

STANDARD 2: RELATIONSHIPS

The school demonstrates its purpose through relationships.

Note: Standard 2 is divided into three categories: school and congregation, school and community, and school climate. Introductory comments and necessary responses are required for each of the three sections. Standard 2A, School, and Congregation, does not apply when a Lutheran school is operating outside of a highly developed relationship with a single congregation or group of congregations.

STANDARD 2A: SCHOOL AND CONGREGATION

Overview

The Lutheran school has a special relationship with its operating congregation. To fulfill its purpose as a Lutheran school, the school concerns itself with the ministry of the whole church and seeks opportunities to enhance relationships with the local congregation(s), its district, and the national church body.

Potential Evidence

Potential evidentiary documents provide support as the subcommittee determines the rating for each General Indicator of Success. The list 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.

- School and church calendars
- Church and school websites
- Church bulletins and newsletters
- Minutes from congregational meetings emphasizing the church-school relationship
- List of educators' participation in the activities of the sponsoring congregation(s)
- Summary of students' church attendance statistics
- Summary of climate survey results
- Faculty handbook describing the church-school relationship
- Written school evangelism plan or written document outlining practices of sharing the Gospel in the school and community
- Attendance at District conferences and events

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.

- School choirs sing at worship services
- Student involvement in activities of the sponsoring congregation(s)
- Pastoral involvement
- Pastor relates well, offering services to school families who do not belong to the sponsoring congregation(s)
- Teachers regularly worship and actively participate in activities of the sponsoring congregation
- Teachers participate in school-required conferences and events
- Teachers participate in district-sponsored conferences and events.
- CMIFs (Commissioned Minister Information Forms) are completed and regularly updated by commissioned teachers.
- Required reporting materials are submitted to district and national bodies on time and are completed with quality.

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. Describe the relationship between the school and its congregation.

Our school and congregation share a deeply intertwined relationship characterized by mutual support and collaboration. Church members play an active role in advancing the school's mission through various means, including financial contributions via donations and fundraising activities. Additionally, they contribute their time and expertise by serving on the school board and assisting in classrooms as volunteers, tutors, and aides.

The Voter's Assembly, representing the congregation, extends substantial financial support by covering building maintenance expenses and managing the school building's debt service. Additionally, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) generously supplies school materials at the beginning of each academic year.

Communication between our school and congregation is robust, ensuring that the latter remains well-informed about the school's mission and activities. Updates are regularly shared during Voter's Assembly meetings, through church bulletins, newsletters, and across digital platforms like social media and the school website.

Both students and parents are encouraged to actively participate in church events, particularly Sunday worship services featuring the children's choir. Similarly, church members show strong attendance at school functions such as Christmas and graduation programs, weekly chapel services, and special events like our annual Golf Benefit, Thanksgiving luncheon, and Veteran's Day program.

Collaboration between the church and school extends to joint events like the Fall Festival, Spring Family Fun Night, and facility maintenance workdays, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

Additionally, in 2022, a dedicated member of the church took the lead in forming the "40th Anniversary Celebration" Committee for the school. This initiative not only provided a significant outreach platform but also fostered engagement among present school families, alumni, and their extended networks across the country. The decision to commemorate 40 years holds profound symbolism drawn from numerous references in the Bible to the number 40. Notably, figures like Moses, Elijah, and Jesus observed a 40-day fast in the desert, the Israelites wandered for 40 years in the desert, and there's the story of God flooding the land for 40 days and nights. The celebration was a huge success, attended by about 200 people.

Finally, each year, the school organizes a Golf Benefit to raise funds for various projects. Numerous members of our congregation contribute their efforts to planning, coordination, setup, catering, and tournament activities. Additionally, our church community extends financial support to the event through a variety of sponsorships.

2. Describe how the pastor from the sponsoring congregation is involved at the school.

Pastor Simpson, an avid supporter of our school ministry, plays an active role in our school community. Regularly engaged, he leads weekly chapel services every Wednesday and participates in various special school events throughout the academic year. Furthermore, Pastor Simpson attends all school board meetings and makes weekly visits to our classes, fostering direct connections with students.

In addition to his administrative and pastoral duties, Pastor Simpson dedicates Monday mornings to teaching seventh and eighth graders on a range of religious topics. His consistent presence and involvement have cultivated strong relationships with our students, who hold him in high esteem. This rapport facilitates meaningful interactions and allows him to minister effectively to both students and their families.

Beyond his interactive roles, Pastor Simpson provides spiritual guidance to ensure our school's mission and practices align with the tenets of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He also offers recommendations on curriculum that further enrich the spiritual growth of our school community.

Pastor Simpson's commitment and dedication exemplify his invaluable contribution to our students' spiritual and educational journeys, making him an integral part of our school's fabric.

3. In what ways are students involved in the life of the sponsoring congregation?

Students actively participate in the life of our congregation through various avenues. Quarterly, special 10:30 worship services are arranged, offering opportunities for church members and parents to engage with our school students as they perform. These events, coordinated by our school administration, teachers, and pastor, provide meaningful moments for families to worship and attend Sunday school together.

In 2019, our Church's Evangelism Committee initiated a youth and young adult program called "The Way" to reach out to our school community. This program aimed to engage students in church activities by offering physical activities like pickup basketball games, followed by a hot dinner and bible study. The response from students was positive, with many participating regularly. However, due to the pandemic, the program had to be paused. Nevertheless, our Evangelism Committee is committed to relaunching the program in the near future.

Additionally, families are consistently encouraged to integrate into the Good Shepherd church community, with specific invitations extended during key events throughout the year. These include Lenten and Advent services, Vacation Bible School, church meals, Easter activities, and various other gatherings. Such initiatives foster a sense of belonging and active involvement for students and their families within the congregation.

4. What are the ways the school connects families to association churches and their ministries?

The school facilitates connections between families and our church and its ministries through various means. Upon enrollment, new students and their families receive informative material about the church, emphasizing their welcome to participate in church activities. Both the church and the school actively promote this integration, consistently referring to "Church *and* School" in signage and seamlessly integrating our websites and social media platforms. While maintaining separate websites, we are interconnected with links to ensure easy access to all aspects of the combined mission, including doctrinal beliefs and practices at Good Shepherd.

Additionally, the presence of our pastor at our school enhances personal connections with students and their families. Parents and students are encouraged to engage in worship services, especially when students participate by singing for the congregation. Furthermore, regular chapel services on Wednesdays provide another opportunity for families to worship together and strengthen their ties to the church community.

5. Describe the relationship of the school with its LCMS district and national offices.

The school maintains a great relationship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS) district and national offices, reflecting a commitment to shared values and collaborative engagement. Both the church and school are active members of the Oklahoma District and the national Synod, upholding NLSA accreditation standards. Our administrators regularly attend District Administrators' Meetings, fostering ongoing dialogue and collaboration within the district. Additionally, the teaching staff actively participates in the Oklahoma District's Lutheran Teachers' Conferences, enriching professional development and alignment with Synod standards. Students from our school enthusiastically engage in the District-wide annual intermural track and academic meet in Ponca City, further strengthening ties with the broader LCMS community. Furthermore, our school maintains close communication with the LCMS national offices through the submission of annual reports, ensuring transparency and accountability. Finally, in May 2024, our student choir will proudly represent our school at the momentous 100th LCMS Anniversary celebration in Oklahoma, symbolizing our enduring connection and commitment to the District's mission and legacy.

6. Describe how all teachers are engaged in in-service, workshops, and volunteer efforts.

- **In-Service Training:** Regular in-service training sessions are conducted to provide teachers with opportunities to refine their teaching skills, learn about new educational methodologies, and stay updated on curriculum standards and school policies. These sessions cover topics such as classroom management techniques, differentiated instruction, assessment strategies, and technology integration.
- **Workshops and Professional Development:** Teachers participate in workshops and professional development opportunities both within and outside our school community. These workshops may be led by educational experts, guest speakers, or fellow educators and cover a wide range of subjects relevant to teaching and learning. Topics may include literacy instruction, STEM education, cultural competency, particular education strategies, and more.
- **Volunteer Efforts:** Teachers actively engage in volunteer efforts within our school and local community. This may involve participating in extracurricular activities, serving as club advisors, organizing community service projects, or volunteering at school events such as fundraisers, open houses, and parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, teachers may volunteer their time to support charitable organizations, participate in service-learning initiatives, or mentor students outside of regular school hours.

7. Describe the involvement of called workers in required district conferences, workshops, and volunteer efforts.

Mrs. Lynn Cunningham, our sole commissioned teacher, has devoted an impressive 37 years of service to our school community. Beyond her exceptional dedication within the classroom, Mrs. Cunningham actively contributes to our church's initiatives, serving on multiple committees and actively participating in events such as Vacation Bible School and LWML activities. Furthermore, she consistently enhances her professional expertise by diligently attending conferences and workshops. These sessions focus on critical areas such as curriculum development, instructional strategies, classroom management, and the seamless integration of Lutheran doctrine into our curriculum. Mrs. Cunningham's unwavering commitment and continuous pursuit of excellence exemplify her invaluable contributions to our school's mission and educational standards.

8. How does the school support the work of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod?

- **Adherence to Lutheran Doctrine:** Our school upholds and teaches Lutheran doctrine in alignment with the beliefs and teachings of the LCMS. This ensures that students receive a comprehensive education rooted in the Lutheran faith.
- **Participation in District and National Initiatives:** Our school actively participates in district and national initiatives organized by the LCMS. This includes attending district conferences, workshops, and events aimed at promoting Lutheran education and supporting the mission of the church.
- **Collaboration with Local Congregation:** Our school maintains close ties with LCMS congregations, collaborating on various initiatives such as joint worship services, outreach programs, and community service projects. This partnership strengthens the bond between our school and the broader Lutheran community.
- **Integration of Faith and Learning:** Our school integrates Lutheran faith into all aspects of our educational program, ensuring that students develop a deep understanding of Christian values and principles. This commitment to faith-based education contributes to the LCMS's overall mission to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples of all nations.

Required Indicator 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.

2A:01* The school is operated by one or more of the congregations of The Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod (LCMS) or maintains an active Recognized Service Organization (RSO) status with the Synod (if an RSO, provide the latest RSO renewal).

YES

NO

Identify and list supporting Evidence or Practices:

The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Midwest City, Oklahoma, oversees our school, which shares a campus with our church. Our school comprises two distinct permanent structures: the Family Life Center and the Brick Annex. These buildings are situated separately from the Sanctuary building and provide the physical infrastructure for our educational activities.

Comments:

N/A

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.

2A:02: The school is an extension of the ministry of its sponsoring congregation. Church and school work together effectively to accomplish goals related to a well-defined 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 pastor is acknowledged as the spiritual leader of the whole congregation, including the school.
- The pastor demonstrates that he is the spiritual leader of the school and congregation.
- The congregation provides spiritual support for the school and its students.
- Pastor and school staff regularly demonstrate support for each other's ministry.

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:

To ensure alignment with the beliefs and teachings of the LCMS church, significant decisions affecting both our school and our congregation are consulted with our pastor. Regular meetings occur between our lead administrator and pastor, who convene weekly to discuss joint church and school activities. Our pastor actively engages in worship services involving students and parents, including chapel sessions, fostering spiritual connectivity within our community. Daily staff devotions, led by our pastor, serve as a cornerstone for nurturing spiritual growth among our staff members. The Ministry of Parochial Education Chairperson, elected by the congregation's voting members, appoints additional board members and is accountable to the Voter's Assembly with a commitment to upholding LCMS teachings. Annually, our pastor conducts installations for all teachers, administrative staff, and school personnel during a congregational worship service, underscoring the school's essential role in fulfilling the church's mission. Additionally, our pastor provides counseling and spiritual guidance and performs baptisms as needed, embodying pastoral care within our community. The church prayer list extends to accommodate prayer requests from students, their families, and school personnel, reflecting our collective commitment to support and uplift one another in faith.

Comments:

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

Concern: All significant school decisions are made by the administrator and/or school board and reported to the pastor as needed. The new school administrator will now oversee all educational management that Pastor previously handled.

Action Taken: Pastor Simpson has readjusted his role with our school and currently interacts with it on a regular basis, notifying our administrator when he does so.

2A:03: The school concerns itself with the ministry of the whole church and seeks opportunities to support and enhance relationships with its congregation, its district, and the national church body.

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.

- Students regularly participate in congregational life through planned activities available and coordinated with the congregation.
- School staff members are actively involved in worship and congregational life in their parish.
- The school and congregation plan and work together on behalf of families who do not have an identified church home or who do not attend church regularly.
- The school supports LCMS missions.
- Called teachers participate in required district conferences and events.

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 school prioritizes its role in supporting the broader ministry of our church and actively seeks opportunities to strengthen relationships with its congregation, district, and the LCMS. Student involvement in congregational activities is a regular occurrence, with careful planning and coordination to ensure meaningful engagement. Our Called teacher plays an integral role in congregational life, actively participating in worship services and various parish activities while also attending district conferences and events to enhance professional development. Close collaboration between the school and congregation extends to supporting families without a designated church home or those who may not attend regularly. Additionally, our school consistently contributes to the missions of the Synod and actively participates in LCMS community efforts whenever possible, demonstrating a commitment to serving beyond the school's immediate community.

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".

1. Are the Required Indicators of Success met for Standard 2A?

YES

NO

2. Based on evidence, what are the strengths of the school related to Standard 2A?

The purpose-driven ministry of our school is visible in the daily interactions among students, parents, and teachers. This is sustained by the unwavering support of our congregation, the active spiritual guidance provided by our pastor, and our Christ-centered curriculum.

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

N/A

4. What is the school's average rating for all General Indicators of Success for Standard 2A, rounded to the nearest tenth?

STANDARD	RATING
2A:02	3
2A:03	3
Total:	6
Average: (Total ÷ 2)	3.0