



# The Salesian School

Salesian Youth  
Ministry Sector

# The Salesian School

*Graphic design:* Artia Comunicación  
*Illustrations:* Javier Carabaño  
*Translation:* Fr. Jose Lorbeth Vivo

Property reserved for the Youth Ministry Sector, SDB

**Salesians of Don Bosco – Head Office**  
Via Marsala, 42. 00185 Rome

Salesian Youth  
Ministry Sector

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CG</b>	General Chapter of the Society of St. Francis de Sales.
<b>Const. / Reg.</b>	Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales (1984).
<b>PEPP</b>	Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan.
<b>EPC</b>	Educative and Pastoral Community.

## Tables of Contents

Introduction . . . . .	6
» <b>Chapter 1</b>	
The originality of the Salesian school . . . . .	9
1.1 Practice and theory of the school of Don Bosco . . . . .	10
1.2 Reviving Don Bosco's dream that unites us and projects us into the future . . . . .	12
» <b>Chapter 2</b>	
The Educative and Pastoral Community of the Salesian School . . . . .	15
2.1 The importance of the EPC of the Salesian school . . . . .	16
2.2 Members of the EPC of the Salesian school . . . . .	16
» <b>Chapter 3</b>	
The educative and pastoral proposal of the Salesian school	21
3.1 Inspiration from Gospel values and an invitation to faith . . . . .	22
3.2 An efficient and quality education . . . . .	25
3.3 Salesian pedagogy . . . . .	28
3.4 Social function and care for those most in need . . . . .	31
» <b>Chapter 4</b>	
Systematic pastoral animation of the Salesian school . . . . .	35
4.1 Main interventions of the proposal . . . . .	36
Educational environment . . . . .	36
Holistic humanism from a Christian perspective . . . . .	37
Teaching of the Catholic religion . . . . .	39
A constantly updated pedagogical approach . . . . .	40
Other freely chosen complementary, supplementary and reinforcing activities . . . . .	42
Articulation of explicitly evangelizing activities . . . . .	42
Personal encounter with students . . . . .	45
Selecting, training and updating teachers and leaders . . . . .	46
The SEPP is our "identity card" . . . . .	49
The recovery of the language and aesthetics of youth . . . . .	50
4.2 Structures of participation and responsibility . . . . .	51
Local animation . . . . .	51
Provincial/national animation . . . . .	53
Bibliography . . . . .	57

# Introduction

**The Church's** commitment to education in all its manifestations continues to be one of the pillars of her social presence and visibility. The Catholic school is a privileged place of education and evangelization that cares for people. For this reason, the "Salesian school" has developed an educational style with its own identity within the Catholic school. In this regard, it offers its own educative and pastoral proposal in line with current expectations, renewing its practices, curricular proposals, innovative methods, contents and intentions. *The Salesian school is always a place of authentic and specific pastoral action.*

**A school with a pastoral approach requires passionate, balanced and competent leaders** who are able to live and transmit the values of the Educative and Pastoral Plan of the Center; teachers who build a respectful and creative pedagogical relationship that fosters the growth of the individual; coordinators and pastoral workers who have faith in the principles of the Gospel, are empathetic in accompanying, joyful in communicating, trained in organizing and managing resources. Committed witnesses who motivate others to get involved, who build communities and expand the Salesian presence in the local area. The purpose of this document is to contribute to the formation and growth of these witnesses in the Salesian school.

In this regard, these pages have a threefold purpose:

- A.** To provide Provincials and educational Provincial coordinators with *an evaluation tool* to help them verify the level of evangelization and Salesian identity in the institutes;
- B.** To help the directors of educational institutions, their management teams and collaborators to *set up educational centers according to behaviors that are consistent* with the keys to Salesian identity;
- C.** To help all educators assimilate the *key aspects of our identity* by offering them an ordered and systematic set of Salesian guidelines and behaviors.

**Don Miguel Ángel García Morcuende, sdb**  
*Councillor General for Youth Ministry*  
ROME, 28 MARCH 2025

# THE ORIGINALITY OF THE SALESIAN SCHOOL

CHAPTER

I



## 1 1 PRACTICE AND THEORY OF THE SCHOOL OF DON BOSCO

Don Bosco was a great educator: his school of joy, of charity, of contemplation of the wonders of the Creator, of a strong practice of the sacraments, of flexibility in the face of changing situations, of a sense of duty, of friendship without discrimination, are the original elements that, when put into practice, form true pillars for the building of strong personalities that allow the formation of good Christians and honest citizens. The style and institutions with which he made himself present among the youth of his time are thus a *precious legacy for those who consider themselves today the successors of his ideals of education and evangelization*.

The rich synthesis of content, methods and means used by Don Bosco for human promotion and evangelization responded to various needs in terms of assistance, education, vocations, catechesis and formation, thus giving different “faces” to this pedagogy. We can rightly say that it is possible to think of a single **“Preventive System” that can be applied to a variety of “methodologies” or “preventive methods”**.

For this reason, Don Bosco, always attentive to the needs of young people, extended his commitment beyond the trade workshops to promote the birth of the Salesian school. From the first years of his activity in Valdocco, he creatively integrated this educational component into his youth apostolate, while maintaining the Oratorian objectives, climate and criteria. And when the opportunity arose, he also took over existing schools or opened some of his own, *always guided by his original Oratorian intention and his characteristic pedagogical method*.

In the heart of the Oratory, various types of popular schools were founded, which became an integral part of Don Bosco’s work: schools for music and singing, schools for literacy, schools of general culture (teaching Italian, Latin, French and arithmetic), evening and Sunday schools, which were the forerunners of others; decades later, in 1871-1872, Don Bosco organized *elementary day schools* in Valdocco.

The school was founded in Valdocco to respond to the concrete needs of young people and was part of **a comprehensive project of the education and evangelization of young people, especially those**

**most in need**. The same “preventive” educational inspiration was able to balance the material (housing, food, clothing, protection) with the spiritual (prayer, education, catechesis, sacramental life), with the personal (hospitality, personal dialogue, confession, spiritual guidance), with the expressive (theater, band, excursions, playground, joy, celebration), with the organizational (rules, discipline, homework, study).

Don Bosco’s theory and practice of school do not have original features other than the originality which comes from the application of the principles of preventive pedagogy. In all types of schools, Don Bosco emphasized two fundamental aspects: their *ethical-religious objective and their social and professional value*. School and culture are considered essentially a means of moral formation in a Christian sense and an essential step in the preparation for life: “in order to be able to earn one’s bread”.

In the *Latin School*, generally the five years of high school as established by the Casati Law (1859), there were no innovations in the curriculum or teaching methods. Don Bosco, however, insisted on one principle: *Initium sapientiae timor Domini*, in which honoring and loving God is both the beginning, means and end of education; and the humility of the learner is the indispensable inner disposition for it (cf. J. Bosco, *Rules for Houses*, Part II, Chapter VI *Behavior in School and Study*, Art. 21 and 22, p. 73; Chapter VI *School teachers*, Art. 12 and 14, p. 35).

From a teaching point of view, Don Bosco’s recommendations on how teachers should behave are well known: esteem for the textbook and its faithful explanation, the formulation of questions, the consideration of the intellectual “average” of the class, the use of literary academic entertainment and humanistic theatrical performances, the use of dialogues in their teaching and special attention to those who have more difficulties.

Education was an intuition in line with *his sensitivity, his great capacity for imagination, his realism enveloped by his passion for young people*. For this vision and these tasks, simple traditional education, however necessary, was not enough, nor was pedagogy. The educator had to be much more than a priest, a religious, a tutor, an educator, and much more than a “pedagogue” or social worker. The “new” priest or religious or educator had to develop, **in contact with the experience and urgent reality of the most vulnerable young people**, a great sense of “humanity”,

a “steadfast faith”, a “burning charity”, combined with an overflowing passion and sensitivity.

1 2

## REVIVING DON BOSCO'S DREAM THAT UNITES US AND PROJECTS US INTO THE FUTURE

Throughout its history, **the Congregation has expanded, enriched and updated a style of education and evangelization** that still flourishes today. The Salesian school has had to rethink the same educative and evangelizing proposal in rural areas or with indigenous peoples, educational models that are just as valid as those in urban areas.

In any case, the school is a privileged and decisive cultural mediator in the formation of personality because it conveys a vision of the world, of man and of history (cf. *Gravissimum educationis*, no. 8). As a consequence, the school environment has undergone a great development in the Congregation in response to the needs of young people themselves, of society and of the Church. It has become a movement of educators for young people, as envisioned by Don Bosco.

*«It was Don Bosco who sent his sons to the state universities with possibilities to learn secular subjects. Don Bosco had very clear ideas on the unity of the human person and, consequently, the need for an integral education. He knew, in fact, that a pastoral action, at the same time, formed honest citizens and good Christians. In this sense, he saw the school as a providential moment of formation» (GC20, no. 234).*

Church documents that followed the Second Vatican Council leave no doubt about the Church's intention in establishing his schools. The Catholic school is “a place of evangelization, of authentic apostolate and of pastoral action” (*The Religious Dimension of Education in Catholic Schools*, no. 33). The Salesian Congregation has been aware, since the time of its Founder and through his inspiration, that it is called by God to carry out this work of evangelization of the Church through the service of education. **The Salesian school is Church** and it participates in her mission at all levels, bringing to the school environment that which is typical of the Salesian charism and working for the building of Christian and human communities

(cf. *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*, Chapter I: “Catholic Schools in the Mission of the Church”). It carries out its work within its own diocese, in harmony with Catholic school organizations in the surrounding area. We therefore recognize the fundamental value of the school as a place where the Gospel illuminates culture and allows itself to be challenged by it, thus creating an effective integration between the process of education and the process of evangelization.

This integration is an important educational alternative in the social, political, cultural, ethical and religious pluralism of today's societies. The existing socio-cultural reality in nations, the new guidelines for the renewal of education in various countries and the internal reality of education itself present new challenges and complex difficulties. All cultures, at every moment in history, are made up of all those elements of reason (thoughts, sciences, beliefs, etc.), goodness (behaviors, values, morals, models, etc.) and beauty (affective styles, sensitivities, artistic expressions, etc.) that are authentically meaningful. *It is necessary to design and implement an operational tool that, as a “letter of introduction” of the school to society, defines its principles and values, both evangelizing and academic, its goals and objectives, and the resources and actions to achieve them, namely the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan.*

# THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY OF THE SALESIAN SCHOOL

CHAPTER





## 2 1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EPC OF THE SALESIAN SCHOOL

In the decades between the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, there was a shift from an institutional model of education to a community model of education, from a model where education was delegated to certain consecrated persons (religious, teachers) to a model of active participation by everyone involved in the educational process. **The EPC is the subject of educational responsibility and the educational environment** (cf. Const. 47); in Salesian schools, *the convergence of the intentions and convictions of all its members* finds its result in the realization of the SEPP (cf. Reg. 4-9).

The presence of so many lay people in our schools is not a mere addition of forces, let alone a forced replacement to compensate for the losses and absences of religious: their experience, professionalism and the typical model of life they represent are an irreplaceable wealth in educational and pastoral work. **The EPC is a true ecclesiological communion of complementary vocations.**

## 2 2 MEMBERS OF THE EPC OF THE SALESIAN SCHOOL

**A. Students are the main protagonists of the formation journey and the center of the entire educational process:** they participate in a creative and practical way (with concrete actions) in the development and realization of their formation programs, through its various stages; they increase their relational skills through their schooling and formation. By responding to the explicit desire of young people to receive a serious cultural and human preparation, the Salesian school fosters a series of fundamental and basic potentials which articulate the integral development of the student: "the ability to integrate the knowledge of head, heart and hands" (*Christus Vivit*, no. 222).

Young people are also *educator and evangelizers of other young people*; they participate in the construction of a rich educational environment that welcomes and cares for all, assuming responsibilities appropriate to their age and stimulating personal commitment and the commitment of their peers.

Youth empowerment is a specific form of participation. Participation is a right in itself and implies a pedagogical dimension, that is, a process that goes from an individual level, such as deciding on a life plan, to the collective action of transforming the environment. *Participation is not imposed, but encouraged, facilitated and accompanied.*

**B.** In the words of Don Bosco, **educators** create a "family" together with the young people, a youthful community in which the interests and experiences of young people are the foundation of the entire educational process. Working together, educators put their professional, pedagogical, pastoral and personal skills at the service of the mission of the Salesian school; not only do they teach, but they also "assist", work, study and pray together with the students. They are willing to spend time with young people, and are capable of accompanying them in the various situations of their lives: "*Teachers in the classroom and brothers in the courtyard*" (Don Bosco).

Among the educators, we include *the teaching staff*, Salesian and lay people who are fully involved in an educative and pastoral role, according to the Salesian plan and according to their professional competence: "It depends on them above all that the Catholic school can achieve its aims and principles" (cf. *Gravissimum educationis*, no. 8). For this reason, the process of selecting our educators is fundamental: it must be consistent with our mission, with the vision for which we want to be recognized, and with the values that underlie the way we work to achieve it. The future of Salesian schools depends on a good choice of teaching staff.

On the one hand, there has been a shift from "doing with others" to a *shared mission with the laity*, as the expression of a careful and thoughtful choice that requires balance, seriousness and integrity of life: lay people who are passionate about education and who identify themselves with the pedagogical aims of the Salesian school. They have knowledge and an appreciation of the pedagogical and spiritual tradition and legacy of Don Bosco. They contribute their experience of lay life which they express culturally and professionally in their life choices, knowledge and activities, including various extracurricular and formation activities.

In turn, *religious teachers* testify to their experiences as consecrated persons. And they do so by being companions and guides in the lives of young people, capable of attracting everyone to the same goal and the same path. The Salesian school needs consecrated persons who are rooted in the essence of the Salesian charism, who are able to stimulate the renewal of an educative and evangelizing project, who are capable of assuming positions of service, regardless of leadership, who are able to read the signs of the times and participate in the transformation of contexts, starting from the fundamental values that characterize the Salesian school, which are none other than those of the Gospel.

- C. The **administrative/auxiliary staff** carry out their functions in shared responsibility with the other members of the Educative and Pastoral Community. Their attitude and style, therefore, are in line with that of the other educational staff and are distinguished by their professionalism; their hospitality; their friendly and cordial attitude; their spirit of service, their dedication and the quality of their work; their discretion; their loyalty and fidelity to the educative project and their sense of belonging to the institution.

- D. **Fathers, mothers and legal guardians** are directly responsible for their children's growth, with the complementarity of the school. By choosing a Salesian school, the family accepts our project and commits itself to our way of understanding education, based on a specific conception of human beings, pedagogy and the world.

A close collaboration between the families and the school is essential to achieve the educational goals. In this regard, communication (periodic, personal or online), participation (family associations, collegial bodies), information and/or formation activities, among other initiatives, are encouraged.

We must acknowledge that the concept of the family is undergoing a transformation. Reality shows us a wide range of forms of coexistence and organization. For this reason, the relationship between school and family, influenced by many social, educational, economic and/or ideological factors, must be one of the priorities in Salesian schools.

Don Bosco's Preventive System is inspired by the family environment and is practised through family relationships. It distinguishes the educational system of our schools and proposes parents as a reference for growth in the educational dialogue with their children.

*“Parent Associations, Family Groups, School-Family Cooperation Programs and other initiatives can be structured according to a wide range of proposals with different emphases: charitable and of service, formative, spiritual and educative-pastoral. However, each action, with its own characteristics, is called to be a sign and stimulus for young people and to introduce a more fraternal style of personal relationships in the formative proposal that may reveal the family dimension of the EPC and the Church” (YOUTH MINISTRY AND FAMILY, CHAPTER 3, 3.2).*

- E. The animating and guiding action of the **Provincial, with the help of his Council**, concerns not only religious life but also apostolic action in the various fields of the mission of the Provincial community (cf. Const. 161). In this way, it must guarantee the Salesian charismatic identity of each school and its pedagogical tradition. The Province formally has the ultimate and non-delegable responsibility of preserving the identity of the school; the management and direction of the school can be delegated by the Provincial, for a limited period of time, to the school director and his management team.

In this context, the Province should encourage the existence of ongoing institutional training of the teaching staff, combining general training (identity, methodologies, processes specific to the institution) with training specifically aimed at the functions of the institution. It also accompanies, guides and encourages leaders in their professional growth and personal situation.

- F. Finally, we must emphasize **the presence of other persons and entities involved in the educative and pastoral action of the school**. Catechists and animators of religious groups, supervisors of extracurricular activities and complementary services, coaches, groups of the Salesian Family, among others, form a network of collaborators who enrich and complement the work of teachers and families.



# THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL APPROACH OF THE SALESIAN SCHOOL

## CHAPTER

### III



The physiognomy of the Salesian school provides values and skills that society needs, it generates a commitment to models of holistic education, not only of learning but also of the whole person of each young person, and involves the entire Educative and Pastoral Community. And it does all this through certain objectives and characteristics that make up its form and roots, that is, through the *institutional expression of the Salesian charism*. The Salesians display our educative and pastoral proposal, expressing in a concise and orderly way the elements that characterize the Salesian style of education, those that define and distinguish us as a school. In this way, teachers, families, students and all those involved in the Salesian school will be able to know the main principles of our pedagogy, which is always up to date.

It is appropriate here to summarize these essential features that make the Salesian school a *privileged means of formation*, a valuable element of *popular promotion* and a *particularly effective environment for evangelization*.

## 3 1

## INSPIRATION FROM GOSPEL VALUES AND AN INVITATION TO FAITH

**A. Evangelization” is a “rich, complex and dynamic” reality** (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 17); it consists not only in proclaiming the message of Jesus, but *it promotes the interior transformation of the person and the renewal of humanity, transforming by the power of the Gospel the criteria, values, points of interest, lines of thought, models of life...* that are contrary to the Kingdom of God; it gradually leads to adherence to the plan of Jesus, to the Kingdom he proclaimed; and this adherence is revealed and achieved through integration into the Church community (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 19; 23-24).

Evangelization implies the mutual interplay of the Gospel and man's concrete life, both personal and social. In this relationship of mutuality, which the school can promote in a special way, evangelization adapts its message to different situations and constantly updates it, “about the rights and duties of every human being, family life..., the community life in society, international life, peace, justice and

development; a message that is particularly strong in our time, about liberation” (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nos. 26-29).

In this way, the Salesian school takes its inspiration from the Gospel, which is expressed in the commitment to its values, which are both essential for society and for life in common. Today we see the urgency of evangelization in our educational institutions. As Salesians, we *are part of the Catholic school scene* with the pedagogical legacy we have inherited from St. John Bosco, developed in later tradition (cf. GC21, no. 130). We offer an educative and pastoral proposal that remains open to the values in the social and cultural contexts where it is present; we promote openness and a deeper appreciation of religious and transcendent experiences and we accept the vital dialogue with the world of languages and with issues arising out of culture.

In our environments, we choose to offer a proposal that respects the experience of faith, characterized by:

- ▮ Acceptance of each person's situation,
- ▮ Open dialogue based on the values inspired by the Gospel and by the current context,
- ▮ Encounter with God in everyday life,
- ▮ Experiences of prayer and interiority, openness to transcendence,
- ▮ Celebration of faith and the sacraments,
- ▮ Devotion to Mary Help of Christians,
- ▮ Sense of Church,
- ▮ Proposals for Christian commitment in the fulfillment of duty, solidarity, mission and civil life,
- ▮ Promotion of inter-religious dialogue, fostering respect and mutual understanding among different religious traditions, with the aim of building a culture of peace and universal brotherhood.



**B.** There is no doubt, therefore, that the diversity of the cultural and social environments in which Salesian schools are present requires a great deal of reflection. Moreover, the phenomenon of the relation between different cultures, in addition to those between different religions and faiths, urges us as schools to seek concrete and appropriate ways to be *truly inclusive communities*. Some of our students belong to other religions or do not belong to any at all; this, together with migration and displacement, makes the school population heterogeneous and diverse. For this reason, **the demographic profile of religious beliefs in our countries** requires not only the coexistence of different religious expressions and beliefs, but also dialogue in order to foster a peaceful society (cf. *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools*).

Our educational proposal aims to *accompany all students in their personal growth*, while respecting their beliefs and helping them to grow as persons in a world that we want to be characterized by dialogue, mutual recognition and respect for the beliefs of others without giving up one's own. The Salesian school wants to be a meeting place that helps each young person, whatever their religious condition, to live to the full: by educating the person to interiority, and to the search and yearning for the infinite; building the personal dignity and integrity of each person; getting fully involved and creating existential bonds of solidarity; creating living conditions that promote integral development.

This dialogue is first and foremost a *conversation about human life*, open to all people, sharing their way of seeing and being in the world, their hopes and desires, their religious values, and this exercise of dialogue is mutually enriching. In short, "religious education is the means by which we can lead students to discover the mystery of the human person, just as St. Paul led the people of Athens to discover the 'unknown God'" (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, no. 76).

As open and welcoming schools, therefore, we contribute to the creation of a culture of encounter, in which we seek to build a new intercultural attitude aimed at the *integration of cultures in mutual acceptance*, without raising barriers and without falling into relativism or syncretism. This mutual enrichment cannot do without the Christian principles that give meaning

to the identity of the Catholic school, proposed with determination and respect.

*A Catholic school addresses this perspective by "discovering the multicultural nature of one's own situation, overcoming prejudices by living and working in harmony, educating oneself 'by means of the other' to a global vision and a sense of citizenship. Fostering encounters between different people helps to create mutual understanding, although it should not mean a loss of one's own identity" (EDUCATING TO INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL, INTRODUCTION).*

This type of school, which is not afraid of differences but appreciates them, initiates dialogue so that students can get to know each other better, become more aware of their choices, learn to be responsible, and deepen their identity. This school takes responsibility for the personal development of all, *while at the same time stimulating religious growth*. It is necessary to consider dialogue as a criterion for giving shape to the educative project; "dialogue" is a form of "mission".

## 3 2

## AN EFFICIENT AND QUALITY EDUCATION

**A. Among the various ways through which evangelization is developed, we Salesians give preference to the educational perspective** that best guarantees "a courageous and innovative fidelity to one's own educative project" (*Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools, Introduction*) in different social, cultural and religious contexts. In a very general sense, education is intentional (with specific aims, defined tasks, appropriate experiences) and a team effort (EPC). From this perspective, Salesian schools offer a significant and quality educative and cultural proposal in which:

- ▮ the dynamics of teaching and learning are supported by a *solid educational foundation*;
- ▮ attention is given to a "systematic and critical assimilation of culture" (*The Catholic School*, no. 26), work and social communication;

- ▮ *innovation* must be one of the guiding principles of the Salesian school as a whole and of each of its players;
- ▮ young people are offered a *gradual and orderly pedagogical and pastoral approach* that encourages them to discover their own life plan;
- ▮ the continuous updating of the *professional qualifications and the Salesian identity* of all EPC members is guaranteed through systematic processes of ongoing formation;
- ▮ *the culture of continuous improvement* is encouraged in the institutional dynamics;
- ▮ *renewed pedagogical models* are developed that define what and how to teach and when and how to evaluate.

**B. The organized content of the various disciplines** are proposed as knowledge to be acquired, truths to be discovered, techniques to be mastered, answers to questions and values to be assimilated. The school's mission also educates through the curriculum: the different areas realize the educational processes for the best development of the person. These areas, increasing in number, cannot be limited to ensuring the acquisition of content. The evangelization of the academic environment involves bringing *the Christian sense of the human realities that are taught* in the different areas. This is the place and the method of the much-used dialogue between faith and culture. We run the risk of falling into the trap of thinking that evangelization has to do only with the specifically pastoral field, while forgetting the immense potential of the academic environment.

This is why we *value knowledge as an element of the humanization of the person*. This is aided by the clarity of the knowledge, the teaching approach and, above all, the essential cultural understanding that is being presented.

The task of educating young people, of leading them to the truth, *is a profound act of love*, it is "intellectual charity" (Benedict XVI). This act of love on the part of the teacher leads him or her to show

a unified truth, not a fragmentary and utilitarian knowledge typical of a positivist view of the world, but a profound and beautiful truth.

It is absolutely necessary to ensure that education to values, ideals and deep aspirations, which make up the framework of holistic education (cf. GC 23, no. 56), prevail in our schools, as opposed to purely scientific-technological notions. This means that, on the one hand, we give importance to the human experience underlying the different disciplines, helping young people to grasp, appreciate and assimilate *the intrinsic values* of the facts presented and explored; and, on the other, that interest is shown in *universal culture*, through the expressions of the different peoples and the heritage of values shared by all humanity.

**C. The gender identity laws** passed in some countries affect many areas of social life and therefore have many important implications in the field of education. In educational centers there is a growing interest in how to address, accompany and guide the affective-sexual education of students. We give priority to the education of the heart, the place of affections, emotions, expressiveness and creativity, and we encourage meaningful experiences of interiority.

Without going into further details, it is obvious that *the anthropological concept contained in some laws is antagonistic to Christian anthropology*. This particular aspect is of great importance for education in our schools and touches on very important issues related to the concept of the person that is to be taught, which borders on, and sometimes clashes directly with the anthropological assumptions of a Christian concept of the person.

The integration of affective-sexual diversity in an educational center has to do with certain criteria for reflection and means of intervention (cf. *A youth ministry that educates to love*). Among others, we point out: being trained with a clear and basic conceptualization of each subject; informing parents about what is contained in the laws on diversity, through qualified and reliable persons; including in the formation of the students those aspects related to affective-sexual education that will help them in their process of maturity, in full accordance with the Center's Educative Plan and in respect of the students' rights and personal freedoms;



as these are matters that affect the most intimate nucleus of one's personality, they require a personal, careful and prudent treatment, always in the best interest of the minor; creating a safe environment against any kind of bullying, insults, derogatory remarks, vulgar insults and physical assaults that may arise from the sexual orientation of a student.

### 3 3 SALESIAN PEDAGOGY

In every field, Salesian practice has the pastoral-spiritual-educative plan of Don Bosco as its frame of reference and measure of authenticity. The core and foundation of this plan is known as the **Preventive System**. It is the result of the union of a series of elements that define its threefold aspect: rational (reason), religious (religion) and affective (love). These three axes are the fundamental inspiration of a proposal designed to give a total response to past and present challenges that concern the world of youth. The experience of these three aspects is the most characteristic and charismatic feature of our schools.

The Preventive System basically includes:

- ▮ creating a positive environment that stimulates, supports and develops a taste for the good.
- ▮ being present in the lives of children and young people, especially those who are in unfavorable situations due to social, economic, cultural, ethnic or personal circumstances.
- ▮ encouraging the positive development of the inner strengths of human beings.
- ▮ accompanying them in their process of maturity and human and Christian growth.
- ▮ offering suggestions for vocational, voluntary and missionary work.
- ▮ leading people to a citizenship based on the Gospel and a sense of commitment ("honest citizens and good Christians").

**A. Reason**, combined with pedagogical charity, enables us to: contribute to the formation of firm beliefs; evaluate life and things with depth, and a positive and critical sense; discover, starting from autonomy and freedom, the true meaning of earthly reality; discover the culture of effort, of ongoing formation, and of the motivation to learn; look with hope at the person and the positive values of today's culture.

In particular, it is manifested in:

- ▮ the rationality of the requirements and rules,
- ▮ the flexibility and common sense of actions,
- ▮ the care for spaces for listening,
- ▮ dialogue and patience,
- ▮ understanding the concrete world of young people,
- ▮ cultivating realism and a spirit of initiative.

**B. Religion**, which reminds us that pedagogical love is based on faith, encourages: openness to transcendence; respect for different religious and belief options; an unconditional encounter with God who loves us just the way we are; acceptance of the truth and goodness that beats in the heart of every person; the journey to personal sanctification.

In particular, it is revealed through:

- ▮ interest in the dialogue between faith, science and the surrounding culture,
- ▮ the continuous discovery of the value and relevance of the "good news" of the Gospel,
- ▮ the experience of moments of interiority and prayer,
- ▮ experiences of discerning the signs of God's presence and will,
- ▮ the proposals of the first proclamation.

- C. The experience of **love/affection/loving kindness**, which is the liberating power of the educative act, involves: unconditional acceptance; trust in the potential for good in each person; constructive and rich relationships in the various educative proposals; participation in the joys and sorrows of others; the translation of educative love into concrete signs; the practice of a friendliness that makes children and young people not only loved but aware that they are loved; the free and profound encounter with others.

In particular, it is revealed:

- ▮ in personal relationships,
- ▮ in kindness,
- ▮ in seeking the good of the student,
- ▮ in loving others just the way they are, as persons,
- ▮ in mature affection.

As can be deduced from the above, the word System in Salesian pedagogy refers to **a systematic, all-encompassing, articulated and comprehensive educational experience**. In short, the Preventive System is:

- ▮ a proposal for the total well-being of the person,
- ▮ a spirituality for a Christian way of living,
- ▮ a practical pedagogical method.

### 3 4

## SOCIAL FUNCTION AND CARE FOR THOSE MOST IN NEED

*«A Salesian school should be for poorer people: this should be reflected in its siting, its culture, its curriculum and its choice of students. Services to meet local needs should be provided, such as courses for cultural and professional training, literacy and remedial programs, scholarships and other initiatives» (REG. 14).*

- A. The educational programs are open to numerous experiences; coordinated by the school, they can also lead to interventions outside the school. Educators accompany the **integration of young people into reality**, in collaboration with educational/training institutions and agencies. The full integration of young people into local life and their taking up responsibility contribute to building up a more just and dignified society. The school “must not lose its missionary impulse and confine itself to an island” (*The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*, no. 72).

In this regard, Pope Francis’ *Global Compact on Education* is a challenge to transform the world through education, inviting young students to have educational experiences that are not elitist, exclusive or exclusionary, but rather experiences of solidarity, brotherhood and service to others. The Pope’s educative proposal of major international importance is based on the principles of cooperation and solidarity, care for the environment, the appreciation of teachers, inclusion, equity and the participation of all in building the future of education.

- B. Every proposal for education and evangelization must be based on the real needs of those it seeks to serve. But the closer we come to these needs, **the more we allow ourselves to be challenged by them, and the more we are attracted to the real needs, those that cause the situations of poverty of our children, adolescents and young people**, that is, those human limits that more or less severely hinder the realization or maturity of the person, or marginalize them from the social group: economic, intellectual, affective, physical, psychological poverty, etc.

And here we are faced with a great quantum leap that distinguishes one educator from another, and one school from another. For a school

to be considered Christian, the first condition is that it offers signs, the signs of the Kingdom; *it must be distinguished by its preference for the poor*. A Salesian school educates to the Gospel when, wherever it finds failure, it seeks to create meaning; when the dignity or freedom of the person is in serious danger, it seeks to strengthen and revive them; and when young people find closed doors, narrowed horizons... the school offers them hospitality and hope.

For this reason, **Salesian schools:**

- ▮ seek to establish themselves in *the more working-class areas* and give preference to the *young who are most in need*;
- ▮ become centers of social animation in their environment, preferably opting for curricula, specializations and programs that meet the *needs of the youth in the area*;
- ▮ reject *all discriminatory conditions or exclusion*;
- ▮ pay attention to the multiple *aspects of diversity*;
- ▮ value and work on *citizenship as a reference* for social behavior;
- ▮ give priority to the criterion of *promoting everyone* over that of selecting the best;
- ▮ promote a systematic *social formation* of their members, *sensitive to the world's biggest problems, open to hope and engaged in reality*;
- ▮ use *techniques for identifying students' needs and motivations* (questionnaires, observation scales, individualized teaching platforms) to identify those most in need of support;
- ▮ practice *empathy and solidarity*, making people and spaces available, offering support services open to all, and collaborating with other educational and social institutions;
- ▮ foster the creation and development of *Salesian-style leaders among young people*;

- ▮ engage in new educational approaches aimed at providing *service to the community*. Among other things, the Service-Learning methodology is active and collaborative, linking and integrating curricular objectives with service objectives;
- ▮ encourage their students and EPC members to have a concern for generous service to others by implementing *educational actions that bring together young people from different places and socio-cultural and economic backgrounds*;
- ▮ opt for community building, *concern for the poorest, justice and care for the common home*, aware of the social and environmental crisis;
- ▮ encourage our *past students* to have a significant presence in the world, where they are active and proactively involved in cultural, educational and professional dialogue in the local area and in the local Church.

C. We are called to help our students, and indeed the entire school community, to *recognize and celebrate diversity, to meet and appreciate the other*. We must give priority to educational attention to individual differences without prejudice, misunderstanding or stereotypes, especially with regard to students with educational needs: late entry into the educational system; delayed schooling or lack of language skills due to being immigrants or refugees; belonging to ethnic or cultural minorities in a socially disadvantaged situation; irregular schooling due to family displacement or repeated or periodic school dropouts; residence in socially, culturally or economically disadvantaged areas; dependence on institutions for the social protection of minors; maladjustment to the school and educational environment, etc.

Students' aptitudes, abilities, strengths, rhythms, learning interests, culture, age, and curricular skills, as well as other social or personal circumstances, are a unique educational reality that must be analyzed and addressed with respect and understanding of differences. In this regard, the priority of an inclusive school, where there is room and attention for everyone, should be emphasized. It is not only a question of integration, but inclusion. Rejecting the

“throwaway culture”, an expression used by Pope Francis as the key to interpreting various social problems, means adopting a specific anthropological and ethical vision that transcends and transforms the whole of reality:

*“It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the “exploited” but the outcast, the “leftovers” (EVANGELII GAUDIUM, NO. 53).*

## SYSTEMATIC PASTORAL ANIMATION OF THE SALESIAN SCHOOL

CHAPTER

IV

The pastoral animation of the Salesian school requires the development of **specific itineraries and systematic interventions**, at times starting from the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, at other times from cultural proposals, but always leading to a combination of both.

## 4.1 MAIN INTERVENTIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

### 4.1.1 Educational environment

- A.** In the Salesian tradition, people, time, space, relationships, teaching, study, work and all other activities are systematically integrated in a climate of peace, joy and commitment: this is the educational environment.

Moreover, **every act of education is an act of relationship**. Therefore, it is necessary to give quality to educational relationships, which are based on reasonable demands, the value of daily life and the educational accompaniment of Salesian assistance.

We attach great importance to *joy, celebration and play*, and pay special attention to courtyard moments. It is not just a geographical place where activities and initiatives can be carried out, but also a **time for building personal relationships through free and spontaneous interaction, animation, games, sports and the presence of the educator** in face-to-face spaces with young people. Every Salesian school is called to safeguard times and spaces set aside for meetings with students; it must inevitably guarantee the presence of authoritative and joyful adults among the youth, in the spirit of Don Bosco.

In addition to the attention given to study, research and work, it is important from an educational point of view to respect and care for the teaching materials, facilities and places where school life takes place, as an expression of a sense of belonging.

- B.** Therefore, we promote a **framework or code of ethics for action** based on the values and virtues of the Salesian school, integrated into the daily life of the center (plans, programs, etc.).

We want to promote *the creation of a safe environment* and a culture of good relationships. A code of conduct helps us to cultivate and maintain our sense of ethics, our institutional ethics, and to have a road map. Its primary function is to provide direction, empowerment and guidance. It helps us to see clearly what we intend: what we are, what we want to be, and where we need to go. We are all called to the same course of action, regardless of our role or position in the school. Through the code of conduct, we all know what is expected of us in terms of specific behaviors and actions.

Its purpose is to protect the most vulnerable individuals (students), but also educators, by preventing them from becoming involved in compromising or conflict situations. It is also designed to protect the educational institution, which is ultimately responsible for what happens in our schools.

### 4.1.2 Holistic humanism from a Christian perspective

- A.** Learning about other ways of thinking, other ways of being, other views of the world and cultures is a challenge in itself. The central problem of the school is its cultural approach: its holistic reflection on the human person. The school in general, and the Salesian school in particular, must consider in its curriculum the formation of the dimension of meaning, and therefore of the meaning and function of religion within *a humanistic and transcendent anthropological vision of the student*; a student with broad horizons and sufficient critical capacity to come into contact with other ways of believing, thinking and living.

In the daily life of the classroom, an anthropological vision inspired by a **complete humanism is offered from a Christian perspective**. Indeed, Catholic education is based on the belief that Jesus Christ is the complete and convincing expression of the fulfilment of human potential (cf. *The Catholic School*, no. 34, 35).

Therefore, educators in the Salesian school set up *training programs* imbued with the contribution of this Christian and Salesian humanism, together with other issues that are central to the overall growth of young people: *the formation of conscience, education to affectivity and socio-political education*, and in particular, we believe that personal development presupposes *openness to dialogue with God in profound interiority*. We are committed to a community vision of the person, built on relationships based on respect, collaboration and giving. This vision and these attitudes extend to all creation. We also believe in the power of the *vocation of each person*, that is, living with a sense of vocation and contributing something valuable to the world so that it may become a more just and fraternal place.

**B.** In the Salesian school, which focuses on the discovery of a *personal life plan based on solid human values rooted in the Gospel*, we want each young person to cultivate an anthropological dimension (personal growth), a social/solidarity dimension (relational maturity and commitment) and a transcendent dimension (spiritual and vocational growth). This is how we **define the exit profile of each student**:

- ▮ Develops health habits and values and takes care of himself/herself.
- ▮ Cultivates joy and discovers opportunities for growth in all situations of life.
- ▮ Welcomes the reality around him/her with an attitude of respect, wonder, and contemplation.
- ▮ Is capable of critical discernment and has developed a free and responsible will.
- ▮ Possesses the intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence to build positive relationships and emotional bonds.
- ▮ Knows his/her emotions, expresses them, and integrates them into his/her personality in a mature way.

- ▮ Possesses cultural, technological, and multilingual knowledge that enables him/her to critically interpret the world in its current paradigms.
- ▮ Works in groups and collaborates with others, avoiding confrontation and competitiveness.
- ▮ Acts with solidarity and compassion, works for justice and shows preference for the weak, in order to exercise an active and committed global citizenship based on the values of democratic coexistence and the culture of love and life.
- ▮ Faces reality with a creative, innovative and enterprising approach that enables him/her to integrate into the world in a constructive way.
- ▮ Adapts successfully to different situations and to the processes of change that may occur in them.
- ▮ Develops and lives his/her inner self and faces the profound questions of existence with openness and honesty.
- ▮ Is familiar with the Christian faith and has experienced dialogue with the God of Jesus of Nazareth.



### Teaching of the Catholic religion

The teaching of the Catholic religion, considered a fundamental element of education, is part of the school curricula in many nations. Aware of the particular difficulties inherent in the Christian formation of young people, periodic processes are carried out to plan and verify the quality of religious education, **an important opportunity for cultural formation**.

Religious education in schools allows students to have an understanding of the transcendent dimension and an approach to religious experience. The goal must be for students to perceive religion (in general) and Christianity (in particular) as a concrete and valid way of living and cultivating their spirituality. It is an education that helps young people to discover the religious dimension of human reality and seek the ultimate meaning of life.



It offers guidance towards a choice that is conscious and free for an active and coherent life. It offers an open and positive view of Christian doctrine, which prepares for its explicit proclamation. It fosters critical and positive dialogue with other areas of knowledge and with other religions and it awakens the desire for ongoing education to the faith in the Christian community.

#### 4.1.4 *A constantly updated pedagogical approach*

**A.** We adopt a pedagogical approach that is constantly updated, and in which **the teaching method of personalization and collaboration** stands out. Our pedagogical model is based on the following options:

- ▮ innovation in teaching and organization, as well as continuous pedagogical-pastoral updating;
- ▮ active methodologies based on tools, programs and resources that allow meaningful learning and the ability to explore;
- ▮ ongoing training for educators and the promotion of cooperative work;
- ▮ digital training for students and teachers, as the use of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, is currently fostering the development of new ways of learning;
- ▮ quality and excellence, supported by ongoing evaluation processes;
- ▮ renewed planning of physical spaces in the school to transform them into learning spaces;
- ▮ actions and programs that respond to the needs of the local area and are aimed at achieving global citizenship
- ▮ interdisciplinarity, which ensures a more profound and meaningful learning experience.

**B. New technologies in the teaching-learning process** are already creating new ways of educating, which must adapt to new lifestyles and are great allies of formation. We see how ICTs (in all their various forms: mobile devices, digital books, social networks...) are increasingly present and integrated into the lifestyles of our children, adolescents and young people.

The new “virtual courtyard” is still seen as one of the areas of accompaniment, an online space where they can meet even outside of formal activities. *The digital revolution of recent years has fully involved the world of education.* Schools in particular have been overwhelmed by the irruption of social networks, artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced language models such as ChatGPT. Despite the critical issues, we are on the verge of an “undeniable quantum leap”.

*The potential of technology in education is clear:* it can personalize adaptive learning, improve accessibility, foster autonomy and problem solving, and generate teaching materials and inspiration. However, if not handled carefully, it can also deepen inequalities, promote inhumane and dehumanizing experiences, and create addiction to technology, overconfidence in its results, and misinformation.

In this context, it is crucial to equip teachers with the skills they need to navigate the digital world in a virtuous way. Aware of the enormous educational potential of these technologies, **teachers need ongoing preparation and training** in the use of new technologies, especially emerging applications. For this reason, we must help teachers develop *strategies to educate and encourage our students to be responsible, critical, and civic-minded* in the face of the abuses that can be committed with these technologies, and to encourage schools to provide families with information and education on new technologies and social networks to help them in the difficult responsibility of educating their children.

#### 4.1.5 Other freely chosen complementary, supplementary and reinforcing activities

The Salesian school provides ample space for artistic, recreational, sports and cultural activities. It is a school that offers full-time education and is linked to its environment. In addition, the complementarity of the different environments (vocational training center, parish, Oratory-youth center, specialized works for marginalized youth, etc.) of the Salesian work in an area or place is valuable for achieving a holistic pastoral approach.

The annual program provides specific times for participation in these activities: dance schools, music schools, choir, drama, languages, sports, art and creativity workshops, nature activities, etc. In these activities we see that *art is fundamental to the educational process*. It promotes the development of intellectual skills, perceptual sensitivity, expression and the ability to appreciate beauty.

To this end, some schools provide young people with *educational spaces in accordance with the Salesian pedagogical approach*: areas for informal meetings; multipurpose rooms that encourage different types of groups and different ways of sharing experiences; music rooms, chapels and celebration rooms; spaces for educational sports; versatile libraries where workshops and performances are held; areas with vegetation or school gardens, etc.

#### 4.1.6 Articulation of explicitly evangelizing activities

One of the pillars of the identity of the Salesian school is the clear and comprehensive articulation of explicitly evangelizing activities. The educative and pastoral proposal is translated into experiences and activities which are dear to the Salesian tradition. They also overcome a reductive notion of pastoral animation as “entertainment” and offer diversified strategies for human development and education to faith:

- A. *Short daily encounters* for everyone or for groups (“Good morning”, words of welcome) inspired by the “Good night” practiced by Don Bosco in his life experience with his boys at Valdocco. The “Good morning” is seen as a time for prayer and a wise interpretation of life with a view to the gradual assumption of the judgment of events. The

“Good morning” is a daily, regular and brief moment at the beginning or end of the school day, formative in nature, consisting of a few words (thoughts, reflections, sharing of experiences, development of a theme) guided by an educator or the youth themselves.

- B. Throughout the school year, the students and teachers of the Salesian schools are offered *formative and spiritual experiences*. One of the approaches is the group outing, which lasts one or two school days or a weekend. The diversification of contents and methods according to students’ levels and ages, as well as their progression and continuity from one level to another, should be emphasized. Other topics that are worked on are: knowledge and living together in the group; knowledge of the center’s educative plan; formative themes of personal growth, relationships and personal life plan; aspects of Christian identity; evaluation of the group’s progress.

The Salesian school gives space to, promotes and accompanies *the various groups* (study and research, cultural, recreational, artistic, community service, volunteer services, Christian growth, professional guidance, Christian commitment), recognizing that they are a special form of education and evangelization. It is a process of initiation, understood in all its anthropological richness, that is, the process by which students enter into a group of peers, integrate themselves in the relationships of its members, participate and intervene in its history... The result is the acquisition of an identity and full incorporation into the group.

- C. *Campaigns of solidarity or promoting educational values* are planned (e.g. liturgical periods, Salesian feasts, anniversaries, important events). The link with world, ecclesiastical, Provincial and local life is important.
- D. Faithful to what Don Bosco experienced with the boys at Valdocco, each school should plan *specific moments of prayer and celebration*. They can be liturgical, sacramental or devotional. Students belonging to other Christian denominations and other religions may also take part in these moments as opportunities for cultural integration and to become familiar with religious traditions of the country in which they live. The Eucharist and celebrations of local events, liturgical periods or devotions are an integral part of the educative and pastoral

approach. Special attention should be given to the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

On some occasions (feasts or general school celebrations) there is the participation of all students; on others, only students who wish to do so, duly motivated by groups and sections.

In any case, it is important to teach the customs of celebration (how to stand in sacred spaces, signs, responses, participation in common prayer and singing), to initiate prayer as a dialogue with God, to relate what is being celebrated to one's own life and faith. It is important to take care of the place (decorations, music, words). In some contexts, *spaces or workshops for interiority* are offered, which are a formative process that accompanies the growth of personal prayer from the earliest stages.

- E. Throughout the school year, time should be allotted for *moments of gathering and celebration* as opportunities for thanksgiving and education to shared responsibility and a sign of belonging. Families and the various components of the EPC are involved in the organization and development of some of these initiatives. Special emphasis should be given to the celebration of Salesian feasts, opportunities for growth in family spirit and a sense of gratitude.
- F. *Vocational animation* is the dimension of youth ministry that aims to help young people, in the process of personal development, to discover and embrace their personal life plan in the light of their general and specific Christian vocation. It results in interventions or strategies inspired by the Preventive System: the educator's attitude of constant dialogue and the possibility of closeness and daily personal accompaniment; the family atmosphere, made up of constant presence and the establishment of authentic friendship relationships; the care of specific activities (vocation weeks, advertisements and posters, round table discussions, social networks, etc.); the proposal for spaces where young people can share their vocation with their peers and share their own experiences, etc.; the proposal of spaces and times for personal accompaniment in discernment, appropriate to the age and personal process of the young person; the offer of progressive altruistic and solidarity commitments within the center itself and outside it; the

explicit proposal of vocations of particular commitment in the Church, especially within the Salesian family.

- G. Initiatives focused on *missionary animation*, with the aim of creating, developing and keeping alive a missionary and solidarity consciousness among young people. Some important methodological elements are: the transversality of solidarity and the committed content of this dimension in the rest of the educational work; the offer of missionary campaigns that provide information, awareness, formation and action through concrete actions of solidarity; moments of group formation, with the support of grants; missionary groups, as part of the process of faith formation in the group; contact with missionaries, visits to exhibitions and volunteer experiences.



#### Personal encounter with students

Young people who attend the Salesian school often find the family atmosphere there attractive. In animating the EPC, it is important for educators to be always available for personal encounter with the students. Taking into account the different developmental stages of the students, the educators in each section should have sufficient time and space for personal encounter with the students in order to review the progress each one has made and what can be proposed.

All educators should be available for personal dialogue, but some should dedicate special attention to this service. Psycho-pedagogical counseling has an important role to play in this regard. But it must go a step further in order to offer spiritual accompaniment to those who wish it.

Since accompaniment is at the heart of the educative action, it is necessary to *identify the profiles of the accompanying persons* in the school and give them time and space to carry out these functions of accompaniment. They must be close, approachable and welcoming people, who are able to listen, to relate to others easily, etc.

## 4.1.8 Selecting, training and updating teachers and leaders

**A.** The formation and updating of teachers are great opportunities for every educational institution and for those who work there. It is important that our teachers receive ongoing formation and updating, not only with regard to their methods and disciplines, but also in the development of their professionalism within the Salesian school, according to a formative plan that links faith, knowledge and life. Therefore, the formation of teachers should take into account the personal and institutional skills that are related to our identity. As Pope Francis said, “we cannot create a culture of dialogue if we do not have identity” (Pope Francis, *Speech to the teachers and students of “Collegio San Carlo” of Milan*, 6 April 2019).

The courses, days of reflection and formation in which the teachers of the Salesian school are expected to participate will involve them in a process which includes skills concerning practical aspects of method and teaching in the Salesian tradition. Some of these skills are listed below:

- ▮ Experience of faith, Salesian identity and charism, pastoral sense of educative action:
  - Teachers are familiar with the Salesian charism and live their profession as a vocation, according to the values of the Salesian Institution. They combine faith with key attitudes such as trust, kindness, solidarity and dedication.
  - They are actively involved and participate in the development of the Salesian educative and pastoral plan, with the purpose, mission and vision of the institution, showing a clear sense of belonging.
  - Greater attention is given in their formation to the educational ministry within the specific dynamics of the school.
  - There is an educational coherence with one's own work, which is not limited to mere teaching, but aims at transforming the environment.

### ▮ Intra and interpersonal care and development:

- Teachers must have a human and welcoming personality. They try to manage their emotions and feelings appropriately, creating a safe environment and helping students to grow in all their dimensions.
- The teacher is an active listener and an effective communicator, and acts as a facilitator of personal relationships based on closeness, kindness and empathy.
- Their professionalism is characterized by a fundamental ethical dimension, understood as a personal witness that promotes the growth of human values in young people.
- They carry out their duties in accordance with the school's Educative Plan and complying with the criteria established by the coordinating and governing bodies.

### ▮ Professional and pedagogical development:

- Teachers are characterized by their professional competence, their interest in systematic updating and their active participation in planning and evaluation meetings.
- Teaching is innovative, offering creative responses to the teaching-learning process, based on the specificity of the Salesian project. The teacher is a pedagogically effective professional.
- Teachers work as a team to achieve common and shared goals.
- In addition, they are concerned with the quality of their professional performance and the continuous improvement in carrying out the tasks entrusted to them.
- They plan and organize activities according to the characteristics and needs of the learners.

- B.** Initiatives at local as well as Provincial level should be regularly planned in response to a Provincial formation plan for teachers, with particular **attention to the formation of newly hired teachers**.

It is essential to give due attention to the Salesian identification process of these new educators and to cultivate a sense of belonging to the Salesian house and the Province. This issue is increasingly becoming a professional choice that goes beyond a simple employment contract. It can be useful to develop a local and Provincial plan to accompany the charismatic identity.

Before this process of identifying teachers with the Salesian style, there is a **selection process**. It is necessary to establish a clear protocol that defines the procedure. It will be necessary to establish minimum criteria of competence to carry out the educational function entrusted to them. In the process of hiring a new teacher, it is essential to go beyond the first individual interview; attention must be paid to the process of welcoming, accompaniment and evaluation, as well as the appropriateness of mentoring the first years of the teacher or a member of the administrative and auxiliary staff for their proper identification. Personal professional improvement plans should be developed, recognizing the talents that each person can bring ("map of talents").

- C.** Years ago, there was talk of the need to form lay people; today, in addition to this statement, in more and more places there is a need for **joint training involving laity and religious**. Awareness of this reality has increased due to the growing collaboration between Salesians and laity in decision-making, consultation and the need to integrate new dynamics of change and transformation in educational centers as well as in various apostolic activities.

Shared formation aims to *build and rebuild the Salesian identity, even as it is lived out in the context of one's own identity*. The process of joint training is strengthened when we try to read together the youth situation from the common experiences and needs of everyday life. This strengthens the sense of belonging and the updating of the charism.

Sharing time and space, sharing life, expressing faith experiences, praying together, having fun together... helps to understand the specific identity of lay people and Salesians, creates deep bonds of communion and allows the shared process to grow and mature.

The programs should take into account *the different levels of participation in the charism*:

- ▮ Those who wish to deepen their faith through a spiritual path (spiritual itineraries, retreats, etc.)
- ▮ Salesians and lay people in charge of animation, local or Provincial governance (directors, coordinators, etc.) and those directly involved in Salesian missionary projects (pastoral, educational, etc.).
- ▮ Those share solidarity projects (volunteer work, new presences, etc.).
- ▮ Those who take part in temporary projects of community life (new experiences, living together, etc.).

- D.** In addition to the training of teachers and staff, **priority should be given to the training of leaders**, both those currently in positions of responsibility and those who may assume them in the near future, with emphasis on planning and management aspects, especially with reference to the Salesian charism.



### *The SEPP is our "identity card"*

- A.** All the components and interventions that make up the school SEPP **should be part of the broader and more comprehensive Educative Plan**, in accordance with government legislation and the context itself. Educational ministry in schools is always a planned action: it begins with the discernment of the current situation, that is, it chooses to learn about reality in order to seek the most appropriate criteria for living and acting in it; in tension with the challenges of the area, it seeks to respond "in a Salesian way" through an action that favors the conversion of individuals and groups to the Gospel.

For this reason, **SEPP pastoral planning** expresses and defines the identity of the school, explaining the Gospel values which inspire it and translating them into practical and precise terms. The SEPP thus combines pedagogical reflection and pastoral practice; it is the humanizing project that the world of youth needs; it is therefore the criterion for all choices and interventions (school program, choice of teachers and textbooks, lesson plans, criteria and evaluation procedures, etc.). It distinguishes the pastoral intent animating the entire EPC, which is decisive in all the elements and articulations of the school. *The EPC is always the source, the place and the goal of all evangelization. There is no ministry, educational or otherwise, if the movement is the work of only one person.*

As educational institutions, our Salesian schools are part of a historical context and defined by national laws which define the system of organization and teaching. Our approach to education, our principles and the values that characterize them are recognized and endorsed by legislation. The SEPP presents the charism inspiring our educational service (the original motivation must continue to enlighten our work today); the concept of holistic education; the EPC as our model of the educative community; our values of reference; our educational method and the current preferred options.

The identity of “our Salesian school” as written in the local SEPP is thus a common educative proposal for all the students of the school and of each class. The SEPP, which defines explicit evangelizing activity in pastoral planning, is fully consistent with the culture of the curriculum (general educational options and teaching in general); with the extracurricular, organizational and management proposals (formative programs, activities, educative initiatives, organization and management of the school’s facilities, staff and resources). Pastoral activity, in so far as it is not considered an isolated element, permeates the entire work of education.

#### 4.1.10 The recovery of the language and aesthetics of youth

**Recovering the language and aesthetics of youth in order to create places for encounter and dialogue.** The educator must be familiar with and appreciate everything that young people like, at least for the

simple fact that it attracts them and is important to them (music, spaces for socializing, etc.). This knowledge is a bridge of encounter with them, which expresses what Don Bosco used to say: “May you like what they like, so that they may like what you propose to them”.

Therefore, in our school we must create *spaces that are cheerful, welcoming and bright*, in tune with imagination, and accessible and relevant to young people, and that encourage learning in a family atmosphere. The location of the spaces (classrooms, chapel at the foot of the courtyard, playgrounds, entrances, ...), everything has a meaning. At the same time, attention must be given to the pastoral pedagogy of the external signs, of the cognitive and festive routines and habits, and of the signs of Christian and Salesian identity. It is a question of teaching the symbols, images and music of the religious and Salesian world, so that young people may understand them, find meaning in them, and recreate and update them creatively.

## 4.2

### STRUCTURES OF PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

## 4.2.1

#### Local animation

- A.** The question we ask is: how do we create **an organizational culture** that reflects the identity and values of the Salesian school and fosters people who identify with the mission, are committed to the mission and share responsibility for the mission?

First of all, the structures of participation and shared responsibility intend to create the ideal conditions for a greater unity, participation and collaboration among the various components of the EPC. The aim is to implement the Educative and Pastoral Plan and foster a greater collaboration between teachers, students and parents. These structures vary according to the country and its school legislation. Therefore, each Province should define *concrete and appropriate organization procedures, internal functioning and responsibilities in its schools*, keeping in mind the following elements:

- ▶ First, the **EPC Council**, in accordance with the provisions of each Province, is a body which animates and directs all Salesian



activities through reflection, dialogue, planning and review of all educative and pastoral activities (GC24, 160-161.171).

- Second, the school's **leadership team** animates and directs the entire institution; it manages resources efficiently and guides its organization in accordance with Gospel values, so that all members of the school community make their specific contribution to achieving the same guidelines and goals of the educative plan. Therefore, in their meetings they not only deal with management issues, but also devote time to reflection, vision and strategy for the school, and leadership formation.
- The **teaching body** is responsible for planning educative and teaching guidelines in terms of proposal, discussion, decision and evaluation in accordance with the Educative and Pastoral Plan. Every school also ensures the teaching staff has certain structures: commissions (or teams or working groups) and departments (or various disciplines) for the purpose of planning, programming and implementation of educational initiatives. The aim is to promote a form of teamwork that creates community and a shared project.
- The **administrative and auxiliary staff** play a key role in the implementation and support of the Educative and Pastoral plan. They work in collaboration with the teaching staff and contribute to the organization and logistics of educational initiatives. Their work is essential to the proper functioning of the school, facilitating resource management, internal communication and support for educational activities. Through their involvement, the administrative and auxiliary staff contribute to a teamwork atmosphere that fosters a cohesive school community committed to the same goals and values.
- Lastly, the **Pastoral Team**, led by the pastoral coordinator, provides leadership for evangelizing activities, taking care of their effective integration into the educational process. The criteria for the composition of the team are defined at the local level. A certain number of students are also members of the team.

- B. For their part, **pastoral coordinators**, usually teachers, accompany more directly the evangelizing dimension of the Educative and Pastoral Plan. They are responsible for animating and coordinating the pastoral activities of the center (or section). They can be a lay person or a Salesian, with an evangelizing motivation and intention. They must have a basic qualification in the Salesian youth ministry and the ability to plan, organize and coordinate people and work in groups. In addition, they must have ability in relationships and personal accompaniment.

They also collaborate with the Director in the ongoing formation plan of the members of the Educative and Pastoral Community, paying particular attention to the aspects of the Christian experience and the Salesian identity of the educator. They also convene, guide, direct and evaluate the pastoral team and ensure the participation of all members of the Educative and Pastoral Community in the evangelization project of the center. They encourage the participation of the center in the pastoral activities promoted by the Province or other institutions in the social and Church environment.



### *Provincial/national animation*

The organizational structures established for Salesian schools exist at local, Provincial, national and international levels. They can be **civily recognized legal entities**. This network of cooperation at different levels constitutes an active presence in the school system; they also interact with social forces and other national and international bodies interested in educational processes. They can also join together to create synergies for the training of educators and school workers in a given country or area, and for reflection and updating on various pedagogical, legislative and educational issues.

Some Provinces offer **the service of a boarding school for young people attending the school**. The boarding schools have a residential structure that allows the students to stay all day, even at night. It is a conducive environment for study in an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence. The youth are constantly accompanied by a team of educators. The educators play an important role in the boarding schools: they assist and advise students during the hours of study and recreation;

they share meals with them and accompany them throughout the day. Students are given a human and cultural formation that supports them in their daily studies. The daily schedule is divided into school attendance, study time, recreation time, sports time, time for the development of artistic expression (games, painting, sculpture, drama, music, dance, sports) and time for spiritual care.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Vatican Council II, Declaration on Christian education of youth *Gravissimum educationis* (1965).
- Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2014).
- Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (2019).
- The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic school* (1977).
- The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in schools: witnesses to faith* (1982).
- The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The religious dimension of education in a Catholic school* (1988).
- The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium* (1997).
- The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to intercultural dialogue in Catholic schools: living in harmony for a civilization of love* (2013).
- The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The identity of the Catholic school for a culture of dialogue* (2022).
- John Bosco, “General Articles” of the “Rules for houses” (1877).
- Salesian Youth Ministry Sector, *Frame of Reference. Salesian Youth Ministry* (2014).
- Salesian Youth Ministry Sector, *Youth ministry and family* (2021).
- Salesian Youth Ministry Sector, *A youth ministry that educates to love* (2023).





