

The Salesian System of Education – The Preventive System

All educational activities within a Salesian School is carried out according to a basic educational philosophy which is usually referred to as The Preventive System. The Preventive System is a stream of positive activity flowing throughout the whole school, from the Principal to the youngest students which by its very positiveness excludes disorders and negativity.

The System demands an open mind and ready mind, constantly on the alert, ready and prepared for any eventuality. It lays upon the Principal and the teachers, the responsibility of creating an educative environment which allows the teachers and students to carry out their duties without tension or hardship. In this regard the physical and educational structures should be constantly reviewed so that any in-built cause of disorder may be eliminated.

It is based on three pillars: reason, religion and loving-kindness. The Preventive System, makes a friend of the pupil, who looks upon his educator as a benefactor who advises him, wishes to make him good, to save him from trouble, from punishments, and from dishonour.

The Preventive System demands from the teachers a well-planned, suitable, interesting course of studies for the students. How often disciplinary problems among the students are the direct result of hasty, or non-prepared classes? Students should know in advance the year's general program, the monthly and weekly proposed areas to cover. A teacher who does not conscientiously prepare his classes, fails not only against the Preventive System, but also against justice.

Teachers are assistants, guides and directors, and should be found often with the students. They should join, if possible, in student activities, be present in recreation with them, not as supervisors, but as assistants.

The Monitor System of St. John Bosco is to be favoured. Teachers, therefore, will delegate areas of responsibility to suitable class members. Students must always be kept busy and occupied, in the classroom and outside it. This demands far-sightedness, planning and organisation.

In this atmosphere of positive activity, understanding and tolerance, the real work of education – personality and character development – can be carried on. Gentleness, understanding and patience must be exercised at all times. "The System is based entirely on reason and religion, and above all, on kindness; therefore it excludes all violent punishment, and tries to do without the slightest chastisement." (St. John Bosco)

Belongingness, security, and recognition are attained in this system of education by the confidence generated through this interpersonal relationship between pupils and teachers who, in Don Bosco's words, are like "loving fathers" encouraging and praising at the proper moment. The needs for attention and recognition are fulfilled by wholesome outlets: sports, music, drama, field trips and a countless number of school activities.

The educator in a Salesian school seeks to minimize the negative effects of the so-called "generation gap" fostering the proper balance between authority and permissiveness, by blending freedom with responsibility, integrating the old and the new. In a word, he fosters true and genuine humanism. To stop at human values and not go beyond was inconceivable for Don Bosco: he placed great emphasis on the second factor of the Salesian Educational System.

The means of saving the young is and ever will be religion, which will dominate the actions of the young and effect permanent change for the good of the individual and that of society. Salesian Education, drawing always from authentic Catholic tradition, places great importance on the frequent use of the Sacraments - the ordinary channels of God's grace and help.