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### **Inclusive Service Delivery in Jesuit Secondary Education: A case study of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program at Manresa Prep**

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The University of San Francisco

INCLUSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN JESUIT SECONDARY EDUCATION: A CASE  
STUDY OF THE RODRIGUEZ LEARNING SERVICES PROGRAM AT MANRESA PREP

A Dissertation Presented to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
Department of Leadership Studies  
Catholic Educational Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Angelo J. Rizzo, S.J.  
San Francisco  
November, 2018

## ABSTRACT

The documents and rhetoric of Jesuit Catholic education speak frequently of care for the individual (*cura personalis*) and caring for those most in need. Frequently, however, students with learning disabilities are admitted to Jesuit Catholic schools without any consideration as to whether the school can address a student's individual learning needs. This study examined one particular program at one particular school – Rodriguez Learning Services at Manresa Prep -- that attempts to offer accommodations to students with learning disabilities.

Through interviews and observations over a six-week period with students, faculty, staff, administration, and alumni, the study sought to identify whether inclusive services were being offered to the students in Rodriguez Learning Services, and what connection those services had to the mission of Jesuit Catholic education. Data revealed that students did indeed receive an inclusive Jesuit Catholic education with accommodations appropriate to their learning needs. Additionally, staff members, alumni, and current students clearly articulated the connection between the work of Rodriguez Learning Services and the mission of Manresa Prep as a Jesuit Catholic School. All constituent groups acknowledge the need for greater trust and collaboration between classroom teachers and learning specialists. The lack of clear communication leads to an erosion of trust between learning specialists and classroom teachers, which affects the experience of students in Rodriguez Learning Services.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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November 15, 2018

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of my students – former and future – who have taught me what it means to be an educator, a Jesuit, and a priest. You have motivated me to pursue the *magis* in Jesuit Secondary Education, always striving to go deeper and to be true to our mission to form Men and Women for Others. Like so much in my life, this work would not have happened if not for you!

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

There are many people who have been part of the journey that led to this dissertation. I am eternally grateful to the many teachers I've had in my life, from my earliest years to my most recent, who have been role models for me and instilled in me a love learning and a desire to make the world a better place.

In particular, I want to thank Dr. Jane Bleasdale, whose expertise, compassion, and sense of humor made the process of writing this dissertation and conducting this research a joy and a privilege. I am more grateful to you than I can express, Jane – thank you for your support, your accompaniment, your encouragement.

Additionally, I am grateful to Dr. Michael Duffy and Dr. Kevin Oh, the other members of my committee, for their careful reading and insightful recommendations that helped to enhance this dissertation at every stage.

My passion for the subject matter of inclusive service delivery in Catholic High Schools comes from personal experience; watching my youngest brother Gabriel struggle during his adolescence fueled a fire in me to make a difference in the way Jesuit schools approach this issue. Gabe, your hard work, determination, and self-initiative never fail to inspire me. I am proud of the man you've become; being your brother has helped me to become the man and priest I am today.



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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

#### **Statement of the Problem**

For the Catholic Church and for the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), all peoples have a right to an education – and if they choose, a Catholic education (*Declaration on Christian Education*, 1965). This assertion on the part of the Church is grounded in Her fundamental belief that human persons are created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore, are endowed with inherent dignity and are entitled to basic rights (*Gaudium et Spes*, 1965). Although this is true in principle, Jesuit Catholic schools have not always responded to the needs of students with special needs; their legal obligation to do so is not as clear as it is for their publicly funded counterparts (Pitasky, 1999; Scanlan, 2009; Shaughnessy, 1998). This hesitation has a number of root causes spanning from financial considerations (Byrk, A., Holland, P., & Lee, V., 1993; Hunt, T., Joseph, E, & Nuzzi, R., 2002; Hunt, T., Joseph, E, & Nuzzi, R., 2004; Powell, 2004) to a lack of professional preparation/training (Bello, 2006; Scanlan, 2009; Boyle, 2010).

Nonetheless, since Vatican II, the Church has urged schools to expand their outreach, to welcome all students, and to offer a quality Catholic education that meets students' individual social, emotional, and physical needs (Byrk et al, 1993; Long and Schuttloffel, 2013). Jesuit Catholic schools have responded to this call, providing scholarships and funds to the poor and marginalized, ensuring that they are not excluded from Catholic educational opportunities (Stewart, et al., 2009; York, 1996). Still, while Church documents over the past forty years have continually encouraged schools to reach out to students with special needs and integrate them into our learning communities (USCCB, 1978; USCCB, 1998; USCCB, 2005), American Jesuit Catholic schools continue to lag behind in their efforts to educate students with learning

disabilities (Shokrai, 1997). In short, there is a disconnect between what the Church's documents say Her schools ought to do and what they actually do.

However, there are a growing number of Jesuit Catholic schools across the country that have responded to this need, and attempt to integrate students with special needs into their classrooms (Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2004; Scanlan, 2009). These schools have specific programs which address the different learning styles of their students. This study seeks to explore the dynamics regarding the efforts of these Jesuit Catholic schools. There is limited study to date on this issue, and this dissertation serves as an opportunity to fill that void.

### **Background and Need**

Since colonial times, education in the United States has made a distinction between general education and special education (Michaud and Scruggs, 2012). Research has shown that not all students learn the same way, and that diversified instruction and reasonable accommodations can significantly impact a young person's classroom experience (Winzer and Mazurek, 2000). Until the 1960s, however, "students with physical or cognitive disabilities were legally excluded from public general education classes" (Michaud & Scruggs, 2012, p. 20).

For a variety of reasons, Jesuit Catholic schools have not always responded to the needs of special needs students. Unlike their publicly funded counterparts, Jesuit Catholic schools are not required by law to offer services for students with learning disabilities unless the school receives federal funds (Boyle, 2010; Pitasky, 1999; Hunt, et. al., 2002; Shaughnessy, 1998). As a result, funding programs for special needs students, which can be expensive, must be raised by Jesuit Catholic schools or paid for by parents, as limited government support is given (Boyle, 2010; Eigenbrood, 2000; Powell, 2004).

Additionally, the historically homogenous structure of Jesuit Catholic school classrooms and curricula, which enabled teachers to educate large amounts of students, was not conducive to diversified instruction; the sake of the individual was forsaken for the sake of the group (Jacobs, 1997; Shokrai, 1997). A related cause can be tied to a lack of experience – or in some cases, education – for teachers in educating students with learning disabilities. Teachers are unprepared for this responsibility, and as a result, do not understand it as part of their job (Bello, 2006).

Educational research over the past forty years has shown us that every child, when given the necessary tools, is capable of learning (Bloom, 1984; Bloom, 1992). This research has also pointed to a new understanding of intelligence – namely, that there are multiple types of intelligence, and educators ought to take that into consideration when teaching – and evaluating – their students, (Gardner, 2006; Gardner, 2011; Nuzzi, 2017). In light of this new understanding, there has been a major revision in education law in the United States. In 1973, the United States Congress passed the Rehabilitation Act. Section 504 of this civil rights law “prevents discrimination against individuals with disabilities by any institution that receives federal funds and provides for a free, appropriate public education (FAPE),” (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2010, p. 11). Just two years later, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed, which guaranteed every individual a free, public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Coincident with this new understanding of education in the public sector, the Catholic Church experienced its own reimagining of its mission through the Second Vatican Council. Convened by Pope John XXIII in 1962 and closed by Pope Paul VI in 1965, Vatican II brought about a significant change in the Catholic Church’s self-understanding (*Declaration on Christian Education*, 1965; *Gaudium et Spes*, 1964; *Lumen Gentium*, 1965). Rather than standing apart

from the world and focusing in on itself, the Church became “profoundly engaged with the reality of the world’s experiences,” (McDade, 1991, p. 422). This new outward focus changed the Church’s way of proceeding in all areas of Her life, including the way that Catholic schools talk about and educate students with special needs (Pope Benedict XVI, 2008). IDEA and Vatican II have created a paradigm shift for educators, from resting on legitimate reasons for not offering an educational experience tailored to each individual student toward recognizing inherent duties to accomplishing this task.

For the Church, much of this shift has been in theory; in practice, there has been a lag. While the Church has called Jesuit Catholic schools to accept and to address this need, and while some schools and some teachers have stepped forward and answered this call, many have not. In 2000, a study by the National Catholic Education Association revealed that 37% of American Catholic high schools accepted and educated students with learning disabilities without providing any special accommodations (Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2004). Jesuit schools are not included in this study, because the Jesuit Schools Network does not keep data on number of students with diagnosed learning disabilities in their schools.

In light of the gap between praxis and theory, this study will examine a school that has responded to the Church’s call to action. In doing so, this study seeks to discover the ways and means that the Church’s call has been answered and the benefits for the school, students, and alumni as articulated by a faculty, administration, current students, and alumni. In taking a close look at how one school has responded, we hope that it will serve as a blueprint for other Jesuit Catholic schools.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how the Rodriguez Learning Services Program at Manresa Prep offers inclusive educational services to students with learning disabilities. The study also examined the benefits of the program to the school, its students, and its alumni. The study also examined how the Rodriguez Learning Services Program connects to the mission of Manresa Prep as a Catholic and Jesuit institution. Finally, the study sought recommendations for the Rodriguez Learning Services Program deemed necessary from those students, administrators, staff, and alumni interviewed.

## **Research Questions**

- 1) How does the Rodriguez Learning Services Program deliver inclusive education to students with learning differences at Manresa Prep?
- 2) What are the benefits of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program to (a) the school (b) the students (c) the alumni?
- 3) In what ways is the Rodriguez Learning Services Program aligned with the mission of Catholic education in general, and Jesuit education in particular?
- 4) What recommendations do those surveyed or interviewed have for the Rodriguez Learning Services Program?

## **Theoretical Rationale – Inclusion Theory**

Although free, public schooling has been a right since colonial times, our integrated understanding of general education and special education only emerged in the 1960s, as the nation's social consciousness grew to consider the needs and abilities of those typically pushed to the margins. "As late as 1973 in the state of Virginia, schools were allowed to exclude children thought to be physically or mentally incapable for school tasks," (Michaud and Scruggs,

2012, p. 21). In Pennsylvania, up until 1975, parents could be expected to remove their retarded child from school based on the school's conclusion that he/she was uneducable. Such a judgment on the part of the school freed the public education system from any responsibility to provide the student with an education (Gilhool, 1995).

In 1973, the United States Congress passed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a "civil rights law that prevents discrimination against individuals with disabilities by any institution that receives federal funds and provides for a free, appropriate public education (FAPE)," (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2010, p. 11). Just two years later, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed, which guaranteed every individual a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE). "Critical to IDEA legislation is the concept of least restrictive environment... students with disabilities must be educated in the setting least removed from the general education classroom," (Mastropieri and Scruggs 2010). In order to implement this concept of LRE, students with disabilities must be integrated into general education classrooms and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), "a written agreement between the school and the parents detailing the unique curricula that will be provided to that individual student so that he/she can access an appropriate education," (Michaud and Scruggs, 2011, p. 22). This integration of general and special education students in the same classroom, so that students with special needs can be educated in the LRE, is referred to as *inclusion*. Inclusion theory serves as the theoretical framework of the IDEA and of this study.

Major players in educational research and in government helped give birth to inclusion theory as we know it today. Lloyd Dunn's article *Special education for the mildly retarded: Is it justifiable?*, published in 1968, questioned the way that the education establishment handled students with disabilities by closely examining the results of exclusive, special education. Dunn

found that children with ‘mental retardation’ who were removed from general education classrooms did not perform better than those who remained in general education classrooms. When structured appropriately, general education classrooms were able to provide the necessary setting and instruction for students usually educated in special education classrooms. Furthermore, the implementation of exclusive classrooms for slow or mildly retarded students disproportionately labeled African American students as incapable of general education schoolwork; the harm done by this prejudice outweighs any potential good that might be done (Dunn, 1968).

Dunn’s connection between racial justice and educational opportunity led to a number of lawsuits which fought for parental permission when placing students in special education classrooms, and for specialized testing that was culturally sensitive to subgroups (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997). Additionally, Dunn’s findings allowed the inclusive education movement to tap into the resources and philosophical underpinnings of the *Brown v. Board of Education* movement, as Dunn showed that the arguments for inclusion and for integration were not so different from one another.

Lisa Walker also helped to advance the establishment’s understanding of true inclusion. As a Senate staff member in 1975, she helped to construct IDEA’s original framework, and understood the real goal of Congress’ efforts regarding special education:

Congress was interested in the normalization of services for disabled children, in the belief that the presence of a disability did not necessarily require separation and removal from the regular classrooms, or the neighborhood school environment, or from regular academic classes. (Walker, 1987, p. 99)

Although this statement by Walker touches upon what we acknowledge inclusion to mean today, the first years of implementation of IDEA did not resemble this reality. Initially referred to as *mainstreaming*, IDEA forced special education students to receive their special curriculum in the

context of a regular, general education classroom. Still, this execution of IDEA allowed for two separate education systems – special and general – which, in the eyes of some, legitimized restrictive environments by acknowledging that the Least Restrictive Environment ought to be used (Taylor, 1988).

Inclusion involves more than just the decision to teach special and general education students alongside each other; it involves intentional planning and choices on the part of educators and administrators:

Inclusive education signifies much more than the presence of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. It has developed from a long history of educational innovation and represents school improvement on many levels for all students... Above all, it is about a philosophy of acceptance where all people are valued and treated with respect. (Carrington and Elkins, 2002)

In order for inclusion to be just and beneficial for all parties as Carrington and Elkins describe, teachers must be given professional development opportunities that educate them on successful inclusion strategies.

The need for preparation and professional development becomes especially important for private school teachers, who are not required by law to implement IDEA, and therefore, are often unprepared to offer true inclusion:

IDEA does not apply to private schools in nearly the same manner. Private schools are not obliged to provide a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, and when parents place their children in private schools, they forfeit these rights protected under IDEA. (Scanlan, 2009, p. 28)

In a sense, students with special needs give up their rights to education in LRE when they enroll in a private school. If private (and therefore, Jesuit Catholic) schools have truly inclusive classrooms where the gifts, talents, and abilities of each student are considered, then inclusion must be an intentional choice on the part of the school. Jesuit Catholic school teachers in

inclusive classrooms must be given appropriate professional development opportunities to learn how to address the needs of all of their students.

### **Educational Significance**

This study sought to understand the connection between inclusive education and mission of Jesuit Catholic schools. As such, the results of the study will provide empirical data for any individual, group, or institution interested in bridging the gap in Catholic, Jesuit secondary education between the moral imperative to educate students with learning disabilities and the reality present in American Jesuit Catholic Secondary Schools.

### **Limitations**

There were a number of limitations to this study. Firstly, the study did not include every member of the Manresa Prep community, nor every graduate of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program; as such, the results of interviews and surveys represented a purposeful sample of the communities considered, but not the community in its entirety. Additionally, the researcher is a Jesuit priest; his presence in a Catholic school brought an element of power into the interviews, especially with students. Similar to a “white coat syndrome” with doctors, this unavoidable fact may have affected the answers of students, who wanted to tell him what they think he wanted to hear, rather than what was on their minds. In order to mitigate this limitation and prevent bias from affecting the results of the study, the researcher wore a shirt and tie, rather than his clerical garb, while interviewing students. Additionally, the researcher allowed each individual interviewed to approve both the interview transcripts as well as the analysis of the transcript, to ensure that the individual’s intent was captured.

Furthermore, because Manresa Prep is a private, Catholic, all boys high school, the generalizability of the results of this study was limited to schools with a similar scope and

mission to Manresa Prep. Finally, as a member of the religious order that sponsors the school, I had to be aware of researcher bias that may seep in to my research and conversations with students, faculty, and alumni. This bias was mitigated by interviewing individuals with whom the researcher does not have a previous relationship.

### **Definition of Terms**

Cura Personalis – “A hallmark of Ignatian spirituality (where in one-on-one spiritual guidance, the guide adapts the Spiritual Exercises to the unique individual making them) and therefore of Jesuit education (where the teacher establishes a personal relationship with students, listens to them in the process of teaching, and draws them toward personal initiative and responsibility for learning. This attitude of respect for the dignity of each individual derives from the Judeo-Christian vision of human beings as unique creations of God, of God's embracing of humanity in the person of Jesus, and of human destiny as ultimate communion with God and all the saints in everlasting life,” (Traub, 2002, p.2)

General Congregation – “While other religious orders usually speak of ‘chapters’ to refer to formal meetings where elected members gather to do official business or to elect a person to office, Jesuits speak of ‘congregations,’ of which there are four kinds: General Congregation, a Provincial Congregation, a Procurators’ Congregation, and a Congregation for the Election of a Temporary Vicar. The most important is a General Congregation, which meets either to elect a superior general or to treat important or difficult matters affecting the life and work of the Society of Jesus as a whole. A General Congregation, when convened, is the supreme governing body of the society and makes decisions that are binding on Jesuits everywhere,” (Worcester, 2017, pp. 191-2).

Inclusive Education - The integration of general and special education students in the same classroom, so that students with special needs can be educated in the least restrictive environment, is referred to as inclusion. “Inclusive education signifies much more than the presence of students with disabilities in regular classrooms. It has developed from a long history of educational innovation and represents school

improvement on many levels for all students... Above all, it is about a philosophy of acceptance where all people are valued and treated with respect. (Carrington and Elkins, 2002, p. 51)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) - A law passed in 1975 which revolutionized public education in the United States, particularly for students with disabilities. IDEA guaranteed every individual a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE), and allotted federal funding for public schools to carry out this charge.

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) - “A written agreement between the school and the parents detailing the unique curricula that will be provided to that individual student so that he/she can access an appropriate education,” (Michaud and Scruggs, 2011, p. 22).

Jesuit – A member of the Society of Jesus, the religious order founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola. As an adjective, Jesuit refers to association with the same religious order. *See also Society of Jesus*

Jesuit Schools Network (JSN) – The Jesuit Schools Network is the most recent iteration of an organization founded in 1964 – first called the Jesuit Education Association, then the Jesuit Secondary Education Association. Throughout its existence, this educational apostolate of the Jesuits has worked to coordinate efforts among Jesuit schools, in order to facilitate the sharing of best practices both organizationally and educationally. According to its website, the Jesuit Schools Network “promotes the educational ministry of the Society of Jesus in service to the Catholic Church by strengthening Jesuit schools for the mission of Jesus Christ.”

Least Restrictive Environment – A concept foundational to IDEA and inclusive education, the least restrictive environment indicates that students with learning disabilities must receive educational services as close to general education classrooms as possible.

Liberation Theology – “Latin American liberation theology is one of the most significant movements in 20th-century Catholic theology. Its focus on the preferential option for the poor, its criticism of structural sin, and the emphasis it has placed on reimagining the Catholic faith as an instrument for the liberation of the oppressed constitute decisive contributions to Catholic theology,” (Worcester, 2017, pp. 464-5).

Response to Intervention (RtI) – A three-tier approach to address students’ needs that emphasizes prevention of academic and behavioral problems through high quality instruction and standards-based curricula. “The use of active data systems, including the ongoing progress-monitoring of students’ academic and behavioral functioning, provides continuous information to inform programmatic decisions about individual students,” (Boyle, 2010, p. 5).

Society of Jesus – “Catholic religious order of men founded in 1540 by Ignatius of Loyola and a small group of his multinational friends in the Lord, fellow students from the University of Paris. They saw their mission as one of being available to go anywhere and do anything to help souls, especially where the need was greatest (e.g., where a certain people or a certain kind of work were neglected). Today, numbering about 23,000 priests and brothers, they are spread out in almost every county of the world ("more branch offices," said Pedro Arrupe, "than Coca Cola")--declining in numbers markedly in Europe and North America, but growing in India, Africa, Latin America, and the Far East,” (Traub, 2002, p. 13).

Vatican II – “Convoked in 1962 by Pope John XXIII to bring the Catholic Church up to date, this 21st Ecumenical (i.e. world-wide) Council signaled the Catholic Church's growth from a church of cultural confinement (largely European) to a genuine world church. The Council set its seal on the work of 20th century theologians that earlier had often been officially considered dangerous or erroneous. Thus, the biblical movement, the liturgical renewal, and the lay movement were incorporated into official Catholic doctrine and practice. Here are several significant new perspectives coming from the Council: celebration of liturgy (worship) in various vernacular languages rather than Latin, to

facilitate understanding and lay participation; viewing the Church as the whole people of God rather than just as clergy and viewing other Christian bodies (Protestant, Orthodox) as belonging to it; recognizing non-Christian religions as containing truth; honoring freedom of conscience as a basic human right; and finally including in its mission a reaching out to people in all their human hopes, needs, sufferings as an essential part of preaching the gospel,” (Traub, 2002, p. 18)

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Overview

This study hopes to analyze effective inclusive practices for students with learning disabilities in American Jesuit Secondary Schools, and how those programs/strategies flow from the mission of Catholic and Jesuit education. As such, the review of literature will be split into three parts; first, exploring the beginnings of Jesuit education and the foundational documents of the Society of Jesus – namely, *The Spiritual Exercises*, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, and *The Ratio Studiorum of 1599*, as well as some more recent writings on Jesuit education — in order to articulate Jesuit educational philosophy, and show how it flows from those documents. Secondly, the research demonstrating the benefits of inclusive education will be considered. Finally, the research around Catholic education and inclusive education in the United States will be covered — both research that creates a rationale for inclusive Catholic education, and research that proposes models of inclusive service delivery in Catholic schools. Research is limited in the latter areas, hence creating a need for the study.

### The Beginnings of Jesuit Education

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, was born in the Basque region of Spain in 1492. Ignatius had a conversion experience while convalescing from a wound received in the Battle of Pamplona, which sent him on a lifelong pilgrimage of growth and movement toward God. Part of that journey bound him together with a group of like-minded individuals, who decided to formally commit themselves to the Church and to each other under the name The Society of Jesus in 1540.

For the first ten years of the Society's inception, the Jesuits engaged in ministries of preaching, hearing confessions, and works of mercy. Ignatius did not initially intend for his

religious order to be involved in education; starting in 1551, however, the Society of Jesus opened approximately four or five schools per year. By 1640, 100 years after their founding, the order ran 372 schools all over the world (O'Malley, 1993). This change in the mission of the Society was not one that Ignatius, their founder and first Superior General, had intended:

He did not at first intend that his little band of followers should become schoolmasters. That was a sedentary and time-consuming business, not suitable for an active, bustling set of preachers and missionaries. Yet in this, as in so many other things, the needs of the time overtook Ignatius' intentions. (Foss, 1969, p. 164).

The dramatic shift of apostolic focus only ten years into the Society of Jesus' existence flows easily from the history of the Jesuits and from Ignatius' vision of his order. "Both the vision and the Compagnia had from the beginning, in fact, a plasticity that encouraged moving beyond a rigid interpretation of the *Formula*," (O'Malley, 1993, p. 201). Ignatius demanded that members of the Society of Jesus were well-trained and always flexible, adapting to meet the needs of the people placed in their care. Although Ignatius' vision for the Jesuits incorporated a flexibility, it is history's interaction with this flexibility that explains the Society's movement away from itinerant preaching toward the establishment of schools. This characteristic flexibility of the Society of Jesus also became part and parcel of Jesuit education, as a consideration of the Society's foundational documents will show.

### **Fundamental Principles of Jesuit Education**

#### *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*

In 1521, while Ignatius convalesced from his battle wound he received in Pamplona, he had a profound experience of conversion from reading *The Lives of the Saints* and *The Life of Christ*. Over the next two years, Ignatius travelled as a pilgrim from Loyola to Montserrat – where he left his sword behind and dedicated himself to our Lady of Montserrat – and from Montserrat to Manresa, all in hopes of arriving in Jerusalem. Throughout this period of Ignatius'

life, he continued to have profound experiences of God's presence in prayer, and recorded his method and observations in a book. "Perceiving certain things happening in his soul, and finding them helpful, he thought they might also be helpful to others, and so he set them in writing," (Tylenda, p. 186). Over time, these notes formed basis of a more structured prayer manual called the *Spiritual Exercises*. This manual was never meant to be read as any other book, but rather to be used as a guide for a director leading a directee, or retreatant, through an experience of prayer and growth in personal relationship with God (Duminuco, 1990).

The spirit and world-view which animate Jesuit education, as well as the standards by which the success of Jesuit education has been measured throughout the centuries, flow directly from the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius (Aixala, 1981; International Commission on the Apostolate of Education, 1987; Metts, 1995; Newton, 1994). The *Exercises* were carefully constructed by Ignatius, based on his own religious experience (Gray, 2000; Newton, 1994; International Commission on the Apostolate of Education, 1987) and are divided into four "weeks," which may last for a longer or shorter period of time, depending on the individual. The First Week (Fleming, 1996, # 23-90) focuses on the reality of evil in general and the contemplation of one's sins in particular, always in the context of God's loving mercy and forgiveness. The Second Week (Fleming, 1996, # 91-189) contains contemplations and meditations on the life of Jesus, up to the Last Supper. The Third Week (Fleming, 1996, # 190-217) invites the one making the *Exercises* to consider Jesus' sacrifice in his suffering, passion, and death, followed by the Fourth Week (Fleming, 1996, #219-237), which leads the individual through meditations on Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

Prior to the First Week, the *Exercises* begin with a series of twenty-three annotations, which are meant to assist the one guiding a person through the prayer experience. From the

beginning, Ignatius indicates that an experience of the *Exercises* involves more than an individual's intellect. Annotation three states, "as in all the following spiritual exercises, we use acts of the intellect in reasoning, and acts of the will in movements of the feelings," (Fleming, 1996, #3). Duminuco (1993) connects this annotation with Jesuit education, asserting that "Ignatian experience goes beyond a purely intellectual grasp. Ignatius urges that the whole person — mind, heart, and will — should enter the learning experience," (p. 15). Through the total engagement of an individual's faculties in learning, Jesuit education attempts to lead students to act upon what they've learned.

Of particular importance for an understanding of Jesuit education is annotation eighteen, which reads:

The Spiritual Exercises have to be adapted to the dispositions of the persons who wish to receive them, that is, to their age, education or ability, in order not to give to one who is uneducated or of little intelligence things he cannot easily bear and profit by. Again, that should be given to each one by which, according to his wish to dispose himself, he may be better able to help himself and to profit. (Fleming, 1996, #18)

This adaptability of method and even of material flows authentically from the *Spiritual Exercises*, and is a hallmark of Jesuit education (Newton, 1994; Ganss, 1954). While Ignatius wrote the *Exercises*, he indicated during this time God taught him as a school teacher instructs a student. Education was the paradigm for his unique, personal relationship with God. "Thus, inherent first in the Manresa experiences and then in the processes he proposed to others through the *Exercises* was the reverence Ignatius had for teaching and learning as metaphors for God's way in guiding human decisions," (Gray, 2000, p. 4)

This metaphor also extends to the way that the directee ought to work with individual retreatants, and by extension, to the way that educators ought to work with individual students. "Like the guide of the *Exercises*, the teacher is at the service of the students, alert to detect

special gifts or special difficulties, personally concerned, and assisting in the development of the inner potential of each individual student,” (International Commission on the Apostolate of Education, 1997, p. 17).

Ignatius is clear from the outset that an individual being led through the *Exercises* must not progress from week one to week two, or from week two to week three, etc., until the director (the one guiding them through the *Exercises*) is satisfied that they have internalized the principle graces and learnings of that week’s prayer periods:

Though four weeks, to correspond to this division, are spent in the Exercises, it is not to be understood that each Week has, of necessity, seven or eight days. For, as it happens that in the First Week some are slower to find what they seek --namely, contrition, sorrow and tears for their sins -- and in the same way some are more diligent than others, and more acted on or tried by different spirits; it is necessary sometimes to shorten the Week, and at other times to lengthen it. (Fleming, 1996, #4)

This foundational document for the Society of Jesus has, inherent in its structure, a model for a carefully constructed scope and sequence of a Jesuit school:

Though the content and sequence of the educational plan or course of studies of a Jesuit institution today must differ substantially from that of past years, the underlying principle of successively arranged objectives and an overall coherent plan into which all parts fit should remain an important feature of Jesuit education. (Newton, 1994, p. 6)

Furthermore, it is important to note that this curricular advancement after mastery is, in the vision of Ignatius’ *Exercises*, intended to exist on an *individual* level – not at the classroom level.

Newton (1994) also points out that the *Exercises* are, in a sense, an instrument for learning and teaching one how to grow in the spiritual life. As previously stated, Ignatius used the language of education to describe his own experience of growth and spiritual progress in his *Autobiography*: “At that period God dealt with him as a teacher instructing a pupil,” (Tylenda, p. 74). The individual being led through an experience of the *Exercises* will come to know God,

and know what it means to follow Jesus; she will have the tools necessary to continue that lifelong journey back to God.

Newton suggests that a similar perspective can be taken when considering Jesuit education. It is essential that educators at Jesuit schools teach children how to grow and *continue* to learn; this is not to de-emphasize content areas, but rather is an acknowledgement of the rapid pace of change and growth in our world. No individual can rely solely on the data that he/she learned in formal education; for Ignatius, education was a life-long event (Gray, 2000). In the true spirit of the *Exercises*, Jesuit education should produce life-long learners.

Ignatius' first meditation in the First Week, the Principle and Foundation, sums up the world-view present in the meditations and contemplations that are to follow. The Principle and Foundation states that human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God; everything that exists has been created to assist human beings in achieving this goal:

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him as to it. For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created. (Fleming, 1996, #23)

Every created thing is a means to our ultimate end: the praise, reverence, and service of God.

Newton (1994) indicates that this must, then, be applied to Jesuit educational practices:

Operating excellent schools is important and necessary, but in the end, the level of academic success is not the final measure of effectiveness; it is the degree to which the apostolic goal, 'the greater glory and service of God,' is achieved. (p.3)

Jesuit education ought to lead its pupils back to God, and help them to use their God-given talents to praise and serve God. The success of Jesuit education can be measured against this metric.

Costello (1970) suggests that of all the meditations proposed in Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, three in particular have profound implications for a distinctly Jesuit understanding of the purpose and process of education: the meditation on the Incarnation (#101-109), the meditation on Christ the King and his call (#100-108), and the meditation on the Two Standards (#136-148). Whereas the majority of the *Exercises* have their basis in Scripture, and involve the retreatant imagining themselves in the Scriptural scene, these meditations are inspired by the imagination and personal spiritual experience of Ignatius himself.

Through the use of one's imagination, the meditation on the Incarnation provides the one engaged in prayer with an experience of God that illuminates God's relationship with humanity. The prayer exercise begins with a series of preparatory points, which helps set the scene: "Here it is how the three divine persons looked at the plain or circuit of all the world, full of men" (Fleming, 1996, #102). In imagining the Trinity gazing at the world, the retreatant attempts to "enter into the vision of God" (Fleming, 1996, p. 91). Having thus set the scene, Ignatius offers three prayer points (#106-108):

1. The first Point is, to see the various persons: and first those on the surface of the earth, in such variety, in dress as in actions: some white and others black; some in peace and others in war; some weeping and others laughing; some well, others ill; some being born and others dying, etc.
2. To see and consider the Three Divine Persons, as on their royal throne or seat of Their Divine Majesty, how They look on all the surface and circuit of the earth, and all the people in such blindness, and how they are dying and going down to Hell.
3. To see Our Lady, and the Angel who is saluting her, and to reflect in order to get profit from such a sight.

Second Point. The second, to hear what the persons on the face of the earth are saying, that is, how they are talking with one another, how they swear and blaspheme, etc.; and

likewise what the Divine Persons are saying, that is: “Let Us work the redemption of the Human race,” etc.; and then what the Angel and Our Lady are saying; and to reflect then so as to draw profit from their words.

Third Point. The third, to look then at what the persons on the face of the earth are doing, as, for instance, killing, going to Hell etc.; likewise what the Divine Persons are doing, namely, working out the most holy Incarnation, etc.; and likewise what the Angel and Our Lady are doing, namely, the Angel doing his duty as ambassador, and Our Lady humbling herself and giving thanks to the Divine Majesty; and then to reflect in order to draw some profit from each of these things.

This meditation asks the retreatant to consider a God who is both above the world and of the world (Ivens, 1998). The Christian Trinitarian God is deeply, lovingly interested, invested, and involved with the welfare of humanity; God enters into the experience of humanity in order to work for humanity’s salvation. Elsewhere in the *Exercises*, Ignatius will describe God as one who labors on our behalf in all things. (Fleming, 1996, #236). In the Ignatian world-view, then, creation – and humanity – is fundamentally good; Jesuit education, therefore, is world-affirming (International Commission on the Apostolate of Education, 1987).

The Ignatian world-view does not only emphasize God’s loving concern for humanity – indeed, for all of creation – but it also places considerable emphasis on the response of human persons to that love. The meditation on the call of Christ the King invites the retreatant to consider how she might respond to God’s invitation to labor alongside Jesus. The meditation begins by asking the one making the *Exercises* to imagine an earthly king, who wishes to conquer the world and establish order for the good of all people. The retreatant is asked to imagine how a rational, good-natured person might respond to such a call:

Consider what the good subjects ought to answer to a King so liberal and so kind, and hence, if any one did not accept the appeal of such a king, how deserving he would be of being censured by all the world, and held for a mean-spirited knight. (Fleming, 1996, # 94)

If a human, temporal king is worthy of such a response from his subjects, suggests Ignatius, then how much more worthy is Jesus Christ, God-made-man, of our cooperation? Who could refuse Jesus' invitation to work alongside him?

If we consider such a call of the temporal King to his subjects, how much more worthy of consideration is it to see Christ our Lord, King eternal, and before Him all the entire world, which and each one in particular He calls, and says: "It is My will to conquer all the world and all enemies and so to enter into the glory of My Father; therefore, whoever would like to come with Me is to labor with Me, that following Me in the pain, he may also follow Me in the glory." (Fleming, 1996, # 95)

In the Ignatian world-view, every person is invited by God into personal relationship with God; that is the presumption behind the *Spiritual Exercises* in the first place. The Call of Christ the King, however, reminds the retreatant that "fulfilling one's vocation implies far more than concern for my own personal salvation. We are called to *serve* God and others," (McGovern, 1988, p. 27). Practically speaking, this means that Jesuit education is an apostolic instrument. – human beings are invited to participate in a common enterprise for the good of all (Sosa, 2017). "Jesuit education is concerned with the ways in which students will make use of their formation within the human community, in the service of others, for the praise, reverence, and service of God," (International Commission on the Apostolate of Education, 1987).

Indeed, Ignatius expressed an awareness that schools could be a way for the Jesuits to help souls and advance the common good of larger society, by helping individuals to say "yes" to God's invitation:

From among those who are at present students, various persons will in time emerge – some for preaching and the care of souls, others for the government of the land and the administration of justice, and others for other responsibilities. In short, since young people turn into adults, their good formation in life and learning will benefit many others, with the fruit expanding more widely every day. (Casalini & Pavur, 2016, p. 59)

In the founder's own words, Jesuit education had as its goal from the outset the formation of humans who would accept Christ's invitation to put their talents to use laboring alongside Him for the good of all.

We are each invited, in freedom, to participate in the mission of Christ the King here on earth – yet Ignatius knew all too well that there were opposing forces at work on individuals trying to give their lives in service to the Kingdom of God. The meditation on the Two Standards illuminates these obstacles through military imagery, giving the retreatant an interior knowledge of the forces at work in his/her life.

Saint Ignatius knew well that human beings exercised their freedom to respond to God's invitation under the influence of prompting from both good and evil spirits. Ignatius includes this insight in the *Exercises* by asking the retreatant to consider two leaders at war — God and the Devil — under two battle standards. Throughout the *Exercises*, Ignatius refers to the Devil as Lucifer (Fleming, 1996, #136, #138), Satan (#140), the chief of the enemy (#140), the evil one (#142), the evil spirit (#335), the rebel chief (#139), and the enemy of our human nature (#324). The retreatant is asked to consider what motives each leader uses to convince his followers to fight under his battle standard; Lucifer uses pride, riches, and honor to keep individuals focused on their own self-interest, without concern for the common good:

Consider the discourse which he (the evil one) makes them, and how he tells them to cast out nets and chains; that they have first to tempt with a longing for riches -- as he is accustomed to do in most cases -- that men may more easily come to vain honor of the world, and then to vast pride. So that the first step shall be that of riches; the second, that of honor; the third, that of pride; and from these three steps he draws on to all the other vices. (Fleming, 1996, #142)

If an individual prioritizes reputation and riches, he will make decisions that lead him toward other vices; this is the evil spirit's strategy in luring human beings to battle under the standard of evil.

Jesus, on the other hand, calls his disciples to a virtuous life through spiritual poverty, worldly contempt, and humility, so as to keep them free from the traps of the evil spirit:

Consider the discourse which Christ our Lord makes to all His servants and friends whom He sends on this expedition, recommending them to want to help all, by bringing them first to the highest spiritual poverty, and -- if His Divine Majesty would be served and would want to choose them -- no less to actual poverty; the second is to be of contumely and contempt; because from these two things humility follows. So that there are to be three steps; the first, poverty against riches; the second, contumely or contempt against worldly honor; the third, humility against pride. And from these three steps let them induce to all the other virtues. (Fleming, 1996, #146)

By inviting all of humanity to labor under the standard of the cross, Jesus wishes to free them from the traps of the evil spirit, and to work alongside them for the greater glory of God.

The search for truth is at the heart of the enterprise of Jesuit education (Duminuco, 1993; McGovern, 1988). The process of discernment that is built into the *Exercises* is revealed in this meditation on the Two Standards, where an individual can see how both God and evil work in his own life and his own decision making processes. “The meditation on the Two Standards is intended to provide deeper knowledge of the two leaders – God and Satan – and their tactics... when retreatants are making this exercise, they being to understand the deceits of the enemy by looking at the Enemy’s actions in their own lives,” (English, 1995, p. 147).

At its core, Jesuit education is concerned with the formation of a human person, with Jesus Christ as the model toward which we all strive. “It calls for a human excellence modeled on Christ of the Gospels, an excellence that reflects the mystery and reality of the Incarnation,” (Duminuco, 1993, p. 5). Jesuit education, then, is meant to prepare its students for a life of service, shown in a commitment to Gospel values and a concern for the poor in our midst.

### *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*

The Society of Jesus was approved by Pope Paul III on September 27, 1540. Having been officially established, the group of first companions voted to have Ignatius as their first

leader, or Superior General. While his companions spread throughout the globe setting up ministries to help souls, Ignatius remained in Rome and began to work on the *Constitutions*, a set of rules by which the newly formed order might live and govern themselves. In this document, Ignatius infuses the practical details of the new religious order with his deep mysticism.

“Inspired by the same vision embodied in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the *Constitutions* manifest the Ignatian ability to combine exalted ends with the most concrete means for achieving them,”

(International Commission on the Apostolate of Education, 1987, p. 21)

The *Constitutions* are divided into ten parts; Part Four deals directly with how Jesuits were to be educated in schools, and how they would run their own schools. However, Gray (2000) points out that there are Ignatian principles, presented in other parts of the *Constitutions*, which make their way into the Jesuit philosophy of education. Gray cites Part III of the *Constitutions*, where Ignatius treats the spiritual formation of young Jesuits, and offers the following instruction:

In all things they should try and desire to give the advantage to the others, esteeming them all in their hearts as if they were their superiors [Phil. 2:3] and showing outwardly, in an unassuming and simple religious manner, the respect and reverence appropriate to each one's state, so that by consideration of one another they may thus grow in devotion and praise God our Lord, whom each one should strive to recognize in the other as in his image. (*Constitutions*, #250)

Gray suggests that this passage encourages Jesuits to accept, revere, and see God in each other, while emphasizing the important ability to be present to another human being on his/her own terms. “The ramifications for this formation directive are wide and rich, suggesting an important key to the personal religious event of finding God in all things,” (Gray, 2000, p. 10). This would be taught, Ignatius wrote, through example – by the Master of Novices:

It will be beneficial to have a faithful and competent person to instruct and teach the novices how to conduct themselves inwardly and outwardly, to encourage them to this, to remind them of it, and to give them loving admonition; a person whom all those who are

in probation may love and to whom they may have recourse in their temptations and open themselves with confidence, hoping to receive from him in our Lord counsel and aid in everything. (*Constitutions*, #263)

This example elucidates the connection between Jesuit formation and Jesuit education – just as Jesuit novices learned acceptance and reverence from watching their formators, so also should students in Jesuit schools learn acceptance and reverence from their teachers. Students in Jesuit schools will learn how to treat others from the way they are treated by their teachers; Jesuit educators ought to treat students with empathy, value, and dignity, working toward their well-rounded growth (Jesuit Schools Network, 2015).

Part IV of the *Constitutions* contains seventeen chapters; the first ten deal with the education that Jesuits are to receive, with the remaining seven treating the formal administration of Jesuit schools for the wider public. Ganss (1954) points out that Part Four of the *Constitutions* contains both comprehensive, wide-sweeping principles for the foundations of Jesuit education as well as minute, practical procedures for the administration of schools. The heart of the former is expressed in the Preamble of Part IV:

We shall likewise accept colleges under the conditions stated in the apostolic bull, whether these colleges are within universities or outside of them; and, if they are within universities, whether these universities are governed by the Society or not. For we are convinced in our Lord that in this way greater service will be given to his Divine Majesty, with those who will be employed in that service being multiplied in number and making progress in learning and virtues. (*Constitutions*, 308)

In chapter twelve, which deals with the subjects to be taught in the schools, Ignatius emphasized that “In all this the honor and glory of God our Lord should be sincerely sought,” (*Constitutions*, 450). Ignatius articulates the mission of Jesuit education in the *Constitutions*, and it is the same as the mission of the Society of Jesus – the greater glory of God and service to the Divine Majesty.

Amidst all of the practical details of school administration, Ignatius included a detail encouraging the Jesuits to remain flexible and open to how Jesuit education might be carried out in different contexts:

Concerning the hours of the lectures, their order, and their method, and concerning the exercises both in compositions (which ought to be corrected by the teachers) and in disputations within all the faculties, and in delivering orations and reading verses in public, all this will be treated in detail in a separate treatise approved by the general. This present constitution refers the reader to it, with the remark that it ought to be adapted to places, times, and persons, even though it would be desirable to reach that order as far as this is possible. (*Constitutions* 455)<sup>1</sup>

“Adapted to places, times, and persons” is a phrase used throughout the *Constitutions* by Saint Ignatius. It is in the true spirit of Ignatian discernment, where God is to be found in all things, dealing directly with God’s beloved daughters and sons; Ignatius did not just mean for this principle of adaptation to apply to educational endeavors of the Society:

Finally, there is the acceptance of Saint Ignatius’ principle of adaptation which he applied everywhere, not merely to school questions. Although Ignatius left to that future tract, the *Ratio Studiorum*, the spelling out of most practical matters, he himself laid down this great principle which by its very nature, as well as by its explicit inclusion in the *Constitutions*, occupies higher ground than the rules of the Ratio. He directed the attention of Jesuit schools to the provisions of that anticipated school plan, but with this warning: that it was to be adapted to places, times and persons. In the historic event, this principle of adaptation appears as a prime characteristic of Jesuit educational activity when that activity is viewed in its entirety over four centuries. (Donohue, 1959, p. 46)

Jesuit education must work within the context of time, places, and persons it finds itself in order to be effective communicators of the Gospel to each individual student. “Jesuit education cannot exist as a simple genus but is necessarily specified by time and place,” (Donahue, 1959, p. 94).

Concretely in history, this decision to adapt educational methods to places, times, and persons has not been without controversy – even when successful. In China in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Jesuits used Confucian conceptions of “God” and “heaven” in order to communicate Christian

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<sup>1</sup> The separate treatise to which Ignatius refers in the *Constitutions* is the *Ratio Studiorum*, developed between 1546 and 1599.

from within the Chinese people's culture. Additionally, the Jesuits reconciled Confucian socio-religious ceremonies dedicated to the honoring of ancestors, allowing Chinese Christians to participate fully in their culture while remaining faithful to Catholicism; according to their Dominican and Franciscan counterparts, these rituals were considered heretical. The Vatican ruled against the Jesuits after fifty years of controversy, but history has shown that their methods were not only orthodox, but brilliant – the Vatican reversed the condemnation in 1939 (Standaert, 2017).

Ignatius states clearly in chapter seven of Part IV, entitled, “The Schools Maintained in the Colleges of the Society,” that the purpose of Jesuit education extended beyond accumulation of knowledge:

In these schools measures should be taken that the extern students are well instructed in matters of Christian doctrine, go to confession every month if possible, attend the sermons, and, in sum, acquire along with their letters the habits of conduct worthy of a Christian. (*Constitutions*, 395)

From the beginning, Jesuit education was concerned with forming graduates after the model of Christ, so that they might be prepared for this life and the life to come. “The Jesuit school prepares not only for citizenship, but for Christian citizenship,” (McGucken, 1932, p. 150).

Ganss (1954) provides a comprehensive treatment of Part IV of the *Constitutions*, distilling its content down to fifteen educational principles in the spirit of Saint Ignatius:

- An Awareness that Education is a Means to the End of His Society
- A Care to Impart a Scientifically Reasoned Catholic Outlook on Life
- A Training of the Whole Man [sic] to the Excellence of All His faculties
- A Conscious Effort to Make Education Both Intellectual and Moral
- A Preservation of the Preeminence of Theology, Supported by Philosophy
- Abundant Self-Activity of the Students
- Personal Interest of the Professors in the Students
- A Transmitting of Old Truths and a Discovering of New Ones
- A Care to Have the Training Psychologically Fitted to the Ages of the Students
- A Devising of Means Truly Adequate to Achieve the Ends Envisaged

- A Care of Timeliness, through Adaptation of Procedures to Places and Times
- An Alertness to Gather the Best Elements Emerging in the Educational Systems of the Day
- A Care to Preserve, Discard and Add According to Contemporary Needs
- A Courageous Yet Prudent Spirit of Experimentation and Discussion
- A Care to Have a Complete Code of Liberal Education (Ganss 1954, pp. 185-192)

### Ratio Studiorum of 1599

Once it had been established that Jesuits would be involved in the ministry of education, the new religious order had to turn their attention to what would be taught in their schools, and how that order of studies would be delivered. The *Ratio atque Institutio Studiorum Societatis Jesu*,— literally, the “Plan and Methodology of Studies of the Society of Jesus” in Latin -- was developed between 1546 and 1599 (Casalini & Pavur, 2016). Ignatius was born into a time-period when the ideas of scholastic education were being critiqued and replaced by a more humanistic approach. This new perspective on education was grounded in the idea that there is a link between good literature and a life of virtue – that is, developing one’s capacities to read, write, and speak about universal themes of life assists an individual in living their own.

Much of the Jesuit way of proceeding with regard to education was copied from 16th century French and Italian “Latin” schools, which operated according to the principles of humanism, (O'Malley, 1993, p. 209). Modras (2004) outlines six key characteristics of Renaissance humanism, and suggests that even though Renaissance humanism is often thought of as irreligious, these characteristics became the foundation of Jesuit education.

The humanist movement was grounded in classicism, and emphasized that lessons on human life could be gleaned from studying ancient Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic texts. Furthermore, because classicism understood that progress could be made in living a “good life” through learning, education involved the development of a person’s whole self – mind, body,

spirit, etc. “The very name for their discipline, *studia humanitatis*, implied a claim that an education in classical literature served to cultivate a certain desirable kind of human being, a person developed as far as possible in all forms of virtue,” (Modras, 2004, p. 59).

An education grounded in the classics like Cicero and Catullus naturally focused on the importance of civic duty and virtue. For the humanists, civic virtue meant speaking well and effectively, capable of convincing an audience through well-developed rhetorical skills. Humanistic education also focused on the development of an individual identity in the context of community, as well as on the essential nature of human dignity and freedom. Because humanistic education ultimately focused on being the best human a person could be, the freedom to choose a life of virtue was central to the education provided. Giving students the tools to choose well was essential. Finally, humanistic education was grounded in the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who asserted that truth was universal.

Ignatius and his companions witnessed and experienced these tenets of humanistic education at work in their studies at the University of Paris, a place deeply rooted in the humanist tradition. “The influence of their instructors and the humanist culture they assimilated at Paris remained with them as individuals and as a community, entering into the very fiber of the Jesuit ethos,” (Modras, 2004, p. 64). The education they experienced there served as a model for the schools the Society was starting all over Europe.

Benito Pereira, a Spanish professor of Philosophy at the Colegio Romano, was the most influential figure in developing the *Ratio Studiorum*, which grounded Jesuit education in the humanist tradition (Foss, 1969). Education, according to Pereira, should concentrate on the whole person through three main academic talents: memory, intelligence and judgment, with a primary focus on the cultivation of judgment. Because of Pereira’s influence on the Colegio

Romano, this school quickly grew and excelled in the model laid out in the Ratio and the *Constitutions*:

The *Constitutions* and the Ratio together see the Jesuit University as a worthy compendium of all knowledge, with professors of the Society teaching logic, philosophy, physics, mathematics, and the particular sciences, strange tongues such as Arabic, Persian, Indian and Japanese as required; and with secular professors taking secular subjects, such as civil law and medicine.” (Foss, 1969,p. 169)

Through this kind of academic preparation, students at Jesuit schools were trained from the outset to develop their talents to the best of their ability. Through their role in educating the next generation of leaders, the Jesuits found a way to influence society while caring for souls. “They saw education as a means of producing good leaders and citizens for society and good priests for the Church,” (Modras, 2004, p. 80).

Among instructions given to teachers, early documents of the Society of Jesus express the importance for teachers to “know and deal with diversity in the natures of the students” (Casalini & Pavur, 2016, p. 124). Methods that work for some students might not work for others; the school leadership ought to take that reality into account when deciding upon a method to reach individual pupils. Furthermore, teachers were instructed to be “very concerned about the students’ progress... taking special care for the progress of each one of his own students,” (Pavur, 2005, p. 55). Grounded in the humanist tradition of civic virtue and individuality within community, Jesuit educated individuals were prepared for life with an understanding that their knowledge ought to be used for the advancement of culture and society – a reality that still holds true today.

## Modern Developments of Jesuit Educational Philosophy

### *Cura Personalis*

The phrase *cura personalis* was first used by Wlodimir Ledochowski, Superior General of the Society of Jesus from 1915-1942 (Worcester, 2017). A major tenet of modern Jesuit educational philosophy, *cura personalis* literally means “care for the individual,” and refers to the personal attention and care that each individual student ought to expect from his/her teachers. *Cura personalis* is grounded in the *Spiritual Exercises*, where the directee takes special care to adapt the *Exercises* to the needs of the one making the retreat (Traub, 2002).

Although this phrase is relatively new in Jesuit education, the spirit of *cura personalis* can be traced back to the very beginnings of Jesuit education. The Constitutions for the German College, written in 1570 by Giuseppe Cortesono, S.J., contains instructions for teachers on “How to Know and Deal With Diversity in the Nature’s of the Students,” (Cassalini and Pavur, 2016, p. 124). Cortesono writes that it is the responsibility of all teachers to know their students, and to plan their teaching strategies accordingly:

Knowing and dealing with everyone according to his own nature is very important for the good governance of the college. And although this is the charge for all of those who will be assigned to this governance, it still particularly belongs to the office the rector, who has to have a special talent for knowing and directing everyone according to his nature... (Cassalini and Pavur, 2016, p. 124)

According to this particular model of schooling, a teacher must know his/her own students, and use what he/she knows in order to adapt the method used in teaching. *Cura personalis* was written into the rules of the very first Jesuit schools.

### *Father General Pedro Arrupe*

In December 1975, Father General Pedro Arrupe convoked the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregation of the Society of Jesus. In Decree Four of GC 32, entitled “Our Mission Today,”

the council fathers proclaimed, “The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement. For reconciliation with God demands the reconciliation of people with one another,” (Padberg, 2009, p. 322). Although in some ways the service of faith and promotion of justice had been a part of the Society’s mission since its founding in 1540, this new articulation was in the true spirit of adaptability that Saint Ignatius embedded in the Jesuit way of proceeding (Kolvenbach, 2000). Having read the signs of the times, the Jesuits of General Congregation 32 realized that all Jesuit apostolates needed to recommit themselves to the promotion of justice in our world — in particular, on behalf of the poor and marginalized.

This phrase — “the service of faith and promotion of justice” — could be said to be the central theme of the generalate of Father General Arrupe. His writings and speeches on education focused on how to make Jesuit schools centers for social change. Arrupe is considered by some to be a “second founder” of the Society of Jesus, in particular due to his efforts to update Jesuit education to match the spirit of Vatican II (Worcester, 2017).

His most famous speech, entitled, “Men for Others: Education for social justice and social action today,” was given on July 31, 1973 in Valencia, Spain. Arrupe was speaking to the Tenth International Congress of Jesuit Alumni of Europe. In this speech, he offered a rearticulation of the mission of Jesuit education, centered on character formation and selfless living:

Today our prime educational objective must be to form men-and-women-for-others; men and women who will live not for themselves but for God and his Christ - for the God-man who lived and died for all the world; men and women who cannot even conceive of love of God which does not include love for the least of their neighbors; men and women completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce. (Arrupe, 1973)

Here, Arrupe does not mention academic pursuits at all. All other educational objectives must be placed at the service of the larger mission of Jesuit education: forming men and women for others, who understand the connection made explicit in the Call of Christ the King from the *Exercises* — namely, that one’s personal relationship with Jesus always includes an invitation to work alongside Him for justice for the poor.

That same year, Arrupe addressed the Board of Directors of the Jesuit Secondary Education Association (JSEA). Arrupe exhorted those gathered on the need to consider the special educational needs of each individual student; Arrupe’s remarks give the sense that this critical insight requires immediate attention, as if the idea might be new to Jesuit high schools:

We must now recognize the urgency of responding to the special needs of each person... If we ignore this fact, we will be trapped into dealing with students in a regimented, routine-structured way that reflects nothing of the joy of *Gaudium et Spes* and *Octogesima Adveniens*<sup>2</sup>. (Aixila, 1980, pp. 50-51)

The joy of being fully human can be coaxed out of our students — and will be a part of our teachers’ experiences of education — when we respond to the particular needs of students as unique children of God. If we treat every student the same, Arrupe seems to indicate, our educational pursuits will fall short of the mission entrusted to Jesuit educational institutions.

Finally, Arrupe gave a talk in Rome to a gathering of Jesuit high school teachers; the talk was entitled, “Our Secondary Schools Today and Tomorrow.” In his remarks, Arrupe reminded the participants that the Catholic and Jesuit definition of “excellence” is distinct from other educational philosophies:

The excellence we seek consists in producing men and women of right principles, personally appropriated; men and women open to the signs of the times, in tune with their cultural milieu and its problems; men and women for others. Aixala, 1980, p. 61

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<sup>2</sup> *Gaudium et Spes* is a document produced by the Council Fathers at Vatican II; *Octogesima Adveniens* is an Apostolic Letter written by Pope Paul VI.

An excellent human in the Jesuit tradition means to model one's life after the person of Jesus, God-made-man, the true man for others. Being academically excellent is never enough.

*Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach*

Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach succeeded Arrupe as the twenty-ninth Superior General of the Society of Jesus. His most famous talk on Jesuit education was delivered at Santa Clara University on October 6, 2000, and was entitled "The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education." His words speak to the true success of our educational institutions, which goes far beyond material success:

The real measure of our Jesuit universities<sup>3</sup> lies in who our students become. For four hundred and fifty years, Jesuit education has sought to educate "the whole person" intellectually and professionally, psychologically, morally and spiritually. But in the emerging global reality, with its great possibilities and deep contradictions, the whole person is different from the whole person of the Counter-Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, or the 20th Century. Tomorrow's "whole person" cannot be whole without an educated awareness of society and culture with which to contribute socially, generously, in the real world. Tomorrow's whole person must have, in brief, a well-educated solidarity.

In Kolvenbach's remarks, there is much that is consonant with Ignatius' initial ideas about Jesuit education. Jesuit education must adapt to address the needs of students within the context it is located. The graduates of Jesuit schools ought to feel a kinship with the poor that inspires them to work on behalf of marginalized persons. And the success of Jesuit schools should be measured, Kolvenbach says, by the kinds of people our graduates **become** — the kinds of husbands and wives, mothers and fathers they turn out to be — not by how much they know, or how much wealth they accumulate.

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<sup>3</sup> Kolvenbach was speaking to a gathering of university professors and administrators; his words speak to the reality of Jesuit education at every level in our world today.

### *Profile of the Graduate at Graduation*

One can see the roots of modern American Jesuit education in the beginnings of the Society of Jesus and of Jesuit schools. The Jesuit Schools Network (JSN) is an organization in the United States, which coordinates efforts to assist Jesuit sponsored schools in their mission of education and formation. They publish a document entitled, “The Profile of the Graduate at Graduation,” which outlines five general characteristics that Jesuit schools hope their students possess upon graduation<sup>4</sup>. In it, JSN hopes that the Jesuit school graduate is:

- open to growth
- intellectually competent
- religious
- loving
- committed to doing justice (Jesuit Schools Network, 2015).

In these characteristics, the humanistic goals of forming a virtuous young person who is a member of the community and well trained in the art of moral decision making can be seen. Furthermore, the first Jesuit schools prioritized academic excellence and were concerned with the truth; these qualities of Jesuit education remain central goals for Jesuit schools today.

### *Go Forth and Teach: Characteristics of Jesuit Education*

In 1987, during Father Kolvenbach’s generalate, the Jesuit Secondary Education Association promulgated a document entitled *Go Forth and Teach: Characteristics of Jesuit Education*. Drawing on the primary source material of the Society of Jesus (*Spiritual Exercises, Constitutions*, etc.), the writers of this document describe in detail the characteristics that make an education distinctly Jesuit in nature. The authors argue that the success of Jesuit schools can be measured against their fidelity to Ignatius’ vision of education from four hundred years ago; this document is meant to be a tool assisting schools in trying to live out that vision and mission.

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<sup>4</sup> This list, commonly referred to as the “Grad at Grad,” was first published by the JSEA in 1980.

*Go Forth and Teach* lists twenty-eight characteristics of Jesuit education:

- Jesuit education is world-affirming
- Assists in the total formation of each individual in the human community
- Includes a religious dimension that permeates the entire education
- Is an apostolic instrument
- Promotes dialogue between faith and culture
- Insists on individual care and concern for each person
- Emphasizes activity on the part of the student
- Encourages life-long openness to growth
- Jesuit education is value-oriented
- Encourages a realistic knowledge, love, and acceptance of self
- Provides a realistic knowledge of the world in which we live
- Proposes Christ as the model of human life
- Provides adequate pastoral care
- Celebrates faith in personal and community prayer, worship, and service
- Jesuit education is preparation for active life commitment
- Serves the faith that does justice
- Seeks to form “men and women for others”
- Manifests a particular concern for the poor
- Jesuit education is an apostolic instrument, in service of the church as it serves human society
- Prepares students for active participation in the church and the local community, for the service of others
- Pursues excellence in its work of formation
- Witnesses to excellence
- Stresses Jesuit-lay collaboration
- Relies on a spirit of community among: teaching staff and administrators; the Jesuit community; governing boards; parents; former students; benefactors
- Takes place within a structure that promotes community
- Adapts means and methods in order to achieve its purposes most effectively
- Jesuit education is a “system” of schools with a common vision and goals
- Assists in providing professional training and ongoing formation, especially for teachers (International Commission on the Apostolate of Education, 1987, pp. 5-16)

Through the promulgation of this document, the JSEA emphasizes the active role of the student in his/her own learning, the importance of self-knowledge — especially with regard to how one learns, so as to produce life-long learners. Furthermore, the document emphasizes excellence, but in the context of Christian anthropology — students and teachers of Jesuit education ought to

always strive to be more and more like Christ, the man for others, always caring for the poor in our midst.

*Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*

An accompanying document to *Go Forth and Teach*, *Ignatian Pedagogy: a Practical Approach* was written by Fr. Vincent Duminuco, S.J. in 1993. This instruction for educators at Jesuit schools grew out of the need for practical guidelines to implement the Ignatian vision of education presented in *Go Forth and Teach*. Duminuco instructs the readers of his document that teaching cannot be merely about methodology, but must be grounded in a world view and vision. From these, Duminuco suggests, we can glean the end of the educational process, and determine the means of arriving at that goal.

*Ignatian Pedagogy* presents a paradigm for the educational process that involves the relationship between, experience, reflection, and action (Duminuco, 1993, p. 8); he traces this paradigm back to Ignatius' mode of giving the *Exercises*, in which a person would be asked to reflect on her own religious experience, and to act differently because of that serious reflection. The teacher in a Jesuit school, then, is responsible for creating an environment where students can have experiences of learning, can reflect on those experiences, and can formulate a plan of action in light of the experience and reflection. "The teacher creates the conditions, lays the foundations, and provides the opportunities for the continual interplay of the students' experience, reflection, and action to occur (Duminuco, 1993, p. 9).

This paradigm has significant implications for pedagogical practices, Duminuco suggests. Transmission of knowledge from teacher to learner is not enough. "In Jesuit schools, the learning experience is expected to move beyond rote knowledge to the development of the more complex learning skills of understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation,"

(Duminuco, 1993, p, 11). In order for that type of learning to occur, personal care of the individual, or *cura personalis* must be present. Teachers must know the world of the student in order to present material in a way that make sense to their reality (Duminuco, 1993).

Additionally, Duminuco suggests that evaluation of a student in a Jesuit school should be diverse and individualized, accounting for each students' learning style, age, etc.:

There are a variety of ways in which this fuller human growth can be assessed. All must take into account the age, talents, and developmental levels of each student. Here the relationship of mutual trust and respect which should exist between students and teachers sets a climate for discussion of growth. (Duminuco, 1993, p. 19)

The kind of relationship between teacher and student that Duminuco describes gives the educator knowledge about the student, which can then be used to present subject matter in an intelligible way — for each individual student.

### *Summary*

In his 1980 address to high school teachers in Rome, Arrupe spoke of the truly Ignatian character of Jesuit secondary education:

A Jesuit secondary school should be easily identifiable as such. There are many ways in which it will resemble other schools, both secular and confessional, including schools of other religious orders. But if it is an authentic Jesuit school — that is to say, if our operation of the school flows out of the strengths drawn from our specific charism, if we emphasize our essential characteristics and our basic options -- then the education which our students receive should give them a certain “Ignacianidad,” if I can use such a term. I am not talking about arrogance or snobbery, still less about a superiority complex. I simply refer to the logical consequence of the fact that we live and operate out of our own charism. Our responsibility is to provide, through our schools, what we believe God and the Church ask of us. (Aixala, 1981, pp. 61-62)

This section of the review of related literature examined the foundational documents of the Society of Jesus, as well as some more recent documents on Jesuit education, in an attempt to trace this “Ignacianidad” that Arrupe indicated should be characteristic of Jesuit schools.

## **Benefits of Inclusive Education**

The second section of the review of related literature will cover studies that have demonstrated the benefits of inclusive education. Several studies have revealed the benefits of inclusion for students with special needs as well as for students without special needs. A national study on inclusion in 1995 collected data from 891 school districts in all fifty states; inclusive service delivery was found to improve performance for students with special needs in a variety of areas, including standardized testing results, grades, and IEP goals (National Center for Educational Restructuring and Inclusion, 1995).

Baker and Zigmond (1995) conducted a qualitative case study, in which they interviewed practitioners from five schools, who were implementing inclusive services into the school culture and praxis. Their findings suggested that students with special needs received a very good, comprehensive, general education in an inclusive setting. Accommodations were offered to the entire class, so that students with specific learning needs were not singled out to feel different. The presence of a special education instructor in the room with a general education teacher qualitatively demonstrated an improved learning experience for all students.

Waldron and McLeskey (1998) conducted a quantitative study using a curriculum-based measurement to compare the progress of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms to the progress of their peers educated in resource settings. Students with special needs made significantly more progress in inclusive reading classrooms than their special needs peers educated in resource classrooms did. In mathematics classrooms, the data did not reveal any significant difference in performance between students with special needs in inclusive classrooms and students in resource classrooms.

Saint-Laurent, Dionne, Giasson, Royer, Simard, and Pierard (1998) observed collaborative inclusive classrooms with significant parent involvement and adapted instruction measures in thirteen different schools over the course of one year. The researchers used a pre-test administered in September and a post-test administered in June to track student progress; these tests covered reading, writing, and mathematics. Students with special needs in inclusive settings scored higher on post-tests in writing than those students with special needs in special education settings. Math and reading scores did not vary significantly depending on an inclusive or special education setting. Students without special needs educated in inclusive settings performed better in reading and mathematics than those students educated in general education settings. Indeed, Saint-Laurent et.al. (1998) suggest that because of the high-quality instruction they received in the inclusive classroom, the students without special needs benefitted the most from this particular model of inclusion.

Mastropieri, Scruggs, Mantzicopoulos, Sutrageoun, Goodwin, and Chung (1997) observed three middle school science classrooms — two general education classrooms which used the district approved textbook approach, and a third inclusive classroom, which adopted an activities-based approach. The pre-test/post-test study revealed that all students in the inclusive classroom made superior academic gains in comparison to the two general education classrooms. This study suggests that the adjustments made by teachers to the curriculum, in an effort to incorporate students with special needs into an inclusive classroom, benefitted all students present.

McLeskey and Waldron (1996) conducted interviews with teachers in inclusive classrooms, and they contend that all students benefit from inclusion, especially those who may not be classified with a particular learning issue, and so may get left behind otherwise:

A primary goal of inclusion should be to allow teachers in general education classrooms to better meet the needs of all students. This will most likely include not only students with disabilities but also slow learners, students who are perceived to be at risk for school failure, students who learn the curricular material quickly and become bored, students with attentional problems, and so forth. (McLeskey and Waldron, 1996, p. 152)

All students benefit from the differentiated instruction and efforts to include students with special needs. A truly inclusive classroom benefits all kinds of learners. Farlow (1996) uses four successful vignettes of inclusive classrooms to show the benefits of inclusion for all students. She concludes that all students develop improved social communication, problem solving skills, as well as the ability to thrive in diverse communities.

In a study determining the best practices of inclusive classroom teachers, King-Sears and Cummings (1996) name the following benefits to all students in inclusive settings:

- Increased opportunities to practice and respond to tasks in a given subject area (math, reading, etc.)
- The amount of engaged time spent by students in academic tasks increases
- Students are provided with frequent feedback about their academic performance
- Off-task and acting out behavior are reduced
- Students build fluency in basic skills
- Students' rates of correct responses increase (King-Sears and Cummings, 1996, pp. 220-221)

Baker, Wang, and Walberg (1995) argue that meta-analytics offer social scientists a research method that reduces researcher bias while offering a mechanism for handling large amounts of data. In meta-analyses, the effect size can statistically quantify the academic and social effects of inclusion on students with special needs. Baker, et.al. cite three studies — Carlberg and Kavale (1980), Wang and Baker (1985), and Baker (1994) — each of which reported positive effect sizes with an average of 0.195. The effect sizes for all three studies were positive for both academic and social effects, indicating that inclusion is statistically effective and positive for students with special needs, and the benefits extend beyond academic effects into social development.

Staub and Peck (1994) name three main concerns or questions that parents, teachers, and administrators commonly raise regarding inclusion and its effects on students without special needs:

- Will inclusion reduce the academic progress of nondisabled children?
- Will nondisabled children lose teacher time and attention?
- Will non-disabled students learn undesirable behavior from students with disabilities? (Staub and Peck, pp. 36-37)

Odom, Deklyen, and Jenkins (1984) performed a pre-test/post-test study on two groups of preschool-age children — one classroom that had an inclusive model and one that contained only students without special needs. Their study addressed the first question that Staub and Peck raise; the data showed that the development and academic progress of students without special needs was not negatively impacted by the presence of students with special needs. Cognitive, language, and social development outcomes for students without special needs in inclusive classrooms did not significantly differ from those in general education classrooms.

Sharpe, York, and Knight (1994) conducted a similar study, administering a pre-test/post-test to 35 students without special needs educated in inclusive settings, and 108 students without special needs educated in general education classrooms. This study did not show any significant difference in academic performance between the two groups, indicating that the presence of peers with special needs does not hinder performance of students without special needs.

Similarly, Hunt and colleagues (1994) researched the academic performance of students in cooperative learning groups. Their study found that the presence of students with special needs in cooperative learning groups did not negatively impact performance of students without special needs.

Hollowood, Salisbury, and Palombaro (1994) recorded time used for instruction and individualized follow-up with teachers in an inclusive elementary school. Their sample size

included six students with special needs and twelve students without special needs. Their study reported comparable levels of time engaged by lessons, and there was not a loss of individualized instructional time for students without special needs.

Peck, Carlson, and Helmsetter (1992) surveyed 125 parents and 95 teachers of preschool-age children in inclusive classrooms. Their data revealed that parents and teachers did not observe children learning undesirable behavior from students with special needs. On the contrary, parents and teachers noticed considerable social development and an openness to difference in students precisely because of the presence of students with special needs. Staub and Peck (1994) also name potential benefits of inclusive education for students without special needs, including: reduced fear of human differences, growth in social cognition, improvements in self-concept, development of personal principles, and warm and caring friendships.

Dare and Nowicki (2018) explored students' perceptions in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade classrooms of grade-based acceleration of high-ability students. This study expands the practical definition of inclusive education, which historically has focused on strategies to incorporate students with learning disabilities into classrooms; acceleration includes diversity represented by difference in student age, and how students are socially accepted in classrooms with students of diverse ages. The majority of students expressed positive opinions about grade-based acceleration, and named specific strategies to promote an inclusive environment, including: inviting students of different age to join a group, getting to know students who are different from you, and helping other students with school work. These strategies, named by students themselves, indicate that students benefit from having classmates of diverse ages in an inclusive classroom – if only for the cooperative skills they learn.

Koh and Shin (2017) raise the essential question as to whether the actual goals of inclusive education are being met – that is, “is inclusive education working overall for the education of students with disabilities?” (Koh and Shin, 2017, p. 5). Their review of literature considered the practice of inclusive education over thirty years, and found that the majority of studies demonstrated academic gains or mixed results in inclusive classrooms. Regarding social outcomes, 41% of the studies considered in their review showed that inclusion promoted social growth for students, while 25% of the studies did not demonstrate growth. The authors suggest that mixed results can be explained by the lack of teacher preparation to implement truly inclusive practices. If teachers are expected to educate students with diverse learning needs, then their own education must prepare them for that reality.

Perhaps the most compelling benefit of — and rationale for — inclusive education lies in the benefit for all students and for all of society. Ramsey (1993) suggests that in order for schools to effectively prepare students for life after school, classrooms and communities must become inclusive, reflecting the diversity which students will encounter:

This challenges the very nature of this mainstream education, and challenges it to become inclusive of all the needs, interests, and experiences of students which it is supposed to be serving. Such an education, in its inclusivity, would be a richer, more diverse, and more stimulating education, and a more appropriate preparation for post-school life in an egalitarian community not only for those students who are disadvantaged by the current arrangements, but indeed for all students. (Ramsey, 1993, viii-ix)

Students will grow up to be adults, as Saint Ignatius wrote over four hundred years ago, and they will live and work and interact with all kinds of people, who will have all kinds of special needs. In order to prepare all young people for the kind of world in which they will live as adults, school communities must strive for diversity that resembles the real world. Inclusive education challenges our schools to become just that.

Furthermore, *The Salamanca Statement Framework for Action for Special Needs*

*Education* (1994) suggests that inclusive schools and classrooms are the most effective way to combat discrimination, while also offering the best possible education to the most students:

Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency... of the entire educational system. (pp. viii-ix)

The *Salamanca Statement* goes on to say that, in fact, inclusive education properly honors human rights, and gives each student her due and dignity as a person:

Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights. Within the field of education, this is reflected in the development of strategies that seek to bring about a genuine equalization of opportunity. Experience in many countries demonstrates that the integration of children and youth with special educational needs is best achieved with in inclusive schools that serve all children with in the community. It is within this context that those with special educational needs can achieve the fullest educational progress and social integration. (p. 11)

Inclusive education, then, combats discrimination and offers equal opportunities to those with special needs — both benefits. Put another way, Lipsky and Gartner (1997) suggest that the post-industrial world is in need of a new educational paradigm — one that honors and celebrates difference as diversity — rather than treating difference as deviance from the norm:

Inclusive education goes beyond a “readiness” model which requires that students with disabilities prove their readiness to be in an inclusive setting, and views the general education setting as the norm, both as a moral standard and as a pedagogical requirement. Inclusive education goes beyond the programs of “mainstreaming” which posit two separate systems – general and special education – to embrace a restructured school system, one that is unitary and that can provide success for all children. (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997, p. 257)

Inclusive education benefits all students by reimagining how students with and without special needs might relate to one another. “As alienation threatens community, inclusive education is

the seedbed in which we learn to nurture and live in a democratic society,” (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997, p. 258).

### Summary

This section of the review of related literature outlined the benefits, both academic and social, of inclusive education — to students with special needs, to students without special needs, and to society as a whole. Research shows that students with special needs receive a number of academic and social benefits. Their classmates without special needs at least are not harmed by, and in some cases benefit from, learning in inclusive classrooms. And inclusive education prepares students for life in a diverse community, properly honors difference, and gives each person their due and human dignity.

### **Inclusive Education and Catholic Schools**

The final section of the review of related literature will examine studies that address the need for inclusive education in American Catholic schools. There is a lack of research surrounding this particular aspect of Catholic education, thus creating a need for the study. This section of the literature review will be divided into two parts: research that creates a rationale for inclusive service delivery in Catholic education, and research that offers models or best practices for inclusive service delivery in Catholic education.

#### *Rationale for Inclusive Service Delivery: The Mission of Catholic Education*

Long and Schutloffel (2006) offer contemplative practice as a way for Catholic schools and Catholic educators to make decisions regarding inclusive practices:

Contemplative practice challenges Catholic educators to examine their decisions through the lens of Catholic teaching and tradition. Here the principle of contemplative practice raises questions about the authenticity of a Catholic educational experience that does not embrace all members of the faith community. (Long and Schutloffel, 2006, p. 446)

Having set forth this practice as a way of proceeding for Catholic educators, Long and Schutloffel present statements and documents from the Holy See and from the American Catholic bishops to show that the Church's position on individuals with special needs and access to Catholic education is clear. These are the documents which Catholic educators should, according to Long and Schutloffel, consider when developing policies and practices regarding inclusive education. Their message encourages Catholic schools to be more inclusive and welcoming to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Long and Schutloffel refer to the statement by Saint John Paul II (2000), who asserted that "the Church is committed to making herself more and more a welcoming home," (p.444). Additionally, the American Catholic bishops proclaimed in 1978 that educators in Catholic schools ought to coordinate at the diocesan level in order to "supplement the provision of direct educational aids," (*Pastoral statement of U.S. Catholic bishops on people with disabilities*, 1978, p. 8) for students with special needs. In June 2005, American bishops issued a joint statement through the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) which praised, "the increasing number of our Catholic school administrators and teachers who have taken steps to welcome these children and others with special needs into our Catholic schools," (*Renewing our commitment to Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the third millennium*, 2005, p. 7). Long and Schutloffel point out that these statements made by the American bishops are consistent with those made by Saint John Paul II's writings as pope on the same issues, indicating that the Church's stance on this issue is clear, in theory if not in practice.

Carlson (2014) draws upon specific principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), Liberation Theology, as well as the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas to show why Catholic schools ought to offer inclusive services to students with special needs. CST is grounded in

Scripture, and is articulated mostly in papal encyclicals and documents produced by bishop's conferences. The United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has narrowed CST down into seven key themes: life and dignity of the human person; call to family, community, and participation; protection of rights and fulfillment of responsibilities for the common good; preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; dignity and rights of workers; solidarity, or working for peace and justice for all humans; and the stewardship of God's creation (USCCB 1998, 2003). "In sum, CST might be called officially Church-sanctioned teaching on social issues," (Carlson, 2014, p. 64).

Carlson argues that CST compels our institutions (such as schools, hospitals, etc.) to address societal inequalities and to advocate for the poor and marginalized. In educational settings, this means offering services that help individuals to participate in community to the fullest extent, and to realize their inherent dignity as humans created in the image and likeness of God.

Carlson then turns to the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who wrote in the 1200s, to establish a rationale for inclusive services in Catholic schools. Aquinas teaches that human beings must express their love for God through their love for their neighbor; "love of God is inexorably bound up with love of neighbor, whom people must love as themselves," (Carlson, 2014, p. 68). Practically speaking, this means that Christians — those who follow the teachings of Jesus — must actively work for the happiness and full human flourishing of neighbors. This has huge implications for Catholic education:

Thus, if what we supporters of Catholic education believe to be the best type of education is available to some children to help them become their best selves, should not participation be open to all? (Carlson, 2014, p. 68)

If Catholic education truly does contribute to human flourishing, then that opportunity should be open to all people — including students in need of special services.

Furthermore, Carlson clarifies that for Aquinas, love is an act of the will — therefore, to love your neighbor means to will for them all of the good that God bestows on you and your family. Remaining faithful to this teaching of Aquinas carries significant responsibility for another’s happiness. “If Catholic educators are willing themselves to love each person, to see the reflection of divinity in each person, then can schools that exclude those most in need be called Catholic?” (Carlson, 2014, p. 69)

Finally, Carlson makes an appeal to Aquinas’ teaching on the relationship between divine and civil law, which states:

What belongs to human law cannot abrogate what is required by natural law or divine law. The natural order is founded by divine providence; material things are ordered to the alleviation of human needs. Therefore, the division of ownership of things that proceed from human law must not interfere with the alleviation of human needs by those things. (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, q. 66, a.7.c)

An interpretation of this statement suggests that even though American Education Law does not compel Catholic schools to provide inclusive services to their students under IDEIA, those communities are not free from the divine imperative to care for those in need.

Carlson also draws upon Liberation Theology to advocate for inclusive services in Catholic education. "Its focus on the preferential option for the poor, its criticism of structural sin, and the emphasis it has placed on reimagining the Catholic faith as an instrument for the liberation of the oppressed constitute decisive contributions to Catholic theology," (Worcester, 2017, pp. 464-465). Liberation theologians have asserted that the root cause of societal injustices lies in the under-representation — and therefore, lack of participation — of marginalized groups in institutions.

In the wake of Vatican II, particularly in Latin America, Liberation Theology led to a radical reorientation of Church activity toward the liberation of the poor. This included education; in a letter from the provincials of Latin America to all Jesuits, the leaders asserted “we are convinced that the Society of Jesus in Latin America must take a clear stand in defense of social justice, supporting those who lack the basic tools of education, which are so essential for development. Hence we must offer marginal groups the chance for an education,” (Worcester, 2017, p. 465).

Carlson asserts that in order for individuals with special needs – a marginal group in American Catholic education – to participate fully in the community, they must be present in the community and receive what they need to participate fully. In a school, Carlson argues, this means that inclusive services must be offered to students who need them in order for the institution to be faithful to Liberation Theology.

Scanlan (2009) suggests that “Catholic Social Teaching compels Catholic schools to include and serve traditionally marginalized students, including students in poverty, those with special needs, and English language learners,” (p. 1). This insistence flows, Scanlan (2009a) suggests, from a Christian anthropology that asserts the inherent dignity and social nature of humanity. Additionally, Scanlan (2008) suggests that inclusive education grows organically out of CST’s focus on human dignity, the common good, and a preferential option for the poor and marginalized. “CST compels adherents to work directly to ameliorate barriers, including special needs, poverty, racism, and home language, that inhibit students from succeeding in schools,” (Scanlan 2009a, p. 538). Since the motivating principle of Catholic education — namely, Catholic Social Teaching — so strongly supports inclusion, one would think that Catholic schools delivered specialized services for students with learning differences. In reality, though,

“These schools do not have strong track records of crafting effective service delivery models, particularly for students who present special needs,” (Scanlan, 2009, p. 3). Scanlan asserts that this track record is caused by Catholic schools’ lack of a clear articulation of their role with respect to students with learning differences.

Scanlan also suggests that inclusive service delivery expects a classroom teacher to know his/her students, and to assume increased responsibility to teach them as they are. This educational philosophy is grounded in the principle of subsidiarity, one of the main tenets of Catholic Social Teaching:

Subsidiarity emphasizes that decisions should be made by those closest to the consequences...Those closest to the child need to be invested and involved in strategizing about the education of the child. The classroom teacher cannot simply rely on the special educator to accommodate the special needs. (Scanlan, 2009, p. 43).

According to Church teaching, then, those closest to the student each day should be actively creating strategies to teach him/her as they are, taking his/her gifts, talents, and abilities into consideration.

Scanlan (2009a) also contends that there are legal implications for Catholic schools which develop inclusive service delivery programs for students with special needs. Although not every piece of legislation has implications for Catholic schools and Catholic educators, Scanlan points out that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 does consider the requirements of Catholic schools to offer reasonable accommodations for students with special needs. This law applies to every school that receives federal funds in any form — legal cases have even determined that participation in local school district programming can count. “Section 504

applies to the vast majority of Catholic schools and to virtually all Catholic diocesan school systems,” (Scanlan, 2009a, p. 540). As Catholic schools grow in their awareness of and ability to address special needs, their responsibilities under the law grow. For instance, inclusive services that are offered in Catholic schools must meet Section 504’s requirements regarding evaluation and placement, assessment, and procedure (Scanlan, 2009a). In other words, if Catholic schools are not motivated by their mission and educational philosophy, perhaps they may be compelled by adherence to the law.

Barton (2000) contends that a truly Catholic school is an inclusive one. She asks the question, “Can Catholic schools not be inclusive and still be truly Catholic?,” thus binding the philosophical underpinnings of Catholic education to inclusive practices. Because the word Catholic literally means “universal,” the Catholic Church — and therefore, Catholic education — are by their very nature inclusive institutions. Barton cites the history of American Catholic education to further her point:

Catholic schools have always been inclusive given that they were begun in order to afford a quality Catholic education to all, especially those newly arrived immigrants whose socioeconomic, cultural, and language differences created significant educational challenges. Inclusion, then, is part of the historical tradition of Catholic schools from elementary through university level. (Barton, 2000, p. 330)

Because inclusion is closely tied to the reason why Catholic schools were founded in the first place, inclusion must, Barton argues, remain an inseparable part of the mission of the Catholic education today. DeFiore (2006) also points out that the American Catholic bishops expanded their statements on education in the wake of the passage of IDEA in 1973 to include — at least in theory, if not in practice — inclusive services for students with special needs.

Drawing on the American Catholic bishop's 1972 statement, "To Teach as Jesus did," Barton suggests that Jesus is the model for teachers at Catholic schools, and that requires educators to treat students a particular way:

It means seeing and respecting each child as unique and unrepeatable; it means recognizing that each child has special, different gifts and that the school's job is to identify and develop those gifts in a climate where all gifts can be appreciated and shared for the common good. (Barton, 2000, p. 330)

Celebrating different learning styles and meeting the needs of each individual student all flows from the example of Jesus, the teacher par excellence.

Barton also draws upon the research of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences to suggest that a truly excellent school, grounded in cutting edge educational research, "requires a different vision from one where all children learn the same material in the same way at the same pace and where progress is assessed by a standard, static, decontextualized instrument," (Barton, 2000, pp. 332-333). Students in schools of today must be given various and diverse opportunities, which draw on multiple intelligences, to demonstrate mastery of material. This, Barton suggests, is consistent with Catholic educational philosophy, which "understands that education is not merely knowledge accumulation but formation," (Barton, 2000, p. 337).

### Best Practices and Models of Inclusive Education in Catholic Schools

Burke and Griffin (2016) point out that one major barrier to inclusive education in Catholic schools is the lack of information about successful models. Without coordination across institutions and a central office dedicated to providing resources and support, many schools are left to tackle the practical aspects of inclusive education alone. Still, some researchers have observed models of inclusive education that have demonstrated success in Catholic schools. Through their research, they have been able to identify best practices for these models.

Boyle (2010) presents the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework of inclusive service delivery as a possible way forward for Catholic schools. RtI is a three-tiered approach, focusing on providing high-quality instruction that is data-driven based on student performance. Often, when students begin to exhibit difficulties in completing work at the same rate as their classmates, the student gets blamed for their performance. RtI acknowledges that sometimes, poor student performance may be due to a lack of curricular development, or poor pedagogy, or a stressful classroom environment. “By using a systems approach, Response to Intervention shifts the focus of school difficulty from the student to the system,” (Boyle, 2010, p.5).

Tier One of RtI’s three-tier approach focuses on improving support for all students, regardless of ability, performance, or need. Universal screening in the classroom, an essential element of Tier One, can reveal if there is an area of the curriculum that needs to be clarified or improved. “By adopting universal strategies to support all students, many problems can be prevented before they actually occur,” (Boyle, 2010, p. 7). Tier Two develops strategies and interventions to assist students who did not respond to Tier one supports, as indicated by their performance data. These students do not get labeled in any way, and may receive these interventions in the regular classroom — and, if possible, as part of a group of students in need of the same intervention. If there are students who, as demonstrated by performance data, do not respond to the interventions used in Tier Two, then more focused, long-term intervention strategies can be developed in Tier Three.

Boyle (2010) proposes some difficult questions that Catholic schools can ask themselves in light of a Response to Intervention blueprint for inclusive service delivery:

- Does our curriculum use a standards-based approach to teach students or does it merely repeat material because "that's what we have always taught"?

- Does our school employ instructional strategies that are grounded in research to meet the needs of all students or does the school use a one-dimensional approach to teaching students regardless of individual need?
- Does our school utilize ongoing data about student achievement to document the learning of all or does the school rely on its reputation for academic excellence?
- Does our school use proactive approaches in organizing support structures to meet the extraordinary learning and behavioral needs of students or do we simply rely on the public school to meet those needs? (Scanlan, 2012, pp.12-13)

Crowley and Wall (2007) propose the use of paraeducators, or instructional aides, in a Catholic general education classroom to help teachers offer inclusive services. These individuals must be trained especially for this purpose; however, as studies have shown that aides who are not trained to support the class as a whole can undermine the inclusive nature of the classroom (Loreman, 2000). Crowley and Wall hold up the Archdiocese of Washington as a model network where paraeducators are used to offer inclusive services; the paraeducators receive intensive training at The Catholic University of America, along with their general education partners and the school administrators, on how to collaborate to promote an environment of inclusion. Long, Brown, and Nagy-Rado (2007) elaborated on the need for educators in Catholic schools to be educated to provide inclusive services. Their research, also based in the Archdiocese of Washington, focused on preparing educators to be both collaborative and consultative in offering Catholic inclusive education.

Powell (2004) highlights the program of one specific school — Paul VI High School in Fairfax, Virginia — as an example of a Catholic institution that successfully incorporated inclusive practices into the life of the school. Called the Options program, this program employs a certified special educator and offers professional development workshops by trained professionals for all teachers. Additionally, a committee of parents served as an advisory panel, helping the school to tap into resources from the parents in an organized fashion. Powell emphasizes that the school's commitment to include all types of students, coupled with the

administration's willingness to listen to parents and their ideas, the compelling story of students with disabilities to potential donors, and the willingness of faculty to support the Options program, all contributed to this program's success.

Laengle, Redder, Somers, and Sullivan (2000) profile the Success Central Program at Catholic Central High School in Cincinnati, Ohio. As early as 1991, Catholic Central developed a special education committee, which produced the following list of ideal characteristics of an inclusive program:

- Students would get individualized help when they needed it.
- Students would feel a strong sense of self-esteem and a sense of motivation and self-direction.
- Students would know their strengths and weaknesses and would seek out help when needed.
- Students would be offered a variety of ways to learn the same concept.
- Students would have competency in computer usage, including spell check and grammar check.
- Students would be able to express themselves both orally and in writing to convey logical, organized thoughts.
- Students would not experience continuous failure and frustration, but would instead feel a sense of accomplishment.
- Adaptations would be made by teachers to meet students' needs (i.e., tape recorded classes, longer time for tests, fewer questions on tests, a scribe to take student's notes)
- Students would have developed appropriate study skills (i.e., organization, listening, test taking, memory, finding main ideas).
- Students would develop skills that would enable them to be successful in the working world.
- Students would be comfortable relating to others in social contexts and have the opportunity to practice these skills.
- Students would gain a sense of control over their lives leading to a vision of what they would do after high school.
- A variety of general courses would be available to meet these students' needs at the junior and senior levels, should they choose not to attend the Joint Vocational School.
- Curriculum would be designed with a wide variety of ability levels in mind.
- Technology would be used to assist students with their learning needs.
- Tutors would be available for one-on-one consultation. (Laengle, et.al., 2000, pp. 356-357)

The work of this committee led to the founding of a school-within-a-school model of inclusive service delivery, where fifteen freshmen with diverse learning needs were accepted into Catholic Central High School. These students were always in class together, but were mixed in with other students at the school. The director of the Success Central program was available for one-on-one tutoring with these fifteen students; she also served as a paraeducator in their classroom throughout the day. Furthermore, parents were provided with bi-weekly reports on student progress.

Scanlan's research has suggested a number of useful models for inclusive service delivery, and has identified trends and attitudes that contribute to its success. He proposes a new model of service delivery in Catholic schools that is grounded in CST. Scanlan (2009) refers to this program as Integrated Comprehensive Services (ICS). ICS places the responsibility of educating each child individually in the classroom teachers' hands. Instead of expecting students to fit the mold of their instructors' styles of teaching, ICS expects teachers to develop strategies that fit each students' style of learning:

ICS focuses on building the capacity of all educators in the school to create teaching and learning for all students... building the expertise compels teachers to no longer concede their power or expertise to so-called experts down the hall, at another school, or in another district, (Scanlan, 2009, p. 40).

Catholic school teachers and administrators must, then, begin to understand that their responsibility extends to the individualized learning needs of each student with whose care they are entrusted. Expecting students with specialized learning needs to conform, or "passing the buck" to specialists, are not acceptable strategies for effective inclusion. The ICS model which Scanlan proposes expects a classroom teacher to know his/her students, and to assume increased responsibility to teach them as they are.

Elsewhere, Scanlan (2009a) offers a learning consultant model of inclusive service delivery, which is an integrated way of meeting students' individualized learning needs that contains elements of the Response to Intervention approach described by Boyle (2016). In the learning consultant model, a classroom teacher develops a prerefferal intervention strategy — in concert with an on-site specialized learning consultant — to be delivered in the classroom by the classroom teacher. Data is collected to determine whether or not the student is responding to the intervention; if she is not, then an alternative path is considered — including possible diagnosis of a disability. Scanlan emphasizes that this model requires a school ethos that fosters collaboration and a robust professional development program that is ongoing.

Scanlan (2009) observed the learning consultant model at work in archdiocesan school systems. This study concluded that support from the diocesan central office was essential in establishing an inclusive culture in individual schools. Furthermore, schools systems that developed consistent professional development and mentoring opportunities for teachers had considerable more success than those who left schools — and teachers — to “figure it out” on their own. Finally, Scanlan found that the learning consultant model thrived when the sharing of best practices occurred between schools, principals, and learning consultants themselves:

The implementation was strengthened when the system's key players — namely, the school principals and learning consultants — fostered effective collegial relationships across horizontal, vertical, and diagonal dimensions. The depth of these relationships corresponded with the perception of successful implementation of the learning consultant model in each school community. (Scanlan, 2009, p. 642)

In sum, schools that cooperated and shared resources — centering around a shared mission — created programs that effectively delivered inclusive service programs.

Scanlan (2017) also determined best practices that ensure the success of the learning consultant model. In examining schools that implemented the learning consultant model, he

found that schools which formally document and keep track of the individual learning needs of students have considerable more success in meeting the needs of their students. Additionally, the clarity of communication among teachers is a key factor in the success of the learning consultant model, as was the consistency with which the model is applied throughout the school.

Additionally, Scanlan (2008) found that schools which focus on developing discourse of community and an increased capacity to include were more faithful to the values of CST upon which their philosophy of education rested. Discourse of community, Scanlan suggests, refers to how the school talks about and conceptualizes the inclusion or exclusion of students. Schools that are successful at developing the discourse of community in a broad, truly Catholic way — by intentionally developing an attitude of inclusivity toward all students, being committed to engaging families, and are grounded in CST values — avoid the exclusive grammar of Catholic schools that has slowly crept in over decades. Their policies and practices reflect CST values of the common good, human dignity, and a preferential option for marginalized persons.

Furthermore, schools that intentionally dedicate resources toward inclusion of all students, and have school leaders who are able to articulate that connection to the school's mission, avoided the problematic grammar of Catholic schooling that often leads to exclusion — whether intentional or not.

Barton (2000) identified eighteen suggested components of an inclusion model for Catholic schools:

- Develop a climate where each child is seen as having gifts, not deficits.
- Don't label as handicapped.
- Find and develop strengths; teach to and assess through them.
- Identify weaknesses and keep them from becoming obstacles to achievement/success.
- Create a climate that fosters self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and personal intelligence.
- Create a climate that celebrates diversity and appreciates complementarity of different profiles.

- Adapt curriculum to student profiles; curriculum is "what"; instruction provides "how."
- Teach students to adapt themselves to task demands through use of strategies that work for them.
- See learning as a match between learner and environment; when a child is not learning—change the learning environment until the child can learn; don't label the child as incapable.
- View intelligence as dynamic, multifaceted, distributed, and contextually determined.
- View aptitude differences as changeable and not residing solely in the student.
- View success/failure in terms of person-situation interaction, relative to past/present learning.
- Integrate "assessment in service of learning" into all aspects to create an iterative process that directs instructional planning and design; assessment must be formative and include a dynamic interaction between adult and child that affords scaffolding, feedback, and modeling.
- Set individual versus competitive goals; define success as learning something you did not know before.
- Expect all to succeed and show them how; make academic success possible.
- Develop intrinsic motivation by focusing on curiosity, optimal challenge, and control.
- Teach for understanding and transfer/application; focus on learning to learn.
- Include a program to work collaboratively with parents.

These strategies coupled with ongoing professional development, Barton suggests, will help to create a learning environment that allows individuals to flourish in their own unique way and that accentuates students' strengths, in the spirit of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. In a truly inclusive Catholic school, students can become responsible for their own life-long learning and be taught to advocate for themselves in the future.

### *Summary*

This section of the review of related literature provides an overview of rationales for, and best practices/models of, inclusive service delivery in American Catholic schools. The presence of agreement with regard to rationale, coupled with the lack of consistent praxis, suggest that Catholic schools are not doing everything they ought to do with regard to inclusive service delivery.

## Conclusion

The first section of the review of related literature covered the founding documents of the Society of Jesus, and showed how Jesuit educational philosophy flows from those documents. Although there is not explicit reference to inclusive education, much of the material can be interpreted as supporting inclusive Jesuit education. Because each person is a cherished gift from God with unique talents and abilities, their education ought to be tailored with those individual gifts and talents in mind. Just as the director in the *Spiritual Exercises* must show *cura personalis* to his directee, so also must a teacher in a Jesuit school show *cura personalis* to her students. The *Constitutions* of the Society of Jesus suggest that superiors must know and love their community, and that they must use what they know about the people placed in their care to govern; so, too, must a teacher in a Jesuit school know and love her students, and use what she knows about them to differentiate instruction.<sup>5</sup>

The second section of the review of related literature addressed the benefits of inclusion. Research has shown that students with special needs achieve better results in inclusive classrooms as opposed to segregated classrooms. Furthermore, the academic performance of students without special needs either is not affected by, or benefits from, inclusive education. Research has also shown many social benefits to inclusive education for all students, including reduced fear of human differences, growth in social cognition, improvements in self-concept, development of personal principles, and warm and caring friendships. Inclusive education also benefits society as a whole, by preparing students to be citizens in a diverse community where difference is honored and celebrated — not treated as deviance.

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<sup>5</sup> Not all Catholic schools are Jesuit schools; although these principles may apply to all Catholic schools and all Catholic educators, only educators in Jesuit Catholic schools would rely upon the documents of the Society of Jesus for inspiration. As such, the statements in this section of the review of literature are limited to Jesuit Catholic schools.

The third and final section of the review of literature addresses research around Catholic, inclusive education. Catholic Social Teaching, which flows from Biblical theology, as well as the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, compel Catholic schools to be inclusive. Furthermore, Catholic education from its start has been inclusive in nature; to stray from that path is a betrayal of the educational and theological principles at its foundation. Finally, a number of models propose a way forward with Catholic inclusive education, which suggests that a) something must be done about how Catholic schools educate students with special needs, and b) Catholic schools are unclear exactly how to accomplish this goal. There is a lack of research in this particular area, creating a need for this study.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### **Restatement of Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze the extent to which the Rodriguez Learning Services Program successfully delivers inclusive services to students with learning differences at Manresa Prep. Furthermore, this study hoped to understand the extent to which the work of the Rodriguez Program is aligned with the mission of Catholic education in general and Jesuit education in particular. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How does the Rodriguez Learning Services Program offer inclusive education to students with learning differences at Manresa Prep?
2. What are the benefits of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program to (a) the school (b) the students (c) the alumni?
3. In what ways is the Rodriguez Learning Services Program aligned with the mission of Catholic education in general, and Jesuit education in particular?
4. What recommendations do those surveyed or interviewed have for the Rodriguez Learning Services Program?

Research has demonstrated that although documents related to Catholic and Jesuit education encourage or even compel schools to offer inclusive education, there is often a gap between theory and praxis. This study lifted up one program that seeks to bridge this gap between what Catholic and Jesuit schools say they ought to do, and what they actually do regarding inclusive education. In this chapter, the research design, sample selection, and data collection techniques are provided.

## Research Design

This study employed a case study to explore the inner-workings of Manresa Prep's Rodriguez Learning Services Program. Creswell (2007) identifies a case study as "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection," (p. 465). The bounded system in this case was the Rodriguez Learning Services Program, which was studied intensively through interviews with various stake-holders, direct observation, and examination of artifacts. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) describe a case study design as a funnel. As data is collected and analyzed, the study, which begins broadly, focuses in on particular themes and ideas that emerge. The coding of interviews, documents, and observational data allows for this narrowing of focus in the case study.

Yin (1984) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context," (p. 23). By directly observing the strategies used in the Rodriguez Learning Services program and interviewing participants about their experience, this study examined the Rodriguez program in its real-life context — Manresa Prep High School — to determine whether the form of inclusive service delivery used is effective and related to the mission of the school.

In a case study, a specific group of participants are observed in their real-life context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Yin, 1984). Through interviews with a purposeful sample of faculty, students, and alumni, this study sought to understand whether and to what extent the Rodriguez Learning Services Program offers truly inclusive education in the spirit of the mission of Catholic and Jesuit secondary education. Catholic and Jesuit educational philosophy support the existence of inclusive education; because there is a lack of structured programs for students with learning differences in American Jesuit Secondary Schools, the case

study model will provide data for other schools of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus who wish to replicate the work of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program in their school.

### **Population**

The case study examined the Rodriguez Learning Services Program at Manresa Prep High School. Manresa Prep is a Jesuit school for grades six through twelve in the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus, located on the east coast of the United States. The school was founded as a high school, grades nine through twelve, to educate the sons of immigrants or first generation laborers in a major American city; the school's first home was located in the heart of the city. As the demand for Catholic and Jesuit education grew in the area, the school moved its campus to a larger facility in the suburbs of the city. The students of Manresa come from 110 zip codes throughout the state; the majority of the students come from the suburbs of the city. The average class size at Manresa Prep is seventeen students

In 1996, the Rodriguez Learning Services Program was founded at Manresa Prep. The Manresa website explains that this program was created "as an effort to say true to the Jesuit idea of cura personalis." Rodriguez Learning Services is a fee-for-service program for students with documented learning differences. Students receive one-on-one and small group supplemental instruction, using subject material from class, to target their specific learning needs.

### **Sampling**

A purposeful sample of students, faculty/staff, and alumni who have participated in the Murray Learning Services Program were selected. Purposeful sampling allows for the selection of particular individuals within a site to help understand a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). One particular type of purposeful sampling known as "snowball sampling" was used for this case study. As an outsider, the researcher did not know who best to interview in order to best understand the phenomenon. "Qualitative snowball sampling is a form of purposeful

sampling... when the researcher asks participants to recommend other individuals to be sampled,” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). The researcher interviewed administrators, seeking their input on which faculty are most involved with the Murray Learning Services program. From faculty, the researcher will determine which students to interview.

Using snowball sampling at Manresa Prep, twenty participants were selected:

- Five current students who have been in the Rodriguez Learning Services Program for two or more years
- Five faculty/staff members who work directly with students in inclusive service delivery through the Rodriguez Learning Services Program
- Five faculty members who teach students enrolled in the Rodriguez Learning Services Program
- Five alumni of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program who have graduated from college.

In addition, the school’s President, Principal, Director of Ignatian Identity, and Director of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program were interviewed.

### **Data Collection**

Visitation to Manresa Prep began in early 2018, and occurred over a six-week period. A letter sent to all of the parents of students in Rodriguez Learning Services announced the researcher’s arrival; deferred consent was obtained through this letter for observation. Direct observations in the Rodriguez Services academic areas were recorded using a uniform observation report, and were saved in a word file; these observations were mostly of interactions between teachers and students, as well as among students.

Informed consent was obtained for each adult that will be interviewed. Students identified through snowball sampling were interviewed after obtaining informed consent from their parents. All interviews were recorded using smart phone technology, and transcribed at a

later date by the researcher. All data collected through visitation to Manresa Prep was stored in the cloud in a password protected file, and backed up on a thumb drive. Only the researcher will have access to this data.

### **Validity**

The validity of the study was ensured through validation of interview transcripts by participants, as well as through objective observational practice. Each participant that is interviewed had a chance to read the transcript of their conversation with the researcher, and to approve the text before data analysis occurred. Furthermore, observations made by the researcher were confirmed and validated with faculty members and adult staff in the Rodriguez learning services program. Artifacts collected, such as promotional materials, instructional aides, etc. were collected and cataloged on site.

All documents were stored securely and protected by password, both in the cloud and on a thumb drive. Anonymity of participants in the study, as well as of the case study site location, was maintained. The school and program name have been changed to the Rodriguez Learning Service Program at Manresa Prep in order to maintain the anonymity of the school site and location.

### **Reliability**

The study was carefully documented, with observations including time of day, number of participants, subject being considered, etc. Demographic information was kept for each of the participants in the study, while maintaining anonymity of individuals. Interviews began with open-ended questions, intended to allow individuals to articulate their own experience.

## **Data Analysis**

Data collected through interviews, observations, and artifacts was analyzed using a coding system. Careful analysis of the data in light of the research questions allowed patterns and themes to emerge from the data itself. The coding of interviews was confirmed by individual interviewees, and the themes that emerge were confirmed by an unbiased learning specialist in the field of inclusive education, who is familiar with Jesuit Catholic schools. The overall methodology had the objective of identifying best practices of inclusive service delivery in Catholic and Jesuit secondary schools, while also connecting inclusive education to the mission of Jesuit secondary education.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Introduction**

This study considered the effectiveness of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program at Manresa Prep in offering inclusive educational services to students with learning disabilities. The study also examined the benefits of the program to the school, its students, and its alumni; as well as how the Rodriguez Learning Services Program connects to the mission of Manresa Prep as a Catholic and Jesuit institution. Finally, the study sought recommendations for the Rodriguez Learning Services Program deemed necessary from those students, administrators, staff, and alumni interviewed.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How does the Rodriguez Learning Services Program deliver inclusive education to students with learning differences at Manresa Prep?
- 2) What are the benefits of the Rodriguez Learning Services Program to (a) the school (b) the students (c) the alumni?
- 3) In what ways is the Rodriguez Learning Services Program aligned with the mission of Catholic education in general, and Jesuit education in particular?
- 4) What recommendations do those surveyed or interviewed have for the Rodriguez Learning Services Program?

In this Chapter, the researcher will present findings related to each of these research questions as ascertained through observations, interviews, and document analysis. Five alumni, five students, five faculty members, five learning specialists, and four administrators were interviewed over a period of six weeks and asked these research questions, in order to gather data for analysis.

Through the coding of interviews, observation reports, and promotional/educational documents, five themes emerged from the data:

**Student Advocacy** – in an atmosphere where so many student relationships with adults are adversarial, the relationships in Rodriguez Learning Services are not. The relationship is strictly one of helper, as there is no evaluation taking place on the part of the teacher. The staff express that they are working with the kids to help them succeed, and the kids KNOW that; this knowledge allows students to take risks and push themselves in a way that they might not in an ordinary classroom, and helps the students to believe that they are smart, capable young men. The director refers to the program as “boots on the Ground Cura Personalis.”

**Consistent, Specific Interventions** – Rodriguez Learning Services provides structure for kids to help with executive functioning. The learning specialists emphasize the importance of students showing up every day, creating to do lists, etc. Students come every day, multiple times per day, to the learning center for help with organization, with studying, with preparing for tests, with writing papers, etc. Students receive every intervention that is available through the College Board, including extra time and having their tests read to them. These interventions are a clear example of the principle of adaptability which Saint Ignatius was so clear about in the first Jesuit schools.

**Learning Specialist as Intermediary** -- The staff in Rodriguez Learning Services understand, as learning specialists, that part of their responsibility involves educating faculty and staff about students’ individual learning needs. This often requires them to act as an intermediary between student and classroom teacher. Similarly, as an adult and a member of the faculty/staff, the learning specialists often find themselves having to advocate on behalf of

teachers to students – helping the young men to understand what a classroom teacher is asking, and why.

**Meta-Cognition** – Every student in Rodriguez Learning Services is helped through the content of his coursework to understand his own meta-cognitive skills, so he can advocate for himself later in life. Rodriguez Learning Services uses the content from the classroom as opportunities to teach students about how they learn, what their strengths are, and how they might capitalize on those strengths to be successful. Students and alumni both talk about this; the alumni express how helpful this was not just for high school, but beyond – even into their careers.

**Trust** – The element of trust was named by every person with whom the researcher spoke as an essential ingredient to the success of Rodriguez Learning Services, and something that is often lacking in the learning community. Classroom teachers express that they have a hard time believing that the learning specialists are not doing the work for students. Learning specialists express that they have to work hard in order to earn the trust of classroom teachers. Students express that they often are subjected to remarks by students, and sometimes by teachers, suggesting that they go to Rodriguez Learning Services to “cheat.”

What follows is an in-depth exploration of these themes, drawing on the data collected.

## THEMES FROM DATA

### **Student Advocacy**

This element of Rodriguez Learning Services was expressed most strongly by the students and their learning specialists, and is grounded in the fact that students spend multiple periods per day – including before and after school and their lunch periods – in the Rodriguez Learning Services Resource Center. Whereas classroom teachers only spend fifty minutes per

day with a student, the learning specialists in RLS often spend twice or three times as much time with them. This extra time facilitates a relationship of care, in which the young men know that the adults in RLS want them to succeed and are invested not just in their academic success.

### *Student Perspectives*

Of the five students interviewed, each expressed that the staff in Rodriguez Learning Services were on their side, cared about them, and wanted them to succeed both in and out of the classroom. One student, a sophomore named Peter, expressed that coming to RLS is reassuring to him, because he knows that he has an entire system of support is there ready to help him overcome any obstacles:

Here I have the support of everybody it seems like. They're always there to help you. Like, they're here for you and they tell you that. I can walk in right now and say, "Hey, Ms. Rogers, can I work on math?". "Alright, sit down we'll have math, we'll do math". I could walk in and say, "Can I work on history?", and Mr. Fine will work on history. It's like, it's just a bigger support, especially for a kid who has always struggled with reading, writing, and dyslexia really gets me sometimes. And coming in here is just kinda like a reassurance. Like I'm not alone and I have help to get me through whatever I have a challenge with.

This young man is aware of the safety net that RLS provides for him, and that reassures him and mitigates any anxiety he may feel about academic performance. He also pointed to the fact that the learning specialists in RLS have more time to dedicate to his personal learning needs, and do not give him a grade for the work that he does with them:

They (teachers) all say they have time, but in reality, they have to grade stuff and they have other students to meet with, and they have all these classes, you know? How much time can they really give to you? At RLS, that's for a small group of guys, so they really do focus in on your needs.

Charlie, a junior, contrasted the environment of RLS with the classroom setting, where teachers give grades; that makes him apprehensive to ask a question that might be obvious to other students in the class. Because the RLS staff do not evaluate student performance, this student

feels more comfortable taking risks and asking questions in RLS that he might not ask out loud in the classroom:

I've also become very personal with the RLS teachers, as well. Which is always nice, because if you have any specific questions, there are no wrong questions. I know that some people actually have trouble asking teachers questions because they think they're going to be wrong or that it might feel awkward, but with RLS, I feel like I can ask whatever I want. They always know that you can do better and they always cheer you on to be more ambitious and to strive for that higher grade. There are some kids that walk in and say, man, I'm gonna fail, they still say, oh no, you got this!

A major benefit of RLS for these young men is that the staff in RLS are invested in their academic success without evaluating their academic performance. The interest of the learning specialists in their success is “without strings.” This allows for the specialists to give and for students to receive social-emotional support as well as academic support. The one-on-one or small group time in RLS not only helps to clarify lessons and advance the learning process, but also helps students to feel cared for.

Charlie also connected the work he does in RLS to the mission statement of Manresa Prep, stating that being a part of the community in RLS has helped him to be a better person, not just to be a better student:

Like, the idea of helping others is the idea of RLS, so RLS, in and of itself, is answering the mission itself, but as it helps me as a person, personally, through RLS to be able to talk to people and reduce my stresses and talk about things and maybe helping other students, it all helps you to become a better person in the end. They build you up as a person. If you say something mean to another student, they're gonna let you know that that's not right. They're gonna tell you, and if you do things well, they'll applaud you... Overall, it's just a community that helps you become a better person, which in the end, kind of helps the mission statement here.

In the true spirit of Jesuit education, RLS helps students to become better humans, not just better learners, so that they can have a positive impact on the world when they leave Manresa Prep. For this young man, membership in the RLS community has been an important part of his development into a “Man for Others.”

A third student, a senior named Robert, is aware that the more personal, one-on-one interactions with adults have helped in his social development, and given him confidence in speaking with both other adults and peers:

Well I've definitely noticed as I'm talking with a teacher about a certain subject just that social aspects. It has definitely helped me to become more social and just open up. Freshmen year I was this quiet kid who was new to the school, I didn't know anyone other than a couple of kids. But just being able to have teachers to talk with about what I've been learning, and how I'm struggling, how they're open to hearing me talk about my struggles, and all that is something that I've never really had the chance to talk to anyone else about before. And I just found that to be life-changing in a way because I've never been able to fully discuss struggling and having someone to be there for me and help me with my struggles. So, Rodriguez Learning Services has definitely provided me with a new kind of social life.

For this student, RLS is a safe space where adults are able to listen intently, and that has given this student an opportunity to develop social skills in self-expression and in talking about struggles.

Mark, a sophomore, says that the staff not only helps students by encouraging them, they also serve as role models of how not to behave:

They build you up as a person. If you say something mean to another student, they're gonna let you know that that's not right. They're gonna tell you, and if you do things well, they'll applaud you... Overall, it's just a community that helps you become a better person, which in the end, kind of helps the mission statement here.

Mark can acknowledge that the RLS staff want him to be a better human being, and that they exert effort in building community to facilitate that process. Mark also connects their efforts to the mission of Manresa Prep – the learning specialists help him to be a better person.

Finally, a sophomore named Eric emphasizes the importance of the non-academic support that the RLS staff offer to him:

They always ask you how you're doing, how your day was. They'll always be interested in what you have to say, no matter what. I know some teachers downstairs that, I can tell them anything and they wouldn't judge me, it's between us. You can tell them bad things that happen, and they'll listen to you.

The support that students receive in other areas of their lives helps them to feel cared for by the staff in RLS. The resource room becomes a place they want to go, not a place that they avoid.

### *Learning Specialists/RLS Staff Perspectives*

Four of the five learning specialists interviewed in RLS articulate that they intentionally strive to provide the kind of environment where students feel supported and encouraged, and that the teacher-student ratio in RLS allows for more personal relationships to develop. One specialist says that their basic philosophy has been to care for the students as they are, and to let that loving relationship do the work:

We love them for who they are and the kids sense that. That's a very interesting phenomenon, because typically in a classroom they've endured a lot of embarrassment, shame and pain. If they hang out in RLS for just a very short time, they find everybody who's there is comfortable in their own skin to the point where we joke about it. And we have fun with it and it's just a total space where everything is okay as long as you're working. As long as you're making strides to improve wherever you are.

The loving relationship that the learning specialists strive to create with the students in RLS forms the context in which the students learn. The young men do not feel judged if they make mistakes, and are therefore able to relax; they become more comfortable with who they are.

Another RLS staff member points to the fact that the RLS staff work with students over the course of four years, as opposed to a classroom teacher who might only teach a student for eight months:

They (a teacher) might have them in ninth grade world history, never have them again. So, they see them for that one year. We see the student for what they did in that class, but we also get to see them their senior with, "This is where they've come from and where they've come to." I'm a very basic person in my philosophy and my beliefs. I believe when you look at it it comes down to, the kids know we care. And when the kids know that you care, they're willing to give you something back. And it comes down to the same we talk about with teachers, the relationships. The relationships and once the boys know that we care about them as people. They're not just student A in my classroom sitting there.

The longevity of the relationship established through Rodriguez Learning Services helps students to feel like the adults are invested in their long-term success, and the students respond to that investment by investing themselves, and working hard with the learning specialist to complete tasks and improve academic performance.

The Math and Science learning specialist in RLS expresses a similar sentiment, adding that adults have to work hard to cut through defenses that adolescent young men put up to protect themselves from failure.

So, first of all, you have to be ... You have to show them that you care about them, and you have to give them wins. You know what I mean? And we have to be able to hear them saying things like I'm lazy, I'm stupid, and we have to be able to work past those strategies. But you've got to have a relationship with them to do it.. You can't just come in for forty minutes and make that happen.

Cutting through these defenses takes time, and patience, and love, over an extended period of time.

Each of these four staff persons interviewed used explicit mission language in connecting the work they do in RLS to the larger mission of Manresa Prep. One individual said, “I don't think there's anything that could possibly be more religious or loving than providing these services to these individuals. It is so clear that this is the most boots on the ground form of *cura personalis* that there can possibly be.” Similarly, another said, “I'm gonna make sure we level the playing field. It comes back to meeting students where they are. And having the care for the individual person, *cura personalis*. And a third said, “Manresa’s mission I've always heard is *cura personalis*, care for the individual. And this is more about us looking at the student as an entire person and what they can bring.” A fourth learning specialist said that “RLS is a loving environment. I see just how much students can grow in a loving environment.” Each of these members of the Manresa Prep community feel that they are contributing to the mission of the

school as a Jesuit institution through the care they are providing to the students in Rodriguez Learning Services. They are modelling for the students what loving and religious behavior looks like – two of the goals of the Grad at Grad. In short, the work of RLS is an integral component to the mission of Manresa Prep.

### *Administrator Perspectives*

The sentiment that RLS is essential to the mission of Manresa Prep is shared by both the president and the principal of the school. One administrator expressed that the staff of RLS model for the young men at Manresa what it means to be selfless and committed:

There's a real deep commitment to the kids. The staff comes in on days off, and they offer tutoring, study sessions, they check in with them in the evenings. They send them emails and texts and all kinds of things, when appropriate, to make sure that they are staying connected to the kids. I think the kids, what the kids are learning here is that notion of what it means to be selfless in your pursuit to help others.

Students learn by watching their teachers, and by being recipients of their care, what the school hopes the students will themselves become: selfless Men for Others. Another administrator said that the work of RLS is a perfect mixture of pedagogical best practices and the mission of Jesuit education:

For me, for Jesuit education, I think Rodriguez Learning Services essential. I think we talk about *Cura Personalis*, right. It's the height of *Cura Personalis* meets pedagogical practice. What makes it work is the individual care that the teachers show for the students and as a result, the students are willing to buy into. There's a trust that's built.

This individual believes that the work of RLS demonstrates excellence in Jesuit education – a combination of pedagogical best practices within the context of *cura personalis* and loving relationships. The trust that grows out of that environment motivates students to work hard.

### *Alumni Perspectives*

Four of the five alumni of Manresa Prep who were educated in RLS describe the learning resource room of RLS as a safe space, where they were free from judgment and ridicule that

might happen in the regular classroom. One alumnus named Jeff stated that the environment of RLS encouraged him to push himself, and to believe that he was capable of success:

The fact that you constantly had somebody challenging you and pushing you and seeming like they had faith in you. For someone that you don't really know, made you feel like they had confidence in you and could push yourself. When you're sixteen, fifteen, and you're facing adversities and changing of life and all the things that are happening to a standard fifteen, sixteen year old... I do think that constantly having a support staff that continued to reiterate to you, "You are not cheating. You're just thinking differently. You're as smart as everyone else..." That kind of reiteration did me a lot of real benefit.

Another alumnus, Joseph, who works as a social worker in downtown Washington expressed that his arrival in RLS was the first time in his life that he did not feel stupid:

I felt like I, for the first time I felt like I might be smart, or I might be able to do this. And it was really helpful for me to be able to feel like I belong to the school or that I could do well or that maybe this wasn't all just like, "I'm an idiot." Maybe. I just needed more help with certain things. Rodriguez Learning Services was really helpful because, I think, it again kind of gave me some of the confidence to work on stuff.

This young man points to the fact that before receiving learning support he needed, he did not feel like he was capable of succeeding in school; for this reason, Joseph never put forth his best effort in school. He felt that it was futile. But the relationships in RLS and the support he received gave Joseph confidence that he was smart, and that encouraged him to work hard to achieve good grades. Joseph's classmate, James, reaffirmed this assertion, stating that, "Without a doubt, to be completely honest, I didn't realize I was intelligent until I arrived in Rodriguez Learning Services."

Ronald, a fourth alumnus, remembers both the radical commitment of RLS staff to his success, and the motivation that provided him and his classmates:

I think having that additional investment, I mean, maybe they would get there at, I don't know, like seven in the morning maybe before. I remember driving to Loyola in the dark to study with them and other students early in the morning, staying after school, too. So that's going above and beyond. I think practicing the preaching of that flexibility, it really made us want to try hard to succeed.

The extra effort that the RLS staff invested in alumni had an impact on their own motivation and effort. Because Ronald knew that the staff cared about him and how he did in class, he was encouraged to put forth his best effort.

### *Faculty*

The classroom teachers interviewed did not have major insight into the relationships built between students and learning specialists in RLS. One teacher, Mrs. Jones, did say, “I do think they certainly have the kids', first of all, welfare at heart. Welfare both in terms of as a person and as a student.” The lack of understanding on the part of classroom teachers of this fundamental aspect of the work that occurs in RLS points to a larger issue of a lack of communication and transparency, which will be addressed later in this chapter.

### **Specific, Consistent Interventions**

Observations demonstrated that learning specialists had identified unique strategies to help individual students, and implement those strategies on a daily basis. For instance, one particular student, a sophomore, benefits from visual representation of science concepts. The learning specialist assigned to work with him brings in laminated photos of different processes with tape on the back of them, and the student puts them on the dry-erase board and explains out loud what is happening in the picture.

### *Students*

Evidence through interviews for this way of proceeding came mostly from two of the five students and from three of the five alumni, who were able to distinguish the techniques used to drive home content to them from the methods used by classroom teachers. Robert, the senior

student who has a processing disorder, said that the learning specialists were able to teach things at a slower pace, which gave him the extra time necessary to receive the input:

If I was like okay, I don't understand this at all, can you just go over this with me? They would kind of start from the top and slowly progress into what I went over that day. And, I just found that to be very helpful. Having the ability to go at a slower pace than in class, because in class it seems like ... Well a lot of my classes I dealt with it's kind of fast paced. Some teachers take their time, but even if they do take their time they might not spend like a lot of time breaking it down kind of. Having RLS kind of break things down for me, like break a topic down, I just feel like that was really helpful and was definitely my kind of learning style.

The learning specialists are able to take the content from a specific class and tailor their instruction to meet the specific needs of this particular student, to such an extent that the student is aware of the difference between classroom instruction and his time with the learning specialist.

Mark, a junior diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD, described an intervention offered to him during test taking that assisted him in expressing what he knows:

Whenever I take a Government test, I sit right where you are, and I ask (RLS staff member), can I just talk to you out loud. I find it better to just talk out loud. She doesn't answer anything, she doesn't you know, talk back to me, she just sits there, as if I'm talking to her.

This young man benefits from talking through what he already knows and has retained before expressing the information in written form – an accommodation that gives him an opportunity to show his teacher what he has learned through study and hard work.

### *Alumni*

Three of the five alumni interviewed remember the specific interventions offered to them as students – some as much as ten years after graduation. James, a man diagnosed with ADHD in his early teens, expressed that the highly structured nature of RLS helped him to deal with deficits in his executive functioning:

I very much went from a very structured environment in middle school to excessive freedom. People talk about it going from high school to college, like you go from high

school to college and you have all this free time and it's like how do you manage your time and everything like that. I kind of ran into the same thing moving from middle school to high school. I started having free periods, I had extracurricular activities and it was up to me to make those decisions. So one of the things that they really did was, it was more structured than anything.

Having a place to go during free periods every day, with people there to help him prioritize his school work, provided an organized structure to his day that this young man was not capable of creating on his own at the age of fourteen.

Joseph, who now works at a bank in Information Technology, said that his fourteen year-old self benefitted from being held accountable by learning specialists, who showed him different ways of studying and made sure that he employed those methods:

Helped me with study methods that I was aware of, but they pushed me to use them even more and they made sure I was doing it, specifically visual learning with flashcards and things like that. Where before it was left up to me to do it and it was like you just brush it off and your like, "Nah I don't need it," but they would push you to do it. So they really helped with time management, identifying the best teaching or learning methods for myself and repetition, which is a really big thing.

This young man was held accountable for his study methods by an adult he knew cared about him and his success, and that outside structure and accountability helped him to develop good, productive study habits.

An alumnus named Ronald pointed to a specific instance of coaching in a study method, and how that taught him to adapt to situations in which he finds himself:

And one of the biggest things I really took away and ultimately helped me a lot of things I do today is just how to adapt to your surroundings whether it's what I'm personally facing with how I think and operate or the teachers and students around you and how they take what you're doing. At RLS, it was a lot about how to adapt. So, whether it was reading and just trying to remember a couple words and use them as clues to trigger and work on mind triggers for vocabulary or ... I still remember, to this day, History of Music there were so many orchestras and other things that we would take the words of the composers and the actual acts and try to convert them to words that were football terms, or something else. Or take the letters that all of it started with and convert it to acronyms that we're used to. So then when we would see or hear it, I would start associating that song with the Arizona Cardinals, might have been Andrew Carmine.

Ronald is now an executive at Under Armor in Baltimore City; he articulates perfectly the importance of the principle of adaptability in Jesuit Education. “This principle of adaptation appears as a prime characteristic of Jesuit educational activity when that activity is viewed in its entirety over four centuries,” (Donohue, 1959, p. 46). Ronald feels prepared to deal with situations he encounters in his work day because his education at Manresa Prep and in Rodriguez Learning Services taught him how to adapt. By adapting to the specific learning needs of individual students, educators instill a flexibility in students, and help them develop the ability to adapt themselves.

### *Faculty*

Once again, classroom teachers did not have a strong sense of what interventions were being offered in Rodriguez Learning Services. On the one hand, perhaps classroom teachers need not know what types of interventions and accommodations are being offered in RLS. On the other hand, this lack of understanding point to a larger issue of communication between the faculty and RLS learning specialists.

Additionally, there did appear to be some inconsistency in the implementation of interventions for students in RLS. Observations revealed that in one instance, the school decided to revise the curriculum in a subject for a particular student, who was diagnosed with dyslexia as a freshman. But the classroom teacher was not willing to revise the assessments this student would take, nor was the administration willing to enforce this change. So, effectively, this freshman was being tested on material he never learned, as decided upon by the adults at the school.

Scanlan (2009a) speaks directly to this inconsistency, saying that as Catholic schools grow in their awareness of and ability to address special needs, their responsibilities under the

law grow. For instance, inclusive services that are offered in Catholic schools must meet Section 504's requirements regarding evaluation and placement, assessment, and procedure (Scanlan, 2009a). This lack of consistency with regard to assessment not only creates a problematic educational experience for this particular student, but also raises questions around offering interventions according to education law.

### **Meta-cognition**

The model of intervention used in Rodriguez Learning Services focuses on content learned in the classroom setting, and using that content as a vehicle to teach students about their own learning difference. This self-knowledge leads to self-confidence, which leads to improved classroom performance. Students are able to articulate what they've learned about themselves, and how that helps them to achieve mastery of educational goals at Manresa Prep. They are also able to articulate how those learnings will assist them in the future.

#### *Students*

Of the five students interviewed, four of them possessed an awareness of how they've grown in self-knowledge through RLS. One junior student, Charlie, said that his work with the staff in RLS has taught him which study strategies work for him, as well as the value of hard work; these lessons have given him the confidence that he can do the work at Manresa Prep if he puts in the appropriate amount of time:

At first, they give you the confidence that you know that you're not dumb and not ... That you can push yourself to ... Like, yeah, I might have to work a little harder, but they give you the tools, like different ways to study, like just repetition and stuff. I learned that I have to ... I can't ... I'm not the kid that just ... I can't put it off to the last minute to get the good grades, I have to put in the work. I have to have a good work ethic, and I'm not going to understand a lot of things on the first try. I have to get help, have someone help me learn it in a different way sometimes.

Charlie knows that repetition is an effective study strategy to help material stay with him. The success he has achieved demonstrates to him that he is not dumb; his mention of this implies that, at some point in the past, he did not think that was true.

Another junior student, Mark, spoke of an experience he encountered with AP U.S. History class, and how the learning specialist helped him learn to deal with the stress of deadlines and a high volume of work:

They would help me understand it, and they would help me understand what needs to be done, and study sessions, easy ways to remember, acronyms, anything I could do to help. I would definitely say that through RLS, I've definitely learned to handle stress better. I was in AP US History last year, and that kicked my butt, really, and I would buckle under pressure, and with the help of (RLS staff member), he really helped me manage my time better and understand that things cannot be put in late. I don't know why I struggled with it, but I did, that, "I'll just wait an extra night and do it." "Well, the due date's tomorrow." I had a big issue with that, but I got my act together, and with the help of (RLS staff member), really ... I'm sure you've heard him talk about the Civil War Course. I never would've done that freshman year. I never would've put my neck out in any risk and try to adapt myself to anything else. I would've just kind of stayed back and done my own thing.

This young man credits the RLS staff with helping him to manage his time better, which led to a reduction of stress. He articulates that he is more willing to take risks as a direct result of that learning, and is taking his passion for the Civil War and using it to help develop a senior elective for him and his classmates. Not only has his experience in RLS helped him to have more confidence in himself and to succeed in school, but it has also sparked his creativity and given him the courage and freedom to follow his passions.

One senior student, Robert, spoke of specific ways the RLS staff helped him learn how to learn. He plans on using those strategies in the future:

Like I would go over there in class and they would help me with like studying habits, and just note taking, and all that, and having them do homework with me. It just gave me a whole new perspective of learning and definitely helped me. RLS has definitely opened up new doors for me, especially as I go into college I'm definitely going to use what I've

learned from RLS and try to use that in my every day college life. Just my study habits, and seeking help, and I think I'll probably use a learning center similar to RLS in college.

This student's time as a student at Manresa Prep has taught given him the tools to succeed in college and beyond and to be an advocate for himself. By focusing not just on content, but on helping the students understand how they learn best, the RLS staff gives them more than just success in the here and now. They give students the ability to succeed in the future.

Similarly, one sophomore student named Eric knows that his time in Rodriguez Learning Services has given him self-knowledge about how he studies best. That knowledge has not only helped him to succeed at Manresa Prep, but will aid him in the future:

What I've learned most about like ... biggest thing I've learned I think is how I study. I'm not a sit there and read a book and I'll retain all the information of the book. I have to sit there and discuss it. So the biggest thing is history. That's probably the most I do in RLS. This year and last year I sit down with Fine and I have to talk about every little detail. I just have to talk through it.

Yeah. So I sit there and now I know, when I'm in college, I have to get a study group. I have to just have somebody to study with where I can discuss everything.

This sophomore has gained knowledge about himself and his learning style that will be useful to him not just in college, but beyond – through his experience of working with the staff in Rodriguez Learning Services.

### *Alumni*

Four of the five alumni interviewed also articulate that their experience as students in Rodriguez Learning Services taught them how to succeed in school not only by helping them with their work, but also by teaching them effective study strategies based on their specific learning difference. Joseph expressed that RLS taught him the value of repetition as a study habit, and helped to instill in him patience so that he would not give up:

I think I learned a lot about, I mean definitely (RLS staff member) specifically helped a lot with kind of learning how to study, learning about how to use repetition more in

learning. I learned that it takes more time for me to do certain things, like read a chapter. I think that another thing they taught me was how to be patient, how to utilize the skills that you have and the things that you're good at, and then work harder on some of those other elements.

Joseph has a Master's in Social Work from the University of Maryland. He points to RLS as a key factor in teaching him how to learn, and how to be patient with himself throughout the learning process. Furthermore, he says that the staff of RLS taught him how to use his strengths as a learner to compensate for areas where he is not as strong.

One alumnus names Gabriel points to concrete strategies he learned in RLS, and situations where he finds those strategies useful in his everyday life as a banker:

I would say one of the things I've learned about myself was self confidence. Recognizing that I am as smart as everyone else. I can do what everyone else is doing. It's kind of one of those things, where you don't think about it, but I mean in high school where your self esteems really being built, it's important to start getting successes. And they were able to give those successes and they very much built my confidence up in saying, "No, you can do what all of the other kids in the class are doing." And some of the ways they did that was just providing the structure and getting the small wins. And, there was a snowball effect, where I was outperforming a lot of my classmates that weren't in the program. And, as far as things that I took away from it. It was definitely the self confidence, the knowledge that I know I can do things, but also study methods and how to topple assignments and projects and homework. Manage your time, do a little bit here and there and some of the methods, I mean I remember all of the methods. Some of the methods I still would use, especially when I get stuck, like I need to like just push myself. Like okay well I'll just do an outline. You just throw an outline or an information dump, just type whether it's nonsense or whatever just type. I don't know it just gets everything flowing and then you can start making it coherent. So it was definitely some of those things they instilled in you, that you just begin to develop and you just take with you. So they definitely gave me that.

Rodriguez Learning Services taught this banker how to be a successful student, and gave him the confidence to know that he was an intelligent person. The tactics he learned that helped him to be a productive student at Manresa Prep still help him to be a productive member of a team at work.

Ronald gained an understanding of his dyslexia through his time in RLS, and that has given him useful insight into how he operates in professional settings:

And even now, I'll tell some of my co-workers who don't know I'm dyslexic, I'll be like, "Look, if you send me PowerPoint or something like that, I'm in or you tell me to do something, I'll do it, but if you're just going to talk at me or at a meeting for an hour, after 10 minutes I'm out." I can't sit there and focus, especially... we have some people in my department that just, they go a mile a minute and I catch one sentence in their whole minute and then I'll move on. It's just stuff like that. That's just stuff I learned about myself that started at RLS. I think that's probably the biggest thing.

Once again, RLS gave this alumnus tools to be successful while at Manresa Prep – tools that continue to be useful to him in professional settings.

Jeff believes that RLS helped him not to be embarrassed of his learning difference, nor to see it as a disability, but to embrace it as a gift – a gift to be used to make the world a better place:

You know when you read about kids that are thinking differently, they see orange and they don't think orange, they think red and yellow made that. And it's like the general public sees orange and they see orange and what can I do with orange. We see red and yellow and think if we could have done a little bit different with the yellow, could we have made bright and then what could we do with bright orange? And it's like, that's the way that our minds are gonna think a little bit differently, but when you constantly are disability and everything you do in RLS is just to get you a better grade on that test, you're still not helping the day they leave and RLS doesn't exist anymore. The only thing they look back on is, "Shit, I don't have somebody to help me study for this test." But that wasn't what it was about. It was leaving there, back to the mission statement, being a better person both in and outside the classroom on how we can take the way we think and operate and do something better in the real world.

This business executive saw that the RLS staff helped him to embrace his dyslexia and ADHD, and to see them as unique gifts that gave him a unique perspective on the world. The point of RLS, in his experience, was not just to help him learn how to study, but about teaching him how to do something to make the world a better place. He cites the mission statement of Manresa Prep as the rationale behind this piece of RLS' specific mission.

## *Learning Specialists*

Two of the five learning specialists interviewed explicitly mention the meta-cognitive piece of their job. One staff member believes that the metacognitive piece of the work she does is fundamental, and flows from the mission statement of Manresa Prep:

Well, if you've got 135 IQ you shouldn't be getting Cs and getting by. That intellectually ambitious piece, when you give them the right tools and the right format they're now in honors and AP classes and they're class leaders because they've got the right tools, because the teachers understand them better.

Teaching students how to learn encourages them to be intellectually ambitious, which is one of the “Grad at Grad” goals of Jesuit secondary education. Once they have discovered learning styles and study methods that work for them, students experience success in academic endeavors, which encourages them to invest in new academic pursuits.

Another staff member has ideas of how the program might expand the metacognitive piece for students. They hope to hold age-appropriate workshops for students in grades 9-12, to develop students’ ability to self-advocate by giving them more robust opportunities to learn about themselves:

I think we can get in some more of the skills that they're gonna need going forward. More of a prescriptive kind of, keep it where we are, but then in the ninth grade they get certain skills taught to them by the learning specialist. Like self-advocacy. Doing a self-advocacy workshop with each of these students so they understand how to advocate for their needs. How to talk to a teacher about their needs. Even sometimes talk to a parent about what they need. Another example I would use would be documentation. We get all the psychoeducational documentation. 96% of these kids probably have never read them. Sitting down, letting them read that. Let them see what the people are writing about what these tests showed that their strengths and their weaknesses are ... How do we take these weaknesses and pull them up a little bit? Or, how do we take some of these strengths and make them better strengths? How do we use those strengths in learning? Now when we're using the content to teach some of those skills, they understand a little bit better about what they're getting.

Workshops on talking to adults and understanding an individual's test results help prepare students for a time when the resources of RLS are not available to individual students, helping students to understand their own strengths and weaknesses, thus preparing them for life beyond RLS and Manresa Prep. In this way, RLS teaches students to advocate for themselves not just this week or this year, but for the rest of their lives.

### *Administration*

Both the principal and the president understand the meta-cognitive learning that happens in RLS as an important piece of the mission of the program. One administrator at the school describes the arc of RLS, indicating that students integrate their meta-cognitive skills into their own learning process. When that happens, the upperclassmen need less hands on support and are able to ask for help when needed:

(RLS staff member) always talks about when we got into RLS, she said, "Here's what RLS is. Here's how it plays out year, year over year." Freshman year, we're on them, we're with them. Sophomore year, we're still pretty tied to them. Junior year, we begin to distance. Senior year, we're very distant because if they've got to learn how to be self-advocates, they have to elect to come see us, because they've got to get ready for the next thing.

Similarly, a second administrator knows that the goal of RLS is beyond the student's time at Manresa Prep, giving the students tools they can use when they move into higher education or into the workforce:

That's the thing, the goal of RLS, the short-term goal of RLS with a student is to help support him in his learning Manresa. But the long-term goal is to help somebody when they're not at Manresa, wherever they're going next, be it into the workforce, be it right into college, be it into the military, be it to whatever it is so that they know themselves, they know what they need and they know how to ask and access those resources.

The meta-cognitive skills that RLS tries to teach its students are applicable beyond their four years of high school; they will be useful throughout their lives and careers.

## **Learning Specialist as Intermediary**

The role of the learning specialists in RLS is a unique one, in that they not only interact one-on-one with students, but they also act as an intermediary between the student and the other adults in the school community, functioning almost like a case-worker. The specialists assume a level of responsibility to advocate for students – with parents, with teachers, with coaches, etc. Furthermore, they also act as advocates for teachers with the students, holding students accountable and encouraging them to work with their classroom teachers. Because this message is delivered in the context of that caring relationship, the students are often more open to hearing it from the learning specialists than from their parents or their classroom teachers. This role of advocate requires a certain amount of diplomacy, as the learning specialists represent the interests of various groups.

### *Learning Specialists*

Three of the five staff members of RLS certainly understand their role at Manresa Prep in this way, and that self-understanding manifested itself in the interviews. One individual spoke of the importance of diplomacy in getting the program off the ground twenty-one years ago:

I believed that the way was to win hearts and minds and gain the cooperation of the teachers. And you do that by helping people. So, I would offer to do ... On the surface I started covering classes. If they were going to be out, I'd be the first person to, "I'll cover your class" and just being a good coworker was the first way so they would trust me. Then we would just talk about the kids.

This staff member was able to gain the trust of classroom teachers by extending an olive branch and being a good colleague. This opened up a space for her to talk about how she might work with classroom teachers for the betterment of the students.

This same staff member's strategy for working with teachers has always involved being upfront about extra work that might be involved for teachers, while also explaining how students might benefit from that extra work:

If I was putting more work in their plate I was freely admitting, "I know this is more work for you but let me show you what the kids are going to gain from this" because you can't deny it. When you're working with kids with learning differences and programs that run for those kids it's a little more work for the classroom teacher. To pretend that that wasn't there to me just seemed pretty disingenuous. Better to acknowledge it and try to "pay them back" and I brought a lot of donuts and a lot of food and put it in the faculty room.

The director works hard to create an environment where teachers feel a part of the work of the RLS, and offers incentives when she can to make participation in the mission a positive experience for faculty.

Another RLS staff member has a similar philosophy, and explicitly describes his own role in the school community as one of advocate.

I talk to those faculty members about my belief and how I'm an extension of them, as well as an advocate for them with the students. I'm an advocate for the students, I'm an advocate for the teachers as well. Just talk to them about how ... My belief in accountability, holding guys accountable for what they need to do.

This learning specialist believes in holding students accountable to the standards set by classroom teachers, and working with students to achieve those standards. Teachers observe this individual's efforts, and appreciate his efforts to collaborate with them; an English teacher, Mr. Roberts, expressed that the feedback this particular RLS staff member gives on individual students makes him feel like a part of a team:

It's little things. Fine is amazing in that when he works with our guys and they take a test, (RLS staff member) will walk the test down and be like, "Hey, here's the test. This kid really struggled with number three, four, five. He didn't get this concept". There's just a little bit of feedback. He'll give me a heads up so that I genuinely feel like I'm co-laboring with this person.

When the adults in the community are working together for the well-being and success of the students, students receive a consistent message and one teacher is able to reinforce what the other taught. This RLS staff member understands this, and strives to be a part of the work going on in the classroom.

A third RLS staff member also believes it is part of her job to educate teachers about the experience of students with learning differences in a classroom setting. She told a story of a training she executed with the faculty of Manresa Prep:

Sometimes they (teachers) don't understand what our students deal with. I did some training with some teachers and we would actually use a dyslexic test. Like, it's written like a dyslexic person would see it. And it's one question. One question history question. And I asked them, "Turn it over and read it. Let's see how long it takes you to read it." I wait one minute and say, "Who read the question?" Maybe one person, two people raise their hand out of fifteen. Okay, so you've given them a ten-minute quiz and you're not even done reading the question yet. So, that helps explain why a student may need extended time. If we take that into account for all our students, I think we're getting into a better place as far as universally accommodating every student.

By educating teachers about what students experience in the classroom, this staff person is able to combine her role of advocate for student and advocate for teacher. The experience of both constituents in the community are improved by his intervention.

### *Administration*

The administration of Manresa Prep understands the importance of teachers and learning specialists working together. One administrator believes that the RLS staff's role of advocate and intermediary helps to move teachers away from understanding the classroom as their "territory." When asked whether and how the faculty and RLS staff work together, this administrator answered:

A lot of it's a function of time. Some of it's a function of territory. It also helps to, I would think, resolve or move in the direction of resolving this territory problem because now we're on the same team. It's not you're doing something over here that I'm doing over here. Because whatever I'm doing over here isn't enough for the kids not getting it

from me. But if we're working together, which is obviously the goal, right, but I think people's lived experience of that can be different sometimes.

When classroom teachers work in concert with learning specialists, the RLS staff is able to reinforce what was learned in class. One obstacle to collaboration is this mentality that the classroom is a teacher's "territory"; the RLS staff must work hard to show teachers they are "on the same team."

Another administrator points to the founding director's role in creating a culture of collaboration between the faculty and the RLS staff.

The teachers, I think, had been a challenge over the years for (RLS staff member) and the RLS staff, just kind of educating them on who are these kids, what are they like, how do they learn differently? RLS saying to the teachers, "What do you need from us to help?" What I've noticed over the years, certainly during my time here and over my five years as principal, that because of Fran's assistance, and because of Fran's engagement with the faculty, the faculty grew in their understanding of how this (RLS) is a necessary support system for these boys while still holding them accountable.

The administration clearly understands that part of the job of RLS staff is to educate the faculty about the students in RLS, and through that process, to be an advocate for both teachers and students. The RLS staff makes sure the students get what they need, while also offering to help the classroom teachers create a more inclusive, universal classroom.

### *Students*

Two of the students interviewed articulated an awareness of this role the RLS staff plays in the Manresa Prep community. One sophomore interviewed named Eric feels empowered by the RLS staff to push himself academically and to try new things, because he knows that the learning specialists will be there to help him if he falls:

They say, "Go after it". For like next year I'm picking new, a schedule. And I'm thinking about taking AP's and honors and they said, "Go for it, go do what you wanna do. 'Cause we're here when you ... To fall back on kind of. 'Cause when you're struggling, I'll come help you". And I think that's what they really teach us, is like, that's the ambitious part.

To go and do what you gotta do and try it. It might not work out, but we're gonna be here to support you and to do what needs to be done.

At sixteen years old, this young man connects the work that the learning specialists in RLS do with the Grad at Grad goal “intellectually ambitious,” which is a part of the mission statement of Manresa Prep. He feels encouraged by the RLS staff to take harder classes and to challenge himself academically; and he feels comfortable doing so because he knows that the staff of RLS will help him in the struggle.

One junior student, Mark, recounted a time when an RLS staff member noticed that he wasn't staying on top of his work and was handing things in late during his freshman year. This particular learning specialist pulled him aside and had a serious talk with him that left an impression on him:

Honestly if it wasn't for him dragging my face in the mud and kind of waking me up and telling me, "You need to start doing work. I'm here to help you. Let's grind out a schedule together. We'll have assignments due here that are gonna be due next week, so you can get them done early, so you can start understanding what's going on."

This student still tries to complete assignments the week before they are due to stay on top of things. He learned this lesson due to the learning specialist's honest, caring presence, through which the staff member advocated for what was best for him and what was best for his classroom teachers.

### *Alumni*

Three of the five alumni also touched upon this understanding. Joseph remembers Rodriguez Learning Services as a safe space where students were protected from negative perceptions learning differences, and he attributes that to the work of the RLS staff:

I do recall that there were roadblocks in my time there, especially with a lot of new teachers coming in, not really understanding it and just kind of giving pushback. I will say, we were very much shielded from it. If a professor or teacher or someone like that made a comment or kind of challenged us in what we were getting from the program,

making it known to any of the staff, it was addressed with that professor by (RLS staff member). She did a phenomenal job in ... she did a whole lot more than just provide the educational assistance. She blocked out the outside noise to let the other staff work with us.

According to this alumnus, not only do the staff educate faculty about the educational needs of students in RLS, but they also shield the students from any influence that might harm their self-confidence and ability to believe in themselves.

James remembers how he became a part of the RLS community, through the advocacy of the RLS staff:

I joined RLS after my first quarter. I came in, my first quarter I got three F's and they came in for me with the headmaster, principal, everybody and (RLS staff member) was actually part of the conversation. And it came down to, they pretty much wanted me to transfer schools. They didn't think it was the right fit for me. My parents were hesitant to do that. (RLS staff member) kind of extended an olive branch and was like well he's here let's try bringing him into the program, let's see what happens.

If the RLS staff had not been a part of that conversation, they would not have been able to advocate for James to stay at the school. He would have had to leave and attend another high school, against his parent's wishes.

Still, as with any program in any school, Rodriguez Learning Services has some growing to do in this area. Another alumnus interviewed for this project, Jeff, expressed that he and his classmates were lacking in positive role models who themselves had learning differences. Jeff says that adding a concrete piece that focuses on the future can help young impressionable minds to see their difference as an asset, not as a deviance from the norm:

From my experience, we had nobody at the school that could help you see what success could look like. We had nobody at the school showing you Steve Jobs went through this exact same thing and it allowed him to have the creativity to do what he did. It's like, we did not have that. There's plenty of people that have done creative things in their field that have gone outside of the box of what was ordinarily done and it drove them to success, because we think differently. When you continually do everything in a bubble and you don't include that outside opinion, you're gonna continue to do everything in a

bubble. I just don't think we were ever given the chance to see what life outside of the bubble could really mean, and how we could make a change.

This individual believes that part of the advocacy that RLS does for students should involve a forward-looking piece, which not only seeks to change the negative perceptions of teachers and classmates on learning differences, but the negative perceptions of the boys themselves.

Offering them real-life positive role models who have harnessed the energy of their learning difference into success can help young men to do just that.

### **Trust**

This theme emerged in almost every conversation the interviewer had with individuals in the Manresa Prep Community. Both classroom teachers and learning specialists acknowledge the need for a relationship built on trust between them, and also acknowledge that there is work to be done to improve this relationship of trust. Current students and alumni report that the weaknesses in this relationship have had an effect on their learning experience. Administrators see that the Manresa Prep community has come a long way in this regard, but still has some work to do.

#### *Students*

Current students are aware that their classroom teachers either do not always understand what happens in RLS, or do not trust the work that goes on there. Four of the five students interviewed spoke about the issue of trust. Robert, a senior, told of one new teacher who did not have a clear understanding of where Robert went when he left class:

Yeah, teachers that are new, they don't really understand what RLS is. Like this one teacher my freshman year, I'd say I was going to RLS, and she thought I was just like ... Like she didn't understand. She just thought I was going somewhere to cheat. She didn't understand. Because I would go there, and I would struggle in class about like what we were learning, and then I'd come back on the test, and I'd know how to do everything, and she was just confused. I'd go somewhere and I'd just know.

Yeah. She didn't understand. Like I didn't understand it the one day, and then the next day we'd have a quiz and I'd get a hundred on it, and she wouldn't get it. She'd just think I was cheating.

Robert also articulates that his classmates do not understand the work of RLS, and believe that the work he does with learning specialists is somehow not his own:

I'll have tons of kids saying, "Oh I got a 60 on a test". I was like, "Oh I got a 97." And they'll say, "Oh that's 'cause you got answers". I was like, "Nope. It's 'cause I know it better than you."

This comment represents a fundamental misunderstanding of learning differences in general and the work of RLS in particular: that Robert is incapable of success on his own when given the tools he needs to succeed, and that any success he achieves in an assessment must be due to some assistance he received from an adult.

Charlie, a junior, also encountered specific faculty members who did not trust the work that happens in RLS:

I found some teachers do have some issues with RLS. I've had it in the past, trust issues, especially. For example, Mr. Mack, he was not a fan of sending me to RLS. He thought that I would look up something or cheat during the test. Mr. Mohr also felt that way. They didn't trust the transition from the classroom to RLS.

Charlie did not articulate why he believed his teachers thought he was cheating, or how he knew that they thought he was cheating. Still, certain faculty left Charlie with the impression that the integrity of his academic work was in question.

Charlie also expressed that he has experienced bullying because he is a student in RLS:

That comes with some bullying aspects I've not really had to deal with. It's like, "You're part of RLS. You're dumb. You're a cheater." That's just something that comes with it. Unfortunately, that's just how kids are. They try to do that type of stuff, but that's really died down too, which I think is really a good aspect.

Although Charlie indicates that the culture of Manresa Prep has improved in this regard, his comments point to a lack of trust from both students and faculty regarding the work of RLS.

Mark, a junior, also pointed to a lack of understanding (at best) or a lack of trust (at worst) from his peers regarding his work in RLS. He said that, “we get some accommodations and there are some kids that, they'll always assume that they give us the answers, but they don't give us the answers.” Similarly, sophomore student Eric also encountered disbelief at his performance on assessments from students:

They think they give me the answers because I get better grades than them, which is, it's just how it goes. I'll have tons of kids saying, "Oh I got a 60 on a test". I was like, "Oh I got a 97". And they'll say, "Oh that's 'cause you got answers". I was like, "Nope. It's 'cause I know it better than you."

These remarks from students point to a fundamental misunderstanding that the diagnosis of a learning disability means that students are incapable of success; hence, any academic achievements they receive are the result of being given an unfair advantage. If students believe this, and faculty do not work to combat this faulty understanding, then students in RLS will continue to have their work challenged and their ability questioned.

### *Alumni*

Comments from three of the five alumni indicate that although a question of trust still exists surrounding the work of RLS, significant progress has been made in this area. James, an alumnus who graduated ten years ago, remembers that teachers did not have a firm grasp on what happened in RLS, and assumed that students were being given an unfair advantage:

I think some of the teachers didn't quite understand, and there was a lot of feelings, like ... I think there were at least rumors that they would give us the answers. I remember I think at one point, someone wrote on the sign out front (of the resource center), "Welcome to RLS. Come in and get the answers," or something.

Ronald, another alumnus, had a similar experience as a student. He recalls one particular teacher who would make jokes about his enrollment in RLS in front of the class:

There were some who were very much non-accepting. There were some that, we got a lot of cheating accusations. We got a lot of, when papers were being written, a lot of

questions marks as to who's actually writing the papers. We had a certain teacher, when I would go to grab my test, which I was told I was allowed to take to RLS, would start giving words of ridicule in front of the entire classroom and just started then to put it into the students' heads that when you got up to go to RLS, you had somebody taking the test for you.

These jokes from students and misunderstanding from faculty threaten to prevent students from claiming ownership of their academic success. Furthermore, the stigma associated with membership in the RLS program singles students out and labels them as “less than,” or somehow undeserving of their place in the community.

Another alumnus named Joseph remembers the judgments that teachers and students would make about his performance in class and on assessments. He recalls that his teachers and classmates did not appreciate the amount of work he was putting in behind the scenes; because of their ignorance, they questioned his academic performance and his integrity as a student.

I do recall some professors questioning how students with learning disabilities, how all the students with learning disabilities coming out of the program were scoring at the top of their class, versus students that weren't. They definitely questioned that and raised red flags and stuff like that, but it was one of those things where they didn't know the amount of work we were putting in. I can tell you that within the program, there was a difference between myself and a couple of the people I was close with and then some of the other people. You could tell people were doing ... they were getting out of it what they were putting in to it. As far as ... I do remember ... it was almost a stigma that you were a part of RLS.

Joseph makes a distinction between students in RLS who were working hard, versus students who participated in the program but were not putting in the work. Joseph's statement indicates that merely showing up in RLS was not enough to succeed. Learning specialists gave students tools to succeed, but those tools had to be utilized. This insight reinforces the integrity of the work in RLS, which was being questioned by students and faculty.

### *Faculty*

Three of the five classroom teachers interviewed confirmed a lack of trust in the work of RLS. Mrs. Gallagher has been a teacher at Manresa Prep since the inception of RLS. Without

explicitly accusing learning specialists of helping students on assessments, Gallagher's comments question the integrity of the work being done:

I saw a lot of that happening and I think as RLS developed, it did become periods of time where English teachers would not send their kids down to RLS because you would have a student who in your class wouldn't answer any questions, any quiz, would fail anything, wouldn't hand any work in. Then, you send them down to do vocabulary quiz and those five kids would come back and all have 100's. You'd be like "this is insane". That did go on for a long time.

Mrs. Gallagher, a respected member of the faculty at Manresa Prep, does not always trust the work of students with learning differences who participate in RLS. The erosion of that trust over time can create an adversarial relationship between teachers and learning specialists and between students and teachers.

Mr. Kiernan, another member of the Manresa Prep faculty, articulates well the animosity that springs from a lack of trust:

I saw the ugliness that came out of that too, of teachers taking kids into the hall and being like "define this word because you just used it on a quiz and you got it right, what is this word?" and the kid not know. There were periods where we had suspicions in English and History that all of our stuff was being photocopied without permission and reused. It became, in the opinion of people, a kind of paid to cheat service.

Kiernan explicitly names that there was a sentiment among faculty that students in RLS were being given an unfair advantage by the learning specialists – that the students were cheating.

Kiernan goes on to say that his perception of the work done in Rodriguez Learning Services has improved over time, and he has grown to trust the learning specialists and the work that they do with students. Kiernan articulated that the main factor contributing to this change was the hiring of new RLS staff, who go out of their way to build trust and communicate regularly with classroom teachers:

I have no doubt that if one of my students is working with (RLS staff member) that he's working with him, versus I've had students in the past with different personnel who don't

do anything and would go to RLS and would suddenly have work that I thought wasn't theirs.

Fortunately, the trust between classroom teachers and learning specialists is moving in a positive direction. Still, Kiernan's comments suggest that faculty and RLS staff have not historically collaborated for the welfare of students because of a lack of trust.

Mrs. Jones, a third teacher at Manresa Prep, did not explicitly accuse RLS staff of giving students answers on tests, but she did question whether the line between help preparing for a test and help during a test gets crossed:

The staff are very adamant about they will help students prep, you know, for quizzes and tests, but they're not gonna help them during quizzes and tests. I think sometimes that line gets blurred a little bit with certain people up there.

Observations over a six-week period did not reveal one instance of a RLS staff member assisting a student during an assessment. On numerous occasions, students would arrive in the RLS resource room before a quiz or test and ask for a quick review, and the learning specialists often would accommodate that request. But once students had an assessment in hand, they could ask clarifying questions about questions only, just as a classroom teacher would – the RLS staff did not once entertain requests for assistance with a particular question that would give the students an answer.

In one observed interaction, a student asked an RLS staff member, "Can you help me?" during a test. This learning specialist, conscious of the importance of language, replied, "I cannot help you with your test, but I can answer a question you might have about a particular question." This anecdote is indicative of the obvious care the RLS staff took to have clear boundaries with students and to help students understand the role of learning specialists in their education. Still, for classroom teachers, the perception persists that the role of the RLS staff is not clearly delineated, and that has led to an erosion of trust.

## *Administration*

Three of the five administrators interviewed were able to name the suspicions that classroom teachers have of the RLS staff. One administrator, Mr. Knight, commented that teachers fear that the RLS staff does not hold the students to the same standard to which the faculty might hold them:

teachers want to make sure that these RLS kids are being held accountable, that they're not being given special ... I mean they're given different accommodations, but they're not being given special treatment, or that they're not being held accountable.

Knight also proposes a solution to help clarify the work that RLS staff does with students, so that faculty can understand what is happening in the resource center and have a greater trust in the process:

We probably need to dedicate a little bit more time on the professional development side of things, of educating our faculty, or allowing our faculty to be more informed in terms of how these kids learn and what accommodations they need and why they need them.

By educating the faculty in each department about the specific learning needs of students and the accommodations offered by Rodriguez Learning Services, Knight hopes to demystify what actually happens in the RLS resource room, thus encouraging teachers to trust the work of the learning specialists.

Mr. Papola, another administrator at Manresa Prep, points to the same problem as Knight: there is a lack of clarity for classroom teachers about what the RLS staff does with students, which has led to a lack of confidence in Rodriguez Learning Services:

The formation of RLS took place here 21 years ago, and because we have a lot of long tenured teachers here, I think there's some distrust as to what happens. Because I don't know the reasons why, I know it's not on Fran's part at all, because she consistently tried but predating me here, it doesn't seem like there was ever a clear demystification of what really happens and why. I think that's something, that's what we're still trying to build, one plank at a time, so to speak.

Papola clearly links the faculty's ability to trust with a firm knowledge of what the RLS staff is doing with students. It is the lack of understanding about what happens with students, particularly during assessments, which creates an obstacle for trust, collegiality, and collaboration between faculty and RLS staff.

Mrs. Papp, a third administrator at Manresa Prep, believes that the relationship of trust between faculty and learning specialists has improved in recent years. She herself questions the integrity of the work that RLS staff used to do with students:

I hear much, much less complaints about they're just giving them the answers, they're writing the papers for them. That's not happening any more. I don't know to what extent that it was previously, but it was really difficult. People got really frustrated.

Whether learning specialists were previously giving answers to students or not, the lack of confidence in their work by an upper level administrator at the school points to a clear problem with trust in the Manresa Prep community.

Papp goes on to say that the hiring of a recent addition to the staff of RLS, has contributed significantly to the relationship between faculty and learning specialists:

(RLS Staff member) places a high premium on relationship building with faculty, and my sense from talking with faculty is they're really grateful for that because it's easier to trust. To go back to your question of less complaining or your point of less complaining, it's easier to trust when you know the person.

The efforts of the learning specialist to whom Papp refers have facilitated a better working relationship with classroom teachers, primarily because the improved communication has made it easier for teachers to trust the work of RLS.

### *Learning Specialists*

Four of the five staff members in Rodriguez Learning Services also articulate the importance of trust in their work on the part of the faculty of Manresa Prep; they are also aware that establishing trust has been an uphill battle. One staff member, who has been associated with RLS since its inception, remembers the difficulties caused because of a lack of understanding:

There was actually tremendous misunderstanding and resentment and opposition to the program, to the point where when I first started and it was the first come to Loyola with your new group of new teachers and do all of that stuff, somebody referred to my job as “the person that does all the new foolishness on campus.”

This staff member knew from those first days that she had an uphill battle convincing classroom teachers that her work added value to the Manresa Prep educational experience. She has been patient and has understood that her job involves educating faculty about learning disabilities and appropriate interventions, separating fact from fiction:

The faculty who did object were not objecting out of any feeling of meanness or malice. They genuinely believed that by putting this program here, we were here to ... My least favorite quote. "Spoon feed the students to get by in their classes so they would be getting through Loyola, almost on a counterfeit basis." It wouldn't be the same education.

This learning specialist's work, then, has been as much with teachers as it has been with students, helping both constituencies to understand the work of Rodriguez Learning Services.

When asked how the work of RLS might be improved, this same individual imagines a presence for learning specialists in the classroom, co-teaching with faculty members. She acknowledges, however that this type of collaboration must be founded upon a relationship of trust:

If we were to partner up, go in maybe co-teach would be great, teach specific units would be great. There's any number of ways. That is all based on trust. They have to trust you to come in and to open their classroom to you. That comes back to us. We have to be trustworthy. It's just a human reaction. If I kind of swapped out places I know I wouldn't want to throw my doors open and invite somebody in who was going to stand in judgment of what I was doing. I had to establish that we're in it together, you show me stuff, I'll show you stuff.

The RLS staff desires greater collaboration in the classroom and this staff member believes that the responsibility for establishing the trust necessary for that collaboration lies with the RLS staff. “We have to be trustworthy.”

A second member of the Rodriguez Learning Services staff believes that part of his job is to build relationships with teachers, so that he can assist them in their job to educate the students at Manresa Prep:

I'm a big believer in relationships. I think it's really key that I went right to the history department to start building those relationships. Letting them get to know who I am and talk to those faculty members about my belief and how I'm an extension of them. And I think all teachers, no matter, across the board, respect that kind of honesty and openness and I think if they know where you're coming from, it helps the whole process.

This individual recognizes that teachers will be reluctant to seek him out, because it may give the impression that they are not capable of doing the job they were hired to do. He believes it is part of his job to overcome this hurdle and actively reach out to teachers:

Teachers are inherently, they're not gonna seek you out because it almost puts them in a feeling of, "I need your help." Where you don't want to make people feel like that. So, it's seeking them out and making sure they know, you're there for them if they need you for anything. You're an extension of them, not a threat to them.

Seeing the learning specialists as an extension of the faculty, meant to supplement the work that happens in the classroom – that is a paradigm that encourages a relationship of trust, and helps both faculty and learning specialists feel like they are part of a team.

A third member of the RLS staff has seen significant change in the perception of her role by the faculty:

I perceive it as evolving, to be honest. Five years ago when I started here, I felt a little bit like the enemy. I felt that there was this undercurrent that if you couldn't do the work based on normal classroom instruction, then it would be better if you went somewhere else.

This RLS staff member's comments point to a lack of trust, due to a fundamental disagreement with the presence of Rodriguez Learning Services at Manresa Prep. When she arrived at Manresa five years ago, she experienced rejection by classroom teachers; they did not believe that there was a place for her at Manresa Prep, or for the students she was hired to help. Over time, that relationship has improved. This staff person desires to work as part of a team with faculty. She says, "I appreciate when the faculty trusts me. When they know that we have the same goal in mind, which is to hold the students academically responsible."

A fourth member of the RLS staff believes that the answer lies in professional development for faculty and staff, to educate them about the role of RLS in the learning process at Manresa Prep:

I think we should educate the faculty more, because I think the science out there is showing there are biological differences in the brains of these kids, and we haven't really educated the faculty on that very well. I think that I would like to see us offering that kind of professional development.

This learning specialist's comments suggest that an educated understanding of what happens in RLS would help faculty to trust the work of RLS more easily, and could relieve some of the tension that exists between faculty and learning specialists.

### **Findings**

The Rodriguez Learning Services Program offers inclusive services to students at Manresa Prep through a resource center staffed by six learning specialists. These staff members work individually with students to provide them with the appropriate interventions based on students' individual learning needs. Students receive academic support in preparing for quizzes and tests, completing assignments, and general organizational assistance and encouragement. The work is carried out in both one-on-one settings as well as in groups, depending on what is appropriate in a given situation.

The data revealed that the work of Rodriguez Learning Services is in fact aligned with the mission of Jesuit Catholic education. Students feel cared for because of the individualized attention they receive in RLS. The RLS resource room is a place where students can ask questions and feel confident they will not be ridiculed. The relationships between students and learning specialists develop over four years, as opposed to the relationship with a teacher who may only have a student for one year. This care not only helps the students to feel protected from ridicule for their disability, but it also motivates them to work hard.

Students feel like they are capable of the work at Manresa Prep because the RLS staff, who do not evaluate their work, are invested in their performance and taken an interest in their success. Staff members believe that students can succeed, and offer them constant support and

encouragement. Students with learning disabilities who have not succeeded in school previously may avoid putting forth effort, because failing without trying is less of a blow to an adolescent's self-esteem. The Rodriguez Learning Services staff helps students to build self-confidence and a positive self-image; as a result, students are more likely to attempt to succeed in school.

Statements from both students and alumni expressing the importance of Rodriguez Learning Services in helping them to develop a positive self-image underscores the importance of offering support to students with learning disabilities in Jesuit Catholic Secondary Education. Without the resources offered through RLS, students are left thinking that they are not capable to doing the work.

Rodriguez Learning Services embodies the Jesuit principle of adaptability, because the academic program is tailored to address each individual student's learning needs. The example that the RLS staff members provide to students encourages them to be more loving – one of the goals of the Grad at Grad for Jesuit High Schools.

Students also articulate that they are more likely to take risks and try new things because they know that the learning specialists support them, no matter what. Alumni speak of the staff members as role models who helped them know what they were capable of – arriving in RLS was the first time some alumni remember feeling intelligent. Furthermore, alumni and students both express that RLS helped them to learn how to learn; alumni articulate that this self-knowledge still helps them as adults. Alums were able to name specific learning strategies that they learned in high school, which they still utilize in their professional lives.

The learning specialists understand their role in the school community through the lens of the mission of Jesuit Catholic education. They use explicit mission language in articulating what they do and why they do it, referring to their individualized work as an instance of *cura*

*personalis*. Administrators also see the work of RLS as central to the mission of Manresa Prep. They believe that the students in RLS learn what it means to be a selfless person through the example of the learning specialists, and that the work of RLS is “where *cura personalis* meets pedagogical practice.”

Data also revealed that classroom teachers do not have a firm grasp on what exactly happens in RLS. Their inability to answer interview questions and help shed light on the work of Rodriguez Learning Services points to a clear lack of knowledge of the RLS program. This lack of understanding contributes to a lack of trust; faculty members speak openly of suspicions that RLS staff members were helping students unfairly. Observations did not reveal any unfair assistance being offered to students, indicating that classroom teachers have faulty perceptions of what actually occurs in Rodriguez Learning Services. These faulty perceptions do not encourage collaboration between faculty and learning specialists; these two groups in the Manresa Prep community, who should be working together for the good of the students, often find themselves in an adversarial relationship.

Still, the lack of trust on the part of faculty points to a fundamental misunderstanding of learning disability – one grounded in ignorance. Faculty are surprised at the work that students produce when they return from RLS; they doubt whether the work belongs to the students. At the root of that doubt is a question as to whether students with learning disabilities are capable of completing the work at Manresa Prep when given the appropriate tools and interventions. As long as faculty persist in this misunderstanding of learning disability education, the collaborative relationship between classroom teachers and learning specialists will be limited due to a lack of trust. Additionally, this lack of trust also impacts the relationship between classroom teachers

and their students. If a teacher does not believe that a student is doing their own work, that doubt can get in the way of faculty caring for students, and of students feeling cared for by faculty.

## CHAPTER V

This chapter presents a summary of the study as well as important conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter 4, and how that data addressed each of the research questions. Following the discussion, recommendations for further research and future practice will be shared.

The Catholic Church affirms that all who desire a Catholic education should be able to receive one. In practice, however, Jesuit Catholic high schools have not always tailored their educational programs to address the needs of students with learning disabilities; their legal responsibility to do so is not as clear as their publicly funded counterparts. This study identified one particular Jesuit Catholic school that has a codified program, which attempts to address the needs of students with learning disabilities in their community.

This study sought to determine whether the Rodriguez Learning Services Program at Manresa Prep offers inclusive educational services to students with learning disabilities. The study also sought to articulate the benefits of the RLS program to the larger school community, as well as the relationship of the program to the mission of Manresa Prep. Finally, the study also pursued recommendations for the program from students, alumni, faculty, staff, and administrators.

The study employed a case study methodology to explore the inner-workings of Rodriguez Learning Services. Data was collected over a six-week period from both observations and interviews with constituent groups from the Manresa Prep community. What follows is a comprehensive treatment of each research question, and how the data answered those questions.

### ***Research Question One***

The data revealed that Rodriguez Learning Services does indeed offer inclusive services, tailored to the educational needs of individual students. Students receive every accommodation they are entitled to by the College Board, including extra time and having their tests read to them. Students visit the RLS resource center multiple times per day, to receive help in organizing their day, completing homework assignments, and studying for tests and quizzes. Sometimes this work occurs in small groups, and sometimes students receive one-on-one help from one of the six learning specialists who work in RLS.

Learning specialists tailor their educational approach to each individual student. If a student learns more visually, then the RLS staff creates manipulatives that allow them to see a representation of the relationship between concepts. If students benefit from articulating concepts out loud to another person, the specialists in RLS allow time and space for that articulation and learning to take place. These interventions occur consistently and regularly over a student's four years at Manresa Prep, which teaches students the ways of learning and studying that work best for them.

Students realize that the staff of RLS are invested in their personal academic success over the four years of high school. The longevity of this relationship, combined with the "no-strings" nature of the relationship (the learning specialists do not evaluate the work of students like classroom teachers do), has a significant impact on students. They expressed that they are more willing to invest in their school work because they witness the dedication and commitment that the RLS staff exhibit toward their educational success. Furthermore, students articulated that they were more likely to take risks and challenge themselves in their course selections because they trusted that the RLS staff would be there to help them succeed.

Alumni of the RLS program are aware that they continue to use in their professional lives many of the strategies for success that they learned while at Manresa Prep. The education received in RLS is not just about content; the meta-cognitive strategies employed in RLS give students self-knowledge and self-confidence that stays with them long after they leave Manresa Prep.

### ***Research Question Two***

The RLS program helps students to succeed who might not otherwise be admitted at Manresa Prep, thus increasing the diversity of the student body. During my time in RLS, I encountered students who exhibited intelligence in various forms – intellectual, interpersonal, musical, emotional, etc. Their presence in the school community enriched the lives of classmates, teachers, and administrators. Many of these students in Rodriguez Learning Services might not have been admitted to Manresa Prep if Rodriguez Learning Services did not exist. Or, if they had been admitted, their experience of high school would have been qualitatively different – I argue less positive, less meaningful, and less life-giving. Without the interventions that Rodriguez Learning Services offers, these students would be left to fend for themselves in classroom settings without any individual follow-up built into their schedule. Additionally, a lack of reasonable accommodations could have prevented these young men from fully investing in the Manresa Prep community – a scenario seen all too often in Jesuit Catholic schools that do not have programs like Rodriguez Learning Services.

Students in Rodriguez Learning Services also speak about the impact that their relationships with learning specialists had on their social skills. Learning how to ask for help and talk about what specifically they are struggling with helped students to come out of their shells and to grow in their ability to articulate struggles as well as successes. Overall, the

relationships with learning specialists offer students the opportunity to grow in self-knowledge and in appreciation of their gifts.

Alumni articulate clearly the impact that RLS had on their experience of Manresa Prep, and on their experience of being human. Several said that their experience in RLS was the first time they felt smart, like they were capable of the work that was being asked of them. One cannot underestimate the impact such an experience can have in the life of an adolescent, nor the role that adolescent identity making has in the life of an adult. Who knows what would have happened were we to remove this clear benefit from the lives of Manresa Prep alumni?

### ***Research Question Three***

Faculty, RLS staff, and administration believe that Rodriguez Learning Services is central to the mission of Jesuit Catholic education. Both students and alumni were able to articulate ways that their experience in RLS made them more open to growth, more loving, and more intellectually ambitious – all goals of the Manresa graduate at graduation. Furthermore, the individualized attention that each student receives in RLS is a clear instance of *cura personalis*, and of education imbued with the Catholic belief that each person is uniquely created by God with special gifts, talents, and abilities. Furthermore, Rodriguez Learning Services also ensures that Manresa Prep educates students who might otherwise not have access to a Jesuit Catholic education, by making the curriculum palatable for students with learning differences. In this way, RLS demonstrates Manresa’s commitment to justice and service students on the margins. These tenets are central to the mission of Jesuit Catholic education.

Students and alumni articulate that they saw Rodriguez Learning Services staff members as role models – people who lived the kinds of lives they hoped to live someday. Their example

of selflessness, commitment to those in need, and determined fidelity to a cause show the students in Rodriguez Learning Services what it means to be a “Man for Others.”

#### ***Research Question Four***

Individuals from each constituent group offered recommendations as to how the work of Rodriguez Learning Services might be improved. Students interviewed indicated that a movement away from the standard Modern Language curriculum toward a conversational language curriculum could benefit the students in RLS. Because many of the students enrolled in RLS have language-based learning differences, written assessments for modern language can be unnecessarily difficult. A conversational Spanish class, on the other hand, could effectively assess a student’s understanding of the language while allowing them to articulate orally what they’ve learned.

Alumni and learning specialists both recommended the creation of a separate space for testing. The resource room can sometimes be too noisy, and interfere with the ability of students to concentrate on tests and quizzes. Additionally, the learning specialists in RLS expressed concern that the administration of Manresa Prep wants to increase the number of students in Rodriguez Learning Services without increasing the number of staff persons. The staff members believe that the most important part of their work is the individualized attention they are able to give to each student; that personal care is foundational to the success of students in RLS. If the school were to increase enrollment without increasing staff, the learning specialists would not be able to dedicate as much time and energy to individual students. Therefore, they recommend growing the staff at the same rate the school wishes to grow the program. Currently, each staff

member is responsible for approximately ten students; the RLS staff would like to keep that ratio should the program grow.

### **Recommendations for Rodriguez Learning Services**

Observations over a six-week period revealed consistent, specific interventions being applied to individual students. However, in one instance, a lack of consistency threatened to derail a student's progress in learning and in understanding his own disability. The curriculum of a particular subject was adjusted for this sophomore, but assessments were not adjusted to reflect the curricular adaptations. This student continued to experience failure in this particular subject – not because he was not trying, or because he was not capable of success, but because the accommodations he was receiving were not being applied in a consistent way. This lack of consistency is unjust and unfair. In order to fulfill the mission of Rodriguez Learning Services with integrity, the faculty, staff, and administration of Manresa Prep will have to work together to ensure that students are being assessed on what they are learning. More broadly, Manresa Prep ought to use education law to guide their implementation of accommodations. In doing so, the school community can ensure not only that they are in line with what the law requires, but also that they have reasonable expectations of students and are giving each individual the tools he needs to succeed.

Furthermore, the learning resource space in which RLS is housed performs multiple functions throughout the course of the day. Students go there to prepare for tests, to complete homework, to help organize their papers, and to take tests. All of these functions fall within the purview of RLS, and they are all good uses of the resources provided to students at Manresa Prep. There is a tension with this space being used for a variety of purposes, however;

sometimes, the room can be noisy with the work of preparing for tests, while students are trying to take tests. A separate space that could function as a testing center would ensure that students undergoing assessments would be provided with an environment conducive to test taking.

Finally, the data collected did not demonstrate any observable behaviors that would contribute to the lack of trust between faculty and learning specialists. Rather, that distrust grew out of the faculty's suspicions that work was being completed for students by RLS staff. At the root of this suspicion is not only a lack of information, but also a misunderstanding of learning disabilities, and of the level of work that students are able to accomplish when given the appropriate tools. If teachers do not believe that their learning disabled students are capable of "A" level work, then any successes that students achieve will be suspicious ones in the eyes of classroom teachers.

Professional development programs with faculty and staff are key to resolving this issue of trust, which is so clearly seen as essential to the success of RLS by all parties involved. Robust, ongoing professional development, run by RLS staff members as well as outside experts, on the nature of learning disabilities and the role of accommodations, is necessary to educate classroom teachers. If teachers better understand not only what happens in RLS but why it happens, then they can know what to expect from their students in class and on assessments. They won't be surprised at their students' success, and won't question the integrity of students' work.

One-on-one consultation and collaboration with faculty who are concerned about the integrity of the RLS program could also help to create a new culture of trust among educators, dispelling the myth that RLS staff compromise the integrity of the educational experiences for their students.

Students reported that interventions were essential in helping them to understand that they were not stupid, and that they could in fact do the work at Manresa Prep. Alumni were able to articulate the importance those interventions played in building a positive self-image. Because the success of Jesuit Catholic education is measured not by what our graduates do, but who they become, this formative piece of the education offered at Manresa Prep is foundational to its mission. The lack of communication and trust between RLS staff and faculty, which leads to questions about the integrity of student work, interferes with the formation of the young men at Manresa Prep. If teachers do not believe that students are completing their own work, the young men – who are at a very formative stage, and learning about themselves daily – will also doubt the integrity of their own work, and if they indeed are capable of what is being asked of them.

Furthermore, increased communication coupled with professional development could help to clarify the role of learning specialists and how they are supporting students in RLS. The data collected did not reveal any substantive reason why faculty should be suspicious of the work in RLS. It appears that lack of knowledge about what actually happens in RLS, coupled with a lack of clarity as to why it is happening, leads to a culture of mistrust among colleagues.

Increased communication could be formalized in a number of ways. One suggestion might be to include learning specialists as members of departments, so that there is regular, formalized communication between classroom teachers and learning specialists built into their schedules. This model could encourage a spirit of collaboration among adults in the Manresa Prep community, where faculty and RLS staff are part of the same team. RLS staff members could help to teach particular lessons in the classroom, which would allow non-RLS students to see the learning specialists as a part of the faculty. Students would benefit directly from this renewed collaboration, in that all adults in the community would have a consistent understanding

of each student's abilities and learning needs. Students would not feel that their successes were being challenged or somehow compromised because they were not achieved on their own.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

Having established that the RLS program does indeed align with the mission of Jesuit Catholic education, Manresa Prep could benefit from a study of their communications strategies between adults in the community. Opening intentional lines of communication and observing how those different ways of working together foster or inhibit collaboration could help to clarify the effect of communication on professional relationships among colleagues while also establishing best practices in the community.

Additionally, Manresa Prep might consider running a pilot program with the RLS staff serving as para-educators in specific classrooms. Having para-educators in the classroom depends on a relationship of trust and collaboration between the learning specialist and the classroom teacher. Through interview and observation, researchers can explore the multivalent effects such a program might have on the educational environment: the effect on RLS and non-RLS students in class, as well as on the classroom teacher-learning specialist relationship.

### **Conclusion**

Catholic Social Teaching claims a preferential option for the poor – those among us in need of extra help, those pushed to the margins of our Church and of our world. The criteria upon which a truly excellent Jesuit Catholic school is deemed to be so, it seems to me, should be its fidelity to this concept that is central to Church doctrine, to the mission of Jesuit Catholic education, and to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, too often Jesuit Catholic schools accept students with learning disabilities into their learning communities without giving any thought as to whether they can offer the accommodations those individual students require.

The law may allow Jesuit Catholic schools to proceed in this way. The mission of Jesuit Catholic education, however, does not. If Jesuit Catholic schools take their mission of *cura personalis* seriously – treating every person as a unique child of God, and tailoring their educational experience to match their unique talents and gifts – then Jesuit Catholic schools ought to take a long, hard look at how they treat students with learning disabilities.

Manresa Prep’s Rodriguez Learning Services program is one school’s attempt to treat students with learning disabilities with the respect and dignity that they deserve as beloved children of God. The staff offer the young men entrusted to their care the tools necessary to succeed at Manresa Prep and beyond. The alumni of Rodriguez Learning Services use the lessons they learned about themselves while at Manresa Prep in their everyday lives as husbands, fathers, bankers, and social workers. Truly, the work of Rodriguez Learning Services is at the heart of the mission of Jesuit Catholic education.

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