

National Lutheran School Accreditation Glossary of Terms

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National Lutheran School Accreditation

Mission Statement

National Lutheran School Accreditation encourages, assists, and recognizes schools that provide quality Christian education and engage in continuous improvement.

Glossary of Terms

Accredited in Good Standing: An accredited school in good standing demonstrates compliance with required standards and indicators of success and is committed to continuing school improvement.

accredited school: A school that has been granted accreditation by NLSA.

Accredited School Exemplary Status: An Exemplary Accredited school exceeds compliance with NLSA standards, demonstrates leadership through innovative vision and is dedicated to sharing best practices within the educational community and other Lutheran schools.

administrator: An individual charged with the responsibility of carrying out the day-to-day operations of the school. The administrator carries out the policies developed by the board. Includes directors, principals, superintendents, lead teachers, etc.

appropriate state certification: Every state certifies professional educators (primarily teachers and administrators) for specific responsibilities at school. Educators need certification that is specific to the ministry they provide (administrators should receive administrator certificates, early childhood educators should receive certificates that are appropriate for early childhood education, elementary teachers should receive elementary certificates and so forth).

authorized personnel: Individuals allowed access to student files, including teachers, nurse, principal, pastor, school secretary, and teaching support staff.

candidate status: The status of a school that has submitted its Self-Study Report to the NLSA office and/or a Visiting Team has been appointed.

child care: Any program that provides child care for children. Includes full-time care, drop-in programs, Mothers' Day Out, extended school care, infant care, and day care.

consultant: An individual appointed by NLSA to assist the school through the self-study process, including the preparation of the Self-Study Report.

curriculum: What the school plans for students to learn at the school. Usually written as objectives or outcomes of what students are expected to know, believe, and/or be able to do as the result of the schooling process.

developmentally appropriate/age appropriate: Activities, goals or objectives included in the educational process which are designed to meet the needs and abilities of children of a specific age or developmental level.

dual accreditation: Accreditation received jointly with NLSA and some other agency that is in partnership with NLSA or for which there are reciprocal agreements.

early childhood center: A school that includes child care and/or educational programs for children aged 3 and 4. May include kindergarten, infant, and/or toddler programs. May be part of an elementary school.

elementary school: A school which includes one or more of grades one through four. Nearly always includes other grades and serves other ages also. Most often included at least preschool through grade six.

exemplary accredited: An Exemplary Accredited school exceeds compliance with NLSA standards, demonstrates leadership through innovative vision and is dedicated to sharing best practices within the educational community and other Lutheran schools.

Exhibit: Written documentation that provides evidence of school quality and compliance with NLSA standards.

extended school care: Caring for children who attend school before and/or after regular school hours. Includes latchkey and before and after school care.

financial plan: A written document that provides projections of income and expenses for at least three years, based on sound, realistic assumptions, that will ensure continued financial support for the school to achieve its goals.

freestanding: A school not attached to another level of school. A free-standing early childhood center is not operated by a congregation that operates an elementary school.

“in process”: The status of a school that has made application for NLSA accreditation and is in the process of completing the self-study process.

indicator of success: Another word for “benchmark”; a criterion for helping to establish whether or not a standard has been met.

Levels of Accreditation: Accredited schools are organized into three distinct categories depending upon their qualifications. The levels of accreditation are: Accredited in Good Standing, Accredited School Exemplary Status, and Provisionally Accredited School.

LCMS roster: Individuals who have been certified by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a Minister of Religion Commissioned or a Minister of Religion Ordained (Called teachers of pastors).

Lutheran school: Any school operated by one or more congregations more than three hours per week. Preferred over “day school” or “Christian day school” (Lutheran Christian seems redundant). May include child care, infant and toddler programs, early childhood developmental centers, and kindergartens, as well as elementary, middle and secondary schools.

learner outcomes: The objective of a school is to help students to learn. Learner outcomes, similar to objectives, specify what students are expected to know or be able to do as a result of the education process.

major deficiency: Any condition that is based on an NLSA standard which has a severe negative effect on the quality of education, the ministry of the school, and/or endangers the health and safety of the school population. The deficiency must be remedied by the school within the time parameters (no longer than two years) prescribed by the visiting team.

management procedures: The operational actions and decisions made by the administrator or staff on a day-to-day basis. These are in agreement with any existing policies.

mandatory: Required, without question or exception; non-negotiable.

Met in Full: The indicator of success has been completely accomplished by the school. It is easily verifiable through evidence and documentation.

mission statement: A short statement (25 words or less) that expresses the purpose of the school.

Mostly Met: The indicator of success has been partially accomplished by the school. Documentation and evidence regularly indicates that the school is well on the way towards full accomplishment of the indicator.

needs assessment: A process of using objective and subjective means to identify needs which, when filled, will benefit children at your school. A needs assessment answers the question, “What needs improvement at your school for your students?”

Not Presently Met: There has been no progress demonstrated by the school towards the accomplishment of this indicator of success.

operating congregation: Refers to whatever entity functions as the supporting parish of a school, whether it be one or more parishes or an association of parishes.

permanent cumulative records: Most schools maintain records of students throughout their attendance or enrollment at the school. These are kept for the duration of the child’s enrollment and usually for several years afterwards. They typically are kept in a file in the school office and provide a permanent record of grades, health, growth, behavior, and so forth.

policy: A board decision that directs future actions of the administrator and other school staff.

professional staff: Paid employees of a school (congregation) who have responsibilities for education.

provisional accreditation: A provisionally accredited school fails to comply with required standards or indicators of success and/or has been cited with major deficiencies by the visiting team. The NAC may change the status of any accredited school to provisional as a result of non-compliance with current policy guidelines.

Provisionally Accredited School: A provisionally accredited school fails to comply with required standards or indicators of success and/or has been cited with major deficiencies by the visiting team.

RSO: Recognized Service Organization. Service organizations officially recognized by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

school community: Includes any individual or group participating with and interested in the school, such as: teachers, support staff, administrators, students, parents, pastor(s), and pastoral support staff, board of education, supporting congregations, or association members. May refer to the geographical location in which a school is located.

short-range goals, long-range goals: Short-range goals are accomplished in two years or less. Long-range goals are accomplished in three or more years.

standard: A degree of excellence required for accreditation.

state mandated programs: In some states specific programs (i.e. driver education, physical education, sex education) may be required for all schools including private schools.

statement of philosophy: A brief statement of belief that is rooted in Holy Scriptures and is in agreement with the Lutheran Confessions. It states what Lutheran school leaders believe about the role of that school as it serves children, families, and the operating congregations.

student growth: Positive change as defined by the school in spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

subject: A field of learning. Elementary school subjects include but are not limited to: art, music, religion, physical education, arithmetic, language arts (English, reading, writing, spelling, composition, speaking and listening), social studies and science. Subjects for young children sometimes are reworded (“Jesus time” instead of religion or “reading readiness” instead of language arts) but usually are broader (units of study that include aspects of several elementary subjects) and describe the type of activity (science center, listening lab, housekeeping area, computer, sand table, sorting center). Subjects in high school are usually narrower than elementary subjects (biology, physics, algebra, American history, composition, photography) or given more sophisticated titles (theology).

Synodical Handbook: This publication by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod includes the constitution and bylaws which synodical members have agreed to follow. Bylaw 5.61 and 5.65 require all commissioned ministers (teachers on the LCMS roster) to attend official conferences of their LCMS district.

vision statement: The desired future for the school that is imprinted on the hearts and minds of the leaders so that it impels planning and helps govern all decisions related to the school program.