

Commission on Lutheran Schools

Our Calling

God's command to us as Christians is clear: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Luke 18:16). The mission statement of the Commission on Lutheran Schools (CLS) is also clear: "to guide and assist congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening Lutheran schools." It is with these two statements in mind that the CLS works to assist our synod's early childhood ministries (384), Lutheran elementary schools (298), area Lutheran high schools (27), and preparatory schools (2). The CLS assists our congregations and schools who daily share the precious gospel message with nearly 42,000 children in 33 states and 3 Caribbean island nations.

Our Current Situation

The CLS provides resources, training, and personal assistance in a wide variety of ways:

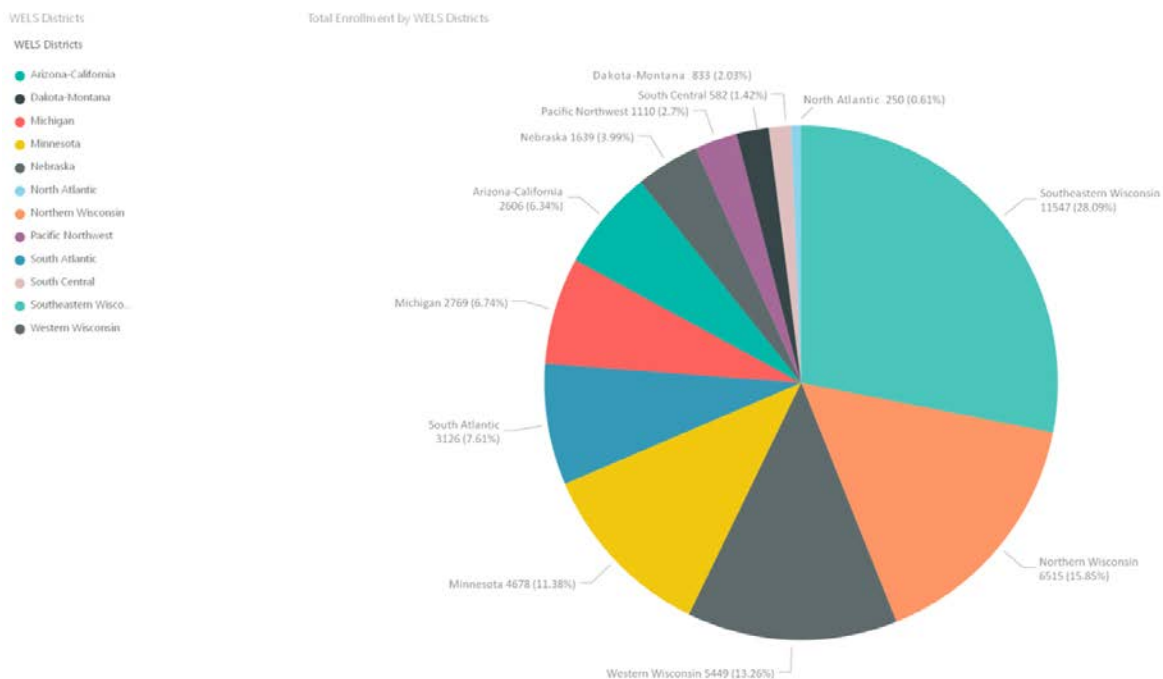
- Supporting the 12 district presidents in providing over 600 teacher call lists per year and assisting them in addressing school-related blessings, challenges, and opportunities
- Maintaining teacher and school statistical data
- Consulting with pastors, principals, directors, teachers, and school and congregational leaders
- Attending teachers' conferences and conducting school visits throughout the synod
- Publishing a weekly Early Childhood Ministries devotion, a weekly electronic news bulletin – the CLS e-News, and The Lutheran School Leader six times yearly for principals and early childhood directors
- Providing support and mentoring programs for newly assigned and aspiring principals and early childhood directors.
- Training consultants to support congregations with or considering children's ministries
- Coordinating cost effective options for formative and summative testing products to assess our students' progress and provide tools for modifying instruction to improve learning
- Representing WELS schools to the public through interaction with the National Council on Private School Accreditation, the Council for American Private Education, the United States Department of Non-Public Education, and various other state and national education agencies and organizations
- Developing and maintaining partnerships with the District Schools Coordinators, Early Childhood District Coordinators, Northwestern Publishing House, Martin Luther College, and many others to provide resources to strengthen the instruction, materials, and curriculum within our schools (a list of resource partners is on the CLS website)

Lutheran School Enrollment Trends

Enrollment Growth/Decline 5 years

	2013 2014	2014 2015	2015 2016	2016 2017	2017 2018
ECM	10,694	10,595	10,911	10,754	11,126
LES	24,425	24,453	24,410	24,335	24,485
LHS	5,141	5,093	5,174	5,320	5,493
Prep Schools	682	675	643	645	616

The past five years have continued to see enrollment growth in early childhood ministries and Lutheran high schools. Lutheran elementary school enrollment has been steady over the five-year period, and our prep school enrollment has decreased. The following chart provides a breakdown of total preschool through high school enrollment by district.



Early Childhood Ministries: “We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power and the wonders he has done” (Psalm 78:4). This verse reminds us so clearly of the mission of WELS' early childhood. As over 11,000 children are entrusted to our care, we seek to share the precious gospel with each of them and their families. The Commission on Lutheran Schools provides support and resources for congregations either considering an early childhood ministry or ones who have an existing ministry. Through the renewed efforts to train additional consultants, the number of congregations provided onsite support continues to grow. To support those who serve as directors, teachers, and aides, resources continue to be updated or developed. These include weekly online devotions for those who serve in early childhood ministries, support for newly assigned directors through the Director Apprentice mentoring program, the Emerging Leader

Cohort, documents that include outreach and harvest strategies, and promotion of *Building Blocks: A Handbook for Beginning and Operating a Christian Early Childhood Ministry*. Early Childhood District coordinators continue to develop and share resources and provide consultation and support for congregations and early childhood ministries in each of the districts.

Telling the Next Generation: Utilizing Our Schools for Outreach: The commissions on Evangelism and Lutheran Schools continue to jointly offer a one-day seminar focused on effective outreach practices for WELS schools. This seminar comes at a time when nationwide 11% of Lutheran elementary school children and nearly 25% of our early childhood ministry children live in homes that report having no church membership. It is a tremendous blessing to have this mission field attending our schools. The six-hour seminar is designed for pastors, principals, early childhood directors, teachers, and church and school lay leaders of the congregation to gather for interactive presentations on maintaining a Christ-centered mission, the critical role of relationships, and a planned and effective harvest strategy. Each ministry team is also provided with an advisor to consult with in the months following the seminar. To date, 1,225 individuals from 165 congregations have attended workshops hosted in 11 of the 12 WELS districts. For more information or to schedule an area seminar, contact either lutheranschools@wels.net or evangelism@wels.net.

A Critical Need for School Leaders - Double digit vacancies for both principals and early childhood directors in each of the past few years has CLS supporting options to provide training for new or future leaders. Martin Luther College provides excellent training for our newly called teachers. Unfortunately, many of the trained teachers are assigned to principal or director positions for which they have had limited or no training. What follows is a description of current and future programs and plans for preparing school leaders.

- **21st-Century Lutheran Principal Initiative** The 2017 synod convention endorsed this initiative which helps to address the growing need for school leaders for our schools and involves cohorts of experienced teachers going through three years of Commission on Lutheran Schools and Martin Luther College training. The first cohort of seven men is scheduled to complete their training in 2020. A second cohort of eight men will begin their training in the summer of 2018 with expected completion in 2021. This initiative was established to train teachers prior to their service to the church as school principals.
- **Principal Apprenticeship and Director Apprenticeship Mentoring** is designed to support those new teachers who are also assigned without any formal training to the position of principal or early childhood director. The assigned new teacher is considered an apprentice and is mentored and provided some training by the CLS for the first two years of ministry. Congregations are assessed \$1,000 per year for this service. We are thankful for the grants that have provided for a great deal of the funding of this program as costs are close to double what is charged congregations.
- **Principal Training Program** is in its fourth year. The program pairs a Martin Luther College graduate with an on-site principal at a WELS school who mentors the graduate for two years as a teacher while also providing leadership instruction. The graduate assumes greater leadership during the third year and is mentored by the on-site principal as a principal-in-training. Following the third year, the graduate returns to the assignment

committee to potentially be assigned as a principal, with his mentor principal mentoring him during the first year at the new assignment. Currently four men are in the program, and one has completed the program and was assigned as a school principal. The CLS identifies schools and on-site mentor principals, while MLC identifies candidates and provides mentor training for the host principals. This program, funded by the CLS, provides some training for a new principal prior to assignment, and provides on the job experiences.

- **Early Childhood Emerging Leader Cohort** is a redesign of the Leadership Candidate Program for potential early childhood directors. This year-long cohort includes professional development, a year-long project in their current ministry applying leadership skills, support from an experienced early childhood director as their mentor, and monthly teleconferences covering practical topics related to the role of early childhood director. The 2018-19 cohort has six individuals who have applied and been accepted into the program which begins in June.

WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA) There are currently 129 schools accredited with WELSSA, and this number continues to grow each year. During the 2017-18 school year, twenty schools hosted a site visit. Of those twenty schools, three were accredited for the first time. Plans are already underway to secure site teams for visits to forty-two schools during the 2018-19 school year. Nine of the schools being visited in 2018-19 will be accredited for the first time. Elementary schools also maintaining a preschool may include their preschools in the accreditation process by including the 3K/4K addendum standards in their self-study. The addendum process allows the K-8 accreditation to be expanded to 3K-8 or 4K-8 accreditation status. WELSSA continues to expand the use of electronic standard tracking tools, which have allowed for many of the reaccreditation visits to be completed over a two to three-day period. Over 100 site team captains, team members, and consultants are available to assist schools seeking to make use of this ministry tool for school evaluation and self-improvement. WELSSA currently has accredited schools in fourteen states across the nation. More than 16,000 students attend schools accredited by WELSSA. Teacher Tom Plitzuweit serves as the executive director of WELSSA. Rachel DiGiorgio serves part-time as the WELSSA executive assistant.

School Consulting Services The CLS has trained over 50 consultants who are available to assist congregations that are seeking to start or expand a children's ministry, experiencing struggles in their current school or early childhood center, or desiring CLS support as a complement to a Commission on Congregational Counseling visit. There are trained consultants available in each district or region to provide timely, effective, and affordable support. Congregations needing school consulting services can contact CLS to set up an initial meeting and discuss which consultation service is best for their ministry.

A Look Ahead

#EdTechLead 2019 The Commission on Lutheran Schools and WELS Technology have joined forces to host a WELS Education, Technology, and Leadership Summit which will be held at Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells, Wis., from June 25-27, 2019. This summit is designed for teachers and called and lay church and school leaders. Please save the date and join up to 500 fellow WELS members for this conference. Interested presenters are invited to submit presentation topics that conference attendees might find interesting. The conference planning committee is looking for presenters with a variety of focuses including: administration, Bible study, communication, curriculum and instruction, early childhood, education, health, leadership, ministry, outreach,

productivity, security, school leadership, technology, and vocation. Submission deadline is May 31, 2018. Visit welsedtechlead.com for more details and to submit your presentation. While you're there join our mailing list to receive #EdTechLead updates sent straight to your inbox.

WELS Ministerial Growth and Evaluation Process will be introduced over the next 18-24 months. It replaces the current Team Ministry Process and focuses on continuous teacher learning for student growth. Final touches are being completed this spring on new tools for supervision of teacher instruction, ministry development plans, and teacher evaluation tools. Train-the-trainer events are scheduled for this summer. The Lutheran Schools office can connect you with speakers for upcoming teachers' conferences on each of the topics in this new process. Presentations could range from a one-hour keynote to 14 hours of modules. Watch for further information on this new process and implementation during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. Questions or requests for a presenter can be directed to lutheranschools@wels.net

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