

STUDENT ACCOMPANIMENT PROGRAM
An Empathy Exercise
for JCAP Workshop Participants

Sacred Heart School – Ateneo de Cebu Junior and Senior High School
19 September 2019 (Thursday), 7:30 am to 12 noon

Rationale and Objectives

In the *Characteristics of Jesuit Education*, we are reminded that “teachers are involved in the lives of the students, taking a personal interest in the intellectual, affective, moral and spiritual development of every student.” Moreover, Ignatian Pedagogy is fundamentally rooted in the *context* of the learners, not just their prior knowledge, but even more fundamentally, their world. Most recently, among the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAP) of the Universal Society of Jesus is “to accompany the youth in the creation of a hope-filled future”: an invitation to listen to the young people and to learn from them.

The Student Accompaniment Program is precisely designed for Ignatian educators to walk with our students on a typical day of their education in order to get to know them personally and to understand their world. The program is yet another expression of the Ignatian value of *cura personalis* which is rooted in empathy. After all, taking personal care of our students is made possible only by a familiarity with them and their context and empathy for the students.

The Student Accompaniment Program also aims to foster understanding of teaching and learning by a teacher accompanying a student for a day. Also known as “student shadowing,” this type of Professional Learning is documented in educational research, exemplified by Margery B. Ginsberg: *Stepping into a Student's Shoes* (Educational Leadership, February 2012 | Volume 69 | Number 5). While Instructional rounds and walk-throughs provide teachers a big picture view of instruction, this program offers the Student Companion an in-depth encounter with a single student not just in the classroom, but outside as well.

Benefits of the Program

- Facilitating conversations between student and teacher
- Observing the relationship of student well-being and learning
- Gaining a new perspective on how a student learns and lives a typical school day
- Awareness of conditions under which students live and empathy for them
- Promotes teachers as learners
- Promotes partnership in learning

Some Guidelines for Implementation

- A diversity of students will be identified for the program. They need to give their consent to be part of it. Students are also told that they are free to withdraw from the program at any time during the morning of the program.
- Students, parents, teachers and administrators are given the necessary information/orientation, and their consent are obtained via letter or email.
- The participants—to be called “Student Companions”—are expected to accompany their designated students for an entire morning: Acting like students, they participate in the class activities and lessons and join them for recess. Classroom teachers are expected to treat the Student Companions in this manner.
- A camera crew will be documenting the activity. The Companions and students are requested to ignore the camera as much as possible.
- The Student Companions will be instructed to observe the students and their classmates, recording their most important observations and insights—e.g., how is the student learning, how is he coping with the workload, etc.
- The Student Companions and students will take lunch together in the workshop venue at 12:13 pm. During lunch, they all take turns for a brief video interview about their experience. Lunch break will last until 1:13 pm.
- The Student Companions will write their reflections down, and these will be shared with the school community and parents, if desired by the administration.

Guidelines for Student Companions during the Student Accompaniment Program

- Take notes on what you observe. Refrain from making judgements about the students or the teachers.
- You are encouraged to participate in the class activities, but please do NOT take the lead or take over.
- Focus your attention on your student and you may want to observe the following:
 1. How engaged are the students in class? How interesting is the class from the student perspective?
 2. How many times and in what way does the student interact with others in class and during the break?
 3. How physically active is the student – (e.g., body language)?
 4. Touch base with the student at the end of each lesson: Does the student feel that s/he learned something valuable? How does s/he feel about the class?

Reflection Questions for Student Companions

- What did it feel like to be a typical student in school this morning? What did you enjoy? What did you find challenging?
- What insights into Jesuit education did you gain from your experience this morning?
- Based on your experience as a Student Companion, how can you become a better Ignatian educator?