

Lutheran Schools 2024 RTTD Online Report

Enrollment growth requires more teachers

WELS schools Pre-K through grade 12 have collectively grown in enrollment by more than 5 percent in just the last two years and by almost 16 percent in the last decade, now serving more than 47,000 students in 417 locations with the gospel on a daily basis. Visit cls.welsrc.net/stats for more school statistical information.

The enrollment growth has increased the number of called WELS teachers to 3,059, which is 221 more called teachers than just three years ago. The Commission on Lutheran Schools is working with the Conference of Presidents and Martin Luther College to seek ways to increase the number of ministry-trained teachers for WELS schools. During those same three years, 200 former called workers have accepted calls back into WELS schools, and over 200 WELS members with Education degrees who have yet to gain ministry certification have accepted provisional calls to serve in WELS schools. We thank the Lord for this blessing of workers.

Support

WELS School Accreditation (WELSSA) is a peer-reviewed self-assessment process focusing on school excellence and continual improvement, guided by the Word. WELSSA is a member of the National Council for Private School Accreditation, accrediting 156 school ministries and expecting to accredit 16 new ministries in the next two years. Recent completed projects include a standard addendum for ministries serving infants through two-year-olds alongside their 3K through 8th grade program, a self-study template for schools starting accreditation, revised consultant role expectations, and application for recognition with YoungStar in Wisconsin. Progress continues with the standards revision task force looking to overhaul the accreditation standards.

Lutheran Schools Consulting Services continues to assist congregations and schools considering opening new schools, expanding or retracting current schools, or merging with nearby schools. James Sievert serves as our part-time lead consultant. He and other recently retired or current call workers consistently conduct over a dozen on-site consultations each year and have also begun to provide ongoing support for those ministries requesting such an option.

Training

Telling the Next Generation: Utilizing Our Schools for Outreach: The commissions on Evangelism, Discipleship, and Lutheran Schools continue to jointly offer a one-day seminar focused on effective outreach practices for WELS schools and early childhood ministries. This seminar comes at a time when nationwide 16 percent of Lutheran elementary school children and 33 percent of our early childhood

ministry children live in homes that report having no church membership. The 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. For more information, go to <https://welscongregationalservices.net/download/telling-the-next-generation>.

Training for School Leaders: The shortage of principals and leaders in our schools has grown to the point that about one in eight Lutheran elementary schools has a principal vacancy or an interim plan in place. In addition to programs for training early childhood directors, Lutheran Schools supports, mentors, and provides training for new and aspiring school leaders through the Principal Training Program and partners with Martin Luther College on the Principal Credential Cohort. A business certificate program was also launched thanks to grants from the Milwaukee School of Engineering and the Kern Foundation.

A look ahead

Modules are in development or have recently been completed in the areas of school financial sustainability, the role of the board and the pastor in the school and early childhood ministry, effective practices in school marketing and promotion, and the calling and hiring of workers in early childhood ministries. Additionally, the commission continues to study micro-schools and new standards for a new theology curriculum.

Melanie Giddings enters year two of her limited duration part-time call coordinating the work of the WELS Theology Task Force, which plans to complete the framework for a new theology curriculum over the course of the next year. That framework and corresponding standards will pave the way for the development of resources beginning in 2025.

Lutheran Schools and Special Ministries continue to look for ways to better support the growing need for supporting both mental health and special education needs within the children in our churches and schools.

We look forward to joining together and both celebrating our work in Christian education and learning together as a WELS National Education Conference will be held in Green Bay, Wis., on June 22–25, 2025.

Finally, we ask prayers for our schools and their leaders, teachers, parents, and students as we seek to share Jesus through our WELS school system.

Teacher Jim Rademan, reporter

Teacher Ryan Wiechman, chairman

Rev. Darin Aden, secretary

Rev. Phil Sievert

Teacher Kyle Swogger

Teacher Kyle Bender

Teacher Chris Joch

Mr. Cory Lamb

Advisory:

Teacher Jim Rademan, director

Teacher Paul Patterson , associate director

Teacher Cindi Holman, national coordinator of early childhood ministries

Prof. Jennifer Mehlberg, Martin Luther College

Prof. Nathan Ericson, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary