



Mennonite Education Agency 2020 Report to Mennonite Church USA Conferences

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Mission Statement: MEA will strengthen Mennonite education for restorative leadership, work, and service throughout the church and the world.

HIGHLIGHTS: from 2019 – present

COVID-19

This global health crisis has dominated all of our lives this Spring. Although our educational systems, both public and private, have been disrupted, our institutions have risen with grace to provide compassionate leadership during this most uncertain of times. MEA's role during this crisis has been to provide support to the leaders of our Mennonite schools, who are feeling the heavy burden of making tough decisions to close and pivot to online learning. MEA's monthly Prayers for Faith and Learning have offered an opportunity for congregations to join us in praying for our schools in specific ways. We trust in the goodness of our Creator and continue to hold in prayer the students, faculty, and staff across Mennonite education.

Strengthening Hispanic Ministries education programs

A new Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (Anabaptist Biblical Institute or IBA) study center opened in Omaha, Nebraska in August 2019. In November, we celebrated as five students from Mexico graduated from IBA. We are thankful for our creative supporters that help make these successes possible:

- Marco Güete, Director for Hispanic Ministries, and his sponsors raised \$17,695 for Hispanic Ministries during Marco's historic 161-mile pilgrimage on El Camino de Santiago in Spain.
- An anonymous donor challenged our current and former board and staff with a matching donation grant of \$5000, which raised a total of \$10,125 for Hispanic Ministries.

Collaborations at every level: There are strong collaborations and partnerships in place at all levels across Mennonite education, including a Collaborative MBA, Doctor of Nursing Practice, and the *Encounter* Anabaptist faith formation curriculum. MEA is proud to promote these school-led initiatives and hope they inspire similar learning collaborations and innovative partnerships, through both traditional and non-traditional learning opportunities.

MEC 2020: The biennial Mennonite Educators Conference took place February 6 – 8, 2020 at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, Virginia. The theme, “Unleashing Curiosity – Igniting Hope” resonated deeply with the 360 attendees from the Mennonite Schools Council. MEA is thankful for the work of the MEC planning committee to prepare a successful and inspiring event.

Social media webinar: Dr. Curt Bechler led two webinars on social media in February, one aimed at presidents/heads of schools and the other for communications staff. Dr. Bechler, a Goshen College alum, is the managing partner of Venture International and a specialist in crisis management and organizational change. MEA is continuing to look for opportunities to link industry experts with our schools to provide resources and support in key areas facing our schools today.

Building a strong leadership team to carry us forward: Carlos Romero completed his time as MEA's Executive Director in July 2019. We are grateful for Tom Stuckey's leadership, talents, and experience in the interim and ask for your prayers as we seek to build upon this strong leadership foundation.

LOOKING AHEAD

Title IX webinar: Saundra Schuster, J.D., an expert in preventive and civil rights law for education and co-founder of ATIXA, will lead a webinar in the Spring on Title IX. She will also be reviewing the participating schools' policies concerning Title IX and Section 304 of the Clery Act.

Bridging the gap: At the Constituency Leaders Council gathering in October, we heard clearly the urgent call to build relationships between local congregations and students attending non-Mennonite schools. When 80% of Mennonite students aren't choosing Mennonite schools and universities, we feel this call keenly. We are pondering what MEA can do to help bridge this gap.

KEY GOALS FOR 2020

- **Helping congregations provide student aid plans:** We are looking at ways that MEA can partner with conferences and congregations to develop support plans for students from pre-K through seminary studies.
- **Creating a human resources bank:** MEA is creating a human resources "bank" of interested individuals who can help provide much-needed services to our schools.
- **Sustainability:** The MEA board and staff are committed to developing a sustainable financial model by Dec. 2020.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

Earthquakes have impacted two of our partner schools over the past months. On November 26, a 6.4-magnitude earthquake hit Albania, with the epicenter not far from the town of Lezhë, home to Lezha Academic Center (LAC), a Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) International Affiliate. The LAC school building suffered some damage but was able to re-open in January.

Puerto Rico was rocked by series of strong earthquakes in January, which impacted Academia Menonita Betania near Aibonito, also an MSC member school.

Please join us in praying for these communities as they cope with trauma and fear, and for the rebuilding efforts.

*The MEA board and staff thank you for the many ways you support
Mennonite education across the church!*

*Submitted by Tom Stuckey, Interim Executive Director and CEO
March 2020*