

**Analysis of the Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with the WELS School
Accreditation (WELSSA) Process**

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions key school stakeholders had prior to going through the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation (WELSSA) self-study with the outcomes experienced once the school was accredited. The stakeholders surveyed included principals, directors, teachers, pastors, and board of education members from each of the school ministries currently accredited with WELSSA.

A key focus of this study was to provide the WELSSA office with data that can enhance the overall process and assist in developing resources aimed at helping schools improve. Through this study, the WELSSA office will better know and understand whether or not school stakeholders' perceptions of the process match the specific outcomes enjoyed after accreditation is achieved. This study will also provide feedback to the WELSSA office as it seeks to continually improve the self-study process for WELS schools.

A few key conclusions were reached in this study. First, there is a high level of agreement between perceived outcomes and actual outcomes of going through the accreditation process among all stakeholder groups surveyed. Second, principals/directors, and teachers were highly engaged in the process, whereas board of education members and pastors were less engaged. Involving all stakeholders in the accreditation process needs to be a priority for all schools moving forward. Third, the study affirms the WELSSA standards as an important tool for WELS schools to evaluate their individual ministries in an effort to establish a culture of continual school improvement.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Problem Statement

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) has had a long tradition of having congregations supporting educational ministries as part of their overall congregational ministry. For just over 150 years, these schools have served their students, families, and congregations well. WELS educational leaders hold that high-quality Christian education is completely a blessing from a gracious Lord. It is also a tangible expression of doing all things to his glory. WELS also believes that high quality Christian education is an expression of the blessings which God has given to his Church. So how do we assess what “high quality Christian education” is?

WELS school leaders, since the early 1980s, considered developing self-study guidelines and a process for the accreditation of WELS schools. Schools could say they offered “high quality Christian education,” but how could they show it? How could they prove it? It wasn’t until 2003 that a program was established to accredit WELS schools. This program, which has grown tremendously since its inception, is called Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation (WELSSA).

Through the faithful work of the Commission on Parish Schools (known today as the Commission on Lutheran Schools or CLS) and the Board for Parish Services (known today as Congregational Services or CS), materials and resources were developed that would seek to meet the following three objectives:

1. Assist WELS congregations with evaluating their early childhood ministries, Lutheran elementary schools, and Lutheran high schools based on Scripture and on sound educational principles.

2. Provide WELS congregations with a basis for developing a plan for improving their school by identifying strengths and discovering areas in need of improvement.
3. Provide a means by which WELS schools can become accredited through a nationally recognized agency (WELS, 2019b).

Now that WELS has a well-established program for accrediting schools and being recognized nationally, how can the WELSSA office be certain that the WELSSA standards are meeting the expectations of school stakeholders as they seek accreditation? Does going through the WELSSA self-study for accreditation meet the expectations of school stakeholders? By gathering feedback from key stakeholders of accredited schools, how can the WELSSA self-study process be improved to meet the needs of school leaders seeking to make systemic improvements in their educational ministries?

Purpose of the Study

In 2012, WELS Principal Brian Mensching completed a thesis which studied “the effect that school accreditation has had on WELS schools concerning academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment” (Mensching, 2012). His study focused on the 66 schools that were accredited with WELSSA. Today, the number of accredited schools has grown significantly, as there are 136 WELSSA schools (WELS, 2019a).

As a follow-up and extension of Mensching’s work, this study analyzes the perceptions school stakeholders had prior to going through the WELSSA self-study with the outcomes experienced once the school was accredited. A key focus of this study is to provide the WELSSA office with data that can enhance the overall process and assist in developing resources aimed at helping schools improve. Through this study, the

WELSSA office will better know and understand whether or not school stakeholders' perceptions of the process match the specific outcomes enjoyed after accreditation is achieved. This study will also provide feedback to the WELSSA office as it seeks to continually improve the self-study process for WELS schools.

Research Questions

This study focused on comparing the perceptions school stakeholders had prior to conducting the WELSSA self-study with the outcomes experienced once the school was accredited. There are two key research questions that were addressed in this study. They were as follows:

- 1) What are the perceived outcomes key stakeholders have prior to going through the WELSSA accreditation process?
- 2) What differences exist between stakeholder perceptions based on the role they hold within the school? (*i.e.*, Principal/Director, Teacher, Pastor, Board Member)

The survey was sent to principals, teachers, pastors, and board members of schools that are currently accredited by WELSSA. The survey/research questions centered on the following 15 topics:

- Engaging stakeholders in the process
- Improving teacher learning and teaching
- Improving teamwork at the school
- Improving student achievement
- Strengthening school climate
- Improving how the school allocates resources
- Improving communication
- Engaging in strategic planning
- Providing evidence of quality assurance
- Reinforcing compliance with high educational standards
- Committing to continual school improvement
- Ensuring the school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work

- Reassuring parents of their investment in the school as prudent
- Receiving accurate recommendations and commendations
- Producing a detailed self-study and receiving an objective evaluation

The survey cover letter and questions in their entirety are found in Appendix A and B.

Definition of Terms

Accreditation. The Cambridge Dictionary (2020) defines this as “official approval, especially in order to maintain satisfactory standards.” For WELSSA purposes, this also includes conducting an in-depth self-study of the entire educational program and validation by a team of peer reviewers from outside the school.

Self-Study. Schools seeking accreditation through WELSSA must carry out a thorough study of the school’s program based on the WELSSA standards. This study may take nine to 24 months to complete. Time may vary depending on the number of stakeholders participating in the study, the availability of evidence, as well as the amount of evidence collected. Using the accreditation standards as its guide, the school will recognize and celebrate how the Lord is blessing the school, as well as identify areas of needed attention. The school leadership then creates a plan for continual improvement.

Stakeholder. The Cambridge dictionary defines this as “a person such as an employee customer, or citizen who is involved with an organization, society, etc. and therefore has responsibilities toward it and an interest in its success” (2020). In WELS schools, this includes called workers, school staff, students, parents, operating congregations, etc. For the purpose of this study, stakeholders are identified as principals, teachers, pastors, and board members (those who are responsible for the school’s governance).

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

This study was sent to the 136 schools that are currently accredited through WELSSA. The researcher was hopeful of receiving feedback from at least one stakeholder from each school. The survey was open and collecting data for a two-week period. Ideally feedback was to come from all stakeholders, but in reality, this did not happen within the two-week window for this survey. A response rate of 40% or better would definitely be considered a blessing to this study.

In the WELS, school faculty may have changed significantly since the school was last accredited. This lends itself to current staff not knowing what the perceptions were leading up to the school being accredited. If a stakeholder was not present during the “pre-accreditation” phase, then answering perception and outcome questions would prove challenging.

The survey was sent to each school’s principal/director, who was then asked to provide the survey to his or her faculty, pastor(s), and board of education members. The survey would reach several, but not all of the intended stakeholders. This fact, along with the likelihood that not all individuals surveyed actually will complete the survey, gives some limitation on the overall response rate. As stated above, a successful response rate would be at least 40%.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

If one looks up scholarly literature on school accreditation, he is sure to find that the majority is written for postsecondary education or higher learning. There is not much written about school accreditation on the elementary or secondary levels. However, there is plenty to be learned about what accreditation truly means, what constitutes a good self-study, and developing a plan of continual school improvement.

School Accreditation

WELSSA is recognized by the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA) as a quality accrediting association or member. Currently there are 18 major private and independent school accrediting agencies from around the globe that make up NCPSA. There are 4,407 accredited member schools in NCPSA, serving 2,049,328 students. Of that number, WELSSA has 136 accredited schools, with 19,154 students being served in those schools (NCPSA, 2019).

One of WELSSA's partners in NCPSA is the Middle States Association (MSA), which constitutes one of the six nationally recognized regional accreditors. According to MSA, "Accreditation is a self-evaluation process that schools and school systems voluntarily use to demonstrate they are meeting a defined set of research-based performance standards" (MSA, 2020). Not only is it a self-evaluation process, but it is important to note that for private schools, accreditation is generally a voluntary method of quality assurance. When accreditation began in higher education over 100 years ago, it was designed to distinguish schools that were meeting and exceeding a set of educational

standards. The aim was and still is focused on helping students perform better and set the school on a path of continued improvement.

At the center of any school accreditation is to evaluate the educational effectiveness of an institution or system through a comprehensive study of standards, operation protocols, and research-based practices. According to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), accreditation “is a process by which accreditors provide students, the public, and each other with assurances of institutional integrity, quality, and effectiveness (WASC, 2012). By going through the accreditation process, schools will plan for improvement in educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

Self-Study

Accreditation is not fixed, meaning it is not something that is achieved and sits on the shelf or wall for five or more years. It is, however, an opportunity for a school to learn, grow, and develop toward excellence. A vital component of accreditation is the self-study process. The process of accreditation requires a rigorous self-examination. Schools seeking accreditation through WELSSA must measure themselves against its own mission and goals, and against the WELSSA Standards. NCPSA states that “integral to the accreditation process is the opportunity for a school to engage in a self-study process; whereby it may assess its own effectiveness based on the established standards and guidelines, make necessary improvements, and report its results” (2019, p.21).

When schools embark on an accreditation self-study, they are voluntarily evaluating their entire educational program. By going through the self-study process, school stakeholders will inevitably learn more about their program. That knowledge will be broad and deep. The self-study itself requires stakeholders to undergo a conscious and

self-reflective analysis of strengths and weaknesses based on WELSSA's accreditation standards (see Appendix C). According to Knowlton, "the look inward is the first step in a local, bottom-up approach to assaying quality" (2013, p.14). This voluntary approach to testing the quality of the educational program intentionally encourages all stakeholders to analyze, discuss, and provide evidence for school improvement based on the standards.

Continual School Improvement

As schools look to create a culture of continuous school improvement, it is important to note that WELS schools are autonomous. Each school will have differing thoughts on what areas of their ministry receive emphasis in their school improvement initiatives. Continuous improvement in one school does not necessarily work in another school (Lillrank, 2010). Although WELS schools often share a similar mission, the objectives in carrying out their mission will vary. Furthermore, "successful school improvement can only occur when schools apply those strategies that best fit their own context and particular developmental needs" (Harris, 2003, p. 4). A key to successful school improvement is that it is customized to a particular school's ministry.

An important component of establishing a culture of continuous school improvement is for leaders to undergo a comprehensive self-study of the school's entire program. In order to make strides toward improvement, a school needs to know its strengths, as well as the areas in need of improvement. As noted in the objective statements, WELSSA aims to help congregations do just that (WELS, 2019b).

Continuous school improvement takes work. It doesn't happen overnight. It requires commitment from all stakeholders. The WELSSA standards were designed to help congregations evaluate the school's complete educational program. Improvement

initiatives are school-wide. “The only way for quality improvement work to be truly continuous is if it is woven into the fabric of the daily work that individuals are constantly doing” (Park, 2013, p.5).

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

As pointed out in the literature review, there is not much written regarding the accreditation of elementary and secondary schools. There is even less written about stakeholder perception prior to accreditation and the outcomes following accreditation.

This study focused on comparing the perceptions school stakeholders had prior to conducting the WELSSA self-study with the outcomes experienced once the school was accredited. The survey developed for this study addresses 15 identified areas of improvement which accreditation seeks to address. Respondents were asked three questions in each of the 15 areas as referenced in Chapter 1. Those questions were as follows:

1. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to
(*insert area of improvement*). Agree or Disagree
2. During your school's most recent accreditation: This important result was –
 - a. Mostly achieved?
 - b. Partially achieved?
 - c. Less than desired?
3. (If mostly achieved) Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved.
4. (If partially achieved or less then desired) What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved?

This survey was sent to the administrator of each WELS school currently accredited with WELSSA. The administrator was asked to share the survey with each teacher, pastor, and board of education member. Recipients had two weeks to complete the survey and provide feedback to the researcher and the WELSSA office.

Research Design and Procedures

This study has a descriptive research design, using quantitative data gathered from key stakeholders (principals/directors, teachers, pastors, and board members) of schools currently accredited through WELSSA. The study also included qualitative data, as respondents were asked to provide specific examples of how the outcome was achieved. They were also given opportunity to provide reasons they felt led to any discrepancy between perceived outcomes and actual outcomes of going through the accreditation process.

Population and Sample

The Perceptions and Outcomes Survey was sent to 136 school administrators (principals and directors) of the schools currently accredited with WELSSA. Administrators were asked to distribute surveys to each of their teachers. There are currently 1,293 teachers serving in WELSSA schools, serving more than 19,000 students (WELS, 2019a). Administrators were also asked to distribute the survey to the pastor(s) and each member of their board of education. The survey results were separated by the roles respondents have in the school they serve. Those surveyed had two weeks to complete the survey.

Instrumentation

The survey used was a Google form. The first question asked respondents if they were willing to participate. The second question had the respondents mark the role they have in relation to the school. The rest of the survey consisted of questions referencing 15 recognized outcomes of going through the accreditation process. Respondents were not identified by school or district affiliation, and names were not recorded.

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the stated outcome and then provide an answer as to whether those outcomes were mostly achieved, partially achieved, or achieved at a less than desired level. If the response was “mostly achieved,” the respondent was directed to the next question, which asked him or her to provide examples of how the outcome was mostly achieved. If the answers of “partially achieved” or less than desired” were given, the respondent was given an opportunity to write a statement as to why he or she believed the perceived outcome did not match the actual outcome.

Data Analysis Procedures

The survey was sent to principals and directors via email. The principals and directors were asked to complete the survey. They were also asked to forward the survey to their faculties, pastors, and board of education members. One week following the initial email, a second email was sent to encourage survey recipients to complete the survey if it had not already been completed.

The first item analyzed was the overall response to perceived outcomes of going through the accreditation process. This data was separated according to the respondents’

role in the school (principal/director, teacher, pastor, and board member) and analyzed accordingly. This assisted the researcher in establishing themes within each role group.

The second item was to compare differences in responses for each of the 15 recognized outcomes of the WELSSA process. This data was also analyzed according to the role respondents have in their school.

The third item was to compare samples of how the outcomes were mostly achieved. Getting this feedback will help the WELSSA office as it recruits and encourages more schools to pursue accreditation. This data, too, was separated and analyzed according to the role respondents have in their school.

The final analysis was to compare respondents' answers to what they believe the reasons were for any discrepancies they saw between the perceived outcomes and the actual outcomes of going through the accreditation process.

Limitations

When relying on a survey shared through email, there will always be certain limitations. The recipients of the survey were asked to complete it voluntarily. The survey was also reliant on the principal/director sharing the link with other stakeholders (teachers, pastors, board members). It was certainly possible that a) surveys did not reach all intended respondents, and b) surveys were not completed by all intended respondents. Responses came from individuals who chose to participate in this voluntary survey.

Another limitation was the possibility of a lower return rate from those who were new to the school, were not part of the accreditation process the last time the school was accredited or did not have prior knowledge of the school's reasons for pursuing accreditation. Lower response rates may also have increased the potential for greater

nonresponse bias. An individual's refusal to participate in the study would also increase the nonresponse bias.

Although it is assumed that all respondents answered the survey questions honestly, there was still potential for survey bias. Respondent names and schools were not recorded for this survey, which helped to promote anonymity and accurate reporting. However, if respondents answered questions according to what they believed the researcher wanted or expected, survey bias would be present.

Chapter IV: Results

Introduction

Since 2003, WELS schools have had opportunity to measure themselves against their own mission statement, their own goals, and a set of educationally sound standards. To assist schools in carrying out this plan, WELSSA developed a series of standards which cover the entire educational ministry of WELS schools. It has long been known that an integral part of the accreditation process is the opportunity for schools to take on the challenge of a self-study, receive feedback from a visiting team, and make a school improvement plan.(NCPSA, 2019). Any WELS school that seeks accreditation through WELSSA will assess its own effectiveness based on the established standards and guidelines and will make necessary improvements for growth.

As pointed out in the literature review, there is not much written on the topic of accreditation at the elementary or secondary levels. However, within WELS schools, the researcher believes that much of the accreditation work, namely carrying out the self-study, is completed by a core group of stakeholders within the school. The two main stakeholder groups involved with the process are the principal/director and teachers. Two other internal stakeholders that often are more involved in the process include the school's governance board (board of education) and pastors. These four stakeholder groups often took on a greater share of the responsibility associated with accreditation and overall school improvement. The study focused on feedback from these key stakeholder groups.

A Google survey was given to all principals, directors, teachers, pastors, and board of education members from 136 WELSSA accredited schools. This survey

centered around the main focus of this study, which was to compare the perceptions school stakeholders had prior to conducting the WELSSA self-study with the outcomes experienced once the school was accredited. The information included here in Chapter Four provides a thorough description of the sample used in the research, as well as a review of the research questions and subsequent results of the survey.

Of the 136 schools that received the survey, 80 schools (58.8%) had at least one individual respond to the survey. The total number of respondents was 188. Respondents were asked to identify their specific role at the school for which they completed the survey. The breakdown of responses was as follows:

- Principal/Director: 80 (42.55%)
- Teacher: 76 (40.43%)
- Board of Education Member: 21 (11.17%)
- Pastor: 11 (5.85%)

It should also be noted that if a respondent holds multiple roles in the school (*i.e.*, serves as both principal and teacher or as pastor and principal), the individual was asked to complete the survey as a Principal/Director. It is unknown how many of the Principal/Director respondents are also serving in another capacity within the school's ministry. Due to the size of most WELS schools, there is a high likelihood that a majority of the Principal/Director respondents are also serving as teachers within the school's ministry.

Research Questions and Data Analysis

As a review, the following two research questions guided this study:

1) What are the perceived outcomes key stakeholders have prior to going through the WELSSA accreditation process?

2) What differences exist between stakeholder perceptions based on the role they hold within the school? (*i.e.*, Principal/Director, Teacher, Pastor, Board Member)

Each survey question was analyzed as part of the overall total of responses, as well as within each role assigned to the respondents. For each question of the survey, respondents were provided an opportunity to provide feedback and/or examples of how the result was mostly achieved. If the result was partially achieved or was less than desired, respondents could also give feedback as to why they answered as they did. The researcher's email and phone number were included in the event respondents needed further clarification or wanted to provide additional feedback.

Table 1 (see p. 28) shows the survey questions (goals and outcomes) and the agreement percentage of respondents. Agreement percentages were separated into the various role groupings. To compare the overall perceived goals to the actual agreement outcomes, as well as provide context for any major difference between goals and outcomes, a change score was calculated and presented in Table 1. The smallest differences, as well as the largest differences were identified and presented in this paper.

Analysis of Key Results

The analysis of both research questions above was based on survey results. The survey identified 15 recognized outcomes of going through the WELSSA accreditation process, and key stakeholders were asked to identify their level of agreement with each of the recognized outcomes before embarking on the accreditation process. To aid in

answering the first research question, these perceived outcomes were ranked (1-15) according to the overall agreement percentages as noted in Table 1. A ranking of “1” was given to the highest percentage of agreement, whereas a ranking of “15” was given to the lowest percentage of agreement.

The analysis of the second research question focused on respondents’ feedback regarding their perception of how well each of the 15 recognized goals in the school’s most recent accreditation cycle were accomplished. For each goal, respondents were asked to choose whether the goal was mostly achieved, partially achieved, or achieved at a less than desirable level. Table 1 shows the percentages for the “fully achieved” responses, as well as the rankings. The researcher also included in Table 1 the difference between the rankings of each of the 15 recognized outcomes and the percentage of respondents who felt the outcomes were mostly achieved.

For further analysis of the second research question, data was separated according to the role the respondents have in the accredited school. The data was broken down into four stakeholder groups: Principal/Director, Teacher, Board Member, and Pastor. If a school principal or early childhood director also splits time as a teacher, the data was recorded in the Principal/Director stakeholder group.

Stakeholder Response Analysis

An analysis of the stakeholder data clearly shows that the Principal/Director and Teacher groups had the greatest change between agreement on the 15 stated goals and the outcomes experienced. Respondents in these two groups generally held a slightly lower agreement rate on the goals than the Board Member and Pastor groups. Ideally there

would be a more consistent correlation between the four stakeholder groups. However, interest and participation in the accreditation process generally is higher among principals, directors, and teachers. These individuals made up the largest groups surveyed, and they were the groups with most daily exposure to the accreditation process and its outcomes. Principals typically engage in the most discussion and planning regarding accreditation. It is the researcher's professional opinion that administration and teachers engage in more discussion around continual school improvement and accreditation than board members and pastors. It is also the researcher's opinion that board members and administrators view a major portion of an administrator's work to include planning, reviewing standards of accreditation, and carrying out recommendations. From professional experience, the researcher concludes that much of the accreditation process is driven by the school's administrator or director.

For pastors, 100% of respondents agreed that 12 of the 15 stated goals of going through the WELSSA accreditation process were deemed important for their school. The other three goals came in with 90.9% agreement. When it came to reporting the levels of achievement for each stated goal, only two received "less than desired" responses. Goal One (engaging stakeholders in open discussions about school improvement) scored 9.1% in this area, and Goal Nine (providing evidence to the congregation and community that the school is a quality Lutheran school) scored 11.1%. All other goals received either mostly or partially met outcome scores from the pastors.

Similar findings were evident among the Board Member group. Only Goal Twelve (ensuring the school's mission is inherent in all aspects of the school) had less than 90.5% agreement, coming in at 85.7%. Coincidentally, 100% of the board members

reported that this goal was mostly met. Only Goal Six (allocating resources) and Goal Eight (engaging in strategic planning) received any kind of “less than desired” outcome ratings at 10% and 5%, respectively.

The next section highlights the survey questions that had the highest and lowest rankings in terms of perceived goals (of the 15 recognized goals) and the greatest change in respondent satisfaction in actual outcomes.

Goal One: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to engage your stakeholders in open discussions about school improvement.

This goal was perceived to be critically important for schools (96.8%), garnering a 1st place ranking in overall agreement out of the 15 recognized goals. The outcome, however, ranked 15th when it came to overall rankings for being mostly achieved (58.8%). To be fair, as pointed out in Table 1, respondents who listed the outcome to be partially achieved (33.5%) combined with mostly achieved (58.8%) makes up 92.3% of all respondents identifying this goal as met to some degree.

To provide more context to these rankings, respondents were given opportunity to share thoughts as to how the goal was mostly achieved. For the respondents who felt a goal was partially achieved or achieved at a level that was less than desirable, they were given opportunity to explain their thoughts as to the discrepancy for their perceived outcome and the actual outcome they experienced.

Some of the feedback for having a lower achievement than anticipated centered around personnel. “I (leadership) did not start the process soon enough to involve others”, “We are a small school with widely dispersed constituents, so it was difficult to involve

many people...”, “We had a lot of turnover on staff and in leadership positions... naturally spent less time with stakeholders/parents.” Other areas that accounted for discrepancy were a sense that follow-through was lacking, work was mainly done by administration and teachers, and meaningful conversations around improvement were minimal, to name a few. For a full list of responses, see Appendix E.

It is clear that respondents highly value having open discussions around school improvement. The feedback on actual outcomes, however, shows that this is an area of much-needed improvement in accredited WELS schools, especially if the goal is to be mostly achieved.

Goal Three: *An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve teamwork at my school.* The goal of improving teamwork ranked 9th overall (88.3%) leading up to the accreditation process. Although it was not ranked in the top half of the 15 goals, the outcomes tell a different story. Of all respondents, 79.4% listed this goal as mostly achieved, which, in turn, ranks improved teamwork as 4th overall. This shows a rank improvement of 5 places in terms of perceived goal to actual outcome.

Due to the measured improvement in rankings (perceived to actual), it is important to consider comments from respondents citing examples of how this goal was achieved. Several responses mentioned the increased teacher involvement on committees, as well as different ministry boards needing to communicate more frequently. One respondent mentioned “Our standard teams were made up of various people who don’t regularly work together,” while another stated “All involved with the school felt a part of the success of our accreditation visit.” Another commented “Our staff really grew in its

trust for one another through the self-study process. We spent a lot of time working together and realized that despite our individual differences, we all care deeply about our school and its mission.”

According to the survey results, it can be said that stakeholders who are actively engaged in the accreditation process, namely the self-study portion, will experience improved teamwork aimed at strengthening the school. With 88.3% of respondents agreeing that teamwork is important and 79.4% saying it was mostly achieved (plus another 15.9% saying teamwork was partially achieved), improved teamwork is enjoyed as a great blessing to schools accredited through WELSSA.

Goal Eight: *An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to compel my school to engage in strategic planning for my school.* This goal ranked 4th overall in agreement among stakeholders, having a 92.6% agreement percentage. Although 93% of respondents stated this goal was either mostly achieved or partially achieved, there was a 5-point decrease from perception to actual outcome ranking for mostly achieved. Of all respondents, 72.8% noted that the goal of engaging in strategic planning was mostly achieved. Respondent feedback ranks the actual outcome for strategic planning as 9th overall.

Survey results suggest that strategic planning is considered to be a highly important component of going through the accreditation process. Of the responses given, many supported the School Improvement Plan (SIP) helping set a course for continual improvement. Other responses speaking positively of strategic planning include “Part of the process engages a forward-looking vision of the school. Planning for the future is a must,” “Three-year vision doc created,” “We have created a strategic plan in response to

meeting the standards,” and “We had engaged in the VTO (Vision Traction Organizer) process and not all board members understood its benefits until they heard it from an outside source.”

Goal Twelve: *An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to ensure my school’s mission is inherent in all aspects of its work.* For overall agreement, 85.1% of respondents agreed that this is an important goal of WELSSA accreditation. This goal ranked 11th among the 15 recognized goals of WELSSA. Regarding the outcome agreement, this goal was ranked 1st overall. 85.2% mostly agreed and another 13.0% partially agreed. Less than 2% of all respondents stated that the outcome was less than desired. There was a 10-point increase from perception to actual outcome, giving Goal Twelve the most positive change of all 15 recognized goals.

As with all the goals, respondents were able to expound upon their reasons for rating the goal of ensuring the school’s mission statement is inherent in all aspects of its work. A few of the comments given by those that stated the goal was mostly achieved include “Our school mission has greatly improved because of this! It is now the center of everything,” “We continue to work with our parents as our mission statement states. Parents feel a strong connection with the school,” and “Prior to accreditation our staff could recite our mission but didn’t always live the words. I believe this has changed which is really exciting to me.” There were many more similar comments made regarding accreditation and the school’s mission.

Table 1: Survey Questions – Agreement Percentages (Overall and by Role)

Survey Questions (Goal and Outcome Achievement)	Overall Agreement %	Overall Ranking and Change Between Goal and Outcome	Principal/Director Agreement %	Teacher Agreement %	Board Member Agreement %	Pastor Agreement %
Goal One: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to engage your stakeholders in open discussions about school improvement.	96.8%	Rank: 1	97.5%	94.7%	100%	100%
Outcome One: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	58.8%	Rank: 15 Change: -14	56.4%	61.0%	71.4%	54.5%
Goal Two: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school.	88.2%	Rank: 10	83.7%	88.2%	100%	100%
Outcome Two: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	66.2%	Rank: 13 Change: -3	52.2%	59.9%	71.4%	90.9%
Goal Three: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve teamwork at my school.	88.3%	Rank: 9	87.5%	85.5%	95.2%	100%
Outcome Three: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	79.4%	Rank: 4 Change: +5	78.6%	77.1%	70.0%	81.8%

Goal Four: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve student achievement at your school.	85.1%	Rank: 11 (tied)	81.3%	82.9%	100%	100%
Outcome Four: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	64.0%	Rank: 14 Change: -3	60.0%	61.1%	76.2%	72.7%
Goal Five: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to strengthen my school's climate.	90.4%	Rank: 7	95.8%	89.5%	95.2%	100%
Outcome Five: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	73.0%	Rank: 8 Change: -1	61.5%	70.3%	60.0%	90.9%
Goal Six: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve the way my school allocates resources.	66.0%	Rank: 15	60.9%	63.2%	90.5%	100%
Outcome Six: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	71.0%	Rank: 11 Change: +4	63.6%	66.7%	70.0%	72.7%
Goal Seven: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve communication at my school.	85.1%	Rank: 11 (tied)	78.8%	86.8%	95.2%	100%
Outcome Seven: During the school's most recent accreditation, this	68.9%	Rank: 12 Change: -1	61.1%	67.6%	66.7%	81.8%

goal was mostly achieved.						
Goal Eight: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to compel my school to engage in strategic planning for my school.	92.6%	Rank: 4	90.0%	93.4%	95.2%	100%
Outcome Eight: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	72.8%	Rank: 9 Change: -5	73.5%	73.2%	75.0%	72.7%
Goal Nine: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to provide evidence to the congregation and community that my school is a "quality" Lutheran school.	89.9%	Rank: 8	87.5%	89.5%	100%	90.9%
Outcome Nine: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	76.6%	Rank: 7 Change: +1	71.4%	89.1%	81.0%	77.8%
Goal Ten: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reinforce that my school complies with high educational standards.	93.1%	Rank: 3	91.3%	92.1%	100%	100%
Outcome Ten: During the school's most	78.9%	Rank: 5	80.6%	80.0%	81.0%	63.6%

recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.		Change: -2				
Goal Eleven: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reflect a commitment to continual school improvement.	94.1%	Rank: 2	93.8%	92.1%	100%	100%
Outcome Eleven: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	83.1%	Rank: 2 Change: 0	90.9%	77.1%	90.5%	90.9%
Goal Twelve: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is ensure my school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work.	85.1%	Rank: 11 (tied)	81.3%	86.8%	85.7%	100%
Outcome Twelve: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	85.2%	Rank: 1 Change: +10	81.8%	86.4%	100%	81.8%
Goal Thirteen: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reassure parents that their investment in your school has been a prudent one.	80.3%	Rank: 14	73.8%	82.9%	90.5%	90.9%
Outcome Thirteen: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.	72.6%	Rank: 10 Change: +4	53.3%	76.9%	75.0%	77.8%

<p>Goal Fourteen: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to receive accurate recommendations and commendations from the visiting team.</p> <p>Outcome Fourteen: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.</p>	91.5%	Rank: 5	93.8%	88.2%	95.2%	90.9%
	78.5%	Rank: 6 Change: -1	70.3%	84.2%	85.0%	90.0%
<p>Goal Fifteen: An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is for my school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation from the visiting team.</p> <p>Outcome Fifteen: During the school's most recent accreditation, this goal was mostly achieved.</p>	91.0%	Rank: 6	91.3%	86.8%	100%	100%
	81.8%	Rank: 3 Change: +3	83.6%	71.4%	95.2%	90.9%

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The WELS has been accrediting schools since the 2003-2004 school year. Over the course of the last several years, the number of accredited schools has grown significantly. At the time of this research, 136 WELS schools had achieved accreditation through the synod's accrediting agency, WELSSA. Interest in accreditation continues to rise among WELS schools. According to the WELSSA office, there are now 145 schools accredited with WELSSA, and by September 2021 it is anticipated that 151 schools will be accredited. Nine schools are currently pursuing first-time WELSSA accreditation (A. Truss, personal communication, March 22, 2021).

This study analyzed the perceptions school stakeholders had prior to going through the WELSSA self-study with the outcomes experienced once the school was accredited. A key focus of this study was to provide the WELSSA office with data that can enhance the overall process and assist in developing resources aimed at helping schools improve. Through this study, the WELSSA office will better know and understand whether or not school stakeholders' perceptions of the process match the specific outcomes enjoyed after accreditation is achieved. This study will also provide feedback to the WELSSA office as it seeks to continually improve the self-study process for WELS schools.

Summary of Results and Conclusions

When it comes to a complete analysis of the survey data, it is important to point out that only five of the fifteen stated goals of accreditation had an overall agreement

percentage of 85% or less. Goal Four (improving student achievement), Goal Seven (improving communication), and Goal Twelve (school's mission is inherent in all aspects) each came in at 85.1% agreement. Goal Thirteen (parental assurance of prudent investment) came in at 80.3% agreement. Goal Six (allocation of resources) came in with the lowest score of 66.0% agreement by all respondents. Ten of the goals ranged between 88.2% and 96.8% agreement.

A review of the agreement percentages and outcome levels leads the researcher to believe that an argument can certainly be made that all fifteen goals were seen as significantly important to schools as they sought accreditation through WELSSA. Across all four stakeholder groups, there was significant support stating that the 15 stated goals were important to them as their schools went through the accreditation process.

As discussed in Chapter One, school accreditation is viewed as a form of official approval based on meeting or exceeding a set of educational standards. With WELSSA, this approval comes from an in-depth self-study that is validated through peer review by a visitation team. Schools that engage in a thorough self-study will see more clearly the strengths of their program, as well as areas that need improvement. Some WELS schools have engaged in the accreditation process with the feeling that they “had to,” yet other schools go through the process because they “want to” see improvements in the overall school ministry. Regardless of the rationale for going through the accreditation process, this study provides valuable reassurance that it is a worthwhile process for schools today. In the end, schools are given recommendations from the visitation team, and those recommendations help form the basis for establishing a school improvement plan that covers a five-year span.

A look at feedback given partial or less than desired outcomes for question 14 (receiving accurate recommendations and commendations) shows that there is work to be done in ensuring visitation teams are truly helping the schools by giving recommendations that fit the ministry of the individual school. Comments like “sometimes these (recommendations) seemed artificial,” “poor VT (visiting team) leadership,” and “although the recommendations were given in good faith, they did not necessarily reflect the realities of our setting” warrant a more thorough review and training for visitation teams. One comment stated, “we felt that our site visit team didn’t do a great job of truly understanding (our school).” In other words, some schools felt that the work of the visitation team was subjective, recommendations were unrealistic or busy work, and some recommendations were not specific to a certain school’s ministry. Most critical feedback came from the teacher and principal/director stakeholder groups, those groups that are most closely tied to daily operation of the school.

Not surprising in the research, the stakeholders who are involved in the day-to-day operation of the school seemed to be more heavily involved in the self-study as well as carrying out any subsequent school improvement initiatives. Feedback in Appendix E gives evidence that in several schools, principals and teachers carried the brunt of the load in gathering evidence for the self-study. A few comments talk about the lack of participation by board members, parents, and laypeople associated with the school. One principal commented that he “didn’t involve the stakeholders in the process soon enough,” and another principal mentioned that it was “hard to find time to invest in review groups.”

By reading through the responses, both for how stakeholders saw how outcomes for each goal was “mostly achieved” or “partially achieved/achieved at a level less than desired,” one can see a further need to understand the expectations and outcomes of perceived goals. For example, when outcomes were viewed as less than “mostly achieved,” comments often referred to the specific shortcomings within the ministry of the school. Items like “lack of follow-through by volunteer congregation members,” “people chose not to participate...,” and “church and school leadership division,” were cited a few times. These results are specific to a ministry setting and are not universal throughout all WELS schools. Care should be taken when reading through qualitative data in this study, especially those found in Appendix E. The thoughts shared by respondents represent those of a small percentage of individuals who expressed their heart-felt thoughts regarding the specific ministry in which they serve or are associated. They are not representative of all respondents.

Recommendations

Stakeholders agreed that Goal One (open discussions about school improvement) and Goal Eleven (commitment to continual school improvement) are vitally important to a school’s rationale for seeking accreditation. An important aspect of the WELSSA office’s work is to encourage schools to create a culture of continual improvement. Although accreditation is not the only tool school’s may use to accomplish this, it is certainly a tool that has been developed to help schools study their individual ministries in an effort to improve. As noted in the objective statements, WELSSA aims to help congregations do just that (WELS, 2019b).

As Harris pointed out in the literature review, “successful school improvement can only occur when schools apply those strategies that best fit their own context and particular developmental needs” (Harris, 2003, p. 4). A key to successful school improvement is that it is customized to a particular school’s ministry. The research contained in this study, especially the qualitative data shared by respondents, widely supports the self-study process WELSSA provides. The WELSSA standards (Appendix C) provide a clear framework for schools to pursue a culture of school improvement, giving individual WELS schools guidance that can assist them in considering improvement initiatives that are specific to their individual settings. These initiatives will vary from school ministry to school ministry.

The WELSSA office reports that 66% of all WELS elementary and high schools are currently accredited with the organization. When including the early childhood ministries, 63% of WELS school ministries are accredited with WELSSA. The Executive Director’s office has a goal of seeing 75% of WELS schools accredited in 2022 and 100% in 2025 (P. Patterson, personal communication, March 26, 2021). As the WELSSA office continues recruiting more schools to consider WELSSA as a tool for their continued improvement, an encouragement would be to utilize the potential positive effects of word-of-mouth marketing by those schools that are currently accredited. Having a goal of 100% of WELS schools accredited within four years is a lofty, yet commendable goal. With the Lord’s blessing, this goal could certainly be a reality. The researcher encourages the WELSSA office to continue seeking “accreditation ambassadors” from accredited schools to help encourage other schools to pursue WELSSA.

Mensching (2012) summarized the findings of his work by sharing that WELSSA had shown to have a positive impact on schools in the area of academic improvement, school improvement, and school growth and recruitment. The research in this study supports those findings and goes a step further to show that each of the 15 stated goals are perceived as significantly important across the four key stakeholder groups in this study.

The results of this study deserve consideration from principals/directors, teachers, board members, pastors (serving with a school ministry), and the WELSSA office. Fifteen stated goals were analyzed in this study, and if these goals are intentionally connected to school improvement and accreditation, then ongoing efforts will be taken to ensure all stakeholders actively work together to create a culture of continued school improvement in WELS schools. Ongoing, yearly evaluation of the standards and goals of accreditation, as well as regular promotion and support for schools considering WELSSA is going to assist in laying the foundation for sustained school improvement. Involving all stakeholders needs to be a priority for schools moving forward. This will ultimately be more meaningful to the school's ministry and will close any gaps that currently exist between stakeholder perception and outcomes experienced when considering and achieving accreditation with WELSSA.

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Appendix A: Perception and Outcomes Survey Cover Letter

Dear Administrator,

I am currently working on a project for my graduate studies, which is entitled, “Analysis of the Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with the WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA) Process.” I am seeking your assistance in gathering feedback, which will compare what school stakeholders perceived the process to do for the school and what the resulting outcomes were.

The overall purpose of this study is two-fold. The first is to help with my graduate work. The second is to assist the WELSSA office to know and understand whether school stakeholders’ perceptions of the accreditation process match the specific outcomes enjoyed after accreditation is achieved or if there were discrepancies.

I am asking you to please share the link to this survey with your current teachers, pastor(s), and Board of Education members. I am seeking to gather input from all principals, directors, teachers, pastors, and board members who are currently serving our 136 WELSSA schools. Please note that all feedback and comments you and those completing the survey provide will be kept confidential. There will be no personally identifiable information requested. Please note however, the survey will be asking for each person completing the survey to state their role (principal, director, teacher, pastor or board member) with the school.

This survey should take responders no more than 15 minutes to complete. Please take a moment between now and April 22, 2020 to complete the survey. Your feedback is very important to this study and the ongoing support the WELSSA office will provide to schools going through the accreditation process.

Here is the link to the survey: [Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELSSA Survey](#)

Thank you for your assistance. May the Lord continue to bless you and your ministries!
In Christ,

Tom Plitzuweit
WELSSA Executive Director

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414-256-3221

Appendix B: Perception and Outcomes Survey

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

Your participation in this survey will help the WELSSA office compare the perceptions school stakeholders have prior to conducting the accreditation self-study with the outcomes experienced once the school is accredited. Your assistance will help to improve the WELSSA process. This survey should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

* Required

1. Do you agree to participate in this survey? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

School Role

2. Please indicate your role at your school. *

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Teacher (if also a principal or director, please only mark principal/director)
☐ Principal/Director
☐ Pastor (if also a principal or director, please only mark principal/director)
☐ Board Member

Question 1 - Engaging Stakeholders

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

3. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to engage your stakeholders in open discussions about school improvement. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ I do agree.

☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 7*

Question
1a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to engage your stakeholders in open discussion about school improvement. Please provide some follow-up information.

4. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 5*

☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 6*

☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 6*

Question 1b

Engaging Stakeholders

5. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 7

Question 1c

Engaging Stakeholders

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

6. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 7

Question 2 - Teacher Improvement

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

7. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve teacher learning and teaching at my school. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 8*
- ☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 11*

Question 2a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve teacher learning and teaching at your school. Please provide some follow-up information.

8. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 9*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 10*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 10*

Question 2b

Teacher Improvement

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

9. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 11

Question 2c

Teacher Improvement

10. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 11

Question 3 -
Teamwork

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

11. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve teamwork at my school. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 12*

☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 15*

Question
3a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve teamwork at your school. Please provide some follow-up information.

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

12. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 13*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 14*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 14*

Question 3b

Teamwork

13. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 15

Question 3c

Teamwork

14. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 15

Question 4 - Student
Achievement

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

15. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve student achievement at your school. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. Skip to question 16
- ☐ I do not agree. Skip to question 19

Question
4a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve student achievement at your school. Please provide some follow-up information.

16. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. Skip to question 17
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. Skip to question 18
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. Skip to question 18

Question 4b

Student Achievement

17. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 19

Question 4c

Student Achievement

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

18. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 19

Question 5 - School Climate

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

19. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to strengthen my school's climate. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 20*
- ☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 23*

Question 5a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to strengthen your school's climate. Please provide some follow-up information.

20. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 21*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 22*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 22*

Question 5b

School Climate

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

21. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 23

Question 5c

School Climate

22. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 23

Question 6 - Resource Allocation

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

23. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve the way my school allocates resources. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 24*

☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 27*

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

Question
6a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve the way your school allocates resources. Please provide some follow-up information.

24. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 25*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 26*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 26*

Question 6b

Resource Allocation

25. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 27

Question 6c

Resource Allocation

26. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

[Skip to question 27](#)**Question 7 -
Communication**

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

27. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve communication at my school. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. [Skip to question 28](#)
- ☐ I do not agree. [Skip to question 31](#)

**Question
7a**

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to improve communication at your school. Please provide some follow-up information.

28. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. [Skip to question 29](#)
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. [Skip to question 30](#)
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. [Skip to question 30](#)

Question 7b**Communication**

29. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

[Skip to question 31](#)

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

Question 7c

Communication

30. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 31

Question 8 - Strategic Planning

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

31. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to compel my school to engage in strategic planning for my school. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 32*
- ☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 35*

Question 8a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to compel your school to engage in strategic planning. Please provide some follow-up information.

32. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 33*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 34*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 34*

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

Question 8b

Strategic Planning

33. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 35

Question 8c

Strategic Planning

34. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 35

Question 9 - Quality
Assurance

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

35. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to provide evidence to the congregation and community that my school is a "quality" Lutheran school. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 36*
- ☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 39*

Question
9a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to provide evidence to the congregation and community that your school is a "quality" Lutheran school. Please provide some follow-up information.

36. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 37*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 38*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 38*

Question 9b

Quality Assurance

37. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 39

Question 9c

Quality Assurance

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

38. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 39

Question 10 - High Standards

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

39. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reinforce that my school complies with high educational standards. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 40*
- ☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 43*

Question 10a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reinforce that your school complies with high educational standards. Please provide some follow-up information.

40. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 41*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 42*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 42*

Question 10b

High Standards

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41. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 43

Question 10c

High Standards

42. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Question 11 - Commitment to Improvement

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

43. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reflect a commitment to continual school improvement. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 44*

☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 47*

Skip to question 43

4/14/2020

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Question
11a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reflect a commitment to continual school improvement. Please provide some follow-up information.

44. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 45*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 46*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 46*

Question 11b

Commitment to Improvement

45. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 47

Question 11c

Commitment to Improvement

46. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

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[Skip to question 47](#)

Question 12 – Mission Focus

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

47. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is ensure my school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. [Skip to question 48](#)
- ☐ I do not agree. [Skip to question 51](#)

Question 12a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to ensure your school's mission is inherent in all aspects of its work. Please provide some follow-up information.

48. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. [Skip to question 49](#)
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. [Skip to question 50](#)
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. [Skip to question 50](#)

Question 12b

Mission Focus

49. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

[Skip to question 51](#)

4/14/2020

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Question 12c

Mission Focus

50. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 51

Question 13 - Stakeholder
Investment

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

51. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reassure parents that their investment in your school has been a prudent one. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 52*
- ☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 55*

Question
13a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to reassure parents that their investment in your school has been a prudent one. Please provide some follow-up information.

52. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 53*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 54*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 54*

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Question 13b

Stakeholder Investment

53. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 55

Question 13c

Stakeholder Investment

54. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

Skip to question 55

Question 14 - Outside
Feedback

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

55. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to receive accurate recommendations and commendations from the visiting team. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 56*

☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 59*

4/14/2020

Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

Question
14a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to receive accurate recommendations and commendations from the visiting team. Please provide some follow-up information.

56. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 57*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 58*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 58*

Question 14b

Outside Feedback

57. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

Skip to question 59

Question 14c

Outside Feedback

58. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

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Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

*Skip to question 59***Question 15 - Self Study and Objective Evaluation**

Please respond to the following statement as to whether or not you agree.

59. An important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is for my school to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation from the visiting team. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ I do agree. *Skip to question 60*
- ☐ I do not agree. *Skip to question 63*

Question 15a

You agree that an important result of going through the WELSSA accreditation process is to produce a detailed self-study and, in turn, secure an objective evaluation from the visiting team. Please provide some follow-up information.

60. During your school's most recent accreditation: *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This important result was mostly achieved. *Skip to question 61*
- ☐ This important result was partially achieved. *Skip to question 62*
- ☐ This important result was less than desired. *Skip to question 62*

Question 15b

Self-Study and Objective Feedback

61. Please provide an example of how this was mostly achieved. *

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Perceptions and Outcomes Associated with WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA)

[Skip to question 63](#)

Self-Study and Objective Feedback

Question 15c

62. What do you believe are the reasons for the discrepancy between what you felt should have been achieved and what was actually achieved? *

[Skip to question 63](#)

Question 16

63. Please provide any additional feedback you would like to share regarding your perceptions and outcomes of going through the WELSSA process that were not addressed in the survey.

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Appendix C: WELSSA Standards (Lutheran Elementary School – 3K-8 – 2019)**STANDARD 1 – The School’s Mission and Its Implementation**

The mission, vision, objectives (MVO), and action plans are crafted within the framework of the scriptural admonition that we “do all things for the glory of God” (I Corinthians 10:31). The Christ-centered mission statement and support vision, objectives, and action plans give direction for the entire school and provide criteria for evaluation. This standard establishes the framework for all subsequent self-study standards.

- 1.01 * The school has a written mission statement that is rooted in the Holy Bible.
- 1.02 * The mission statement includes these two concepts: nurturing those who are already Christians and reaching out to those who are not Christians.
- 1.03 * The school’s mission statement agrees with and supports the congregation’s mission statement.
- 1.04 * The school has a written set of vision statements that helps achieve the school’s mission and which previews the school’s plans 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)
- 1.05 * The school has a written set of measurable objectives that help achieve the school’s vision statements. These objectives:
 - a. Cover five years
 - b. Include completion date for each objective
 - c. Include the name of person responsible for implementing the action plan
 - d. list the cost, if any.
- 1.06 * The mission and the plans for implementing it were developed through the cooperative efforts of teachers, administrator, and the school’s governing board.
- 1.07 Parents of the school are given opportunity to respond to the school’s plans.
- 1.08 * The mission and the plans for achieving it have been approved by the congregation’s governing board and the voters’ assembly.
- 1.09 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.

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standard needs to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standard: A1.01.

A1.01 (ECM 1.05) *The ECM has a written philosophy regarding the care and/or education of young children. The philosophy is based on current research and “best practices” in the field and is consistent with the congregation and school’s MVO.

STANDARD 2 – The School’s Relationship with the Congregation(s)

A special relationship exists between the school and its supporting congregation(s). The mission of the congregation(s) is to “make disciples.” The congregation(s) established the school to help carry out that mission. The school serves as one ministry, albeit an important one, that the congregation(s) has implemented to achieve its mission.

- 2.01 * The congregation(s) provides an appropriate level of spiritual support for the school.
- 2.02 The school’s outreach plan complements the broader evangelism efforts of the congregation(s).
- 2.03 The school communicates regularly with the entire membership of the congregation(s) in a variety of ways (*i.e.*, print, electronic, personal, website, etc.)
- 2.04 * The faculty, administrator, and governing board accept the pastor’s role as the primary spiritual leader of the congregation.
- 2.05 * The faculty, pastor(s), and governing board accept the spiritual leadership of the administrator.
- 2.06 * The faculty, pastor(s), and governing board accept the educational leadership of the administrator.
- 2.07 * The congregation(s) supports and respects the called workers.
- 2.08 Planned opportunities for pupil participation in congregational life are regularly available to foster a service attitude among the students.
- 2.09 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, etc.).

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standard needs to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standard: A2.01.

A2.01 (ECM 2.26) *The congregations operating the ECM have clearly articulated bylaws that
include the ECM.

STANDARD 3 – The School’s Relationship with the Home

God has given parents the primary responsibility for the Christian nurture of their children. God has given his church the responsibility of supporting, helping, and encouraging parents in that primary role. It is important that these distinctive and supportive roles be understood and practiced.

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

- 3.02 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.

- 3.03 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.

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

- 3.05 The school works with parents in planning a variety of activities that enhance family life. (*e.g.*, parent-teacher group planning 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, etc.)

- 3.06 * The school regularly communicates with the home in a variety of ways.

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

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

- 3.09 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 parent to be active in the school’s program.

- 3.11 Parents take an active part in school-sponsored 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

Jesus’ directive to Peter, “Feed my lambs” (John 21:15), applied to the church in Peter’s day and applies to Christ’s church today. That directive and other words and actions of God demonstrate his love for children. Lutheran schools will strive to emulate Jesus’ attitude, words, and actions regarding children.

- 4.01 * The school demonstrates that its most important objective is to nurture children to be faithful followers of Jesus.
- 4.02 * All who have contact with children show love and respect for students by their attitudes, words, and actions.
- 4.03 * Teachers nurture children to love and respect all people regardless of age, nationality, culture, race, or religious affiliation.
- 4.04 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.
- 4.05 Students show love and respect to others in the school.
- 4.06 * The school makes reasonable efforts to identify students’ unique spiritual, academic, physical, and emotional needs and helps them grow in each area.
- 4.07 * The school makes reasonable efforts to identify students’ God given talents, abilities, and interests and helps students use those gifts to glorify the Lord.
- 4.08 The school, within the scope of its resources, offers Christian education to students with special needs.
- 4.09 * 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.

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standards need to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standards: A4.01, A4.02, A4.03, A4.04.

A4.01 (ECM 5.13) *The discipline policy is clearly articulated in the handbooks. The discipline

employs interactive procedures such as redirection, reflective listening, adult role modeling, and positive reinforcement. Corporal punishment or demeaning practices are not used.

A4.02 (ECM 5.14) *Staff uses techniques of guidance that clearly apply the Law and Gospel

including methods such as:

- Establish clear limits
- Utilize natural or logical behavior
- Anticipate potential problems
- Encourage repentance
- Assure children of forgiveness in Christ

A4.03 (ECM 6.20) The staff organizes numerous opportunities for children to learn about themselves and others and uses these opportunities as a context for promoting social skills and positive interactions.

A4.04 (ECM 6.21) The staff fosters positive communication and interaction as children actively

engage in a variety of learning experiences such as taking turns, playing simple, small-group games, and performing daily routines.

STANDARD 5 – The School’s Relationship with the Community

The Lutheran school, having numerous opportunities and challenges for ministry in the community, will be a good neighbor and responsive to local needs.

5.01 The school has developed a written public relations strategy which informs the community about the school.

5.02 * The school uses a variety of resources (print, electronic, and activities) to promote the school’s organization, purpose, and operation.

5.03 The school maintains an up-to-date, informative, and user-friendly website.

5.04 Promotional materials produced for distribution in the community are well-written and visually appealing.

5.05 The school maintains harmonious relations with the local public and private schools.

5.06 Teachers and administrator participate in community activities and service organizations.

5.07 The school provides opportunities for students to become involved in community service.

- 5.08 Teachers use educational resources found in the community.
- 5.09 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 (WELS)

Maintaining a solid relationship with the WELS benefits both the school and the synod.

- 6.01 * The school is operated by one of more congregations in fellowship with the WELS or by a group that is in fellowship with WELS.
- 6.02 * The faculty knows, understands, and is committed to the theology and mission of the WELS.
- 6.03 * The school cooperates with district and synodical offices of the WELS when calling staff members.
- 6.04 * Teachers and administrator participate in WELS conventions and conferences.
- 6.05 The school utilizes those district and synodical resources/services that help it achieve its mission.

STANDARD 7 – The School’s Plans for Enrolling Students

Our Lord, in Deuteronomy 6, encourages parents to nurture their children. The Lutheran school exists to assist parents with that task and will encourage them to enroll their children in the school.

- 7.01 * 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.
- 7.02 * 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).
- 7.03 The school has prepared and implements a well-defined enrollment process from the time of the first inquiry through the actual enrollment.
- 7.04 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 and affiliation with WELS

- 7.05 All students are enrolled based on the school's written enrollment policy.
- 7.06 * 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

The school's climate is an indicator of how well it is achieving its mission and objectives. Ongoing, harmonious, caring, joyful, and compassionate relationships among parents, faculty, and students reflect Jesus' love for them. Note: Climate implies long-term, not daily occurrence.

- 8.01 * A loving, Christian climate is evident throughout the school.
- 8.02 Annually the faculty, pastor, governing board, and parents discuss how the school can improve the school climate.
- 8.03 Christian behavior is demonstrated at school-sponsored activities, such as athletic events, musical events, and field trips.
- 8.04 * Teachers, pastor(s), and administrator respect and support each other.
- 8.05 Students demonstrate love and respect for one another, for their teachers, and other adults.
- 8.06 Students and faculty demonstrate a positive school spirit.
- 8.07 * The teaching/learning environment helps the school achieve its mission.
- 8.08 Student behavior and student appearance contribute to the school's teaching/learning environment.
- 8.09 * Visible elements of a Christ-centered culture are evident (*e.g.*, bulletin boards, pictures, religious symbols, etc.)

STANDARD 9 – School Governance and Administration

The school is organized to carry out its mission, vision, and objectives. The congregation looks to the school's governing board and the administration to provide leadership so that the God-given abilities of professional personnel, parents, and students are fully developed. The leadership provided by the board and administration is a major factor in determining how well the school achieves its mission.

A. Governing Board

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

- 9.02 Board members are members in good standing of the operating congregation(s).
- 9.03 New members of the board are oriented to their roles and responsibilities.
- 9.04 * The board meets regularly and follows a written agenda in its meetings.
- 9.05 Minutes are recorded for each meeting, circulated to all members in printed and/or electric form, and kept on file in the school office.
- 9.06 * The board at least annually reviews the school's MVO and works to help the school achieve its vision and objectives.
- 9.07 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 (*e.g.*, curriculum, athletics, administration, instruction, etc.).
- 9.08 * The board reports regularly to the operating congregation(s).
- 9.09 * The board has direct supervisory responsibility over the school and its school's administrator.
- 9.10 * The board's ministry is assessed annually by the administrator and pastor. These assessments are kept on file in the school office.
- 9.11 * The pastor's relationship with the school is clearly defined.
- 9.12 * The pastor's ministry, related to the school, is assessed annually by the board, teachers, and administrator. These assessments are kept on file in the school office.
- 9.13 The administrator's ministry is assessed annually by the board through its chairman, using a process similar to the following:
- The board obtains input from the teachers and pastor(s).
 - The board chairman and administrator complete a summative evaluation, using the Ministerial Growth and Evaluation tool from the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS). This form is submitted to CLS, as well as filed in the school office.
 - The board chairman works with the principal to develop improvement objectives. The form and objectives are filed.
- 9.14 The board has a position description for the administrator and others who serve in administrative positions.

- 9.15 * The board approves an annual budget of income and expenses that is fiscally sound and sufficient to meet the schools MVO. The budget is submitted to the congregation(s) for approval.
- 9.16 The annual budget of receipts includes an appropriate balance of congregational support, cost-based tuition, and other sources of income.
- 9.17 The board acts on the faculty's recommendations regarding significant changes in curriculum.

B. Administration

- 9.18 The school's administrator carries out the policies adopted by the board and is responsible for the daily, ongoing operation of the school.
- 9.19 * The administrator demonstrates a strong personal faith in Jesus Christ, a commitment to the Scriptures, and a dedication to the WELS teaching ministry.
- 9.20 * The school administrator maintains WELS ministry certification.
- 9.21 The administrator holds current state certification in administration or is working toward that certification.
- 9.22 * The administrator who has served in that role for four or more years has earned a master's degree in education, is working toward such a degree, or has earned the WELS Principal Credential.
Note: If the administrator is less than two years from retirement, Standard 9.22 does not apply. However, Standard 9.22 will apply to the administrator who succeeds the retiree.
- 9.23 The administrator is well-organized.
- 9.24 The administrator delegates responsibilities effectively.
- 9.25 The administrator consults regularly with pastor(s) and teachers individually.
- 9.26 The administrator regularly convenes and effectively conducts faculty meetings which include a written agenda and written minutes.
- 9.27 The administrator works closely and in harmony with all other administrative personnel (E.g., vice administrator, athletic director, music director, etc.)
- 9.28 * The administrator provides leadership in spiritual development of faculty.
- 9.29 * The administrator provides leadership in academic development of faculty.

- 9.30 * The administrator observes each teacher's classroom several times during the school year. Records of those visits are filed.
- 9.31 * The administrator works with each teacher to complete a summative evaluation form at least every three years. These forms are submitted to the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools.
- 9.32 The administrator provides leadership in school promotion within the congregation and in the community.
- 9.33 * The administrator provides leadership in curriculum development.
- 9.34 The administrator provides leadership for the school in public relations.
- 9.35 * The administrator provides leadership in student assessment.
- 9.36 The word and example, the administrator supports all aspects of the congregation's ministry.
- 9.37 * The administrator facilitates the orientation of new faculty, support staff, and volunteers to their roles and responsibilities.
- 9.38 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.
- 9.39 The administrator works with the faculty and board in preparing and implementing the budget.
- 9.40 All faculty, support staff, and volunteers are accountable to the administrator for the performance of their duties.
- 9.41 The administrator participates in conferences and conventions which help with professional and ministerial growth.
- 9.42 The administrator is a member of at least one professional organization outside the WELS.
- 9.43 The administrator has built a good relationship with local schools.

- 9.44 * The administrator is provided the equivalent of 10 weekly hours of released time from teaching duties during the school day for every 75 students or fraction thereof, or the school is working toward that goal.
- 9.45 An administrative assistant is available the equivalent of 10 weekly hours for every 75 students or fraction thereof in the school, or the board is working toward that goal.
- 9.46 The administrator utilizes technology in the school office.
- 9.47 The administrator facilitates the use of technology for classroom instruction.
- 9.48 The administrator regularly informs the parents, faculty, professional personnel, school staff, and volunteers of board decisions.
- 9.49 The administrator maintains a list of qualified substitute teachers trained to maintain the integrity of the school's mission and also designates a person to assume leadership in the event of his/her absence.

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standards need to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standards: A9.01a, A9.01b, A9.01c, A9.02, A9.03.

A9.01a (ECM 7.14) *The administrator has received a divine call from the congregation and is

WELS ministry certified or is persistent in working toward that goal.

A9.01b (ECM 7.14) *The administrator has a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution

or is actively working toward the requirements of one of the following disciplines:

- a. Early childhood education/child development,
- b. Elementary education/child development,
- c. Any other subject with twenty-four credit hours in early childhood education/child development.

A9.01c (ECM 7.14) The administrator has a working understanding of business practices as

evidenced by:

- a. Twelve credit hours of college course work, or
- b. The equivalent of documented one-year, on-the-job training in an administrative position under the supervision of a mentor.

A9.02 (ECM 7.16) The administrator assists with or conducts interviews of prospective staff

members and makes recommendations to the board and/or congregation, when necessary and proper.

A.9.03 (ECM 7.39) *The administrator obtains a minimum of twelve clock hours per year of

continuing professional development, provided by a qualified entity, in such areas as emergent literacy and mathematics, child or staff development, programming, administration, health and safety, family relations, legal issues, communications, and technology.

STANDARD 10 – Professional Personnel (faculty and support staff)

It is vital to the school's efforts in achieving its mission to have a faculty and support staff who are dedicated to faithfully serving our Lord.

10.01 * 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.

10.02 * The school expects each teacher to hold WELS ministry certification and is persistent in meeting that goal.

10.03 * Faculty members are regularly involved in congregational worship and group Bible study.

10.04 * All teachers have earned a baccalaureate degree in education.

10.05 All teachers have earned and maintain their state licensure/certification or area working toward that goal.

10.06 All teachers attend conferences and/or conventions which help with professional and ministerial growth.

10.07 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.)

10.08 Teachers are not burdened with an overload of additional responsibilities (E.g., music, athletics, technology, etc.) whereby their primary responsibility of teaching suffers.

10.09 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 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.

- 10.12 If specialists (E.g., guidance, special education, reading, speech, etc.) 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.
- 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 developed a written policy for faculty members and support staff whose absence is due to family emergencies.
- 10.16 The school has adopted a policy that address the issue of teachers facing false allegations made by students and/or parents regarding treatment of students.
- 10.17 The school has adopted written procedures for handling staff injury or illness.

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standards need to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standards: A10.01, A10.02, A10.03a, A10.03b, A10.04, A10.05.

A10.01 (ECM 7.03) *Staff understands and supports the ECM's mission and philosophy.

A10.02 (ECM 7.08) Appropriate training is provided to staff to meet their responsibilities as well

as to aid in professional development.

All staff responsible for the care and education of the children in the program participate annually in a minimum of twelve documented clock hours of continuing education relating to child growth and development in the areas of cognitive learning and social, emotional, and physical development; safety and health issues for young children, family and community relations, classroom and program management; and professional development which may include special needs.

Training may also include related language development, discipline, and technology.

A10.03a (ECM 7.31) *The early childhood program ensures appropriate staff-child ratios by

adopting a policy that meets the guidelines listed below. Ratios must also comply with state

and/or local requirements:

Age of Students	Staff to Child	Maximum # of Students in Group
3 Years Old	1 to 9	18

4 Years Old	1 to 10	20
5 Years Old	1 to 10	20

When mixed age groups are in the same room, the staff-child ratio is maintained according to the average age of the children.

A10.03b (ECM 7.31) The administrator provides for proper record keeping including:

- Attendance
- Financial
- Staff-child ratios

A10.04 (ECM 7.46) *Early childhood teachers have a divine call from the congregation, an

associate degree or CDA, and have or are actively pursuing WELS synodical certification.

A10.05 (ECM 7.62) Teacher assistants attend required staff meetings.

STANDARD 11 – Curriculum

The curriculum includes all courses, activities, programs, and experiences offered to the students. The curriculum is the vehicle the school staff uses to help it achieve the school's MVO.

11.01 * The school's curriculum agrees with the Bible and helps the school achieve its MVO.

11.02 * 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.

11.03 * The school's written religion curriculum:

- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
- b. Contains exit goals for graduation
- c. Includes grade level measurable 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

11.04 The school's written mathematics curriculum:

- a. Includes a rationale (philosophy) based on Scripture
- b. Contains exit goals for graduation
- c. Includes grade level measurable 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

11.05 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 measurable 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
- 11.06 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 measurable 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
- 11.07 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 measurable 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
- 11.08 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 measurable 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
- 11.09 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 measurable 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 measurable 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 measurable 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 (*i.e.*, 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.

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standards need to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standards: A11.01, A11.02, A11.03, A11.04.

A11.01 (ECM 6.27) *The curriculum, methodology, equipment, and materials are age, individually, and culturally appropriate.

A11.02 (ECM 6.34) A variety of quality children's literature is an integral part of the classroom environment.

A11.03 (ECM 6.35) Materials for varied pre-writing and writing experiences are provided in all learning areas including centers.

A11.04 (ECM 6.36) *The materials and equipment on hand are readily accessible to the child for

self-selection, age and developmentally appropriate, size appropriate, durable and in good repair, adaptable for the handicapped (if applicable), and available for group and individual use.

STANDARD 12 – Instruction

A. Instructional Process

Instruction is planned and directed for the effective implementation of the approved curriculum. All instruction helps the school achieve its MVO.

12.01 * 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.

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

12.03 instruction is based on the adopted written curriculum.

12.04 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

12.05 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

12.06 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

12.07 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
- 12.08 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
- 12.09 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 schools MVO 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 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 (E.g., report cards and parent-teacher conferences) and informal (e.g., phone, text, email, personal conversations) methods to discuss student progress with parents.

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standards need to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standards: A12.01, A12.02, A12.03, A12.04, A12.05, A12.06, A12.07.

A12.01 (ECM 3.08) *Parent-teacher conferences are held at least twice a year and at other times

as needed to discuss the child's developmental progress, personal care, and education. Teachers and parents work together to develop the child's individualized plan within the program. Conference schedules accommodate working parents.

A12.02 (ECM 3.09) *Anecdotal records, checklists, forms, and other written samples within the child's portfolio form the basis of the professional evaluations shared with the parents.

A12.03 (ECM 3.11) Significant changes in a child's pattern of behavior and/or physical condition are reported to the parents, documented, and placed in the child's file.

A12.04 (ECM 5.06) *The staff speaks and interacts with children in a friendly and positive manner, speaking individually to children at their eye-level throughout the day.

A12.05 (ECM 5.07) The staff includes children in conversations, listens and responds to the children's comments and suggestions.

A12.06 (ECM 5.09) The staff encourages developmentally appropriate independence in children.

A12.07 (ECM 6.22) Development of critical thinking skills, creative expression, and problem solving is fostered in children.

B. Instructional Materials and Resources

The school's instructional materials and resources are necessary to the school's total educational effort.

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 (*e.g.*, internet, 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 database of instructional materials and resources has been established and is updated annually. Note: This type of record is important for insurance purposes in the event a catastrophe destroys 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 follow written policies and procedures which establish the guidelines for using educational experiences (*i.e.*, field trips, guest speakers, assemblies, etc.) in the instructional process.

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standards need to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standards: A12.08, A12.09, A12.10, A12.11, A12.12, A12.13, A12.14, A12.15, A12.16, A12.17.

A12.08 (ECM 6.24) Scheduling takes into consideration the developmental stages of the child.

A12.09 (ECM 6.25) A balanced daily schedule gives attention to the following dimensions:

- all age groups play outdoors daily (weather permitting),
- alternate periods of quiet and active play,
- a balance of large muscle and small muscle activity,
- more than one option for group activity (individual, small group, or large group) is available to children most of the day,
- both child-initiated and staff-initiated activities are provided,
- the amount of time spent in staff-initiated, large group activity is limited.

A12.10 (ECM 6.26) The use of media and technology is limited to developmentally appropriate programming. Media are used to enhance or reinforce a teaching topic.

A12.11 (ECM 6.35) The child has choices for a variety of hands-on activities.

A12.12 (ECM 6.36) Resources that provide multi-sensory experiences are used by the child individually and in groups.

A12.13 (ECM 6.37) Equipment and materials are used throughout the day by the children for

large and small muscle development.

A12.14 (ECM 6.38) Equipment and materials are open-ended and lend themselves to a variety of activities.

A12.15 (ECM 6.42) *Ongoing assessment of children's progress takes place and is used to plan

activities for individual children and for groups of children. Children's progress is stated in a written report with supporting documentation, and the assessment methods are consistent with the program's philosophy and methodology.

A12.16 (ECM 6.43) Observations made by trained staff of children's cognitive development

include giving attention to individual traits such as multiple intelligences, learning styles, and learning preferences.

A12.17 (ECM 6.44) A variety of assessment tools are employed to match the developmental

stage of the child with an individually appropriate educational plan. These include, but are not limited to:

- Collections of representative work by the child (writing and art projects)
- Records of systematic observations by the teacher(s)
- Summaries of conversations and interviews with the child
- Photographs, audio recording, and videos of the children engaged in play
- A checklist of developmental levels and behaviors
- Observations that address all areas of children's development
- Results of screening and formal assessments
- Individual portfolios that contain a wide array of these records and other documentation that aid teachers in using flexibility to adapt lesson plans
- Written assessment tools shared with parents.

STANDARD 13 – Student Services

Christian education encompasses every area of a student's development. The school, therefore, is concerned with the quality and variety of services offered to students. Those services, as do all school activities, come under the scriptural injunction, "Take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5b).

A. Student Activities

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

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

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

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

B. Student Guidance

13.05 * The administrator and teachers consult with the pastor(s) regarding the students' spiritual growth. Counseling is provided to parents and student as needed.

13.06 * Permanent cumulative records for each student are maintained. The Family Educational Rights and Policy Act (FERPA) is followed as those records are given out.

13.07 * 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.

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

C. Student Health and Safety

13.09 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 medication
b. handling student injury or illness

13.11 The services of a nurse are available.

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

13.13 * The school provides training and equipment for its personnel to administer basic first aid and CPR/AED.

13.14 * The school has a written plan for handling bloodborne pathogens and other health issues.

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

- 13.16 Crossing guards are provided where needed, and crossing lanes and school speed zones are designated.
- 13.17 A safe, supervised procedure for loading and unloading students is in effect.
- 13.18 * 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.
- 13.19 * 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.
- 13.20 Emergency, fire, police, and ambulance phone numbers are posted in a prominent place in every room.
- 13.21 * Written emergency evacuation and protection procedures are established, communicated, and practiced regularly. (*e.g.*, fire, tornado, earthquake, etc.)
- 13.22 * A written procedure has been adopted for reporting child abuse.
- 13.23 Written intervention plans have been adopted to deal with crisis situations. These plans include counseling of students, parents, and others as needed.
- 13.24 * The school enforces its written security plan, which prohibits unrestricted entry during the school day.

D. Student Food Services

- 13.25 If hot meals are provided, they are nutritionally balanced and are prepared by qualified personnel in sanitary conditions.
- 13.26 Care is taken to ensure cleanliness while meals or snacks are eaten.
- 13.27 If milk is available for students, it is stored and delivered in a hygienic method.
- 13.28 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.
- 13.29 * 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 MVO.

- 14.01 * Physical facilities, both inside and outside, give specific Christian witness to the community (*e.g.*, crosses, signs, pictures, etc.)
- 14.02 Buildings (outside), grounds, and equipment are attractive, well-maintained, and adequate for the age and number of students.
- 14.03 * All facilities meet state and local codes, or the school is working toward that goal.
- 14.04 * All inside physical facilities including the kitchen and washrooms are clean and sanitary and conform to all applicable health, safety, fire, and building codes.
- 14.05 Classrooms and school offices are orderly and clean.
- 14.06 Adequate and appropriate space is provided for classroom teaching/learning, offices, storage, health issues, recreation, a library (classroom or central), and small group instruction.
- 14.07 School furniture is appropriate to the physical requirements of the students, adequate for the demands of the program, and sufficient in quantity.
- 14.08 The playground/athletic field has adequate restraints to prevent students from going onto streets or adjoining property. Those restraints also prevent vehicular traffic on the playground during school hours.
- 14.09 The school administrator or a designee participates in supervising the maintenance of the physical facilities.
- 14.10 All physical facilities are inspected manually by qualified individuals either from the congregation or from the outside. Improvements are made as needed.

If the school would like to have the preschool (3K/4K) accredited as part of the school, the following standards need to be included. If there is no preschool, or the school does not desire accreditation for their preschool, omit the following standards: A14.01, A14.02.

A14.01 (ECM 6.38) *Classroom space is arranged to facilitate large group, small group, and/or individual activities, such as, but not limited to:

- block building
- socio-dramatic play
- art
- music
- science
- math
- manipulatives
- quiet book reading
- sand/water play

- wood-working.

A14.02 (ECM 6.46) *The classroom environment promotes interaction of the child with other children, adults, and materials.

STANDARD 15 – Information Management

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

A. Information Management: Personnel

- 15.01 * The school cooperates with the congregation in maintaining files, preferably a database, that includes all pertinent and current information on each family (children and adults) in the congregation(s).
- 15.02 * 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 is working toward this goal.

B. Information Management: Student Records

- 15.03 * The school maintains files, preferably a database, that includes all pertinent and current information on each student (*e.g.*, academic, attendance, health, etc.).

C. Information Management: Financial

- 15.04 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 MVO.
- 15.05 * A school uses a workable and efficient accounting procedure.
- 15.06 If feasible, the financial records for the school are part of the computer data system.
- 15.07 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.
- 15.08 Funds provided by auxiliary organizations (*i.e.* parent-teacher group, athletic booster club, etc.) are expended according to board policy and in consultation with the school administrator.
- 15.09 * The school has adequate comprehensive insurance, 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

- 15.10 * The school maintains an accurate and current list of the personnel involved in the accreditation process. This list includes the following:
- a. Administrator
 - b. Teachers
 - c. Pastor(s)
 - d. Board of Education members
 - e. Church Council officers
 - f. Steering Committee personnel
 - g. Subcommittee groups and members
 - h. Administrative Assistant(s)
 - i. Volunteers in the accreditation process
 - j. WELSSA Consultant
 - k. Visiting Team Captain and team members
- 15.11 * The school maintains accurate and current records of all accreditation reports and documents in electronic and/or hard copy formats. The following documents should be included:
- a. All forms and resources (*e.g.* schedule for completing tasks of the self-study process)
 - b. School 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)

E. Information Management: Data Backup

- 15.12 * The school has an efficient system for backup of all important, electronic data.