



# Visiting Team Report

for

Rochester Central Lutheran School -  
Early Childhood Development Center

2619 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Rochester, MN 55901  
April 30-May 1, 2012

## FOREWORD

Becoming accredited is a strenuous process. When, as is true at Rochester Central Lutheran School and the Early Childhood Development Center, the school desires to become accredited by more than one agency, the task becomes even more arduous. Rochester Central Lutheran School and the Early Childhood Development Center and its administration are to be highly commended for their efforts in this accreditation process. The self-study document and the various arrangements for the accreditation team were done exceptionally well. It is the hope and prayer of the members of the visiting team that the enclosed document is one that is accurate and helpful for the continued improvement of Rochester Central Lutheran School and the Early Childhood Development Center.

The committee hereby expresses sincere gratitude to the faculty, staff and students at Rochester Central Lutheran School and the Early Childhood Development Center for the opportunity to serve on the visiting team and for the many kindnesses shown to us during our visit. Each of us on the committee has grown as a result of the experience.

Rochester Central Lutheran School and the Early Childhood Development Center obviously is a good school. This was reflected not only in your self-study but also in the comments and observations of the visiting team. We were delighted with the whole climate of Rochester Central Lutheran School and the Early Childhood Development Center. The school speaks out for the Christian faith to the students and to the community very effectively.

This report is carefully written and includes specific recommendations that should be considered seriously by the school and the supporting congregations. Not every suggestion needs to be followed, but each should be considered.

There were four members of the visiting team. This report combines the talent of all members of the team. The report has been written and edited by the team as a whole, with only minor editing done by the team captain. Each part of this report follows the following format: 1. **Overview.** This provides an introduction and a few observations in general terms about that particular aspect of the school program. 2. **Strengths.** These are the most obvious strengths of the topic of the report. 3. **Concerns.** The committee felt that the school should be aware of these items. They may not be weaknesses, but they gave members of the committee some concern. 4. **Recommendations.** Wherever possible, specific, practical suggestions have been made to help to remedy the concerns expressed.

The team captain and the consultant pledge their continued support and assistance should you care to call upon us in the implementation process.

May the Lord richly bless the faculty and constituents of Rochester Central Lutheran School and the Early Childhood Development Center so that with the Lord's help they might continue to proclaim His Gospel ever more effectively through Rochester Central Lutheran School and the Early Childhood Development Center.

*Brenda A. Lovhaug*

Brenda A. Lovhaug  
Team Captain

## NLSA VISITING TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

**Captain: Brenda Lovhaug** Director at Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center  
Golden Valley, MN

Work: 763-544-0590 [brendal@gvlc.net](mailto:brendal@gvlc.net)  
Cell: 612-272-3714

**Areas of responsibility:** Board and Health & Safety

**Education:** Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education with a  
concentration in Early Childhood

**Accreditation experience:** Director at an early childhood center which has  
been through, completed, and been awarded accreditation in 2004 and 2011.  
This center was also awarded *Exemplary Status* for 2012-2013. She has served  
as a member on twice teams; once as a supporting member (2010) and once as  
a captain (2011 and 2012).

**Jeremy Ashley** School Administrator at St. Peter's Lutheran School  
Edina, MN

**Areas of Responsibility:** Relationships and Director

**Education:** BA in Early Childhood Education / MS Ed in Educational  
Administration

**Areas of Expertise:** Early Childhood and Elementary Administration, Technology  
and Relationships

**Accreditation Experience:** He has served as a supporting team member in 2010  
and is the administrator at a school/center which was  
recently accredited (2011).

**Barb Schoenbeck** Early Childhood Adjunct, Concordia University  
St. Paul, MN

**Areas of responsibility:** Statements and Curriculum

**Education:** Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with Emphasis in ECE

**Areas of Expertise:** Early childhood ministry and curriculum

**Accreditation Experience:** She served as a supporting team member in 1999.

**Missy Tjosaas** Director of Christian Education at St. John's Lutheran Church  
Volunteer Director of Creation Kids Preschool (CKP)  
Kasson, MN

**Areas of Responsibility:** Personnel and Teacher/Child

**Education:** BA from Concordia College with Religion focus

**Areas of Expertise:** Relational ministry- she is a substitute teacher at CKP, a  
teacher at Just Like Home SACC, and a Director of Education  
from birth to death. She spends a lot of time with students of  
all ages.

**Accreditation Experience:** NONE

**Rochester Central Lutheran School  
Early Childhood Development Center  
NLSA Visiting Team Members**



Jeremy Ashley, Brenda Lovhaug, Missy Tjosaas and Barb Schoenbeck

## **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 be considered a privileged document, to be submitted by the captain of the visiting team directly to the administration of the school. The distribution of the report and its availability for public consideration beyond that point rest solely in the hands of the school administration. Neither the captain nor the other members of the visiting 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 visiting team has been to examine the educational ministry of the school, including courses of study, learning materials, student needs and interests, staffing, and facilities. The visiting team has attempted to assess the effectiveness of the total school program in meeting the educational objectives the school has established for itself and in meeting national NLSA standards.

It has not been the purpose of the visiting team to evaluate individual teacher performance. The use of this report as an official assessment of any staff person's professional competency would be in violation of the process and the intent under which the school evaluation was conducted. Such use would be inherently invalid since at no time during the team visit has the team been concerned with the evaluation of individual teacher performance.

Accreditation is a process that centers on the self-study conducted by the individual school. The visiting team and its subsequent report are meant to assist the school in its own process as a guideline for continual growth. Neither the team nor its report can be presumed to be the authority for validating any claims regarding health, safety, or personnel issues. Such matters are the sole responsibility of the school.

# Standard 1A: Philosophy

## Overview

The Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC) of Rochester Central Lutheran School (RCLS) has a clear, well written philosophy statement that has a biblical, Christ-centered, and developmental base and is used at all levels of the school. The board approved statement is shared with the pastors of the association churches. The whole school philosophy of RCLS and the Early Childhood Development Center is:

The RCLS ECDC believes the church has a unique opportunity to provide an educational ministry to assist parents in helping their young children develop to their fullest potential. "from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15.

Because of the uniqueness of early childhood education, the ECDC has an additional statement they call Program Methods and Philosophy. It reads:

The RCLS ECDC program strives to provide a happy safe environment for children to develop a positive self-image, make friends, prepare for Kindergarten, and be happy in the knowledge that they are a child of God. Developmentally appropriate learning experiences and play opportunities will be provided to encourage children to explore and experiment with a variety of stimulating materials that promote physical, emotional, intellectual, creative, social, and spiritual growth. Children will be given opportunities to develop skills in all areas of learning: language development; reading readiness; writing; math; science; art; and music. Physical activities and large muscle development will be provided both indoors and outdoors. The ECDC program implements a developmentally appropriate curriculum for the age levels of the children enrolled. A written curriculum will be available to parents upon request. RCLS seeks to provide a physically safe and emotionally secure setting where children can explore and experiment with a variety of materials. The prekindergarten and preschool classrooms create a supportive, safe, confidence-building atmosphere through explorative play opportunities.

## Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **14** points? **Yes**

## **Strengths**

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The whole school philosophy statement is appropriate for all levels. (1, 4)
2. The separate, additional ECDC “Methods and Philosophy Statement” specifically calls out the developmental approach, how it is used at the early childhood level, and how it drives a holistic approach to child development. (1, 3, 4)

## **Concerns and Recommendations**

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The “Methods and Philosophy Statement” which was specifically developed for the newly structured early childhood center needs to be reviewed annually and used as a source for curriculum planning and goals and well as assessment of the program. (1, 2, 4).

**Recommendation: As the program grows and changes into a new view of early childhood education, all teachers who work with young children should continue to return to this unique statement to determine if it still permeates the ECDC ministry with young children.**

# Standard 1B: Mission and Ministry

## Overview

There is a clearly written and well communicated mission statement. The mission and ministry of Rochester Central Lutheran School and its newest program, the Early Childhood Development Center, are communicated in the mission statement:

Preparing for tomorrow with a Christ-centered education today.

There are four association churches that support RCLC. Each of those congregations has mission and ministry statements that in some way support the mission statement for RCLS.

## Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **8** points? **Yes**

## Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The mission statement is clearly written and communicated on handbooks, school stationary, school newsletters, posted in classrooms, and shared with the association church pastors. (1, 2, 4)
2. The school administrator and early childhood director are continually striving to learn to be more effective in ministry to young children and their busy, diverse families. (1, 2, 4).

## Concerns and Recommendations

(1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Only one of the four association churches speaks of “school” as one of their vehicles for “vigorously sharing the love of Christ by word and deed.”

**Recommendation: We suggest that leaders of the four association churches and the leadership of the school meet to review the notion that RCLS and the ECDC are mission vehicles for sharing God’s love. (1,2, 3, and 4)**



2. While the mission statement is adopted for all age groups of RCLS, it is not consistently used on the informal teacher to home communication of the ECDC.

**Recommendation: We suggest that a standard ECDC letterhead be developed and used by all the staff when they communicate weekly news, lesson plans, and weekly schedules. This letterhead should include the mission statement and school logo. In addition, if informal communication is structured to be completed and distributed electronically, it creates a unified, professional approach to school to home communication. (1, 2, 3, 4)**

# Standard 2A – Home and Parent Relationships

## Overview

Rochester Central Lutheran School ECDC demonstrates its mission through the relationships it builds with the families of the ECDC.

## Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **26** points? **Yes**

## Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

- 1. Parents are welcomed into the classrooms as visitors and volunteers. (1, 2, 3)
- 2. The school effectively communicates with families. (1, 2, 3, 4)
- 3. Christian behavior is modeled by the teachers to the students and families. (1, 2, 3)

## Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

- 1. Parent growth opportunities have been offered and have been put aside as something that cannot be done well. (1, 2)

**Recommendation: Survey the families to determine their specific needs and interests in regards to parent education offerings. Consider offering incentives for participation in parent education sessions.**

- 2. Communications to parents are primarily paper-based. (2, 3)

**Recommendation: Increase the use of email, the school website, and social networking as a method of communicating with families. Give parents the option of choosing a preferred method of delivery.**

3. Daily/Weekly themes and topics are not currently posted for parents to view.

**Recommendation: Create and display a standard ECDC lesson plan grid that shows parents the topics that will be presented for the week.**

## Standard 2B - Congregational Relationships

### Overview

Rochester Central Lutheran School ECDC has the blessing of being supported by four congregations, all of which, have the opportunity to be a part of the daily ministry of RCLS.

### Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **24** points? **Yes**

### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. An on-site pastor offers support, encouragement, and a sense of joy to teachers, students, and parents in the school. (1, 2, 3)
2. RCLS works with four supporting congregations who have the opportunity to be a part of training disciples for Christ. (1, 2, 3, 4)

### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. It is evident that not all of the four congregations' pastors view the ECDC as a ministry that could benefit from their consistent presence. (1, 2, 3)

**Recommendation: Intentionally invite pastors for specific opportunities to be involved in the ECDC. Communicate the joys that come from their scheduled and impromptu visits to the classrooms.**

2. Names of unchurched school families are ineffectively communicated and contacted. (2)

**Recommendation: Design and implement an effective way to reach out to unchurched families within the school. Communicate names to the association churches in a timely fashion and ensure each family is being contacted by the appropriate congregation.**

3. There is no praise and worship experience available for ECDC students and families. (1, 2, 3)

**Recommendation: Implement an age-appropriate praise and worship experience for ECDC students and families.**

## Standard 2C – Elementary School to Early Childhood Center

### Overview

Rochester Central Lutheran School ECDC has capitalized on the blessing of having and ECDC and an Elementary School on the same campus.

### Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **24** points? **Yes**

### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Preschool and Kindergarten teachers are in close communication to help facilitate healthy transitions of children. (1, 2)
2. Principal and Director meet weekly and communicate effectively with one another throughout each day. (1, 2)
3. The ECDC is viewed by the elementary staff as an important part of RCLS's educational program.
4. Programs have been put in place that allow ECDC and elementary students to gather together. (1, 2, 3, 4)

### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

**There are no concerns.**

## Standard 3A – Early Childhood Governing Authority

### Overview

Rochester Central Lutheran School and Early Childhood Development Center is blessed to have a Board of Directors who is highly diverse in thought and approach.

### Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **54** points? **Yes**

### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

- 1. The formation of the new task forces has helped the Board of Directors be more engaged in the operation of Rochester Central Lutheran School and Early Childhood Development Center. (2)

### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

- 1. The director of the Early Childhood Development Center does not have sufficient time to perform the responsibilities of a director (ie curriculum leadership, marketing, supervision, staffing, licensing, accreditation). (1, 2, 4)

**Recommendation: The Board of Directors should find a way to have a full time director to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Early Childhood Development Center.**

- 2. Staff evaluations are being done, however; evaluations are not being done for the aides. (1, 2)

**Recommendation: The Director and supervising teacher should evaluate all staff in the Early Childhood Development Center rooms including employees who are aides.**

3. There is no evidence of a policy addressing the “open attendance” at board meetings and committees meetings. (1)

**Recommendation: The Board of Directors should develop and approve a policy addressing “open attendance” at board meetings and committee meetings.**

4. Salaries and remuneration do not currently reflect the current district recommended salary scale. (1, 2, 3)

**Recommendation: Continue to look for ways to increase salaries which in turn will increase morale.**



# Standard 3B – Early Childhood Director

## Overview

Rochester Central Lutheran School ECDC is blessed to have a passionate and dedicated director who is willing to go above and beyond the call of duty. She has a good understanding of early childhood education and has a great rapport with teacher, students, and families.

## Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **46** points? **Yes**

## Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The director is passionate about and dedicated to early childhood education. (1, 2, 3)
2. The director works closely with the principal to ensure cohesion between all educational programs at RCLS.
3. The director has formed solid relationships with staff, students, and families of RCLS.

## Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The director is also teaching and does not have the time necessary to perform her directorial duties in a manner that is consistent with the quality of the rest of RCLS's programs. (2, 3)

**Recommendation: RCLS ECDC needs a full-time director that does not have additional teaching responsibilities. This would allow the ECDC to grow and function in a manner consistent with the quality expected and displayed in RCLS's other programs.**

2. The director has not completed colloquy. (1, 2)

**Recommendation: Follow through with plan to complete colloquy process.**

3. The director does not communicate regularly with the association pastors. (1, 2)

**Recommendation: Schedule a time to meet or communicate with the association pastors on a regular basis. This could be in combination with the current principal-pastor meetings that already occur.**

# Standard 4 - Personnel

## Overview

The staff of Rochester Central Lutheran School Early Childhood Development Center are professional, well educated and show a great love and dedication to their students, families and for their school.

## Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **16** points? **Yes**

## Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. A dedicated, well educated and loving director/teacher who brings out the best in the entire staff. (1, 2, 3)
2. Personnel Handbook well done and available (1, 4)
3. The teaching staff demonstrates their personal relationships with Jesus Christ and each is committed to the school's ministry. (1, 2, 3)
4. New staff orientation is thorough and well documented. The staff members that are newer to the center feel a part of the team and valued for their contribution. (1, 2, 4)

## Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Staff in-services need topics that pertain to ECDC. (2, 4)

Recommendation: **We recommend that at least one in-service a year to be focused on topics specifically geared to early childhood.**

2. The part time teachers are not included as members of the Lutheran Education Association.

**Recommention: If budgetary funds are available, the recommendation is all the lead teachers become members of an early childhood professional organization.**

# Standard 5 – Teacher/Child Relations

## Overview

ECDC teaching staff displays appropriate and effective interactions with all children in their care. Interactions are characterized by warmth, responsiveness, individuality and positive support from both the classroom teacher and aide.

## Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **36** points? **Yes**

## Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Children are valued and respected and listened to. (1,2,3)
2. Learning areas are warm, bright and age appropriate. (1,2,3)
3. Teachers are warm and welcoming. (1,2,3)
4. Teachers provide and foster positive learning environments for all of their students. (1,2,3)
5. The teachers provide an excellent social interaction for students. (1,2,3)

## Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

**There are no concerns.**

## Standard 6 – Indoor/Outdoor Environment and Health and Safety

### Overview

Rochester Central Lutheran's Early Childhood Development Center is clean, safe and developmentally appropriate for the age of children that are enrolled in the program. The indoor environment is child-friendly, colorful, and reflects the ministry of the program. The outdoor environment is secure and age appropriate.

### Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **80** points without infants/toddlers?  
**Yes**

### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Rochester Central Lutheran's Early Childhood Development Center adheres to the Minnesota Department of Human Services' Rule 3 guidelines for licensed preschools and child care centers. These guidelines include, but are not limited to, teacher to student ratios, supervision guidelines and safe and appropriate learning environments. (1, 2, 3, 4)

### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The cushioning (mats, pea gravel, sand, wood chips) materials that currently exists under climbing equipment, swings, and slides (indoor and outdoor) do not meet the National Child Safety Standards. (1, 2, 3)
2. The outdoor sandboxes are not covered when not in use. (1, 2, 3)

**Recommendation: In recent history, there has not been a problem with contamination due to the sandboxes not being covered, however; research should be completed so if a problem should arise, there is a plan in place.**

3. The outdoor play area has a variety of play surfaces but there is limited shade. (1, 2, 3,)

**Recommendation: Look into artificial shade options (ie awnings) which can be strategically placed throughout the playground to provide shade for the children.**

4. All rooms are not air conditioned. (1, 2, 3)

**Recommendation: This should be included in the long range plans for Rochester Central Lutheran School.**

# Standard 7 - Curriculum

## Overview

RCLS's ECDC is developing, delivering, and evaluating a developmentally appropriate curriculum that is both commercial and teacher developed. The adults who are involved are striving to educate the spiritual, cognitive, physical, emotional, and social needs of each child.

## Compliance

- A. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- B. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **40** points without infants/toddlers?  
**Yes**

## Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. There is a regular schedule for reviewing and rewriting curriculum that is school wide and validates the importance of developmentally appropriate curriculum for all ages of children. (1, 4)
2. The ECDC is striving to meet cognitive goals in the context of play and social emotional development. (1,2,4)
3. Christian interactions, prayer, and faith is integrated throughout the day and included in goals for the ECDC. (1,2,4)

## Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The curriculum has a new-found emphasis on academic skills. This is very appealing to the parents of Rochester.

**Recommendation: While this emphasis is important, it is imperative to remember that young children learn academics best through active, child selected learning and centers and play is the best time to differentiate learning. (1, 2, 3, 4)**