

**ASSESSMENT IN THE
"CONDUCT OF SCHOOLS"
(2/2)**

Brother Manuel F. Magaz

THE AGENTS OF "CHANGE"

The students

Not all the students will complete the test for the change of grade or level: only those who have been selected in advance will undergo it. The teacher alone will present this list of the preselected ones that he judges to be *very well prepared*, since failure on the final exam would disappoint them. On occasion some student who was outstanding in his knowledge and conduct, would receive a *class change* during the year.

The solutions that the Conduct suggests for students who are very young and bright seem strange. Because of their ability and behavior they ought to be promoted by level and grade at an accelerated pace. Since they were very young, their time in school would be brief which would result in harm being done to their process of maturing, which is one of the processes attended to by the Lasallian school.

In cases such as these, the teacher and the Inspector would advise the student that he delay his promotion; but the delay had to be accepted voluntarily and willingly by both the student and his parents who would also be informed; a real proof of respect for freedom on the part of the Lasallian school! On several other pages of the Conduct values dealing with the concept of respect are presented.

The child in question had to wrestle with the idea of why he should not be promoted and three altruistic tasks were assigned him: helping his companions to be promoted, helping those who were behind and serving as an example for them. Aside from the unquestionable personal satisfaction that these students found, the teacher could also give them some reward; for example, the teacher could entrust them with some classroom job.

The teacher

The teacher's role in the changing of grade or level is minutely spelled out in the Conduct. "Teachers cannot, on their own account, ever change a student's grade or level in their classroom"; that is how the third section of chapter III begins concerning "the change of level" (12, p. 21). This prohibition does not lessen in any way the central role of the

teacher in the changing of level process; it is a limitation that frees him from awkward entanglements. Here is a summary of the teacher's assignment:

1. It is incumbent upon him to develop the students' knowledge throughout the month.
2. Before the day set aside for the promotion, he presents to the Inspector a *report* concerning the intellectual ability of the students.
3. He discusses the *report* with the Inspector in order to determine the students who deserve to be promoted.
4. On the day set aside for the Inspector or the Director, he will examine the students and will choose only those whom he believes to be *very well prepared*.
5. The Conduct spells out in great detail the symbols that the teacher should put in the *Catalogue for promotions* in order to facilitate the work of the Inspector or Director (13, p. 21).

I think that it would be appropriate, at this point, to offer a summary that the Conduct gives of the Catalogue for promotions. This is an eloquent example of the constant follow-up that the Lasallian school offered to each student and this can truthfully be called *personalized pedagogy*.

The aforementioned Catalogue, in book form, consisted of twenty-four pages, two per month. The pages were divided into three vertical columns of varying widths. In the left column, the narrowest, was the day and the month in which the student was promoted in grade or level. The middle column, the widest, contained the surname and first name of the students, separated by a horizontal line. The names of each grade formed subsequent blocks. In the third column, divided into four parts, a point was used to mark, respectively, *tardiness, excused absences, unexcused absences and absences from Catechism class*. As we pointed out above, three of the informational pieces would result in a change of grade or level. The teacher would fill out the Catalogue on a daily basis (14, pp. 136 and 136, passim).

M O D E L E

*Catalogue de la premiere Classe de la
ruë
pour le mois de Mars 1722*

1 ^{er} table 1 ^{er} ligne		Tard.	Abs. excus.	Abs. non excus.	Abs. de Cat.
1. Decemb					
1 May					
1. Mars					
1. Juin.					
1. Avril					
1. Juillet					
1. Aoust.					

The inspector

Preliminary clarification: When there were several Lasallian schools in the area, one Brother would serve as Inspector of schools for all of them. When there was only one school, the Director would assume this role. In both cases, the tasks were the same for one or the other.

The Inspector was ultimately the one responsible for promotion of grade or level. We should like here to spell out his role in outline form:

1. At the end of the month, he would remind the teachers about the day they had to test the students who might possibly be promoted.
2. Together with the teachers, they would look at the students who could and could not be promoted, along the lines of the requirements.
3. He would assign the teachers on the day that they had to draw up the *report* and he would look at the report along with them in order to insist on the necessary orientation "so as not to error in the promotions".
4. He would also advise the students from the different schools about the promotion day so that no one would be absent; absentees had to wait until the following month.
5. It was very important that in the changing of grade or level there was impartiality with respect to persons;...he needed to adhere to the fact of the student meeting the required conditions. He recommended to the teachers that the students be *very well prepared* (15, pp. 273, 274, *passim*).

The Inspectors also had to carry the *Catalogue for promotions*, a different one from that of the teacher. We shall present briefly a description of this from the *Conduct*:

The Inspector carried as many Catalogues as the number of schools in his charge. The layout for each page was divided into five columns, separated by vertical lines. The center column was the widest since it contained the surname and first names of each students. These began by grades, starting from the lowest and gradually progressed to the last grade. In the first column on the left was the day and the second column contained the month showing the previous promotion, the fourth and fifth columns showed, respectively, the day and the month of most recent change (16, pp. 133 and 134, *passim*).

MODELE, ECRITURE du 3 ^e ordre.				
1	January	Jacques Maturin	2	April
1	March	Hubert Valle	3	June
2	May	François Duterioux	6	July
1	June	Nicolas Paulet	1	August
1	July	Louis Adam Rive	1	October
2	August	Jean Grimoine	2	November
1	October	Philippe Le Gendre	1	December
2	November	Pierre Le Large	2	February

The team

In the paragraphs above, we presented successively and separately the agents involved in *assessment* in De La Salle's schools. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to point out that *they acted as a team*. The teachers pre-selected students that they evaluated, jointly with the Inspector. The dialogue between the teachers, Inspectors and Directors was continual. Sometimes - recall the very bright young children - the students themselves participated in their own promotion process. The opinion of the parents was even required in the case of the very young children so that a student would not unnecessarily repeat grades. We wonder if this process in itself is not a forerunner of a type of *educational community*? In any case, working as part of a team is part of the very origins of the Lasallian school.

CONCLUSION

Leaving aside the matter of names, it is obvious that De La Salle and his Brothers, *three hundred years ago*, practiced *assessment* in their schools. Without going into specifics, this assessment contained quite a few of the characteristics that present day pedagogy attributes to assessment today. For example:

Initial. The Inspector or the Director, upon receiving a new student, placed him in the grade and level that corresponded to his knowledge.

Continuing. As we have noted, this was carried out on a monthly basis.

Final. This was not the result of a global examination but of an ongoing process. The final results were listed in the *Catalogue for promotion* in the next school year.

Based upon, on the one hand, the assessment of the capability and knowledge of the students and, on the other hand, and no less important, on their attitudes and conduct.

Personalized. The students, one by one, in dialogue, first with the teacher and then with the Inspector, responsible for their knowledge and behavior.

Carried out by a team of persons which, according to the *Conduct*, should make up a primary constitutive element in educational practice. •