



September 1, 2020

Dear Colleagues in Christ,

The annual meeting of the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) National Accreditation Commission (NAC) was held July 29 to affirm Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) schools and conduct the business of NLSA. Minutes from the Membership and NAC meetings will be posted on LuthEd.org in September.

The National Accreditation Commission acted on the following items:

1. NAC awarded accreditation to **38** schools bringing the total number of accredited schools to **671**. Formal letters affirming accreditation were sent to each school the first week of August.
2. It was affirmed that the NLSA annual fee will remain at \$650 for the 2020-2021 school year during the extended time of the pandemic. Please note that the fee freeze is for one year and will increase to \$700 for the 2021-2022 school year as affirmed by NAC in 2019.
3. It was affirmed that NLSA will offer a Pandemic Extension to schools with Validation Team Visits scheduled for the 2020-2021 school year (including schools that are currently working with an extension). Applications for the extensions will be considered beginning November 1.

Please note the changes in the application process:

- Schools must have a district approved NLSA Application for Accreditation on file in the national office before applying for a Pandemic Extension.
- Schools are required to submit a hard copy (print or email) of the Pandemic Application, accompanied by a rationale for the extension request and a written report of the school's progress with NLSA, to their district office for approval and district signatures.
- The district education executive approves (or denies) and submits the application to the national office.
- The national office convenes the NLSA executive committee for review and final approval.
- Schools approved (or denied) for the Pandemic Extension will receive written notification from the national office. Updated accreditation certificates will be sent to schools approved for the extension.
- Fees for the 2020-2021 Pandemic Extension are waived.
- The Pandemic Extension Application will be accessible to download on LuthEd.org beginning November 1.

4. A process for conducting a Virtual Validation Team Visit was affirmed by NAC. Please note that schools are urged to complete a face-to-face Validation Team Visit when at all possible. The following conditions for a Virtual Validation Team Visit follow:
 - Work is underway for a Virtual Validation Team Visit Process Manual and Virtual Team Captain Training to be made available in September.
 - Schools that have completed two accreditation cycles with Accreditation in Good Standing are eligible to apply for a Virtual Validation Team Visit.
 - Schools approved for a Virtual Validation Team Visit must follow the prescribed process.
5. It was affirmed that the annual recognition of “Schools of Distinction” as an accreditation status will be discontinued.
6. It was affirmed that 9 Powerful Practice webinars will be offered for 2020-2021. The webinar series is composed of 4 schools from the past year that were not able to present webinars and 5 schools selected for the current year.

2019-2020

- Open Arms Lutheran Child Development Center, Alpharetta, Ga.: *Staff Position – Focus on Faith Development*
- Trinity Lutheran School, Springfield, Ill.: *Eight Elements of Success*
- Salem Lutheran School, Tomball, Texas: *Community Outreach Involvement Program*
- Zion Lutheran Early Childhood Center, Hinsdale, Ill.: *Reggio Emilia Inspired Early Childhood Education*

2020-2021

- Our Shepherd Lutheran School, Avon, Ind.: *Project Approach and Multi-Age Classrooms*
 - St. John Christian Preschool, Dublin, Ohio: *Serving an International Community*
 - St. John School, Ellisville, Mo.: *Personalized Learning Program*
 - St. Paul Lutheran School, Fort Worth, Texas: *Student Counseling Program*
 - St. Stephens Lutheran School, Hickory, N.C.: *English and Language Arts Learning Communities*
7. An NLSA Membership Committee and Accreditation Review Process was affirmed to accomplish the following:
 - Assure a thorough process of review and approve accreditation status recommendations.
 - Address the increased number of schools that the commission reviews each year.
 - More fully involve all district commissioners in the review and approval process.
 - Change the name of the “Membership Committee” to the “Candidate Review Committee” to reflect the responsibilities of the committee.

8. It was affirmed that the proposed changes to the NLSA Appeal Process Policy are enacted.
 - The school may make a written appeal of the recommendation of the Validation Team to the District Accreditation Commission (DAC).
 - Should the appeal be denied, the school may appeal the DAC ruling to the Executive Committee of the National Accreditation Commission. The Executive Committee's decision is final.
 - The school or the DAC may appeal a ruling of the National Accreditation Commission (NAC) for its reconsideration at the next NAC annual meeting. The reconsidered ruling of the NAC is final.

9. A progress report was provided for the Armature Online Submission Project noting the following:
 - Phase One was completed and Phase Two is underway.
 - The initial data migration phase is completed.
 - The budget for Armature was provided.
 - A timeline for completion was shared.

10. A progress report was outlined regarding the preparation of the following Validation Team Member Training Materials:
 - Validation Team Member Manual
 - Validation Team Training Resources for Consultant, Team Captain and Team Member

11. Changes in NLSA protocols will be incorporated in the NLSA documents and posted on LuthEd.org on September 1.

12. It was affirmed that the NLSA NAC will conduct a business meeting in December 2020 to award schools that must have accreditation by December 31 and address recommendations from districts regarding NLSA.

13. The following members of the executive committee will serve in the coming year:
 - Chairman – Keith Wilharm, NID NLSA Commissioner
 - Chairman Elect – Joel Wahlers, CNH Asst. to the President: Education & Congregational Support
 - Secretary – Matthew Schleicher, Texas NLSA Commission Vice Chair

We thank the NLSA executive committee, Membership Committee and the National Accreditation Commission for their dedicated work on behalf of schools.

In His Service and yours,



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