

May 2016

# The Augustinian Values Institute: Preserving a Legacy of Augustinian Education

Stephen J. Baker OSA

Villanova University, [stephen.baker@villanova.edu](mailto:stephen.baker@villanova.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/ce>



Part of the [Teacher Education and Professional Development Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Baker, S. J. (2016). The Augustinian Values Institute: Preserving a Legacy of Augustinian Education. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 19 (3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.1903112016>

This Article is brought to you for free with open access by the School of Education at Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for publication in *Journal of Catholic Education* by the journal's editorial board and has been published on the web by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons at Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information about Digital Commons, please contact [digitalcommons@lmu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@lmu.edu). To contact the editorial board of *Journal of Catholic Education*, please email [CatholicEdJournal@lmu.edu](mailto:CatholicEdJournal@lmu.edu).

## The Augustinian Values Institute: Preserving a Legacy of Augustinian Education

Stephen J. Baker, OSA  
Villanova University

*A concern for Catholic educators is how to keep Catholic schools viable and healthy in a milieu of diminishing numbers of religious as well as a very complex and changing world. This article addresses the Augustinians' response to the challenge to keep the Order's mission of education alive and thriving in the 21st century. This article hopes to accomplish two goals: first, to articulate the meaning of the three core values of Unitas (Unity), Veritas (Truth), and Caritas (Charity). Secondly, to report the results of a study of the Augustinian Values Institute (AVI), a program that engages participants in reflection on the core values and how they might be applied to their classroom pedagogies. The article concludes with some discussion about future directions for the Institute.*

### Keywords

Augustinian education, Catholic school, values, Augustinian Values Institute

The landscape of Catholic education in the second decade of the 21st century continues to evolve. Dioceses and religious orders who own or sponsor Catholic Schools continue to wrestle with the complex issue as to how to continue to offer a Catholic education as numbers of priests and religious men and women continue to decline. Robert Murray (2002) has stressed that most religious congregations in the United States that sponsor schools continue to experience a decline of members of religious orders serving as administrators, faculty, and staff due to decreases in membership as well as decisions by orders to work in other ministries outside of education. This shifting scene in Catholic education has moved the Augustinians to ask two questions: How does the Order define its philosophy of education in the context of the values of the Order? How can the Order continue to promote education in the Augustinian tradition given declining membership?

The purpose of this article is two-fold: first, to articulate the Augustinian core values in education and how these values can be applicable to teacher pedagogy in an Augustinian school, and, secondly, to report the results of a study of a program that engages participants on these core values in education. The article begins with some historical context outlining the challenges the Order faces in Catholic education and how the Order has responded with the creation of the Augustinian Values Institute (AVI) to meet these challenges. Next there will be a presentation on the theoretical and philosophical grounding of the three core values of an Augustinian education: *Unitas* (Unity), *Veritas* (Truth), *Caritas* (Charity). The article will then turn to report on the study conducted on the AVI and how the Institute assisted teachers in trying to implement the three core values in their classroom pedagogies. It will conclude with some discussion about future directions.

### **Augustinian Education: Historical Context and Challenges**

From the earliest decades of its founding in the mid-thirteenth century, the Augustinians were committed to the promotion of education as the Order sought to live out its identity as a community that claimed St. Augustine as father and founder (Martin, 2006). From the outset, teaching, study, and investigation have been salient parts of the Augustinians' service to the Church (Prevost, 2006). A significant challenge to the Augustinians is how to continue the legacy and spirit of Augustine in the Order's educational ministries. Two factors have challenged the Order in this enterprise. First, there is the rapid change of the modern world, leading humanity to face a number of social, cultural, and religious difficulties. Interestingly, according to Theodore Tack (1988), the world in the time of Augustine had challenges in the wake of social change similar those in our current milieu. Tack (1988) proposed that because of these similarities, people could find in Augustine some connection to their own inner life and struggle. Augustine's struggle is our struggle, and his search, our search. Augustinians throughout the world have a strong desire to offer this treasure that is Augustine's thought and spirit especially in the area of education. Prevost (2006) emphasized that the Order desires to promote "what is truly Augustinian within the numerous educational centers that are a part of our Augustinian educational apostolate" (p. 5).

The second factor that challenges the Order is concentrated in its own internal life. The number of Augustinians throughout the world is declining due to these same social, cultural, and spiritual challenges of life in the

twenty-first century. Bernard Scianna (2006) noted, “Many of these schools are in operation today, but several Augustinian schools have had to close due to changing demographics as well as the [decreasing] number of professed priests and brothers serving in the United States” (p. 2). With diminishing numbers of friars ministering in schools, the challenge for the Order is to promote Augustine’s vision and spirit of education. The question for the Order is, how?

This challenge to preserve and promote a religious community’s charism in service of education has been taken up by other religious orders as well. For example, in the last two decades, the Christian Brother schools have been engaged in the promotion of their charism by partnering with their lay educators through the Lasallian Leadership Institute (LLI) and the Lasallian Social Justice Institute (LSJI). According to a study by Diane Kettle and Carol Swain (2002), the LLI was designed “to serve as a comprehensive formation program for leadership within Lasallian institutions throughout the United States and Toronto Region of the International Institute” (p. 1). Kettle and Swain’s (2002) study was initiated for the purpose of determining whether or not the LLI had been successful in assisting laypersons to interiorize the Lasallian mission. Their study suggested that the LLI’s strengths were an increased depth of understanding of the Lasallian mission, continued friendship and networking among participants, and an understanding that the Lasallian mission must be translated into concrete actions. Areas for improvement centered on the logistics of the experience and a need for a greater connection of some of the Institute curriculum to the participants’ work life.

The LSJI was born as a response to the Christian Brothers leadership’s recognition of a need for “an approach to help lay associates fully understand and embrace the call to educate the poor” (Proehl & Suzuki, 2009, p. 457). According to the Brothers’ website, the LSJI is a “formation program for the Partners and Brothers in the Region based on the Gospel and our Lasallian vocation to the promotion of social justice and service to the poor” (Christian Brothers Conference, 2015). Proehl and Suzuki (2009) reported in their study that the great majority of the participants in the Institute have grown in knowledge and commitment to the Lasallian mission, more dedicated to promoting social change, more sensitive to issues of poverty and social injustice, and more reflective about their own lifestyle practices. Proehl and Suzuki (2009) suggested that school leaders need to be attentive to creating and providing additional opportunities for participants to continue reflecting on the experience of the Institute as well as applying lessons learned to their work.

Before other religious communities could create programs and initiatives to carry on their legacies, they first saw it necessary to articulate the meaning of their charisms. The Augustinians needed to do the same. What is this Augustinian vision and spirit of education? What are the criteria that make a school *Augustinian*? Santiago Insunza Seco (2006) asserted that if one is going to talk about the elements of an Augustinian school, then it is essential to refer to Augustine's thinking about education. What elements define the Augustinian identity of a school? One cannot find these elements neatly defined in the writings of Saint Augustine. Insunza Seco (2006) proposed that an Augustinian approach to education is not based so much on the words of Augustine, but rather on the spiritual itinerary of his life. Gary McCloskey (2006) concurred with Insunza's (2006) thinking by stating that if one looks at Augustine's life, one sees evidence that his plans changed many times when he learned better directions and developed improved insights. McCloskey (2006) suggested that Augustine's life was one in which life plans "were interrupted as he found new ways to advance on his learning journey" (p. 114). With Insunza and McCloskey's comments, three core values of Augustinian education can be identified: *Unitas* (Unity), *Veritas* (Truth), and *Caritas* (Love). What are the philosophical and theoretical concepts that ground them? How can they be lived out in Augustinian schools?

### Core Values of Augustinian Education

#### Pursuit of Unity

The first core value for Augustinian education is the pursuit of unity, both as a method and a goal. Augustine did not envision learning as individualistic, but as accomplished in community with others. In his *Rule* of life, Augustine reminded his brothers and sisters that the primary reason for coming together is to "live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart" (Augustinian General Curia, 2008, p. 9). McCloskey (2006) proposed that for Augustine, learning with others is of the utmost importance, and the means by which this learning takes place is through dialogue. The core value of unity is promoted in Augustinian education through the dialogue that takes place between teachers and students and students with each another. Everyone is included in this learning enterprise. McCloskey (2006) expressed the belief that Augustinian pedagogy can be seen as "having an inclusive thrust to aim to teach all learners as a mutual respon-

sibility of an Augustinian learning community” (p. 131). Some practices or strategies that can advance Augustinian pedagogy are collaborative learning and cooperative learning because they can be used to shape learning activities that reinforce the communitarian dimensions of Augustinian education (McCloskey, 2006).

An additional dimension to this core value of unity is not only learning together, but also the promotion of friendship. Learning takes place in the context of friendship. For Augustine, creating a community of friends with whom to share life and the search for Truth was central. Augustine (1997/397), in book four of his *Confessions*, described the significance of his interaction with his friends that resulted in a unity of mind and heart. McCloskey (2006) concluded that Augustinian pedagogy in the core value of unity is learning to desire and create unity, a unity that brings together spirits and souls leading to the creation of a community of friends. It is in this community that we meet and dialogue with the Inner Teacher and experience Christ in his fullness (McCloskey, 2006).

### **Pursuit of Truth**

A second core value is the pursuit of truth. Augustine set out on an ongoing journey to pursue and learn the truth. Augustine never believed that he fully grasped truth. Rather, each new truth propelled him forward and lifted him upward in his dialogue with the inner Teacher, Jesus Christ (McCloskey, 2006). Augustine’s understanding of the pursuit of truth influences Augustinian pedagogy to view objective truth as a reality that continues to unfold, rather than as something that can be captured and frozen in approaches such as fundamentalism, traditionalism, and literalism, or that truth can only be discovered strictly through the scientific method as in scientism (McCloskey, 2006). Augustinian pedagogy “supports learning how to move upward on a learning journey pointing beyond ourselves” (McCloskey, 2006, p. 123). With this Augustinian approach to truth, one can say that the searcher for truth is always on the way to wisdom: one becomes a life-long learner (McCloskey, 2006). This perspective on truth can be helpful in a world that questions objective truth claims (McCloskey, 2006).

Francisco Fincias (2006) presented this search for truth in terms of one’s inner light. Fincias (2006) argued that Augustine believed that every person has within one’s self an inner light and that the disciple learns from this inner light. Augustine (1997/397), in book seven of the *Confessions*, named this

inner light within every person as God. Fincias (2006) defined this inner light as the Word of God, which illuminates every person, and Christ as the only Teacher. The person who accepts Christ as the Inner Teacher lives in the world as one who remains steadfast in the proclamation of the gospel message, especially in the dialogue with the modern culture. Fincias (2006) proposed that this dialogue does not mean consensus at the sacrifice of Christian identity and values. Rather, dialogue with modern culture in the pursuit of truth means a respect for persons who hold differences in values and an openness to the possibility that some truths can be found in other cultures and religions (Fincias, 2006). In the Augustinian school, there is extended a welcome to the nonbeliever and to persons of other religious confessions because Augustinians affirm the presence of God in each person and the human person's search for and experience of God (Insunza, 2006). Augustinians affirm the Church's understanding, articulated in *Nostra Aetate* (1965), that persons of other religious confessions and traditions can often reflect for the community a ray of that Truth that enlightens all people (par. 4).

### **Fostering of Love**

The final core value of Augustinian education is the fostering of love. In an Augustinian pedagogy, the value of love begins with a love for God. Tack (2006) asserted that Augustinian education has an important connection to the human heart and therefore with relationships with God, with one's self, and with others. According to Tack (2006), Augustine had to come to a love of self and see and experience the God within before he could come to love God. Once Augustine looked within himself, he saw that God was closer to him than Augustine was to himself. About his experience, Augustine (397/1997) wrote: "Where was I when I was seeking for you? You were there before me, but I had departed from myself. I could not even find myself, much less you" (V, ii, 2). This love of God, in terms of Augustinian pedagogy's core value of love, is then expressed through the promotion of a love for learning and care for the learner.

This love and passion for learning fostered in both the educator and the learner is manifested in the person's development of character and formation of the will. For the Augustinian learner, knowing what is true and right is not enough; the challenge of life is to do what is right (McCloskey, 2006). Learners come to learn what is right through the formation of the will. The will is a central component in Augustine's pedagogy (McCloskey, 2006). Au-

gustine understood the human will as needing to be developed so that it can act rightly. McCloskey (2006) argued, “Augustinian pedagogy must include methods and practices that strengthen the habits of the will to act rightly” (p. 119). Augustine saw the education of the will, done in humility, as building character. He also saw developing good habits as accomplished through dialogue with Christ, the Inner Teacher (McCloskey, 2006).

McCloskey (2006) proposed that an important piece to the formation of one’s will is a desire to seek out what is not known. An Augustinian education promotes this desire to search out the unknown through a pedagogical approach known as problem-based learning (McCloskey, 2006). This approach begins with a known problem, and then moves from what is already known to what is unknown, and works to make the unknown less intimidating (McCloskey, 2006). Problem-based pedagogy assists students to develop a more confident will as they explore how other learners throughout history were able to come to new insights when faced with the unknown (McCloskey, 2006). This pedagogy helps learners to reorganize and adapt their knowledge, resulting in better understanding and living (McCloskey, 2006).

A final dimension to the core value of *Caritas* is the educator’s care *for* the learner. An educator cares for the learner through understanding how learners learn. McCloskey (2006) suggested that the technique of scaffolding is useful in assisting learners. McCloskey (2006) proposed, “Programs fostering successful transitions across levels of scaffolding and ladders, including orientations of new students in a school, implement the care for the learner that Augustine advocated” (p. 120). This scaffolding technique took into account the educational needs of students and how to best respond to those needs through effective strategies leading to student success in learning. Scaffolding helps to avoid obstacles to the love of learning: apathy and boredom (McCloskey 2006). Love for learning and care for the student propels the Augustinian educator not to be content simply with good lesson plans and readiness to teach, but also to develop methods and skills that address the attitudes that students bring with them to the learning process (McCloskey, 2006). Augustinian education programs need to provide cocurricular programs for students as well as professional development for teachers to help them develop positive attitudes for learning in their students (McCloskey, 2006).

This exposition on the three core values demonstrates that there are many pedagogical practices that can foster Augustinian pedagogy. While these practices are not uniquely Augustinian, the interrelation of the considerations is unique to Augustine (McCloskey, 2006). As there is no precise blueprint

for implementing Augustinian pedagogy, McCloskey (2006) proposed that Augustine does offer us the insight of *reconsideration*. Reconsideration in this context means to identify successful practices that can serve to bring about improvement in areas where growth in Augustinian teaching and learning may be needed (McCloskey, 2006). The Augustinian educator realizes that Augustinian education is never perfect; it is always on the way, it can always be more than it is.

Defining the core values helps to provide some nomenclature for generations of teachers and students to articulate their experiences of an Augustinian education. Over the years, countless teachers and students have stated in conversation or writing that there is something unique about their education in an Augustinian school. They have recounted that there is a spirit and energy that has remained with them long after their experience as a teacher or student in the school. With an understanding of the Order's commitment to education and some definition of its core values in education, the creation of the Augustinian Values Institute could now begin to take shape to assist educators in naming and shaping this Augustinian experience.

### **The Augustinian Values Institute**

The Augustinian Secondary Education Association (ASEA) was created in 2002 for the purpose of creating opportunities for friars and lay collaborators to reflect on the practice of Augustinian education and the philosophy that grounds it. The Augustinian Values Institute (AVI) came out of this desire to promote and share this Augustinian philosophy of education and was seen as a crucial mechanism to continue the Augustinian legacy and spirit in the schools under the care of the Order. Since 2004, there have been 11 Institutes.

The AVI is a yearly weekend hosted by one of the Augustinian schools. The host school is responsible for providing the space for the Institute and arranging accommodations for participants. The host school also provides opportunities for participants to experience the life and culture of the local school. Participants come from each of the Augustinian schools in the United States and Canada, as well as recently from schools in other English-speaking countries such as England, Ireland, and Australia. Participants represent the various stakeholders in the school community: faculty, staff, administrators, school board members, and parents. Funding for the Institute comes from the schools themselves and the sponsoring North American Augustinian provinces.

The content of the Institute centers on the three core values of *Unitas*, *Veritas*, and *Caritas*. School leaders give presentations on the core values and how these values might be concretely lived out in an Augustinian school. Following the presentations, there are small and large group discussions that allow for participants to share their reflections and thinking about the core values. Throughout the weekend, there is time for prayer and socializing for the purpose of forming community among the participants. These experiences help the participants to feel a sense of connectedness and common values and mission with other Augustinian schools. One goal of the Institute is to assist participants in understanding the meaning of the core values and to gain a renewed passion and energy to live the values in their particular work in the Augustinian school. An additional goal of the Institute is for participants to make connections with colleagues from other schools that can result in greater networking and collaboration with one another.

### Method

This embedded case study examines how the AVI serves as a vehicle to assess how the three Augustinian core values of truth, unity, and love are fostered in the teacher pedagogy in an Augustinian school (Yin, 2003). The case study includes two Augustinian schools with the same AVI experience (Yin, 2003).

### Participants

Because this case study was an attempt to understand one situation in great depth, the process for selecting participants was intentional, nonrandom, and purposeful (Glesne, 2006; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Nine persons consented to participate in the study, five from one school and four from the other. The majority of the participants were teachers, and a few were administrators. The subjects in this study participated in all three data collection techniques.

One important issue in this study was the protection of the confidentiality of the participants, while not compromising the meaning of the data analysis (Kvale, 2006). Confidentiality of participants was maintained as much as possible in a few ways. First, there is not a description of the two schools provided in the study. The only descriptor about the schools is that they are both Augustinian. Secondly, participants are not identified by race, gender, or position in the school. The only identifier for each participant is by number

and from which school the participant belonged (i.e., school A or B). Each participant was given a number known only to the researcher.

### **Information Collection**

Three data collection strategies were used for this study for the purposes of convergence or triangulation of the data: a survey, individual interviews, and focus groups (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Participants were sent via mail a pre-Institute survey about their views of the place of the values in the school's pedagogy. In the weeks following the Institute, each participant took part in a personal interview and a school focus group. Once the personal interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed, they were sent to each participant for verification and to ensure accuracy. In addition, an email was sent to each participant with a paragraph containing conclusions the researcher reached from their interviews to see if they agreed with the conclusions of the data they provided.

### **Information Analysis**

Meaning condensation was the primary analysis tool used for this study (Kvale, 2006). Following Kvale's (2006) technique, the information expressed by the participants was abridged down to the main sense of what was said. Once this reduction of information took place, the data were organized into manageable units. I then coded them, synthesized them, and searched for patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The coding categories were created, applied to the data, and were ready for analysis. What follows in the data analysis is a presentation of the results of the survey before attendance at the AVI, the personal interviews, and the focus groups following the Institute weekend experience.

### **Data Analysis and Results**

#### **Pre-AVI Survey**

The question on the survey asked participants about their understanding of the Augustinian values impacting upon the pedagogy of the school. From the School A responses, three themes emerged: (a) the education of the whole student, lesson preparation, and presentation; (b) extra-curricular activities; and (c) education about world issues. From the School B responses, the theme that emerged was centered on skill promotion and knowledge for life success.

The first theme of core values as contributing to the education of the whole student came through the words of Participant 3A:

The development of the whole student does not come from books. Values play an integral role in the development and ultimate success of the “whole student” . . . The guidance and growth of each student; it is not just about the “grade,” but of the advancement of the “whole student.”

The second theme that emerged from participant responses is preparation and presentation of lessons. For several participants, the core values seemed to play a significant role in the way lessons are constructed and delivered. For example, Participant 2A commented:

Our institution teaches brotherhood in the English and History departments from my experience with seeing, hearing and teaching specific works that deal with unity, togetherness, and sacrifice for our fellow man. We have events that develop bonds between the gentlemen attending our school. We have convocations discussing togetherness and pulling for one another. Our institution teaches participants in many forums where the truth is sought out or revealed. This is displayed strongly in our education on world issues.

The third theme is core values contributing to the extra-curricular activities of the school. The participants understood pedagogy to include not only classroom instruction, but also extra-curricular activities of the school such as service learning and other school events. Participant 1B wrote: “I feel that we base everything we do off of these values. Anytime we do something, whether it is academic, spiritual or athletic we always make sure that it is following our Augustinian values.”

The fourth theme of skill promotion and preparing the student for success in life surfaced in the participant responses from School B. The core values served the students in acquiring the skills needed to be successful in life. To this point, Participant 2B wrote: “I do believe that our faculty strives to provide the highest level of education to students, include all students in the daily lessons and provide the students with skills and knowledge to succeed in life.” It must be said that one participant did not believe that the values of truth and love were sufficiently reflected in the school’s pedagogy, but did

believe that unity was becoming increasingly reflected. About this Participant 3B wrote:

Currently, unity is throughout our school's pedagogy, and it is increasing as I write this. Unity is throughout our school and taught extensively. Truth should be taught, at the very least in theology courses, but I am not sure if it is because I am not a Theology teacher. As far as it is being taught throughout, I don't believe it is. Campus ministry and freshmen mentoring does discuss the topic. Love is another one that isn't throughout the pedagogy. It is preached, but not taught or discussed often.

### **Personal Interviews**

The personal interview asked if attending the AVI made any impact on how participants viewed pedagogy in their school. From the interview responses from School A, four themes emerged: (a) learning as more than just internalizing information, (b) core values permeating lesson preparation and instruction; (c) core values promoting skills and knowledge for life; and (d) the values as promoting service. In School B, participants also recognized that the core values are to permeate lesson preparation and instruction. In addition, participants commented on the uniqueness of each student as a learner.

The first theme centers on the idea of school pedagogy as more than simply conveying information and facts to students. One participant mentioned the importance of seeing the student as a whole person as a priority. Participant 2A noted:

I was discussing the idea of learning to learn – wanting to learn for the sake of learning as opposed to learning because you have to. I have touched upon that a couple of times already and I feel that is something I definitely have to teach – not that I am teaching for the grade, but that I understand that we work toward grades, and that the kids are aiming to do things for grades. But I try to get them to learn because they want to learn and the grades will come.

Two participants mentioned that pedagogy must center on the education of the whole student. One participant looked back on the education his/her sons had received at the school, asserting:

If I look back with the light of today [the AVI], I can see where the teaching of the whole self-vs. this is your homework, go home and do it and come back with the answers; you can see it in the coaching, I can see it in, maybe not every teacher my children had, but just in the way that some of the teachers would propose a plan, a lesson plan . . . The teachers were hired, in our minds, to do more than just teach the kids. And they did. I see the success that has come with my son.

Another participant saw the importance of the teacher being available for interaction with the students beyond the classroom instruction time. Participant 1A commented:

I have a more hands on approach with my students. I try to incorporate the idea that maybe not being their friend per say, but being a little closer than other teachers might be. And I think that is kind of the truth aspect of it. I try to be realistic with them, almost like a mentor. That is one of the things I noticed here. We have a guidance counselor and he is kind of bogged down. A lot of these kids are just floating around. Sometimes they just want a place to go and talk and I try to open up my door to them.

An additional component in connecting the core values to pedagogy was recognizing that each student is a unique learner with unique abilities and styles of learning. Regarding this subject, Participant 4B noted:

When we learn about the background of St. Augustine and where he came from . . . how he thought education should be and teaching the student at his level is important. I very much agree with that. To treat the student as an individual and teach the student as an individual as opposed to putting it back on the student to get caught up or stay caught up with the class. . . . That has to do with really genuinely caring for the student, being concerned with what he knows as truth or representing truth and then the community feeling and the atmosphere and the classroom and the family atmosphere.

The second theme proposed that the pedagogy of the school inserted the core values into the lesson preparation and instruction of the teachers to the students. Two participants mentioned in their interviews that the core values drove lesson planning and delivery. For example, Participant 5A commented:

But when we sat down and talked about it – I started to understand what exactly truth, what exactly unity means and how they interweave in one another. In terms of the pedagogy, I definitely see Veritas, Unitas, and Caritas starting to mold how I am going about interacting with the students and how I present materials with them, how I respond to negative circumstances in my class. It really gives me a different perspective.

When asked if the AVI would compel one to think about adding different teaching strategies to the class, this participant mentioned that the small group dynamics modeled some teaching strategies. Once again, Participant 5A asserted:

The one thing I personally enjoyed was the small group discussions itself from the AVI, and it was interesting because the small groups themselves were almost emanating the values of unity and truth. We would all start by saying what our truths were – everyone has their own truth, their own perspective. But, by the end of the conversation, after almost forty minutes, would have this united agreement on what the topic meant or what we were trying to discuss. Even if we were not 100% in with somebody, we certainly could respect their points of view. And I think those discussion groups are something I could carry over into my class itself. I am so used to me leading the discussion, kind of forcing it down the pathway I like. I think letting the students interact with themselves could foster the same type of environment or atmosphere that I experienced at the AVI. And that is applicable to any subject, to anything you are talking about.

Another participant commented on how an understanding of the core values reaffirmed a teaching strategy used in the class. Participant 3B elaborated:

The first thing I think of is collaboration and teaming. I do a lot of that already. I think every teacher should do more as I should. The Unitas,

the idea of doing it together as a group, a team, and then coming forth together. To do it alone, it could be good, but imagine how much better it would be if everyone works together and has multiple ideas.

The third theme that emerged out of a discussion of pedagogy and the AVI is core values promoting the acquisition of skills and knowledge for students to live their adult lives. Participant 2A remarked:

Constantly when I am in class I am teaching them information but I am also trying to teach them about life. That is what I have been trying to do since I have been here, because that is what I do on the football field, too, because examples of facing adversity, no matter what it might be like breaking a tackle or tying to tackle somebody, trying to finish your reading assignment or studying for a test and how it is difficult to overcome that adversity it is important how you handle it and how you approach it is important.

When asked how he/she would want to see teaching performed at the school in light of the AVI, Participant 3A noted:

How if this is such an important piece of what we are trying to teach our children, not just reading, writing and arithmetic, but morals, unity, truth, happiness, love, how are our teachers learning this? Do these teachers have mentoring, someone to go to? I know they do evaluations. Are they being evaluated on the book or what they do, how they project themselves, how they teach the kids, the whole self?

A third participant hoped that the pedagogy assisted students in making changes for the good. Participant 5A asserted: "I think that what I do with these three values would hopefully end up influencing and changing the students in a positive way."

The fourth theme that comes out of the connection of pedagogy with the AVI is the notion that the core values promote a spirit and life of service in the school and beyond. Two participants mentioned service as an important piece of the curriculum and pedagogy of the school. Participant 2A explained:

Everything that we do here service wise is based on that love that we have for one another. . . . We do the Caritas project here and that is one of the things that we are streamlining. We already have it here at the right level and the kids are getting a lot out of it. . . . Looking at community service hours, how do you motivate them? The kids are always thinking they are doing a lot of community service. We put the onus right on them. We are not creating this for you; you are creating this on your own. . . . The student in his senior year has to present to the faculty board what idea the student had and whether or not the idea worked.

### Focus Groups

The focus groups revealed how the AVI assisted participants in assessing how the core values connected with their understanding of pedagogy. Participants were asked to elaborate on how each value—*Veritas*, *Unitas*, and *Caritas*—was applicable in the implementation of their pedagogy. One goal of the focus group, through inquiring about each of the values separately, was to have participants become more specific about their understanding of each value and its connection to pedagogy, whereas the personal interview only asked participants to comment about the core values in a general way.

Participants from both schools affirmed the theme that the core values view learning as more than simply internalizing information. Participant 2A commented:

I understand the guys are concerned about getting the best grades possible, but we have to think why we are learning. It is important to learn. Just being honest with yourself with what you are learning. If you are just trying to get the grades, you are cheating yourself and not being true to yourself.

An additional dimension to the idea that education is more than internalizing information was that education and learning should teach and promote higher thinking skills. About this theme, Participant 4A commented:

Relationship brings us the truth. For example, we study church history not just to know the facts, but to know the relationship between God and his people. What is that relationship all about? What does it mean

for me? They have a tough time with that. It is higher level thinking for them. Trying to get it into the classroom on a day to day basis, I think we struggle with that. We all try to do it, but truth is one of those values that, I don't want to say that it is indefinable, but it is so abstract for them. They want concrete stuff. That's harder to get them to higher level thinking. So we plant the seeds and hope and pray that they get it eventually.

Some new themes about the impact of each value upon pedagogy in their schools also emerged. For the value of *Veritas*, participants either found truth hard to define or saw *Veritas* in terms of the virtue of honesty between faculty and students and colleagues. Participant 4B reflected:

I get Unitas, I get Caritas. I struggle with the definition of Veritas. Is it being true to yourself? Being true to God? Knowing the truth? Seeking the truth? I struggle with the whole definition of what you mean by truth. I think of the three, it is the hardest to really define. We say love one another. Unity is obvious. Truth is hard to grasp. It can be very subjective which is kind of ironic.

An additional piece of *Veritas* mentioned by one participant from School B was the value of the educator's commitment to life-long learning through professional development opportunities. The fulfillment of this obligation not only helped these educators, but also, ultimately, their students. About educator commitment to life-long learning, Participant 2B stated:

Maybe we could bring back a little more professional development or talk about more unity with the faculty. Get the kids out of here and let's talk about professional development among us and what we are doing and what we are doing to create that unity among us.

One new theme that emerged from the core value of *Unitas* and its connection to pedagogy in School B was the idea that unity demands treating all students equally. This idea went beyond discussion in personal interviews that every student is a unique learner. To acknowledge each student as a unique learner, it necessarily follows that every student in the school is entitled to equal opportunities and resources for learning. The following quotation from Participant 2B grounded this theme.

I think it is a big thing and it goes along with love, treating all students equally, giving the same type of resources and attention to all the students. Sometimes it feels like we are putting too much emphasis on the really smart kids and not enough on everyone else. And we are recruiting and trying to get all these other students and to promote programs that we might have or want to start having, but we are not fully involving them. We do not have the resources available to all students. . . . There is a reason why this kid is failing and I feel like we don't give much attention to those students. I think we need to build on the attention that we have given them. We put in all these AP classes, but what about the remedial kids?

An additional theme that emerged in relationship to the value of *Unitas* and pedagogy in School A was educators building relationships with students and modeling relationships for students. In support of this notion, Participant 1A stated:

You need to draw between friendship and teacher relationship. My door is always open to them even if it has nothing to do with my class. . . . You have an opportunity to have an important impact on some of these kids and show them that there are more important things in life than just grades and memorizing facts, but to form relationships with people and friendships and unity. I think that is the most important thing and I think our school does a really good job at that.

Also, one participant in School A saw the value of teachers modeling appropriate relationships for the students in their own relationships with colleagues. Along these lines, Participant 1A commented:

I think they [the students] model the relationships that we teachers have with each other. I know that when I was in high school, I always paid attention to the way the teachers treated each other. The teachers here are my friends and we hang out together. The kids hear about that and they like that. They see us at their prom. We do it not to get paid, but because we care. That shows the idea of unity here.

Two new themes that emerged from the focus groups about the value of *caritas* and pedagogy were a love and passion for the subject one is teaching

and a love for the students in one's care. Participants from School B mentioned the importance of demonstrating to students a love and passion for what you teach. Participant 2B explained:

I think the number one thing is that you are demonstrating a love for the subject you are teaching. This is a reason why you are teaching this class. You have to love it to do it. I have to love my job to put in ridiculous hours and do what I need to do. We need to make that visible to our students. Why should they care about this math formula or the War of 1812 if we don't seem interested in it? We need to outwardly express our love for the subject and what we are doing.

Participants in both schools saw the value of *caritas* as lived out in the educators' love for their students. Love, in this context, means helping students to achieve success in all the areas of student life: academics, spirituality, athletics, activities, and relationships. About this love for the student, Participant 2A commented:

I think about the delivery of information that was mentioned at the AVI. How do I convey or deliver information? . . . Maybe there is a better way to do that, to deliver messages to students. The way I interact, try to be as softly spoken as I can be, and not be callous with my comments, being more caring, and constantly think of self-improvement. In giving back grades or the way I would grade papers and the way I would word it, but still express how important it is and where they have made their mistakes. You never know how it is going to affect them. You think that being hard on them is sometimes better. Each student is different. Maybe you can handle it, but maybe they can't. *Caritas* is me being in their shoes and how I would feel if I were them.

### Findings and Discussion

The reported data reveal important discussion points worthy of note. Findings from the pre-AVI survey seem to show that before the AVI experience, most participants already had some understanding of the core values in education and how these values operated in the pedagogical models in their schools. At the same time, some participants could not articulate these con-

nections of values to pedagogy as clearly—perhaps because some had been in Augustinian schools longer than the others. Participants with longer tenures had had more exposure to the language and the culture of the values. Another possible explanation could be that participants interpreted the survey questions differently. One could conclude that most participants had some basic understanding of the core values and pedagogy and that the AVI assisted them to grow in this understanding.

The personal interviews demonstrated that all the study participants found the AVI experience to be very positive. They experienced a connectedness with colleagues from other schools, a sense of shared goals and mission as well as opportunities both now and in the future to network and share ideas with each other.

A second finding from the interviews showed that the AVI gave participants the opportunity to assess their own pedagogy. They saw the core values influencing their pedagogy by seeing each student as a unique learner, viewing learning as more than simply absorbing information, embracing the values influencing lesson preparation and instruction, and promoting skills and knowledge for life as well as service to others. One area of concern from the interview was that the participants did not address how each value specifically impacted their understanding of pedagogy. The participants seemed to refer to the values only in a general way. This concern generated one of the goals of the focus group: to provide an opportunity for participants to respond specifically to each particular value and consider how each value impacted their pedagogy.

The aim of the focus group was to affirm any knowledge gleaned from the personal interviews and to discover new knowledge about how the values might impact the pedagogy of the school. All participants reaffirmed the value of both the experience in helping them to understand more clearly the core values and the value of meeting colleagues from other Augustinian schools—both nationally and internationally—and experienced a sense of support through shared mission and values. The focus groups also confirmed the belief that learning is more than taking in information, and that education and learning should promote higher-level thinking skills.

Some new knowledge did emerge about the values and pedagogy. Participants found the value of *Veritas* difficult to define, or they saw *Veritas* in terms of honesty between faculty and students and colleagues. In addition, participants valued opportunities for professional development and the educator's commitment to become a life-long learner. From *Unitas* emerged the

ideas of treating each student equally and that each student should have the resources needed to become successful learners. In addition, *Unitas* calls educators to build appropriate relationships with students and colleagues both in and beyond the classroom. Concerning *Caritas*, the focus groups revealed the importance of having passion for the subjects one teaches and an appropriate love and concern for the students that is directed toward assisting them to become successful in all their educational and life pursuits. Overall, the focus groups were successful for participants in affirming the comments made in the personal interviews as well as in articulating how the core values impact one's understanding of pedagogy.

### Conclusions

The first conclusion to this study is that the AVI did assist educator-participants in assessing the implementation of the core values in the pedagogy of the school, but only in a general way. The focus of the AVI experience is primarily to educate participants through presentations and small group conversation about the meaning of the core values. In addition, it is a wonderful opportunity to experience community and connectedness to others who share the same mission of Augustinian education. Given these positive benefits of the experience, there is simply not enough time in a three-day experience to delve very deeply into how one can assess the ways in which the core values can be applied to one's pedagogy. There must be additional opportunities for participants to make this specific connection between the core values and their application to pedagogy in an Augustinian school.

A second conclusion to this study is that the core value of *Veritas* needs to be more concretely defined as it pertains to pedagogy. Many of the participants equated *Veritas* with the virtue of honesty—being truthful with the self and others. The value of *Veritas* means much more than honesty in the literature. For Augustine, and certainly for the Christian, the search for truth leads us to Christ, who is the Truth. This transcendent nature of truth must be concretized more clearly for the future participants of AVI.

### Implications and Future Directions

A first implication is the need for further scholarly research into the articulation and meaning of the core values for Augustinian education. While McCloskey (2006) and Insunza (2006) have made worthy contributions to this area of research, additional Augustinian voices on this subject would

greatly add to the literature on how the core values are embodied specifically in the pedagogy of the school. A specific area for inquiry could be how the Augustinian approach to education is different or distinct from other approaches in the Catholic Tradition.

A second implication is that this study could be replicated beyond the two schools that were subjects for this study. Future studies conducted with a similar design would provide additional data to see if the findings would be the same or different from this initial study. Future studies would add to the knowledge base in this area of Augustinian education.

A third implication of this study is a proposal for a Level II experience for participants with the purpose of studying how the core values are and can be applied to the pedagogy of the school. The AVI provides a great service in assisting the general school population to define and articulate the meaning of the values and how they might be lived out in the school in a general way. The Level II experience would assist teacher participants to reflect more specifically on their teaching and how their pedagogical practices and theories can be grounded in the three core values. Further discussion and thought about the implementation of a Level II experience would respond to the participants' desire for teachers to have a venue to study and reflect upon how the core values might become more and more a part of their craft as educators in the Augustinian spirituality and tradition.

### References

- Augustine (1997/397). *The confessions*. J. Rotelle (Ed.). (M. Boulding, Trans.). Hyde Park, NY: New City Press.
- Augustinian General Curia. (2008). *Rule and constitutions of the order of St. Augustine*. Rome, Italy: Author.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Allyn and Bacon.
- Christian Brothers Conference – LSJI. (2015). *Lasallian Social Justice Institute*. Retrieved November 27, 2015 from <https://www.lasallian.info/programs-events/lcji/>
- Fincias, F. G. (2006). The Augustinian educational model. In E. B. Berdon (Ed.), *Basic elements of Augustinian pedagogy* (pp. 33–42). Rome, Italy: Augustinian General Curia.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Insunza Seco, M. (2006). The identity of an Augustinian school. In E. B. Berdon (Ed.), *Basic elements of Augustinian pedagogy* (pp. 137–169). Rome, Italy: Augustinian General Curia.
- Ketelle, D., & Swain, C. (2002). *Lasallian leadership institute national evaluation*. Moraga, CA: Saint Mary's College of California.

- Kvale, S. (2006). *InterViews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and design* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Martin, T. F. (2006). The educational tradition in the order. In E. B. Berdon (Ed.), *Basic elements of Augustinian pedagogy* (pp. 209–221). Rome, Italy: Augustinian General Curia.
- McCloskey, G. N. (2006). Considerations and practices of Augustinian pedagogy. In E. B. Berdon (Ed.), *Basic elements of Augustinian pedagogy* (pp. 114–136). Rome, Italy: Augustinian General Curia.
- Murray, R. J. (2002). Effecting a university's mission: The praxis of charism. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 6(1), 49–70.
- Proehl, R., & Suzuki, S. (2009). Transferring social justice initiatives into Lasallian schools. *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 12(4), 457–474.
- Scianna, B. C. (2006). *A history of Cascia Hall Preparatory School: A Catholic, Augustinian school in Tulsa, Oklahoma (1924–2006)* (Doctoral dissertation). Dissertation Abstracts International, 67(02). (UMI No. 32707185)
- Tack, T. (2006). Saint Augustine, student and teacher. Considerations and practices of Augustinian pedagogy. In E. B. Berdon (Ed.), *Basic elements of Augustinian pedagogy* (pp. 15–32). Rome, Italy: Augustinian General Curia.
- Vatican Council II. (1965). *Nostra Aetate* [Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions]. Retrieved from the Vatican website [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html)
- Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

*Stephen J. Baker, OSA, Ed.D. is Assistant Professor of Education at Villanova University. Correspondence regarding this article can be sent to Dr. Baker at [stephen.baker@villanova.edu](mailto:stephen.baker@villanova.edu)*