

Running head: ENROLLMENT POLICIES IN WELS SCHOOLS

**Descriptive Study of Open, Semi-Open, and Closed Enrollment Policies in WELS
Schools**

by

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Abstract

This descriptive research study sought to investigate the enrollment policies of Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Schools (WELS) as being open, closed, or semi-open. WELS elementary school principals, pastors, and professors at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary constituted the population for the study. Data was collected using the “Enrollment Policies Questionnaire”, which was sent to 303 principals; 100 pastors; 65 professors at Martin Luther College, and 17 professors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Usable responses were received from 261 respondents – 150 principals, 57 pastors, 44 professors at MLC, and 10 professors at WLS.

The results revealed that 93% of WELS schools currently have an open enrollment policy, 4% have a semi-open enrollment policy, 1% a closed enrollment policy, and 2% follow a combination of the three. Out of all participants 84% have the belief that WELS schools should have an open enrollment policy, 15% a semi-open policy, and 1% a closed policy.

The percentage of schools with an open enrollment policy was compared to the percentages all the groups that responded and believe WELS schools should have an open enrollment policy to determine if the difference was statistically significant. In addition, the percentages of all the groups in favor of an open-enrollment policy were compared to determine if the difference was statistically significant.

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Chapter I: Introduction

A Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) school conducted an advertising campaign to reach out to their local community. They sent out postcards promoting the benefits of a Christian education and encouraging parents to enroll their children. A week later a family walked into the WELS school inquiring about enrollment for their children. The school principal gave the family a tour of the building, explained the Christ-centered mission and purpose of the school, and gave the family an enrollment packet. The parents expressed how they desired their children to receive a Christian education and were very excited. The next day one of the parents dropped off the application. Looking at the information on the application, the principal discovered the parents were members of the local Baptist church and had no desire to become members of the WELS church or learn the teachings of the WELS church. A few days later another family applied to enroll their children, but in this case the parents were not members of any church, nor did they have much background in religious instruction at all. They were drawn to the school because of the small class sizes, focus on academic excellence, and the idea of a private education; yet were open to learning about what the church teaches. They understood their children would receive religious instruction on a daily basis.

WELS schools are regularly presented with these different enrollment scenarios. David Valleskey confirmed this in his paper entitled *Outreach and Our Lutheran Elementary Schools and Pre-Schools* when he wrote “experience shows that there may well be as many, or more, *churched* families that desire to enroll their children in our schools than *unchurched* ones” (Valleskey, 2014). In his essay, Valleskey stated that during the years he served as pastor at Apostles Evangelical Lutheran Church in San

Jose, CA the church had an enrollment policy that set the priority order of student enrollment. That policy included enrollment of students whose parents were members of Apostles, members of other WELS churches, children from unchurched homes, and children from homes that were churched but non-WELS. Valleskey states “I assume that most, if not all of our schools, have a similar policy” (Valleskey, 2014). Joel Gerlach in an essay entitled *The Application of the Scriptural Principles of Fellowship to the Participation of Non-WELS Students in Religion-Oriented School Activities* states “Most, if not all, of our schools have their own set enrollment policies” and he makes a similar claim as Valleskey when he refers to a survey (not cited in paper) that was conducted of WELS schools and states “in each instance such children (children of members of non-Lutheran churches) were included in the enrollment policy endorsed by the congregation” (Gerlach, 1983).

In my personal, informal, observation I have found that enrollment policies are not consistent throughout our WELS schools as Valleskey and Gerlach state. I have observed that some schools have a “closed” enrollment policy, others a “semi-closed” enrollment policy, and others an “open” enrollment policy. For the purposes of this paper, “closed” enrollment refers to a WELS school only accepting enrollment of children whose family are WELS members or members of a church in doctrinal fellowship with WELS. The school will not offer enrollment to families who are unchurched (not members of a church) or are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS. “Semi-open” enrollment refers to a WELS school offering enrollment to WELS members, members of a church in doctrinal fellowship with WELS, and families who are unchurched. “Open” enrollment refers to a Lutheran school offering enrollment to WELS

members, members of a church in doctrinal fellowship with WELS, the unchurched, and to families who are members of a church not in fellowship with WELS.

Valleskey and Gerlach make the generalization that enrollment policies are similar throughout WELS schools. Through this research study I seek to find if this assumption is true, as well as gain valuable insight into the Biblical foundation and underpinnings of WELS elementary school enrollment policies by answering the following research questions: 1. What percentage of WELS schools have an open, semi-open, or closed enrollment? 2: What is the opinion of principals, pastors, MLC professors, and WLC professors regarding enrollment policy type? 3. What factors lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are unchurched? 4. What factors lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS? 5. What factors lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are unchurched? 6. What factors lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS?

This project paper will consist of a literature review that focuses on the purpose of the church, church fellowship principles, church fellowship principle(s) applied to the Lutheran school, problems/obstacles associated with enrolling families that are not WELS members, and opportunities and blessings of using the Lutheran school for outreach. This descriptive study will include a methodology section that explains how the study was conducted, will provide results in both narrative form and also by using charts and graphs, a summary of the results, conclusions, and finally recommendations.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Purpose of the Church

To get to the heart of the matter of discussing enrollment in our WELS schools, the topic and question that is addressed is whether or not to use our Lutheran elementary schools for outreach. This type of conversation should start with a review of the mission of the church. Article III (Purpose and Objective) in the constitution of the congregation currently served by the researcher, St. John's Lutheran Church and School in Watertown, WI, states:

The continuing purpose of this congregation, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of Holy Scriptures (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15). The primary objective of this congregation shall be to proclaim the Law and Gospel in our congregation, community, and the world (2 Timothy 4:2), so that through the means of grace the Holy Spirit might: A. Lead sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for life and salvation (Luke 24:46-48). B. Strengthen believers in faith and sanctification (Romans 10:17). C. Equip believers as disciples, stewards, witnesses, and servants to share the gospel and live their faith (Ephesians 4:11, 12; Matthew 5:16) (p. 2).

This constitutional statement is consistent with the Christian Church at large. In his essay *Outreach and Our Lutheran Elementary Schools and Pre-schools* Valleskey makes the statement that all WELS congregations cover the same ground as stated above in the purpose and mission of my congregation. The purpose of our congregations is evangelism, which is to announce and proclaim God's Word; the good news of

forgiveness of sins and life through Jesus. Believers and unbelievers alike need to be evangelized and hear both the message of the Law and the message of the Gospel (Valleskey, 1987; Valleskey, 2014; Vogt, 1975).

The mission of the church is to evangelize, work with, those already within the church. Believers need to be strengthened in faith and sanctification through the means of grace. Believers also need to be equipped as disciples, stewards, and witnesses for sharing the Gospel of Jesus with our fellow men. God's gives the command to "Feed my sheep" (John 21:17). The food believers need is the Gospel in Word and Sacraments (Valleskey, 2014).

The mission of the church is also to evangelize, reach out to, those not in the church. Unbelievers need to be evangelized and it is God's will that we evangelize the unbelieving world. God has commanded us to "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). Christians will automatically want to share the Gospel with others even apart from God's command. "To have no zeal, no inner compulsion, to proclaim the Gospel is to despise the Gospel. And that is a sin" (Valleskey, 2014, p. 4). The fact is souls without Christ die forever. Believers in Christ have a concern and love for souls that will move them to join in the task of proclaiming the Gospel to save the lost and dying (Valleskey, 1987; Valleskey, 2014; Vogt, 1975).

In summary, the true mission of the church is to nurture the believers in our midst, and to reach out to those people who are not in our midst and not yet in the family of God. Valleskey (2014) states:

Sometimes people pit nurture of the believer and outreach to the unbeliever against each other, as though you have to decide between one or the other. When

we see that the mission of the Church is evangelism, proclaiming the Gospel to believer and unbeliever alike, we quickly understand that there is no conflict between the two” (p.3).

Christian education – of all types – is an integral part of the ongoing mission of nurture and outreach of the church. This divine purpose of proclaiming the Gospel is shared by all agencies of Christian instruction, both youth and adult, in the congregation. The common purpose and goal of nurturing believers and reaching out to unbelievers will lead all agencies of instruction in the church to blend into a unified purpose. Lutheran schools are part of the congregation’s single purpose and are clearly and consciously linked to the same mission of the church. If the mission of the church and mission of the school are one in the same, which is the call to evangelize both believer (nurture) and unbeliever (outreach), then the mission of the school also includes both nurture of believers and outreach to the unbelieving world (Mueller, 1974).

Church Fellowship Principles

The scriptural principles of church fellowship directly apply to the discussion of enrollment in WELS schools. For this reason, it is necessary to review the doctrine of church fellowship as it is expressed and confessed in the WELS. A document entitled *Church Fellowship*, issued in 1959 by the Synod’s Commission on Doctrinal Matters defines church fellowship as “every joint expression, manifestation, and demonstration of the common faith in which Christians on the basis of their confession find themselves to be united with one another” (Church Fellowship, 1959, p. 1).

Sin destroyed the perfect fellowship that people have with God and with each other. God provided a plan to undo sin’s divisive, destructive consequences and to restore

us to fellowship with him and with one another in a new family. The Holy Spirit unites us and establishes us in fellowship with God and each other through faith in Christ. That faith unites us as a family with all believers, expresses itself in spiritual unity and activity, and leads us to express it jointly with fellow Christians in various groupings or fellowship activities. This family that is created through faith in Jesus is called the holy Christian church and communion of saints. Believers in Jesus strive to share this blessing of fellowship with others, and scripture urges believers to practice it as often as possible and in as many ways as possible with other Christians.

Joint expressions of faith are classified in various ways, such as altar, pulpit, prayer fellowship, fellowship in church work, education, and charity. Since all of these activities are joint expressions of faith they are essentially the same thing and fall under the unit concept of church fellowship (Gerlach, 1983; Vogt, 1975). Everything a Christian does is done to the glory of God, but not every activity a person does with others is a joint expression of his faith with that person (Kuske, 2001). As an example, playing basketball with another person is not a joint expression of your faith. On the other hand, joining together in the Lord's Supper or in prayer is a joint expression of faith and considered church fellowship.

A person's public confession, not faith in his heart, is the basis for determining whether or not we may express our faith jointly. That Christian's confession involves in principle all of God's Word. All Christians display weakness of faith (not fully understanding Scripture's teachings) and of life (not living up to what Scripture teaches). A weak Christian is a person of our fellowship whose understanding of some portion of God's word needs clarification or correction, or whose acceptance of some portion of

God's word needs to be strengthened. Weakness is not a reason for not practicing church fellowship, but a reason for practicing it more vigorously (Gerlach, 1983; Kuske, 2001).

Church fellowship must cease when a person persistently adheres to false teaching and practice. A persistent errorist refers to a person who in spite of patient admonition continues in sin, or a person who in spite of instruction accepts an error in doctrine and insists that his understanding of that doctrine is the correct one and promotes the error publicly. God directs us to avoid those who persist in error because false teaching can undermine faith and disrupt our fellowship with Him and other believers. Additionally, believers avoid persistent errorists because love compels us to call his attention to the seriousness of his error. On the other hand, God wants us to help a weak and erring Christian grow by instruction so that their weakness does not become a means by which Satan can destroy their soul. The fellowship we have through Christ is so precious that our heavenly Father cautions, counsels, and provides commands to believers against persistent false teachings and personal conduct that could injure and impair fellowship, but encourages continued contact with those in error as long as they are receptive to God's Word (Gerlach, 1983; Kuske, 2011; Vogt, 1975).

Church Fellowship Principle Applied to the Lutheran School

In its 2013 report to the Synod, the Task Force on Lutheran Schools included the section "The WELS School as an Outreach Tool" and stated:

Perhaps one of the most significant issues facing our schools is whether or not to use the school as a tool to assist the congregation with its outreach and evangelism efforts; or determining how to be an outreach-minded school if that is what they have determined they want to do... there is significant debate about the

role of the Lutheran elementary school in this work” (WELS Book of Reports and Memorials, p.50).

Two principles in particular guide Christians and Lutheran Elementary Schools in the exercise of church fellowship and enrollment policies. On one hand, we are directed to be united with fellow believers and reach out with love to a weak or erring brother. On the other hand, God directs us to avoid those who adhere to false doctrine and practice. As both principles are properly recognized, difficult situations will confront Lutheran schools. These difficult situations properly lie in the field of casuistry. Discussions in cases of casuistry deal with solutions that are not clear-cut, nor can decisions be made by the application of a set of rules which govern all cases. Lutheran elementary schools must consider enrollment decisions on a case by case basis rather than having a “once size fits all” rule. No clear-cut answer can be given regarding enrollment of non-WELS students in WELS schools. In cases of casuistry, a spirit of discernment is needed which enables a conscientious servant of God to distinguish between an erring Christian or a persistent errorist. In a study paper presented to the Board for Parish Education in 1983, Rev. Joel Gerlach, a retired parish pastor and seminary professor, stated:

The BPE would be ill-advised to try to draft a set of guidelines for principals to follow in applying principles of church fellowship to specific situations. Rather urge a study of the Scriptures as the source of our life, vigor and evangelical practice, a study whereby the principles the Lord of the church sets forth become our very own by conviction derived from our own grappling with and immersion in the Word. Then also urge us to pray for the Spirit’s help to apply the law of Christ’s love in any and every situation that arises (Gerlach, 1983, p.7).

Some schools have adopted the policy of taking on nonmember children not through the process of carefully balancing the principles mentioned above, but rather as merely an increased funding source by charging a high tuition. Plath, 2010 states:

To adopt this open-door policy as a way to provide necessary funding for our schools is questionable at best. The school then becomes a private school which has as one of its purposes the raising of funds to help the church finance its work (p. 3).

He also goes on to state if a school takes on the goal of raising funds through nonmember enrollment, it becomes questionable if the school is effectively helping to achieve the dual goal of the church of nurture and outreach.

If a WELS school does accept non-member enrollment, it will be mindful not to seek out people who belong to a Christian denomination not in fellowship with WELS if the gospel is present in that church. This type of action would be considered proselytizing. Where the Gospel is present, the Spirit can work faith in believers in spite of the errors that also may be present. We must share the truth with a person of another denomination, however, when we have opportunity if that person comes to us and asks us about our faith or seeks to be instructed in the truth (Kuske, 2001; Vogt, 1975).

Problems/Obstacles

In an essay delivered to the Metropolitan Milwaukee Teachers' Conference entitled "Teaching the Child of a Non-Christian Home" Mark Jeske outlines many problems associated with having non-WELS children in WELS schools. When the home is not Christ-centered, the teacher has some serious handicaps. Non-member parents often do not go to Sunday morning worship, undermining the importance of God's Word.

These parents also will not view Word of God homework, memory work, and hymnology work as important. Another problem of the non-Christian home is that the environment often directly contradicts what the child learns from God's Word in school. Many other problems, such as child abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse, and violence, exist in families which God's Word is not a priority. (Jeske, 1983; Valleskey, 1987; Valleskey, 2014).

Even if non-member parents are not working against the sharing of God's Word as mentioned above, the simple fact remains that a non-member child will, very likely, come into the classroom Biblically illiterate. Especially in the middle to upper grades, teachers assume students know the main Bible stories and have memorized key Bible passages and Luther's Small Catechism. This Biblical knowledge that students have gained through the years helps a teacher move forward in their instruction with a focus on deeper truths of God's Word. A teacher may struggle when students in the classroom are at a very different level of biblical knowledge (Valleskey, 1987; Valleskey, 2014).

When Lutheran schools enroll non-member children, especially those in the older grades, they may simply be inheriting some other school's problem. The child may have been very hard to handle at the previous school or endlessly getting into trouble. In desperation, the parent seeks out a private school in hopes the teacher will be able to handle the child and reform him or her. Rather than having a discipline problem, the child may instead have an academic problem and the parent is fleeing from the child being labeled or written off at the previous school. In some cases the child may have significant learning problems which teachers' small, multi-grade classrooms are unable to handle (Valleskey, 1987; Valleskey, 2014).

Opportunities and Blessings of Using the Lutheran School for Outreach

Despite the challenges and obstacles stated above, there are many opportunities and blessings potentially associated with using the Lutheran school for outreach. Many congregations have found the school to be one of the best mission agencies of the church. The enrollment of non-member children in our Lutheran elementary school may serve as a natural bridge to unchurched families who might have not otherwise inquired about or came into our church. When children hear the saving Word of God for the first time they can't hold their excitement in when they get home and tell mom and dad all they have learned. Through this method, many families have their first contact with the church through the school. Children and parents build positive relationships with loving and caring teachers and adults are given the opportunity to take Bible information classes to learn more about God's Word (Jeske, 1983; Valleskey, 1980).

Jeske states "the task of working with children from non-Christian homes or semi-Christian homes is worth the effort, and it is justifiable as a second reason for the school's existence after training the congregation's own youth" (Jeske, 1983, p. 3). Our Savior in the Great Commission gives the command to, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Lutheran elementary schools enroll non-member children in order to carry out Christ's mission command to share the saving message of the Gospel.

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this descriptive research study is to determine if enrollment policies are similar throughout WELS schools regarding having an open, semi-open, or closed enrollment policy. The study seeks to answer the following questions: 1. What percentage of WELS schools have an open, semi-open, or closed enrollment? 2: What is the opinion of principals, pastors, MLC professors, and WLC professors regarding enrollment policy type? 3. What factors lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are unchurched? 4. What factors lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS? 5. What factors lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are unchurched? 6. What factors lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS?

This descriptive research study will contain an online survey in which the link to the survey will be emailed to participants. Participants will be given two weeks to complete the online survey, receiving one email reminder halfway between the initial survey email and the survey due date. Participants of the survey will include all WELS principals, a random selection of 100 WELS pastors, and all professors from Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. All participants will be thanked for their cooperation in the project through the online survey upon successful completion of the survey.

WELS elementary school Principals will be surveyed to determine if their school offers enrollment to the following groups of people: WELS and ELS members, families who are unchurched, families who are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship

with WELS. The survey given to the principals will have them indicate the school name and location to ensure only one response is received per school. Additionally, the principals, pastors, and professors will all be surveyed regarding his or her opinion if WELS elementary schools should be open to offering enrollment to families who are members of a WELS or ELS congregation, unchurched, or members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS. This descriptive research study will quantitatively describe the percentage of current enrollment policies of WELS schools as being open, semi-open, or closed. The study will also quantitatively describe the percentage of what different sub-groups (WELS principals, pastors, and professors at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary) believe should be the enrollment policy. Both of these pieces of information will be represented as part-to-whole in the form of a pie chart. A comparison will be made between the percentages of actual enrollment policies with the percentage of what different subgroup believe should be the enrollment policy to determine if there is statistically significant difference. In addition, the percentages of the beliefs of all the groups will be compared to determine if the difference is statistically significant.

The research study will also seek qualitative data from participants pertaining to factors that would lead a WELS elementary school to offer or not offer enrollment to a family who is unchurched or that is a member of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS. This information will be processed and organized for analysis and ranked by categorical subdivisions.

Limitations of the Descriptive Study

This study was limited in several ways. Results of the survey reflected the feelings and opinions of those principals, pastors, and professors responding to an online survey. The results of the study are not intended to be generalized. Another limitation of this descriptive study was that it is very likely not all WELS principals responded to the survey. Therefore, the findings of the percentage of WELS schools being open, semi-open, and closed is a sample of the population rather than a full description of all WELS elementary schools. The literature review in this study is limited due to a relatively small amount of available research data regarding percentages of WELS schools' enrollment policies as being open, semi-open, or closed. The literature review summarized papers and essays written pertaining to the enrollment policies of WELS schools. This research study recognized that WELS schools differ in regards to offering or declining enrollment to families who are unchurched and/or members of a church not in fellowship with WELS. This study also recognized that principals, pastors, and professors of Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary have different beliefs regarding whether WELS schools should enroll families who are not WELS members.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of the descriptive research study was to determine if enrollment policies are similar throughout WELS schools regarding having an open, semi-open, or closed enrollment policy. This study sought to describe the percentages of WELS schools having these policies, as well as what different groups believe should be the policy of WELS schools. Additionally, the study gathered data regarding the factors that would lead a school to offer and decline enrollment to families who are unchurched and families who are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS.

A total of 485 people were surveyed with 261 responding (54% response rate). Principal responses totaled 150 out of 303 surveyed (49.5%). Martin Luther College Professor responses totaled 44 out of 65 surveyed (68%). Pastor responses totaled 57 out of 100 surveyed (57%). Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor responses totaled 10 out of 17 surveyed (59%).

Question 1: What percentage of WELS schools have an open, semi-open, or closed enrollment?

Data was collected from principals from 150 WELS elementary schools regarding if their school offered enrollment to the following groups: families in membership of the WELS congregation, families in membership of a fellow WELS (or ELS) congregation, families who are unchurched, and families in membership of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS. 93.3% (140 out of 150) responded the WELS school had an open enrollment policy in which they were open to offering enrollment to all groups listed. 3.3% (5 out of 150) responded the WELS school had a semi-open enrollment policy in which the school offered enrollment to all groups except for families in membership of a

church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS. 0.67% (2 out of 150) responded the WELS school had a closed enrollment policy in which they only offered enrollment to families in membership of the WELS congregation and fellow WELS (or ELS) congregation. 2.0% (3 out of 150) responded the WELS school offered enrollment to different combinations of the groups listed.

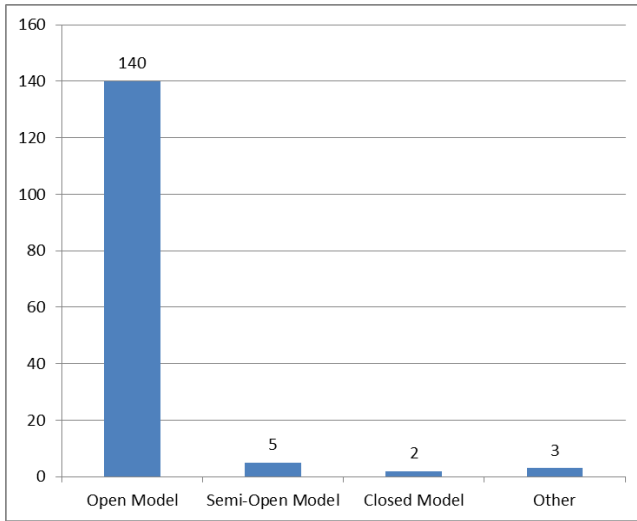


Figure 1. Results from survey on current enrollment policies of WELS Schools.

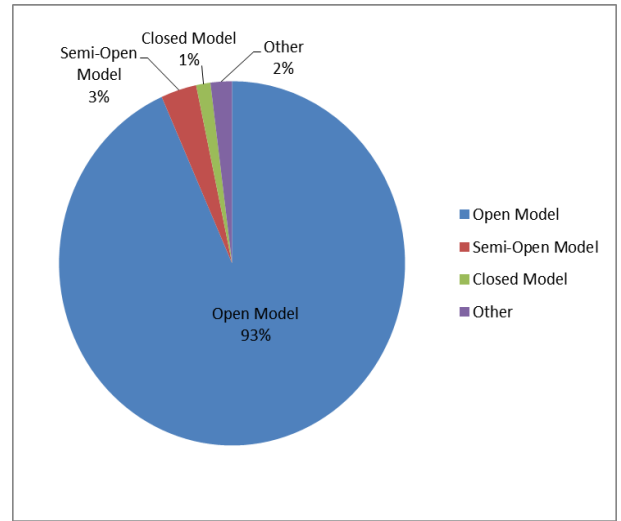


Figure 2. Results from survey on percentage of current enrollment policies of WELS Schools.

Question 2: What is the opinion of principals, pastors, MLC professors, and WLC professors regarding enrollment policy type?

Data was collected from principals, pastors, and professors at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary regarding their opinion on which groups WELS elementary schools should be open to offering enrollment. 83.9% (219 out of 261) responded WELS schools should have an open enrollment policy. 14.56% (38 out of 261) responded WELS schools should have a semi-open enrollment policy. 1.1% (3 out of 261) responded WELS school should have a closed enrollment policy. 0.4% (1 out of

261) responded WELS schools should be open to all groups except for families who are members of a sister WELS (or ELS) congregation.

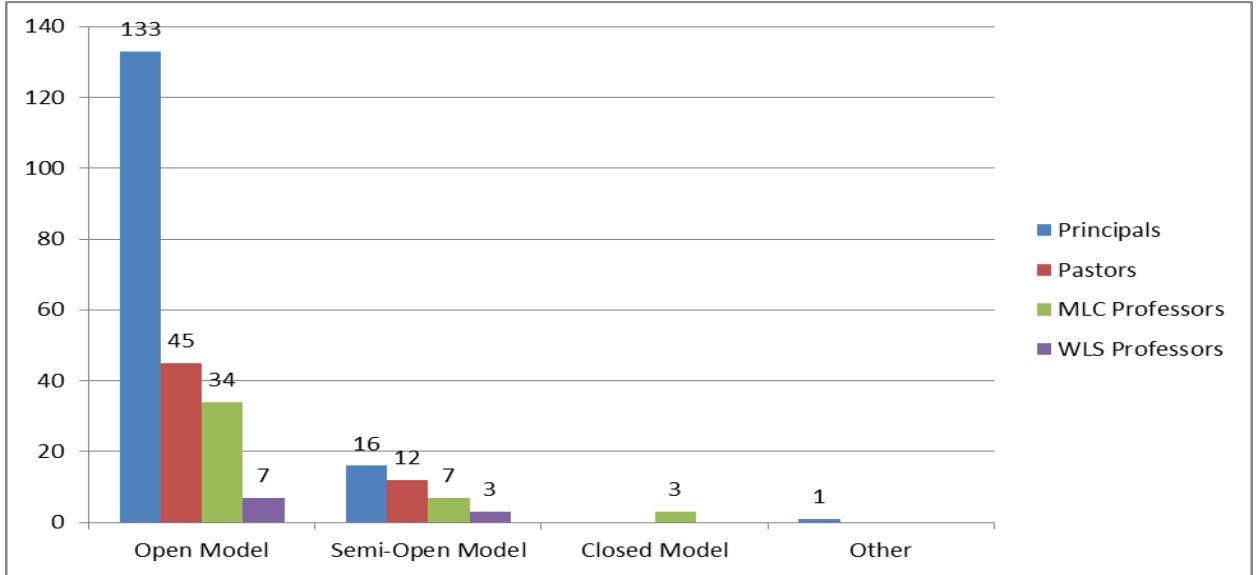


Figure 3. Results from survey regarding beliefs on the type of enrollment policy WELS schools should follow.

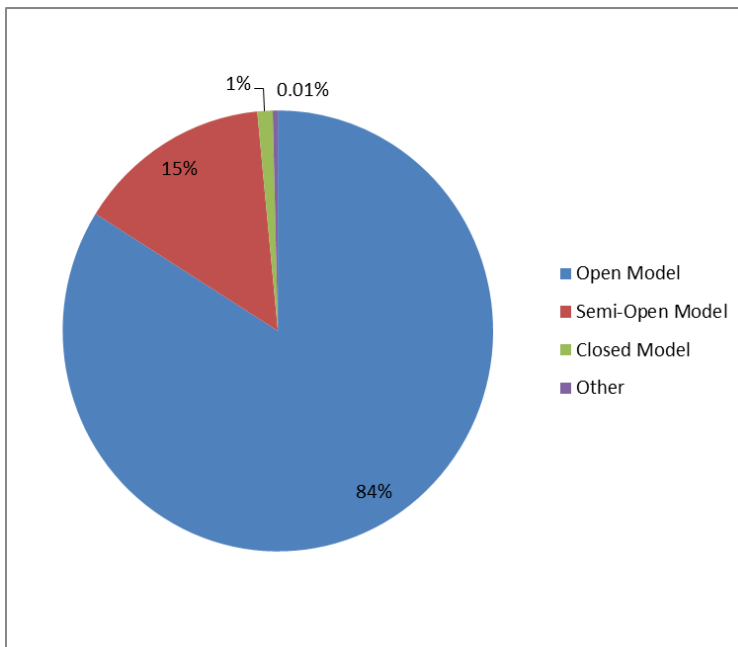


Figure 4. Percentage of results from survey regarding combined beliefs of all participants on the type of enrollment policy WELS schools should follow.

Of WELS principals who responded 89% indicated they believed WELS schools should have an open enrollment policy compared to 10% of those who indicated a semi-open enrollment policy. 79% of WELS pastors indicated they believed WELS schools should have an open enrollment policy compared to 21% of those who indicated a semi-open enrollment policy. 77% of MLC professors indicated they believe WELS schools should have an open enrollment policy compared to 16% of those who indicated a semi-open enrollment policy and 7% who indicated a closed enrollment policy. 70% of WLS professors indicated they believed WELS schools should have an open enrollment policy compared to 30% of those who indicated a semi-open enrollment policy.

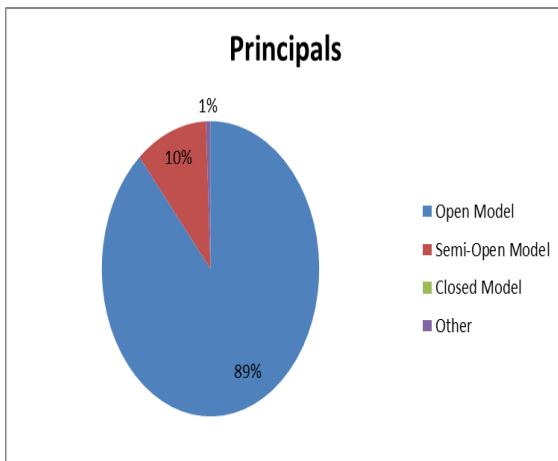


Figure 5. Percentage of results from survey regarding beliefs of principals on the type of enrollment policy WELS schools should

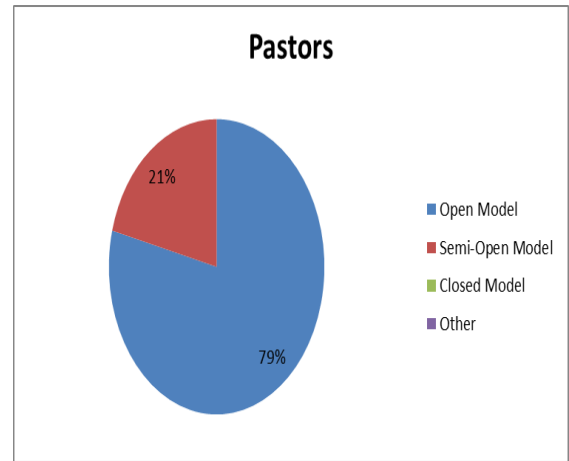


Figure 6. Percentage of results from survey regarding beliefs of pastors on the type of enrollment policy WELS schools should

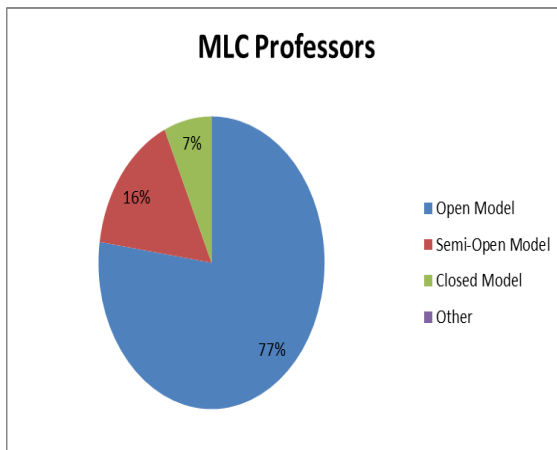


Figure 7. Percentage of results from survey regarding beliefs of MLC professors on the type of enrollment policy WELS schools should follow.

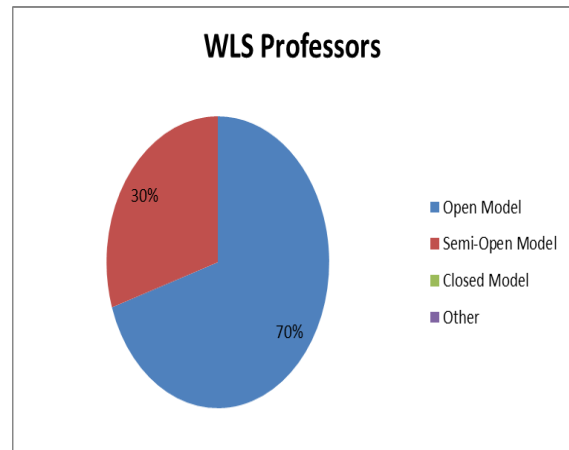


Figure 8. Percentage of results from survey regarding beliefs of WLS professors on the type of enrollment policy WELS schools should follow.

3. What factors lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are unchurched?

The top factor given (121 responses) that would lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are unchurched was to reach out to families with the Gospel. One pastor responded to this question stating “The desire to serve the family with the good news of Jesus”. An MLC professor stated “To reach lost souls – both the children and parents”. The idea of the school being a mission arm of the church was included in this category. The second most frequent factor (66 responses) was for the child in particular to learn about the good news of Jesus. The third most frequent factor (45 responses) was a reference to the Great Commission or Matthew 28. The fourth highest ranked factor (40 responses) was that the family is open to their children receiving religious instruction and will cooperate with and support the mission of the school. One WLS professor stated “Commitment to comply with all policies that have spiritual implications, where they may not yet agree with them”. Fifth highest ranked factor (39 responses) was that by

offering enrollment to an unchurched family it may lead the family to church membership. Other notable factors given ranging from 13 to 34 responses stated the family is willing to be taught God's Word and/or take a Bible information class; to provide the child and family with a high quality, safe, a structure, and loving education; they need all the enrollment income possible to help pay for the school; and to serve and connect with the community and to make the congregation known to the community.

4. What factors lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS?

The top factor given (66 responses) that would lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS was to share the Gospel in its truth and purity and they may learn true Biblical doctrine through the Word of God. One principal stated "Our schools offer the Word taught in its truth and purity. The Holy Spirit certainly has the opportunity to help them see the errors that might exist in their church body." Another principal gave the response "Share the truths of God's Word to those (students and parents) who may have some misguided beliefs about God and his plan of salvation". The second ranked factor (56 responses) was that the family is open and willing for their children to receive religious instruction and will cooperate with and support the mission of the school. The third ranked factor (52 responses) was to reach out to families with the Gospel. Fourth ranked factor (35 responses) was that the parents are willing and/or required to be taught God's Word as they take a Bible information class with the pastor. Other notable factors given ranging from 17 to 27 responses stated that tuition is assessed and the school needs all the enrollment income possible to help pay for the school, the family is interested in

spiritual/Christian education for their child, it may lead the family to church membership or the family has expressed an interest in God's Word and church membership, and the family/child will not insist that their doctrinal differences be heard or argue for their viewpoint.

5. What factors lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are unchurched

The top factor given (67 responses) that would lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are unchurched stated the parent or student wants nothing with a Christ-centered education and there is a refusal to participate in religious instruction. In addition, the child is defiant to what is being taught and speaks against God's Word. One pastor stated "We would not offer enrollment to an unchurched family when in the enrollment process they make it clear that they are not interested in hearing/learning about what we believe and teach." The second most frequent factor (44 responses) to this question was "N/A", meaning there are no factors that would lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are unchurched. The third most frequent factor (29 responses) was the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of the child/family are opposed to the Christ-centered mission. Other notable factors given ranging from 18 to 28 responses stated the child has educational, learning, and/or physical needs the school cannot meet; behavioral/disciplinary problems; the classroom is filled to capacity with member children; the family does not agree or refuses to take a Bible information class; strong disagreement/opposition with WELS position and teachings; and the family refuses/cannot afford to pay tuition.

6. What factors lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS?

The top factor given (79 responses) for not offering enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS stated the reason would be if the child or family has a desire to promote their own belief, argue over doctrine, is defiant to what we are teaching, and speaks against God's Word. A pastor responded to the question stating "If the child/family would speak against what is being taught. Not in the opposition of asking, but in the sense of actively working against what is being taught".

The second most frequent factor (45 responses) stated the parent or student wants nothing with a Christ-centered education and there is a refusal to participate in religious instruction or other religious elements such as Bible history, memory work, and prayer. A principal answered "If the family is not willing to allow WELS doctrine to be taught to their child. We dare not excuse a student from devotions or Bible study. Without the teaching of Scripture, we only serve the same purpose as a public school." Although these top two factors are very similar in nature, they were kept separate as the first factor indicates the child or family speaks against what is taught in religious instruction, while the second most frequent factor is a refusal to learn or participate in religious instruction altogether.

The third most frequent factor (33 responses) given by participants was "N/A", which indicates they do not feel there are any factors that would lead a school to not offer enrollment to a family that is a member of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS. The fourth most frequent factor (30 responses) given for not offering enrollment to this group was strong disagreement and opposition with WELS position and teachings. Other notable factors given ranging from 13 to 22 responses stated the family or student has a desire to proselytize within our walls; the family does not agree or refuses to take a Bible information class; the family will not submit to the rules, policies,

and procedures of the school; the family refuses or cannot afford to pay tuition; fellowship issues; behavior and/or disciplinary problems; and the child has educational, learning, and/or physical needs the school cannot meet.

Chapter IV: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This project paper began with a review on the literature regarding topics of the mission of the church, church fellowship principles, church fellowship principles applied to the Lutheran school, problems/obstacles, and opportunities and blessings of using the Lutheran school for outreach. An online survey was conducted of all WELS principals, a random sample of 100 WELS pastors, and all professors from Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The survey revealed that 93.3% of the responding schools have an open enrollment policy in which it is open to extending enrollment to families that are members of the WELS congregation, fellow WELS or ELS congregations, those who are unchurched, and those who are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS. The study also revealed 83.3% of respondents believe WELS schools should have an open enrollment policy. The research study categorized the participants' responses to the open-ended questions of listing the factors that would lead a WELS school to offer enrollment to unchurched families and to families who are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS, as well as factors that would lead the school to not offer enrollment to those two groups. The categorized factors were presented in terms of frequency of response.

Conclusions

Agreement existed between the literature, current enrollment policies of WELS schools, and opinions of all participants in that the purpose of WELS schools is to share the Gospel of Jesus with those inside the church as well as those outside the church. 100% of WELS schools offer enrollment to those that are members of that congregation and 100% of participant responses stated that enrollment should be extended to families

that are members of the WELS congregation. 98.1% of WELS schools offer enrollment to families that are unchurched, and 99% of participants believe enrollment should be offered to this group. Top responses for factors that would lead a school to offer enrollment to a family that is unchurched go hand-in-hand with this information in that the main responses stated offering enrollment to an unchurched family provides an opportunity to reach out with the Gospel, the child gets to learn about Jesus, it is following the Great Commission, and enrollment in the school may lead the family to church membership.

The literature review portion regarding church fellowship states that church fellowship must cease when a person persistently adheres to false doctrine. Although 93.3% of schools are open to enrolling families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS, the most frequent factor given for not offering enrollment to this type of family is a desire on the part of the family to promote their false beliefs, argue over doctrine, is defiant to what we are teaching, and speaks against God's Word as an unwilling learning. This top factor given does support the fellowship principle of separating from a family that persistently adheres to false doctrine. On the contrary, however, the third greatest response to the question of factors why not to offer enrollment to this group of people was "N/A" in which there are no factors that would lead a school to not offer enrollment. This practice would go against the literature which states there are necessary times to decline enrollment to a family that is persisting in error.

The top factor that would lead a school to offer enrollment to a family in membership of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS is the opportunity to

share the Gospel in its truth and purity and that they may learn true biblical doctrine. The literature pertaining to this topic does state that the truth must be shared with those who come to ask. At the same time, however, the literature advises against proselytizing in which we seek out people who belong to another Christian denomination, remembering that where the Gospel is present the Holy Spirit can work faith in that person despite the errors that are present. The literature also advises against offering enrollment to these families for the increased tuition money, while this was the 5th greatest reason for offering enrollment to these families.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the continual study of God's Word by principals, pastors, and professors and opportunities to be instructed in the topics of the mission of the church, church fellowship, proselytizing, and school enrollment policies. Most WELS schools are being used today to reach out to families that are not WELS members, and it is important for this to be done for the correct reasons. The researcher also recommends providing such training and study to future teachers and pastors attending Martin Luther College.

The researcher recommends the constant desire and effort for principals, pastors, and professors to move toward unity regarding the belief if WELS schools should have an open, semi-open, or closed enrollment policy.

The researcher recommends the creation of a set of questions that would assist WELS principals in gathering information from prospective families. The researcher recommends the creation of an enrollment continuum that would be used to gather

information from a prospective family to help determine if enrollment should or should not be offered.

The researcher recommends publishing a condensed list of factors that may lead a WELS school to offer or not offer enrollment to families that are unchurched and members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS.

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- WELS Book of Reports and Memorials (May 2013).

Table 1

Question 3: What factors would lead a WELS elementary school to offer enrollment to a family that is unchurched?

Responses:	Frequency:
Reach out with the Gospel. Outreach/Evangelism. School is a mission arm of the church. Opportunity for the whole family to hear the Gospel. The children may be trained to be great witnesses to the parents and bring Biblical teachings into the household.	121
The child gets to learn about the good news of Jesus. An opportunity to share God's Word and for those who do not know Christ to hear and learn his Word. Sharing the Gospel with the child.	66
The Great Commission (Matthew 28) - Spreading the Gospel to all nations.	45
The family is open to their children receiving religious instruction and will cooperate with and support the mission of the school. We will not change what we teach. They have a commitment to agree with and comply with policies and regulations of the school.	40
May lead the family to church membership. Desire/possibility for the family/child to become a church member. The family is looking for a church home/expressed an interest in God's Word. Mission prospect.	39
The family is willing to be taught God's Word/take a Bible Information class with the pastor.	34
To provide the child and family with a high quality, safe, structured, and loving education.	21
Need all the enrollment income possible/need tuition to help pay for school/ The family is able and willing to provide financial support.	19
To serve/connect with the community and to make your congregation known to the community.	13
Increasing enrollment in the school.	10
The family is interested in spiritual education for their child.	9
There is room in the classroom/in our facilities.	8
Christ's love compels us. Demonstrate Christian love for others.	7
Filling a void left by public education/alternative to public education/education option for community.	6
They came to you and asked about an education.	6
Opportunity for fellow students to show love and let their faith shine.	4
Offers diversity in the classroom.	3
Unchurched families are around Christian people and gain Christian friends.	3
We are part of the Choice program and it is a legal requirement to accept enrollment.	3
N/A.	3
The school has a good reputation and well trained teachers.	3
The student and family agrees they will in no way promote teaching that is contrary to the Word of God and they will abide by the teachings of the church.	3
Unchurched students participate in church/school activities.	2
The family is willing to commit to regular Sunday Church attendance.	2

The desire to educate people to be dutiful and productive citizens.	2
The family is willing to cooperate with the teachers, principal, and pastor(s).	2
Danger of hell for that child/family.	1
Special needs of the child (escape bullying).	1
Enrollment is reviewed on an annual basis.	1
The family likes the extras that are offered (before school care, after school care, pre-school, ECE).	1
Showing the unchurched family firsthand the benefit of a church family.	1
Gifts and talents of the family become a blessing to the school.	1
The school has a family atmosphere.	1
The congregation supports the school in reaching out.	1
Unchurched families remain in the minority in terms of percentage of student population.	1
To grow the kingdom of God.	1
The family is willing to allow their child to attend worship and participate with the child's class in singing.	1

Table 1 What factors would lead a WELS elementary school to offer enrollment to a family that is unchurched

Table 2

Question 4: What factors would lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS?

Responses:	Frequency:
To share the Gospel in its truth and purity. They may learn true Biblical doctrine through the Word of God. Offer them a doctrinally sound education. Bear witness to the truth.	66
The family is open and willing for their children to receive religious instruction and will cooperate with and support the mission of the school. The family is placing the child in our spiritual care.	56
Reach out with the Gospel. Outreach/Evangelism. School is a mission arm of the church. Opportunity for the whole family to hear the Gospel.	52
The parents are willing and/or required to be taught God's Word/take a Bible Information class with the pastor.	35
Tuition is assessed. Need all the enrollment income possible/need tuition to help pay for school/ The family is able and willing to provide financial support.	27
The family is interested in spiritual/Christian education for their child.	24
May lead the family to church membership. Desire/possibility for the family/child to become a church member. The family is looking for a church home/expressed an interest in God's Word.	17
The family/child will not insist that their doctrinal differences be heard or argue for their viewpoint.	17
N/A.	14
The Great Commission (Matthew 28) - Spreading the Gospel to all nations.	13
They are not active in their church/are not strong in the doctrinal beliefs and practices at their current church.	12
The child gets to learn about the good news of Jesus/grow in faith. Sharing the Gospel with the child.	11
Increasing enrollment in the school.	11
There is room in the classroom/in our facilities.	10
The child is a willing learning of WELS doctrine.	10
The family hears and understands what we believe and teach from the Bible including the doctrinal differences.	10
Filling a void left by public education/alternative to public education.	7
Parents understand the differences in doctrine/WELS doctrinal practices.	6
Parent agrees to follow enrollment policies/regulations of the school/expectations.	6
We are not aggressively reaching out to other Christian churches.	6
Their church does not offer a Christian School, so it offers a Christian education to those families.	6
To serve/connect with the community and to make your congregation known to the community.	5
The family/child will not promote or try to get fellow students to go to their church or church activities.	4
To provide the child and family with a high quality, safe, structured, and loving education.	3
Encouragement for family or child to look at what God's Word says when there is difference in stances among churches.	3
Christ's love compels us. Demonstrate Christian love for others.	3

We are part of the Choice/Voucher program and it is a legal requirement to accept enrollment.	3
Offers diversity in the classroom.	2
They came to you and asked about an education/filled out an application.	2
The family is willing to allow their child to attend worship and participate with the child's class in singing and other school activities.	2
Danger of hell for that child/family.	1
The family likes the extras that are offered (before school care, after school care, pre-school, ECE).	1
The children may spark good/practical discussions in the classroom.	1
Jesus opened His arms to all people.	1
The people may know others who don't know Jesus and tell them how great a school it is.	1
God's command to train a child in the way he should go.	1
They would not be allowed to proclaim the Gospel in worship, since they are not in doctrinal fellowship.	1
Clear understanding of the families role in school governance.	1
Gifts and talents of the family become a blessing to the school.	1
The congregation supports the school in reaching out.	1
Opportunity for church members in classroom to encourage student to attend church.	1
Problems or issues from a previous church are resolved.	1
The school has a family atmosphere.	1
Just because they attend another church doesn't always mean they believe in something different.	1
The school operates as an independent "Ministry of the Word".	1
Fellowship is not a teaching to prevent us from testifying to the truth.	1
To assist parents in their role of bringing up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord.	1
Broadening the child's experience.	1
There are Christians who value a quality, Bible-based education and specific doctrinal differences are not enough of an issue for them to hinder enrollment of the child.	1
Unchurched families remain in the minority in terms of percentage of student population.	1
The desire to educate people to be dutiful and productive citizens.	1
The family is willing to cooperate with the teachers, principal, and pastor(s).	1

Table 2 What factors would lead a school to offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS?

Table 3

Question 5: What factors would lead a WELS elementary school to NOT offering enrollment to a family who is unchurched?

Responses:	Frequency:
The parent or student wants nothing with a Christ-centered education. Refusal to participate in religious instruction or other religious elements (Bible history, memory work, prayer, Etc.) Child is defiant to what we are teaching and/or speaks against God's Word (not a willing learning).	67
N/A.	44
Beliefs, attitudes, and actions of child/family are opposed to the Christ-centered mission.	29
The child has educational, learning, and/or physical needs the school cannot meet.	28
Behavioral/disciplinary issues.	27
Classroom is filled to capacity with member children.	26
The family does not agree or refuses to take a Bible Information Class.	25
Strong disagreement/opposition with WELS position and teachings.	24
The family will not submit to the rules, policies, and procedures of the school.	18
The family refuses/cannot afford to pay tuition.	14
The family has no desire to participate in any worship activities/church.	13
Too many unchurched students/families would lessen Christian atmosphere and culture and possibly lead students away from Jesus.	13
The congregation views the school as primarily shepherding the existing flock, rather than outreach.	8
The family is enrolling for some other reason than the mission and purpose of the school.	4
The threat of the unchurched child/family negatively influencing others in your school.	4
Selfishness, arrogance.	3
Not having congregational approval. Inability to properly instruct church members.	3
Afraid of change and/or the unknown.	3
The family does not support the school and faculty.	3
The family/student has a desire to proselytize within our walls.	3
Financial picture in the church might make some feel like the investment is too much. School can lose money on those families.	2
Unchurched family expecting a governance role/say in the school not appropriate to nonmembers.	2
The family has unresolved issues at a previous school.	2
The student cannot be served adequately by the WELS staff.	1
Fear of sharing Christ with others.	1
Concerns about church fellowship issues.	1

Might discourage proper Christian stewardship on the part of the congregation since tuition income covers costs of education.	1
A desire to avoid the problems that come with dealing with non-member families as school families.	1
Avoiding the world.	1
A child that would bring physical danger to other students.	1
The threat of challenging your beliefs.	1
Distancing the school from the church by giving the impression the school is any other private school.	1
The family is active in another church.	1
The family has the idea since it is a Christian school there will be no problems.	1

Table 3 What factors would lead a WELS elementary school to NOT offering enrollment to a family who is unchurched?

Table 4

Question 5: What factors would lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS?

Responses:	Frequency
The child/family has a desire to promote their beliefs/argue over doctrine. Child is defiant to what we are teaching and/or speaks against God's Word (not a willing learning).	79
The parent or student wants nothing with a Christ-centered education. Refusal to participate in religious instruction or other religious elements (Bible history, memory work, prayer, etc.).	45
N/A.	33
Strong disagreement/opposition with WELS position and teachings.	30
Classroom is filled to capacity with member children.	22
The family/student has a desire to proselytize within our walls.	21
The family does not agree or refuses to take a Bible Information Class.	17
The family will not submit to the rules, policies, and procedures of the school.	17
The family refuses/cannot afford to pay tuition.	15
Fellowship issues.	15
Behavioral/disciplinary issues.	13
The child has educational, learning, and/or physical needs the school cannot meet.	13
The threat of the unchurched child/family negatively influencing others in your school/false teaching being spread.	11
It may be confusing to young Christians to be part of a doctrine teaching that may be in contrary to WELS teaching.	11
The family is not interested in being a part of our church/are committed to their heterodox church.	10
Beliefs, attitudes, and actions of child/family are opposed to true doctrine.	6
The family has no desire to participate in any worship activities/church.	6
WELS children may be lead away from Jesus/to false doctrine.	5
Fear.	5
Considered sheep stealing/proselytizing.	5
If there are too many of these families the school will lose its identify as an extension of the church.	4
They are only using the school because it is better than the public school.	4
Churched family expecting a governance role/say in the school not appropriate to nonmembers.	3
Could lead to errors creeping into the church.	3
Could give the impression that differences in teaching do not matter.	3
These students/families would turn the school culture in an unwanted direction.	2
Extreme Doctrinal Differences (Muslim, Jewish, Mormon, Hindu, ect.	2
Negative feedback from congregation or federation.	2
Too difficult to sift through what they do and don't believe.	1

Doctrinal issues down the road.	1
Could cause school to relax its religion requirement standards.	1
Afraid of change and/or the unknown.	1
The family's church has a school.	1
The congregation views the school as primarily shepherding the existing flock, rather than outreach.	1
Selfishness, arrogance.	1
Financial picture in the church might make some feel like the investment is too much. School can lose money on those families.	1
The student cannot be served adequately by the WELS staff.	1
The family is enrolling for some other reason than the mission and purpose of the school.	1
Most likely would be a lack of loyalty to the WELS church/school.	1
Might discourage proper Christian stewardship on the part of the congregation since tuition income covers costs of education.	1
The family does not support the school and faculty.	1
The family has unresolved issues at a previous school.	1
Their presence would be disruptive to the teaching and learning of others.	1
If some type of an "arrangement" is tried to be made (we do this if you do that).	1

Table 4 What factors would lead a school to not offer enrollment to families that are members of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS?

Appendix A – Survey Questionnaire

Dear WELS Principal, WELS Pastor, MLC Professor, or WLS Professor,

My name is Chris Mueller and I serve as a WELS principal at St. John's Lutheran in Watertown, WI. I am enrolled in the Masters Program through Martin Luther College and am working on my thesis capstone project. I am conducting a survey to gather descriptive information regarding enrollment policies and attitudes toward enrollment policies in WELS elementary schools.

You have been selected to complete this survey because you are a WELS principal, professor at MLC or WLS, or are a randomly selected WELS pastor. The survey contains up to 8 questions and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. No personal information will be collected (name, email, etc) and your responses to the questions will remain anonymous. The findings will be shared online in my completed thesis via the MLC library.

Please complete the survey by Friday, March 18th, 2016. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your time and honest answers to the questions.

In Christ,

Chris Mueller
 principal@stjohnswatertown.org
 715-891-6639

Please indicate your position.* _

- WELS Principal
- WELS Pastor
- Martin Luther College Professor
- Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor

Question 1*_To which group(s) does your WELS elementary school offer enrollment (check all that apply): Only answered by WELS Principals.

- Families in membership of your school's WELS congregation(s).
- Families in membership of a sister WELS (or ELS) congregation.
- Families who are unchurched.
- Families in membership of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS.
- Other:

Question 2*_To ensure responses are given only once per school, please indicate your school name and city. Only answered by WELS Principals.

Question 1*_In your opinion, to which group(s) should WELS elementary schools be open to offering enrollment (check all that apply):

- Families in membership of the school's WELS congregation(s).
- Families in membership of a sister WELS (or ELS) congregation.
- Families who are unchurched.

- Families in membership of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS.
- Other:

For the following questions please list factors in bullet or number format (order does not apply). Feel free to explain as desired.

Question 2*_List factors that would lead a WELS elementary school to offer enrollment to a family that is unchurched (type N/A if none apply).

Question 3*_List factors that would lead a WELS elementary school to NOT offering enrollment to a family who is unchurched (type N/A if none apply).

Question 4*_List factors that would lead a WELS elementary school to offer enrollment to a family that is a member of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS (type N/A if none apply).

Question 5*_List factors that would lead a WELS elementary school to NOT offer enrollment to a family that is a member of a church not in doctrinal fellowship with WELS (type N/A if none apply).

Confirmation Page

Your response has been recorded. Thank you for your time in completing this survey and for your valuable feedback.