

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 RESERVE 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.

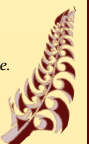
The 12 Virtues help answer the fundamental question for teachers in Lasallian schools: *"If I am to touch the hearts of my students and teach them in the best possible way, what practices should I follow and what vision should I have for them?"*

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 reserve!

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The 12 Virtues of a Good Teacher - RESERVE

Reserve (Self-control)

De La Salle wants teachers to control themselves and show restraint in the face of annoyance.

Do you have the RESERVE that Andrew shows below?

Reserve



Andrew is able to show **self-control** in situations where he might be expected to blow his top. He is **moderate** in his actions and shows discretion and **restraint** in his dealings with students. He has a peaceful and **calm** attitude that the students admire and even begin to adopt themselves.

RESERVE

A virtue that makes us think, speak, and act with moderation, discretion and honesty.



Strategy 5-9: Dignifying Acts

Purpose: To demonstrate underlying care for students in a way that grows a positive, personal class climate.

Description: Doing little things that show we value students as persons, not only as learners.

Almost all students appreciate personal attention from teachers. For some students, it's the key to getting them to invest themselves fully in learning (Combs, 1982; McCombs & Whistler, 1997). How can we communicate a personal interest in students? Some ideas:

- Learn students' names quickly and use them often. By the way, if we have many groups of students, learning names quickly can be eased by taking photographs of the students during the first day or two of school.
- During lessons, make direct, friendly eye contact with individual students, strolling about if necessary so you can eventually look at all students, and if they don't look your way at least be near them for a brief moment.
- Chat with students informally before and after class. Ask about their interests, their preferences, and their hobbies. And share your hobbies, interests and concerns. Perhaps mention the movies and TV programs you saw recently and ask if they saw them too.
- Remember students who made contributions and give them credit later by saying something such as, "Juan's comment adds to the suggestion Nel gave us earlier."
- Make a note to remind yourself which students were absent, and welcome them back warmly when they return.
- Keep a log of birthdays and ask each birthday person to stand for a moment while the classmates tap their fingers on their desks or otherwise acknowledge the day.
- Look for something you can turn into a small, private compliment. You can then bend close to a student as you walk by and softly say something like, "I like that blue shirt," or "I like how you spoke up today," Or "That is a great doodle!"
- Visit the lunchroom, perhaps once a week, and chat with a few students, taking care to sometimes include the quiet students and the loners. Perhaps even occasionally eat lunch with the students.
- Engage in some playground or gym activity with students (which might also demonstrate that people can do their best even when their best is dreadful.)
- Mention a student's special talent or accomplishment to the whole class. Perhaps invite students to tell you privately when they have something that might be suitable for such a public announcement.
- Send a personal note to every student's home early in the year saying why you appreciate having that student in class.

Strategy 8-2: Communicating Confident Authority

Purpose: To motivate students who are likely to act disruptively to exercise self-control.

Description: Exuding a confidence that we can handle whatever discipline problems arise.

Mr. Rainez was sitting at his desk, close to tears. His students had just left, and Mr. Rainez, in his first weeks as a teacher, concluded he could not possibly stop the disruptions that were wrecking his classroom. He felt totally disrespected – not an uncommon experience for new teachers. After all, many classrooms harbor students with pent-up hostilities, students who themselves may have suffered from hostility. When such students see a teacher seemingly vulnerable to attack, perhaps a teacher communicating uncertainty or an ambivalence about authority, or a new teacher apparently unskilled in exerting control, the temptations to create trouble are strong.

How can we avoid this situation? Exude enough confidence in our ability to handle discipline problems so students are not so readily tempted to act out. The problem, however, is that we may not *feel* confidence in our ability to handle all discipline problems. How, then, can we exude confidence? Do it the way plumbers cut their first pipe and surgeons their first bone. Step past lingering hesitations and just do what we have to do to get started. Behave as if we feel confident until we get enough experience to feel it in fact.

If you feel a lack of confidence, try this. Pick a lesson you might typically teach and imagine yourself teaching it to a class that contains potential trouble makers. Then imagine carrying out the following five-step process. Practice it many times, perhaps standing in front of a mirror or with a friend observing and giving you feedback. You want to make this practice as real for you as you can. Repeat the role-playing as many times as you need to, much like an actor practicing again and again to master a role.

1. Being aware of students: Continually scan the room as you teach, so you are constantly aware of what students are doing. You want students to see you as someone who is unquestionably in touch with classroom realities, not someone who is likely to be easily fooled. Therefore, practice looking about alertly as you teach, making direct eye contact with students, perhaps even waling about the classroom. Develop the distinct feeling of being a teacher who remains constantly on top of the classroom situation.

2. Signaling disapproval. Then imagine a student giving a first hint that he may soon create a disturbance. He might talk too long to a neighbor, lose the book loudly, or stand up inappropriately. Imagine yourself responding immediately, without hesitation, yet *without communicating any distress*. Without interrupting the lesson, you might simply catch the student's eye and hold out a hand, palm down, as if to signal "cool down," much as you might signal a friend in a restaurant who may be losing his composure. Direct, clear eye contact indicates confidence. Or you might signal by giving a small shake of your head. Or you might simply walk near the student and teach a bit from that nearby position, so the student senses your presence. The key is not to hesitate. When in doubt, it is better to be overly sensitive and signal students too quickly. You can later communicate more tolerance and balance, but at the outset you want to model someone who has full confidence in his ability to take charge. Note that you do not want to communicate an impression of someone who is distressed. Confident people are not easily distressed. For now all you want to communicate is an impression of someone who is concerned that the classroom runs smoothly and who sends out mild signals to forestall possible disruptions.

3. Inviting private talk. Assume the signal does not work and the student repeats the behavior. Do not repeat your initial response. Do not signal again. Rather, walk toward the student, face him with square shoulders, make direct eye contact, and say quietly, directly, calmly, even pleasantly, "Please see me after class. I'd like to talk privately for a moment." Do not reply if the student asks why or claims innocent. Just make the request and return to the lesson, communicating that you fully assume the student will, as you requested, talk later. Be as unemotional as if you were asking a post office clerk for a roll of stamps. Just make a clear request. This step communicates to the class, including the student in question, that you are indeed ready to face classroom problems. Again, as you play this part, note that you do not want to communicate any distress, just a readiness to be in charge.

4. Making authority statements in private. Now imagine that it is after class, and you and the student are speaking privately. Your task now is to elaborate on your initial signal, not to warn or to scold the student. Squarely face the student and look directly in his eyes, sending a message of confidence, not submissiveness. "Pat," you might say, "I do not want even minor distractions or disruptions in our lessons. I'm not blaming you for anything you did. I just want to make it clear that I care very much that we become a cooperative class,

doing our best to help one another learn well, and I need you to do your share. Thank you. Please go now and join the rest of the students." The content of your little speech is unimportant. What is important is that it does not blame or otherwise incite guilt or anger in the student and that it does communicate an unhesitant willingness to use your authority for the benefit of the class.

5. Making authority statements in public. Sometimes the first four steps will still not settle the student down. Assume the student again acts inappropriately. You now want to be prepared to square off and face him promptly, and this time, publicly. More specifically, imagine that the very next time he acts inappropriately you walk over to him, face him directly, and with a firm but still undistressed voice tell him exactly what behavior you want, such as, "I need you to stop talking to neighbors. It's time to control that. Thank you." Do not focus on what is wrong, but focus on what behavior you want to see. If the student complains or talks back. Simply repeat your statement verbatim: "I need you to stop talking to neighbors. It's time to control that." While practicing this step you may want to try several levels of intensity, aiming to be ready to use whatever level you need at any particular time, taking care, again, not to communicate an impression of someone who is distressed. It is someone who is confidently in charge that you want to model.

Practice this five-step process until you feel fully confident in your authority. Know that the more confidence this practice generates inside you, the less often you will need to use it – or any other discipline strategy. Students have an uncanny knack for identifying teachers who are willing to assert their authority. Most of them will control themselves quite well when faced with such teachers.

Strategy 8-3: Authority Statements

Purpose: To use authority respectfully

Description: Making a simple, direct statement of our authority as teachers.

There is no doubt about it – teachers have both the authority and the responsibility to keep student behavior within bounds. And that sometimes requires that we disapprove of what students are doing. The trick is to deliver such disapproval in ways respectful to human dignity – both our students' and our own. We want to employ our responsibilities easily, comfortably, firmly, never harshly. Consider the following examples.

- When you say, "We do not do that here," you do not want the student to feel chastised, just informed. You do not want to stir up resentment, just communicate clearly. You do not want the student to think you're really saying "You should have known better than that." It is preferable that the student hears your statement as "You just did not know this, so I'm giving you the information."
- When you say, "That is just too much for me," You do not want to sound apologetic or weak. You do not want the student to think you're saying "You should not want to act the way you are acting." You simply intend to say that you have limits. You, too, are a human being. Too much talk or noise or whatever is going on is, in fact, too much for you right now. Furthermore, you want the student to hear in your tone, "I know you are willing to make a reasonable adjustment to meet my needs, for that is what people do when they lie together as a cooperative community."
- When you say, "No, you may not leave now," you do not want the student to hear "You should know better than to ask" or "What a silly question" or "Do not bother me with such questions." You do not want the student to feel stupid or slighted or put down. You want the student to hear your statement simply as a fact; the responsible adult's position is no, you may now leave now.
- When you say to a student who is arguing with you angrily, "I'll be happy to speak about this, but not now; let's do it when we can speak calmly," you do not want to further infuriate the student. You want to acknowledge that disagreements arise and it's good to talk them over, but it's important to do so in a frame of mind that makes talking useful. You want the student to conclude, "I guess it's no use trying to argue with the teacher now. I might as well wait until I simmer down." Incidentally in this situation, you might well need to repeat your statement a few times, before angry students can hear the intended message.

- When you put a finger to your lips to signal someone to shush, you do not want the student to feel guilty or bad or irresponsible. You want the student to think, "Oops, I should stop talking. The teacher is reminding me of what I simply forgot."
- When you say, "Sit down this very minute and turn to page 25. Please take control of those impulses." You do not want the student to feel that you are being hostile and punitive or that the student is a defective or uncontrollable person. You want the student simply to notice that you are taking charge at a time when self-control has temporarily failed, that you are doing what is necessary to protect the welfare of all. You want the student to feel that you are on the side of safety and learning, not against her or anyone else.
- When you say, "Please sit over there for now," you do not want the student to think you are against him. You want him to know that you object to the behavior, not the person. You want him to sense that you make your request simply to end a class distraction.
- When you say, "Will you do that for me?" you want to communicate a warm confidence that the student, at heart will want to go along with you. You do not want to leave the impression that you are unwilling to insist if need be. You rather want to leave the impression that you care that students choose to behave well. (By the way, when students answer such a question affirmatively, they have, in effect, given their word, which adds to their motivation to follow through.

The Authority Statement is similar to what Ginott (1972) calls a "sane authority message." Ginott says that it would be insane for a teacher to belittle a student who has lost self-control or to suggest that a student should not be feeling what he or she is in fact feeling. Here are examples of "insane" messages and their "sane" counterparts:

Insane: Stop talking. You have no consideration for those who are working.

Sane: This is a quiet time. We need it to be absolutely quiet.

Insane: You have no right to be angry. You know what to do. You must wait your turn.

Sane: I know you are upset. We can all get upset sometimes. But now I really need you to wait your turn.

Three Guidelines for Authority Statements

1. *No hostility.* In general, disapproving statements should be emotionally neutral, like a red light. A red light does not communicate criticism or malice. It does not blame or sting. It just gives a signal to stop. We recommend that Authority Statements be similarly straight and simple, similarly unemotional, non-critical. They are to stir up no antagonism. Sometimes we can even exert our authority with a playful touch as in these examples:

- * When a student is fussing about in a way that is too distracting, you might simply pause for a split second and glance her way, with a wink or a smile.
- * Try a joke: "Let me finish this, please. I've been waiting all week to give this speech."
- * Simply keep talking and walk near the student and touch him warmly on the shoulder – not a sting, but a touch of care.

2. *No hesitancy.* It is best to make Authority Statements promptly and cleanly, not hesitantly or apologetically. You want students to see you as strong enough to speak forthrightly, not needing to apologize for your responsibilities. And you want students to see themselves as strong, too. Facing students directly and looking in their eyes conveys both a lack of submissiveness on your part and a respect for their ability to handle what you have to say. In general, you want each student sensing, "He clearly sees me as strong and smart enough to take straight talk."

3. *No excessive intervention.* Some teachers voice disapproval more often than is necessary. A girl may be walking aimlessly about the classroom and that quickly trigger a disapproval reaction in those teachers. But saying nothing might have been a better choice. The girl might soon get back to work. Or she might not be disturbing others more than they can easily handle. Even if it is not easy for other students, it might be better to remain quiet. The other students might then practice calling up extra concentration power, or some of their conflict-resolution skills. There is some advantage to giving students the opportunity to stretch in these ways. When we too quickly solve the problems of healthy community living in the classroom, it sends a signal that we do not trust students to handle such events on their own. This assumption sets up dependency expectations. Students might then expect us to handle all group behavior problems, probably slowing the development of self-responsibility. For all these reasons, it is advisable to avoid intervening unnecessarily.

More Tips on Making Authority Statements

► *Use body language.* We can use body language to make a simple Authority Statement. Here is an example suggested by Frederic Jones:

Sam and Jim are talking while the teacher explains fractions to the class. The teacher makes eye contact, pauses momentarily, and then continues with the explanation.

If Sam and Jim continue to talk, the teacher pauses again, makes eye contact, and shakes his or her head slightly but emphatically, perhaps giving a fleeting palm-out signal.

If Sam and Jim continue talking, the teacher calmly walks over and stands near Sam and Jim while explaining, and perhaps increases the invitation for productive engagement by saying, "Now all work this problem on your scrap of paper."

If Sam and Jim still keep talking to each other, the teacher makes eye contact with each and calmly says, "Jim, Sam, I need you to stop talking right now" or "Speak with me before lunch."

► *Personal explanations.* Explanations are most effective when they are personal. Compare these two comments:

Teacher A: Everyone must have work in by Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. I cannot get my evaluations in on time if the any work comes in after that.

Teacher B: Everyone must have work in by Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. It is difficult for me to handle the papers and budget my time if work comes in after that.

Teacher B's authority is likely to be easier to accept. Students are more likely to believe that it is "difficult" to handle the paperwork than to believe that it "cannot" be done. Here is another example in which Teacher B's words are likely to be more effective, more likely to lead students to conclude that the teacher is on their side, not unsympathetic and certainly not against them:

Teacher A: No running in the halls. People who run in the halls get hurt.

Teacher B: No running in the halls. I do not want to see you or anyone else get hurt.

► *Activate your care for students before speaking.* You may have noticed that some very strict teachers are fully respected by students, and some very lenient teachers are very respected by students. On the other hand, some teachers who are very strict are not respected at all, and might even be highly resented and resisted. Similarly, some teachers who are very lenient are not respected, and run a tight ship or leads a loose community. What is important is that students perceive the teacher as someone who sincerely cares for their welfare and who will act to serve that welfare. And that perception rests largely on whether or not they perceive the teacher as behaving reasonably, respectfully, and fairly.

Explanations can clear up potential misunderstandings about this. If students see our limits as too restrictive for them, for example, an explanation can make it clear that, say, we really need the limits so we can teach effectively, or they need the limits even though they may not currently appreciate it. Similarly, if students feel a need for more security or more guidance, an explanation can communicate, for example, that we do not feel comfortable being more controlling than we are now, or that they may feel insecure but they need to eventually learn to manage their own lives and this freedom can help them to do. The message in both cases is simple: I am doing the best I can to care for you.

Motives, then are critical. Authority tends to be accepted, indeed appreciated, when students know the intention is to do what is best for them, that we are, in effect, on their side. A caution, however: It is not enough to say, "This hurts me more than you." Words are not enough. If it isn't honestly hurting, students will sense that fact and will learn not to trust what we say. Similarly, it is not enough to say, "I'm doing this for your own good." Unless we can feel that, we are not entitled to say it. Truth, after all, also matters.

