

*“Persons influence us, voices melt us,
books subdue us, deeds inflame us.”*

—ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

Preface to the 1996 Edition

Education has always been a mixture of all these elements—and more. In presenting this document on the Characteristics of Marianist Education, I do so with a sense of humility, hope and gratitude. The General Chapter of 1991 of the Society of Mary (SM) recognized the need for a “prudent adaptation to the times,” when it called for the articulation of the common elements of the Marianist educational philosophy and spirit. In this sense, it was faithful to one of Father Chaminade’s basic principles in acting as a genuine Marianist educational learning community. The present document, in fulfilling this call, seeks in its turn to stimulate such learning communities around the Marianist world.

Accordingly, this elaboration of the governing principles of Marianist education is one moment in a longer journey that began with the first Marianists, members of the Bordeaux Sodality who were educators and who later became members of the Society of Mary.

The effort continued in the first days of the Society’s educational efforts, which saw an early attempt to outline certain aspects of this distinctive approach in the *Ancienne Méthode 1824* and the *Manuel de Pédagogie Chrétienne à l’Usage de Frères Instituteurs de la Société de*

Marie (1856). Many other Marianist educators in various countries carried on the venture, and, a few years before the Second Vatican Council, Father Paul J. Hoffer, SM, published a rich synthesis of the Marianist approach in *Pédagogie Marianiste* (1956).

The international team of Marianistsⁱ who has written this contemporary elaboration of our tradition hopes it will serve as a source of energy and grace for all of us in Marianist education, as we seize the task of faithfully and fruitfully living out our common identity for the sake of the reign of God.ⁱⁱ

Our times are characterized by more and more people all over the world experiencing a deeper and broader sense of power over their own lives, of becoming increasingly interdependent, and yet still being surrounded by poverty and local and regional conflicts. If Marianist education is to be a source of Good News within this context, it must have something to say at the point of the needs and desires of today and tomorrow. When Chaminade said, in 1824, “Who does not see that since the Revolution, a new fulcrum must be found for the lever that moves the modern world?” he had the same conviction. The signs of our times also find an echo in Chaminade’s emphasis on “the young and the poor,” hence our desire to find creative new ways to bring a better education to the neediest and the marginalized.

I believe that the educational efforts of the Marianist Family can contribute on all three levels of the major forces moving the world today:

- Transnational: Developing and implementing the *Characteristics of Marianist Education* project requires crossing national and continental borders.
- Regional: The Zonal Conferences of the Conference of African Marianists, the Asian Zonal Conference, the Conference of European Marianists, the Conference of Latin American Marianists, and the Marianist Conference of North America are responding by gathering the talents of their various regions for reflection and action.
- Local: Each province and region of the Society of Mary is

called to bring together—in bodies such as commissions, institutes or forums—lay and religious educators so they can put the *Characteristics of Marianist Education* into action daily in our educational endeavors.

The leadership of the Society of Mary is behind this initiative. In 1994, Father Quentin Hakenewerth, SM, Superior General of the Society of Mary at that time, when commenting on the project of the *Characteristics of Marianist Education* at a meeting of all the provincials, vice-provincials and regionals, stated:

The second sign that gives me hope was the concern for having a clear and common direction for the Society of Mary ... aimed at formation in faith as a new evangelization. I cannot remember a General Chapter or a General Leadership Assembly in which the leaders of the SM consistently spoke of education primarily as a means of evangelizing in today's culture.ⁱⁱⁱ

I share this conviction, springing from my visits to almost all the educational institutions in the Society of Mary over the past four years. The many lay and religious educators who participate as partners in the mission of the Marianist educational institution are a witness that the journey continues. Their competency, commitment and generosity influence and inflame students to be the best they can be. That there are hills and valleys along the way is also true. The present initiative aims to be a means for us to learn together the next steps that further the intent of our personal and professional aspirations.

This document acknowledges that there are Marianist educational writings that have come before and that will be needed after in order to complement and enculturate these principles. We need to be keenly aware of that rich diversity as we search for a stable unity in developing the expression and use of the *Characteristics of Marianist Education*. The next steps of the project, which will be developed by lay and religious educators from around the Marianist world, will include faculty and staff formation programs based on the content of this document. The necessity of elaborating the more specific Marianist pedagogy, to infuse the day-to-day

interactions of teachers and students and administrators with both Marianist spirituality and the special Characteristics of Marianist Education, will be a major challenge.

Finally, I want to thank all those who have contributed to this document. From the outset, this has been a collaborative effort among a broad spectrum of lay and religious educators. It will continue along this line and benefit from the creativity of God's Spirit active in us. Both creativity and enculturation have been witnessed to us by Mary of Nazareth—we can count on her presence in our journey. “Mary, Mother and Teacher of the Church, accompanied her Son as he grew in wisdom and grace; from its earliest days, she has accompanied the Church in its mission of salvation.”^{iv}

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