

*“The Door of Mercy rests on the threshold of need.
Its single key is kindness, which is always in the lock.
Mostly the Door of Mercy stands ajar.” (Mary Wickham, RSM)*

Dear Partners in Mercy Education,

In a spirit of collaboration and accountability with you, we wish to share the highlights of the First Official Meeting of the Mercy Education System of the Americas (MESA).

Our opening reflection was focused upon the opening prayer of the recent Sixth Chapter of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. This was a verse from the poem by an Australian Sister of Mercy noted above.

Core to our reflections was our understanding of our role and desire to help build a system of relationships with all of you. The spirit of the process was centered around our values of hospitality and kindness.

Our initial formal gathering followed six months of orientation, including our monthly meetings. Thank God for technology!

The content of our time together gave witness to our belief and commitment in working closely with the Mercy Education System of the Americas Staff and the member of the Institute Leadership Team. The four Office Staff Personnel were present with us and participated in our reflections and general overview of this new initiative.

We had the opportunity to formally meet with the Institute Leadership Team for reflection and sharing regarding our mutual communication moving forward, our role as servant leaders, and our responsibilities to be in partnership with you, our Local Board Chairs and the Heads of School. Central to this sharing was our reception and dialogue regarding the documents presented to us by the Institute Leadership Team. These included: a Formal Statement of Catholic Identity, an Ethical Decision-Making Process and the establishment of an Ethics Committee, initiated among the Sisters of Mercy Institute Leadership Conference. The charge given to us as the Board was to engage in self-reflection, education and dialogue about the content of these documents in preparation for bringing them to you in March, 2018 at the Annual Leadership Forum.

Our format for internal services among the Board will be addressed through our five Standing Committees: Executive, Stewardship, Finance, Policy and Procedures and

Nominating. Additional committee membership will hopefully be met through our open invitation to serve. The Mercy Educations System of the Americas Office Staff will facilitate this process and the ongoing working tasks on the Board on our behalf.

Looking ahead, it is our hope to directly communicate with you following each of our face-to-face meeting sessions in October, March and July of each year.

We want to assure you of our deep joy in walking this journey with you. We ask that in a spirit of hospitality, we hold one another in prayer as all of us give witness to the Mercy ministry of governance in the name of our educational ministries.

Gratefully in Mercy,

Sr. Richard Mary Burke, RSM