

## How Do We Start?

To be eligible for accreditation, your school must:

- Be a current member of ELEA throughout the term of accreditation;
- Have been in existence for three years;
- Have completed the ELCA's "Ministry of the Congregation" Recognition Program - a free self study available as a download at <http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Education/Pre-12/Resources/Administrators/Ministry-Congregation.aspx> or call the ELCA at 800-638-3522, ext. 2857;
- Have policies in place requiring such things as:
  - √ portfolio-based evaluations for faculty and administration'
  - √ training in child abuse reporting;
  - √ criminal background checks as a condition of employment;
  - √ a crisis management plan;
  - √ First Aid, CPR & Bloodborne Pathogen training for staff;
  - √ a non-discrimination policy.

The processing can be initiated by ordering Accreditation materials, which include a Preparation Guide, the Self Study instrument itself, and Support Materials and Samples. Order forms are available at our website - [www.eleanational.org](http://www.eleanational.org) or by calling 800-500-7644.

A chairperson for your evaluation visitation team will be assigned by the ELEA Office early in the process. This chairperson will then work with you as you go through the process and identify people to be on your evaluation team.

In addition to materials, the ELEA Office will arrange a workshop - either in a group if there are others in your area working on the process, or individually from your chairperson, to help you prepare.



*Children are our most valuable assets—quality education counts*



### **Evangelical Lutheran Education Association**

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### **ELEA Elementary School Accreditation**

*NEW!*

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## What is School Accreditation?

School accreditation is a process of evaluation which begins with a self-study, followed by a visit of objective observers to help Lutheran schools improve the quality of their programs. It is a completely voluntary process which is available to ELCA schools who are members of ELEA. This accreditation is a national, rigorous process designed to evaluate schools on the basis of their unique purposes as Lutheran schools. It helps schools evaluate not only their academic quality, but also the spiritual dimension of the school.

The purposes of accreditation are:

- To help Lutheran schools improve instruction and services;
- To help them evaluate themselves based on their unique purposes and on national standards;
- To help them develop a sharpened focus on their school's ministry;
- To create increased accountability to community, constituents, and congregation;
- To give appropriate recognition to those schools which complete the process successfully.

Most accrediting programs are secular in nature, sponsored by the state of a regional accrediting agency. These agencies do not concern themselves with the spiritual dimension of schools. The main purpose of Lutheran schools is to proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior. This is done through worship, religion classes, and the permeation of faith throughout the day. This instrument, though voluntary, is an evaluation of both the academic program and the spiritual life of the school.

## Can Our School Be Dually Accredited With Other Agencies?

ELEA has been working with a number of major accrediting bodies, such as WASC, SACS, MSACS, NCACASI, and various individual State accrediting organizations, to develop dual accreditation policies. Most accrediting bodies are quite willing to work with ELEA on a case-by-case basis so that a school can do one accreditation with site visit team members from both organizations and achieve dual accreditation without having to do two separate processes. Contact Gayle Denny, ELEA Executive Director, at 800-500-7644 to discuss your particular request.

## How Long Is Our Accreditation Valid?

The site visitation team will prepare a detailed report, indicating whether or not standards were met, met with weakness, or not met. This report is given to the school, along with the Elementary Committee of the ELEA National Board. They will also notify the school and the Committee of the Board of their recommendation for:

- Full seven year accreditation;
- Conditional accreditation for a period not to exceed two years with an additional focused site visit to observe correction plans for standards which were not met, at which time full accreditation may be extended for the remainder of the seven year term;
- No accreditation granted at that time.

The Elementary Committee of the ELEA National Board will then review the documentation and grant or deny accreditation.

The school will develop a School Improvement Plan addressing areas of weakness to be used as their guide for the coming years until re-accreditation takes place.

## What Standards Will Be Used?

Standards used in ELEA Accreditation are based primarily on national administrator, teacher and curriculum standards used by schools, both public and private, across the country. Faith formation is threaded throughout those secular standards, and additional standards have been developed for Religion Curriculum and areas concerning school Governance and Structure. Administrator and staff will develop professional portfolios addressing national standards as part of the accreditation process. These portfolios also become an important assessment tool, guiding growth and improvement.



## What Will Accreditation Cost?

Costs are broken into three categories:

1. A \$250.00 application fee paid to ELEA valid for a maximum of two years;
2. Visitation team costs including a \$200 per day honorarium for chairperson and \$100 per day honorarium for other team members; transportation; meals and housing for the team; expenses related to the pre-site visit mentoring from the chairperson; and other incidentals;
3. Ongoing costs of \$100.00 per year with submission of your school's annual report sent to ELEA by June 15 of each year of accreditation.