



General Conference Concurrent Breakout Session Descriptions

Target Audience of each session: **A** = All, **H** = High School, **M** = Middle School

Breakout Sessions I: Friday, Nov. 21, 10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Accelerated Learning Through Holistic Community – A

Kelly Hall, Lead Teacher, Little Flower Academy, De La Salle Blackfeet School, Browning, MT
Brother Dylan Perry, FSC, Principal, De La Salle Blackfeet School, Browning, MT

Rooted in the spirituality of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and the educational vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, this session invites Lasallian educators to reflect on how we can build sacred bridges that guide young people through moments of growth, struggle and transition — especially as they prepare for the academic and emotional complexities of middle school. Drawing from work on the Blackfeet Reservation, presenters will share insights from a combined 4th and 5th grade model designed to meet the diverse needs of students in a small-school, under-resourced context. This model integrates academic rigor with holistic support, blending literacy-focused interventions, differentiated instruction and growth-mindset pedagogy with values drawn from Catholic social teaching and Montessori principles. At the core of this approach is the belief that each child is a sacred person on a sacred journey. Through intentional relationships, rigorous compassion and a focus on dignity and agency, educators can help students develop academic readiness alongside a deep sense of belonging. By aligning our educational mission with spiritual accompaniment, we affirm our Lasallian vocation and create classroom environments where students can discover their own “Little Way” forward — intellectually, socially and spiritually.

Lasallian Pedagogy: Bringing Our Charism to the Classroom – A

Dr. Deborah Augsburger, Professor & Program Director, Literacy Education, Lewis University, Romeoville, IL
Dr. Kurt Schackmuth, Chief Mission Officer & Vice President for Student Life, Lewis University, Romeoville, IL

What is Lasallian pedagogy and how is it enacted in a university setting? Whether traditional-age young adults, certificate or degree seekers, returning adult students, first-generation college students or others, Lasallian pedagogy responds to and meets these diverse student populations where they are and accompanies and supports them on their educational journeys. Over the course of two years, a task force of Lasallians at Lewis University studied the literature on Lasallian pedagogy, led stakeholder discussions and generated characteristics of Lasallian pedagogy as part of a broader effort to elevate the campus conversation about the importance and distinctiveness of Lasallian pedagogy. We are currently working to operationalize and share with our community the “Foundational Elements of Lasallian Pedagogy” that have been developed by our Task Force and which have application in a variety of classroom and co-curricular settings. In this session, we will share our “Foundational Elements of Lasallian Pedagogy” and the background related to their development, as well as our implementation and formation plans.

Reclaiming Vocation: Sacred Teaching in a Technological Age – A

Brother George Van Grieken, FSC, Ph.D., Coordinator, Lasallian Resource Center, Romeoville, IL
Joe Welling, Principal, Justin-Siena High School, Napa, CA

In today’s digital world, Lasallian educators face both new challenges and fresh opportunities in living out their vocation. This session invites participants to rediscover teaching as a *sacred practice* that sustains identity, builds community and helps students find meaning amid rapid technological change, including artificial intelligence (AI). Drawing on Albert Borgmann’s idea of “focal practices” and the Lasallian tradition, we will explore how presence, discernment, accompaniment and shared wisdom can guide educators.

The session will include interactive approaches using AI to support vocational reflection and deepen the purpose of teaching. Participants will also engage in AI methodologies to reflect on their own questions and emerging needs of their own vocation and technology. Through shared conversation and practical tools, we will consider how the Lasallian tradition can shape our teaching and sustain us in a technological age.

The Importance of "Grace" in Vocational Healing – A

Dr. Nelson Tung, Chief of Clinical Operations, Martin De Porres Schools, Elmont, NY

This will be a Lasallian-inspired/trauma-informed professional development session, designed to help all educators reconnect with their sense of vocation and explore sustainable self-care practices. We are all aware that education is more than a job — it is a calling, a ministry rooted in faith, zeal and the transformative power of human relationships. Due to the vast demands on educators; time, passion and dedication are all areas that can be compromised due to an array of professional and personal reasons. This workshop offers “opportunity”: opportunity to be in community with all Lasallians, to reflect, to learn, to share and to join one another to facilitate “grace.” The power of grace, especially for ourselves, is extremely healing. However, it can be very difficult to do sometimes. Therefore, we will explore the spiritual/clinical impact that burnout, compassion fatigue, secondary trauma stress and vicarious trauma can have. In turn, we will provide for spiritually directed/evidence-based practices to be able to combat it. The ultimate goal is to organically allow for grace, so that the whole person is cared for, and that a renewed direction/sustainability toward vocation, as well as spirituality, is reestablished.

Breakout Sessions II: Friday, Nov. 21, 2:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Cultivating Sacred Bridges Through Compassion – A

Father John Gribowich, Theology Teacher and Campus Minister, Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, San Francisco, CA

Kathy Lorentz, Theology Teacher and Campus Minister, Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory, San Francisco, CA

How do we build sacred bridges that truly ignite our vocation as Lasallian educators? This interactive session explores compassion as the foundational practice that transforms both educators and students, creating authentic connections that honor our shared humanity. Drawing from contemplative traditions and modern research, we will examine how compassion — defined as "the willingness to be present with suffering and motivated to alleviate it" — aligns perfectly with Saint John Baptist de La Salle's vision of education as ministry. Just as Jesus was "moved with compassion" throughout the Gospels, Lasallian educators are called to cultivate attentive hearts that recognize the sacred dignity in every student. Through guided practices including mindfulness, self-compassion and loving-kindness meditation, participants will experience how contemplative tools strengthen our capacity for accompaniment and discernment. We will explore practical applications: How does compassion inform classroom management? How do we practice self-care that sustains our vocational call? How can we nurture both individual and community spiritual needs? This session emphasizes that compassion isn't weakness — it's the tender strength required to stand with rather than apart from those we serve. Participants will leave with concrete practices for building sacred bridges through presence, understanding how "extravagant tenderness" creates transformative environments where both educators and students flourish.

Gen Z Isn't Lazy: They're Overwhelmed – A

Rashad Young, High School Counselor, Christian Brothers College High School, St. Louis, MO

Today's teens are often mislabeled as lazy, unmotivated or disinterested. In reality, many are overwhelmed — emotionally exhausted by social pressures, academic expectations and the nonstop demands of a digital world. Gen Z is not disengaged; they are drowning in overstimulation, anxiety and isolation. As Lasallian educators, we are called to see beyond behavior and into the heart of what students carry. This session will challenge common narratives around youth apathy and offer a more compassionate, trauma-informed understanding of Gen Z's struggles. Together, we will explore how depression and overstimulation show up in students' lives, and how our presence, patience and empathy can become sacred bridges to healing.

Sacred Bridges: Public Schools and the Lasallian Vocation – A

Krystina Henley, Principal, Catalyst Maria Elementary School, Chicago, IL

Elizabeth Jamison-Dunn, Principal, Catalyst Circle Rock Elementary School, Chicago, IL

What does it mean to live out a Lasallian vocation in a public school setting? Catalyst Schools, a Lasallian-inspired charter school network in Chicago, offers a unique case study in sustaining the Lasallian charism without explicit religious framing. This session explores how the five core Lasallian principles and the deeper teachings of De La Salle can be authentically translated into public education. Through an interactive session that includes visual storytelling, participants will see how Catalyst integrates Lasallian values across its physical environment, hiring practices, staff formation and student systems. From mission-focused onboarding to hallway signage, restorative circles to incentive structures rooted in virtue, this session will invite attendees to reflect on how sacred bridges are built when belief is lived through practice. Whether you serve in a religious or

secular space, this session will challenge and inspire you to deepen your understanding of the Lasallian vocation, wherever you are called to serve.

Breakout Sessions III: Saturday, Nov. 22, 12:45 – 2:00 p.m.

Affirming and Supporting Our LGBTQIA Student – A

Dr. John Taylor, M.Ed., MACC, LPC, Assistant Professor, Urban Public Health and Nutrition / Sexuality Educator, Sex and Mental Health Therapist, La Salle University, Philadelphia, PA

The training is designed to increase awareness, understanding and inclusivity toward students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual. The training aims to create a safe and supportive environment by providing participants with knowledge about the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA individuals, as well as the history, terminology and cultural context surrounding LGBTQIA identities. During the training, participants will engage in interactive activities, case studies, discussions and a presentation that will cover terminology, understanding your biases, the importance of using an individual's pronouns, understanding the OBI Model of Sexuality, the Cass Model of coming out and the importance of affirming and supporting clients.

New Directions in the Lasallian Heritage High School Curriculum – M & H

Seth Alexander, Ph.D., Religious Studies Teacher, Christian Brothers High School, Sacramento, CA
Thomas Guro, Religious Studies Department Chair, Christian Brothers High School, Sacramento, CA
Mary Alice Spinelli, Religious Studies Department Chair, Justin-Siena High School, Napa, CA

Three Religious Studies teachers of the San Francisco New Orleans District with the direction of Brother George Van Grieken, FSC, have begun creating Lasallian themed supplements to the four-year high school religious studies curriculum based on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) framework. This presentation will introduce the beginning module for freshmen on the life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the vision for how Lasallian elements can be included in other courses. Presenters will invite a community discussion to vision the continued development of these Lasallian supplements across other courses to best support students and teachers.

Our Lasallian Response to GenAI in Education at Christian Brothers College High School – A

David Brumfield, Secondary Educator, Christian Brothers College High School, St. Louis, MO
Matthew Merys-Mahaffey, Secondary Educator, Christian Brothers College High School, St. Louis, MO

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in education is an ever-evolving set of tools and applications that represent both a difference of degree and a difference of kind shift for Lasallian schools. Christian Brothers College High School in St. Louis, has a history of innovation with educational technology and while GenAI is daunting, the framework for a curriculum emphasizing skills, process and authentic products has been essential to navigating the tumult of these new developments. Two veteran educators will facilitate an interactive presentation on promises, perils and policies for integrating GenAI into a humanities course. Rather than a tour of technology "hows" and "whats," participants will encounter a story of a school where, together and by association, colleagues embraced the occasion of this inflection point and deepened their vocation by seeking pedagogical approaches that provide their students the opportunity to thrive in this new learning landscape. Through reflection prompts and moderated Q/A, participants will leave fostering new mindsets for GenAI integration and promoting a deepened sense of confidence for the dynamism of our Lasallian Charism to keep sacred the work of our classrooms in this new age of teaching and learning.