



Visiting Team Report

for

Zion Lutheran School

14735 County Road 153

Cologne, MN 55322

April 23-25, 2012

FOREWORD

Becoming accredited is a strenuous process. Zion Lutheran School 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 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 Zion Lutheran School.

The committee hereby expresses sincere gratitude to the faculty, staff and students at Zion Lutheran School 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.

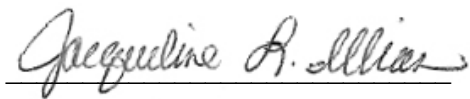
Zion Lutheran School obviously is a good school. This was reflected not only in your self-study but also in the comments and observations of the visiting team. The school speaks out for the Christian faith to the students and to the community very effectively. We were delighted with the whole climate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

This report is carefully written and includes specific recommendations that should be considered seriously by the Zion Lutheran School. Not every recommendation needs to be followed, but should be reviewed over the next five year cycle.

The three members of the visiting team were divided into committees. This report combines the talent of all members of the team and of the committees. 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. **Compliance.** This part is a summary of compliance with required standards and a cumulative total for the rest of the items within that standard. 3. **Strengths.** These are the most obvious strengths of the topic of the report. 4. **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. 5. **Recommendations.** Wherever possible, specific, practical suggestions have been made to help to remedy the concerns expressed.

Dave Polzin and I, your consultant and team captain respectively, pledge our 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 Zion Lutheran School so that with the Lord's help you might continue to proclaim His Gospel ever more effectively through Zion Lutheran School.



Jacqueline Illian, Team Captain

Visiting Team Report summary by

Jacqueline Illian, team captain

on behalf of team members:

Dave Polzin and Sheila Scheele

Outstanding Strengths

Zion Lutheran School has been, is, and will continue to be a blessing to Zion Lutheran Church and the Cologne community because of its greatest asset: People. God has placed a group of people at Zion who not only know why God placed them there, but have submitted themselves to God's will and way. Principal Gosa is being accepted as the unquestioned leader of the school. Pastor Zacharias' unwavering support of Christian education through Zion Lutheran School is noticed and appreciated by many. The dedicated faculty labor tirelessly. The members of the School Board each bring unique gifts to the table as they set policy and vision for the school. The support staff, congregation members and volunteers all find their places on a huge team known as Zion Lutheran Church and School.

Other outstanding strengths include intangibles such as a renewed sense of optimism, a unity of mission and vision direction, and a very evident visibility of faith being incorporated into the very fiber of the school.

Dedicated staff, board, volunteers – tireless and dedicated leadership who are open to feedback and eager to fix issues as they arise – you are bringing children to Jesus – staff are passionate – family atmosphere – the children are excited about learning about Jesus – teachers are eager to teach and share the gospel with the students – the students are getting an excellent education – family activities are great at getting the parents, new and established, involved -

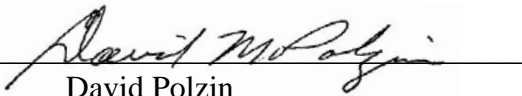
Recommendation

It is the unanimous recommendation of the visiting team that Zion Lutheran School be granted accreditation by National Lutheran School Accreditation.

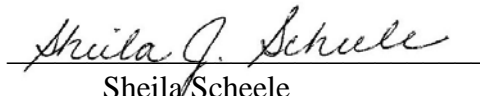


Jacqueline Illian - April 25, 2012

We, the undersigned, strongly recommend to the District Accreditation Commission and the National Accreditation Commission that Zion Lutheran School, Cologne, MN should be accredited through **National Lutheran School Accreditation.**



David Polzin



Sheila Scheele

April 25, 2012

Zion Lutheran School - Cologne, MN NLSA Visiting Team – April 23-25



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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 Zion Lutheran School. The distribution of this report and its availability for public consideration beyond that point rests solely in the hands of Zion Lutheran School and its administration.

Neither the captain nor members of the visiting team are authorized to release any of the information contained in this report without the approval of the administration of Zion Lutheran School.

The primary purpose of the visiting team has been to examine the educational ministry of Zion Lutheran 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 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 around the self-study conducted by the individual school. The visiting team and its subsequent report are meant to assist Zion Lutheran 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 Zion Lutheran School.

Standard 1: Mission and Vision

Overview

The mission of Zion Lutheran School is:

Posted Mission: *“Feed My Lambs” Through the teaching of the Christian Faith and guidance in the Christian Life for personal growth and development.*

Exhibit in NLSA Self-Study Report: *Zion Lutheran School will “Feed My Lambs” to strengthen their Faith life, Sanctification, and Personal Life.*

The mission of Zion Lutheran School supports the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Mission.

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 mission statement is posted in every classroom and displayed in the building. (3)
2. The mission statement is affixed above the entrance into the education wing of the building. (3)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

1. Mission statements are posted in key areas throughout the school and church. The self study manual shows two different mission statements, the mission statement in section one exhibits is different from the one in the handbook. (1, 3, 4) **Ensure that all pieces of information have been corrected when making a change so that they are uniform and convey the same message.**
2. The mission statement of a school is the driving force in everything that you do. This mission statement should be well known by the staff, parents and members of the congregation. (3, 4) **Look into adding the mission statement to newsletters, church bulletin, website and other print material.**

Standard 2: Relationships- School and Congregations

Overview

Zion Lutheran Church and School enjoy a relationship of support for each other. The congregation shows this support through the provision of the facilities, staffing, funding, and prayer. The school becomes part of the church through its efforts to be included in the worship and activities of congregation. Zion's attitude towards its purpose and ministry makes it a very positive place to be.

Compliance

- C. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- D. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **62** points? **Yes**
- E. The following items have been changed to:
2A:09 – Mostly met

Strengths

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

- 3. Students participate in the life of the congregation through planned activities. (2)
- 4. There is a long history of congregational support for school. (1, 2)
- 5. The pastor and the school staff support each other in ministry. (1, 2, 3)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

- 3. Besides singing in a school choir, school students of the school are (2) **Continue exploring possible ways for the school to be more visible to the congregation.**

Standard 2: Relationships- School and Community

Overview

The student body at Zion represents it surrounding community.

Compliance

- F. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- G. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **62** points? **Yes**
- H. The following items have been changed to:
2B:15 – Mostly met

Strengths

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

- 6. Zion Lutheran School has improved its community visibility newspaper articles, web site, school brochures. (4)
- 7. The Zion Education League supports the programs of the school both in funding and promotion.(1, 3)
- 8. Community members of the Cologne area are encouraged and welcome to attend events at the school and church. (1, 2)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

- 4. Zion Education League is supportive of the school and its programs. The ZEL is however void of any parent education programs. (1) **The ZEL should incorporate into its activities parent education programs.**
- 5. Zion Lutheran seems to have an idea/plan about getting more information out to the community through “Cradle Roll”, postcards and parades. (1, 2) **Develop the marketing plans that can be carried out by members, families of ZLS and staff.**
- 6. As the expansion of the 212 corridor continues, and the area around Cologne expands Zion will need to plan ahead. (2) **Consider ways in which Zion can be proactive to the changes of this highway and housing expansion.**

Standard 2: Relationships - School Climate

Overview

Zion Lutheran School maintains a positive Christian atmosphere which is seen in the activities of the school. The faculty, staff, and students show love and respect for each other and support for one another.

Compliance

- I. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- J. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **62** points? **Yes**

Strengths

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

- 9. The families of Zion Lutheran School and Church are a great asset and strength to the overall community (1, 2).
- 10. Teachers are concerned with the students' spiritual needs (1, 2, 3).

Concerns and Recommendations

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

- 7. Zion has a core group of parents that are active and willing to share concerns with the decision making groups (1). **Continue to regularly invite parents to communicate concerns and joys.**
- 8. It appears that Zion does a survey each year to get a feel for how the school is doing (1). **Consider ways in which to utilize your survey in planning and decision making.**

Standard 3A: Leadership - Governance

Overview

Zion Lutheran is governed by a Board of Education whose membership is comprised of elected individuals from the congregation. The Board of Education feels a strong sense of ownership as they create policies for school improvement and community awareness.

Compliance

- K. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- L. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **72** points? **Yes**
- M. The following items have been changed to:
3A:15 – Mostly met

Strengths

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

- 11. The members of the Board of Education at Zion Lutheran are dedicated to serving the Lord through their time on the board. (2)
- 12. The members of the Board of Education have strong personal relationships with the congregation, teachers and administrator. (2)
- 13. The Board of Education has identified school needs. (1, 2)
- 14. The members of the Board of Education are committed to the school's mission statement. (1, 2)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

- 9. As stated in the School Board Handbook, the board will develop a marketing plan (1). **It is recommended that the school board create a written plan for marketing the school.**
- 10. Systematic strategic planning gives the board the opportunity to evaluate what has been done and plan for the future (1). **Consider doing an intensive five year strategic plan to address area of growth and vision; i.e. childcare, building expansion.**

Standard 3: Leadership

Overview

The principal is charged with the overall operation of the school and is accountable to the school board. Zion is blessed to have an administrator that is committed to Lutheran schools.

Compliance

N. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**

O. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **72** points? **Yes**

Strengths

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

15. The administrator is active in the life of the congregation. He is seen as the go-to person for school related items. (1, 2, 3)

16. The administrator demonstrates his faith on a daily basis. (3)

17. The administrator uses his skills to further technology at Zion. (1, 2, 3)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

11. The administrator, depending on circumstances, may not have adequate time to perform his administrative role. **Evaluate the amount of time that the administrator has to fill his/her position and adjust accordingly.**

12. Currently, the church and school share the services of a secretary. With the upcoming change in administration, it is essential to **increase/continue providing secretarial staffing as needed for the future administrator.**

13. **Consider funding classes (teacher evaluation/finances/SLED/etc.) for the new administrator, as needed.**

Standard 4 - Personnel

Overview

Zion Lutheran School has been blessed with qualified and dedicated staff members that are willing to work together for the good of the students.

Compliance

- P. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- Q. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **16** points? **Yes**
- R. The following items have been changed to:
4:02 – Mostly met

Strengths

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

18. Each teacher holds a bachelor's degree. (1)
19. All full-time staff personnel are members of an LCMS congregation. (2)
20. The student/teacher ratio is low which provides time for individual instruction. (1, 3)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

14. Not all full-time faculty members are on or eligible to be on the roster of the Synod.
(2) **Evaluate whether it is possible to have all full-time teaching staff on, or eligible to be on, the roster of the Synod.**
15. Professional organizations enhance knowledge and provide current resources that can be used in our teaching. (1) **Faculty members should attempt to diversify memberships in professional organizations.**

Standard 5 - Curriculum

Overview

Zion Lutheran School has a written curriculum based on curricular guides received from publishers, public schools and the use of *Integrating the Faith*.

Compliance

- S. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- T. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **40** points without infants/toddlers?
Yes
- U. The following items have been changed to:
5:12 – Mostly met

Strengths

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

1. The Christian faith is integrated throughout the curriculum. (3, 4)
2. The daily class schedules include an appropriate amount of time for each subject. (1, 2)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

16. A schedule for evaluating curriculum is not in place. (2) **Adopt a schedule for evaluating current curriculum.**
17. As parochial schools, we need to insure that we are meeting and/or exceeding state standards. (1) **As curriculum is reviewed, use Minnesota state standards as the basis of your curriculum guide.**
18. Although there is written curriculum, there is lack of documentation on how goals and objectives are being met. (1) **Develop a plan for regular evaluation and documentation of objectives, i.e. a checklist indicating what quarter this objective was taught.**

Mathematics:

Math curriculum and instruction is developmentally appropriate for all skill levels. The three levels for seventh and eighth grades give the added opportunity for the students to be placed in an area in which they can be successful.

Language Arts:

The Language Arts curriculum includes reading comprehension, vocabulary, phonics, grammar usage, spelling, and writing. The curriculum appears to build upon previously taught objectives, and new skills are introduced at the appropriate grade levels. Most grade levels contain objectives that would integrate the Christian faith.

Religion:

The religion textbooks, which are produced by Concordia Publishing House, present sound Missouri Synod doctrine. The current series will be updated as the new series is published. Zion's pastor teaches confirmation to the students in grades 7-8.

Computer:

Through Zion's technology curriculum, students learn the basics of computer operation. They also learn keyboarding, basic word processing, spreadsheet and database techniques, as well as topics surrounding ethical use of digital information.

Physical Education:

Students at Zion participate in a wide variety of physical education activities designed to provide student fitness. Through the curriculum, students learn about a variety of games and sports, as well as an appreciation of the physical gifts that God has given to them.

Science:

Hands on materials in the lower grades are available to the students. It appears that there is a limited amount of materials for experimentation.

Social Studies:

Zion Lutheran School is blessed with technology that lends itself to be used for other subject areas like social studies. The use of online resources and the Frozen in Time event are two ways in which history has come alive to the students.

Art:

Art is something that the school has into the schedule and when possible is taught by one teacher. The curriculum shows that a variety of media, technique and design are taught. Art work is displayed throughout the building.

Music:

The written music curriculum lists appropriate learner outcomes. The stated objectives allow students to listen, learn, and express themselves through music.

Standard 6 - Instruction

Overview

Instruction is a strongpoint of Zion Lutheran School. Experienced teachers with specialty areas teach to their strengths in a departmentalized setting thoroughly portions of the school day.

Compliance

V. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**

W. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum **30** of points? **Yes**

Strengths

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

21. The staff possesses a wealth of experience. (1, 3)

22. A variety of methods are utilized by the teaching staff. (3)

23. Online grading has been implemented for charting student progress. (1, 3)

24. Smart boards and computers are utilized by students and teachers throughout instruction. (1, 3)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

19. There is no formalized system for textbook adoption or curriculum update. (2, 3) **Put a plan together that indicates the order of textbook selection, based on a curriculum review. Supplement the textbook with items that will fill out the curriculum.**

20. Technology plays such an important part in the education of today's child. (1, 2, 3) **Keep current on available technology that will enhance student learning by pursuing continuing education opportunities.**

21. Finances so often dictate and limit technology purchases. (2, 3) **Initiate a technology fund, placing 20-25% of the total projected cost of technology replacement over a four to five year period.**

Standard 7 – Student Services

Overview

Student Services at Zion Lutheran School are offered and foster the growth of each student.

Compliance

- X. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- Y. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **40** points without infants/toddlers?
Yes
- Z. The following items have been changed to:
 - 7A:06 – Mostly met
 - 7A:07 – Mostly met

Strengths

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

- 25. Through school activities students have opportunities to share their Christian faith.
(2, 3)
- 26. The school provides activities for students beyond the standard classroom instruction.(2, 3, 4)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

- 22. The school has no written procedures for handling students' emotional, social, and psychological needs. (1) **Develop a written plan so that staff and faculty follow the same steps when working with students' emotional, social, and psychological needs.**
- 23. A working relationship was developed with Lutheran Counseling Services in which you were able to refer students and families. Since the closing of the Counseling center no formal relationship with another service has been established. (1) **Consider developing a relationship with another counselor in which you can refer families.**
- 24. The school has established measures to assess student development. (1, 2, 3)
Document a written plan that addresses the procedures for evaluating students for promotion and graduation.

25. For students who are dropped off early, they participate in the morning devotions with the staff. They are then released to the care of the teachers in the classroom or gym. (3) **For safety and liability reasons, ensure that the students are under direct supervision during all times throughout the day.**

Standard 8: Health and Safety

Overview

Health and safety is the building block to every school system. When you have a safe and healthy school you have safe and healthy staff and student body.

Compliance

- AA. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- BB. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **12** points? **Yes**

Strengths

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

27. Zion Lutheran has established a school wellness policy. (1, 4)

28. Practice fire drills monthly. (2)

29. Healthy balanced meals are provided by the kitchen staff. (1, 2, 3)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

26. The entrance into Zion Lutheran is hidden when driving south on county road 153 and creates a potential dangerous situation. It is understood by school families that when coming to Zion they should use the second driveway when turning left. Someone who is unfamiliar with the school would not necessarily even know that there is a second driveway. (3) **Look into ways that this potential dangerous situation can be diminished. i.e. signage identified south driveway as main entrance and north driveway as the exit.**

27. In speaking with staff, an evaluation of the asbestos is done each year. (2) **It is recommended that you obtain a copy of the report that is done yearly to be kept on the premises.**

28. Students learn firsthand what it means to be of service to the community. (2, 3)
Check into the regulations from OSHA, Health Department and liability insurance company for students serving lunch each day.
29. Emergency evacuation procedures are in place and posted throughout the building. (1, 2, 3) **Consider establishing one evacuation plan that can be used year round that utilizes the closest exit for all areas.**

Standard 9: Facilities

Overview

Zion Lutheran School has a structurally sound facility in good repair. All areas are on one level, which makes it accessible to everyone. There is adequate classroom space for students and they have an expansive outdoor playground area.

Compliance

- CC. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- DD. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **18** points? **Yes**

Strengths

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

30. Zion's building is clean and attractive with appropriate furniture for students. (3)
31. The church property lends itself to future growth. (3)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

30. All entrance doors remain unlocked during the school day. (3, 2) **Consider locking all entrance doors and /or adding a bell or buzzer to front entrance doors.**
31. Doors to basement are not locked. (3) **Add locking mechanism to doors of all storage and maintenance areas.**
32. **Provide another safe means of exit for the kindergarten/preschool room.**

33. A building expansion plan has been developed. (2) **Implement the next phase of the plan, as funding is available.**

Standard 10: Finance

Overview

Zion Lutheran School is blessed by church and family support through additional money allocation to salaries and repairs. Zion is challenged by the economic down turn to continue the support of the whole ministry, which has included additional fundraising to make ends meet.

Compliance

EE. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**

FF. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **20** points? **Yes**

Strengths

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

32. Zion Lutheran School has the support of the congregation and school families financially. (1, 2, 4)
33. Both the school and church contribute to the overall operational budget. (1, 2, 4)
34. Zion has a low tuition rate which helps families afford Christian education. (1, 2, 4)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

34. Teaching salaries are not at district guidelines at this time. Increases have been approved for next year. Salaries not only impact the effectiveness of current staff but also impact the recruitment of future quality staff members. (1, 4) **Endeavor to steadily move to MN-South district guidelines.**
35. According to the track record of the church and school when it comes to budgets, we feel that the indicator of success has been met. (1, 2) **It is recommended that you make a projected three year budget by using projected enrollments and minimal increases in expenses.**

Standard 11: Evaluation

Overview

The ability to evaluate students, faculty, and programs in a variety of ways is vital to the success and continued excellence of Zion Lutheran School.

Compliance

- GG. Are all required indicators of success met? **Yes**
- HH. Is the total for indicators of success a minimum of **14** points? **Yes**
- II. The following items have been changed to:
11:07 – Mostly met

Strengths

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

32. Zion utilizes the Lutheran Special Education Ministries program, allowing special needs of students to be addressed. (1, 3)
33. Teachers use a variety of assessment methods to insure student evaluation and success. (1, 2, 3)
34. ITBS tests are used to indicate student growth. (1, 4)

Concerns and Recommendations

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

36. While ITBS testing can be a valuable tool to view student growth, **consider how other testing tools (Otis-Lennon Cognitive Abilities, MAP, etc.) can provide additional valuable student information to aid in student development.**
37. **After an annual facility inspection, make written plans to address needs, with a timeline/plan for major improvements (installation of hallway lockers, countertops, floors, etc.).**