

NLSA EVIDENCE-BASED ACCREDITATION



National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) has been accrediting schools of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod since 1978. Accreditation decisions are based on a school’s compliance with national standards for Lutheran schools.

Accreditation involves a school in a rigorous self-study process in seven distinct areas that are related to school quality:

- › Purpose
- › Relationships
- › Governance
- › Professional personnel
- › Teaching and learning
- › Student services
- › Facilities

The purpose of an NLSA self-study is to evaluate the actual conditions in place that are related to essential indicators of school quality. These are evaluated and measured in a yearlong self-study process that carefully examines conditions related to the seven standard areas listed above. In order to become accredited in good standing with NLSA, a school must comply fully with 30 required indicators of success.

Additionally, the school must evaluate itself on a scale of 1-4 (with “4” being the highest rating) using a variety of general indicators that quantify how well it complies with standards in each accreditation area. Ratings are established by the school based on evidence and practices that are in place at the time of the self-study. (This is where the name “evidence-based accreditation” comes from.) Ratings allow a school to identify and celebrate unique strengths and address concerns that need corrective actions.

As part of the process, each school is responsible for constructing a school action plan based on concerns identified in its self-study. Actions are required for all conditions that have received a “1” or “2” rating. The



actions that are planned by the school ensure continuous and ongoing improvement. Schools are accountable to their district accreditation commission for annual progress.

Evidence-based accreditation is objective rather than subjective in nature. It requires that schools identify evidence and practices in place at the school that pertain to each indicator. The significance of the evidence and its impact results in a high indicator rating by the school. This removes the subjective nature of what leaders hope to become in the future and requires realistic objective evaluation of where they are and what they are accomplishing today.

Upon conclusion of the self-study, an NLSA visiting team validates that the information prepared by the school accurately reflects the actual conditions that are present at the school. In a formal, two-day visit, the team examines evidence, interviews school stakeholders, visits classrooms and observes practices. If the evidence presented does not sufficiently support a school rating, the visiting team has the authority to change the school’s rating in its report.

National Lutheran School Accreditation encourages, assists and recognizes schools that provide quality Christian education and engage in continuous improvement. Evidence-based accreditation allows NLSA to fulfill this mission effectively, thereby providing a valuable service to Lutheran schools.