

Floor Committee 12: Congregational Services C

**Subject: Commission on Lutheran Schools**

Reference: *Book of Reports and Memorials*, p. 49-55

Report No. 01

We give thanks for the blessings of Christian education and the work of the Commission for Lutheran Schools (CLS) as it faithfully works to fulfill its mission to guide and assist congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening Lutheran schools. The CLS daily provides services to our synod's early childhood ministries (387), Lutheran elementary schools (294), area Lutheran high schools (27), and preparatory schools (2), which share the gospel message with nearly 42,000 children in 33 states and 3 Caribbean island nations.

We recognize our God's gracious blessings in the continued growth of early childhood and high school enrollments as well as the stable enrollments in our elementary schools and preparatory schools since 2017.

CLS is to be commended for strengthening ministries through the following initiatives:

1. *Telling the Next Generations Seminars*—These six-hour seminars given in conjunction with the Commission on Evangelism better enable our schools and early childhood ministries to build purposeful harvest strategies in working with community families. We encourage all our schools to make use of these seminars.
2. *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Principal Initiative, Principal Training Program, Early Childhood Emerging Leader Cohort, Principal and Director Apprentice Program*—These initiatives are effectively addressing both the need for well-trained school leaders and the shortage of school leaders. We pray that the Lord will continue to strengthen and bless these initiatives.
3. *WELS School Accreditation and Consulting Services*—The Lord has richly blessed these initiatives and the schools that have utilized them with an increased focus on mission and vision, the strengthening of student instruction, and school improvement. Currently 138 schools with an overall enrollment of more than 16,000 students in 14 states are accredited by WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA), and more than 50 school consultants have been trained to assist congregations and schools. We commend the schools who have completed school accreditation and the site visiting teams who lead

accreditation visits, and we encourage congregations and schools to make use of CLS consulting services.

4. *WELS Ministerial Growth and Evaluation Process (MGEP)*—After years of planning, research, and work, a series of four modules and online follow-up support are in the process of being shared with leaders and teachers throughout our districts. The process will assist schools in fostering continuous teacher growth for student learning and creating ministry development plans for all teachers. In addition, the process will provide the CLS with better data to assist in building call lists and meeting congregational ministry needs. We encourage the leaders and teachers of all schools to participate in the MGEP Modules and begin implementation in their schools by the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

The committee carefully reviewed the Memorial by the District School Coordinators requesting to change voluntary supplemental contributions to the CLS to annual school support fees based on school enrollment (BORAM pp. 166-167). This committee, as well as the Synod in Convention in 2017, supports the goal of the memorial which is to have all our schools—ECM, LES, and HS—participate in giving voluntary supplemental contributions for the important work of the CLS and strengthening ministry in our districts. However, the committee does not believe that implementing a mandatory fee will be an effective means of increasing the percent of schools providing supplemental contributions.

School contributions were originally approved as voluntary with support from the Board for Parish Services, the Conference of Presidents, the Synodical Council, and district conventions. Most of the non-contributing schools are smaller schools and often struggling schools which represent just 33% of student enrollment. A percentage of WELS schools, especially early childhood ministries, do not make a voluntary school contribution due to a lack of knowledge about the benefits of the process or the means to contribute, and a smaller percentage of WELS schools do not make a voluntary school contribution due to a philosophical belief that all CLS functions should be supported through the synodical budget.

It is the committee's belief that a resolution making supplementary contributions mandatory could burden financially strapped schools or alienate those with philosophical concerns. Additionally, the CLS has no means of enforcing such a mandatory fee.

It is the goal of the CLS and WELS schools to walk together in love to ensure that voluntary

supplemental support contributions benefit all our WELS schools, students, and families; therefore, the committee makes the following recommendation to the CLS:

1. Refer to contributions as “annual school support” to better reflect the support model.
2. Extend the benefits of contributing schools to all schools to encourage active participation of all schools in annual school support contributions.
3. Review and revise the contribution process to increase the ease of completing contributions
4. Renew efforts to communicate the purpose and benefits of annual school support contributions through the communication of School District Coordinators, Early Childhood District Coordinators, and the Commission on Lutheran Schools.

At a time when we face a shortage of educational leaders, teachers, and pastors, we encourage our congregations to actively promote the teaching ministry and the need for educational leaders, including principal and early childhood ministry directors, among their congregational youth. We also encourage MLC to consider ways to strengthen outreach to our elementary schools and high schools to better help young Christians understand and consider ministry.

May the Lord continue to bless the efforts of the CLS to guide and assist congregations in advancing the gospel of Jesus by providing resources, training, and personal assistance for starting and strengthening Lutheran schools.

Teacher Jim Henrickson, chairman

Teacher Randy Peck, secretary