly PD for the New Zealand Lasallian Family of schools - WE ARE ONE LASALLE!  
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## this issue

21st Century Strategies to help you grasp the idea of PRUDENCE and how this applies today in your own classes.

## The origins of the 12 Virtues...

In 1785, just before the French Revolution, Brother Agathon, who was the fifth Superior General of the De La Salle Brothers, wrote a document called 'The Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher'. The list of virtues is like sage advice that a teacher might receive from an experienced Year Level Dean or similar.

The 12 Virtues combines two important pieces of work of St. John Baptist De La Salle's. The spiritual vision of his Meditations and the practical pedagogy of his Conduct of Christian Schools.

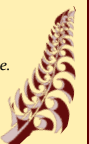
The 12 Virtues help answer the fundamental question for teachers in Lasallian schools: *"If I am to touch the hearts of my students and teach them in the best possible way, what practices should I follow and what vision should I have for them?"*

Br Agathon reminds the teacher - if you have a problem in your class, look to your own behaviour first.

12 Virtues and 12 months of 2013. Each month, I aim to provide you with useful, modern strategies, that will allow you to bring De La Salle's ideas right into your own classrooms. I kindly acknowledge Br. Jeffery Calligan for his work on this material and real insight. Enjoy learning about prudence!

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## The 12 Virtues of a Good Teacher - PRUDENCE

### Prudence

Teachers use their common sense, understanding what they need to do and what they need to avoid when dealing with children.

Do you have the PRUDENCE that Rebecca shows below?

## Prudence



Rebecca is happy to be a kind of guardian angel to her students. She tries to understand all she can about them - she finds out their interests, their passions, their fears and worries. She is always watching out for them, foreseeing difficulties that might arise and leading them to make positive choices in their lives.

# PRUDENCE

A virtue makes us understand  
what we need to do and what we need to avoid.



## Strategy 20-4: Praise and Rewards for All

**Purpose:** To encourage a group without slighting any student and to develop a close community in the classroom.

**Description:** Offering praise or a reward to the group as a whole.

Most students enjoy praise and rewards. Such attention makes them feel worthy and, presumably, motivates them to work harder and behave better. But a look under the surface might reveal undesirable side effects.

- *Addiction.* If students get too much praise and receive rewards too easily, the result can be like watching TV: easily attained satisfaction smothering the growth of independence, diligence, self-control, initiative. Or it can be like eating candy: a quick delight smothering interest in more nourishing choices. Praise and rewards can become addictive and, like other addictions lead to endless desires for more of the same, making students further dependent on others for their feelings of worth.
- *Devaluation.* Many students notice that whereas some classmates receive a lot of rewards and praise, they rarely receive either. "We are not at all appreciated in this class" is the message these students absorb, which too often leads to a sense of "I am not worth being appreciated."
- *Manipulation.* "Look how good the first row is," says the teacher with the intention of getting students in all the other rows to straighten up. The subtler message that students receive is this: "The teacher is just saying that to get what she herself wants. She does not really care about it."
- *Puffery.* "Great answer!" gushes the teacher, followed by "Wonderful! Sensational! Super! Amazing! Let's give a round of applause to Kendra for that answer." Exaggerated praise can quickly devalue language and honest appreciation. Puffery can also lead students to say to themselves, "He must think I'm really dumb, expecting me to believe that nonsense," or "She must think I'm really weak, needing such hype."

The goal is to build personal dignity and motivate hard work and self-discipline without such harmful side effects (Brophy, 1981; Kohn, 1966; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Does that mean never praising students? Not at all. One way to avoid these side effects is to offer praise to the group as a whole when we feel they genuinely deserve it. Some examples:

- This group is making good progress. I appreciate that. It's a pleasure for me to work with you.
- What a good group this is! Even though that material was hard, you folks stuck with it. I sure admire that perseverance.
- We did it right on time! Thanks for that.
- This sure is a powerful bunch, isn't it?
- Let's give ourselves a hand for the way we handled today's lesson.
- You all are working so well together! I told the principal today how special you are.
- This class is going so well I'm giving you all a treat today.

No one loses when praise and rewards are honest and are directed to the group as a whole. There is no envy. No one is left out. Besides, it encourages feelings of the class being one warm community.



Even when rewards cannot be distributed equally, we may want to communicate appreciation to everyone, as when we say something like, "I'm proud that one of our own classmates, Nicky, won first prize. And I'm proud of the way you people supported Nicky. So, in honor of the occasion, let's all give ourselves a hand."

But Praise and Rewards for All can be used manipulatively, as when a teacher offers a reward only when students do what the teacher wants. A class party on Friday because of diligent work all week often falls into this category. The motive of the teacher, then, is less to bring the class together for a delightful occasion, or to show appreciation, or to share good feelings with the class. The motive is more to shape the behavior of students. Not only is that less generous, it models manipulation and may well encourage students to try to manipulate others.

We recommend against making group praise or rewards contingent on student behavior. It is not advisable, then to announce that if students do this or that they will get a reward. It is preferable to model someone who likes to bring joy into others' lives – and not only when it is earned. Indeed, we might better model someone who brings joy into the lives of people who are *not* earning it, for those are the people who most often need positive feedback. And if the intention is to bring out students' most positive, constructive traits, would we not want to model someone being positive and constructive?

### Strategy 20-3: Incorrects with Appreciation

**Purpose:** To acknowledge a students' efforts.

**Description:** Informing a student that although the answer was not correct, the effort was commendable and we appreciate it.

Here are a few examples:

- The correct answer is 64, but that was a good risk taking on your part.
- The answer was *alternating current*, but that was good thinking.
- That is a good answer, but it doesn't really apply to this situation. In this situation, the best answer would be *hardly ever*.
- You have the first part right, and you sure are on the right track. The complete correct answer is...

This strategy shifts the focus from the answer itself to the process of thinking or to the willingness to risk speaking up, which is honestly commendable. We thereby balance any disappointment the student might feel with some positive feedback. That is often valuable for students with a shaky self-confidence.

