



Dear Federation member schools,

April 2016

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with feedback concerning the Teacher Training Concept Plan the TED Committee has been investigating. We have spent considerable time reviewing the questionnaires we received from many of you. Your insights are crucial to our investigation.

“Seeking ways and means for a more thorough training of teachers and prospective teachers in Christian principles” is one of the four explicitly stated purposes of the Federation (Art. 2-A in the Constitution). The TED Committee’s rationale for advancing the Teacher Training Concept Plan is found specifically in this point. With such grounds, we are confident the TED Committee’s work over the past fifteen months is legitimate and needs no further grounding.

With that said, it is apparent that *how* this purpose is to be realized becomes the great challenge. The concept plan we’ve put on the table offers a viable solution to fulfilling article 2-A of our constitution. Because it is only a concept, it is only meant to serve as a vision for what is possible. In other words, it is a guide as the Federation continues to find ways and means for a more thorough training of teachers.

In light of this, the TED committee does not see wisdom in presenting a *turn-key* program that can be voted on by the Federation delegates this coming Fall. No organization is born in a mature stage and we don’t expect a teacher training program to follow this course. We expect it to advance slowly in small steps.

You will see in our agenda and attached documents, we will review the Q & A developed from our recent survey. Our answers to the questions posed are not binding. They are only possible answers as we see it today. We are comfortable with this position because our goal for the Fall 2016 delegate meeting is *not* to come with a precise proposal on a formal teacher training program, but rather to come with a proposal to form a Teacher Training Committee (TTC). Upon this committee will fall the burden of bringing a Teacher Training Program proposal to the Federation Delegate Board which will likely be accomplished in small steps and segments as the assumed program grows and develops.

It may seem backwards to articulate and develop a concept plan and then formulate a committee to construct a plan. It isn’t, however. We think the value of the concept plan is that it reveals to our member schools that a Teacher Training Program is a possibility and it can take on a legitimate form. The form we’ve articulated in the concept plan is, we believe, a worthwhile one to follow.

This is a bold step forward in the direction of providing a thorough training program for Protestant Reformed teachers. We realize it will take time to develop, and time to grow. But the time to take this step is now. The opportunity is here. Let’s ensure the next generation of teachers and schools remain strong and deliberate in their task to educate and train our children and grandchildren. There is strength in unity, so let us take this step together.

The TED committee of the Federation

Q & A

1. What will we actually be voting on?

- We want approval to establish a Teacher Training Committee (TTC). The chief purpose of the TTC will be the establishment, maintenance and development of a teacher training program for Protestant Reformed teachers. Further details and working parameters of this committee would be part of the proposal brought to the Fall Delegate Meeting.
- Once the TTC has completed its work, the Federation Delegate Board will then review and vote on the program they develop. Our concept plan will serve as a vision for this committee.
- In light of this, our answers to the questions below are not binding. As the proposed TTC works develops this program from concept to reality, they may arrive at different answers to the questions below.

2. Will this qualify for state certification credits?

- We will make every effort to ensure they do. For reference, our *History and Principles of Reformed Education* class in Iowa last year did qualify for Iowa certification credits. Our goal is to ensure such credits will be available in all the states where our schools exist. Further investigation would need to take place in regards to our Canadian schools.

3. Can courses be taken ala carte?

- The ultimate purpose of this program is to develop our teachers intentionally and in a timely manner into distinctively Reformed teachers. If an individual is only able to take one course, we see no reason to deny that. With that said, we intend to only grant a diploma of completion to those individuals who have completed the entire program.

4. Are qualified men available to serve on the new board? (many are already serving in other capacities)

- We think there are qualified men available. Whether they are willing to serve is to be determined. With advanced communication technologies available, we don't see why members on the TTC couldn't come from across our member schools. This would open up the pool and also encourage many valuable perspectives. For reference, one of our TED committee members lives in Randolph and he has very effective involvement on our committee even though he communicates via the internet.

5. Will this have to be enforced by all school boards to be successful?

- We assume this question is referring to the idea that school boards will be forced to hire only candidates who have completed this program of study. We aren't convinced this will be necessary or even fully desired. There are good ways to incentivize prospective or new teachers.
 - If a prospective teacher has already taken this program of study, that candidate should have a strong leg up over candidates who have not taken it or have no

desire to take it. In this sense, it is in the candidates' best interest to take this program of study or to be committed to taking it shortly after hiring.

- We would encourage school boards to structure their pay scale so as to reward teachers who have completed this program of study. This would incentivize teachers to take this program of study. Many schools already demonstrate a willingness to do this by offering higher pay for teachers with Master's degrees and some even penalize teachers who do not keep up their state certification by reducing their salaries. Each school could do this in a manner that best fits their needs and resources. There are ways to do this without adding to the overall budget.
- Allow for release time in the early years to help the young teacher find time to complete the program requirements and communicate with peers and mentor teachers.

6. Who will hold this organization accountable?

- The Teacher Training Committee (TTC) would hold the Teacher Training Program accountable. For reference, the Protestant Reformed Seminary is held accountable for their day to day work by the Theological School Committee (TSC) which is made up of qualified individuals. The same governing structure would be modeled in the TTC. The TTC would ultimately answer to the Delegate Board of the Federation via the TED committee.
- Our concept plan also calls for a paid Director who would provide the day to day managerial and leadership demands this program would entail. The Teacher Training Director would be a member of the TTC and provide regular reports. He or She would carry out any decision made by the TTC or the Federation as it pertains to the Teacher Training Program.

7. What will the format be, as this concerns Western schools?

- It is too early to provide an exact plan, but as stated in our concept plan, it will likely take on various different formats. Although there will be one central location which houses the program, it will be imperative for the success of the program to offer a format that is portable. We want to have the ability to deliver the training anywhere. That is a great priority of the committee. Equally important is our ability to provide quality instruction. Accessibility must be coupled with quality. Some possibilities include regular classes held in a brick and mortar location, online courses, summer workshops (possibly held in various communities if possible), teacher's convention workshops and on-site mentorships.

8. Could we get a representative from the TED to visit each school and discuss? (For western schools, face to face is more ideal than Skype)

- We are open to this. As this would involve time and expense, we would ask each member school that desires a visit to formally request it.

9. What does "Master Teacher" mean (in reference to page 12 in the Concept Plan)?

- Our use of the term "Master Teacher" in the concept plan refers to a teacher who has demonstrated quality work in their field and has been in their position for an

Supplement A

appropriate amount of time. The TTC would determine the guidelines for what constitutes a Master Teacher.

- The word *master* does not refer to a teacher with a Master's degree.

10. We would like some answers to the "challenges" posed in the concept plan. - how much will it cost? How much extra workload for teachers? Enforcement? Procuring the right people?

- We understand that these challenges pose legitimate concerns for schools, so we will answer them as best we can from the TED committee's perspective. With that said, these are only possible answers. Like any organization, once it has been given life it doesn't follow a linear path to maturity. Therefore, it is impossible to determine exact solutions to inexact challenges that may or may not arise. But here are some thoughts as we see it today:
 - Cost: We would have to cover the expenses of a director, instructor's salaries, materials, and occupancy. We have no accurate way to determine what these expenses will be this early on, and, therefore, do not want to propose a number. But it is worthy to note that if each school contributed only 1/2% of their annual budget to this endeavor, we would have over \$50,000 in revenue for operating the Teacher Training Program.
 - Extra Workload: This would depend on how the TTC decided to best structure the program. A likely scenario could be 1 semester course (3 months) per year during the school year and 1 mini-course (2-3 weeks) during the summer and 1 or 2 workshops during the teacher's convention. We also would like to develop a mentorship with new teachers that will help them their first year or two. If school boards considered offering "release time" for these teachers, the workload would be especially manageable. Depending on how many courses we offer, this could be a 1, 2 or 3 year program. Hopefully, we will be able to offer choices on the length of program depending on the needs of the student.
 - Enforcement: See question above.
 - Procuring the right people: There are qualified individuals to supply us with instructors and a director. We have talented and intelligent people in our circles. Whether or not they are willing is to be determined.

11. How flexible will the format be?

- Answered in questions above.

12. How extensive will the requirements be?

- Answered in questions above. We anticipate moving forward slowly. Maybe the program starts out with only a few courses. As time, resources, and demand allows, we hope to add more.

Supplement B

Additional information gathered from questionnaires

In December 2015, the TED Committee sent out a questionnaire to each member school. We did this for two reasons: 1.) provide the TED Committee with valuable input from all the member schools, 2.) help facilitate Board discussion on the matter of teacher training.

Through this questionnaire, we gained valuable information which helps the TED Committee as we investigate a Teacher Training program. We thought some of this information would be of interest to our member schools.

- In order to ensure the school remains true to her distinct mission and purpose, the most effective polices and/or practices utilized were listed as follows (in no particular order)
 - Board observations/oversight 4 schools
 - Administrator observations/oversight 4 schools
 - Teacher meeting discussions 2 schools
 - Interviews 2 schools
 - Hiring Protestant Reformed teachers 2 schools
 - Written polices and curriculum guidelines 1 school
 - Mentorship from experienced staff 1 school

- What are the most effective methods utilized to ensure teachers are trained so that they best serve your distinct mission and purpose?
 - Administrator oversight 5 schools
 - Attendance at Teacher's Convention 3 schools
 - Mentorship from experienced staff 3 schools
 - Board observations/oversight 2 schools
 - Teacher meeting discussions 2 schools
 - Attendance in Federation's History and Principle's class 1 school
 - Preaching 1 school
 - Hire Protestant Reformed teachers 1 school

- When asked if you think teachers, especially new hires, might need further training in Protestant Reformed educational distinctives, we received 3 categories of answers.
 - Yes: 5 schools
 - No: 2 schools
 - Did not provide a clear answer: 3 schools

