



SCHOOL ACCREDITATION AND ITS IMPACT ON OUR WELS SCHOOLS

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**Signature Page**

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### Abstract

The use of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation (WELSSA) process as a means for school improvement, academic improvement, and school growth and recruitment improvement was explored in this study. Surveys were given to all sixty-six WELS accredited schools.

The survey focused on sixteen multiple option questions on school accreditation, which were to be answered by all participants. The survey covered the areas of school improvement, academic improvement, and school growth and recruitment. The survey also included two open-ended questions that asked for input on what areas of school improvement accreditation influenced the most in their schools. The principals of the schools were to supply their enrollment numbers for their schools before and after accreditation to determine if the schools experienced numerical growth after being accredited. To review the area of academic improvement, the principals were asked to give their eighth grade composite scores for TerraNova testing before accreditation and after accreditation to see pre and post information concerning standardized test scores.

Results in this study indicated that the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation process showed data that school improvement and academic improvement occurred from before accreditation to after accreditation. The data results indicated WELSSA may be a benefit to school growth and improvement in recruitment.

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## **Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem**

### **Introduction**

In 2003, the Commission on Parish Schools and the Board for Parish Services of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) resolved to establish a WELS school accreditation process as a means of improving the effectiveness of WELS schools (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2010a). Over the last eight years, the Synod has had a number of schools that have gone through the accreditation process. As a school goes through the accreditation process, the people involved in this process will see all the challenges and the benefits to accreditation. The school personnel are required to adhere to certain standards and to plan for overall school improvement.

### **Problem Statement**

Experiences with accreditation have brought up questions about whether or not the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation Process has led to improvement in certain areas of school life and in making schools better. The areas this study focused on were academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment for WELS accredited schools. Collins (2001) urged organizations to see that the first difficult step toward improvement is to confront the brutal facts about themselves. Being able to recognize, through the accreditation process, the schools' weaknesses can help principals, schools boards, and teachers plan for areas of improvement for the benefit of the students. WELS schools are, first and foremost, centered in Christ and his love. School improvement should be based on our love for Christ and what he has done as we serve the people in the community and strive to glorify him in all that we do by being the best that we can be through him.

In addition, school evaluation is important when keeping up with schools from around the surrounding community. Knowing if there have been changes in academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment to WELS schools that have gone through the accreditation process could send a message to the community that the school personnel is committed to improving the effectiveness of the school.

School accreditation provides a structured process in school evaluation. WELS schools want to make sure they have a structured process of evaluation that provides the best education for the child. The success of teachers' work with students is influenced by the structures of the school and the opportunities available for them and their students through systemic evaluations and improvement processes (Danielson, 2006).

Short and long-term planning may have an influence on school improvement. The accreditation process helps schools to create short and long-term goals to achieve school improvement. Strategic planning and goal setting can lead to student achievement gains and school improvement (Cassada, Stevens, & Wilson, 2005).

### **Purpose of the Study**

WELS schools are starting to experience more and more people who are not members of WELS churches, yet enroll their children in WELS schools. Therefore, the personnel in the WELS schools should make use of the opportunity to use the schools for outreach. In 2008, the number of nonmember children was 17% and 2010 the percentage had raised to nearly 22% (Becker & Digiorgio, 2010; Digiorigo, 2010). Increases noted in enrollment for WELS schools that are accredited could be helpful information for WELS non-accredited schools. Are the people in the community in which the school resides looking for schools that are accredited and does the fact that the school is accredited



influence the people in the community? The answer to the question could be key for all WELS schools to take positive steps towards growth as they understand the potential positive impact of accreditation. According to the Association of Christian Schools International (2008), “A program’s/school’s involvement in the accreditation process raises the program’s/school’s commitment to quality through this intentional investment” (p.1). Schools need to be able to show the prospective families in WELS congregations and in the community that the school is committed to quality Christian education where Christ is at the center of everything that is done within the school. The potential impact of this study could lead the principals of WELS schools to realize whether or not school accreditation is potentially important for academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment.

### **Research Questions**

The main area that this study focused on was the potential effect that school accreditation has had on WELS schools concerning academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. The specific questions to be answered by the accredited schools were the following: Has there been an increase in enrollment since you have been accredited? Has accreditation improved the school’s academics? Has accreditation led to school improvement? Has accreditation improved your overall recruitment of students and families? (see Appendix D)

The null hypothesis was WELS School Accreditation has no impact upon academic improvement, school improvement, and student growth and recruitment in our WELS schools. The statistical analysis in this study showed the results to see if

accreditation made a significant difference in the areas of academic improvement, school improvement, and student growth and recruitment.

### **Subjects**

This study surveyed pastors, teachers, and principals from sixty-six accredited elementary schools in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The survey focused on school improvement, academic improvement, and student growth and recruitment.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **Academic improvement**

Academic improvement is defined as an increase in composite scores on the TerraNova pre and post accreditation. According to the article in *Psychology in the Schools* (2007), pre- and post-test measures were used to examine the effects of improvements in children's reading skills (Keith, McGrew, & Taub, 2007).

#### **School improvement.**

School improvement is defined by improvements in the following areas of school life: classroom instruction, professional development, faculty communication, short term school planning, long term school planning, academic and work environments, school resources, school leadership, curriculum development and study, school climate (attitudes and feelings expressed by students, teachers, parents, and faculty), and parental and community involvement (Danielson, 2002).

#### **Student growth.**

An increase in school enrollment before the school was accredited to their enrollment for the 2011-2012 school year.

**School climate.**

School climate is defined as evidence in feelings and attitudes about the school expressed by students, teachers, parents, and faculty (Tableman, 2004).

**Assumptions and Limitations of the Study**

This study did not represent all WELS accredited schools as some schools did not participate in survey. (see results section in Chapter 4) The study measured academic improvement by comparing the composite scores of the eighth graders on the TerraNova before and after the accreditation process. This procedure did not measure the same students in all cases.

The study also compared enrollments of the schools before going through the accreditation process until the 2011-2012 school year. Other factors play a part in the school's enrollment besides the accreditation process. Some factors that could influence enrollment are the economy, child birth rate, and support of family. These factors will play a part in determining if the feedback is helpful in determining this area of improvement.

**Summary**

The findings in this project will potentially help the leaders of WELS schools to evaluate the accreditation process and see potential benefits of the process for their schools. Schmoker (2006) stressed the importance that we take a look at schools and how the teachers are teaching to make sure schools are effective. According to Schmoker (2006), "Unprecedented improvements will merely require that we reorient the heart, the time, and the energy we now invest in failed models and activities into those commonsense actions and practices by teachers and leaders that would address the

deficiencies—the opportunities—just delineated” (p.19). As school leaders work on school improvement, they evaluate what is and what is not working in their schools. School improvement does not consist of implementing a single new program, or establishing a partnership with a business in the community; rather, the process should be comprehensive and should encompass everything done in school (Danielson, 2002).

The WELS started accreditation as a way to improve WELS schools. One perception concerning accreditation exists that the accreditation process is about paperwork and documentation. Paper shuffling does not lead to academic improvement. While planning documents may be requirements mandated by federal, state, and local authorities; they do not improve student achievement and educational equity (Reeves, 2006). School improvement is about monitoring, implementation, and execution.

The self-study in the accreditation process gives schools fifteen standards in which the schools evaluate what they are doing well, what areas need to be strengthened, or what standards are missing. (see Appendix B) The process then involves having a visiting team come in to look at all aspects of the school’s life. The visiting team, through its observations, will give feedback to the school regarding the standards they do or do not meet (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2010a).

An area of concern among the accrediting agencies and their member schools was related to the steps that can be taken to assure that much attention was given to the implementation or follow-up as was given to the self-study and visitation (Jordan, 1997). If a school was willing to do all that it can at the school level to be most effective and if all the teachers in the school were competent teachers in their profession, the principals and teachers can have a good impact on student achievement (Marzano, 2003).

Have WELS accredited schools seen academic improvements, school improvements, and more positive growth and recruitment interests because of our WELS accreditation process? This study analyzes improvements in these areas.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The areas of academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment are addressed in the paragraphs that follow. The literature provided information and support on what was needed for a school to have academic growth, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment.

### **Importance of Accreditation**

According to the Commission on Secondary Schools: Middle States Association of College and Schools (2004), four reasons were given for accreditation. The first reason was that accreditation encourages and facilitates school improvement. Accreditation did this by a process that required a school to ask why it existed. Accreditation also required the school to look at the goals for the future of school and the plan for accomplishing these goals. According to the Commission on Secondary Schools (2004), “The information surfaced through the accreditation protocol served as a sound basis for school/district improvement, strategic planning, restructuring, and staff development” (p.1). The school that went through the accreditation process was able to evaluate all the programs within the school and was able to determine if the programs supported the mission of the school. Schools were able to identify strengths and weaknesses and to work on them for the students and the school community it served. An improvement plan needed to be established as a requirement for accreditation. This improvement plan helped the school in determining the future direction of the school and what was needed to accomplish that direction.

The second reason why accreditation appears important according to the Commission on Secondary Schools (2004) was accreditation provided a means for public accountability. Schools that were accredited assured the community that the school underwent an evaluation process and was committed to serving the students and the community. The accreditation process gave a school a stamp of approval that it met all the standards and requirements set forth by the accreditation agency.

The third reason determined accreditation fostered stakeholder involvement and commitment. The accreditation process allowed many key people to be part of creating a vision for the school (Commission on Secondary Schools, 2004). By getting the parents, students, teachers, staff, and principals involved, the process created a team that was focused on improving the school.

The last reason determined by the Commission on Secondary Schools (2004) was accreditation built positive public relations. Accreditation gave the parents and the community a better understanding of what the school was all about. In WELSSA, one of the standards mentioned was to make sure the school was reaching out to the community by doing a community service effort. (see Appendix B) Accreditation helped the people of the community know more about the school. This process helped the school broaden its view of community expectations and fostered closer school and community collaboration (Commission on Secondary Schools, 2004).

Weaver (2003) offered some advice and pointed to why accreditation does matter for schools from her interview with the executive director of Hawaii's Association of Independent Schools, Robert Witt. Witt was interviewed and pointed out that accreditation was a good seal of approval that schools were monitoring what was going

on in their schools. He pointed out two things that parents would know about accredited schools. The first one identified these schools went through an extensive self-evaluation which was reviewed by peers. The revision by the peers made sure the school personnel carried out the requirements for accreditation. The second point was that the school looked for ways to improve and evaluate their progress because the school needed an action plan for the future as part of the accreditation process. This action plan helped the schools stay focused on their future goals.

Boraiko, Zey, and Greife (2010) addressed the importance of accreditation in the academic field. The authors addressed several benefits that result in school accreditation. One of the benefits mentioned was that accreditation brought a structured process that helped the school evaluate and improve its programs. The standards set by the accrediting agency gave the schools a guideline for evaluation. Some other benefits that were mentioned were prioritizing program improvements and it gave a public symbol of academic quality. “The extensive accreditation process, which included self- and external review, allowed faculty and administrators to thoroughly examine a program, learn its strengths and weaknesses, and incorporate a continuous improvement process” (Boraiko, Zek, & Greife, 2010, p.39).

### **Academic Improvement**

Billman (2004) stated there were six critical actions for academic improvement. These actions were creating a positive learning environment, building leadership within the school to support ongoing improvement, establishing a quality teaching team, delivering instruction based on individual students’ needs, involving parents and the



community, and providing resources to support improvement (p.6). The six actions are supported by WELSSA (see Appendix B).

The first action, creating a positive learning environment focused on the student, involved five concepts (Billman, 2004). The first concept mentioned that everyone needed to be on board with the mission, vision, and objectives of the school. WELSSA included the importance of mission, vision, and objectives in their first set of standards. The faculty and staff of the school needed to create a shared vision of where the school was headed. The second concept was that the faculty and staff needed to constantly assess the climate and culture of the school, the families, and the community. A positive atmosphere and relationships helped with the overall functioning of the school. The third concept focused on relationships within the school. Administrators, teachers, students, and the community should establish professional and caring relationships. The last concept was that school leaders decided how to develop a concept and a notion of how to get the school from where it was to where it should be (Billman, 2004). All five of these concepts correlated with the WELSSA Accreditation Process (see Appendix B).

The second critical action for academic improvement was building leadership within the school to support ongoing improvement (Billman, 2004). The second way to do this was to build teams of shared responsibility. This way everyone was involved in some decision making processes and felt part of the leadership themselves. The principal along with the teachers made data-driven decisions. The school staff made improvements if there were numbers and data that supported the change (Billman, 2004). WELSSA included standards that describe the role of the principal. The principal served as a leader for the school and made important decisions (see Appendix B).

The third critical action for academic improvement was establishing a quality teaching team (Billman, 2004). Quality teachers strived to further their education and keep up with the current trends in education. Teachers did this by realizing the importance of professional growth and taking classes to further their knowledge in education. WELSSA included the importance of continued professional growth by including standards that focused on continuing education and state certification (see Appendix B).

The fourth critical action for academic improvement was delivering instruction based on individual students' needs (Billman, 2004). Class sizes and instructional groups needed to be small so student learning is not compromised. Teachers used best practices, research-based methods, and technology to maximize learning time and to deliver instruction based on the individuals needs. Curriculum and instruction study was part of the WELSSA accreditation process. Accreditation standards helped schools to take a look at the what, why, and how of teaching.

The fifth critical action for academic improvement was involving parents and the community (Billman, 2004). Schools that were accredited looked to maximize parent and community involvement. Parent and community involvement gave them a sense of ownership in the school. Schools looked to parents to involve them in improvement planning of the school. If parents did not participate, the principal and teachers needed to determine why and what the school could do to get them involved. WELSSA put standards in place that made schools look at how their schools are perceived by parents and in the community (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2010a).

Billman (2004) identified the last critical action for academic improvement in schools was providing the resources to support improvement. Teachers of schools should have the resources available to them to enhance their professional growth activities and stay current in educational trends. Schools provided reliable, valid data for improvement plans for the school and for the individual students. Resources were important to student achievement. WELSSA addresses the importance of valuable resources for schools (see Appendix B).

### **School Improvement**

A school that was looking for or needed improvement must have a school improvement plan that was “not rigid prescriptions for day-to-day action, but rather are guides for ongoing improvement in critical areas” (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009, p.1). The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2009) identified six quality indicators of high achieving schools and improvement strategies for each one. These indicators were incorporated by WELSSA in their set of accreditation standards.

The first indicator was a school should have an aligned and rigorous curriculum. This type of curriculum was the foundation for effective instruction and learning. A school improvement plan focused on ensuring that the curriculum reflected high standards for learning. The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2009) identified three aspects of curriculum the school focused on in its improvement plan. The first was to have a written curriculum consisting of standards, learning objectives and outcomes, and supporting materials for each grade level. The pattern continued to make sure it was taught in the classrooms and resources were available for

the teachers. The faculty at the end would test the curriculum and assess it (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009).

The second quality indicator for high-achieving schools was effective instruction. Improving classroom instruction improved student learning (Marzano, 2003). By focusing on effective instruction, accreditation forced schools to apply formal and informal teacher evaluation into its continuous improvement plan. Informal evaluations took the form of classroom observations conducted by an instructional leader with follow-up conversation about the observations. The teacher and the observer identified actions that needed improvement and discussed strategies for implementation. Successful schools provided instructional staff with professional development to address teachers' needs (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009). Formal assessments took the form of standardized testing and other exams that were administered under regulated or controlled test-taking conditions. The data was collected to determine the academic achievement for the students.

The third quality indicator mentioned and supported in accreditation was formative assessment and student assessment data. Teachers evaluated and assessed their students on a regular basis to see what the student's strengths and weaknesses were in their classrooms. In designing an effective school improvement plan, leaders of the school concentrated on how the data could be used to identify strengths and weaknesses and to track whether improvement strategies were making a positive difference (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009).

The fourth quality indicator was a school to have a positive school climate focused on achievement. Students performed at high levels in a school environment in

which they felt physically and emotionally safe and supported, and which communicates high expectations for achievement (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009). A school improvement plan that was put in place by accreditation promoted school policies that encouraged learning. What is needed to develop a positive school culture will vary from school to school. However, the school will want to address this issue in their improvement plans (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009).

The fifth quality indicator of high-achieving schools was effective school leadership. There were no effective reforms without good leadership (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007). In the school reform and improvement initiative, school leaders attended to two fundamental tasks: guided the school community in developing a sound, evidence-based plan of action; and motivated people to support and act on the plan (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The school's principal played a big role, not only helping design the school improvement plan, but also communicating the plan to his faculty and the people around him. The principal's direction for the school and how to achieve improvement included the overall faculty in the decision process. Communication was vital within the school to get everyone on board in the process and direction of the school. The principal, teachers, students, and parents felt part of the school improvement plan when there was communication. Goals were carried out when people felt part of the plan and not distant in what was going on. The same is required in the accreditation process (see Appendix B).

The last quality indicator mentioned by the article was family and community engagement. Two-way communication with families and parental engagement in schools

positively impacted student achievement (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009). School improvement plans directed attention toward increasing family and community engagement. Family and community engagement are included in WELSSA (see Appendix B).

O'Phelan and Wagner (1998) found the most common formula for improving schools was to continue to focus on three principal activities. The first activity was making decisions on curriculum. Teachers and faculty needed to be able to identify what should be taught and how it should be taught. They made decisions on instructional methodology based on the latest research. The last activity that O'Phelan and Wagner mentioned was using assessments to gain more understanding of student's levels of competency. Assessment results were analyzed in great detail and typically served as the blueprint for future improvement plans.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction study in 2000, mentioned six characteristics for successful schools that supported the WELSSA accreditation process. The six characteristics were vision, leadership, high academic standards, partnerships, professional development, and evidence of success. Schools that met these standards and looked to improve on these areas helped in the overall school improvement (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000). WELSSA addressed many of the characteristics with the standards that it wanted schools to achieve (see Appendix B).

The first characteristic for a successful school was to have a vision that defined its goals, principles, and expectations to all school personnel (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000). The study indicated that a successful school would have a

vision that was accompanied by strategic planning. The strategic planning was data-driven and guided the decision making process.

Strong leadership in a successful school promoted excellence and fairness in education that tied into the vision of the school (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000). “This leadership included allocating resources, communication, supporting people and programs that were implemented to achieve the school’s vision” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000, p.14). Leaders were willing to take a risk and make changes they felt was necessary to improve the school. They made decisions based on their expertise and professional training and in attaining the best results for the student.

“The characteristic of high academic standards described what students were expected to know and be able to do” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000, p.15). High standards and great expectations on students in every subject was the foundation for academic success according to this study. Schools that had high academic standards expected all students to achieve at high levels. These standards were used by teachers to guide instructional planning and implementation and showed that they emphasized great expectations from the students.

Establishing partnerships was a characteristic that this study classified as a component of a successful school (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000). These partnerships included the family, school, and the community around the school. The partnership component indicated everyone should be in agreement for the benefit of the children involved. Parents and teachers worked together and communicated on a regular basis discussing the academic progress of the student. This component looked to

get the community involved and looked for learning opportunities that involved the community. Students were sent to local businesses and departments to do research and study a certain field of work.

The fifth characteristic of a successful school was professional development (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2000). Teachers and administrators looked to grow in their knowledge and in their skills throughout their professional career. Professional development helped put the focus on improving student learning.

The last characteristic mentioned in the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2000) was that schools should have evidence of success. Evidence of success was found in data related to student achievement, behaviors, programs, and staff perceptions (Wisconsin Department of Instruction, 2000). The data helped decision making which lead to the improvement of teaching and learning. The leaders of the school and teachers had proof of success that was communicated to the whole school community.

### **School Growth and Recruitment**

Parents were looking for a safe environment and successful academic programming for their children (Tableman, 2004). School personnel looked at different ways to reach out to the community and focused on areas where the community realized that schools were a good place for their children to go to school.

Edmondson, Thornson, and Fluegel (2000) addressed the declining enrollment and the issues that they felt influenced enrollment. Most of the declining enrollment noted was due to declining population in the surrounding community. However, within their study they were able to realize and address three areas that needed strengthening



within their school district so people would realize that they were a good school that was dedicated to student achievement. The three areas that needed improvement were curricular innovations, technology, and marketing (Edmundson, Thornson, & Fluegel, 2000).

“With curricular innovations, the community hoped to focus on staff development, to institute individualized learning plans for all students, to investigate block scheduling and project-based learning, and to research alternative configurations for kindergarten and before- and after-school child care” (Edmundson, Thornson, & Fluegel, 2000, p.52). The community and school personnel decided that they needed to take a look at their whole program and system to see if what they were doing was effective and achieving what they wanted it to achieve. The school was making sure that it was current in all the trends that were going on around them and with the cultural changes (Edmondson, Thornson, & Fluegel, 2000). This evaluation of the whole school program and system is supported by WELSSA (see Appendix B).

The area of technology has changed dramatically within the school system over the years. Parents were looking for an education that kept up with the technology in the world around their children. According to the Edmondson, Thornson, and Fluegel study, the teachers wanted to ensure that it was using technology efficiently and effectively. The school personnel analyzed the current technology and made decisions to ensure that technology would meet the educational needs of the students (Edmondson, Thornson, & Fluegel, 2000). WELSSA included standards in the accreditation process that made sure schools were focused on the educational needs of students (see Appendix B).

The last component was marketing their school and achievements. Because of an open enrollment policy, the community and school personnel thought that maintaining or increasing their current student population was important. School personnel believed that close work with the community and local businesses would allow them to develop creative marketing techniques to increase the visibility of the school and encouraged higher attendance for the school (Edmondson, Thornson, & Fluegel, 2000). From this article by Edmondson, Thornson, and Fluegel (2000), school growth and recruitment were a couple key components that were tied in with the WELSSA accreditation process. This component tied in with WELSSA in that schools should take a look at the way they are reaching out and getting the school name out to the community (see Appendix B).

## **Chapter 3: Research Design**

### **Introduction**

The main area that this study focused on is the potential impact that school accreditation has had on our WELS schools concerning academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. Some of the specific questions that were asked of the accredited schools surveyed were the following: Has there been an increase in enrollment since you have been accredited? Has accreditation improved your school's organization and academics? Has accreditation improved your overall recruitment of students and families?

### **Research Design and Procedures**

The research consisted of both the quantitative and qualitative research method design (mixed method). The survey had 16 closed-ended questions for the quantitative portion and four open-ended questions for the qualitative portion of the study. The survey, which was conducted through a web-based internet survey company (Survey Monkey), consisted of 16 closed-ended questions that related to the topics of school improvement and school recruitment. The 16 closed-ended questions were given to all the pastors, teachers, and principals of WELS accredited schools. There were also four open-ended questions that focused on academic improvement, school improvement, school climate, and WELSSA that were to be answered by all the participants.

The principals of the schools were to supply their enrollment in their schools before and after accreditation to determine if accreditation potentially impacted school

growth. To assess the area of academic improvement, the principals were asked to give their eighth grade composite score for TerraNova before accreditation and after accreditation. A t-test analysis was used to conclude whether or not accreditation potentially impacted academic improvement.

### **Population and Sample**

The survey was sent out to 95 pastors, 63 principals, and 402 teachers in WELS accredited schools. The list of schools that were accredited was sent by the Commission on Lutheran Schools upon request in October of 2011. From the list of schools, the 2010 WELS Synod Yearbook was used to determine who the pastors, principals, and teachers were at the schools. (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2010b) There were 37 pastors (39%), 35 principals (56%), and 134 teachers (33%) that responded to the survey and completed it. The survey was sent out twice to get more participation. The cover letter that was sent explained the purpose and explanation of the survey (see Appendix A.3).

The data from the surveys were analyzed to determine if the school accreditation process has had a potential impact on the areas of the academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. The results were analyzed by taking a look at the percentages of the responses that were recorded by the online survey program. The percentages for each questions and the responses for each open-ended question were recorded by the online survey program and put into an Excel spreadsheet format.

**Timeline of the study:**

- The research proposal was approved by the Martin Luther College review committee in June of 2011.
- The Institutional Review Board of Martin Luther College reviewed the study and found it to be exempt from full IRB review in July of 2011.
- The survey was completed and sent out to all the pastors, teachers, and principals of our WELS accredited schools in November of 2011.
- A second reminder for all participants to complete the survey was sent in late December of 2011.
- The information from the surveys were gathered and interpreted at the end of January and early February of 2012.

## **Chapter 4: Results and Discussion**

The results that were collected are in the following tables in this chapter. The tables were separated by the pastors (Table 1), principals (Table 2), and teachers (Table 3) responses. The findings were labeled by the areas of concentration that this thesis focused on with school accreditation. The three areas were school improvement, academic growth, and school growth and recruitment (see Appendix D for specific questions).

### **Finding #1 (School Improvement and School Recruitment)**

- 75% of pastors, 88.6% of principals, and 70.1% of teachers responded that the accreditation process has led to improvements in classroom instruction.
- 77.7% of pastors, 82.9% of principals, and 73.1% of teachers responded that the accreditation process has led to improvements in professional development for teachers.
- 68.6% of pastors, 71.5% of principals, and 54.9% of teachers responded that the accreditation process has resulted in better faculty communication.
- 65.7% of pastors, 77.2% of principals, and 72.9% of teachers responded that the participating in the accreditation process has been considered by most of the faculty to be necessary for ensuring school improvement.
- 94.1% of pastors, 94.1% of principals, and 81% of teachers responded that the recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough.
- 82.4% of pastors, 82.8% of principals, and 72.3% of teachers responded that the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment for students.

- 70.5% of pastors, 71.4% of principals, and 48.9% of teachers responded that participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the faculty.
- 61.8% of pastors, 60% of principals, and 41.7% of teachers responded that participation in the accreditation process has improved the use and allocation of resources at the school.
- 79.5% of pastors, 85.7% of principals, and 70.8% of teachers responded that the accreditation process has improved the organization of the school.
- 82.4% of pastors, 88.5% of principals, and 63.8% of teachers responded that the accreditation process has improved the management of the school.
- 76.5% of pastors, 85.7% of principals, and 82.6% of teachers responded that the accreditation process affected school improvement in the short-term (1-2 years) planning of the school.
- 82.3% of pastors, 94.2% of principals, 70.6% of teachers responded that the accreditation process affected school improvement in the long-term (3-5 years) planning of the school.
- 85.3% of pastors, 88.5% of principals, and 85.7% of teachers responded that the accreditation process led their school to evaluate its curriculum and gained a better understanding of the school curriculum.
- 67.6% of pastors, 78.5% of principals, and 53.2% of teachers responded that the accreditation process was one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvements at the school.

- 70.9% of pastors, 82.9% of principals, and 57.9% of teachers responded that the accreditation process has led to improvements in school leadership.
- 58.9% of pastors, 60% of principals, and 38.1% of teachers responded that the accreditation process has led to an improvement in school recruitment.

### **Summary of Finding #1**

The components that were surveyed dealt with key factors and issues in school improvement and showed a considerable percentage of responses indicating that school accreditation does have an impact on these factors. The percentage mean for all the components were 75% for pastors, 81% for principals, and 65% for teachers. These percentages indicate that pastors, principals, and teachers agree that school accreditation is a means to school improvement (see Appendix E).

About 58.9% of the pastors and 60% of the principals agreed that the accreditation process led to an improvement in school recruitment while only 38% of the teachers agreed (see question 16 in Appendix E). The average mean for the three groups was 52.3%. The percentage showed there was no strong indication that school accreditation led to improvement in school recruitment.

### **Finding #2 (School Improvement)**

The next finding dealt with the first open-ended question to see what factors the pastors, principals, and teachers thought improved because the school went through the accreditation process. The findings to this open-ended question were qualitative in nature. The top three areas pastors, principals, and teachers thought improved were the areas of curriculum and study (73.5%, 75.8%, 74.4%), enabled school to see their strengths and weaknesses (64.7%, 87.9%, 70.9%), and organization effectiveness and long-term



planning (79.4%, 84.8%, 66.7%). (see Table 4 in Appendix F) These areas were identified in the literature review as components needed for school improvement. (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009) The other areas mentioned by the groups, but not supported by a high percentage, were as follows:

- Accreditation helped them with the will to embrace change in the ministry of the school. Everyone involved helped to determine the direction for the school. Less than 1%, seven participants, indicated the will to embrace change improved through the accreditation process.
- Accreditation helped improve the congregation's ownership of the school. Less than 1%, seven participants, indicated this factor improved through the accreditation process.

### **Finding #3 (School Climate)**

The next finding dealt with the second open-ended question to see what aspects of school climate that pastors, principals, and teachers felt have improved because their school went through the accreditation process. School climate was defined as evidence in the feelings and attitudes about the school expressed by students, teachers, parents, and faculty (Tableman, 2004). The results to this question were diverse (see Table 5 in Appendix F). The one aspect that received a significant higher percentage was the leadership and decision making within the school (63.6% of pastors, 73.5% of principals, and 49.6% of teachers). The percentage mean of 62.2% indicated participants thought there was an improvement with the leadership and decision making within the school.

The appearance of the building was another noticeable factor mentioned by the participants. The percentage mean of 47% showed that close to half of the participants indicated that the appearance of their building had improved because of the process.

#### **Finding #4 (School Accreditation)**

The third open-ended question asked whether the participants thought each Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod school should go through the accreditation process as a means to improve their school. 78% responded that the accreditation process was a means for school improvement. (see Table 6 in Appendix F) The question was expanded and asked the pastors, principals, and teachers why they did or did not support accreditation for school improvement.

- 75.8% of the pastors, 85.3% of the principals, and 74% of the teachers said every school should go through accreditation as a means of improving their school.
- The qualitative portion of this question resulted in some of the following areas as to why every WELS school should go through the accreditation process as a means to improve:
  - The process made the school review the school's ministry from top to bottom and examined all the aspects of school life (Evaluates all programs and areas of school life) (see Appendix B).
  - The process was an effective tool for measuring faithfulness to the school's mission (Evaluate school's mission) (see Appendix B).
  - The process allowed everyone to take an unbiased look at the strengths and weaknesses in order to improve the school (Identify strengths and weakness) (see Appendix B).

- The process gave the school an improvement plan to set in place and implement (Short and long term planning) (see Appendix B).

With the third open-ended question some comments indicated concern about making every school go through the accreditation process. Some of the comments that were given in the survey showed concern for small schools, such as one room or two room classrooms, and how they would not have the resources to carry out this process. The small schools would not have enough people involved in the school community for it to be effective. Another concern about how the accreditation process could be a financial burden on the congregation was expressed. Some people showed concerns on how, at first, this process brought benefits, but then after time, it was just “put on the shelf” and not used for continuous school improvement.

The summary of question three (Table 6) indicated the majority of the people thought the process was a means for WELS schools to improve. The process helped schools evaluate what was currently working and not working in their school. The benefits of long and short term planning and having a school improvement plan at the end of the process helped schools focus and made sure they implemented the plan if they wanted to stay accredited.

#### **Finding #5 (Academic Improvement)**

The fourth open-ended question on whether school accreditation has led to academic improvement brought about mixed responses by the three groups that were surveyed. The respondents were then to explain why they felt that accreditation led to academic improvement or why it did not. (see Table 7 in Appendix F) Table 7 shows 82.4% of the principals indicated the accreditation process did lead to academic

improvement while only 66.4% of the pastors and a 54.1% of the teachers indicated it did as well. These percentages indicated that the teachers and pastors did not feel as strongly as the principals when it comes to school accreditation and academic growth. Some of the explanations as to why or why not are given here:

- Why accreditation did lead to academic improvement
  - The faculty was more aware of the curriculum and the educational standards that were expected. What teachers taught and how they taught were discussed, explored, and communicated much more due to the accreditation process (Curriculum and instruction) (see Appendix B).
  - There was more focus on professional development for the staff (Professional development) (see Appendix B).
  - The accreditation process led to a renewed focus on academic improvement (Expectations of students) (see Appendix B).
  - The staff was more willing to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the students (Faculty communication) (see Appendix B).
- Why accreditation did not lead to academic improvement
  - The curriculum for their school was already in place and under review regularly; therefore, curriculum was not seen as a benefit of accreditation.
  - Academic improvement strategies that were done because of the staff who was dedicated and strived to be the best teachers. This improvement would have occurred with or without the accreditation process.

People focused on basically two ideas when they responded to the why or why not school accreditation has led to academic improvement. The two areas were curriculum

and teachers. The responses were very supportive that school accreditation led the school to take a look at its curriculum more in depth. Responses were supportive that school accreditation led the school to understand what they were teaching and how they were teaching. School accreditation made the school personnel more aware of the different teaching strategies that exist, and it also increased the conversations between the teachers in discussing the students' progress.

The other area of focus was the teachers. Five teachers explained how professional development was increased which led to more knowledge on educational trends in instruction which is put into practice in their teaching. The teacher is a key factor in academic learning was the response for some participants.

#### **Finding #6 (TerraNova Test Scores and School Accreditation)**

The principals of the schools were asked to report the TerraNova composite testing scores for their eighth graders before school accreditation and after school accreditation. There were only eleven principals (17%) that responded to this question. The other principals decided to either skip this question or put in the quantity of zero for each section. Two schools reported that their scores dropped after accreditation, while rest of the schools' scores stayed the same or improved. In other words, 80% of those who reported pre- and post-accreditation achievement test scores reported either an increase or no change in scores (see Table 8 in Appendix G). A dependent samples t-test was conducted to compare the average achievement scores from pre-accreditation to post-accreditation. There was a significant differences in pre-accreditation scores ( $M = 71$ ,  $SD = 9.17$ ) and post-accreditation scores ( $M = 74.5$ ,  $SD = 7.52$ ),  $t(10) = 1.48$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Finding #7 (School Growth)**

The schools reported on their enrollment before and after school accreditation to see if school accreditation may have had an impact on school growth. Out of 63 schools, 28 (44%), responded and answered the question. An overall increase in enrollment for WELS accredited schools was seen from the results (see Table 9 in Appendix H). Although eight schools have lost students since accreditation, eighteen schools have increased in enrollment according to the data collected (see Table 9). The overall school enrollment of the accredited schools was increased by 12%. The overall increase in school enrollment for the entire WELS elementary schools in 2011-2012 was 1%, 344 students (Digiorigo, 2012). The overall majority of the schools that were accredited saw an increase in enrollment according to the data collected.

**Conclusion**

The findings yielded pertinent data concerning accreditation. From the data, leaders of schools can see what areas school accreditation affected. Areas, according to the literature review, supported school accreditation having a positive impact on academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. From the results of study, leaders of schools can ascertain whether or not school accreditation is right for their school.

## **Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusions**

### **Introduction**

In 2003, the Commission on Parish Schools and the Board for Parish Services of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) resolved to establish a WELS school accreditation process as a means of improving the effectiveness of WELS schools (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2010). Over the last eight years, sixty-six WELS schools have gone through the process of accreditation as a means for improving the effectiveness of their school. The areas of this study based on WELSSA were academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. The pastors, principals, and teachers were surveyed to evaluate their opinions on certain areas of the school accreditation process. The null hypothesis of this study was WELS School Accreditation has no impact upon school improvement, academic improvement, and student growth and recruitment in our WELS schools.

### **Summary of the Results**

The area of academic improvement was defined by this study as an increase in the overall total composite score on the TerraNova pre and post accreditation. The results that were given showed that 80% of the schools that gave their composite scores stayed the same or made an increase in their test scores. This represented 17% of the accredited schools. The t-test analysis that was done showed 1.48 for a degree freedom of 10. This showed that the means were different from each other and statistically significant at  $p < .001$ . Even though the percentage was significant, the participation of schools was too low to make an evaluation that the process led to academic achievement. The results that were given on the open-ended question (see Table 7 in Appendix F), pastors (66.7%),

principals (82.4%), and teachers (54.1%), supported that school accreditation may influence academic improvement. The percentages showed significance in school accreditation and the influence on academic achievement.

The components of school improvement were defined in chapter one as improvement in the following areas; classroom instruction, professional development, faculty communication, short and long term school planning, academic and work environments, school resources, school leadership, curriculum development and study, school climate (attitudes and feelings expressed by students, teachers, parents, and faculty), and parental, and community involvement (Danielson, 2002). These areas were addressed in the closed-ended portion of the survey (see Appendix A.4). The responses from the pastors, principals, and teachers in these areas gave accreditation credit for improving the following areas within the school: classroom instruction (75%, 88.6%, 70.1%), professional development (77.7%, 82.9%, 73.1%), faculty communication (68.6%, 71.9%, 54.9%), short and long term school planning (76.5%, 85.7%, 82.6%), school leadership (70.9%, 82.9%, 57.9%), and curriculum development and study (85.3%, 88.5%, 85.7%). The percentage mean for all the components were 75% for pastors, 83% for principals, and 71% for teachers. These percentages indicated that pastors, principals, and teachers agreed that school accreditation was a means to school improvement. The standards of accreditation addressed each of these areas of school improvement, which leads schools to evaluate their schools concerning these components.

The improvement of school growth was determined by the enrollment figures each school gave before and after school accreditation. The results showed the overall



school enrollment of WELS accredited schools has increased by 12%. This result is considerable since, for the first time in the past nine years, WELS elementary schools had an increase in enrollment (Digiorgio, 2012).

The last closed-ended question (see Question 16 in Appendix D) on the survey asked participants to answer if school accreditation has led to an improvement in school recruitment. About 58.9% of the pastors and 60% of the principals agreed this process led to an improvement in school recruitment. These percentages showed an indication that school accreditation may lead to improvement in school recruitment. Standard 7 (see Appendix D) of WELSSA did address this issue and schools are asked to come up with a written plan for school recruitment. WELSSA makes schools evaluate the recruitment efforts that the school has in place or will have in place (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2010a).

### **Conclusions**

The results of this study showed that WELSSA has had an impact on academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. However, the study was not recommending that school accreditation is the only source for these improvements. The study showed statistical support for WELSSA having an impact on academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment.

WELS schools can use accreditation as a tool for academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. Currently only sixty-six WELS schools are accredited by WELSSA. If schools are looking to improve, school accreditation could help them as indicated in this study. Leaders of our schools make sure that their schools are being evaluated in all aspects of school life, are improving on their

weaknesses, and are growing in their strengths through the accreditation process. School accreditation may be a means to make sure evaluation and improvement is happening within schools on a consistent and regular basis for the improvement of education.

### **Recommendations**

The results of the study lead to other questions and topics that may be useful for research. One area would be to see what the non-accredited WELS schools are doing for academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. Research in these areas from non-accredited schools could help quantify the results that school accreditation is needed or not needed for academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth, and recruitment.

One of the limitations in this study is academic improvement was measured by comparing the composite scores of the eighth graders before and after the accreditation process and then doing a t-test analysis. The study did not have a large enough sample size to make an evaluation that the process led to academic improvement. In addition, the study did not measure the same students and track them throughout their years at the school. Further research with a larger response could quantify and compare the same students throughout a period of time in the school to see if there was change in their academic achievement.

Another limitation in this study concerned the other factors that are involved in school enrollment. The other factors that could influence school enrollment are economy, child birth rate, and support of family. Further research in these areas would help see what other factors influenced the school enrollment of the accredited and non-accredited schools.

**Summary**

This study and research has shown that WELSSA has had a positive impact on academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. With knowledge of this study, school leaders can make a more informed decision on whether or not school accreditation is right for their school for the purposes of academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth, and recruitment.

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Appendix (A)

Letter from Commission on Lutheran Schools

October 24, 2011

Brian Mensching

Resurrection Lutheran School

2567 W. Sullivan Road

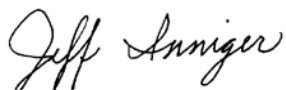
Aurora, Illinois 60506

Dear Brian,

Thank you for informing me about your interest in writing your master's thesis focusing on "School Accreditation and Its Impact on Our WELS Schools". I wholeheartedly endorse your work in this research area and look forward with great interest in seeing the results of your findings. The Commission on Lutheran Schools and I will assist you in whatever way we can during this process.

Feel free to contact me if you have any other questions or concern about this.

Christ's fellow servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Inniger".

Jeff Inniger

WELSSA Executive Director

[jeff.inniger@wels.net](mailto:jeff.inniger@wels.net)

## Appendix (B)

## Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation Standards

**STANDARD 1 The School's Mission and Its Implementation**

- 1.1 \*The school has a written mission statement that is rooted in the Holy Bible.
- 1.2 \*The mission statement includes these two concepts: nurturing those who are already Christians and reaching out to those who are not Christians.
- 1.3 \*The school's mission statement agrees with and supports the congregation's mission statement.
- 1.4 \*The school has a written set of vision statements that helps achieve the school's mission and which previews the school's plan for the future. The school is encouraged to consider these factors as its vision statements are developed:
- a. School and student needs, curricular , extracurricular, enrollment, staffing, facility, and programs such as band and Spanish
  - b. Societal changes in general
  - c. Societal changes in the community
  - d. Changes in the congregation
  - e. Financial impact on the congregation(s)
- 1.5 \*The school has a written set of measureable objectives that help achieve the school's vision statements. These objectives:
- a. Cover five years.
  - b. Include a completion date for each objective.
  - c. Include the name of person responsible for implementing the action plan.
  - d. List the cost if any.
- 1.6 \*The mission and the plans for implementing it were developed through the cooperative efforts of teachers, administrator, and the school's governing board.
- 1.7 Parents of the school are given opportunity to respond to the school's plans.
- 1.8 \*The mission and the plans for achieving it have been approved by the congregation's governing board and the voters' assembly.
- 1.9 The mission and the plans for achieving it are communicated regularly to the students' parents and the congregation.
- 1.10 The MVO and the action plans are reviewed annually.

**STANDARD 2 The School's Relationship with the Congregation(s)**

- 2.1 \*The congregation(s) provides an appropriate level of spiritual support for the school.
- 2.2 The school's outreach plan complements the broader evangelism efforts of the congregation(s).

2.3 The school communicates regularly with the entire membership of the congregation(s) in a variety of ways (such as, print, electronic, personal, web site, etc.).

2.4 \* The faculty, administrator, and governing board accept the pastor's role as the primary spiritual leader of the congregation.

2.5 \*The faculty, pastor(s), and governing board accept the spiritual leadership of the administrator.

2.6 \*The faculty, pastor(s), and governing board accept the educational leadership of the administrator.

2.7 \*The congregation(s) supports and respects the called workers.

2.8 Planned opportunities for pupil participation in congregational life are regularly available to foster a service attitude among the students.

2.9 The school utilizes the talents and skills of a variety of people within the congregation(s).

2.10 \*The congregation(s) complies with state and federal regulations regarding salary and benefits for its school employees (e.g. withholding, social security).

### **STANDARD 3 The School's Relationship with the Home**

3.1 The school's parent handbook contains a statement based on Biblical principles of the roles of home and school and the relationship between each.

3.2 The school annually distributes to all school families a handbook that

- a. Informs them of important school information,
- b. Is reviewed/updated annually, and
- c. Contains a written policy regarding the process parents/guardians are to follow when expressing concerns about the school.

3.3 Bible based parent education programs are available. To supplement these programs, the school makes available parent resources (such as, internet sources, printed, electronic) for nurturing the various age levels of students.

3.4 \*The school promotes parent-teacher cooperation in a variety of ways.

3.5 The school works with parents in planning a variety of activities that enhance family life. (Such as, the parent-teacher group planning school activities, volunteers working with one or more teachers to plan classroom or school activities, the music or athletic director working with parents to plan activities)

3.6 \*The school regularly communicates with the home in a variety of ways.

3.7 The school encourages and helps parents take the initiative in communicating with the school.

3.8 The school has a written set of expectations for itself, shares those expectations with parents, and encourages parents to hold the school accountable.

3.9 The school has a written set of expectations for parents/guardians, shares those expectations, and encourages parents to meet them.

3.10 The school encourages parents to be active in the school's program.

3.11 Parents take an active part in school sponsored student activities.

3.12 Financial assistance is available to families who have limited financial resources.

3.13 \*The legal rights of parents are upheld.

### **STANDARD 4 The School's Relationship with the Students**



- 4.1 \*The school demonstrates that its most important objective is to nurture children to be faithful followers of Jesus.
- 4.2 \*All who have contact with children, show love and respect for students by their attitudes, words, and actions.
- 4.3 \*Teachers nurture children to love and respect all people regardless of age, nationality, culture, race, or religious affiliation.
- 4.4 New students are warmly welcomed and these new students are oriented to the school and classrooms prior to and during their first weeks of school.
- 4.5 Students show love and respect to others in school activities.
- 4.6 \* The school makes reasonable efforts to identify students' unique spiritual, academic, physical, and emotional needs and helps them grow in each area.
- 4.7 \* The school makes reasonable efforts to identify students' God-given talents, abilities, and interests and helps students use those gifts to glorify the Lord.
- 4.8 The school within the scope of its resources offers Christian education to students with special needs.
- 4.9 \* A written and publicized statement demonstrates that there is no discrimination against any students in admissions, or other services because of race, color, national, or ethnic origin.
- 4.10 \* The administrator and teachers consult with the pastor(s) regarding students' spiritual growth and provide counseling to parents and students either by the staff or by referral.
- 4.11 \* The school follows a written procedure for handling misbehavior which properly applies law and gospel.
- 4.12 \* The legal rights of students are upheld. (See the section in Ch. 5 where this item is explained)

### **STANDARD 5 The School's Relationship with the Community**

- 5.1 The school has developed a written public relations strategy which informs the community about the school.
- 5.2 \* The school uses a variety of resources (print, electronic, and activities) to promote the school's organization, purpose, and operation.
- 5.3 The school maintains an up-to-date, informative, and user friendly website
- 5.4 Promotional materials produced for distribution in the community are well written and visually appealing.
- 5.5 The school maintains harmonious relations with the local public and private schools.
- 5.6 Teachers and administrator participate in community activities and service organizations.
- 5.7 The school provides opportunities for students to become involved in community service.
- 5.8 Teachers use educational resources found in the community.
- 5.9 The school facilities are made available, when practical, for use by appropriate community groups and activities.

### **STANDARD 6 The School's Relationship with the Wisconsin Evangelical**

## **Lutheran Synod**

6.1 \* The school is operated by one or more congregations in fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical

Lutheran Synod, or by a group that is in fellowship with WELS.

6.2 \* The faculty knows, understands, and is committed to the theology and mission of the WELS.

6.3 \* The school cooperates with district and Synodical offices of the WELS when calling staff members.

6.4 \* Teachers and administrator participate in WELS conventions and conferences.

6.5 The school utilizes those district and Synodical resources/services that help it achieve its mission.

## **STANDARD 7 The School's Plans for Enrolling Students**

7.1 \* The school has prepared and implements written plans for reaching out to families who are unchurched. The plans include maintaining a record of all prospects. Consider including parents, faculty, board, and students in the implementation of the plan.

7.2 \* The school has prepared and implements written plans for reaching out to families whose children are not enrolled in the school but who are members of the congregation(s).

7.3 The school has prepared and implements a well defined enrollment process from the time of the first inquiry through the actual enrollment.

7.4 The school's enrollment process emphasizes warmth, consideration, and concern to prospective students and parents. During the enrollment process the school interviews parents/guardians and acquaints them with the following:

- a. School's mission and objectives
- b. School and church facilities
- c. Expectations parents can have of the school
- d. Expectations the school has of parents
- e. School governance, affiliation with WELS

7.5 All students are enrolled based on the school's written enrollment policy.

7.6 \* The school has a written document describing its ongoing assimilation process for parents and students who are new to the school.

## **STANDARD 8 School Climate**

8.1 \* A loving, Christian climate is evident throughout the school.

8.2 Annually the faculty, pastor, governing board, and parents discuss how the school can improve the school climate.

8.3 Christian behavior is demonstrated at school sponsored activities, such as, athletic and musical events, field trips.

8.4 \*Teachers, pastor(s), and administrator respect and support each other.

8.5 Students demonstrate love and respect for one another, for their teachers, and other adults.

8.6 Students and faculty demonstrate a positive school spirit.

8.7 \*The teaching/learning environment helps the school achieve its mission.

8.8 Student behavior and student appearance contribute to the school's teaching/learning environment.

8.9 \*Visible elements of a Christ-centered culture are evident (for example, bulletin boards, pictures, religious symbols).

## **STANDARD 9 School Governance and Administration**

### ***A. Governing Board***

9.1 \* The operating congregation(s) elects or appoints the governing board and has established its responsibilities.

9.2 \* Board members are members in good standing of the operating congregation(s).

9.3 New members of the board are oriented to their roles and responsibilities.

9.4 \*The board meets regularly and follows a written agenda in its meetings.

9.5 \* The board at least annually reviews the school's MVO and works to help the school achieve its vision and objectives.

9.6 Minutes are recorded for each meeting, circulated to all members in printed or electronic form, and kept on file in the school office.

9.7 Board policies are adopted at official meetings, recorded in the minutes, and collected into a policy

handbook, separate from the minutes. The policy handbook, available for review in the school office,

contains the policies adopted by the board, dated, and placed under predetermined categories, for example, curriculum, athletics, administration, instruction.

9.8 \* The board reports regularly to the operating congregation(s).

9.9 \* The board has direct supervisory responsibility over the school and its school's administrator.

9.10 The board's ministry is evaluated regularly.

9.11 The pastor's relationship with the school is clearly defined.

9.12 The board has approved and implements a team ministry process which includes the following:

a. \* Orientation of new teachers

b. \* Assessment of the principal's ministry by the board through its chairman, using a process similar to the following:

The board obtains input from the teachers and pastor.

The board chairman and administrator annually completing the Principal Performance Assessment form and submitting it to the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools.

The board chairman working with the principal to develop improvement objectives.

c. \* Assessment of each teacher's ministry by the administrator or a qualified designee using a process similar to the following:

Observing each teacher's classroom several times during the school year.

The administrator working with teachers to annually complete the Teacher Performance Assessment forms. Those forms are submitted to the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools.

The administrator and each teacher to developing improvement objectives for his/her ministry.

- d. The board, administrator, and teachers regularly assess the pastor's ministry with the school. (An assessment form is included in the *Team Ministry Process Resource Book*.)
  - e. The administrator, pastor, and teachers regularly assess the board's ministry with the school. (An assessment form is included in the *Team Ministry Process Resource Book*.)
- 9.13 The board has a position description for the administrator and others who serve in administrative positions.
- 9.14 \* The board approves an annual budget of income and expenses that is fiscally sound and sufficient to meet the school's mission, vision, and objectives. The budget is submitted to the congregation(s) for approval.
- 9.15 The annual budget of receipts includes an appropriate balance of congregational support, cost based tuition, and other sources of income.
- 9.16 The board acts on the faculty's recommendations regarding significant changes in the curriculum.
- 9.17 \* The board expects the administrator and teachers to be involved regularly in spiritual growth activities.
- 9.18 \* The board expects the administrator to be involved regularly in professional growth activities and financially supports those activities.
- 9.19 \* The board expects the teachers to be involved regularly in professional growth activities and financially supports those activities.
- 9.20 The board expects a written report from the administrator at each meeting.
- 9.21 The board provides the administrator with the necessary office technology to enable him to carry out his duties effectively.
- 9.22 \* The board has adopted a policy which states that the length of the school year meets or exceeds state regulations.

### ***B. Administration***

- 9.23 The school's administrator is to carry out the policies adopted by the board and is responsible for the daily ongoing operation of the school.
- 9.24 \*The administrator demonstrates a strong personal faith in Jesus Christ, a commitment to the Scriptures, and a dedication to the WELS teaching ministry.
- 9.25 \*The school administrator is Synodically certified by WELS.
- 9.26 The administrator holds current state certification in administration or is working toward that certification.
- 9.27 \* The administrator who has served in that role for four or more years has earned a Masters' Degree in education or is working towards such a degree.
- Note:** If the administrator is near retirement this item No. 9.27 does not apply. However, item No. 9.27 will apply to the administrator who succeeds the retiree.
- 9.28 The administrator is well organized.
- 9.29 The administrator delegates responsibilities effectively.
- 9.30 The administrator consults regularly with pastor(s) and teachers individually.
- 9.31 The administrator regularly convenes and effectively conducts faculty meetings which include a written agenda and written minutes.
- 9.32 The administrator works closely and in harmony with all other administrative personnel, for example, viceadministrator, athletic director, music director.
- 9.33 \*The administrator provides leadership in spiritual development of faculty.
- 9.34 \*The administrator provides leadership in academic development of faculty.

- 9.35 The administrator provides leadership in school promotion within the congregation and in the community.
- 9.36 \*The administrator provides leadership in curriculum development.
- 9.37 The administrator provides leadership for the school in public relations.
- 9.38 \*The administrator provides leadership in student assessment.
- 9.39 Through word and example the administrator supports all aspects of the congregation's ministry.
- 9.40 \*The administrator facilitates the orientation of new faculty, support staff, and volunteers to their roles and responsibilities.
- 9.41 The administrator works with each teacher individually to develop and implement plans for improving the teacher's ministry. Those plans include the teacher's summer activities. The administrator shares the plans and the accomplishment of those plans with the board.
- 9.42 The administrator works with the faculty and board in preparing and implementing the budget.
- 9.43 All faculty, support staff, and volunteers are accountable to the administrator for the performance of their duties.
- 9.44 The administrator participates in conferences and conventions which help him grow in his ministry.
- 9.45 The administrator is a member of at least one professional organization outside of WELS.
- 9.46 The administrator has built a good relationship with local schools.
- 9.47 \*The administrator is provided the equivalent of 10 weekly hours of released time from his teaching duties during the school day for every 75 students or fraction thereof, or the school is working toward that goal.
- 9.48 A secretary is available the equivalent of 10 weekly hours for every 75 students or fraction thereof in the school, or the school is working toward that goal.
- 9.49 The administrator utilizes technology in the school office.
- 9.50 The administrator facilitates the use of technology for classroom instruction.
- 9.51 The administrator regularly informs the parents, faculty, professional personnel, school staff, and volunteers of board decisions.

## **STANDARD 10 Professional Personnel (faculty and support staff)**

- 10.1 \*The faculty and others who work directly with children demonstrate a strong personal faith in Jesus Christ, a commitment to the teachings of the Bible, and a dedication to the Lutheran teaching ministry.
- 10.2 \*The school expects each teacher to be Synodically certified and is persistent in meeting that goal.
- 10.3 \*Faculty members are regularly involved in congregational worship and group Bible study.
- 10.4 \*All teachers have earned a baccalaureate degree in education.
- 10.5 All teachers have earned and maintain their state license/certification or are working toward that goal.
- 10.6 All teachers attend conferences and conventions which help them grow in their ministry.
- 10.7 Each teacher is a member of at least one professional organization and maintains an appropriate level of activity in that organization. (Note: professional organization means one that is national in scope.)

10.8 Teachers are not burdened with an overload of additional responsibilities (for example, music, athletics, and technology) whereby their primary responsibility of teaching suffers.

10.9 The student/teacher ratio in each classroom contributes to effective classroom instruction and

appropriate supervision for all school activities.

10.10 A fair and nondiscriminatory (see glossary for explanation) salary and benefit scale has been adopted and implemented for all faculty and support staff.

10.11 \*Background checks have been done for all personnel who have regular contact with children (see

glossary for explanation of this item).

10.12 If specialists (for example, guidance, special education, reading, speech) are not available through the school, the school makes referrals to such specialists for those students needing their services.

10.13 \*The legal rights of faculty and support staff are honored (See the section in Ch. 5 where this item is explained).

10.14 The school has adopted and regularly updates a handbook which includes written policies and

procedures for faculty and support staff.

10.15 The school has adopted and regularly updates its support staff handbook which includes written

policies and procedures.

10.16 The school has developed a written policy for faculty members and support staff whose absence is

due to family emergencies.

10.17 The school has adopted a policy that addresses the issue of teachers facing false allegations made by students and/or parents regarding treatment of students.

10.18 The school has adopted written procedures for handling staff injury or illness.

## **STANDARD 11 – Curriculum**

11.1 \*The school's curriculum agrees with the Bible and helps the school achieve its mission, vision, and objectives.

11.2 \*The school's religion curriculum is the most important part of what is taught in the school, therefore, it is designed and implemented to provide maximum spiritual benefit for all students.

11.3 \* The school's written religion curriculum:

- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
- b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
- c. Includes grade level measureable objectives
- d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
- e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each student
- f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth

11.4 The school's written mathematics curriculum:

- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
- b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
- c. Includes grade level measureable objectives
- d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
- e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each student

- f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth
- 11.5 The school's written language arts curriculum:
- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
  - b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
  - c. Includes grade level measureable objectives.
  - d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
  - e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each student
  - f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth.
- 11.6 The school's written social studies curriculum:
- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
  - b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
  - c. Includes grade level measureable objectives.
  - d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
  - e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each student
  - f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth.
- 11.7 The school's written science and health curriculum:
- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
  - b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
  - c. Includes grade level measureable objectives.
  - d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
  - e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each student
  - f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth.
- 11.8 The school's written fine arts curriculum:
- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
  - b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
  - c. Includes grade level measureable objectives.
  - d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
  - e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each students
  - f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth.
- 11.9 The school's written physical education curriculum:
- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
  - b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
  - c. Includes grade level measureable objectives.
  - d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
  - e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each student
  - f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth.
- 11.10 The school's written second language curriculum: (Omit this item if not applicable.)
- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
  - b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
  - c. Includes grade level measureable objectives.
  - d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
  - e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each student
  - f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth.
- 11.11 The school's written technology curriculum:
- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
  - b. Contains exit goals for graduation.
  - c. Includes grade level measureable objectives.
  - d. Demonstrates continuity from grade to grade.
  - e. Assesses the academic growth and achievement of each student
  - f. Reflects fundamental principles of student growth.

11.12 The school faculty cooperatively develops the written curriculum and selects resources and methodologies to implement the curriculum.

11.13 \* The school has a long range plan for reviewing the curriculum, that is, which subject areas will be reviewed each year. The plan includes reviewing and replacing instructional materials (all materials such as texts, software, ancillaries, and manipulatives).

11.14 The school includes in its curriculum state mandated programs unless they conflict with the Bible.

11.15 The faculty evaluates student performance and considers changes in the congregation and society as it regularly evaluates the curriculum and revises it when necessary to meet the needs of students.

11.16 Teachers consider the knowledge and understanding of new students and modify the curriculum for those students as necessary.

11.17 Parents are informed about the curriculum and given an opportunity to participate in its development and evaluation.

## **STANDARD 12 – Instruction**

### ***A. Instructional process***

12.1 \*The teachings of the Bible in worship activities and religion lessons are the most important part of the curriculum and are allotted appropriate time in the daily schedule.

12.2 \*Teachers integrate the teachings of the Bible into daily instruction as appropriate. This integration is planned as daily and weekly lesson plans are prepared.

12.3 Instruction is based on the adopted written curriculum.

12.4 Instruction in religion includes the following:

- a. Effective guidance in learning activities
- b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
- c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as

individuals

- d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning

12.5 Instruction in mathematics includes the following:

- a. Effective guidance in learning activities
- b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
- c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as

individuals

- d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning

12.6 Instruction in language arts includes the following:

- a. Effective guidance in learning activities
- b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
- c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as

individuals

- d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning

12.7 Instruction in social studies includes the following:

- a. Effective guidance in learning activities



- b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
  - c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as individuals
  - d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning
- 12.8 Instruction in science and health includes the following:
- a. Effective guidance in learning activities
  - b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
  - c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as individuals
  - d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning
- 12.9 Instruction in fine arts includes the following:
- a. Effective guidance in learning activities
  - b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
  - c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as individuals
  - d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning
- 12.10 Instruction in physical education includes the following:
- a. Effective guidance in learning activities
  - b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
  - c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as individuals
  - d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning
- 12.11 Instruction in second language includes the following (Omit this item if not applicable):
- a. Effective guidance in learning activities
  - b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
  - c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as individuals
  - d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning
- 12.12 Instruction in technology includes the following (Omit this item if not applicable):
- a. Effective guidance in learning activities
  - b. A variety of teaching methods, experiences, materials, and resources (print, non-print, electronic)
  - c. Adjustment of teaching to conditions and needs of students as groups and as individuals
  - d. Use of varied instruments to evaluate the quality of learning
- 12.13 As the school allots time for each subject it considers state standards (if available) and time allotments for each subject.
- 12.14 Teachers consider the school's mission, vision, and objectives as they prepare and teach their lessons.
- 12.15 For each subject teachers prepare written yearly plans which identify instructional progress.
- 12.16 \*Teachers prepare written daily lesson plans for each week.
- 12.17 \*Teachers prepare and follow a daily schedule for teaching lessons.
- 12.18 The faculty and each teacher individually become familiar with current educational theories and

methods and utilize the ones which help achieve the school's mission.

12.19 Teachers are knowledgeable about technology and utilize the tools that help them achieve their classroom goals.

12.20 A variety of student assessments is used daily and is complemented by a standardized achievement test.

12.21 The assessment results influence instruction and are used for diagnosis, remediation, and reporting.

12.22 \*Each teacher has a classroom management plan (classroom rules and guidelines that establish the parameters for student behavior) that spells out expectations of students and teacher. This plan is communicated to students and parents prior to the beginning of each school year.

12.23 Each teacher develops and shares with parents a written communication plan which incorporates a variety of formal (for example, report cards and parent-teacher conferences) and informal (for example, phone, email, personal conversations) methods to discuss student progress with parents.

### ***B. Instructional materials and resources***

12.24 \*All resources used in worship activities and religion lessons are Biblically sound.

12.25 \*Instructional resources having content not in agreement with the Bible are presented from the Biblical perspective.

12.26 Current reference sources are available (for example, internet access, encyclopedias, DVDs, dictionaries, current events materials).

12.27 Media resources, library materials, and other resources are organized in a way that best suits the teachers and students and are easily accessible to them.

12.28 A data base of instructional materials and resources has been established and is updated annually.

NOTE: This type of record is important for insurance purposes in case some catastrophe destroys the materials and resources.

12.29 The teachers utilize professional resources available in hard copy and electronically.

12.30 \*Technology support services are available.

12.31 Reliable equipment for the duplication of printed materials is available.

12.32 Resources available in the community are utilized.

12.33 The faculty follows written policies and procedures which establish the guidelines for using educational experiences (such as field trips, guest speakers, or assemblies) in the instructional process.

## **STANDARD 13 Student Services**

### ***A. Student activities***

13.1 The school provides academic, athletic, and fine arts activities that meet the needs and interests of the students.

13.2 Each activity is supervised by trained personnel who have been duly authorized.

13.3 All activities are appropriate for the age level of the students involved.

13.4 Through school activities students are encouraged to model their Christian faith.

### *B. Student guidance*

13.5 \* The administrator and teachers consult with the pastor(s) regarding the students' spiritual growth.

Counseling is provided to parents and students as needed.

13.6 \* Permanent cumulative records for each student are maintained. The Federal Rights and Privacy

Act (FERPA) is followed as those records are given out. (Provide link)

13.7 \* The school has a written procedure for handling misbehavior. This procedure properly applies law

and gospel and includes provisions for the due process rights of students.

13.8 The faculty encourages students to serve in the public ministry.

### *C. Student health and safety*

13.9 The school has on file information pertaining to child custody arrangements. This includes, but is not

limited to release of records and releasing the child during the school day.

13.10 \*The school has adopted written procedures for the following:

a. dispensing of medication

b. handling student injury or illness

13.11 The services of a nurse are available.

13.12 Vision and hearing tests are conducted on a scheduled basis

13.13 First aid supplies are readily accessible to authorized personnel and all are familiar with the location of the supplies

13.14 \*The school provides training and equipment for its personnel to administer basic first aid and

CPR/AED.

13.15 \* The school has a written plan for handling blood borne pathogens and other health issues

13.16 Regular fire inspections are made by the appropriate government agencies. Deficiencies are remedied.

13.17 Crossing guards are provided where needed and crossing lanes and school speed zones are designated.

13.18 A safe supervised procedure for loading and unloading students is in effect.

13.19 \* Health, emergency, and safety policies and procedures comply with applicable local, state, and

federal laws and codes.

**NOTE:** Search applicable laws for your state and locality.

13.20 \* Students and teachers observe proper storage and safety precautions when working with toxic

chemicals and other dangerous materials, tools, and equipment. Safety data sheets (MSDS) are on file.

13.21 Emergency fire, police, and ambulance phone numbers are posted at every telephone.

13.22 \*Written emergency evacuation and protection procedures are established, communicated, and

practiced regularly. (for example, fire, flood, tornado, earthquake).

13.23 \* A written procedure has been adopted for reporting child abuse.

13.24 Written intervention plans have been adopted to deal with crisis situations. These plans include counseling of students, parents, and others as needed.

13.25 \*The school enforces its written security plan which prohibits unrestricted entry during the school day.

#### *D. Student food services*

13.26 If hot meals are provided, they are nutritionally balanced and are prepared by qualified personnel in sanitary conditions.

13.27 Care is taken to insure cleanliness while meals or snacks are eaten.

13.28 If milk is available for students, it is stored and delivered in a hygienic method.

13.29 If children bring food from home, parents and their children are responsible for proper care of that food. This statement is to be included in the parent/student handbook.

13.30 \* State law and local food service ordinances are followed.

### **STANDARD 14 Physical Facilities**

Adequate and well-maintained facilities are important as a school strives to achieve its mission and objectives.

14.1 \* Physical facilities, both inside and outside, give specific Christian witness to the community (for example, crosses, signs, and pictures).

14.2 Buildings (outside), grounds, and equipment are attractive, well-maintained, and adequate for the age and number of students.

14.3 \* All facilities meet state and local codes or the school is working toward that goal.

14.4 \*All inside physical facilities including the kitchen and washrooms are clean and sanitary and conform to all applicable health, safety, fire, and building codes.

14.5 Classrooms and school offices are orderly and clean.

14.6 Adequate and appropriate space is provided for classroom teaching/learning, offices, storage, health issues, recreation, a library (classroom or central), and small group instruction.

14.7 School furniture is appropriate to the physical requirements of the students, adequate for the demands of the program, and sufficient in quantity.

14.8 The playground/athletic field has adequate restraints to prevent students from going on to streets or adjoining property. Those restraints also prevent vehicular traffic on the playground during school hours.

14.9 The school administrator or a designee participates in supervising the maintenance of the physical facilities.

14.10 All physical facilities are inspected annually by qualified individuals either from the congregation or from the outside. Improvements are made as needed.

## **STANDARD 15 Information Management**

Information management is a key element in the successful operation of the school.

### ***A. Information management: personnel***

15.1 \* The school cooperates with the congregation in maintaining files, preferably a data base, that includes all pertinent and current information on each family (children and adults) in the congregation(s)

15.2 \*The school under direction of the principal maintains files, both electronic and hard copy that include all pertinent and current information on the administrator, each teacher, support staff, and volunteers or are working toward this goal.

### ***B. Information management: student records***

15.3 \* The school maintains files, preferably a data base, that include all pertinent and current information on each student (for example, academic, attendance, health).

### ***C. Information management: financial***

15.4 Financial policies are established by the governing body/legal authority to guide the administrator in financial management and budget development. These policies are fiscally sound and supportive of the school's mission, vision, and objectives.

15.5 \* A school uses a workable and efficient accounting procedure.

15.6 If feasible, the financial records for the school are part of the computer data system.

15.7 Financial records are reviewed annually. At least every five years an audit must be done by an individual or group not affiliated with anyone in the congregation or school.

15.8 Funds provided by auxiliary organizations (for example, parent-teacher group, athletic booster club) are expended according to board policy and in consultation with the school administrator.

15.9 \* The school has adequate comprehensive insurance coverage, including liability insurance, for all called and hired workers and all who perform services for the school. The school encourages parents to provide accident insurance for their children if not provided by the school.

### ***D. Information management: accreditation***

15.11 \*Accurate and current list of the personnel involved in the school accreditation process

- a. Administrator
- b. Teachers
- c. Pastor(s)
- d. Board of Education members

- e. Church Council officers
- f. All Steering Committee personnel
- g. List of subcommittees and all personnel who served on those subcommittees
- h. Secretary(s)
- i. Volunteers in the accreditation process
- j. Consultant
- k. Visiting Team Captain and Members

15.12 \*Accurate and current records of all accreditation reports and documents – electronic and/or hard copy

- a. All forms and resources, for example, schedule for completing tasks of the self-study process
- b. School's Self-Study Reports
- c. Previous Visiting Team's Written Report (when applicable)
- d. Documents verifying previous accreditation status received (when applicable)
- e. Previous School Improvement Plan (when applicable)

Appendix (C)

Cover Letter for Survey

**Subject:** WELS Approved Survey on WELSSA; Please Complete

**Body:** Fellow Called Workers in Christ-

I am currently working on my thesis project for the completion of my Masters Degree in Education from Martin Luther College. My thesis project is titled, "School Accreditation and Its Impact on Our WELS Schools". This survey has been approved and supported by the Commission on Lutheran Schools.

Please take a few minutes to answer the questions on the survey. Please be as honest as possible. Your feedback and comments are very important to this study and will remain confidential.

Here is a link to the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

Thanks for your participation!

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from me, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from my mailing list.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

In Christ-

Mr. Brian Mensching

Principal of Resurrection Lutheran School

Aurora, IL

Appendix (D)

**School Accreditation and Its Impact on Our WELS Schools**

**Teacher, Principal, and Pastor Survey**

\*\*Please circle your position on your faculty (if you are a principal and teacher, circle principal):

Principal                  Pastor                  Teacher

**Part 1: School Improvement**

- 1) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in classroom instruction.
- 2) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.
- 3) Participation in the accreditation process has resulted in better faculty communication.
- 4) Participation in the accreditation process has been considered by most of the faculty to be necessary for ensuring school improvement.
- 5) The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough. These recommendations were effective in the overall school improvement plan.
- 6) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment for students.
- 7) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the faculty.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Certain
1) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in classroom instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) Participation in the accreditation process has resulted in better faculty communication.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) Participation in the accreditation process has been considered by most of the faculty to be necessary for ensuring school improvement.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough. These recommendations were effective in the overall school improvement plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment for students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the faculty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



- 8) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the use and allocation of resources at my school.
- 9) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the organization of my school.
- 10) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the management of my school.
- 11) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the short-term (1-2 years) planning of the school.
- 12) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the and long-term (3-5 years) planning of the school.
- 13) Participation in the accreditation process led my school to evaluate its curriculum and gain a better understanding of our school curriculum.
- 14) Participation in the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvements at my school.
- 15) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in school leadership.
- 16) Participation in the accreditation process has led to an improvement in school recruitment.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Certain
8) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the use and allocation of resources at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the organization of my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the management of my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the short-term (1-2 years) planning of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the and long-term (3-5 years) planning of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13) Participation in the accreditation process led my school to evaluate its curriculum and gain a better understanding of our school curriculum.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14) Participation in the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvements at my school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in school leadership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16) Participation in the accreditation process has led to an improvement in school recruitment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Directions: Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Please be as honest as possible. Your feedback and comments are very important to this study and will remain confidential.

- 1) Please check all the factors of school improvement that you feel have improved because your school went through the accreditation process. Please make any comments concerning these factors.

\_\_\_\_\_ Curriculum development and study

\_\_\_\_\_ School climate

\_\_\_\_\_ Parental and community involvement

\_\_\_\_\_ Enabled school to strengths and weaknesses

\_\_\_\_\_ Organizational effectiveness and long-term planning

\_\_\_\_\_ School resources and physical needs

\_\_\_\_\_ Professional development

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Explain:

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- 2) Please check all the aspects of school climate that you feel have improved because your school went through the accreditation process. School climate is evident in the feelings and attitudes about the school expressed by students, teachers, parents, and faculty.

Please make any comments concerning these factors.

\_\_\_\_\_ Appearance of the building

\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty relations

\_\_\_\_\_ Student interactions

\_\_\_\_\_ Leadership and decision making

\_\_\_\_\_ Disciplined environment

\_\_\_\_\_ Learning environment

\_\_\_\_\_ Attitude and culture

\_\_\_\_\_ School-community relations

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

Explain:

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- 3) Do you feel that every school in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod should go through the accreditation process as a means to improve their school?

Yes

No

Why or why not?

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**Part 2: Academic Improvement and School Growth (To be filled out by the principals only.)**

- 1) What were the overall test scores for your school before accreditation and right now? (Please indicate the total composite score, not each subject matter separately, for the eighth grade class of your school.)

Before Accreditation \_\_\_\_\_

Right Now: \_\_\_\_\_

- 2) In your opinion, has participation in the accreditation process led to academic improvement (growth in student learning) in your school?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

Explain:

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- 3) Please include the enrollment for PreK-8<sup>th</sup> grade the year before your school was accredited and your enrollment know for 2011-2012 school year.

Before Accreditation \_\_\_\_\_

Right Now: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix (E)

Responses for the 16 Closed-Ended Questions

**Table 1: Pastors' Responses**

Question:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Certain
1) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in classroom instruction.	27.8%	47.2%	8.3%	0.0%	16.7%
2) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.	19.4%	58.3%	11.1%	0.0%	11.1%
3) Participation in the accreditation process has resulted in better faculty communication.	8.6%	60%	11.4%	0.0%	20%
4) Participation in the accreditation process has been considered by most of the faculty to be necessary for ensuring school improvement.	34.3%	31.4%	5.7%	2.9%	25.7%
5) The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough. These recommendations were effective in the overall school improvement plan.	41.2%	52.9%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%
6) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment for students.	32.4%	50.0%	2.9%	0.0%	14.7%
7) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the faculty.	17.6%	52.9%	8.8%	0.0%	20.6%
8) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the use and allocation of resources at my school.	11.8%	50.0%	20.6%	0.0%	17.6%
9) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the organization of my school.	32.4%	47.1%	8.8%	0.0%	11.8%
10) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the management of my school.	26.5%	55.9%	5.9%	0.0%	11.8%
11) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the short-term (1-2 years) planning of the school.	32.4%	44.1%	5.9%	0.0%	17.6%
12) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the long-term (3-5 years) planning of the school.	23.5%	58.8%	2.9%	0.0%	14.7%
13) Participation in the accreditation process led my school to evaluate its curriculum and gain a better understanding of our school curriculum.	26.5%	58.8%	2.9%	2.9%	8.8%
14) Participation in the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvements at my school.	17.6%	50.0%	14.7%	2.9%	14.7%

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15) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in school leadership.	23.8%	47.1%	14.7%	0.0%	14.7%
16) Participation in the accreditation process has led to an improvement in school recruitment.	11.8%	47.1%	11.8%	2.9%	26.5%

**Table 2: Principals' Responses**

Question:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Certain
1) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in classroom instruction.	20.0%	68.6%	5.7%	0.0%	5.7%
2) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.	22.9%	60.0%	8.6%	0.0%	8.6%
3) Participation in the accreditation process has resulted in better faculty communication.	22.9%	48.6%	14.3%	0.0%	14.3%
4) Participation in the accreditation process has been considered by most of the faculty to be necessary for ensuring school improvement.	22.9%	54.3%	14.3%	0.0%	8.6%
5) The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough. These recommendations were effective in the overall school improvement plan.	37.1%	54.3%	2.9%	0.0%	5.7%
6) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment for students.	31.4%	51.4%	8.6%	0.0%	8.6%
7) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the faculty.	11.4%	60.0%	11.4%	0.0%	17.1%
8) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the use and allocation of resources at my school.	2.9%	57.1%	17.1%	0.0%	22.9%
9) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the organization of my school.	28.6%	57.1%	2.9%	0.0%	11.4%
10) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the management of my school.	31.4%	57.1%	0.0%	0.0%	11.4%
11) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the short-term (1-2 years) planning of the school.	31.4%	54.3%	11.4%	0.0%	2.9%
12) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the long-term (3-5 years) planning of the school.	37.1%	57.1%	2.9%	0.0%	2.9%
13) Participation in the accreditation process led my school to evaluate its curriculum and gain a better understanding of our school curriculum.	31.4%	57.1%	5.7%	0.0%	5.7%

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14) Participation in the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvements at my school.	31.4%	37.1%	22.9%	0.0%	8.6%
15) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in school leadership.	20.0%	62.9%	2.9%	0.0%	14.3%
16) Participation in the accreditation process has led to an improvement in school recruitment.	8.6%	51.4%	22.9%	2.9%	14.3%

**Table 3: Teachers' Responses**

Question:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Certain
1) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in classroom instruction.	11.9%	58.2%	14.2%	1.5%	14.2%
2) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the professional development training for teachers.	11.9%	61.2%	17.9%	1.5%	7.5%
3) Participation in the accreditation process has resulted in better faculty communication.	9.8%	45.1%	19.5%	3.8%	21.8%
4) Participation in the accreditation process has been considered by most of the faculty to be necessary for ensuring school improvement.	16.5%	56.4%	11.3%	1.5%	14.3%
5) The recommendations of the visiting team were valid and thorough. These recommendations were effective in the overall school improvement plan.	32.1%	48.9%	5.3%	0.8%	13.0%
6) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the academic environment for students.	11.5%	60.8%	11.5%	1.5%	14.6%
7) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in the work environment for the faculty.	7.0%	41.9%	20.2%	2.3%	28.7%
8) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the use and allocation of resources at my school.	4.7%	37.0%	24.4%	2.4%	31.5%
9) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the organization of my school.	15.7%	55.1%	16.5%	0.8%	11.8%
10) Participation in the accreditation process has improved the management of my school.	14.2%	49.6%	18.9%	1.6%	15.7%
11) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the short-term (1-2 years) planning of the school.	14.3%	68.3%	9.5%	0.0%	7.9%
12) I believe that accreditation affects school improvement in the long-term (3-5 years) planning of the school.	22.2%	48.4%	12.7%	0.0%	16.7%

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13) Participation in the accreditation process led my school to evaluate its curriculum and gain a better understanding of our school curriculum.	32.5%	53.2%	7.9%	1.6%	4.8%
14) Participation in the accreditation process is one of the most important factors in ensuring educational improvements at my school.	14.3%	38.9%	24.6%	6.3%	15.9%
15) Participation in the accreditation process has led to improvements in school leadership.	11.1%	46.8%	19.8%	3.2%	19.0%
16) Participation in the accreditation process has led to an improvement in school recruitment.	3.2%	34.9%	26.2%	5.6%	30.2%



Appendix (F)

Responses to Open-Ended Questions

**Table 4: Open-Ended Response #1**

<b>Question:</b>	<b>Pastors' Response</b>	<b>Principals' Response</b>	<b>Teachers' Response</b>
<b>All the factors of school improvement that you feel have improved because your school went through the accreditation process.</b>			
Curriculum development and study	73.5%	75.8%	74.4%
School climate	52.9%	54.5%	38.5%
Parental and community involvement	47.1%	45.5%	46.2%
Enabled school to strengths and weaknesses	64.7%	87.9%	70.9%
Organizational effectiveness and long-term planning	79.4%	84.8%	66.7%
School resources and physical needs	44.1%	48.5%	40.2%
Professional development	58.8%	69.7%	49.6%
Other	14.7%	3.0%	5.1%

**Table 5: Open-Ended Response #2**

<b>Question:</b>	<b>Pastors' Response</b>	<b>Principals' Response</b>	<b>Teachers' Response</b>
<b>All the aspects of school climate that you feel have improved because your school went through the accreditation process. School climate is evident in the feelings and attitudes about the school expressed by students, teachers, parents, and faculty.</b>			
Appearance of the building	51.5%	47.1%	42.3%
Faculty relations	33.3%	26.5%	26.0%
Student interactions	21.2%	26.5%	21.1%

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Leadership and decision making	63.6%	73.5%	49.6%
Disciplined environment	45.5%	23.5%	22.8%
Learning environment	48.5%	50.0%	42.3%
Attitude and culture	57.6%	47.1%	40.7%
School-community relations	48.5%	44.1%	43.1%
Other	9.1%	8.8%	8.9%

**Table 6: Open-Ended Question #3**

<b>Question:</b>	<b>Pastors' Response</b>	<b>Principals' Response</b>	<b>Teachers' Response</b>
<b>Do you feel that every school in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod should go through the accreditation process as a means to improve their school?</b>			
Yes	75.8%	85.3%	74.0%
No	24.2%	14.7%	26.0%

**Table 7: Open-Ended Question #4**

<b>Question:</b>	<b>Pastors' Response</b>	<b>Principals' Response</b>	<b>Teachers' Response</b>
<b>In your opinion, has participation in the accreditation process led to academic improvement (growth in student learning) in your school?</b>			
Yes	66.7%	82.4%	54.1%
No	33.3%	17.6%	45.9%

Appendix (G)

TerraNova Test Scores and School Accreditation

**Table 8: TerraNova Test Scores**

(For Principals Only) What were the overall test scores for your school before accreditation and right now? (Please indicate the total composite score, not each subject matter separately, for the eighth grade class only.)

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Before Accreditation:	55.79	781	14
Right Now:	58.50	819	14

Number	Before Accreditation:	Right Now:	Difference:
1	70	72	+2
2	79	81	+2
3	71	66	-5
4	80	78	-2
5	78	85	+7
6	50	66	+16
7	65	73	+8
8	84	84	0
9	70	70	0
10	72	81	+9
11	62	63	+1

Appendix (H)

School Enrollment Information

**Table 9: School Enrollment**

Please indicate the enrollment for K-8th grade the year before your school was accredited and your enrollment know for the 2011-2012 school year.			
Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Before Accreditation:	113.14	3,168	28
Right Now:	129.21	3,618	28

Number	Before Accreditation:	Right Now:	Difference:
1	68	113	+45
2	200	220	+20
3	142	147	+5
4	32	36	+4
5	200	200	0
6	150	130	-20
7	218	237	+19
8	73	83	+10
9	60	135	+75
10	130	114	-16
11	27	11	-16
12	180	181	+1
13	75	71	-4
14	94	83	-11
15	97	100	+3
16	123	126	+3
17	150	210	+60
18	163	158	-5
19	60	70	+10
20	187	420	+233
21	225	200	-25
22	99	122	+23
23	98	98	0
24	112	120	+8
25	85	100	+15
26	56	61	+6
27	27	42	+15
28	37	30	-7