Welcome to our monthly e-magazine!

We hope that AT THE CORE promotes thoughtful dialogue and discernment about the evolving mission of Sacred Heart education among and within our 24 school communities across the Network. Designed as an interactive resource, it is linked to many more materials for reading, watching, and listening. As you read, make sure to click. There’s lots here to explore!

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Why Education to Mission?

Culture may be defined as a collective way of living and working that shapes the hopes and behavior of all the members of the community be it a particular school or the Network of Sacred Heart Schools. Evidence of a culture is seen in language, practices, attitudes, and relationships. Sacred Heart culture is informed by our shared mission as articulated in the Goals and Criteria. Efforts to educate to mission intend to deepen everyone’s understanding of Sacred Heart Education. Such education is a genuine formation of one’s core. Experiencing our shared values, we discover our identity as Sacred Heart learning communities.

For all involved, the starting point for Education to Mission is Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat’s vision and the Goals and Criteria. If Sophie’s charism is to be caught, it must be experienced in the context of relationships, ones that are characterized by mutual respect. Relationships are the context in which Education to Mission occurs.

To ensure that all share common understanding of the school’s mission, every member of the school community is invited to take advantage of programs focused on Education to Mission. The objective of Education to Mission is to renew her/his self-understanding as an Educator of the Sacred Heart.

The Holy Spirit, Charism, and Sophie’s Vision Inspire Sacred Heart Education

Firmly rooted in the charism of Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, Sacred Heart pedagogy involves both the philosophy of education as well as the methodology of teaching and learning. Sophie was a deeply religious woman whose life was lived with the basic belief in the existence of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. She lived in a moment of significant complexity, change, and uncertainty. In that context Sophie founded the Society of the Sacred Heart.

Inspire Aspire

Inspired by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat, we are united in our aspiration to realize her vision as articulated in the Goals and Criteria. This vision, which we share, is rooted in Sophie’s sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and the gift of her charism.

Today Sophie’s vision inspires all of us across the globe who are Sacred Heart Educators. In order to comprehend her vision and the mission of Sacred Heart Education, it is essential to consider the role of the Holy Spirit in Sophie’s life and in the lives of the Educators of the Sacred Heart who have gone before us.

What do we mean by charism?
Charism is a theological term for the extraordinary graces given to an individual for the good of others. By nature of being human, and by being open to the Spirit, all of us have the potential to have charism. Most people connect the word charism with a founder and see it as the “inspirational purpose that starts communities and keeps them going. It is community mission and spirit. It gives communities distinctive personalities and imbues their daily practice with meaning” (vocationnetwork.org).
How does this understanding of charism apply to Sacred Heart Educators?

Today, in the United States -- Canada Province, our schools educate both girls and boys. To educate is an act of justice. Religious of the Sacred Heart are called to live lives that are at once wholly contemplative and wholly apostolic. Our ministry is shaped by our prayer and vice versa. As RSCJ today contemplate the pierced Heart of Jesus in the broken heart of humanity, our focus is on compassionate solidarity with the poor, educating to reconciliation and work for justice and peace. This vision is articulated for the Schools of the Sacred Heart in the Goals and Criteria. These principles and values capture Sophie’s charism in words that inspire Sacred Heart educators in our 24 schools in the United States and Canada.

"As we accompany children and young people of all faiths, our hope is to educate Sacred Heart graduates to be their best for the world. The philosophy of Sacred Heart education is framed by the assumption that education is transformational because students and educators are engaged in learning for the purpose of coming to self-understanding as those loved by God."

Statement on Sacred Heart School Identity

“If I had my life to live over again, I would seek to live in complete openness to the Holy Spirit.”
- Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat

Why is Sacred Heart education inspired by the Holy Spirit?

To appreciate fully the Society’s spirit as a congregation and the mission of Sacred Heart education, we need to look to Sophie. She was a deeply religious woman whose life was lived with the basic belief in the existence of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Sophie lived in a moment of significant complexity, change and uncertainty. That historic moment formed the context in which Sophie’s vision evolved. That vision is inspired by the Holy Spirit whom Sophie always credited with the Society’s founding impulse. Sophie’s reliance on the action of the Holy Spirit and her receptivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit help us appreciate charism as a gift freely given for the sake of the community.

Why do we turn to the Holy Spirit at the start of a new school year?

Given our aspiration as educators, it is natural that we turn to the Holy Spirit at the onset of a new academic year in the hope of strengthening ourselves as people of discernment and ideally inspiring our students to develop their own capacity to be discerning people.

Sophie often explained that Sacred Heart education was the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. She believed the genuine founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart was the Holy Spirit. Faithful to her legacy, Sacred Heart Educators call upon the Holy Spirit to bless the new academic year.
Mass of the Holy Spirit

Each year Sacred Heart schools join Catholic schools, colleges, and universities opening the new school year by celebrating the Mass of the Holy Spirit. This long-standing tradition dates back to the 16th century and allows the entire school community to come together and celebrate the school's mission and Catholic identity. The opening serves as a means of invoking the Holy Spirit for guidance and wisdom for both students and educators as they embark on a new year of learning as an adventure in grace.

Resources for Mass of the Holy Spirit

This Month's Sophie Talk

The Educator is the Most Important Factor in Our Mode of Education

A Webinar by Suzanne Cooke, RSCJ

What is our definition of education? What are the essential characteristics of a Sacred Heart Educator?

Watch video

Download slides

Resources

Spirituality of Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat by Catherine Baxter, RSCJ

The Spirituality of the Sacred Heart Educator: One Teacher's Perspective by Douglas Lowney

What is the Meaning of the Charism of the Sacred Heart in a Complex Today? by Georgina Zubiria Maqueo, RSCJ

A Model for Understanding the Identity and Mission of a Catholic School by Fr. Claude Marechal

View and download full issue including all resources
For Your Reflection
We invite you to consider the following questions individually or in groups:

1. How do you see a connection between Sophie’s charism and the Goals and Criteria?

2. What charism or gift of the Spirit do you ask for as the school year begins? Why?

3. It is common practice for educators at the start of the year to establish goals. How did considering Sophie’s charism, and/or the role of the Holy Spirit in life, affect your insights about your hopes for year?

4. In our world today, in your local community, where do you see the most need for the Spirit’s touch? Why?

“Be faithful to the touch of the Holy Spirit upon your soul. The Holy Spirit when free, works marvels within us.”
- Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat

Three Steps to Engage with the Network:

1. **LOG - IN to SACREDHEARTUSC.EDUCATION**
   All faculty and staff already have an online account on sacredheartusc.education. Click on the link below for instructions on how to log-in.

   How to Log-in

2. **COMMUNITY GROUPS**
   Here you can join community groups to connect and share expertise with colleagues, view more resources, and register for upcoming programs.

3. **NETWORK NEWS**
   Keep a look out for our bi-monthly newsletter *Network News*, which showcases upcoming programs, new resources, and opportunities to engage with your colleagues across our 24 schools.
Conference of Sacred Heart Education

The primary purpose of the Conference is to animate fidelity to mission as the most effective means of invigorating Sacred Heart education for the future. It focuses on three dimensions of mission effectiveness: governance to ensure vitality and relevance of mission; education to mission of boards, chairs, heads and leadership teams to promote depth of understanding of mission; and accountability on the part of school communities to fulfill mission as articulated in the Goals and Criteria. The Conference aims to provide resources, opportunities, and avenues for thoughtful dialogue and discernment about the evolving mission of Sacred Heart education among trustees, heads, leadership teams, provincial team, and school communities.

Education to Mission Committee

One of the committees of the Conference, the Education to Mission Committee focuses on the formation to mission of the adult communities across the Network. If Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat’s charism is to be caught, it must be experienced in the context of relationships, ones that are characterized by mutual respect. Relationships are the context in which Education to Mission occurs. While the formation of faculties, staffs and trustees is ultimately the responsibility of the local head of school and board chair, this committee ensures that programs, resources, and plans for Education to Mission for heads, chairs, leadership teams, and school communities exist and are systematic.

Find this issue and all its resources by logging into sacredheartusc.education
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Direct Link