Emotional Intelligence

And Its Role in Developing the Whole Character of the Faculty

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**Mission, Vision and Philosophy**

As written in the Student – Parent Handbook, the philosophy of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School is to "offer a Christian learning experience within a safe environment. We strive to assist parents in fulfilling their responsibilities and consider ourselves partners in the education of the whole child: spiritually, morally, intellectually, physically, emotionally, and socially. Following the example of Jesus' love for the young, we strive to teach as he did and to develop each student's abilities and talents. We strive to teach and instill Christ-like attitudes and values so that each of our students will be able to think, act, and live like Christ and recognize and fulfill his/her obligations and responsibilities as members of their family, school, community, nation, world, and Church" (p. 7).

Our Employee Handbook further emphasizes the importance of the foundation of faith and spirituality by stating that "to implement the philosophy of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School, we, the faculty, working with the family and the Church, strive to meet the needs of each child by emphasizing these objectives. In an atmosphere of mutual respect, dignity, and appreciation of one's giftedness, students are challenged to develop and grow spiritually, intellectually, socially, and physically. Christian Charity and Respect are at the heart of who we are at OLPH School and should be at the forefront of everything we say and do at all levels (personnel, students, and family members) within our community" (p. 7-8).

These foundational statements are further supported by the vision of the Archdiocese of San Antonio that specifies that the "fundamental purpose of Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese

of San Antonio is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. His news is one of challenge, love and unity; His spirit is caught in the lives of students. Affirming that parents are the primary educators and partners of education, we prepare students to share the spirit of Jesus through community building, Christian acts of service, and word and worship" (Employee Handbook, p. 12). Upon these fundamentals of faith and spirituality, we work toward a common mission: "to build character and shape tomorrow's leaders by delivering academic excellence in a Catholic faith-based community" (Student-Parent Handbook p. 7)

These statements of mission, vision and philosophy lay the foundational purpose for the faculty and staff of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School (OLPH). Therefore, as leaders of the school, it is vitally important that we support the same ideals and values of faith and spirituality and foster that growth in the faculty and staff who are charged with this responsibility. One cannot give what one does not have.

**Community and School Climate**

Over the last six years, our school has had three principals and four assistant principals, each with a very different view on the importance of the Catholic identity of our community. With each change in principal and/or assistant principal came changes to the glue that held our community together. For some, the vision and mission followed a business model and was very bureaucratic in nature. With decisions handed down from the top and a "do or die" mentality of following orders, our community that was once filled with love and support for all members began to suffer. An air of distrust and fear replaced one of compassion and commitment to living Gospel values. As faculty and staff members tried to adjust to fit the mold of what each new campus leader wanted, they fell further from the ministry that drew them to this work and

closer to the business end of the job.  However, some strengths were never lost.  The level of

commitment to the community, the feeling of home and belonging, the roots were never lost

within a core of faculty and staff that have remained steadfast and persistent.  Finding a renewed

commitment to the ministry as we begin to rebuild is where the healing lies.  The faith and

spirituality of our faculty and staff are strong.  By building on these, we can continue to

strengthen community building, increase teacher buy-in and improve the school climate.  But

once again, faculty and staff members cannot give what they themselves struggle to find.

Therefore, we are called to minister to the faculty and staff.

**Motivation**

The ideas and thoughts held by individuals can be motivating as well as unmotivating

within a given organization.  In their book, *Organizational Behavior in Education*, Robert

Owens and Thomas Valesky (2007) speak to how motivation can be viewed in two distinct ways

– the cognitive view and the humanistic view.  The cognitive view of motivation says that

"human beings have an innate inner drive to understand the world, to make sense of it, to gain

control over their lives and to become increasingly self-directed" (Owen & Valesky, 2007, p.

378-379).  Piaget supports this theory with the idea of equilibrium.  Equilibrium is the belief that

"organizational routines develop regularity, predictability and dependability as desirable

motivating processes" (Owen & Valesky, 2007, p. 378).  This gives the impression that by

creating a regular, predictable and dependable climate within an organization, one will also

create a motivating climate.  The humanistic view declares that motivation is internal – not

something that is done to us rather it is human nature to want to grow, develop and mature.  As

an organization, if we can create conditions that enhance the likelihood that teachers will grow

intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, then the likelihood is that they will grow in motivation

as well.  However, we must keep in mind that each individual will bring his/her own perceptions

and judgements to the organization, thus creating his/her own motivation.  According to Owens

and Valesky (2007), "understanding one's own temperament not only puts one in a better

position to understand how one sees and deals with the organizational world but also gives one

the greater ability to understand the behavior of others in the organization" (p. 374).  The

environment of an organization (or school) is constructed of how those within the organization

perceive and interpret it.

**Multiple Intelligences**

How we perceive or interpret the world around us comes from four psychological types

to include introverted or extroverted, sensing or intuitive, thinking or feeling and perceiving or

judging.  One way to determine one's own psychological type is with the Myers-Briggs

Personality Type Indicator (MBTI).  The MBTI has been used by businesses and corporations to

help work groups understand the various types of coworkers within an organization and assist

them in working together more effectively.  Fredrick Herzberg's theory shows that an

individual's behavior is a result of the interaction of one's motivational needs and characteristics

and those of the environment.  Owen and Valesky (2007) state that "although educational leaders

have little ability to alter the inner drives and motivational forces of individuals in the

organization, they have considerable latitude to alter the organizational environment" (p. 185).

Therefore, I argue that while we as educational leaders cannot alter what motivates the

faculty and staff of our school, we can build on the motivational pieces that are already in place

and assist the faculty and staff in reconnecting to one another on the basis of shared values and

mutual respect.  The roots of our community are strong.  With teachers who are alumni of the

school themselves, teachers who have been at the school for twenty and thirty plus years, faculty

and staff who choose to have their own children attend the school, and multi-generational

families that date back to the founding of the school over one hundred years ago- these show the

bond to the community that is ever present.   Understanding who we are and what we bring to the

community will strengthen that bond.  This understanding can be found with an increase in

emotional intelligence.

**Emotional Intelligence (EI)**

According to Google Dictionary, emotional intelligence (EI) is "the capacity to be aware

of, control and express one's emotions, and handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and

empathetically".  Having a greater emotional intelligence can help to facilitate a strengthening to

the commitment of our community by rediscovering our shared values and having a mutual

respect for each other's gift and talents.  An increased emotional intelligence can increase

motivation, teacher self-efficacy, teacher engagement and teacher effectiveness, thus fulfilling

the goals of not only our school's mission, vison and philosophy but also fulfilling the goals of

our self-improvement plan to: understand character development in our school's mission

statement, deepen their faith, their spirituality and sense of community, have qualified and more

effective teachers, and include goal setting in the faculty assessment process as well as

Professional Development.

**EI and Teacher Self-Efficacy**

In their research, Ball, Penrose, & Perry share that Albert Bandura's social cognitive

theory states that self-efficacy is one's beliefs about his/her own ability to succeed or complete a

given task at a given level of success.  These beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate

themselves and behave.  People with a stronger self-efficacy maintain a stronger commitment to their tasks.  Self-efficacy beliefs can be significantly predicted by the components of emotional intelligence.  Emotional intelligence creates the ability to recognize the meanings of our emotions and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of those emotions.  Research by Ball, Penrose, & Perry demonstrates that emotionally intelligent employees had higher levels of job satisfaction and greater commitments to their organizations.  Assisting teachers to further develop their emotional intelligence may enhance their sense of self-efficacy.  As teachers' self-efficacy is associated with student achievement, enhancing teachers' emotional intelligence appears to be a means of achieving improved student outcomes (Ball, Penrose, & Perry, 2007).

**EI and Teacher Engagement**

In their studies, Extremera, Merida-Lopez & Rey report that emotional intelligence has been suggested to be a crucial factor for enhancing occupational health and well-being as well. EI has been linked to psychological outcomes such as health, well-being, job performance, work attitudes and engagement.  There are two factors that contribute to work-related stress for teachers – role ambiguity and role conflict.  Role ambiguity means that clear information is not present and communication is lacking.  Role conflict means two or more role pressures occur simultaneously and it is more difficult to comply with one because you are complying with another.  These role stressors create psychological distress, poor mental health, and reduced job performance.  Role stress also affects job satisfaction, occupational commitment and contributes to burn out and high turn over rates as well as diminished engagement.  EI plays a key role in reducing occupational stress among teachers.  According to Extremera, Merida-Lopez & Rey, teachers with higher scores in EI are able to use their affective processing resources when dealing with work related stress.  Teachers with higher EI scores have a higher satisfaction with

life, increased satisfaction with teaching and more positive attitudes in general.  Teachers who believe they have high emotional skills can cope successfully with school stress and can handle threats more constructively and respond more positively to situations at work.  It is believed that having personal resources such as emotional intelligence might energize teachers and help them to focus their efforts and have an increased level of persistence and motivation (Extremera, Merida-Lopez & Rey, 2017).

**EI and Teacher Effectiveness**

Howard Gardner states that interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other people, what motivates them, how they work, and how to work cooperatively with them.  It is not only important to understand one's own feelings and how they drive us.  We must also be able to recognize that in our coworkers as well.  In his paper, Ramana writes that the faculty members who performed superior in overall EI skills also tended to be highly effective teachers.  Higher levels of EI are associated with better workplace performance and physical and mental health.  Effective teachers are caring, helpful, knowledgeable, effective communicators, well-organized, have skills to motivate and inspire students and have good classroom management.  Those who use emotion to base their decisions lack fairness of judgement and often affect others with their emotions.  Emotionally intelligent teachers can understand and regulate their own emotions and can use proactive coping strategies when they experience stress.  They can monitor and manage negative emotions, be optimistic and motivate students.  It is important to give teachers more and more information about emotional intelligence as well as to inform them on signs of burnout and how to overcome it as well as how to deal with stressful problems.  Proactive teachers make plans for how to handle stressful situations and often persevere in achieving their goals regardless of difficulties.   Proactive coping enables teachers to respond to

stress and meet the constant demands of the job, thus experiencing less burnout.  To be proactive, teachers should work to set goals.  Goal setting exposes teachers to the idea of intentionally improving their own skills.  They reflect on what excites them about teaching, what personality traits they have and what skills and abilities they bring to teaching.  In understanding how all these pieces fit together, teachers will be self-motivated and invested in their ministry of teaching.  Teachers who are invested in the ministry and can recognize the investment of their coworkers will be committed to and invested in the organization, leading to an improved school climate (Ramana, 2013).

**Campus Implementation Plan**

Beginning in August, during teacher in-service week, it will be important to remind the faculty that we all come to this community with differences, and these differences are our gifts to our ministry.  In remembering that we all have differences, the administration will remind the faculty of when they took personality tests and encourage them to find their results or even retake the MBTI to discover their personality types.  Once everyone knows his/her Myers-Briggs Personality type, the faculty will be given a document that connects Myers-Briggs Personality Types to spirituality types.  Spirituality is what unifies us as a community.  It is why we choose to be Catholic school teachers.  Looking at how our personality types can be strengthened by expressing our spirituality will aid the teachers in developing a greater understanding of who they are and how they can enrich that spirituality.  Giving the faculty the opportunity to share their spirituality types with one another, finding other faculty members that share those traits and being given the opportunity to purposefully discuss that will assist the faculty members in getting to know one another better and foster community building.

Once the conversations of one's own personality type and spirituality have opened his/her mind to how each is fed spiritually, we will begin a video online course study from The Sophia Institute called *The Spirituality of the Teacher*.  This series of six videos will allow each faculty member to deepen hi/her personal relationship with Jesus and learn how to carry that over into relationships with coworkers as well as with students.  In the chart below, I have outlined the faculty meeting dates and the corresponding video segments and discussion topics that will be scheduled.

| August 6 – 15 (during in-service week) | "Spirituality for Teachers" |
|---|---|
| August 20 | "Teaching as Vocation" |
| September 17 | "Being Inspired and Uplifted" |
| October 15 | "Doing the Little Virtues" |
| November 12 | "Avoiding the Big Temptations" |
| December 17 | "The Never-ending Need to Know" |

After watching each video clip, faculty members will spend time discussing and sharing with their colleagues.  In the subsequent grade level meetings, teachers will collaborate how to use the lesson materials provided in their classrooms with their students.

Upon completing the video series, during a faculty meeting held on January 14th, administration will introduce the faculty to emotional intelligence and the impact of one's perception of the school environment.  During a half day professional development day scheduled for February 1st, a guest speaker will come in to speak to the faculty about taking an emotional intelligence assessment.  The *Leading Challenges* website advertises their EI

Assessment service as one that "measures a set of emotional and social skills that are critical to an individual's success in the following areas: the ability to effectively perceive and express yourself, the ability to develop and maintain relationships, the ability to cope with challenges and the ability to know how to use emotional information in an effective and meaningful way (http://www.leadingchallenges.com/)" Bringing in a presenter to help faculty members identify their own level of emotional intelligence will assist the faculty and staff members in better understanding what emotional intelligence is and how it relates to who they are within our community and how they exist within our community.

In the succeeding faculty meetings on March 18, April 15 and May 20, administration will help faculty and staff members to self-identify areas of strengths and how those strengths can help them to contribute to the success of our school, as well as self-identify areas where improvement is needed. In identifying the areas of improvement, the faculty and staff will be guided in setting goals for the 2019 – 2020 academic year. These goals will then be reviewed and revised as needed during the conferences each faculty member has in connection with the formative and summative assessments done by the principal and assistant principal during the 2019 – 2020 academic year.

In reviewing the success of this program, plans will be made for how to continue this process of goal setting. As new faculty and staff members join the OLPH community, we will revisit the material learned about emotional intelligence and offer the new members the opportunity to view the video segments. A portion of each faculty meeting will be devoted to enhancing the teachers' growth and continued enrichment of spirituality and emotional intelligence.

**Conclusion**

In a community that has undergone much change in such a short period of time, instability and uncertainty grow.  With these feelings of doubt and insecurity, tensions can rise and the climate of the school campus can become unstable.  Such is the case on my school campus.  Telling the faculty and staff what is "wrong" and how to "fix" it causes an increase in the negative climate.  Ministering to the faculty and staff, helping them to grow in their personal spirituality, will help them to feel a stronger sense of commitment and connection to their role within our community.  Helping the faculty and staff to understand their level of emotional intelligence, increase that intelligence, and recognize each other's gifts and talents will improve the relationships between the faculty and staff members, thus improving the campus climate of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School.

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