



## The 2018-2021 Strategic Plan

*Working together and by association, the Brothers with Lasallian Partners provide a human and Christian education to the young, especially the poor, according to the ministry entrusted to them by the Church.*



30 April 2018 (*the birth of Saint John Baptist de La Salle*)

Two thousand nineteen marks the 10<sup>th</sup> birthday of our District of Eastern North America. As we prepare to move into our second decade the Brothers, through the Second District Chapter of the District of Eastern North America (2015), thought it prudent to assess DENA's growth and chart a course for our future. The result is a strategic plan for the next three years that is summarized in this letter and detailed in the accompanying pages.

Building on our District's position of strength, and intent on procuring God's glory, I offer a **BASE** on which we will create our future. Each letter of that acronym designates an area of emphasis for which there is a strategic priority as indicated below:

**B**rothers' Vocation—embolden all Lasallians to take an intentional role in the promotion of a culture of vocations to the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

**A**ssociation/Formation—increase access and opportunities for all Lasallians to participate in Association/Formation programs.

**S**ervice of the Poor—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.

**E**vangelization—incorporate more deeply the ministry of evangelization into the responsibilities of those in governance, teaching, and administration, and also into the everyday life of students, clients, and their families.

Input from more than 1,000 people informed the work of the Strategic Planning Committee since that group's initial meeting in June 2017. I am encouraged by the involvement of so many Lasallians via focus group conversations, survey participation, Community Annual Plan worksheets, and committee discussions. The Spirit is indeed alive in our midst!

Let us move forward together on behalf of the young people entrusted to our care as we respond to the needs of DENA and of our society.

May our Founder, Saint John Baptist de La Salle, guide us as we continue on our journey!



Brother Dennis Lee FSC

Visitor

## Background Information

The Second Chapter of the District of Eastern North America (2015) unanimously approved the following resolution:

*DENA Leadership (Visitors and Councils) shall appoint a committee and engage a consultant to lead the District in a comprehensive strategic planning process; a report and preliminary plan be due to District Council in January 2017 and the plan finalized for the first District Council meeting in the Fall of 2017.*

The Chapter recognized that the needs of the District in the areas of mission, community, and religious life are dynamic and many external factors in the Region and Institute impact DENA.

Furthermore, the Chapter approved the Directional Statements proposed by the 2015 Mission Assembly that established the three areas of Evangelization & Catechesis, Service with the Poor through Education, and Living the Charism in Association for Mission.

Early in 2017 it was decided to adjust the timing to line up with the term of the next Brother Visitor and so the strategic planning process began in June 2017. It was also decided that the time frame for this plan would be the 2017-2021 term of the Visitor. Brother Dennis Lee, the incoming Visitor, invited ten other persons to the committee which was comprised of:

- Thomas Casey FSC - Auxiliary Visitor, DENA
- Joseph Juliano FSC - Director of Administration, DENA
- Matthew Keough - Principal, Christian Brothers Academy – Syracuse NY
- Sarah Laitinen - Director of Lasallian Programs, RELAN<sup>1</sup>
- Jaime Longo PHD - Executive Director of Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning, La Salle University
- Jeffrey Mancabelli - President, St. John's College High School
- James Martino FSC - President, Ocean Tides School
- Marisa Passafiume - Assistant Vice President, Academic Success Center, Manhattan College
- Benjamin Ventresca, Jr. - Board Chair *Emeritus*, La Salle College High School
- Anne Kemp - Consultant/Facilitator, Berkeley Developmental Resources

It was recognized at the start of the planning process that several elements of strategic planning are being addressed in recent financial structures, organizational structures, and the Brothers' physical & pastoral needs. The primary concern for the current planning process is the ongoing viability and vitality of the Lasallian mission and charism as it relates to both Brothers and Partners-in-Mission. It is understood that the plan is a "District as a whole" effort and that the principal outcome is to answer the question ***"How can DENA support each ministry in fulfilling the Lasallian mission?"***

The committee reviewed the aforementioned District Chapter resolution as well as the Mission Assembly Directional Statements and synthesized the data into four categories: Brothers' Vocations, Association/Formation, Service of the Poor, and Evangelization.

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<sup>1</sup> RELAN = Lasallian Region of North America

## ***Process & Stakeholder Participation***

The committee met monthly since June. At every step along the way, they reached out to Lasallians in ministries and at the DENA office to engage them in helping to fully understand what has been accomplished in the past and the current issues that most need to be addressed through the strategic plan.

Sub-committees were formed to address each of the four categories. Exploration of each area began by inviting the participation of a number of people who collectively brought historical knowledge, best practice, and practical issues they are facing into the conversations.

This process was followed by a series of focus groups and an online survey. The focus groups were conducted at the following events/locations:

- DENA Brothers' CAP (Community Annual Plan)
- Brother Luke Salm Workshop
- John Johnston Institute
- Christian Brothers Academy – Syracuse NY
- St. John's College High School
- Brothers in Initial Formation
- La Salle Academy – Philadelphia PA
- Huether Lasallian Conference

Focus group attendees were very engaged and enthusiastic in their participation. The survey was accessed by over 500 persons.

## ***Criteria for Determining Strategic Priorities***

The Committee also discussed the criteria that would inform the decisions about priorities of the plan:

- Responses to the world/needs around DENA
- Stakeholder readiness in ministries
- Important progress for DENA's mission and purpose
- The Visitor's vision and priorities
- DENA has the resources to support next steps

## ***Priorities and Goals & Tactics for DENA's Strategic Plan 2018-2021***

For each of the four categories (Brothers' Vocation, Association/Formation, Service of the Poor, and Evangelization) the strategic priority for the next three years is identified. Key goals and tactics are articulated. While the planning and stakeholder engagement process produced a significant number of needs, hopes, and ideas that could be assessed or implemented in the short term this plan seeks primarily to address those of strategic importance.

## Brothers' Vocations

The survey showed that 60% of respondents are comfortable inviting young people to be open to God's call. But less than 30% feel they are in a position to speak with young people about a religious vocation, especially the Brothers' vocation. The challenge is to create a system of supports e.g. involvement of Brothers, education, and resources, that will help those in contact with young people to be attentive and supportive in conversation with a person who is discerning a vocation.

- The value of seeking candidates beyond high school age is acknowledged. A personalized approach is desirable in such circumstances.
- The role of parents in planting and nurturing the seeds of a religious vocation is important.

The **strategic priority** is to embolden all Lasallians to take an intentional role in the promotion of a culture of vocations to the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

### **Goals & Preliminary Tactics for DENA:**

- **Articulate and contextualize the call to be a Brother within the larger understanding of the concept of vocation by promoting a culture of vocations to the Brothers of the Christian Schools in our various ministries.**
  - Formulate a core curriculum for students regarding vocations, specifically to the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
  - Develop and offer formation and orientation programs (workshops, retreats, classrooms) for students, teachers, counselors, parents, chief administrators, and Board members that focuses on vocation promotion as well as information/explanation pertaining to discerning a vocation to the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
  - Employ social media as the preferred method of communicating the stories of Brothers, their ministry, their consecrated life, and their impact on society.
- **Broaden our sphere of influence by inviting and engaging college aged men in the vocation discernment process.**
  - Initiate and develop a program to reach out to college aged men.
  - Employ social media as the preferred method of communicating the stories of Brothers, their ministry, their consecrated life, and their impact on society.
- **Broaden our sphere of influence by inviting and engaging post-college aged men and young professionals in the vocation discernment process.**
  - Initiate and develop a program to reach post-college aged men and young professionals.
  - Employ social media as the preferred method of communicating the stories of Brothers, their ministry, their consecrated life, and their impact on society.

## Association/Formation

The provision of educational programs and experiences is intended to familiarize and unite people in the Lasallian story and imbue in them the Lasallian spirit. The strategic planning processes and stakeholder engagement revealed some important insights:

- For most who have experienced or been exposed to Lasallian schools, Association is understood principally in the context of a quality education and the corresponding Lasallian approach to pedagogy. Some also appreciate and include the importance placed on responding to society's needs. In general, far fewer would recognize and include the theological/spiritual underpinnings of the movement established by Saint John Baptist de La Salle.
- The fulfillment of the vital role of Animator is challenged where the person is overloaded with other ministry responsibilities.

The **strategic priority** is to increase access and opportunities for all Lasallians to participate in Association/Formation programs.

### **Goals & Preliminary Tactics for DENA:**

- **Afford opportunities to encourage and facilitate alumni/ae of the major District, regional, and international programs to share their learnings and contribute post-program to relevant projects in their local ministry and beyond.**
  - Nurture the networks established by each program through resources, apps, and social media.
  - Solidify some of the more localized geographic links e.g. joint professional development days with local Brothers as key participants.
  - Engage with Chief Administrators around the importance of their support to Association program alumni/ae who are prepared to bring lessons learned and relevant projects back to their ministry.
- **Compose a District-wide curriculum involving Lasallian history, pedagogy, and spirituality for various constituencies (including Trustees, new hires, parent groups, and students and clients served at the middle school, high school, and tertiary age levels).**
  - Contribute to and access the digital library of Lasallian resources maintained by the San Francisco-New Orleans District.
- **Foster and energize Lasallian vocations.**
  - Use the power of personal invitation to engage all Lasallians in activities pertaining to Lasallian Association programming.

## 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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.**

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<sup>2</sup> 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 ...”

## Evangelization

The following definition of *evangelization* has been crafted by the Strategic Planning Committee. It accompanied the survey and focus group questions.

*Evangelization is the process by which we as Lasallian Catholics, moved by the Holy Spirit, proclaim and bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ into every human situation. It calls for our own continued receiving of the Good News as well for us to continually invite those who have not yet heard the Gospel, or those who have lapsed in their appreciation of the Gospel, or those who have developed a relationship with God through another religious tradition, to better develop their knowledge of God.*

- The survey showed that while half of the respondents are comfortable discussing the Lasallian mission in an evangelization context, the remaining half are split between those who are not comfortable and those who are not aware of the mission enough to speak about it.
- The word evangelization means different things to different people. Not all of these things are regarded positively e.g. how is it different from proselytizing?
- A diversity of faith traditions and belief systems are represented by the persons involved in Lasallian schools and agencies. Lasallian spirituality is rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as articulated by the Catholic tradition; it involves helping others to see, accept, and understand God in their lives while maintaining respect for each person's stance regarding the transcendent.
- The challenge of promoting Lasallian evangelization is best shouldered by everyone involved in Lasallian schools and agencies.

The **strategic priority** is to incorporate more deeply the ministry of evangelization into the responsibilities of those in governance, teaching, and administration, and also into the everyday life of students, clients, and their families.

### **Goals & Preliminary Tactics for DENA:**

- **Develop and encourage the use of programs, webinars, presentations, and materials to broaden the understanding of Lasallian evangelization, of the presence of God across diverse faith traditions, and of our Lasallian mission to infuse the Good News of Jesus into the lives of people we touch.**
  - Establishing a “hiring for mission” program/series that includes orientation plans and materials pertaining to evangelization for new employees and Board members that can be adapted by ministries of all types.
  - Developing and offering interfaith programming including a world religions program, webinars, direct interaction with other faith leaders/members, and digital modules for short personal formation and reflection.
  - Creating a digital library of Lasallian and other texts related to evangelization and background on other faith traditions.
- **Inspire ministries to promote a tradition of Lasallian evangelization among all members of their community.**
  - Sharing “success stories” of other ministries.
  - Endorsing and supporting ministry efforts to strengthen and increase ministry-based time in spiritual reflection.

- Optimize the impact that Brothers and Legacy Lasallians, especially those who are not in active ministry, can make on an individual ministry's ability and commitment to develop a tradition of Lasallian evangelization within its community.
  - Identifying potential roles that would provide a visible presence to ministries in many capacities e.g. mentors, tutors, participants in prayer life and hosts to students in Brothers' community life.
  - Identifying potential candidates for this type of service.