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A Guest with a Mission

It goes without saying that, as a visitor, you are a guest in the school. However, you also have an important job to do. Sometimes, as a school visitor, you may feel you are disrupting the teaching and learning environment. Of course you are! All educators know that any variation from the planned routine is a disruption. Having dealt with such disruption yourself, you may be reluctant to inflict that on another educator.

Of course, you should be as respectful as possible of the educational process. You should also remember, however, that you have an important job to do and a very limited time to do it. If someone with whom you need to speak is unavailable because of other responsibilities, consider if it is possible for you to find out what you need to know another way. If not, make the case, through the Chair of the Visiting Team, that the person be made available to you or to the team.

Just as all educators know that disruptions are just that, disruptive, all educators also know that they can find some way to compensate. Be respectful and accommodating to your hosts, but know that they will respect the importance of your work and will accommodate your reasonable needs if at all possible.

Confidentiality

There is a bit of a paradox involved in a Team Visit. On one hand, the purpose of the visit is to gather information. This includes both evidence that a school delivers Marianist Education and ideas that expand your own concept of Marianist Education. On the other hand, as a member of a Visiting Team, you may be privy to information that, while not necessarily secret, is also not necessarily public knowledge. One must use professional discretion in sharing such information beyond your Visiting Team. When in doubt, it is always a good idea to ask an administrator at the school about the status of the information and the proper latitude in sharing it.

Information that you may learn of a private nature about specific individuals should never be shared beyond the Visiting Team. If information should come to your attention that you believe to be of a serious nature involving ethics, morals, or improper or unprofessional conduct, such information should be shared with the Chair of your Visiting Team, who will then inform the chief administrator of the school and/or the Office of Sponsorship.

Impartiality

All of us bring our own experiences to a School Visit. Some of those may include either direct or indirect prior experiences of the school being visited or of the people who make up that school community. Sometimes those experiences may cause us to have a perception of the school independent of the visit or the materials reviewed in preparation for the visit. While it is impossible to disregard completely these perceptions, it is important to approach the visit as objectively as possible. Prior information may certainly be relevant, but you should be careful to remain open to the evidence the school provides to you for the visit.

In evaluating observations made about a visited school, care should be taken when making comparisons to other schools with which you are familiar. While all Marianist-sponsored schools have much in common, each school exists in its own unique context. How this school is characteristically Marianist within that unique context should be the focus of your observations and comments. Take care when tempted to say, "In my school, we do it this way." Sharing the good things about your school, or another with which you are familiar, can be helpful, but not if you expect the visited school to do things in exactly the same way. Presenting options that people at the visited school may not have considered is appropriate; prescribing a "better way" to do things is not.