

**Gospel Values
And
Student Success**

An Adult Faith Resource

Leaders' Guide

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Relating Gospel Values to Student Success

Key Points

- ✓ As Catholic schools, we need to incorporate Gospel values into everything that we do.
- ✓ Early release days are a great opportunity to incorporate an adult faith experience.
- ✓ All sessions are created in a way that responds directly to issues related to student success:
 1. At risk students
 2. Professional learning communities
 3. Forgiveness as it relates to assessment and evaluation.
- ✓ Schools that have engaged in this process have seen very positive results. Staffs appreciate the opportunity to reflect on their own experience and to get to know each other on a little more personal level.
- ✓ Time for prayer and reflection is always personally renewing.
- ✓ Motivation for initiatives related to student success becomes more personal and internalized, energized through faith and a higher purpose to teaching.

Overview of an Adult Faith Process Related to Student Success

Introduction

It has always been the mandate of Catholic schools to bring Gospel values to all that we do including initiatives related to student success, professional learning communities and all professional development. No matter what the educational initiative, we are challenged to integrate a distinctive Catholic approach and motivation. By sharing their stories, they grow in their personal awareness, integrate their story into their spirituality and build community.

Session One: The Lost Sheep

This session has a focus on students who are particularly difficult, needy, or challenging. The parable of the “lost sheep” is used as framework to allow teachers and administration the opportunity to more closely identify these students and the role they play in their lives. The most important aspect of this process is the opportunity for staffs to get together in small groups and hear each other’s stories.

Sharing Stories

- ❖ Let us call to mind some of my students who were “lost sheep”.
- ❖ I remember a time in my life when I was a “lost sheep”.

Critical Reflection on Story:

- ❖ How well is our school doing with our most needy students?
- ❖ Who are the students who are “falling between the cracks”?

Session 2: On Community

The early release days are a great opportunity to enhance Professional Learning Communities in schools. A Catholic Professional Learning Community, will reflect critically on the school as a faith community through the values of the Gospel. One aspect of community up for consideration is the element of welcoming.

Sharing of Story:

- ❖ When I was new to the school, when did I begin to realize that I was part of a community?

Critical Reflection on Story:

- ❖ What is it that we do as a staff that makes us a welcoming community?
- ❖ What else could we be do to be even more welcoming?

Session 3:

On Forgiveness and Redemption: Building a Culture of Compassion

Working with students is always challenging. Often decisions are made and actions taken with the best of intentions; sometimes the full impact of these decisions cannot be fully appreciated. Some students with behaviour problems, in particular, will disrupt the learning of others, and challenge authority. Sometimes it is difficult to forgive. Nevertheless, forgiveness and compassion are at the heart of the Gospel.

This session provides a framework for educators to reflect on their relationships with students within the context of the Gospel values of redemption, responsibility and forgiveness. Educators have immense power in the lives of students with great potential to help or to hurt. This adult faith process calls us to consider the impact of decisions on the lives of people we are called to serve.

Without forgiveness, we have no community. Without opportunities for redemption, we have little hope, love or faith.

Sharing our Stories (please allow about 30 minutes for this process)

- ❖ I think of a time when I was in high school or elementary school and a teacher treated me harshly or unfairly.
- ❖ I describe a teacher who treated me kindly.

Group Discussion

- ❖ As a school community, how do we balance opportunities for redemption with the need for personal responsibility?

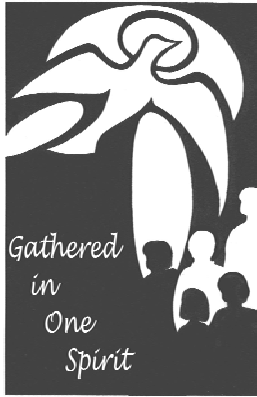
Notes on Sharing Stories and Critical Reflection

To facilitate small group discussion, three or four staff representative staff members meet ahead of time to share their stories. Different stories will strike people in different ways, giving people opportunities to identify aspects of their own experience.

Placing staff in random groups also gives people the opportunity to meet others, and get to know them a little better. Groups of five or six are an optimal number.

Often the flow of sharing stories moves quite naturally to critical reflection.

All discussion has a wider context in which personal experience is put into dialogue with the Gospels, the writings of Jean Vanier and prayer. These experiences are all the most meaningful because staff has had the opportunities to identify these themes within their own lives as teachers.



**Leaders Script:
Session One
The Parable of the Lord Sheep:
At Risk Students**

Call to Worship:

We gather today as a Christian community of faith, eager to learn and grow in our profession as educators and in our spirituality. That is why prayer is a part of all that we do.

Opening Prayer:

Let us pray.... Lord, you have blessed us with this day, this hour, this moment. Open my heart and my mind to all that you want to say. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and teacher, Amen.

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke

The parable of The Lost Sheep

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable:

"Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.

And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost."

Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

The Word of the Lord.

Silent Reflection

Let us call to mind some of the "lost sheep", past and present, we have encountered in our experience as Catholic educators.

Sharing Stories

Let us call to mind some of the students who were "lost sheep".

I remember a time in my life when I was a "lost sheep".

Reflection on our Story:

- ✦ How well are our schools doing with our most needy students?
- ✦ Who are the students who are “falling between the cracks”?

Jean Vanier On Growing

Shepherding is about caring for those who are weak, lost and in need.
It is about presence, love and support.
Shepherds are needed as much today as they were in the time of Jesus,
to love people and guide them to great life.
Young adults need role models who will help them
grow up and make good choices.
All of us who want to deepen spiritually and grow
in a life of love and prayer
need a spiritual father or mother who will help us on this road.

I call to mind a student in my life who needs my care.

Let us pray. . . .

Lord Jesus,
In your life and teaching, you were always open to the weak, the lost and those in need.
You helped others grow by being the kind of person
you wanted us to be.
You see our inner light within,
and called us to yourself.
By your grace and love,
keep my heart open to everyone that I meet,
particularly those who challenge my capacity to love.
Help me to recognize the gifts that they bring me.
Amen.

Reading:

A Reading from *Build Bethlehem Everywhere*

The Fundamental Option for the Lost:

“There is a great deal of talk today about the fundamental option for the poor. In fact, what is needed is a fundamental option for the lost.

A Catholic school does not just deal with the materially poor. It also deals with the intellectually poor who need our schools to find an education that can break the cycle of despair. We care for the spiritually poor, who need to hear the Word of God broken for them so that they might return from the wasteland to the spiritual homeland of the human heart, Christ Jesus. In the materially poor, the spiritually poor and the intellectually poor Catholic

Education sees one common characteristic: here are the people who are lost to God and need to be called home.

All around us we can hear the cry of the lost. In our Catholic schools, just like the shepherd of the Gospel, we go looking for them, even if it means leaving the ninety-nine behind.

As Catholic Educators we have a fundamental option for the lost. We often assume that the worst of all possible scenarios is to be lost. We know, in fact that this is not true. The worst of all possible scenarios is to be lost, and to realize that no one is coming to look for you. The aim of our Catholic schools in being together to evangelize must always be to ensure that no matter how lost our youth may have become, as long as we have breath to draw, we will never stop looking for them.”

From: *Build Bethlehem Everywhere, A Statement on Catholic Education*, 2002,
Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association

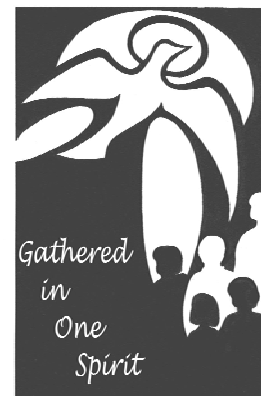
Prayers of the Faithful

Closing Prayer (All)

Lord Jesus, you were the good shepherd who cared for your flock. There are days when I am lost; help me to be patient as you seek me out. There are days when I am called to be the shepherd for others; give me the courage to journey out. We pray in the name of Jesus our good shepherd. Amen.

Sign of Peace

**Leaders' Script
Session Two:
On Christian Community:
Adult Faith and
Catholic Professional Learning Communities**



Rationale:

It has always been the mandate of Catholic schools to bring a faith perspective to all that we do. This includes the formation of professional learning communities, initiatives related to student success and all professional development.

The following structure will help you to integrate adult faith component into an early dismissal professional development day. You might also wish to engage your school councils in all or part of this process.

For this to be more authentic, please consider inviting support staff to be a part of this session.

Call to Order and Introductions

Opening Prayer:

Call to Worship:

We gather today as a Christian community of faith, eager to learn and grow in our profession as educators and in our spirituality. That is why prayer is a part of all that we do.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.... Lord, you have blessed us with this day and with this moment. Open my heart and my mind to all that you want to say. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Lord and teacher, Amen.

A Reading from the Gospel of John

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

The Word of the Lord.

John 15:1-5

Reflection

The image of the vine and the branches tells us that we are all connected, all sharing the gift of life given to us by God.

Let us reflect on this call to sustain our lives through community in Christ.

Sharing Stories: Building Community

- ❖ When I was new to the school, when did I begin to realize that I was part of a community?

Three or four staff members are prepared to share their stories of Community in response to the above question. Staff is divided into groups of six to share their own stories in response to the above question.

Critical Reflection on Story: Small group

- ❖ What is it that we do as a staff that makes us a welcoming community?
- ❖ What else could we be do to be even more welcoming.

Ask groups to put these suggestions down in writing.

Personal Reflection and Prayer

Jean Vanier

On Belonging

“A group is the manifestation of the need to belong.
A group can, however, close in on itself,
believing that it is superior to others.
But my vision is that belonging should be at the heart
of a fundamental discovery:
that we all belong to a common humanity,
the human race.
We may be rooted in a specific family and culture
but we come to this earth to open up to others,
to serve them and receive the gifts they bring to us,
as well as to all of humanity.”

Personal Reflection:

I reflect on my openness to sharing my life and my ideas
with others in my school community.

Let us pray . . .

Lord Jesus,
In your life and teaching,
you were always open to the very people that your society
rejected.
You saw their inner light within,
and called them to yourself.
By your grace and love,

keep my heart open to everyone that I meet,
particularly those that challenge my capacity to love.
Help me to recognize the gifts that they bring me
as I live in community day by day.
Amen.

Jean Vanier
On Sharing Weakness

When we are in communion with another,
we become open and vulnerable to them.
We reveal our needs and our weaknesses to each other.
Power and cleverness call forth admiration but also a
certain separation, a sense of distance; we are reminded
who we are not, of what we cannot do.
On the other hand, sharing weaknesses and needs
calls us together into “oneness”.

Personal Reflection:

I reflect on my willingness to ask for help from others in my school community?

Let us pray
Lord Jesus,
Give me the courage and trust
to share my needs and weaknesses with others.
Help me to be always open to respond
with care and compassion
to the weaknesses of others.
Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful

Let call to mind all those in our community who are in need of our prayerful support....
(Invite names)
for these people, and for all who we hold in our hearts, we pray to the Lord...
Lord hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer:

We thank you and praise you for the gift of others gathered in community. Through your grace and peace, open our hearts and minds to the giftedness in all people we meet. WE ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord and Teacher. Amen.

NOTES

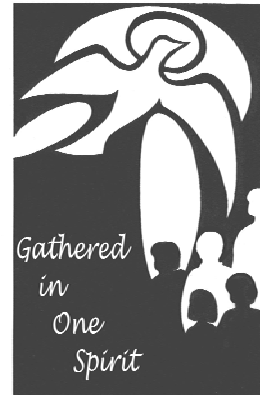
Bridge to Professional Development

- The people providing the professional development part of the day are asked to give due consideration to relating their presentation to the adult faith component by making specific references to aspects of the scripture, stories, discussion and prayer, relating it to the topic the school as Christian Community.

- ❑ The Gospel value of community is connected with the principles of professional learning communities: common mission, vision and values; collaborative teaching focused on teaching and learning; gaining active engagement from family and community.

Bridge to School Life

- ❑ Take the ideas related to community, and develop a one page summary sheet in poster form, using the theme logo.
- ❑ Display the poster in the staff room to bring these ideas into school life.



Leaders Script
Session Three:
On Forgiveness and Redemption

Rationale

Working with students is always challenging. Often decisions are made and actions taken with the best of intentions; sometimes the full impact of these decisions cannot be fully appreciated. Some students with behaviour problems, in particular, will disrupt the learning of others, and challenge authority. Sometimes it is difficult to forgive. Nevertheless, forgiveness and compassion are at the heart of the Gospel.

This session provides a framework for educators to reflect on their relationships with students within the context of the Gospel values of redemption, responsibility and forgiveness. Educators have immense power in the lives of students with great potential to help or to hurt. This adult faith process calls us to consider the impact of decisions on the lives of people we are called to serve.

Without forgiveness, we have no community. Without opportunities for redemption, we have little hope, love or faith.

Leaders' Script

Call to Worship:

We gather as Catholic teachers and administrators recognizing that we have immense power in the lives of students. Every day, there is great potential to enhance growth or to undermine it, to help or to hurt. Today we are called to consider the impact of our decisions on the lives of young people we are called to serve.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.... God of wisdom and compassion, let your Spirit be with us today as we reflect and grow as a community, dedicated to the human growth of our students in all dimensions of their being. Grant us the patience and love that we need to do the work of building your kingdom. We make this prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord and teacher. Amen.

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke on The Prodigal Son

I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."

So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

for this son of mine was dead and is alive again;

he was lost and is found!"

And they began to celebrate...

The Word of the Lord.

Luke 15:18-24

Reflection on Scripture:

Many people believe that the parable of the prodigal son captures the heart and soul of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We reflect on the movement of the human heart that takes on personal responsibility by recognizing that our actions are wrong.

We reflect on the immense power of compassion and forgiveness to transform our lives.
(Silent reflection.)

Sharing our Stories (please allow about 30 minutes for this process)

- ❖ I think of a time when I was in high school or elementary school and a teacher treated me harshly or unfairly.
- ❖ I describe a teacher who treated me kindly.

Group Discussion

- ❖ As a school community, how do we balance opportunities for redemption with the need for personal responsibility?

Personal Reflection and Prayer

Jean Vanier: On Forgiveness

The names of God revealed by Jesus are Compassion, Mercy, Forgiveness, Goodness, Kindness and Tenderness,
Light and Truth.
He did not come to judge or condemn,
but to reveal to each one how beautiful they are and can become.
The Greek word for “to forgive” also means to liberate,
to bring people out of danger and into life.
This liberation implies an acceptance on our part.
God is Love and yearns to give himself in love.
Love is never imposed; love is offered.
Jesus invites; he does not violate our freedom.
We are called to open the door of our hearts.”

from *Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John*

Personal Reflection:

I reflect on a student in my life that I find difficult to forgive.
(Provide time for silent reflection.)

Let us pray....

Lord God,
In difficult situations, with difficult people
Give me your peace.
Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful

Let us call to mind now all those people in our community,
especially our most challenging students...
who are in need of our prayer....
Please simply say aloud the name of this person....
(allow time for spontaneous saying of names)
We pray to the Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.
For these people, and for all we hold in our hearts...
we pray to the Lord...
Lord hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer: Let us pray...

(All)

We thank you and praise you for the gift of others gathered in community. Through your grace and peace, open our hearts and minds to extend forgiveness and compassion in your name. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord and Teacher. Amen.

Sign of Peace

Let us offer each other a sign of peace.