

# Teacher Mentors Abroad



ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 2020





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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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It's been a challenging yet remarkable year.

Teacher training and educational leadership development has been Teacher Mentors Abroad's core 'business' since our first workshops in 2005. However, the pandemic brought new meaning to professional development when educators accustomed to being in a classroom with students, found them in a virtual environment. For many, it was unfamiliar or totally new territory.

Currently, public schools in the Dominican Republic (DR) remain closed, with plans to open on November 2 and 95,000 Dominican teachers are receiving 3 months of training in virtual teaching/learning. The pandemic awakened the country's pressing need to provide internet and computer access to rural and impoverished areas.

At TMA we unknowingly positioned DR mentors for such a time as this. The year began with training at both Santo Domingo and Santiago sites that included introducing virtual platforms. A month later we offered a symposium that showcased the mentors' leadership skills to senior education officials and institutions. Weeks later COVID-19 changed everything.

Although summer programs were then cancelled and a national election resulted in major changes at the Ministry of Education, people were undeterred in their focus. Our Program Committee has moved to virtual modalities and will continue their work in this fashion in 2021.

The accompanying reflections tell how Dominican 'change agents' are all the more committed to their mission of improving the quality of education in their nation. Thank you to our volunteers, our retiring Treasurer Tim Geissberger, our partners and donors. Your generous support permitted us to not falter in the midst of this pandemic. It is you who make change possible and give hope to teachers and their students desiring quality education.

Gracias de todo corazón. Thank you with all my heart.



Nancy Threan Loraine  
President

# REFLECTIONS

## Adapting to our Changing World

2020 has been an interesting year. Our program committee is continuing to virtually work with and support the mentors in the Dominican Republic. Denise Taylor-Edwards keeps in touch with the mentors through WhatsApp. She can get a pulse of the situation in the Dominican Republic by participating in conversations with the mentors on the app. We created posters for our Dominican mentors with inspirational messages during isolation and Wendy Chan put them together and sent them as a video. We are posting teaching strategies, educational articles and websites weekly to share with our Dominican mentors. We are currently planning for a virtual conference for summer of 2021. We are in the early stages of the planning but are all very excited. Lots to look forward to in 2021.

**Janet Giberson** Ret. York Region DSB      Co-Chair Program Committee



The TMA experience has been gratifying for allowing me to acquire skills to help students be self-sufficient and able to respond to the current demands that we are living in which their educational development is growing independently with guidelines that we provide them. Likewise, through TMA, I have been able to help my co-workers have an ally in the development of their work strategies. Infinite thanks for allowing me to be part of your work.

**Juan Francisco Rodríguez**  
Santiago



It was a great experience and a great challenge, as I helped some of my colleagues with the use of tools and platforms so that they can teach their classes successfully. I learned to teach remotely, to my students and colleagues, and to provide social-emotional support to both the children and the parents. I am concerned about the lack of equipment and connectivity of some very low-income students, as I could not work with them virtually. At the request of parents we developed guides, content and printed assignments for students who did not have access and others who were in isolated quarantine because they and their families were positive for COVID\_19.

I've strengthened my technical and digital skills and acquired skills in tools that I did not know such as the Moodle platform. The strategies and methods of TRIBUS (Tribes resource) helped me considerably. I implemented strategies I learned in the TMA workshops in a virtual way with the children through learning by playing. I've learned how to listen in silence, know and implement the Teams tools to teach at a higher level, organize the strategies and skills to make the most of time and classify the content sequentially.

**Xiomara Agramonte**

La Vega

## REFLECTIONS



I learned that crises can turn into opportunities and that we should never underestimate the student, much less limit them or think that perhaps they will not

be able to do it, because in this situation I could see how far we humans are capable of going, even when it seems that we have a lot against and little in favour. I learned the added value of PERSEVERANCE and persistence, but above all, I learned on my own, to handle a platform that I had not even heard of, it is CLASSROOM from Google.

The symposium was an unprecedented event in my experience and I saw it as a 'seal' that consolidated both my commitment with my educational community and of course with TMA.

**Carlos Martinez**      Santiago

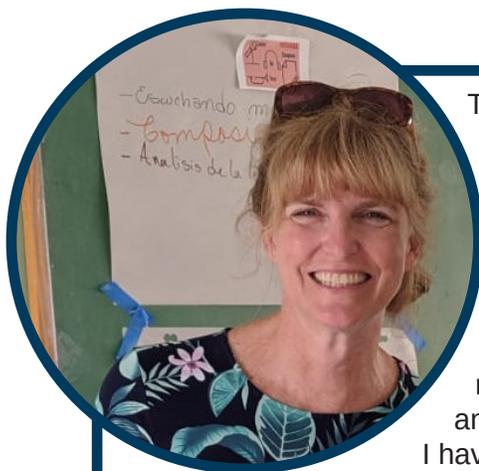


Our meeting with mentors from Santiago and Santo Domingo (at the symposium) was a highlight of this year.

If we unite and break the negative paradigms and help each other, this cooperation will result in the integration of all (students). Already, we put together ideas and organized plans that helped us in the closing programs of the school year

I've learned: To face the challenges of the moment; To empower myself despite the circumstances; Give the best; and To better utilize technology. As for TMA's role in supporting us as mentors; we learn through practice and experience and with their very wise contributions as they always collaborate with us. (TMA) has been more than enough, because right now everything is new.

**Leonisia Sosa**      Santo Domingo



This past summer was to have been my 7th TMA Conference in Santo Domingo, but March came and the world went into quarantine. As teachers, both in Canada and the Dominican Republic, we found ourselves teaching in a completely different way than before.

We heard what our colleagues in DR were going through while trying to connect with students using tech and trying to help students stay on track. The same was happening here in Canada. While I struggled to teach from a distance, I was reminded of the resourcefulness of our Dominican colleagues and kept their stories and experiences in my mind when feeling defeated.

One thing that I have repeatedly learned from the DR colleagues over the years is that they want the same education experience for their students, providing them with opportunities to be successful and to be contributing to their society. I look forward to whatever the TMA Conference looks like in the future as we continue to grow as teachers supporting the future leaders.

**Beth Buchanan**      Thames Valley DSB

# REFLECTIONS

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**Yissel Bautista**

Personally, this experience (the pandemic), even though it was very difficult, allowed me to grow as a teacher and become tech-savvy since it gave me the opportunity to learn to use new tools and technological resources, making my classes different and innovative for my students.

“A school of tribes is a community that learns”, this idea has marked me a lot in this process of pandemic and virtual classes, since due to the same situation we have all had to work as a team of teachers, administrative personnel, students and parents, to be able to finish the school year in the best possible way, allowing each of us to learn new things.

**Santiago**

## **Symposium: Excellence & Equity, How to Achieve Both**

Santiago-February 20, 2020

The event exceeded my expectations and I must say that convening a group of that level has inspired us and filled us with hope. I have fallen in love with the mentoring team and can think of a number of ways we can get involved in future projects.

Thank you very much for your trust in us, we are very happy with the process and happier still with the results. Congratulations to each and everyone involved, what an honor to work together for a better nation.

### **Mariolisa Piña Duluc**

Education Coordinator

Eduardo León Jimenes Cultural Center

Santiago, Dominican Republic

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**Patrons, monthly contributors, event organizers, advocates, volunteers, teachers, friends and family...muchísimas gracias, a huge thank you for partnering with us to support this meaningful work.**

**A very special thank you and acknowledgement of the outstanding work of our Director of Communications & Donor Relations, Adrienne Grant, without whom we would not have achieved the financial stability that enabled us to continue our work in the midst of the pandemic.**