

STANDARD 1: PURPOSE

The school is purpose driven.

Overview

The purpose/philosophy/mission statement serves as the basis for forming school goals, learner outcomes, and action plans, as well as determining a direction for all activities of the school. Throughout the Self-Study process, every area of the school program is evaluated to determine if each aligns with the stated purpose.

The purpose Standard is critical in evaluating each of the Standards involved with the Self-Study. Since the purpose establishes who a school is, where they have been, and what they are to become, it is critical that the Self-Study process begins with a thorough examination of Standard 1.

NOTE: In the interest of clarity related to the accreditation process, the word "purpose" may be used interchangeably with "mission" and "philosophy."

Potential Evidence

Potential evidentiary documents provide support as the subcommittee determines the rating for each General Indicator of Success. The list below includes suggestions for the documentation but is not all-inclusive. The school reviews the list of potential evidence and determines those established at the school. Additional evidence that is not listed in the potential listing may also be presented. Evidence or lack thereof assists the school in reaching an agreement on a rating. Potential evidence does not need to be included in the Self-Study but is to be available for the Validation Team to review.

- Written school policies align with philosophy/mission.
- School social media presence and postings align with the school's purpose.
- School learning objectives align with the school's purpose.
- School policies align with the school's purpose.
- The school's presence in community marketing pieces highlights the school's purpose.
- School publications, handbooks, and marketing materials provide evidence of Lutheran identity.
- Promotional materials give evidence of Lutheran identity.
- The school website provides evidence of Lutheran identity.
- School evangelism plan or written document outlining practices of sharing the Gospel in the school and community.
- Christian symbols are appropriately and prominently displayed throughout the school.

Potential Practices

Like potential evidence, potential practices are identified to demonstrate how well the school is meeting the indicators. A practice describes something that is being done at the school. It is often supported with written documentation, but it can be observed in classroom activities or daily routines. Schools are to identify the practices in place. A list of suggested practices is included in the Self-Study Report, but it is not all-inclusive. The identification of practices allows the subcommittee to arrive at a rating that reflects the condition currently in place at the school. It is the combination of evidence and practices that provide the support for an indicator rating.

- Teachers recognize and verbalize that the teaching of the faith is the main purpose of the school.
- Teaching of the Lutheran faith is allocated with appropriate classroom time in the daily schedule and integrated throughout the curriculum.
- The school attempts to attain and retain a positive Christian image through its public relations and publications.
- The sponsoring congregation(s) provides spiritual support for the school and its students.
- The school encourages students to participate in the congregational life of the parish.
- Pastors and teachers who are members of the supporting congregations demonstrate support for one another and each other's ministries.

- Teachers and staff members seek to be instruments of the Holy Spirit in helping students develop and grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.
- The school cooperates with district and national offices of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
- The school effectively implements a plan for the evangelism of un-churched or marginally churched children and their families attending the school.
- The Lutheran school’s policies, programs, and life within the school emanate from the example and teachings of Jesus Christ and demonstrate the proper understanding of Law and Gospel.
- The school conducts weekly worship (chapel) experiences intentionally designed to consciously and systematically strengthen the Christian faith of all members of the school community.
- Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities enhance the school’s purpose.
- Part-time employees and volunteer coaches, directors, and extra-curricular adult leaders embody and reflect the school’s purpose.
- Service projects are informed by the school’s purpose.

Required Responses

Narrative responses are to be written for all questions at the beginning of each Standard area and included in the Self-Study document. The answers to these questions provide a school with the opportunity to describe how it meets the needs of students. This also allows the school to indicate any nuances that are unique to the school's learning environment.

1. How was the school's purpose developed?

Our school crafted its mission statement during our initial NLSA accreditation, aiming to convey our core vision both internally and externally. Stemming from St. John's Lutheran Church's mission, it served as a blueprint for our school's development. Since then, it has remained a guiding principle, consistently featured in various communications such as school board records, our Student/Parent Handbook, our Employee Handbook, and our school website. Additionally, a brief version, "*Led and fed by the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ*" is prominently displayed in every classroom.

2. Describe how the school's purpose aligns with the purpose of its supporting congregation.

Church Purpose: To foster Christian fellowship and charity among its members and in the community at large through the preaching of the word of God and administration of the Holy Sacraments, the maintenance of sound doctrines, and the operation of agencies for Christian Education, all in accordance with the Confessional Standard of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

School Purpose: To create an educational environment where children's growth is centered on serving as a disciple of Jesus Christ in all aspects of their lives, all in accordance with the Confessional Standard of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Both statements of purpose complement each other, united by the shared goal of nurturing the family of God through the dissemination and instruction of His Word. They are firmly rooted in Lutheran teachings, with the church's purpose elaborated upon in the foundational Good Shepherd Lutheran Church Constitution.

3. Describe the process that was last used to review, clarify, and renew the school's purpose.

Our administrators, faculty, and staff revisit our school's mission at our first staff meeting at the outset of each academic year, most recently during the 2023 – 2024 academic year. We reviewed our purpose, and no changes were recommended. If changes had been suggested, they would have been forwarded to the board for their consideration and approval.

4. How does the school demonstrate its unique Lutheran identity through its alignment with vision, values, and actions?

Our school functions as a collaborative ministry, engaging our pastor, staff, and congregational members. As stated explicitly in the Good Shepherd Lutheran School Employee Handbook, our school adheres to an "Organizational Hierarchy" where the Triune God is recognized as the supreme authority over the school. This authority cascades downward through the Universal Christian Church and the Congregation. It culminates with the congregation's Voters' Assembly, ensuring accountability at each level.

For Lutheran School Week 2024, we emphasized our vision, values, and actions by having our students focus on the theme for each day. The themes were Connected to Christ, Connected to the Father, Connected to the Spirit, Connected to the Church, and Connected to His Commission. They participated in projects and activities that were shared with the church.

5. How does the school's purpose inform its strategic plan?

Our school's purpose serves as the guiding principle for our strategic plan. By aligning every aspect of our strategic initiatives with our core mission and values, our school ensures coherence and effectiveness in achieving its objectives. For example, our school's purpose emphasizes the holistic development of students as disciples of Jesus Christ. In that case, our strategic plan will prioritize initiatives that integrate faith-based teachings across the curriculum, foster a supportive spiritual environment, and promote service-oriented activities reflective of Christian values. In essence, our school's purpose acts as the compass that directs the trajectory of our strategic decisions, ensuring that all efforts contribute meaningfully to fulfilling our overarching mission.

6. Describe how the school's purpose is reflected in the teaching/learning environment in classrooms.

In each classroom, our school's purpose is prominently displayed, serving as a visual reinforcement for both teachers and students. Christ's presence is visible in the nurturing interactions between students and teachers, forming an integral part of the curriculum and learning activities to fulfill the educational aspect of our purpose. Our teachers' daily Christian witness, coupled with regular devotion and prayer time, actively fulfills our evangelistic mission. Additionally, through Christ-centered learning activities and homework, students indirectly contribute to the enrichment aspect of our mission by spreading the teachings of Christ within their homes and communities.

7. Describe how the school's purpose is evident within informal teaching/learning environments and co-curricular and extra-curricular events.

In informal teaching/learning settings, such as classroom discussions, lunchtime interactions, or hallway conversations, our school's purpose is evident through the integration of Christian values and teachings into everyday interactions. Teachers and staff model Christ-like behavior, fostering an environment of love, respect, and compassion among students. These informal moments provide opportunities for students to witness and internalize the principles embraced by our school's mission, contributing to their holistic development as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Similarly, our school's purpose shines through in co-curricular and extracurricular events such as special events, club activities, or community service projects. Whether it's through pre-event prayers, service-oriented projects reflecting Christian values, or discussions on how to embody Christ's teachings in teamwork and leadership, students are consistently encouraged to live out their faith beyond the classroom. These events serve as platforms for students to actively engage with and express their commitment to our school's mission in diverse and practical ways.

Overall, our school's purpose is not confined to formal instructional settings but extends into every facet of school life, fostering a vibrant and authentic Christian community where students are empowered to live out their faith in all aspects of their educational journey.

8. How does the school's purpose inform daily operational processes and procedures?

Our school's purpose plays a foundational role in shaping daily operational processes and procedures, ensuring alignment with our mission and values.

- **Decision-Making Framework:** Our school's purpose serves as a guiding principle for decision-making at all levels, from administrative policies to classroom practices. Decisions are evaluated based on their consistency with our school's mission of nurturing students as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- **Staff Training and Development:** Training programs for faculty and staff are designed to reinforce our school's purpose and equip them with the necessary tools to integrate Christian principles into their daily interactions and instructional practices.
- **Curriculum Development:** Our school's purpose guides the development of curriculum and educational resources, with an emphasis on integrating faith-based teachings across subjects and fostering spiritual growth alongside academic learning.
- **Student Behavior Expectation:** Behavioral expectations and disciplinary procedures are rooted in our values and principles outlined in our school's purpose, promoting a culture of respect, kindness, and accountability reflective of Christian virtues.
- **Community Engagement:** Outreach initiatives and community partnerships are selected based on their alignment with our school's purpose of serving as a beacon of Christ's love and compassion in the community.
- **Resource Allocation:** Resource allocation decisions, including budgeting and facilities management, prioritize investments that support the fulfillment of our school's mission and enhance the overall educational experience for students in accordance with Christian values.

Overall, our school's purpose serves as a measure that informs and shapes every aspect of daily operations, ensuring that we remain steadfast in our commitment to nurturing students' spiritual, academic, and personal growth in accordance with our Christian values.

9. Describe the process used to inform new employees about the school's purpose and the appropriate engagement employees are expected and encouraged to model.

Throughout the hiring, onboarding, and continuous training process, new employees are introduced to our school's purpose at various stages. Initially, during the interview process, which often involves school board members and our pastor alongside our administrators, applicants are informed about our school's purpose and evaluated based on how their credentials align with the overall mission. In the orientation stage, new staff receive the Employee Handbook, which prominently features our school's purpose. Additionally, our administrators reinforce this message through staff meetings and various written communications within our school.

Required Evidence

Required Evidence must be attached to the Self-Study Report and used to assign a rating and complete the written comments for each General Indicator of Success. Place an "X" in the box and attach the required documentation.

- Final School Action Plan from the previous accreditation (if applicable)
- Strategic Plan (if applicable and currently utilized by the school)
- Written purpose/philosophy/mission statement

Required Indicators of Success

Required indicators must be answered "YES" and supported by evidence and comments for the school to be accredited in good standing. Place an "X" in the box and identify supporting evidence and practices.

1:01* The school's written purpose embraces a Lutheran identity that is rooted in Holy Scripture and is committed to faith formation, academic excellence, and Christian service.

- YES
- NO

Identify and list supporting Evidence or Practices:

- **Incorporation of Scripture:** Bible studies, scripture readings, and devotional practices are regularly included within the curriculum and school activities.
- **Integration of Lutheran Teachings:** Explicit incorporation of Lutheran doctrines and teachings into our school's purpose, educational philosophy, and classroom instruction.
- **Faith Formation Programs:** Implementation of faith formation programs, such as confirmation classes or chapel services, to nurture students' spiritual growth and deepen their understanding of Lutheran beliefs.
- **Academic Standards:** Setting high academic standards while ensuring that educational content and teaching methods are consistent with Lutheran values and beliefs.
- **Service-Learning Initiatives:** Integration of service-learning projects and community service opportunities that reflect our school's commitment to Christian service and outreach.
- **Partnerships with Lutheran Schools:** Collaboration with other Lutheran schools to support and reinforce our school's Lutheran identity and mission.
- **Professional Development:** Offering professional development opportunities for faculty and staff focused on Lutheran theology, pedagogy, and incorporating faith into academic instruction.
- **Outreach Programs:** Organizing outreach programs that provide students with opportunities to apply their faith through service to others.
- **Parent and Community Engagement:** Encouraging parental involvement in our school community through activities such as parent-teacher conferences or volunteer opportunities that reinforce Lutheran values at home.
- **Distinctive Lutheran Traditions:** Observance of Lutheran traditions and practices, such as the celebration of Reformation Day and Lutheran liturgies in special church services.

Comments:

By aligning our school's written purpose with our Lutheran identity rooted in Holy Scripture, we affirm our dedication to fostering a community built on faith, excellence, and service. Embracing these core values ensures that every aspect of our educational mission reflects the teachings and principles of our faith. Through the integration of faith formation, academic excellence, and Christian service, we strive to empower students to grow spiritually, intellectually, and morally, preparing them to make meaningful contributions to both their local communities and the world at large.

1:02* School leadership and staff members understand and accept the purpose of the school.

YES

NO

Identify and list supporting Evidence or Practices:

- **Mission and Vision Statements:** Our school's purpose, mission, and vision statements are clearly articulated, prominently displayed, and regularly communicated to all staff members.
- **Professional Development:** Offering regular professional development sessions or workshops focused on our school's mission and values, ensuring that staff members have a comprehensive understanding of our school's purpose.
- **Orientation and Onboarding:** Discussions about our school's purpose are incorporated into the orientation and onboarding process for new staff members, providing them with the necessary context and understanding from the outset.
- **Regular Communication:** Open and transparent communication channels between school leadership and staff members, allowing for ongoing dialogue and clarification regarding our school's purpose and objectives.
- **Leadership Modeling:** Our school administrators exemplify our school's purpose through their actions, decisions, and interactions, serving as role models for staff members to emulate.
- **Staff Meetings:** Allocating time during staff meetings to discuss and reflect on our school's purpose, fostering a collective commitment and understanding among staff members.
- **Evaluation and Feedback:** Incorporating our school's purpose into performance evaluations and feedback mechanisms for staff members, reinforcing its importance and relevance to their roles and responsibilities.
- **Integration into Curriculum and Instruction:** Ensuring that our school's purpose is integrated into curriculum development, instructional practices, and classroom activities, providing opportunities for staff members to promote and reinforce it actively in their teaching.
- **Celebration of Successes:** Recognizing and celebrating achievements and milestones that align with our school's purpose reinforces its significance and motivates staff members to continue their dedication and commitment.
- **Community Engagement:** Encouraging staff members to actively participate in school-community events and initiatives that reflect our school's purpose, fostering a sense of ownership and investment in our mission and values.

Comments:

The acknowledgment and acceptance of our school's purpose by our leadership and staff members serve as foundational pillars for fostering a cohesive and effective educational environment. With a shared understanding of the school's purpose, leaders and staff can work together towards achieving our goals, ensuring alignment in decision-making and actions. This unity of purpose not only strengthens our school's identity but also inspires confidence and trust within the community. Through our dedication and commitment, we play a pivotal role in realizing the school's mission, ultimately enriching the educational experience for all students.

General Indicators of Success

General Indicators of Success help the school quantify its compliance with the Required Standards. The assignment of a rating for each General Indicator of Success is determined by the evidence and the practices that support the rating. Each general indicator is to be rated by the subcommittee using the criterion below with the corresponding point value. A written response is required for every indicator in the "Comments" section.

Highly Functional (4) — This is an area of outstanding strength of the school. It not only meets ALL the benchmarks related to the General Indicator of Success but is supported by extensive documentation and/or observable practices that exceed expectations related to the indicator. This indicator establishes practices for other Lutheran schools to consider. The Validation Team verifies that these practices and/or documentation exceed the Operational (3) level.

Operational (3) — This is the expected rating for a strong Lutheran school. ALL benchmarks must be met completely for this indicator to be considered Operational. The condition is supported with documentation and/or observable practices that support the rating.

Emerging (2) — Improvement is required in this area. If one or more benchmarks are not fully met, the rating must be Emerging. This indicator is recognized as important by the school but is inconsistently applied. Any benchmark not fully met must be addressed in the School Action Plan.

Not Evident (1) — There is observable conflict or deficiency with this indicator at the school. A majority of the expected benchmarks are not met or addressed with sufficient practice, evidence, or documentation. This rating may result in the assignment of Provisional Status. This must be addressed in the School Action Plan.

1:03: School leadership (administration and governing board) uses the mission statement as the foundation and reference for all planning.

Schools must demonstrate with documented evidence and practice that they comply with the following to function at the "operational" level. Place an "X" in the boxes below which currently apply to the school.

- The school's purpose was developed in accordance with governance policy.
- The school's purpose is engaged, aligned, and enacted with its vision, values, school goals, learner outcomes, and student activities.
- The school's mission statement supports and aligns with the congregational mission statement.

Place an "X" in the Rating Box that Reflects the Actual Condition of the School

Highly Functional (4) Operational (3) Emerging (2) Not Evident (1)

Identify and list supporting Evidence or Practices:

Our mission statement, developed in alignment with governance policy and the overarching mission of the Good Shepherd congregation, serves as a guiding beacon for decision-making and strategic initiatives. Through annual reviews by faculty and dedicated revisits by the board, our school ensures that our mission statement remains engaged, aligned, and enacted with its broader vision, values, goals, learner outcomes, and student activities. The seamless integration of the school's mission statement with the congregational mission statement underscores a unified commitment to spreading the gospel and nurturing families through the teachings of the word of God. This adherence to purpose not only strengthens the school's identity but also fosters a community deeply rooted in shared values, enriching the educational journey for all involved.

Comments:

N/A

1:04: School leadership (administration and board) regularly assembles school constituencies (including but not limited to faculty, staff, parents, students, and congregational stakeholders) to review, clarify, and renew the school’s stated purpose.

Schools must demonstrate with documented evidence and practice that they comply with the following to function at the “operational” level. Place an “X” in the boxes below which currently apply to the school.

- The school’s purpose is communicated effectively to staff, students, and stakeholders.
- The school regularly evaluates and reviews the alignment of purpose, vision, values, school goals, learner outcomes, and student activities.

Place an “X” in the Rating Box that Reflects the Actual Condition of the School

Highly Functional (4) **Operational (3)** **Emerging (2)** **Not Evident (1)**

Identify and list supporting Evidence or Practices:

- Our school hosts an open house meeting annually, which provides an opportunity for a comprehensive review and discussion of our school's purpose and strategies for fulfilling our mission.
- Our school's purpose and mission are prominently featured in all essential materials distributed to parents, faculty, and staff, including the Student/Parent Handbook, Employee Handbook, and school board agenda and minutes. Additionally, they are visibly displayed in every classroom, at our school entrance, and on our school website.
- Church members are regularly updated on our school's purpose and fulfillment during Voter's Assembly meetings, through the church newsletter, and in bulletins. Our school consistently showcases our commitment to its purpose through our presence on our website and social media platforms.

Comments:

N/A

1:05: The school’s purpose is displayed and reflected in school activities and in the teaching/learning environment in classrooms.

Schools must demonstrate with documented evidence and practice that they comply with the following to function at the “operational” level. Place an “X” in the boxes below which currently apply to the school.

- The school’s purpose is displayed in each classroom and in the hallways.
- The school’s purpose is readily seen on the school’s website.
- The school’s purpose is included in written communications distributed to families, such as the PTL handbook and promotional materials that are supplied to prospective families.
- School events, curriculum, and discipline are aligned with the school’s mission statement and purpose and promote a positive teaching/learning environment.

Place an “X” in the Rating Box that Reflects the Actual Condition of the School

Highly Functional (4) **Operational (3)** **Emerging (2)** **Not Evident (1)**

Identify and list supporting Evidence or Practices:

- As previously mentioned, our school's purpose is communicated through various written channels.
- Our school's purpose is disseminated during significant gatherings involving parents, teachers, church members, and community stakeholders throughout the school year, such as our Back-To-School Orientation, Pancake Breakfast, Christmas Program, Family Fun Night, and Spring Sing.
- Upon entering the building and within each classroom, visitors will encounter the prominently displayed school purpose.
- Throughout our school, students, parents, and visitors will encounter tangible manifestations of our school's Christ-centered purpose, evident in every activity due to the curriculum's focus on Christ. Weekly chapel services, daily prayers, pastoral involvement, and dedicated faculty and staff all underscore God's Love and Saving Grace.

Comments:

This section was included in our 2018 NLSA School Action Plan.

Concern: The mission statement and purpose should be consistent throughout the documents and clearly conveyed to the staff/students/families. Display the mission statement more prominently in all the classrooms.

Action Taken: We have placed our Mission Statement in prominent locations in the school, including the school classrooms.

1:06: New employees are informed about the school’s purpose and its appropriate engagement.

Schools must demonstrate with documented evidence and practice that they comply with the following to function at the “operational” level. Place an “X” in the boxes below which currently apply to the school.

- New employees are given an orientation packet and have an orientation meeting with the school administrator.
- New employees utilize mentors to assist them in learning about the school’s purpose and how to carry it out.
- The school’s purpose is outlined in the job description for each employee.

Place an “X” in the Rating Box that Reflects the Actual Condition of the School

- Highly Functional (4)** **Operational (3)** **Emerging (2)** **Not Evident (1)**

Identify and list supporting Evidence or Practices:

- The purpose is explicitly communicated during both the onboarding and orientation stages as new employees integrate into our school community.
- Newly recruited teachers are assigned mentor teachers for their inaugural year to ensure that our school's purpose and objectives are manifested in student interactions and instructional practices.
- The Employee Handbook contains our school's purpose.
- Our administrators observe new teachers to ensure that our school's purpose is evident in classroom practices.

Comments:

N/A

Summary and Response Actions

Summary and response actions related to the school's strengths and items needing improvement are to be provided. Subcommittees carry on the primary work of evaluating the school's compliance with the assigned Standard through a thoughtful and purposeful evaluation of each of the General Indicators of Success. Based on any general indicator ratings of "1" or "2", the school must develop specific plans to improve. Plans must include specific targeted completion dates and assignments. At the discretion of the school, actions may be developed for indicators that have been rated as "3".

A. Are the Required Indicators of Success met?

YES

NO

B. Based on evidence, what are the strengths of the school related to Standard 1?

At Good Shepherd Lutheran School, our purpose-driven ministry is apparent in the daily interactions among students, parents, and teachers. Our congregation's support sustains it, as does our pastor's active spiritual guidance and Christ-centered curriculum.

C. Based on the evidence, what are the challenges of the school related to Standard 1? All areas identified as "emerging" [2] or "not evident" [1] must be addressed in the School Action Plan.

N/A

D. What is the school's average rating for all General Indicators of Success for Standard 1, rounded to the nearest tenth?

STANDARD	RATING
1:03	3
1:04	3
1:05	3
1:06	3
Total:	12
Average: (Total ÷ 4)	3.0