

October 31, 2017

## Teacher Training Committee report to the Federation of PR School Societies

Greetings to you all! We are thankful for the work and effort of all of our school board members and of the Federation Delegates who are taking part in this meeting.

This is the first report of the Teacher Training Committee since the committee was authorized in the fall of 2016. After accepting the position of Managing Director in mid-January, I assisted the TED Committee with the recruitment of the TTC members. Our members include Joel Langerak our president, Kyle Bruinooge (Teacher member), Nathan Vis (Heritage Chr. High Dyer) and Brendan Looyenga (Heritage Chr. School Hudsonville), who are members-at-large, and Duane Huisken (Redlands) who is our technology consultant. The mandate given to the TTC included a research phase and operations phase. At this point in time we are still very active in the research phase. In this first report, I would like to review our activities to date, and point to the work that we would like to concentrate on in the months ahead.

We were able to schedule our first meeting on June 17 to allow for all the members to be personally present in the Board room at CCHS. This was a lengthy meeting that allowed us to become acquainted with each other, share our personal vision and commitment for the work, and lay some basic groundwork for proceeding to work as a committee. We felt that it was very important that we were all on the same page in terms of what we see as the need and how we can best achieve our goals. It was a great meeting. Reflecting afterward, I was very thankful for the group that has been assembled. I can assure you that the committee that was put together is an extremely talented, dedicated, and insightful group of men that all have the interests of our teachers and our schools in their minds. Not only are the members diverse in skills but they also represent a broad geographical area served by our schools.

Since our initial meeting in June, we have had meetings on August 8 and October 12. In the time between meetings there has been a great deal of email communication as we have worked on various documents, information gathering, and projects. We have taken some time to get to know the history of the PRTI and the Federation and have attempted to understand the relationship between these two organizations and how we can relate our efforts to each.

After our first meeting, we spent a good deal of time working individually on developing mission statements. Once everyone was able to share their own version, we did some combining of thoughts and produced a draft. This draft was then discussed at our second meeting and a final draft was put together and approved at our last meeting. We present that statement of Mission, Vision, and Goals for the TTC for information at the Federation meeting.

Areas of focus in our meetings and our online conversations include various ways that we believe new teachers and prospective teachers can be assisted in their growth and development. The areas that we feel strongly about and hope to develop into a comprehensive training program proposal for your consideration and approval in April 2018 are the following.

First, we see great value in developing a mentoring program that will pair a young teacher with an experienced teacher as a mentor. The goal would be to work through an intentional program addressing key points in the application of Reformed principles to the work of a teacher in the classroom. This would lead to discussion of principle issues as well as practical, every-day issues that arise in the life of a teacher. It is our desire, when possible, to also extend this mentoring program to include those who are student teaching. We are beginning to discuss the program that would be followed and the format in which this mentoring could take place. We want to be able to have good relationships develop and to have a specific itinerary as the basis for discussions between mentee and mentor.

Second, we are committed to having the History and Principles class remain a vital part of the training program and have discussed this with Professor Dykstra. We have three main thoughts regarding this class. We would like to be able to offer it as an online class so that it can be available to teachers where they are and when it fits into their schedule. Even though the course would be online, we still would like to have some personal contact and discussion involved. We would also like to add a more practical component to the course that would prompt the participant to develop applications of the course principles to their work in the classroom (History, Principles and Practices). And finally, we would like to see our teachers be able to receive college credit for the class.

Prof. Dykstra is willing to work with us on the matter of bringing the course online, but he believes that it would be better for an experienced teacher(s) to develop the practical component. On the third point, the committee is working to develop contacts in some of the Christian colleges in an attempt to get our courses recognized for credit within broader degree-granting programs. This would allow the course to be used by our teachers as they work toward their continued certification or advanced degrees. Our work in this area will be to determine how we can best expand the scope of the History and Principle course with the addition of the practical component and to determine how it can be reformatted for online instruction.

Third, we would like to work toward the development of other course material that will assist all teachers to grow in their ability to know and to apply a confessional Reformed worldview to the subjects that they teach. These materials would explain the relationship of worldview to course content and to pedagogical methods that teachers use to teach and manage their classrooms. We are beginning this effort by looking at what other organizations similar to ours have to offer and by seeking input from Protestant Reformed teachers and administrators via online surveys. In connection with the development of course material, we are working to identify a teaching platform that will be flexible enough to meet the needs of teachers regardless of their geographical location, time zone, or personal schedule. We are studying the methods used by other religious school groups that are already accomplishing this goal for their teachers, many of whom are using online delivery as an effective instructional strategy. The two main tasks within this area will be to determine where we should place our emphasis in terms of course development and how we can deliver these courses to those who need them.

Fourth, we would like to see the PRCS.org website become the “go to” place for all of the work of the TTC as well as the launching point for many of the teacher activities. We believe that the website can function very well for us but is currently underutilized. We will work with Mike Vander Veen, the Federation web master, to include all of our work and report our progress.

Finally, we believe that there is a need to publicize our work to the teachers and the broader church/school community in a very positive manner. We do not want to do this until we have a firm grasp of the main direction of our work and have plans to begin the implementation of some of the projects. In the meantime, we would like to use the PRCS.org website as the main vehicle for our communication. We also hope to organize a teacher training conference that would be open to Board members, teachers, and parents alike in the near future.

To assist us further in our work we have been in contact with Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College, which we plan to visit this coming spring. This organization (located in Hamilton, Ontario) currently achieves many of the same goals within the Canadian Reformed community that we hope to address for the PR schools, and will be an important source of information for our committee going forward.

At the time of this report the TTC has two requests for the Federation. First, we would like to ask the member school boards to encourage the participation of their teachers in the research work that is currently going on, particularly the online surveys that have been sent out. Second, it is very well possible that we may want to commission some work to be done by teachers in the summer of 2018. This could include the development of a mentoring framework and the development of course materials. Funding for this would have to be approved by the Federation in your budget which will be set in the Fall of 2017. We would like to ask you to consider the potential needs that may arise and perhaps set some funds aside for a use that could be approved in the spring. The dollar amount of \$10,000 to \$15,000 was suggested by the Committee.

Overall, I believe that the work of the Committee has been solid to this point. Ground work has been laid for good things to come. A brief look at the survey results from teachers seems to indicate that we are going in the right directions with our ideas and our plans. We hope to post the results of the survey on the website once we are confident that everyone has participated. (As of 10-30-17 we have 115 responses from 212 possible.) We continue to be excited about the work. We look forward to bringing specific proposals to the TED Committee and sharing more information about our work with the teachers and the school/church community.

In the service of Christ our King,

Rick Noorman  
Managing Director, TTC