

**National Lutheran School Accreditation**  
**Evidence-Based Accreditation**  
**Glossary of Terms**

*Revised September 2020*

*The glossary is designed to assist schools with the terminology associated with the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) Evidence Based Accreditation (EBA) process.*

**Accommodation:** An alteration of the environment, curriculum format or equipment allowing an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks.

**Accreditation in Good Standing:** Accreditation award without condition.

**Accreditation with Provision:** Accreditation award with condition. This level of accreditation is awarded as a result of the school's failure to comply with any single Required Indicator of Success, failure to provide any single piece of Required Evidence, a General Indicator rating of "1" by the team or any Major Deficiency identified by the team, and where a school demonstrates a commitment to continuing school improvement.

**Accredited School:** A school that has been granted accreditation by NLSA.

**Administrator:** An individual charged with the responsibility of carrying out the day-to-day operations of the school as directed by the policies developed by the board or governing authority. Administrators include directors, principals, superintendents, lead teachers, etc.

**Applied Learning:** The emphasis of the relevance of what is taught in the classroom to the "real world."

**Authentic Assessment:** The measurement of intellectual achievement that is worthwhile, significant and meaningful.

**Authorized Personnel:** Individuals who are permitted access to student files, including principals, teachers, nurses, pastors, administrative assistants and teaching support staff.

**Candidate Status:** The status of a school that has submitted its application to the NLSA office and a Validation Team has been appointed.

**Child Care:** Any program that provides care and supervision for children whose working parent (or parents/guardians) needs full or part-time care. Child care programs include before-school care, drop-in programs, extended-school care and full-time care for children ages 6 weeks to 13 years of age.

**Civic Literacy:** The effective participation in civic life for the benefit of staying informed and understanding governmental processes. The exercising of the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national and global levels to understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.

**Consultant:** An individual appointed by NLSA to assist the school through the Self-Study process, including the preparation of the Self-Study Report.

**Critical Thinking:** A method of evaluating an issue through objective analysis to form a judgment.

**Curriculum:** A written document identifying the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, learning standards or objectives, content, resources and materials, and the assessment methods to evaluate student learning.

**Developmentally Appropriate/Age Appropriate:** Activities, goals or objectives included in the educational process which are designed to meet the needs and abilities of children of a specific age or developmental level.

**Differentiation:** Allows students to learn at the depth, complexity, and pace that are beneficial to him/her. Used to provide a rich and effective approach to meet the needs of children.

**District Accreditation Commission (DAC):** An oversight group of any number appointed by the District Education Executive. The Commission will be primarily comprised of Lutheran educators who are familiar with NLSA and is usually chaired by the NLSA District Commissioner. The DAC oversees the NLSA process in the district and carries out the duties outlined in the NLSA Policy Manual. The terms of the members is determined by the District Education Executive.

**Documentation:** Evidence (policy, written documents, etc.) and practice (observable procedures, actions, etc.) that support compliance with Required Indicators of Success and ratings of General Indicators of Success.

**Dual Accreditation:** Accreditation received jointly with NLSA and another agency with which NLSA is in partnership or with which there are reciprocal agreements

**Early Childhood and School Statistics Report Form:** An annual form administered by the LCMS Office of Rosters and Statistics that is intended to provide pertinent statistical information related to Lutheran schools.

**Early Childhood Center:** A school which includes child care and/or educational programs for children aged 3 and 4. May include kindergarten, infant, and/or toddler programs and also may be part of an elementary school.

**Elementary School:** A school which includes one or more of grades 1-4. Nearly always includes other grades and serves other ages. Most often includes preschool through grade six.

**Environmental Literacy:** a) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the environment and the circumstances and conditions affecting it, particularly as it relates to air, climate, land, food, energy, water, and ecosystems. b) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of society's impact on the natural world (e.g., population growth and development, resource consumption rate, etc.) c) Investigate and analyze environmental issues and make accurate conclusions about effective solutions. d) Take individual and collective action towards addressing environmental challenges (e.g., participating in global actions designing solutions that inspire action on environmental issues.)

**Evidence-Based Accreditation (EBA):** Recognition by NLSA of a school's quality Lutheran education program involving extensive self-study that provides thorough documentation of compliance with NLSA standards and the production of a School Action Plan for improvement.

**Extended School Care:** Caring for children who attend school before and/or after regular school hours.

**Financial and Entrepreneurial Literacy:** Knowing how to make appropriate economic choices. Understanding the role of the economy in society. Using entrepreneurial skills to enhance the workplace productivity and career choices.

**Freestanding Early Childhood Program:** An early childhood center or preschool, sponsored by a congregation, that operates a program serving any combination of children from six weeks to six years old and is not a part of an elementary school.

**General Indicator of Success:** A measure for a Standard which is rated at a level of compliance by the school and the visiting team.

**Global Awareness:** Involves recognition and appreciation of the size, complexity, and diversity of the earth conceived as a single entity.

**Governing Authority:** The policy-making individual, board, assembly, or agency for the school that empowers school administration to maintain day-to-day autonomy and provide for a high-quality, Christ-centered education for students.

**Grade:** A level of schooling. In elementary school it is a number (1 – 8). Grades in high school (9 – 12) are referred to as freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years. Grades for very young children are infants, toddlers, age 3 and 4 (preschool), and kindergarten.

**Health Literacy:** The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

**High School:** A school which includes one or more of grades 10 – 12. Typically includes grade nine and often includes middle school (grades 6 – 8).

**Home School:** Education provided by parents for their children at home. Some learning occurs in other locations but children usually do not attend another school while being "home schooled".

**"In Process":** The status of a school which has made application for NLSA accreditation and is in the process of completing the self-study.

**Indicator of Success:** Another word for "benchmark". A criterion for helping to establish whether or not a standard has been met.

**LCMS Roster:** Individuals who have been certified by The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod as a Minister of Religion Commissioned or a Minister of Religion Ordained (Called teachers or pastors).

**Learner Outcomes:** The objective of a school is to help students to learn. Learner outcomes, similar to objectives, specify what students are expected to know or be able to do as a result of the education process.

**Learning Styles:** An individual's natural or habitual pattern of acquiring and processing information in learning situations. Core concept is that individuals differ in how they learn.

**Life Skills:** Behaviors used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs. A set of human skills acquired via teaching or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily life.

**Long Range Goals:** Long range goals are accomplished in three or more years.

**Lutheran School:** Any school operated by one or more congregations more than three hours per week. Preferred over "day school" or "Christian day school". May include child care, infant and toddler programs, early childhood developmental centers, and kindergartens, as well as elementary, middle and secondary schools.

**Major Deficiency:** Any condition that is based on an NLSA standard which has a severe negative effect on the quality of education, the ministry of the school, and/or endangers the health and safety of the school population. The deficiency must be remedied by the school within the time parameters (no longer than 2 years) prescribed by the Validation Team.

**Management Procedures:** The operational actions and decisions made by the administrator or staff on a day-to-day basis within the constraints of any existing policies.

**Membership Committee:** A committee of the National Accreditation Commission (NAC) that is charged with reviewing applications for accreditation and reaccreditation and making recommendations to the National Commission about the accreditation status for candidate schools.

**National Accreditation Commission (NAC):** Membership of this commission is comprised of one voting Commissioner from each participating LCMS district and the NLSA Director. The Commission's primary responsibilities include granting approval or revocation of accreditation, considering and adopting revisions to the NLSA process, standards, and materials, and determining operating procedures for NLSA.

**Needs Assessment:** A process using objective and subjective means to identify needs which, when filled, will benefit children at school. A needs assessment answers the question, "What needs improvement at school for students?"

**Operating Congregation:** Refers to whatever entity functions as the supporting parish of a school, whether it be one or more parishes or an association of parishes.

**Ongoing:** Continuing without conclusion or interruption.

**Permanent Cumulative Records:** Most schools maintain records of students throughout their attendance or enrollment at the school. These are kept for the duration of the child's enrollment and usually for several years afterwards. They typically are kept in a file in the school office and provide a permanent record of grades, health, growth, behavior, and so forth.

**Policy:** A board decision which directs the future actions of the administrator and other school staff.

**Potential Evidence:** Sample evidentiary documentation that may support ratings of General or Required Indicators of Success.

**Potential Practice:** Sample observable procedures and actions that may support ratings of General or Required Indicators of Success.

**Powerful Practice:** A pattern of action that exceeds standard compliance. It is innovative and exceeds accreditation expectations. It is an uncommon, calculated risk that results in significant rewards for students.

**Professional Learning Communities:** An extended learning opportunity to foster collaborative learning among colleagues within a particular work environment or field.

**Professional Staff:** Paid employees of a school (congregation) who have responsibilities for education.

**Rating:** A value (Highly Functional, Operational, Emerging, Not Evident) placed for each General Indicator of Success which is used to evaluate the current standing of the school to help the school to constantly improve and help formulate the School Action Plan.

**Required Evidence:** Documentation that must be attached to the Self-Study document in order to be awarded Accreditation in Good Standing.

**Required Indicator of Success:** A condition that must be met in order to be granted Accreditation in Good Standing.

**Requirement:** A condition of success which must be met before a school can be awarded Accreditation in Good Standing.

**School:** A planned program for helping children learn. Includes preschool, kindergarten, child care, elementary school, middle school, home school, and secondary (senior high or junior high) school.

**School Action Plan:** A blueprint for ongoing school improvement drawn from the school's self-study and the Validation Team Report. Each General Indicator of Success the school or team has rated as "Emerging" (2) or "Not Evident" (1) must be addressed in the School Action Plan by devising strategies for remediation. Additionally, each concern and recommendation proposed by the Validation Team must be likewise addressed. The plan must include the Standard and General Indicator number, the concern and related strategies for remediation, the target school year for addressing the concern, a responsible party, and the school year completed.

**School Community:** Includes any individual or group participating with and interested in the school, such as teachers, support staff, administrators, students, parents, pastor(s), and pastoral support staff, board of education, supporting congregations, and association members. May refer to the geographical location in which a school is located.

**School Shepherd Award:** An award established by NLSA to honor a faithful pastor who has provided outstanding encouragement, support, and service to his school, and to identify the tangible means of support that have positively impacted the school he serves.

**Self-Study:** The extensive process of school evaluation that identifies school strengths and areas of concerns and develops plans to address areas needing improvement.

**Service Learning:** A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Students solve real-life problems, becoming contributing citizens through the service they perform.

**Short Range Goals:** Short range goals are accomplished in two years or less.

**Standard:** A degree of excellence required for accreditation.

**State Certification:** Every state certifies professional educators (primarily teachers and administrators) for specific responsibilities at the school. Educators are required to hold certification that is specific to the ministry areas they serve (administrators should receive administrator certificates, early childhood educators should receive certificates that are appropriate for early childhood education, elementary teachers should receive elementary certificates, etc.).

**State Mandated Programs:** In some states specific programs (e.g., driver education, physical education, sex education) may be required for all schools including private schools.

**Statement of Philosophy:** A brief statement of belief that is rooted in Holy Scriptures and is in agreement with the Lutheran Confessions. It states what Lutheran school leaders believe about the role of that school as it serves children, families, and the operating congregations.

**Steering Committee:** A committee of five to eight people representing various members of the school community (parents, teachers, administrator, pastor, other church staff members, board of education members) whose primary task is to plan, guide, and coordinate all things related to the self-study process, including appointing necessary subcommittees, preparing the Self-Study Report, reviewing the Validation Team Report, and making final recommendations for continued improvement.

**Student Growth:** Positive change as defined by the school in spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

**Subject:** A field of learning. Elementary school subjects include but are not limited to: art, music, religion, physical education, arithmetic, language arts (English, reading, writing, spelling, composition, speaking, and listening), social studies and science. Subjects for young children sometimes are reworded ("Jesus time" instead of religion, "reading readiness" instead of language arts) but usually are broader (units of study which include aspects of several elementary subjects) and describe the type of activity (science center, listening lab, house-keeping area, computer, sand table, sorting center). Subjects in high school are usually

narrower than elementary subjects (biology, physics, algebra, American history, composition, photography) or given more sophisticated titles (theology).

**Synodical Handbook:** This publication by The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod includes the constitution and bylaws which synodical members have agreed to follow.

**Team Captain:** Validation team captains are requested by the school, recommended by the district and appointed by the NLSA Director. Captains receive required training that has been endorsed and approved by the NLSA Director.

**Validation Team:** A team of educators that visits the school upon completion of the self-study process for the purpose of validating the schools Self-Study Report and making recommendations for the improvement of the school.