



MENNONITE EDUCATION AGENCY REPORT TO THE CENTRAL DISTRICT | MARCH 2019

Greetings from MEA! In this report, you can get a glimpse of some of the work we do in cooperation with six colleges/universities/seminaries, two Ministerios Hispanos programs, more than two dozen primary and secondary schools in the Mennonite Schools Council (MSC), Mennonite Early Childhood Network (MECN), and others. Some of the activities and initiatives of the past year include the following:

MEA Board Strategic Planning Direction

Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) has identified its guiding values and strategic goals for a “new MEA” that aims to adapt to the evolving needs of education within the Anabaptist and Mennonite context. At a March meeting, the MEA board described the new MEA as “cultivating energy and synergy for the whole of Anabaptist/Christian education by communicating compelling stories, coordinating services and collaborating with partners.”

Some of the goals for the new MEA include functioning in the role of “community collaborator” and bridge builder between schools, the church and world; developing a network of grassroots initiatives to connect experts in MEA-affiliated schools and educational programs with others seeking best practices; and providing training in diversity and intercultural competence on school campuses, including audits and recommendations for growth.

As part of the strategic plan, MEA and its partners — the Mennonite Higher Education Association (MHEA), the Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) and Hispanic Educational Programs (HEP) — are developing a new mission statement and vision statement to more clearly focus and guide their work together. A five-person committee was appointed to propose new statements by July 2019, based around five guiding values: Christ-centered, innovative collaboration, trustworthy relationship, culturally informed and responsiveness. These values were identified through a discernment process with the MEA board, MHEA Presidents, MSC Executive Committee, leaders of HEP and MC USA Executive Board representatives.

The preliminary draft of MEA’s strategic plan that emerged out of the March meeting identified overall priorities and goals. MEA staff, including the recently appointed interim executive director, will add specific initiatives, polish language and share with all stakeholders for feedback and counsel. The hope is

to present a more finalized plan to the MEA board this summer.

This Strategic Direction Plan will guide the MEA as it walks with, empowers, and partners with schools, conferences and educational programs in and beyond Mennonite Church USA. The adoption of the Mennonite Higher Education Church/School Relations Agreement, outlining a new way for Mennonite Church USA to relate, partner and support each other, presents a unique opportunity to look and envision a new future for all. The adoption of the agreement which included a vision for Mennonite Higher Education, the creation of the Mennonite Higher Education Association (MHEA) in conjunction with the Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) going through a process to consider the initiatives that best serve its members schools and the growing Hispanic Educational Programs in Mennonite Church USA and other denominations calls us to re-look at our work. Mennonite Education Agency is looking forward to the development of a strategic plan to best serve and support the needs and missions of our educational partners and Mennonite Church USA.

MEA Leadership transition

The MEA Board announced that Thomas Stuckey of West Unity, Ohio, has been appointed interim executive director of Mennonite Education Agency (MEA). He will replace Carlos Romero who announced at the recent board meeting his intentions to transition out of MEA by the end of the summer. Romero has served as executive director since the formation of MEA in 2002, guiding the new agency's mission to strengthen the life, witness and identity of Mennonite Church USA through education. The appointment of the interim executive director will be followed by the appointment of a search committee to seek a new executive director.