

National Lutheran School Accreditation
Early Childhood
Validation Team Report
Revised September 2021

Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center
Golden Valley, Minnesota
April 24-26, 2022

Bonnie Stottlemyer – Team Captain
Emily Anderson
Cheryl Haun
Lisa Johnson
Sean Martens
Rebecca Schmidt
Kim Wuebke



FOREWARD

Becoming accredited is a strenuous process. The school and its administration are highly commended for their efforts in this ongoing accreditation process. The preparation and the arrangements for the Validation Team were well done. It is the hope and prayer of the members of the Validation Team that the enclosed document is accurate and helpful for the continued improvement of Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center.

The members of the Validation Team express sincere gratitude to the administration, staff and community of Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center for the opportunity to serve on the Validation Team and for the kindness shown during the visit.

Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center is a good program. This was reflected not only in the Self-Study Report but also in the comments and observations of the Validation Team. The school effectively represents the Christian faith and values not only to its children and families, but also to the surrounding community.

The Self-Study Report is carefully written and includes specific recommendations to be considered seriously by the school and all constituents of Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center and its sponsoring congregation, Golden Valley Lutheran Church. Not every suggestion must be followed, however, each is to be considered and addressed in follow-up reports, specifically the annual ongoing cumulative report submitted to the school's district office.

The report was written collaboratively and edited by the Validation Team with minor editing completed by the Team Captain. The report reflects the talents and expertise of all team members. Wherever possible, specific and practical recommendations were made to help address concerns.

The Team Captain, Team Members and the Consultant pledge their continued support and assistance in the implementation process and look forward to hearing about and/or seeing the progress of the School Action Plan.

May the Lord richly bless the staff and constituents of Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center so that with the power of the Holy Spirit they might continue to proclaim His Gospel ever more effectively to the children and families they serve.

In His Service,

Bonnie Stottlemyer
Validation Team Captain

DISCLAIMER

Limitations on the distribution, use and scope of this document.

It is the official intent of the National Lutheran School Accreditation Commission that this report is considered a privileged document, to be submitted by the Team Captain of the Validation Team directly to the administration of the school. The distribution of the report and its availability for public consideration rests solely in the hands of the school administration.

Neither the Team Captain nor the other members of the Validation Team are authorized to release any of the information contained in this report without the approval of the administration of the school.

The primary purpose of the Validation Team was to examine the educational ministry of the school, including curriculum, learning materials, student needs and interests, staffing and facilities. The Validation Team assessed the effectiveness of the total school program in meeting the educational objectives and National Lutheran School Accreditation Standards.

It is not the purpose of the Validation Team to evaluate individual teacher performance. The use of this report as an official assessment of any staff member's professional competency is a violation of the process and is not the intent of the school evaluation. Such use is inherently invalid since at no time during the Validation Team Visit was the team concerned with the evaluation of individual teacher performance.

The Validation Team and the Validation Team Report assist the school in its own process as a guideline for continuous growth. Neither the team nor the report is presumed to be the authority for validating any claims regarding health, safety or personnel issues. Such matters are the sole responsibility of the school.

VALIDATION TEAM MEMBER BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Emily Anderson serves as the administrative assistant, athletic director, and 7th-8th language arts teacher at Immanuel Lutheran School – Silo in Lewiston, MN. Emily has a Master’s Degree in Education, with an emphasis in administration, from Concordia University – Nebraska. She is proud to have taught in a variety of different single and multi-grade classrooms ranging from first grade through eighth grade including five years as a school principal as well. Her experience with NLSA began in 2013 as a team member. Emily is the Commissioner for Accreditation for the Minnesota South District and enjoys the privilege of visiting many Lutheran Schools.

Cheryl Haun holds certifications in Elementary and Early Childhood Education in Missouri and Illinois. She completed the Education Specialist Degree at Webster University with an emphasis in Educational Leadership. She serves as an Early Childhood Consultant for the Missouri District and part-time adjunct professor for Concordia University Nebraska. Cheryl’s professional experiences include teaching children ages 2 through kindergarten; program development and growth; parent education; and administrative leadership for teacher support, supervision and professional development. She has served as a NLSA Validation Team Captain and team member on Validation Teams.

Lisa Johnson serves as Director at Our Savior Lutheran Church and School in Excelsior, Minnesota. She holds her Elementary License with an art minor as well as her Early Childhood license with her Kindergarten endorsement. She completed both her elementary and Early childhood license at Concordia University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her professional experiences include Early Childhood teacher, elementary teacher in second, third and fourth grade, as well as K - 8 art teacher. She has completed NLSA Consultant training and has been a Validation Team member.

Sean Martens serves as the Assistant to the President, Education and Commissioned Ministers for the Minnesota South District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He has been a Lutheran school principal, instructor, and coach in Minnesota, Nebraska, and Nevada at the elementary, high school and college levels. He earned Bachelor’s degrees in Chemistry, Biology, and Secondary Education and Education Masters Degrees (2) in Curriculum and Instruction and Administration from Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska. Martens is a certified AoR Reconciler, a 2003 graduate of the School Leadership Development (SLED) program, and has been a SLED program mentor. Martens has served as a Consultant, Team Captain or team member on more than 25 accreditation teams and serves on the Minnesota South District Accreditation Commission. Martens also serves on COGNIA (AdvancED) accreditation teams and is ELEOT certified.

Rebecca Schmidt serves as the Director of School Ministry for The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. She earned a BA in Elementary Education and an MA in Classroom Teaching from Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. She completed an EdD in Educational Leadership and Supervision from the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, Arkansas and Colloquy from Concordia University, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Her professional experience includes teaching, directing early childhood programs and serving as principal in Lutheran elementary schools in Michigan, Arkansas and Missouri. Her experience with National Lutheran School Accreditation includes serving as Director, Consultant, and Validation Team Captain.

Bonnie Stottlemyer serves as the Director of St. John Christian Preschool and Family Ministry Leader at St. John Lutheran Church in Dublin, Ohio. She also serves as Early Childhood Advisory Cabinet member for the Ohio District. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, and a Master's Degree in Early and Middle Childhood Education from The Ohio State University. Her professional experience includes teaching preschool - second grade and administration in early childhood. She has served as NLSA Consultant, Validation Team member, and Validation Team Captain.

Kimberly Woebke serves as the Director of Mount Hope Preschool and Childcare and Administrative Assistant to Mount Hope Lutheran Church in Bloomington, MN. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Concordia University - St. Paul. She has teaching experience at many grade levels ranging from preschool thru eighth grade. This is her first experience on an NLSA Validation Team.

REPORT SUMMARY

The Validation Team's Overall Impression of the School

Golden Valley Lutheran Church and the staff of Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center (Loving Shepherd ELC) demonstrate a continuous commitment to building and sustaining an exemplary ministry of early childhood education. The interviews and information shared with the National Lutheran School Accreditation Validation Team reveal an ongoing allegiance to our Lord's mission as commanded in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." Loving Shepherd ELC continues to be a blessing to the congregation and a beacon of hope for the community as they carry out their mission, "to provide Christian nurture, support, and education to parents and children, so that they may know Jesus and touch the lives of others with His love".

Outstanding Strengths

Relationships

- Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center is a welcoming and Christ-centered environment where establishing and building relationships with families is an integral part of the culture.
- Communication strategies are intentional in building a partnership between families and staff.

Leadership

- The director of Loving Shepherd ELC is passionate about sharing Jesus with children and families and goes above and beyond expectations in all areas of administration.
- The leadership team works in concert with the pastor and church ministry staff to connect families to Christian fellowship opportunities and faith education at school and at home.

Personnel

- Loving Shepherd ELC staff members build appropriate relationships with children and families that promote the positive development of every child. Parents and guardians experience a strong home/school partnership.

Facilities

- Loving Shepherd ELC and Golden Valley Lutheran Church maintain indoor and outdoor environments that are clean, well-kept, and beautiful to behold.
- All environments display Christian images and symbols.
- The LSELC maintains a welcoming and inviting Christian facility.

Major Deficiencies - None

Checklist

YES	NO	
X		The <i>General Information about the school</i> is complete.
X		The Required Responses are complete.
X		The Required Evidence is complete.
X		The Required Indicators of Success are met in full.
X		The General Indicators of Success are rated and reflect the actual practice in the school.
X		The total point value of all applicable Indicators meets/exceeds 80% of the eligible points.
X		Review of the School Action Plan is complete.

Summary Evaluation of Indicators of Success

Standard	Number of Rated Required and General Indicators of Success	Total Number of Points Possible for Rated Indicators <i>(Previous Column x2)</i>	Total Number of Points Earned for Rated Indicators
Standard 1A – Mission and Ministry	5	10	10
Standard 1B – Philosophy	5	10	10
Standard 2A – Home/Family Relationships	17	34	32
Standard 2B – Congregational Relationships	14	28	25
Standard 2C – Elementary School to Early Childhood Center	NA	NA	NA
Standard 3A – The Early Childhood Governing Authority	30	60	52
Standard 3B – The Early Childhood Administrator/Director	28	56	54
Standard 4 – Personnel	14	28	27
Standard 5 – Staff/Child Interactions	18	36	35
Standard 6 – Facilities	23	46	46
Standard 7A – Health and Safety	57	114	114
Standard 7B – Food and Nutrition	22	44	44
Standard 8 – Curriculum	25	50	50
Standard 9 – Infants/Toddlers	85	170	168
Standard 10 – Continuous Improvement	10	20	13
Overall Totals:	353	706	680
Final Percentage Score: <i>(To calculate final percentage score, divide “Total Number of Points Earned for Rated Indicators” by “Total Number of Points Possible for Rated Indicators”)</i>	96.32% <i>NOTE: An overall score of 80% or higher is required for recommendation of National Lutheran School Accreditation in Good Standing.</i>		

Accreditation Recommendation

Team Captain: **Bonnie Stottlemyer**

Signature of Team Captain: **Bonnie Stottlemyer**

Date: **4/26/2022**

We, the members of the Validation Team, recommend

Accreditation in Good Standing	X
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Provisional Accreditation	
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Denying Accreditation	
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for **Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center, Golden Valley, Minnesota**

Standard 1: Purpose
Standard 1A: Mission and Ministry

The Lutheran early childhood program must be an integral part of the congregation’s ministry to young children and their families. As such, it concerns itself with the ministry of the whole church in order to fulfill its purpose as a Christ-centered early childhood program.

Validation Team Overview: The Mission/Ministry Statement for Loving Shepherd ELC is Christ-centered and aligned with the church’s mission statement.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
The congregation supports the Mission and Ministry statement of Loving Shepherd ELC.	1,2,3
Both Loving Shepherd ELC and Golden Valley Lutheran Church embrace the children and families served by the center.	1,2,3,4
Responses to the Mission and Ministry statement reach out into the community because of the relationships formed in the center.	1,2,3,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

Standard 1: Purpose
Standard 1B: Philosophy

An early childhood program philosophy is a cooperatively formed statement of beliefs that reflects every aspect of the program. Practices of the program align with the philosophy. Reflection and review of the philosophy is an on-going process.

Validation Team Overview: The Philosophy Statement of Loving Shepherd ELC clearly communicates what the school believes regarding their early childhood program. It is a comprehensive statement about child development.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
Loving Shepherd ELC is committed to whole child development.	1,3,4
Loving Shepherd ELC values each child as an individual created and loved by God and honors that each child develops at their own rate.	1,3,4
The philosophy of Loving Shepherd ELC is clearly communicated effectively in multiple ways.	1,3,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

Standard 2: Relationships

Standard 2A: Home / Family Relationships

Ministry in the Lutheran early childhood program is directed toward young children and their families. The early childhood program has strategies for teaming with and engaging families through effective communication, active parent involvement and parent education.

Validation Team Overview: Loving Shepherd ELC is a place where families entrust their children to the care of Christian educators in a safe and loving environment. Parents and guardians experience a strong home/school partnership supported by multiple forms of communication regarding curriculum, daily activities, special events and opportunities to participate in the church family.

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
Loving Shepherd ELC teachers, parents and guardians experience a powerful partnership through the use of a variety of communication practices ensuring that the Christ-centered educational experience meets the needs of children.	1,2,3,4
Parents and guardians experience many opportunities to interact with church and school staff members informally during morning drop-off and during the many special events and programs offered throughout the year.	1,2,3
Many families learned about the excellent staff and Christ-centered care at Loving Shepherd ELC from other parents who referred them to the center.	1,2

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
Loving Shepherd ELC does not provide educational opportunities for families.	Develop and implement a variety of educational opportunities for families.	1,2	2A:02

Parents and guardians are not asked to evaluate the center program based on purpose, goals and objectives on an annual basis.	Develop an instrument to evaluate the center program based on purpose, goals and objectives and administer it annually.	1,2,4	2A:07
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(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

2A:07 was changed from 2 to 1. Parents and guardians are not asked to evaluate the center annually.

Standard 2: Relationships

Standard 2B: Congregational Relationships

The Lutheran early childhood program is an integral part of the congregation’s ministry to young children and their families. The early childhood program commits itself to participate in the ministry of the whole church in order to fulfill its purpose as a Christ-centered early childhood program.

Validation Team Overview: Golden Valley Lutheran Church and Loving Shepherd Lutheran ELC conduct a seamless ministry marked by a shared vision for serving children and family in Golden Valley and surrounding communities. Congregation members are active on the LSELC board and participate in many fund-raising events that support the operation of the center.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
The pastor and church staff members are visible and actively involved in the day-to-day activities of Loving Shepherd ELC.	1,2,3
Parents and guardians are invited and welcomed to attend worship and church activities that appeal to children and families.	1,2
The pastor leads a weekly age-appropriate chapel for toddlers and preschoolers.	1,2,3
Congregation members support the center with time, talent and treasure as they are able.	1,2,3
Congregation members regularly pray for the staff and families in Loving Shepherd ELC.	1,2

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
More involvement of congregation members in the Loving Shepherd ELC is desired.	Explore ways to connect with congregation members in meaningful ways that comply with state licensing and health and safety guidance.	1,2	2B:19
While a formal written evangelism approach does not exist, an outline of informal practices is recorded.	Develop, expand and implement the informal practices into a written evangelism approach.	1,4	2B:21
Not all Loving Shepherd ELC teachers are actively involved in worship and the congregational life of a home church.	Explore ways to increase opportunities for Bible Study and fellowship for staff to share their faith with each other.	1,2	2B:25

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

Standard 2: Relationships

Standard 2C: Elementary School to Early Childhood Center

A close relationship between the early childhood level and additional levels of the school is vital. The early childhood director and school administrator(s) work together closely to carry out the shared vision.

Validation Team Overview: NA – Not connected to an elementary school

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

<INSERT RESPONSE HERE>

Standard 3: Leadership

Standard 3A: The Early Childhood Governing Authority

The school operates under governance and leadership that promote family involvement and support the spiritual, social/emotional, cognitive, physical and creative development of young children. The governing authority guides, steers, directs and oversees the strategic direction of the early childhood center.

Validation Team Overview: The Loving Shepherd ELC Board is dedicated to supporting and equipping the staff of Loving Shepherd ELC through effective policy development and guidance.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
The Loving Shepherd ELC Board has strong policies for board operation.	1,4
The Board supports the preschool through policy decisions and oversight of finances.	1,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
The Board does not have a policy about open board meetings.	Develop an open meeting policy and add to the Board Handbook.	1,4	3A:06
The job description for the director needs to be updated, and a job description for the assistant director needs to be written.	Review and update job descriptions. Add a job description for the assistant director.	1,2,4	3A:12
The Board does not provide an annual evaluation of the director based on job description.	Schedule annual director evaluations based on the job description.	1,2,4	3A:13
Due to an industry-wide staffing shortage, the center is currently understaffed causing a need for administrators to frequently substitute in classrooms. This also necessitates frequent schedule shifts for center staff.	Develop a plan to reach full staffing, allowing administrators and staff to fulfill their primary position roles.	1,2,3	3A:16 3A:17

There is no written needs assessment process.	Develop and implement a written needs assessment process.	1,4	3A:20 3A:21
The current strategic plan, written in 2016, needs to be updated.	Use accreditation results and other sources of information to develop a new strategic plan for the next 5 years.	1,4	3A:22

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

3A:12 was changed from 1 to 2. The existing Board Handbook does include policies of the Board.

3A:20 was changed from 2 to 1. Although some needs are assessed, there is no written needs assessment process.

Standard 3: Leadership

Standard 3B: The Early Childhood Administrator / Director

The administrator/director assures that the early childhood education program is distinctively Christian and developmentally appropriate. He/she understands the mission and ministry of the congregation and is responsible to staff, families and children in the day-to-day operations of the program.

Validation Team Overview: The early childhood director is highly qualified and passionately uses her skills and experience to lead an excellent, Christ-centered program for children and families.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
The director nurtures relationships among staff members, church staff, congregation members, children and families, and the community.	1,2,3
The director is detailed-oriented and attentive to licensing rules, accreditation standards, and best practices and applies them in productive ways in the center.	2,3
Parents highly respect the director for her management of the program, for her kindness to children and families, and for the home and family culture of the center.	2,3
The director shares her knowledge and expertise with others on the district and national levels of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.	2,3

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
Staff supervision is chiefly provided by informal observations and casual conversations. Formal observations, individual meetings, self-evaluations by staff members, and formal written evaluations are not done in an ongoing system.	Develop a system and schedule for assuring ongoing staff supervision that includes informal and formal observations, individual meetings, self-evaluations by staff members and formal written evaluations.	1,2	3B:46
Staff:child ratio policy for the center does not meet NLSA ratio requirements.	Make a plan for moving toward adopting NLSA staff:child ratio requirements.	1,2,3,4	3B:56

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

3B:46 was changed from 2 to 1. Interviews indicated that formal evaluations of teaching staff need to be done routinely.

3B:56 was changed from 2 to 1. Written staff:child ratios follow Minnesota early childhood licensing rules. NLSA has higher requirements for staff:child ratios, so those ratios are required for fully meeting this indicator. (Example: NLSA for 0-24 months = 1:4, 24-36 months = 1:6)

Standard 4: Personnel

A qualified and competent Christian staff is essential to a quality Lutheran early childhood program. The cohesive school ministry team embodies the shared vision of the early childhood program.

Validation Team Overview: Loving Shepherd ELC has a combination of experienced staff members and newer staff members. Although Loving Shepherd ELC is currently challenged by a shortage of workers, there is no question that staff is dedicated to the Christian ministry focus of Loving Shepherd ELC where they are able to continue to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and with each other. They have created an environment that is open to communication among director, teachers, staff, and parents.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
LSELC provides relevant and timely staff training beyond what is required by the state including diversity training following the George Floyd incident and workplace wellness in response to the staff shortage.	1,2,3,4
The staff demonstrates a dedication to the Christian ministry to the children and families attending LSELC.	1,2,3,4
The center provides a competitive compensation and benefits package for the staff.	1,2,3,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
One lead teacher does not yet meet the NLSA standard of having at least a CDA (MN state variances)	Support and encourage the teacher to complete her plan to complete her degree by the fall of 2023.	1,2,4	4:03

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

4:03 was changed from 2 to 1. NLSA requires lead teachers to have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or state recognized equivalent and be at least 18 years of age (21 years of age if working with infants and toddlers) or follow the requirements of state licensing (**whichever has a higher requirement.**) Loving Shepherd ELC has one teacher that is enrolled as a part time student and will complete her credential in 2023. State licensing has varianced this. In this case, **the higher requirement** is the NLSA requirement of having the degree.

Standard 5: Staff / Child Interactions

Teaching staff members recognize and provide opportunities for young children to develop an understanding of self and others. These interactions are characterized by warmth, positive, Christ-centered relationships, respect, positive support and responsiveness.

Validation Team Overview: Loving Shepherd ELC staff is intentional about building personal relationships with children and parents. They provide a Christ-centered, safe, positive, and nurturing environment. Incorporating the HiMama app has allowed Loving Shepherd ELC staff to send a quick note or picture to families to assure parents that a child is doing okay. HiMama provides quick professional and meaningful communications without taking too much quality time away from children.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
Staff appropriately reflect, model, and share Jesus' love through the curriculum, classroom activities, frequent prayer times, weekly chapel, social interaction, and during play.	1,2,3,4
Loving Shepherd ELC staff endeavor to build appropriate individual relationships with children and families that promote the positive development of every child. The consistent positive relational culture makes the transition from room to room easy for both children and parents.	1,2,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
There is room for greater proactive appreciation of the culture and traditions of the families served at Loving Shepherd ELC.	Loving Shepherd ELC is encouraged to look for more opportunities to expose children to different cultures, traditions, and practices within the center and in the wider community.	1,4	5:12

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

Standard 6: Facilities

The school maintains facilities, services and equipment to provide a safe, clean and healthy environment for all children and staff. The building, grounds and equipment are designed to provide a developmentally appropriate environment in which young children work, play, explore and learn.

Validation Team Overview: The facility is well designed and maintained. It is evident that time and money is spent on classroom furnishings and materials.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
The classrooms are laid out to best utilize the space available and provide the required interest areas and materials.	1,3,4
The entrance and center spaces are aesthetically-pleasing, well-maintained, and demonstrate the Christ-based mission of the center and church.	1,3,4
The large motor spaces are well-designed and equipped. It is evident that safety was a primary goal in planning.	1,2,3,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

Standard 7: Wellness

Standard 7A: Health and Safety

The school maintains facilities, services and equipment to provide a safe, clean and healthy environment for all young children and staff. Children receive healthy snacks/meals, participate in physical activity and are introduced to healthy practices.

Validation Team Overview: The layout of classrooms and space in Loving Shepherd ELC shows tremendous forethought in serving children and families. The center is safe and secure.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
Teachers and staff members take great care to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment.	1,3,4
Loving Shepherd ELC has clearly written procedures for health and safety, and these are communicated to both staff and parents.	1,3

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

Standard 7: Wellness
Standard 7B: Food and Nutrition

The school provides children with snacks and meals that adequately meet their dietary needs. Menus are reviewed and approved. Kitchen facilities are inspected by the health department.

Validation Team Overview: Loving Shepherd ELC is committed to meeting individual student needs through food and nutrition. This is demonstrated through clear communication and practices of accommodating individual and family preferences.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
There is strong communication between families and the center regarding students' specific dietary needs.	1,2,3,4
Employing a full-time cook provides a great amount of support to Loving Shepherd ELC staff in meeting children's needs.	2,3

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

7B:68 was changed from 1 to 2. The Validation Team saw adequate evidence that the program promotes good nutrition for students and communicates this to families through menus.

Standard 8: Curriculum

The curriculum of the Lutheran early childhood center reflects its philosophy and consists of appropriate learning experiences. The school's curriculum, instructional design and assessment practices guide and ensure teacher effectiveness and support the spiritual, social/emotional, cognitive, physical and creative growth and development of young children.

Validation Team Overview: At Loving Shepherd ELC, the teachers embed the love of Christ into all aspects of the children's day. Play-based learning is highlighted throughout the center. Minnesota Early Learning Standards are followed. Each classroom considers the unique needs and interests of the children in their weekly planning.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
At Loving Shepherd ELC, the teachers embed the love of Christ into all aspects of the children's day.	1,2,3,4
The curricular experiences are based on play throughout the center and classroom schedules allow extended times of play in a variety of settings.	1,3,4
There is a plan for the faith curriculum for the school year. All classrooms are focused on the same Bible Story/concept on the same week. Resources are listed by age level. This action plan provides all teachers, regardless of faith teaching experience, a strategic curriculum plan for teaching the faith to their little learners.	1,2,3,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
A formal curriculum or curricula have not been selected, only a potential alignment with Creative Curriculum. Creative Curriculum is not used.	Research & review curricular samples to meet Minnesota Early Learning Standards in all curricular areas for infants, toddlers, & preschoolers.	1,2	8:03
These indicators share the following statement: "The lesson plans show that children have an opportunity to explore all these areas." Implementation of specific curriculum types & strategies is not mentioned.	Research & review curricular samples for language & literacy, math/science.	1,2	8:12 8:13

Curricular strategies are not listed that foster self-identity and understanding & acceptance of others. Wall hangings & toys are mentioned.	Research & review curricular samples for social-emotional growth.	1,2	8:14
Review of the written curriculum requires a systematic review cycle to ensure up-to-date implementation and student growth.	Review, revise, and update curriculum following a specific schedule so curricular areas are more thoroughly researched to ensure the most viable curricular experiences for the students and staff.	1,2	8:25

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

8:12, 8:13, 8:14, 8:16, and 8:25 were changed from 2 to 1. In these Indicators and in Required Response 1, "curriculum" was mentioned. The director clarified curricular questions in an interview: Creative Curriculum is not implemented and a specific curriculum review is not scheduled.

Standard 9: Infants / Toddlers

Research into early brain development and cognition provides clear evidence that early experiences establish the ability to learn throughout life. Experiences and materials are intentionally selected to support learning in all developmental domains: spiritual, cognitive, social/emotional, physical and creative.

Validation Team Overview: At Loving Shepherd ELC, infant and toddlers are nurtured in all developmental domains by staff/caregivers who build nurturing relationships with each individual child.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
The staff members of Loving Shepherd ELC follow very clear and consistent routines to provide for the needs for each individual child.	1,3
A warm, inviting environment allows for growth and exploration as children grow and develop.	1,3
The staff members of Loving Shepherd ELC use of several strategies to assess and communicate with parents about the growth and development of each individual child.	1,2,3,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
A curriculum or curricula have not been selected, only a potential alignment with Creative Curriculum. Creative Curriculum is not used.	Research & review curricular samples to meet Minnesota Early Learning Standards in all curricular areas for infants, toddlers.	1,2	9:72
Parent teacher conferences are offered twice a year for infants.	Conduct parent teacher conferences every 3 months for infants to meet NLSA requirements.	1,4	9:85

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

9:72 was changed from 2 to 1. Self-Sutdy comments state that infants and toddlers use Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos to implement developmentally appropriate activities for children. There is no formal curriculum that is currently used.

Standard 10: Continuous Improvement

The school has an improvement planning process that is data-driven and ensures the implementation of the school's purpose, the achievement of learning expectations for children and the provision of high-quality services.

Validation Team Overview: The surveys conducted during the NLSA Self-Study process reveal a dedicated, caring Christian church and school staff providing positive feedback highlighting a shared vision for serving children and families.

Strengths:

Strengths	Sources of Evidence
Parent and guardian surveys revealed enthusiastic supporters of Loving Shepherd ELC and strong satisfaction feedback scores.	1,2,4
Church and center ministry leaders provided positive feedback reflecting a highly collaborative staff.	1,2,4
Teachers in all classrooms use a variety of assessment tools to provide progress of the growth and development of the children in their classrooms.	1,2,4

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Concerns and Recommendations:

Concern	Recommendation	Sources of Evidence	Indicator
Professional development, quality assurance activities, and policy and operation improvements are not included in the School Action Plan.	Develop and include professional development, quality assurance activities, and policy and operation improvements in the School Action Plan.	1,2,4	10:05
The preliminary School Action Plan does not include measurable objectives and strategies.	Fully develop existing recommendations in the School Action Plan with measurable objectives and strategies.	1,4	10:06
The preliminary School Action Plan is missing a more specific timeline and assignment of responsible parties.	Fully develop a timeline with the use of a school year identification of the date (ex. 2022-2023) and clarify groups and individuals responsible for the goals identified in the School Action Plan.	1,4	10:07

The School Action Plan is not reviewed annually by center staff and church leadership.	Develop a timeline for an annual review of the School Action Plan with center staff and church leadership.	1,4	10:08
The School Action Plan is not shared with congregation members and Loving Shepherd ELC families.	Develop a timeline for sharing the School Action Plan with all stakeholders on an annual basis.	1,2	10:09

(Note: Sources of Evidence are identified using the following: 1=Self-Study Report, 2=Interview, 3=Observation, 4=Written Documentation)

Did the Validation Team change any ratings that were assigned by the school?

YES

NO

If YES, what was the justification for changing the rating?

General Indicator 10:06 was changed from 0 to 1. The preliminary School Action Plan has identified improvement areas but is lacking measurable objectives and specific strategies and activities.

Review of the School Action Plan

As a school conducts its Self-Study process, it identifies areas needing improvement. These items are rated as **1 (Partially Met)** showing that the condition is recognized as important by the school but is moderately accomplished. Additional detail, depth and written documentation is required to meet the General Indicator of Success in full. A rating of **0 (Not Presently Met)** indicates that the General Indicator of Success is not present or is emerging (minimally met).

Items that have been identified as **1 (Partially Met)** or **0 (Not Presently Met)** require planned improvement actions. Over the course of the school's accreditation cycle, the items must be targeted (with a completion date), assigned, evaluated and completed. The School Action Plan is the organization's roadmap, guiding the improvement process during the school's accreditation cycle.

In a narrative, please address the following aspects of the School Action Plan:

- What is the Validation Team's evaluation of the realistic attainability of the plan as a whole?
- Were any items not addressed in the School Action Plan that were identified by the school in its Self-Study Report?
- Does the Validation Team identify additional action items not identified by the school in its Self-Study Report?

The Validation Team believes the goals of the Preliminary School Action Plan for Loving Shepherd ELC are attainable. Target completion years need to be designated in school year terms: 2022/2023, 2023/2024, 2024/2025, and 2025/2026. The last year in the new cycle, 2026/2027, will not have target goals since that year will be spent doing a new Self-Study to renew accreditation.

Indicator 9:85 from the Self-Study was not addressed in the Preliminary School Action Plan. Also, Indicators 10:05, 10:06, 10:07, 10:08, 10:09 were not addressed specifically in the Preliminary School Action Plan. They can be addressed as separate goals or combined into a larger goal that lists each indicator and explains how each will be addressed in that larger goal.

The Validation Team identified action items for the following Indicators in addition to those identified by Loving Shepherd ELC - 2A:07, 3A:07, 3A:20, 3B:46, 3B:56, 4:03, 8:3, 8:12-14, 8:25, 9:72. These will need to be added to the Final School Action Plan.

In addition, the Validation Team changed the scores of 3A:12 and 7B:68 from Partially Met to Fully Met. For these Indicators, the center is not required to include a goal on the Final School Action Plan.