

Mann, William. Annotation of "A Process to Develop a Model That Will Assess the Lasallian Charism in Christian Brother Secondary Schools," by James M. Gay, Ed.D. diss., Loyola University of Chicago, 1996. *AXIS: Journal of Lasallian Higher Education* 2, no. 2 (Institute for Lasallian Studies at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota: 2011).

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ANNOTATION

Gay, James M. "A Process to Develop a Model That Will Assess the Lasallian Charism in Christian Brother Secondary Schools." Doctoral dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 1996.

This 130-page doctoral thesis by James Gay, completed in his sixth year as Principal of De La Salle Institute in Chicago, develops and proposes a model to measure the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle within a Lasallian secondary school so as to help maintain and increase the Lasallian spirit in these schools at a time when there is a radically diminished presence of De La Salle Christian Brothers in these schools. The concern and commitment of many lay and Brother educators for the future of Lasallian schools, he notes, is evidenced by the shared vision and diligent work currently being done to safeguard and cultivate the Lasallian mission in the network of Lasallian schools in the United States of America.

Gay spends some time in the early section of the thesis presenting the teachings and vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. He notes that De La Salle viewed teacher training as essential to the running of successful schools and gathered his first Brother teachers into a style of community wherein by association they shared gospel values.

His primary sources used to understand the Lasallian educational vision are three works penned by De La Salle: the *Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, the *Conduct of Christian Schools*, and the *Meditations for the Time of Retreat*. The Lasallian school is, he contends, directed to have as its beneficiaries the working class and the poor and evolved around a simple God-centered program to integrate the Gospel into all of life. The *Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility*, while presenting a proper code of conduct for civilized Christian persons, intertwines the values of the Gospel with the values of both decorum and civility. The *Conduct of Christian Schools* is presented as a guide to mold good and qualified teachers by presenting practices followed in these schools that contribute to their good order and functioning. The *Meditations for the Time of Retreat* give voice to a vision of the relationship of teacher and student that is based on love and mutual respect. Gay sees these meditations as the expression of De La Salle's desire to change the way teachers viewed themselves and the way they viewed their students.

He complements this reading of the writings of De La Salle with a look at the *Letters* of De La Salle, the *Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools*, and some recent Lasallian writings of Brother Luke Salm, Brother Othmar Wurth, Brother Lawrence Colhocker, and Brother William Mann.

The assessment models developed by four other faith-based organizations or institutions round out Gay's backdrop for the development for his model for evaluating mission in Lasallian schools. Each of these groups has a clear and documented model for evaluating the specific charism in their schools. The documents he examines are: "Instrument of Self-Evaluation"

(1975) and “Sixteen Criteria of a Jesuit High School” (1974); “Validating Our Christian Mission – a Guide for the Self-Study and Evaluation of the Christian Dimensions of Lutheran High Schools” (1970); “What Is a Friends School?” (1960); and “Goals and Criteria for the Sacred Heart Schools in the United States” (1990).

The assessment model that Gay drafted, which can be found on pages 79 to 86 of the thesis, was field-tested in five secondary schools located in the States of Illinois and Wisconsin; and all of these schools are associated with the Midwest District of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. It has as its aim the goal of helping to preserve the richness and uniqueness of the Lasallian heritage in the individual schools of the network. A year-long process of self-study and a three-day onsite visit by an external visitation committee are proposed as part of the model.

The five major principles or desired outcomes of Lasallian secondary schools, as articulated in this assessment model, are the following: (a) Lasallian schools provide an atmosphere where there is a strong commitment to the mission of Saint John Baptist de La Salle; (b) Lasallian schools provide a caring atmosphere where Christian values are promoted and celebrated by the school community; (c) Lasallian schools provide an atmosphere where excellence in education is provided by a competent and caring faculty; (d) Lasallian schools provide an atmosphere where a diverse population is accepted and cultivated in the Lasallian spirit; and (e) Lasallian schools provide an atmosphere in which issues of social justice are integrated into student life.

Some readers who are new to the Lasallian network might find the definitions he provides on pages 8 to 10 of some key Lasallian terms or vocabulary helpful.

Gay suggests that this process or model of Lasallian Assessment might be transferable to any organization, and certainly for use by religious congregation sponsored schools, examining its future.

At the conclusion of the study, Gay makes three suggestions for further study: a wider testing of the model; the inclusion of parents, non-classroom school personnel, and people from the larger community in future studies; and adaptation of outcomes and strategies of the model for possible use by Lasallian colleges and universities.