

ITEM B.201
FOR INFORMATION

EDUCATE A CHILD, TRANSFORM THE WORLD CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Educate a Child National Initiative:

The Educate a Child Initiative Domestic Staff Team has met several times to date. Staff members include Alonzo Johnson (point person), Sara Lisherness, Ginna Bairby, Bryce Wiebe and consultant, Eileen Lindner. Thus far, the team has strategized ways to excite and engage churches within our denomination to be faithful, creative, and diligent in acknowledging and responding to the current crises in U.S. education, many of which are given further analysis in *Loving our Neighbors: Equity and Quality in Public Education (219th General Assembly, 2010)*. Our emphasis and support of public education recognizes not only current social witness policy, but also the value and importance of education in the entire Reformed heritage of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Staff agreed that the domestic component of the *Educate a Child, Transform the World* initiative would center around two major foci: (1) strengthening early childhood education, and (2) working to reduce the dropout rate of adolescents. Central to this discussion is Jesus' mandate to care for all children. The Staff Team explored Luke 17:2 as an appropriate entryway into theologically addressing the issue of education. The scripture reads: "*It would be better for you if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble (NRSV).*" This text instrumentally reminds us of the church's responsibility to attend to the educational needs of all children, through advocacy and action, so that they may live lives of self-determination. The goals for the Educate A Child National Initiative are as follows:

- In concert with the global expression of this initiative, reach one million children at home and abroad, with practical strategies for the improvement of their educational opportunities, focusing especially on children who are poor. We will give witness to a coherent and effective Christian mission response to contemporary educational needs in ways that maximize the unique capacities of individuals, congregations, and the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Using the metric of one million children, we will assess in four years the extent to which this initiative has enabled children to live the lives for which they were created.
- Recover a sense of advocacy for children as a central example of Christian life and witness within the PC (U.S.A.). This advocacy will consist of two main foci: to strengthen early childhood education, and to work to reduce the dropout rate of adolescents. As such, we will seek:
 - a. To elevate the quantity and quality of early childhood programs offered in and by Presbyterian congregations.
 - b. To develop highly replicable strategies for the retention of the maximum number of young people in secondary education through effective engagement with the multiple and complex reasons for a high national dropout rate.
- To identify, elevate, celebrate, and encourage the replication of the best congregationally-based strategies. Via electronic and social media, animate a vigorous national conversation and fellowship

among Presbyterians regarding how best to live out this mission to children as a demonstration of the hope of the Gospel.

- Discover, call, engage, and train leaders of all ages and regions as advocates for the education of children and enable their engagement with other such networks, both secular and religious.
- Give voice, born of concrete community experience, to national public policy debates around educational issues and funding and facilitate engagement in state and local reform efforts in public education.
- Support congregations as they collect the Pentecost offering, seeking to foster a deeper sense of stewardship of the 40% of the offering that remains with congregations, using it to train and equip leaders in their midst for the mission of education and to invest in the education of those children most at need in their local communities.

The Staff Team continues to witness great interest, energy, and potential in animating this initiative. Today, 64% of out-of-home childcare in our country takes place in church-owned facilities. Church analytics show that our denomination's pastors, elders, and members view education as a denominational priority (second only to evangelism). We interpret this to mean that alongside great need in America's children, there is great interest, receptivity, and passion in our church, which is ready to be called to advocacy and action. Therefore, we are set to launch this initiative, which led us to take the following steps:

- Staff Team met with several leaders from across the denomination to engage them and assess buy-in and foster invaluable contacts with key constituencies in the PC(USA). Our conversations included members of Presbyterian Women, the Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators (APCE), and an urban ministry/education innovator. The initiative was incredibly well-received; conversation participants were excited and expressed great interest and willingness to support and promote this work. A PowerPoint presentation by consultant Rev. Eileen Lindner was valuable in underscoring the high favorability of the issue of education in our denomination. Encouraged by these initial conversations, the Staff Team is also developing strategies to reach out to other key constituencies within the church including YAVs and alumni/ae, colleges, racial ethnic populations, PHEWA etc.
- The Staff Team has met with PMA communication strategists (March 9) to beginning developing a communication plan that will create engaging and exciting widespread media awareness of the *Educate a Child* Initiative. There is a possibility that a short video will be created for presentation purposes. The video will highlight the initiative and lift up congregations or ministries that are already engaged in the work of education.
- A website is being developed that promotes the initiative by providing helpful resources and opportunities for networking, leadership/congregational training tools, and "best practice" information that will equip and resource congregations, ministry leaders, groups, and individuals interested in education. The website will also lift up existing ministries within our denomination that are already doing work in the field.
- The Staff Team entered an *Educate a Child* themed workshop for the next APCE national gathering to be held in Chicago 2016.
- In partnership with World Mission, the Staff Team has developed a plenary session for this year's Big Tent Conference that will emphasize the great value and transformative character of this initiative while highlighting both the global and domestic dimensions of the initiative. Rev. Janet Wolfe of the

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Children's Defense Fund has been chosen and confirmed as the speaker for the domestic component. Rev. Wolfe is a longtime child advocate and can speak authoritatively and prophetically to the issues of poverty, inequity, and incarceration as they relate to education. In the same plenary session, World Mission members will likewise offer a speaker to address the international component. Moderator Heath Rada and Former Moderator Rick Ufford-Chase will also help lead and facilitate the plenary. The Domestic Staff Team is also developing a workshop that will specifically address the domestic initiative and offer hands-on and practical opportunities for people to engage this initiative.

- The Educate a Child Initiative Staff is working on a summer training event (projected for July).
- Rev. Lindner is working closely with Special Offerings to highlight and uplift the Educate a Child Initiative, which will assist congregations in using the funds they retain locally to be involved in education in their own communities.

Further Reading, from the PC (U.S.A.)'s online social witness journal *Unbound* (justiceUNBOUND.org):

- Eileen Lindner - <http://justiceunbound.org/carousel/into-the-words-recalling-our-history>
- Raymond Roberts - <http://justiceunbound.org/carousel/our-theology-of-public-education/>
- Duncan S. Ferguson - <http://justiceunbound.org/carousel/the-centrality-of-education-in-the-reformed-tradition/>
- Marian Wright Edelman - <http://justiceunbound.org/carousel/the-cradle-to-prison-pipeline-americas-new-apartheid/>
- *Other relevant articles can be found at <http://justiceunbound.org/journal/pedagogy-for-the-distressed/>*

Educate a Child Global Initiative:

Following the launch of the Education Campaign at the 221st General Assembly in Detroit in June 2014, education-related projects of Global Partners have been promoted and aligned with interests of U.S. individuals, congregations, presbyteries and mission networks.

Presentations on the Global Education Campaign have been made at/to:

- the New Wilmington Missions Conference, PA
- the Congo Mission Network meeting, the Guatemala Mission Network meeting, the Malawi Mission Network meeting, the Sudan mission network meeting, the Zambia, Zimbabwe Mission Network meeting.
- to mission co-workers in Latin America and the Caribbean, El Salvador
- Presbyterian churches in Sacramento, CA; Louisville, KY; Bloomington, IN; Bloomsburg PA; and Charlotte, NC
- Baltimore, National Capital, New Castle Presbyteries, Northumberland and Huntingdon Presbytery, Pacific and Sacramento Presbyteries

A facebook page has been developed for “PCUSA World Mission: Addressing the Root Causes of Global Poverty” with a focus on education issues. A “Global Poverty Blog” has also been initiated to stimulate discussion.

Following the General Assembly announcement of support to the South Sudan Education and Peacebuilding Project (SSEPP), by Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis (lead donor), 19 additional gifts were received during 2014, totaling \$530,600. Activities in that project have included:

- Strengthening the management capacity of the education department of the Presbyterian Church of South Sudan (PCOSS)
- In-service teacher training sponsorship at the Yei Teacher Training College
- School assessments and collaboration with communities and government departments
- Mobile teacher training and mentoring
- Support for mission co-workers: Leisa Wagstaff, Lynn and Sharon Kandel and Nancy and Shelvis Smith-Mather

Activities of the WM Poverty Alleviation office planned for the coming months include:

- Formalization of an Global Education Advisory Committee
- Presentation to the Ethiopia Mission Network

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- Visits to PCUSA Global Partner education programs in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Malawi (with further development of campaign activities in both countries)
- Presentation at the Christian Connections for International Health (CCIH) Conference on Ending Extreme Poverty
- Presentation at National Black Caucus annual meeting
- A webinar on African Presbyterian Partner education projects
- Presentation at the PW Church-wide Gathering in Minneapolis
- Presentation on WM Education campaign at the PMA Big Tent event
- Attendance/presentation at Egypt Partnership Network & Malawi Mission Network

In addition, education-related, project proposals are being developed together with World Mission Area Coordinators and several Global Partners in each region of the world.