

## COMPILATION

# Annual reports from educational institutions and programs

### 1. What are your greatest opportunities for collaboration with Mennonite area conferences?

Member schools of Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) noted ways they provide resources to pastors, churches and conferences: performances by school-sponsored groups (i.e., choirs, theater groups), faculty/staff presentations, training for Sunday school teachers, and events sponsored by the school or cosponsored with conferences. There are also ongoing relationships between conferences and schools with conference representatives attending school meetings (i.e., board meetings) and school representatives attending conference meetings—as a delegate, presenter and/or school representative. A few schools are owned by the conference or a group of churches; a few conferences appoint school board members. Three schools—Christopher Dock Mennonite High School, Penn View Christian School and Quakertown Christian School—worked with Franconia and Eastern District conferences to together develop a strategic plan for Mennonite education in their area.

The Mennonite higher education institutions have both formal and informal partnerships with conferences. Some board members are appointed by conferences, and information from conferences help with institutional planning. The colleges, universities and seminaries collaborate with conferences in many ways. They host and/or cosponsor events for pastors, congregations, conferences and the local community. They provide educational opportunities through degree and non-degree programs, seminars, continuing education events, and online courses. They prepare students for pastoral ministry, lay leadership positions and service assignments. Off campus, they provide speakers, resource persons, and performance groups in a variety of settings. For example, the higher education institutions provided both performance groups and seminar presenters at the recent Mennonite Church USA Convention. Like MSC faculty and staff, the faculty and staff of higher education institutions serve in many roles in congregations and conferences.

Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA) is the Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education office's greatest opportunity for collaboration while presentations at events is Mennonite Early Childhood Network's greatest opportunity.

### 2. What is the greatest barrier to developing stronger mutual support and relationships with area conferences?

The MSC answers to this question are easily categorized into three areas. (1) Financial constraints of both schools and conferences limit what can be accomplished. (2) Another area is time limitations. While they would like to develop stronger relationships, they have a limited amount of time and energy, and their first priority is to keep their institutions viable. (3) Many feel a bias against church schooling from Mennonite church members/attenders and congregations. In some cases they feel this bias is directed more towards MSC schools where sending one's children to a Mennonite elementary and secondary school can often be seen as elitist. For those schools located further away from areas of Mennonite populations, distance and low Mennonite student population were also factors.

The higher education institutions mentioned a variety of barriers: no existing structure or regular communication between conferences and educational institutions, decline in denominational loyalty, increasing inward focus of both groups, lessening authority of pastors, budget restraints, cost of Mennonite education, geographic distance, and less support for a diversity of viewpoints.

### **3. What can MEA do to help strengthen the relationship between educational institutions and conferences?**

Over and over, MSC schools mentioned the importance of communication—through publicity/story-telling, dialogue, networking, and face-to-face interaction. Schools value any help from MEA to open communication among MSC schools and Mennonite higher education institutions, and with congregations and conferences. They also want MEA to communicate more about the value of Mennonite education with families, pastors, church leaders, congregations and conferences. Several mentioned how important it was for MEA to communicate about the missional role that schools have in the Mennonite Church. A few also mention finding ways to subsidize the cost of Mennonite education.

The higher education institutions recommended that MEA be an advocate for needed change, i.e., structural connections, to facilitate events/opportunities to interact together, to actively promote Mennonite education on their behalf, to lobby for leaders of higher education institutions to speak at Mennonite Church USA related events, and to foster more direct communication. One institution felt a better balance was needed in the promotion of higher education institutions versus MSC schools. The youth census, the Faculty Calling Project, and the appointment/development of board members were affirmed while also requesting that these MEA tasks be strengthened.

### **4. How has your institution/council/program connected with area conferences and congregations to discern educational needs?**

MSC schools have consultations and official meetings with pastors and other church leaders regarding curriculum, programs, institutional planning, tuition assistance, and possible collaboration. School representatives attend conference events, visit congregations, and provide Sunday school teacher training. Many schools hold regularly scheduled events for pastors, and several have pastors or congregational representatives on their boards and/or Spiritual Advisory Committees.

The president, faculty and staff of Mennonite higher education institutions have been invited and taken part in events for pastors, congregations and conferences. Colleges, universities and seminaries have also invited pastors, congregations and conferences to events held both on and off campus. They have met with conference leadership and pastors in person and on the phone. They have collaborated on events, programs, curriculum and scholarships. The Ministry Inquiry, the Church-Leader-In-Residence and Pastor-In-Residence programs encourage much successful collaboration.

### **5. What can you and MEA do together to discern educational needs?**

MSC schools requested that MEA should continue and increase ways it already supports the schools: bridging the different levels of Mennonite education, accreditation, networking opportunities, resourcing, and on-site consultations. Several also mentioned that they appreciated how MEA provided the broader church perspective and kept the mission of church in the forefront. A common request of MEA related to some form of research via data collection or surveys although the focus of the research varied from documenting the benefits of Mennonite education to an analysis comparing Mennonite population numbers and attitudes toward Mennonite schools to enrollment numbers. The schools thought that MEA and they could discern

education needs by being available to each other, communicating openly, and listening more intentionally to discover why Mennonite education options are or aren't chosen. A few schools mentioned that together, the Anabaptist education viewpoint could be further formed and then used to train teachers.

Higher education institutions provided a variety of ways: advocate for those educational institutions who experiment with new models, continue to search for potential Racial/Ethnic faculty, promote how the church needs its Mennonite educational institutions, continue meeting in higher education institutional affinity groups, use research instruments to discern educational needs, engage more with pastors and conference leaders to discover what Mennonite youth are looking for in a college, and advocate for the presence of educational leaders at more Mennonite Church USA meetings.

## **6. What resources and training opportunities are you offering to area conferences, congregations and members?**

In addition to providing a quality education to students who attend local Mennonite congregations, MSC schools provide choirs, music and theater groups for worship services; share educational resources and facilities with congregations for free or at a reduced rate; and coordinate choirs, sports and camps for children from the school and the community. Teachers and staff serve in their congregations and conferences, and some preach or do presentations at churches. Many schools offer Sunday school teacher training/events and other educational opportunities such as parenting workshops.

As mentioned above, faculty and staff from higher education institutions serve as speakers, provide resources, and lead performance groups in a variety of settings. They provide a quality education through on and off campus courses, continuing education, workshops, retreats, community support groups, touring music groups, online devotions and many more ways.

## **7. If you like, include a few paragraphs about notable events or milestones (of any type) for your institution/council/program in the past year.**

### ***Mennonite Schools Council***

Accreditation-related (*Christopher Dock, Philadelphia, Warwick*)

Anniversary (*Hopi – 60<sup>th</sup>, Sarasota – 50<sup>th</sup>*)

Cross-cultural interaction (*Eastern - Honduras, Iowa – Poland, Lake Center – Dominican Republic*)

Faculty/staff development (*Eastern, Penn View*)

Student mentoring program (*Bethany, Christopher Dock*)

New courses/curriculum (*Bethany, Hopi, Lancaster, Peace & Justice, Penn View, Quakertown, Sarasota, Warwick*)

New remodel or location (*Eastern, Hinkletown, Lancaster, Peace & Justice*)

Other new educational opportunities (*Bethany, Eastern, Lancaster, Penn View, Quakertown, Warwick*)

### ***Higher education institutions and educational programs***

Accreditation-related (*Goshen*)

Celebrations (*Goshen, Hesston, HPLE*)

Hosting outside groups (*AMBS, Bethel, MECN*)

New facilities (*Bethel, EMU, HPLE*)

Changing programs/curriculum (*AMBS, EMS, EMU, Goshen, Hesston, HPLE*)

Presidential transition (*AMBS, Bethel*)

Special speakers (*Bethel, Hesston*)

# COMPILATION

## Reports from Mennonite Church USA area conferences

### 1. What are your greatest opportunities for collaboration with Mennonite institutions (PreK to seminary)?

#### *Interacting with institutions*

- Relationship with MSC school(s) in the area (official and unofficial)
- Relationship with local Mennonite college/university/seminary (official and unofficial)
- Interacting with representatives at their annual conference meetings

#### *Using resources*

- Inviting persons from college/university/seminary to preach or teach
- Encouraging youth to participate in youth programs offered by Mennonite educational institutions
- Hiring graduates of Mennonite educational institutions

#### *Promoting Mennonite education*

- Encouraging youth to visit/attend Mennonite institutions
- Providing scholarships
- Recruiting and supporting pastors/church leaders in seminary
- Distance education/continuing education for pastors
- Joint pastoral training events

### 2. What is the greatest barrier to developing stronger mutual support and relationships with Mennonite institutions (PreK to seminary)?

#### *Realities*

- Distance from Mennonite educational institutions
- Budget too small to pay for educators to travel to conference's geographical area or for students to travel for training
- Sometimes working at cross purposes or competing for the same resources
- Lack of parental interest and support of college choices
- Congregationalism
- Lack time and energy to collaborate

#### *Perceptions*

- Lack of money to attend Mennonite educational institutions (can also be a reality)
- Definition of missional and whether that means staying in the public school system
- Less value on Anabaptist/Mennonite educational perspective (sometimes apathy)
- Don't trust the Mennonite educational institution
- Not willing to take the risk to collaborate

### **3. What can MEA do to help strengthen the relationship between educational institutions and conferences?**

#### ***Participation***

- Come to delegate sessions.
- Come to annual conference meetings.
- Visit congregations in our conference.
- Send faculty and staff to resource congregations.
- Develop ongoing relationships.

#### ***Services***

- Communicate regularly.
- Share how Mennonite educational institutions at all levels prepare students to “more fully engage God’s mission in the world.”
- Subsidize Mennonite students who attend Mennonite schools.
- Partner with congregations who provide matching grants.
- Provide conferences with training materials that strengthen Anabaptist identity.
- Continue to provide cooperation and coordination of Mennonite educational institutions at all levels.
- Coordinate the translation of educational materials into Spanish.
- Provide accurate, up-to-date statistics.
- Create educational policies that benefit conferences.

### **4. What are specific tools, skills and knowledge that you need from Mennonite education to help you accomplish your conference’s missional goals?**

#### ***Tools***

- Offer homeschooling materials/resources.
- Translate English educational materials into other languages.
- Provide accurate, up-to-date statistics.

#### ***Skills***

- Engage Mennonites not in the primary Mennonite populated areas and offer resources.
- Provide more development and training in Anabaptist/Mennonite/missional thought.
- Offer leadership training/pastoral education that doesn’t require travel/relocation.
- Hold workshops/events in areas not as heavily populated with Mennonites.

#### ***Knowledge***

- Remember that Mennonite educational institutions and conferences can learn from and support each other (two-way).
- Educators available to speak in congregations
- Graduates trained in conflict mediation incentives to work at conferences
- Graduates who return to work in their community/conference of origin

**5. How has your area conference connected with Mennonite institutions (PreK to seminary) and education-related programs to discern educational needs?**

- Publicity of Mennonite educational programs
- College visits sponsored by conference youth minister
- Provision of grants/scholarships
- Educational events arranged by conference minister
- Conference members are board members, teachers, professors, and staff.
- Conference office is located in Mennonite educational institution facilities.
- Meetings/consultations to discern educational needs
- Interaction at conference gatherings

**6. What resources and training opportunities have you accessed from Mennonite educational institutions (PreK to seminary) and education-related programs?**

- Members participate in programs for youth.
- Members attend Mennonite education institutions.
- Continuing education opportunities for pastors
- Preaching institute
- Matching grants
- Collaborated on curriculum/courses
- Instituto Bíblico Anabautista program
- Invited educators to preach or teach
- Use of facilities