

Service of the Poor

The Founder and his first Brothers understood from the beginning that “The purpose of this Institute is to provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry which the Church has entrusted to it.”² Throughout DENA there are very many inspiring examples of ongoing financial support for, and service with people from the lower socioeconomic strata. At the same time, it is difficult to see how the mission to be in “service of the poor” is being realized given the financial realities of many Lasallian institutions. There is also an awareness of the many other supports that are necessary for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to thrive.

- The survey responses and focus groups produced positive ideas for enhancing this area.
- They also raised questions and hopes regarding DENA’s role in offering a coordinated and concerted social justice stand via advocacy, curriculum, and a fundamental rethinking of what it would look like for DENA’s schools and agencies to engage with children and adults who are among the last, the least, and the lost.
- The awareness of an ever increasing economic imbalance, lack of job opportunities, urban poverty, marginalization, and the effect of these circumstances on youth in particular must become an integral part of the Lasallian mission to be on the side of those people who live with the consequences of such realities.

The **strategic priority** is to create a bold, compassionate and practical Lasallian vision, on the District level and on the local level, of what it means to serve “especially the poor” having looked critically at existing practices and assessed current needs.

Goals & Preliminary Tactics for DENA:

- **Affirm and challenge the ways DENA ministries live out the five core principles of Lasallian education in addressing persons from the lower socioeconomic strata of society.**
 - Disseminate information and stories regarding the ways that ministries currently serve those who are economically poor.
- **Develop and adopt an advocacy role for DENA within its mission to be especially for the poor.**
 - Encourage attention to Catholic social teaching in curriculum and service activities.
 - Assist Lasallians to learn and practice Catholic social teaching as a catalyst for advocacy and systemic change.
- **Focus awareness on schools and agencies that experience difficulties and require support in securing their future.**

² The *Rule* of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, article 3. This also composes the principal vow of the Brothers “... wherefore I promise and vow association for the service of the poor through education ...”
