



Visiting Team Member Manual

For the Standards-Based Self-Study Process

2011-2012 EDITION



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.

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VISITING TEAM MEMBER MANUAL FOR STANDARDS BASED PROCESS

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TO THE TEAM MEMBERS

Congratulations on being selected to serve as a member of an NLSA visiting team. It is an honor to be selected and the District Accreditation Commission has a great deal of confidence in your abilities as an educator. As a result, I have validated that confidence by appointing you as a member of the team. You have been selected because you have professional insights, experience, and expertise in specific aspects of school life, common sense, and the ability to work with others. You are not expected to be an expert, but a peer who gives an outside viewpoint as to the school's operation. There is a great deal of trust that must be shared between you and the staff of the visited school, for your reports will have a strong effect on the school's future program. The specific goal of the accreditation process and of the visiting team is to help the school, and to help those children, teachers, and staff who function in the school. The purpose is not to criticize or to find fault, but to build up and make specific, helpful recommendations. These will be valuable for the school. However, you will not only give as part of the visiting process, you will also gain. You will gain insights and new ideas for your own teaching or administering opportunities.

Accreditation is a process, not a report or a certificate. The visit of a team of outside educators to the school is a critical part of the accreditation process. This is as true for National Lutheran School Accreditation as it is for other legitimate accrediting groups.

Thank you for volunteering to serve as a member of the Visiting Team. Your work will be of great benefit not only to the school you visit but also to yourself. The visiting school and the National Lutheran School Accreditation Commission are thankful for your willingness to serve in this capacity and for the willingness of your school to release you for this purpose.

Terry Schmidt, NLSA Director
National Lutheran School Accreditation

THE 10 STEPS OF SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

1. The school applies for accreditation, pays an initial fee, receives NLSA documents, and is assigned a consultant.
2. The school, on the basis of the National Lutheran School Accreditation Standards and the local school philosophy, evaluates itself. This self-evaluation is probably the most important part of the accreditation process, because it helps the school improve itself.
3. The self-evaluation report is written. After the school has evaluated itself, it is required to write a report in which it indicates that it is ready for recognition as an accredited school. This report documents the school's compliance with required NLSA Standards and Indicators of Success. It reflects the school's strengths and weaknesses, with plans for further improvement. It reflects the results of the self-evaluation and provides a source of direction for the school. This report is submitted to the District Accreditation Commission, the National Accreditation Commission, and to visiting team members.
4. The National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) Director, on the basis of recommendations from the school and the district, appoints a visiting team no later than four weeks before the visit. It is the responsibility of the visiting team members first to read the report and then to determine whether or not the school is ready for a site visit.
5. Once the site visit has been authorized by the District Accreditation Commission, the visiting team visits the school for a few days.
6. The visiting team writes a comprehensive report during the visit, based on the observations made during the visit. At the end of the site visit, a brief, oral, general report is provided for interested individuals at the school, but no specific recommendations, except the overall recommendation for or against accreditation, are made until the written report is given to the school after minor editing by the team captain. This report is provided by the team captain to the school for publication and appropriate distribution. The report will contain an overview for each section, an evaluation of standards compliance, as well as lists of specific strengths, concerns, and recommendations. The visiting team will also recommend, in the report, whether or not the school should be accredited.
7. The District Accreditation Commission then decides if the school will be recommended for national accreditation. If the school receives this recommendation, the National Accreditation Commission takes final action on the recommendation at its annual meeting.
8. The accreditation certificate is awarded by the district education executive to the school in a worship service or other public gathering.
9. Self-study and school improvement continue.
10. A cumulative annual school report, documenting ongoing school improvement, is sent to the District Accreditation Commission.

TEAM TASKS

The visiting team performs four basic tasks:

1. All team members will prepare for the visit by reading the school's self-study report and other materials produced by the school and noting particular questions that come to mind. Note especially how the report reflects the philosophy of the school and complies with all required NLSA Standards and Indicators of Success.
2. The visiting team will observe the school and its program in full operation. The visiting team attempts to determine how the school normally operates, based on observations while visiting. Their purpose here is to evaluate whether or not the school's self-study report is truthful and accurate and agrees with the actual operation of the school. As the visitor observes, he or she takes special note of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Team members seek information that provides evidence to support the school's compliance with all required standards and indicators of success. The notes taken become the basis for that visitor's assigned section(s) of the team's report.
3. Team members make general observations about the school. They use their professional judgment and experience to consider what type of recommendations might help the school improve. As part of this process, the team member will attempt to solicit viewpoints not only from teachers, but also from students, parents, congregation members, and citizens in the local community.
4. The visiting team prepares a specific, helpful, written report that reflects the observations made during their visit. The purposes of the report are to help the school and to reflect that the self-study report is accurate. Site visitors will be expected to give reports in their assigned areas to the team captain before leaving the site.

Throughout the first part of the site visit, team members should attempt to seek evidence to verify the school's compliance with Required Standards and Indicators of Success and validate that the school's self-study report is honest and accurate. Observation, exhibits and interviews help team members accomplish their work. The team has an opportunity to change a rating scale number that was prescribed by the school if evidence indicates that the school's assessment is inaccurate. That is why a thorough evaluation and assessment is critical to an overall assessment of standards compliance.

As the visit progresses, it is appropriate to ask specific questions about the adequacy of the school's mission and vision and to determine if the school reflects it. It is also appropriate to question if the mission and vision reflects the needs of the students, their parents, the congregation, and the community in which the school is located. The team report on the standard related to Mission and Vision will be the first report written and discussed by the team. It will serve as a model for the report-writing process to be used for the other sections of the visiting team report. Team members will reflect on the work which generated that report as they prepare their assigned work.

School goals, objectives, and activities are expected to flow from the school's statement of philosophy. The school's academic program should be evaluated on the basis of its objectives.

In both Standards Based Accreditation and Ongoing Improvement, compliance with Required Standards and Indicators of Success is an expectation for accreditation. Evaluations of a school using the Standards-Based process revolve completely around the school's compliance. The team's work is to verify and validate the school's compliance with Required Standards and Indicators of Success.

Review of the Ongoing Improvement process requires a cursory review of standard compliance and an intense review of the school's Ongoing Improvement Plan. That plan identifies where the school will be headed over the course of its next accreditation cycle.

TEAM ASSIGNMENTS

Accreditation standards for Lutheran schools are organized into 11 sections. Visiting team members will be assigned responsibilities directly related to those sections. The captain will usually assign team members to work in their areas of preference. Work assignments are made before the site visit in order to give team members the opportunity to thoroughly prepare for their work.

The 11 sections of the standards are:

1. Mission and Vision
2. Relationship
 - School and Congregation
 - School and Community
 - School Climate
3. Leadership
 - Governance
 - Administration
4. Personnel
5. Curriculum
6. Instruction
7. Student Services
8. Health and Safety
9. Facilities
10. Finance
11. Evaluation

For a **Standards-Based** team visit, the curriculum section is subdivided by subject area (religion, mathematics, computer education, reading, language arts, social studies, science, art, physical education, and any other subjects in the curriculum). Each area of the curriculum is evaluated separately. The captain assigns each curricular area to a team member for review. Team members visit classrooms while their assigned subject area is being taught to validate the school's evidence in its self-study document and compliance with the curriculum standard. In addition to each of the subjects, a team report on the general curriculum is written. Since the individual curricular areas provide evidence, compliance with Standard V, Curriculum, it is not necessary to address the compliance area when writing reports in these areas.

A sample list of the responsibilities for a standards based accreditation team of seven members:

Team Member	Major Responsibility Sections	Minor Responsibility Sections
Mary (captain)	1, 2 (religion)	6, 11 (social studies)
Sam	11 (mathematics, computer education)	(science) (physical education)
Jennifer	4, 9 (physical education)	8, 10 (religion)
Sue	7 [general], (reading, music)	(art, mathematics, music)
David	3, 6, 8	5, 9 (language arts)
Fred	10 (social studies, science)	1, 2, 7 (general)
Alice	5 (art, language arts)	3, 4 (reading)

“Major responsibility” means to “chair” the committee and write the report with the assistance and observations of the person with “minor” responsibility for that section.

During an **Ongoing Improvement** visit, each team member will be asked to validate the school’s compliance with required standards and indicators of success. Together, team members will review the standards checklist, the accompanying explanations, and materials. They will evaluate whether or not the school meets the expected level of achievement for National Lutheran School Accreditation.

In addition, the ongoing improvement team will evaluate the School Improvement Plan (SIP). SIP goals will be divided among the visiting team members so that each team member is responsible for carefully reviewing one or more specific goals and its attendant objectives and strategies for completion.

Each team member will submit his or her reactions to the goals and to the School Improvement Plan, including specific suggestions that could facilitate accomplishing them. These reactions should be presented for review and acceptance by the team as a whole, so that each section of the report becomes part of the report of the whole team, rather than a report by individual team members. Each recommendation must be reviewed and agreed to by all team members.

Sample: Ongoing Improvement Team Assignments

A. All three team members are to review and write a tentative report on the Standards Checklist.

B. Captain: Goals 1 and 4 and Report Summary

Consultant: Goals 2 and 6

Team Member: Goals 3, 5 and 7

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR TEAM MEMBERS

Not all visiting team members will be experienced in preparing school accreditation reports, processes, or visits. Although it is expected that each member of the team rely primarily on professional knowledge, personal experience, insights, and common sense, the following suggestions may help each member to more fully realize the task before them. These suggestions are not meant to limit the professional observations of the site visitor, but to provide some guidance for those observations.

1. Be concerned primarily for major issues rather than looking for nits to be picked. Keep in mind the school's philosophy and your purpose, that of helping the school.
2. Allow the comments made by the school staff in their self-study report to establish a direction for your work. At times you will want to affirm what is said in the self-study report. Thorough preparation before arriving at the school is critical to a successful visit.
3. The basic questions for the site visit are to determine if the school complies with Required Standards and Indicators of Success and how effectively the whole school or the part of the school relates to the standards that you have been assigned. Stay focused. Don't let little incidents or superficial concerns distract you from the larger purpose of your visit and report.

During the visit, every teacher in the school should be visited by one or more members of the visiting team. However, the team members must be cautious not to evaluate individual teachers. The objective is to evaluate instruction in the school, not to evaluate individuals. Even when requested for an evaluation of their teaching, it is appropriate for the team members to indicate that their purpose is not to evaluate individuals but to observe instruction as a whole. Any rating or specific evaluation of a specific teacher is inappropriate either by individual team members or by the team as a whole.

5. You are a professional educator. You have specific skills and abilities. You may be a specialist in a particular aspect of school. You can tell what a good program is compared to a bad program. You have the ability to determine what is effective and what is not. Conduct your tasks with confidence, relying on your God-given abilities. You are not expected to be perfect, but you are certainly capable of accomplishing assigned tasks within the prescribed time frame.
6. Although each educator has specific opinions about educational thinking, it is not the objective of the visiting team to impose any particular educational thinking on the local staff. Your personal opinions or educational philosophy are not appropriate in the report. It is your professional judgment and evaluation that is needed. You may wish to suggest alternatives to their practices and objectives, but not to indicate that these are weaknesses in the program. Schools are to be observed and evaluated on the basis of national standards and the local school's objectives, not individual, committee, or team opinions.
7. Actively solicit information. Don't wait for information to come to you. Information that is offered is sometimes the least credible or valuable in writing the visiting team report. Feel free to examine all parts of the school and to ask whatever professional questions you feel are appropriate. Aggressively, yet kindly and professionally, accomplish your task.
8. Time during the site visit is extremely limited. Seek out specific answers to questions you have and report those. Do not assume that you or anyone else will ever know all the answers to all the questions. It is possible that some of your assumptions based on your observations during the visit are inappropriate. All the visiting team is expected to do is report on what they observed while they were present and to make professional judgments on the basis of those observations.
9. Stick to your assignment. Look for information specifically related to your committee or individual assignment at the visit. You will not be able to observe everything or do every part of the report. Instead, try to determine the major questions or concerns about your areas of responsibility, then seek specific information to help you reach legitimate judgments.
10. As you observe and discuss those matters related to your areas of responsibility, you will come to tentative judgments. As soon as such judgments are made, check them out. Evaluate whether or not your tentative judgments are legitimate. Share them with other team members, but not with members of the local staff. However, by asking discreet questions you can check out your tentative judgments with

the staff without letting them know what your judgments are.

11. Throughout the visit, be willing to modify your tentative judgments. Keep observing. Don't assume you know all the answers on the first day.
12. The art of questioning without revealing tentative judgments requires a great deal of careful thought. Ask opening, not leading, questions of the staff. Do not vent your judgments or evaluations. By all means, don't criticize what an individual tells you. However, do try to get the individual to elaborate sufficiently so you have evidence that indicates what they said was true.
13. Watch and listen carefully. Sometimes what you see or hear is done for a particular purpose. Be aware of those purposes and evaluate the obvious on the basis of the purposes.
14. Evaluate things you see or hear based on the situation in which you see or hear them. Some statements and actions are based totally on a specific situation and are not typical of the school operation.
15. Discuss the school and all your observations with colleagues on the team. Share none of them with members of the staff at any time. Compare your tentative findings with other insights from other team members.
16. Although you may have many suggestions that you would like to offer during the visit—or ideas for changing things—or appropriate observations—withhold any comments until you write the report. It is your role to listen and observe during the visit, not to suggest verbally or to make comments.
17. Use available resources to make sure your comments are legitimate. Resources include all exhibits made available with the Self-Study Report, NLSA Notes of Clarification and other manuals, state curriculum and licensing guides, developmentally appropriate practices, and the students/children at the school.
18. Before you draw final conclusions, be sure you have sufficient facts to support them. If there is any doubt in your mind about something that you have assumed, check it out again. It is a great embarrassment to find that your conclusion is based on biased or faulty information.
19. Already, when reading the self-study report, you probably have reached some tentative conclusions about what you will find at the school. Be careful that those tentative conclusions, made without ever seeing the school, are tested over and over again during the school visit. Be sure your report is based on your observations and judgments made during the site visit.
20. As recommendations are considered, do your best to make them realistic in terms of the school. Sweeping, unrealistic recommendations are of no value. Only those recommendations that are somewhat realistic and possible are helpful. However, do not avoid making any recommendations for additional resources if the local school claims not to have sufficient funds. There are always appropriate goals for every school to reach.
21. Evaluate the conclusions, concerns and recommendations made in the self-study report. At times there will be conclusions and recommendations made that should be repeated in the site visit report. In that way, the local school and its constituents may be helped to accomplish their reasonable goals.

THE VISITING TEAM'S ORAL REPORT

The final task of the visiting team at the school is to provide a brief exit (oral) report to the faculty and others invited by the school. All members of the visiting team are expected to be present at the exit report. The team captain will lead this report and team members will participate in the presentation. This report will be general in nature, perhaps highlighting the “overview” portions of each written report.

Before the exit report, the team will prepare the “Report Summary.” The report summary will be shared during the exit report. The only specific recommendation to be given at the exit report is the overall recommendation for or against accreditation, unless there are major deficiencies. If there are major deficiencies, the school may need to take action immediately. The “Report Summary” is to be the last page of the visiting team’s written report.

The team’s verbal report usually takes no longer than 30-45 minutes. After that, a brief question-and-answer period may be held. If questions relate to specific recommendations or concerns, ask them to wait for the fully documented, carefully edited final written report which they will receive within two weeks.

During the exit report be sure to:

1. Begin with prayer.
2. Thank the school and the individuals for their gracious hospitality. Be specific here.
3. Comment on the cordiality with which you were received.
4. Share your personal appreciation.
5. Share something extra special you observed during the visit.
6. Compliment them on the effort and improvement that has occurred already.
7. Review the contents of the “overview” sections informally.
8. Let each member of the visiting team speak.
9. Read the team’s “Report Summary.”
10. Invite questions.
11. Explain the review process at the district and national levels.
12. Explain the appeal process.
13. Let them know when they will receive the team’s written report.
14. Remind them to distribute that report, after they publish it, to the district and national offices, the team members, and others at their discretion. Assure them of the team’s confidentiality.
15. Let them know when and how they will hear of the final approval of the team’s recommendation by the national accreditation commission.
16. Encourage them to realize that school improvement is never over and that you hope the team’s recommendations will help as they continue the process and prepare annual reports.
17. Close on a positive, happy note. Assure them of their quality (if such assurance is justified).
18. Close with prayer, the Lord’s benediction, and the doxology.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEAM MEMBERS

Individual Team Member

1. Be professional. Use professional judgment. Hold whatever information you receive in strictest confidence. Inquire, don't criticize. Make professional judgments, but don't talk about them to staff.
2. Read and study the self-study report, taking special note of those parts that deal with your specific assignments.
3. Attend pre-visit meetings punctually. Spend all required time on the site visit. You will not be able to schedule any other business during the days spent on the site visit.
4. Serve on assigned committees. Chair some. Assist others.
5. Write your report on time and professionally.
6. Make observations and test those observations before making judgments. Test tentative judgments before writing the report.
7. Prepare the written reports for each of the committees to which you have been assigned major responsibility, in cooperation with the other committee members.
8. Avoid unnecessary criticisms or reference to individual personalities.
9. Provide helpful, specific, realistic recommendations for each area of concern you note.
10. Be an active participant in the visiting team's oral report.
11. Pray for the school and your part in its accreditation.

Committee Chairpersons

1. Consult with your partner in your areas of assignments. Direct the efforts of the committee and be the person primarily responsible for the committee report.
2. Schedule classroom visits for committee members so that every teacher is visited at least once during your time at the school.
3. Provide the written report to the visiting team as a whole for their approval.
4. Revise the report based on the visiting team's comments and present it in final form to the captain.
5. Lead the team members through a review of the Standards Checklist (OI). Help the team reach consensus on each area.
6. Thoroughly review each goal associated with the School Improvement Plan (OI). Objectively evaluate each goal assessing realistic attainability and measurability. Provide helpful suggestions for improvement.
7. Prepare your positive reflections of the visit for the school faculty and invited guests at the end of the visit.
8. Provide an appropriate written report to the team captain before leaving the school site.
9. Pray for your leadership and the team as a whole. Resolve to give witness to your faith throughout the visit.

The Entire Visiting Team

1. Carefully review the school's mission and ministry statements and the objectives of the school.
2. Read the whole school self-study report, including the School Improvement Plan (OI).
3. Help one another accomplish assigned tasks.
4. Reach consensus on all items contained within the Standards Checklist (OI).
5. Become acquainted with the school, its congregation and its community.
6. Prepare an overall evaluation of the school and state it in the "Report Summary." Probably this overall evaluation will be the main portion of the exit report that the visiting team makes to the faculty and other individuals on the last day of the visit.
7. Carefully evaluate all committee reports and make appropriate suggestions for changes. All parts of the visiting team report should be acknowledged and approved by the team as a whole. That report is a report of the whole team, not only of individuals serving on specific committees.

THE VISITING TEAM'S WRITTEN REPORT

Writing the report is the most important task assigned to the visiting team. Therefore, the report must be written carefully. A visiting team report should be prepared with the intent of accurately reflecting the team's findings and having a positive influence upon the morale and future progress of the school.

Each section of a Standards-Based Visiting Team Report should contain five distinct parts:

- A. Overview
- B. Compliance
- C. Strengths
- D. Concerns
- E. Recommendations

For each strength and concern, the source of information should be noted by the code:

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

Every concern should numerically refer to the standard(s) to which it relates.

Overview

The overview should be an objective statement of what is, devoid of any concerns or recommendations. It should provide a brief, general look at this part of the school.

Compliance

This is a statement that communicates (YES or NO) that all the Required Standards and Indicators of Success have been met. Standard compliance is determined by adding a total of Lichert Scale point indicators and reaching the total required in each section for compliance.

Strengths

It is important that the section on strengths includes specific parts of the school which deserve note and commendation. It is vital that the report contain almost as many strengths as concerns where possible. The purpose of the report is to help, not to criticize unduly or to leave them with a feeling of despair.

Concerns

Without indicating that a particular facet of the school is a weakness or a limitation, it is appropriate that the report indicate the committee's concerns. Avoid relating insignificant details and focus on major issues. Base your specific concerns on specific observations. Relate each concern to an NLSA standard. This may be the most vital part of the report since it indicates areas where continued improvement may occur.

Recommendations

For every concern there should be at least one associated recommendation. A report that lists only concerns does not provide help for improvement. Recommendations are based on the team's professional judgment and experience. They are not requirements for the school to implement. Rather, they are helpful suggestions that the school will consider as it continues to improve.

Suggestions for Writing the Report

1. Each section of the report should be divided into separate sections: Overview, Standards Compliance, Strengths, Concerns, and Recommendations.
2. Determine required standard compliance by using the numerical formula as determined by the Lichert Scale for each section.
3. Within each section of your report, number each strength, concern, and recommendation.
4. Write carefully, using complete sentences and correct grammar and spelling. The quality of the report helps convey the importance of the accreditation process.
5. Submit your reports to the team captain before you leave the school.
6. Make your report objective rather than personal.
7. Follow the format and examples of the attached samples of reports.
8. Cite the source of information (observation, documentation, interview, self-study, etc.) for the strengths and concerns in your report. Cite the applicable standard and indicator of success.
9. Ensure that the "Report Summary" (the last page of the report) includes the team's recommendation about accreditation and any outstanding strengths or major deficiencies. A major deficiency is any condition based on an NLSA standard that 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 prescribed by the team (no longer than two years).

SAMPLE REPORT SECTION: LEADERSHIP

Overview

Immanuel congregation has established a clearly delineated and detailed organizational structure within the parish. The principal, through the school board, is responsible to the Board of Directors and voters of Immanuel for the effective operation of the school. A comprehensive policy manual has been written.

Compliance

Are all required indicators of success met? ___YES ___NO

Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of 72 points? ___YES ___NO

Strengths

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

1. Written, detailed personnel policies and procedures are available. (1, 4)
2. The professionalism and Christian commitment of the administrator and staff are very noteworthy. This has a profound impact upon the congregation and community-at-large. (2, 3)
3. The administrator and school board have shown a great amount of leadership in curriculum development and policy formulation. (2, 3, 4)
4. Procedures for effective communication during emergencies have been devised and are clearly communicated in written form. (4)
5. Excellent procedures for annual faculty and staff evaluations have been developed. (1, 2, 4)
6. The plan for summer use of faculty time allows for an orderly process in class scheduling, professional growth, and curriculum development. (1, 2, 4)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

1. **(Concern)** The job description of the principal does not allow enough time for supervision of personnel. (1, 2) (Standard 5B:13)
(Recommendation) Update the job description of the principal to consider providing for full-time administration.
2. **(Concern)** The principal lacks the necessary coursework for his administrative certificate. (1, 2, 4) (Standard 5B:03)
(Recommendation) Provide time, encouragement, and assistance to the principal while he is working toward the state administrative certificate.
3. **(Concern)** The congregation has not addressed the problem of separation of the school office from the two classroom buildings. (1, 2, 3) (Standard 11:12)
(Recommendation) Ask the parish planning committee to address the needs of the church and school offices and prioritize these into any other remodeling plans. Supervision, faculty meetings, school discipline procedures, and communication would be enhanced by incorporating the offices into the classroom building.
4. **(Concern)** Written job descriptions for teachers do not exist. (4) (Standard 5A:10)
(Recommendation) Prioritize the development of faculty job descriptions.
5. **(Concern)** The summer organizational plan for staff does not serve the interests of the entire parish. (1, 2) (Standard 2:03)
(Recommendation) Devote a percentage of faculty summer work to total parish service. This should be done with the consultation of all involved.
6. **(Concern)** Although the policy manual is quite comprehensive, there apparently is a need to carefully examine whether all divisions function as outlined. (2, 4) (Standard 5A:07)

(Recommendation) Re-examine the policy manual to determine where various divisions are unclear in responsibilities.

7. **(Concern)** The administrator should have a greater amount of input into school building maintenance. If he is responsible for health and safety, then he needs to be able to help determine building needs and priorities for maintenance and repair. (2) (Standard 11:08)

(Recommendation) The principal should be given the power to correct emergency repairs and maintenance.

8. **(Concern)** The preschool is separated by distance from the resources of the administrator. (3) (Standard 11:01)

(Recommendation) Evaluate the possibility of establishing a preschool director to help the principal in the administration of the preschool.

9. **(Concern)** There are no signs to direct visitors to the administrative offices. (3) (Standard 11:01)

(Recommendation) Place signs in convenient locations around the school to direct visitors to the administrative offices.

SAMPLE REPORT SECTION: RELATIONSHIPS

Overview

The credo of the Lutheran school reflects the Church's mission, as given in God's Word. One hundred years ago the Lutheran community of this city understood the Great Commission in such a way that a parochial school was a matter of high priority. Those who have succeeded those early settlers to this community have continued to strengthen the relationship between congregation and school and extend it to its surrounding community.

Are all required indicators of success met? ___YES ___NO

Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of 62 points? ___YES ___NO

Strengths

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

1. A cooperative spirit between the two operating congregations and the school itself is evident. (1, 2, 3)
2. The established formula of congregational funding support seems adequate for the school's current program as a whole. (2, 4)
3. A high percentage of the staff is involved in non-school congregational ministry. (1, 2)
4. The Board of Directors, made up of members of both operating congregations, continues to represent the concerns of both congregations in policy decisions. (1, 2)
5. The Board of Directors, through informal expression, represents a strong commitment to the Christian emphasis of the Lutheran school. (2, 4)
6. The pastors from both congregations demonstrate support for the school in tangible ways. (1, 2, 3)
7. A Christ-centered, respectful relationship exists between students and teachers. (1, 2)
8. The school exhibits a positive, Gospel-centered climate. (1, 2, 3)
9. The school shares its ministry periodically through student involvement community events through its choir. (2)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

1. **(Concern)** Although there appears to be an effort to enhance the relationship with other area LCMS congregations, no specific plans or proposals were presented. (1, 2) (Standard 2:01)
(Recommendation) The Board of Directors should contact the LCMS area congregations not currently providing operating funds for the Lutheran school and discuss with them specific proposals for such support.
2. **(Concern)** While non-voting board membership has been offered to the area LCMS congregations, no representatives from these congregations have become members. (1, 2, 4) (Standard 2:01)
(Recommendation) The Board of Directors should communicate to the local LCMS congregations a desire to have them be represented on the board.
3. **(Concern)** Only 60 percent of the staff participates in Sunday or weekday Bible classes. (1, 2) (Standard 2:03)
(Recommendation) In addition to the high involvement in congregational ministries on the part of the staff, they should be encouraged to begin immediate participation in Sunday or weekday Bible classes.
4. **(Concern)** While evangelism is described as a considerable concern, no specific evangelism effort is described in connection with the unchurched students and their families. (1, 2) (Standard 2:09)
(Recommendation) A request should be made of the two chairpersons of the boards of evangelism that a specific plan be prepared to personally contact those families served by the Lutheran school who are unchurched.

SAMPLE REPORT SECTION: MATHEMATICS

Overview

Teachers of mathematics appeared sensitive to student needs and abilities. The concepts presented were explained in more than one way, with different concrete examples being used to stimulate student interest. Students appeared interested in the materials being presented.

Strengths

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

1. Teachers obviously were excited about the subject as they taught. (3)
2. Many concrete applications to mathematical principles were used during the course of the lesson. Mathematical concepts were presented as tools in order to make students aware of their practicality in daily activities and in planning for the technological life of the future. (3)
3. A cohesive, well-coordinated program of basic mathematical concepts and an enriched algebra program are being developed at the upper grade level. (1, 2, 4)
4. Computers are used as teaching tools in mathematics. (1, 2, 4)
5. Computers are used to provide an individualized program of mathematical skill development in the upper grades. (2)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

1. **(Concern)** Manipulative devices to put abstract concepts into concrete conceptual form were not used frequently. (3) (Standard 8:03, 9:01)
(Recommendation) More manipulative mathematical devices need to be made available.
2. **(Concern)** Students appear to have difficulty relating an abstract concept to a practical application in daily living. (1,2,3) (Standard 8:02)
(Recommendation) More time and practical experience need to be provided in the curriculum for analytical thinking and for experiential learning experiences.
3. **(Concern)** All students are provided with the same assignments, and little or no difference is made for individual abilities in the lower grades. (2,3) (Standard 8:03, 8:06)
(Recommendation) Modified assignments that cover the basic concept would help reach the needs of the gifted as well as the students who are struggling.

(ALTERNATE FORMAT) LEADERSHIP

Overview

Members of the Board of Christian Education are elected in accordance with the bylaws of Zion Lutheran Church. Minutes are approved at each meeting and are available for review.

The administrator has a working relationship with the pastors and other church staff. Her length of service and leadership abilities have earned her the respect of the church and community.

Are all required indicators of success met? ___ YES ___ NO

Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of 72 points? ___ YES ___ NO

Commendations

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

The committee commends Zion Lutheran School:

1. For the support of Christian education it receives from the congregation. (1, 2)
2. For seeking high standards of credibility through National Lutheran School Accreditation. (3)
3. For a school policy handbook in which all policies of the Board of Christian Education have been compiled. (1, 4)
4. For the administrator's participation in professional organizations, her enthusiastic performance at conventions, and her membership in the Synod. (1, 3)
5. For a detailed job description for the principal. (1, 4)
6. For maintaining accurate and current files for each faculty member and student. (1, 3)

Recommendations

The committee recommends that:

1. Since there is no process in place to evaluate the work of the principal, develop a process that will allow input from parents, faculty, and board members to evaluate the principal on the basis of her job description. (2, 4) (Standard 5A:12)
2. Since there is no teacher evaluation instrument in use, develop a teacher evaluation instrument and a schedule for classroom visits that will provide an ongoing program of staff supervision and improvement of instruction. (1, 2) (Standard 5B:13)
3. Evaluate the amount of time the principal is accorded to accomplish her administrative tasks and, if appropriate, provide her additional time for administrative duties. (1, 2, 3) (Standard 5B:07)

REPORT SUMMARY SAMPLE STANDARDS COMPLIANCE

The school conforms with all Standards and Required Indicators of Success.

Recommendation

The visiting team unanimously recommends that Trinity Lutheran School receive accreditation by National Lutheran School Accreditation.

Outstanding Strengths

- The new administrator is a remarkable blessing. Her new ideas and practices have re-invigorated the faculty.
- Parents are unanimous in their praise of the school and its outstanding academic program in a caring environment.
- Relationships between the school and the congregation are very supportive. All the professional church workers seem to be good friends and eager to assist one another in ministry and in personal matters.
- Teachers are capable and enthusiastic. Their excitement for learning and creative teaching techniques, coupled with educationally sound, up-to-date learning materials, provide excellent instruction.

Major Deficiencies

- Since the school does not conform to fire and safety regulations (Standard 11:04), the administration must ensure that all facilities conform fully with all applicable fire and safety codes for the safety and protection of facility users before September 1, 2007.
- Since no policy or consistent procedure is in place for dispensing medicine to students (Standard 10B:06), the administration must develop and implement a policy and procedure for dispensation of medication for the health and welfare of children before June 1, 2007.
- Since the curriculum is not reviewed and updated on a regular basis (Standard 7:08), the administrator and faculty, in order to improve instruction, must develop, implement, and adhere to a schedule for updating each curriculum area before June 15, 2007.

John Schmidt
Team Captain

SAMPLE WRITTEN SITE VISITOR'S ONGOING IMPROVEMENT REPORT

1. Accreditation Recommendation

On the basis of our review of the School Profile, the NLSA Standards Checklist, the narrative statements, and the School Improvement Plan for Trinity Lutheran School, we:

recommend NLSA accreditation. do not recommend NLSA accreditation

Name of Team Captain Charles Larsen

Signature of Team Captain Charles Larsen Date 2/10/2000

2. Team Checklist

	YES	NO	
1	√		The school has successfully completed NLSA Phase I.
2	√		The school has successfully completed the Standards Checklist.
3	√		The exhibits are appropriate and complete.
4	√		The school indicated satisfactory compliance with the NLSA Standards.
5	√		The narrative summary statement for each section indicates valid reasons for incomplete compliance or non-compliance.
6	√		The needs assessment adequately identifies school and student needs.
7	√		The School Improvement Plan states valid, student-centered goals for improving the school's program based on identified needs and NLSA standards.
8	√		The School Improvement Plan provides for an adequate process for addressing the identified goals, including objectives and strategies to be used, a time frame, and methods for evaluation.

3. Standards Checklist Report

The school indicated that it met all the NLSA standards except three. Observation and interviews by team members indicate that this very positive evaluation of the school and its program is justified. Trinity is a very good school that provides outstanding ministry for children and their families.

The explanations for why three of the standards were not met were clear and specific, justifying, in the minds of the visiting team members, that there were defensible reasons for not meeting those standards and that the school will strive to meet them as soon as possible.

4. School Improvement Plan Report

The School Improvement Plan included eight goals that were clearly written and indicated a preferred future condition at the school. Objectives and strategies were written for each goal. The goals were based on valid assessments of legitimate student needs.

Although the school as a whole was acceptable, the visiting team has the following concerns and related recommendations:

Goal 1: Although it is assumed that goals are so broad that it is difficult to find a specific way to measure them directly, it is vital that objectives and strategies be specific and measurable.

Concern: Objectives 1, 5, and 8 are too general to be evaluated easily. For example: Objective 5 reads that students will receive adequate counseling.

Recommendation: A more appropriate objective would be, "Counseling services will be available to all students one day of each week."

Goal 2: This goal is appropriate and the objectives seem real and measurable.

Concern: Strategy 9 does not seem realistic considering the resources available.

Recommendation: Change Strategy 9 from "Every student will be required to buy a laptop computer" to "Each student in grades 2 and 5 will be required to purchase a laptop computer," with the expectation that this requirement will be extended gradually to other grade levels.

5. Report Summary

The relationships among the faculty and between teacher and child were excellent. Relationships between teachers and parents were outstanding. We found no major deficiencies that must be addressed immediately. This speaks well for the school and its staff. There is work yet to be done and there is improvement that can be made. However, the SIP plan that has been developed is accepted by the visiting team and is a good basis for continued improvement.

VISITING TEAM BIOGRAPHY

Name: _____

Present Position: _____

Education:

Areas of Expertise:

Previous experience on an Accreditation Team:

School	Accreditation process	Year
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EVALUATION OF THE TEAM CAPTAIN BY TEAM MEMBERS

At the conclusion of the visit, each team member is asked to complete this evaluation and return it to the District Education Executive and NLSA office in St. Louis. Circle the word that defines your agreement with each statement. Feel free to make additional comments below as well.

Name of Team Captain _____ Dates of Team Visit _____

Name of School/Location (city/state) _____

- 1. Communication from the captain was shared with me within a few weeks of my accepting the team position.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 2. A detailed time schedule was distributed.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 3. The team meeting room was adequate.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 4. Details of the visit were well planned (meals, supplies, secretarial help).
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 5. Housing arrangements were suitable.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 6. Basic information regarding fellow team members was shared.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 7. Assignments were made ahead of time and appropriately explained.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 8. My responsibilities as a team member were clearly explained.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 9. I was given guidance as to how to carry out my assigned tasks.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 10. Questioning techniques, observation procedures, report writing techniques, performance standards, note taking, and educational professionalism were explained and demonstrated.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 11. The team captain facilitated the discussion and review of the various committee reports.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 12. Consensus of approval was sought.
Definitely Generally Somewhat No
- 13. How could the team captain prepare you better to fulfill your role as a team member?

14. If you were asked to serve on another visiting team, would you elect to serve? Why?

Comments

Signature of Team Member

Phone Number

Date

MISSION STATEMENT

NLSA encourages and recognizes schools that provide quality Christian education and engage in continuous improvement.

Accreditation by National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) indicates that the school successfully completed the NLSA process of self-study, reporting, and evaluation by a visiting team and that the visiting team recommended NLSA accreditation as a result of that visit. It is determined, through this process, that the school is worthy of NLSA accreditation. Neither NLSA nor its authorizing agency, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, assume responsibility for the school's quality (or lack thereof) or for variations from NLSA standards either at the time of initial accreditation or at any time during NLSA accreditation.



National Lutheran School Accreditation

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