

Professional Development Reflection

Igniting the flame of Jesuit Education, by Milan Parab

During our professional development on Friday, November 25th, the faculty and staff of St. Bonaventure's College were asked to participate in an act of compassion and commitment to finalize our immersion in the understanding of the principles of Jesuit Education: Competence, Conscience, Compassion, and Commitment.

I chose to take the opportunity to meet with the board chair, Mr. Jose Rivera of RIAC – Refugee Immigrant Advisory Council. Initially, I struggled with my decision because of the ghosts and memories of my own experience as the son of an immigrant. But, as soon as I had met with Mr. Rivera, I knew that I had made the right choice. He is a man on fire and focused on improving the situations of these newcomers to our province. As a teacher, I'm often caught up in the "talking" of issues in our world and society, but it was time for me to listen to and embrace the stories of these very vulnerable members of our community. And I did. Mr. Rivera explained the struggles of people coming to Newfoundland and Labrador from all over the world, especially with regards to accessing education. He explained that without an adequate knowledge of English then these new immigrants and refugees are not afforded the opportunity to better their position in society. But, he also informed me that there are often roadblocks to education, such as federally and provincially assigned quotas for the English programs at designated sites. Many of these immigrants he explained are already educated and just need to become fluent in the language to be able to apply for jobs. When I asked him how can St. Bonaventure's College assist RIAC, he believed the most effective way for our school to be involved was through students tutoring refugees and immigrants in spoken English. He believed that this social interaction would greatly improve the clients to interact with and integrate into our communities.

At the end of our meeting, I recognized that to be a truly Jesuit educator I must not only inform my students but also lead through action. Much like Mr. Rivera, I needed to set fire to my own spirit and be a living and loving witness and participant in improving the quality of life for all members of our community.