



# **PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES**

**FOR THE**

**CONTINUING EDUCATION**

**OF**

**WELS TEACHERS**

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist congregations establish policies and procedures which will encourage teachers to continue their educational activities in a God-pleasing manner.

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Commission on Parish Schools  
2929 North Mayfair Road  
Milwaukee, WI 53222

## **Principles for the Continuing Education of WELS Teachers**

The ministry of the Lutheran teacher is both a privilege and a responsibility. Part of the responsibility is for the teacher to understand and accept these principles.

- a. **Learning is a life-long activity.** The Christian must continue to grow in his or her knowledge of scripture and in the understanding of God's good creation and gifts. The teacher also recognizes that God's gift of understanding and knowledge is used and must be used throughout life.
- b. **The teacher-minister requires continuing professional growth.** The nature of teaching and the changes which occur in society suggests that professional growth is an essential part of the work of teaching. Standing still in education generally means that the teacher and the methods and content which he or she teaches will become dated and perhaps inappropriate for the needs of the children today.
- c. **Professional growth has as its primary function to improve the ministry of the teacher to his or her students.** The goal of any improvement in ministry is to those served by that ministry. Although personal growth is important, the work of the ministry implies that the teacher is primarily concerned with the effect of his or her work on the students served by that ministry.
- d. **Continuing education is best when it is self-directed.** Although the synod could impose requirements for continuing education, as does the public sector, the proper motivation must come from within, whereby the teacher who recognizes the privileges and responsibilities of the called ministry, willingly seeks ways in which to improve that ministry. The teacher as a mature Christian professional is also the best judge of what she or he needs to be more effective in that profession.
- e. **Continuing education is comprehensive, including such areas as religious, intellectual, practical, and psychological.** Continuing education ought not become so focused either in format or content that the multiple responsibilities generally found in the teaching ministry are not all served. The teaching ministry must be particularly alert to the importance of spiritual growth.

- f. **Teachers should be accountable for their continuing education program.** Continuing education should not be merely a choice which a teacher makes. He or she is responsible first to God who has called the teacher but then he or she is responsible also to the congregation and the students who are served by that ministry. All ministers are accountable for their ministry and part of that accountability is to actively seek ways in which the ministry is enhanced.
  
- g. **There is a shared responsibility for continuing education.** The benefits of continued education accrue to students, the congregation, and to the synod as a whole. Thus the responsibility needs to be shared by teachers, the calling body, and synod. This sharing includes the provision of materials, financial support, and encouragement.

### **Guidelines for the Continuing Education of WELS Teachers**

These guidelines suggest a program that will be an encouragement to every teacher minister. Implementation of these guidelines will consider the personal needs of the individual teacher and of those whom they serve. The guidelines offer variety of formats and link the existing resources with those yet to be prepared. At the same time the administration of the program should be kept simple and straightforward. The hope is that each congregation will consider these guidelines as a way of helping their teachers grow in their ministry. The proposed guidelines follow.

1. Continuing education is directed by the individual needs of the teacher to improve the teacher's ability to perform the responsibilities of his or her calling.
  
2. Continuing education is developmental, that is, it is appropriate to the life stage of a teacher's ministry.
  
3. Continuing education must be flexible by taking into account the teacher's family circumstances, financial situation, called responsibilities, and unique strengths and weaknesses.
  
4. Continuing education for a Lutheran teacher has the study of God's Word as a strong component.
  
5. Continuing education allows the individual teacher personal choice in a variety of areas such as:

- formats -** teachers can take courses, attend professional meetings, read a book.
- content -** teacher can study French, teaching methods, disciplinary techniques, organ music.
- techniques -** teachers can enhance professional development by reading, discussions with other persons, listening to an expert, practicing, traveling.
- material -** teachers can use audiovisual material, books, computer programs.

6. The financial support of continuing education is a shared responsibility of the calling body and the teacher. (One WELS congregation pays 50% of each teacher's expenses up to \$250/year with permission to carry over for one year. Another congregation budgets a set amount for the entire faculty per year.)
7. The district parish school committees/coordinators have the responsibility for assisting congregations implement these guidelines and serving as a resource for teachers in arranging continuing education activities within their respective districts.
8. Congregational boards of education will refine and adapt these guidelines for their own circumstances and needs.
9. Each teacher, in consultation with the principal, will prepare a professional growth plan based on the congregational guidelines.
10. In preparing this professional growth plan, the following areas can be included:
  - a. **Formal Study:** includes courses, workshops, independent study programs, degree work
  - b. **Personal Study:** includes something which is done individually for personal or spiritual growth but which is not necessarily directly related to the teacher's professional or ministerial responsibilities.
  - c. **Professional Informal:** includes learning activities which directly impact classroom teacher or a congregational responsibilities but is undertaken by the teacher on his or her own initiative.

- d. **General Professional Activity:** includes learning activities of a general nature which affect teaching or congregational responsibilities in a more indirect manner.
11. In discussing the professional growth plan with the teacher, the principal may consider the following:
- a. the variety and balance the teacher has in his/her plan (see points 5 and 10 above);
  - b. whether the plans of the teacher include activities which are new or a continuation of an existing activity;
  - c. whether the activities are related to the professional needs of the teacher; and
  - d. whether the activities are appropriate to the needs and circumstances of the congregation and school.
12. The calling body has the responsibility to monitor the teachers' continuing education program. The congregation may decide to use the Team Ministry form completed by the principal each year. This form could be modified to include an item indicating the teacher's continuing education activities. The district parish school committee/coordinator will support the congregations through the current School Counselor program. The district also has the responsibility to assist congregations in developing professional education activities.
13. The synod through its administrative agencies, such as the Commission on Parish Schools, and through its educational institutions, such as Martin Luther College, has the responsibility to support the districts through resources, programs, and encouragement.

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**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

*Discuss each of the following principles. Determine whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Be prepared to explain your reasons.*

1. Learning is a life-long activity.
2. The teacher-minister requires continuing professional growth.
3. Professional growth has as its primary function to improve the ministry of the teacher to his or her students.
4. Continuing education is best when it is self-directed.
5. Continuing education is comprehensive, including such areas as religious, intellectual, practical, and psychological.
6. Teachers should be accountable for their continuing education program.
7. There is a shared responsibility for continuing education.

*Consider each of the guidelines. With which three (3) do you agree most strongly? With which, if any, of the guidelines do you disagree?*

Most Strongly Agree:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Disagree:

***What will be the most significant challenges in implementing a program for the continuing education of your school's teachers?***

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

***Suggest a strategy for addressing each of the challenges identified above.***

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.