

Assisting Educators in their Ministry



Ministerial Growth & Evaluation Process

WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools
Revised 2019

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Assisting Educators in Their Ministry

CHAPTER ONE - PHILOSOPHY

MINISTRY

God has commissioned his Church to make disciples of all nations through the preaching and teaching of his Word and the administration of the Sacraments. This is done as the gospel is used to reach out to unbelievers and nurture the faith of believers. WELS carries out that commission in a variety of ways and forms of ministry.

In carrying out his commission, God has privileged some men and women with the high calling of the public ministry. Those who are called into the public ministry have the responsibility to exercise that calling in a manner which glorifies God. Christians have the responsibility to support the called ministers in ways which will assist them in their ministry. This will include both admonition and encouragement. Pastors, educators (teachers, directors, and principals), and congregational lay leaders have a special responsibility to uphold the high calling of the public ministry and assist colleagues to perform their duties in a manner which gives honor and glory to the Lord.

When educators receive and accept calls, they obligate themselves to serve the congregation in a manner which is also above reproach in all matters of faith and life. A team which works together in Christ's ministry can be powerful in support of each other and in helping the challenged, weak, or erring educator. Counsel, assistance, and encouragement among educators are important aspects of building relationships which build bonds among educators and which benefit the ministry.

Special effort is required in building Christ-like relationships. It relies on the use of God's Word as the guide and motivator for actions of love and concern. Spirit-worked attitudes and actions build a climate of trust in which wrongs are forgiven and in which there is cooperative effort to strengthen weaknesses. Spirit-built, Christ-like relationships also establish a climate in which to deal with the challenges of incompetence or error.

Pastors, educators, and congregational lay leaders can assist one another through an ongoing analysis of their work. The purpose of this analysis is to assist and encourage each other in achieving the Lord's purpose of making disciples for Christ and, thus, glorify God. There may be times in which efforts to assist and encourage require correction and admonition. These are also undertaken in the spirit of our mutual desire to glorify our God through our service to him.

CORRECTION

Correction and admonition in the performance of one's ministry can be a sensitive issue. Some pastors and educators have taken a position that their divine call exempts them from such performance evaluation and correction. Such a view denies the Scriptural encouragement to "admonish one another" (Colossians 3:16) and the role of the overseer in supervising the work of those under his direction (Fourth Commandment). It also ignores the importance of mutual support and encouragement necessary to maintain the highest standards of quality in the public ministry. The goal of any admonition, correction, assistance, and encouragement is that we might support one another in making disciples for Christ to the glory of our God.

The principles of Matthew 18 should serve as the guide when the performance of educators needs improvement. Co-workers, administrator, parents and/or board members should address problems immediately, personally, and in a spirit of loving concern for the other's performance or behavior. Problems which can be addressed early are often solved more easily. Led by the Spirit, co-workers will be able to speak to one another in love, give and accept correction, to resolve conflicts for the glory of God and the flourishing of his ministry. Serious problems or crises also require immediate attention in accordance with the principles of Matthew 18 and the guidelines outlined in this document. The Lord of the Church patiently and persistently works with his servants to enable them to glorify him through their service. We will do the same one to another.

Christian love and the principles of Matthew 18 make initial efforts at correction both personal and private. Conversations with others about problems and concerns is out of place prior to discussions with the individual educator. Guidance may be sought from other appropriate professionals - such as pastor, school counselor, circuit pastor, or district president, in confidence regarding proper procedures to use in attempting to correct the problem.

ADMINISTRATION

Congregations have established a structure through which they administer their ministry. In most cases, boards of education have been elected for the establishment of school policies. It is inherent in that responsibility to adopt a procedure for assisting educators in their ministry. Administrators (principals and directors) have been called to provide direction and leadership in our efforts to help each other serve God to the full extent of our gifts. When faculty or staff members are found to be performing their responsibilities in a less than satisfactory manner, the administration and board of education will work with them according to the procedures outlined in this document.

Assisting educators in their ministry is important for the effective carrying out of the responsibilities which God has given those in the public ministry of the gospel. It can provide great joy as the performance of ministerial responsibilities is improved. It can also bring great anxiety when incompetent performance of duties or personal errors require removal from the public ministry. In every case, the participants will call upon the Lord for guidance and trust that he will direct their loving actions in ways which will glorify him and extend his kingdom among us.

Guiding Principles for Dealing with Challenging Called Worker Issues

1. The divine call is a sacred trust.
2. The divine call is a mediate call through the calling body.
3. The calling body is responsible to govern the call in regard to its scope and duration.
4. The called worker is responsible to honor and obey the calling body as God's representative for the divine call.
5. The calling body is responsible to honor and support the called worker who has the sacred trust in his call.
6. The calling body will provide training and evaluation to help the called worker perform his or her duty.
7. The calling body is responsible to intervene when the called worker fails, and possibly terminate the call of one who is willfully neglecting their duty and/or is not apt to teach.
8. The district presidium is to be involved early and throughout the intervention and/or termination process.
9. The calling body must always maintain proper law and gospel ministry to the called worker.
10. The calling body will appropriately support the worker who resigns or is terminated.

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CHAPTER TWO – Ministerial Growth and Evaluation Process

Philosophy

Christian educators have a unique privilege – sharing God’s saving message with those they are called to serve. They approach this role with humility, first toward God’s Word as their source of strength for spiritual growth and as their primary tool for equipping others. They also approach the educational portion of their tasks with a humility that recognizes the need for professional growth and commitment that seeks out ways to improve their educational practice. Christian educators embark on this journey with the words of the Apostle Paul in their hearts and minds, *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving”* (Colossians 3:23-24).

Purpose

The press of daily tasks and responsibilities for Christian teachers can, at times, become a nearly overwhelming burden. In the daily throes of a sinful world, time in service to the church and God’s people can easily be consumed with a flood of urgent and important ministry activities. Proactively living out a commitment to lifelong learning, continuous growth, and professional development, while important, do not carry the urgency of daily tasks and activities. As a result, sincere intentions for personal and professional development may be left unrealized without a clearly articulated and manageable plan.

To assist and support Lutheran congregations and their teachers, the WELS Commission on Lutheran Schools has developed the [WELS Ministerial Growth and Evaluation Process](#). The process includes planning and evaluation tools that allow teachers and school leaders to plan, collaborate, and chart progress in the context of shared accountability and ongoing professional and spiritual growth. Such collaborative ministry improvement is critical for the continued health and wellness of Lutheran schools and may also be one of the most impactful steps teachers and leaders can take to strengthen the Christian education of the children and families they serve.

Assisting Educators in Their Ministry

CHAPTER THREE - PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

There are situations and incidents that may occur that require immediate and documented attention.

It is the intent of these guidelines to provide systematic and God-pleasing procedures for those who have the responsibility to assist educators in their ministry. The term "educator" represents both classroom teachers, principals, and directors serving our Lord in schools of WELS. The spirit of Christian love and of Matthew 18 is followed by these steps.

May the guidelines be carried out in the same loving and compassionate way that our Lord Jesus deals with us. Let us all note how we love one another as we go about serving our Savior in our respective ministries.

General Procedures

1. All efforts are aimed at assisting educators improve the performance of their public ministry for the welfare of children and to the glory of God.
2. Pray for guidance and patience.
3. All documentation must stress facts and observable behaviors.
4. All documentation should be dated and initialed by supervisor and educator.
5. All Ministry Improvement Plans (MIP) should list observable behavioral outcomes.
6. Involve others in counseling and intervention procedures.
7. Summarize all meetings in writing.
8. Act to insure due process and fairness.
9. Use Matthew 18 as a guideline.
10. Be sure to involve the pastor in matters of spiritual challenge.

RECOMMENDED FIRST STEPS

1. Present concerns about a teacher's actions or lack of actions to the educator personally and informally.
2. Discuss suggestions for improvement during the informal first meeting and establish some mutually agreed upon goals.
3. Document all actions.
4. Inform the board of education and church council of the implementation of this step.

RECOMMENDED SECOND STEPS

1. Document in writing continued evidence of need for continued improvement by the educator.

2. Consult with the local pastor, various officials and experts who could aid in diagnosing and intervening.
3. Share documented evidence (Appendix 1) with the educator and together develop an appropriate plan of action (Ministry Improvement Plan - Appendix Two) which would include specific competencies to be improved and a time frame for improvement to take place.
4. Continue to explain until the educator expresses understanding of the problem AND AGREES THAT THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE MINISTRY IMPROVEMENT PLAN can be reached. If there is no agreement, then FOURTH STEPS should be implemented.
5. Agree to the documented Ministry Improvement Plan with the educator.
6. File the Ministry Improvement Plan.
7. Inform the board of education and church council of actions taken.

THIRD STEPS

1. Provide appropriate assistance.
2. Determine whether the Ministry Improvement Plan is met by the designated time in a satisfactory manner using multiple and objective observations.
3. Document observations and evaluation and share that documentation with the educator.
4. Document specific improvements made and future Ministry Improvement Plans as needed.
5. Agree to the revised documented Ministry Improvement Plan with the educator.
6. File the revised Ministry Improvement Plan.
7. Provide appropriate assistance.
8. Repeat THIRD STEPS as needed.
9. Inform the board of education and church council of progress made.

FOURTH STEPS (if necessary)

1. Document continued and persistent evidences of incompetency or error.
2. Share documented evidence of continued incompetency with the educator.
3. Consult the pastor and district officials.
4. Present evidence to the board of education.
5. Confront the educator with the evidence and take specific board action.
6. Take the evidence to the church council for action to be taken at a congregational meeting.
7. Inform district officials of impending congregational action.
8. Take appropriate action at the congregational meeting.
9. Inform district and synodical officials of action.

Appendix 1 – Sample Letter of Evidence of Immediate Issue

May 28, 2019

Dear Edward Educator,

During the 2018-19 school year, through both principal formal classroom observations and walk-throughs, and parent and student feedback, the following have been identified as behaviors needing improvement:

1.) Timely communication with parents in returning phone calls, emails, and texts, and providing parents with regular communication on assignments and classroom and school events;

Returning Communications - five different parents, some on several occasions, reported non-response on attempts to communicate with you.

Regular Weekly Communications- on eight occasions, you did not send home a required weekly classroom note. On four other occasions the note was very minimal and failed to deliver timely information to the parents.

2.) Professionalism in the following areas:

Punctuality

- You arrived later than the expected time of 7:20 AM for teachers on more than fifteen occasions.

- You failed to attend three faculty meetings without excuse and were late to faculty meetings by more than ten minutes on five occasions.

- Your lesson plans for the week were still incomplete at noon on Monday on more than eight occasions.

Communication and Teamwork

-You chose to deviate from the school novels schedule by including two novels reserved for other classes into your curriculum for this year without discussion with other teachers or the principal.

- You frequently engaged your students in activities that far exceeded the classroom time period during departmentalization blocks, which affected instruction time by other teachers on at least ten occasions.

3.) Relationships with parents that demonstrate empathy, acknowledgment of their concerns, and willingness to work with them in resolving those concerns;

-Parents have complained you have not listened, but have argued, interrupted, or failed to follow through on promises made during meetings.

- Your co-workers have shared with you and the principal that your regular judgement and negative comments about parents have no place.

4.) Classroom management

- Though regular procedures are in place most of the time within the building, others have witnessed you publicly yelling at and belittling students with sarcasm or put downs.

- Your attempts at collaborative student group work often end poorly as your low tolerance for meaningful collaborative discussion with students often results in you yelling for them to be quiet.

In Christian love for you as our called worker, and for the parents and students being served, the board of education chairman, principal, and school pastor intend to meet with you to discuss a Ministry Improvement Plan to set improvement goals to address the concerns above, which will identify options for improvement, and provide necessary support and instruction, and a timeline for reassessing the areas for growth throughout the 2019-2020 school year.

Thank you for your willingness to meet with Board of Education Chairman _____, Pastor _____, and Principal _____ to discuss and acknowledge these issues.

To aid you in writing your Ministry Improvement Plan, we desire that you to meet with Principal _____ to discuss specific details, regarding instruction for classroom and personal time management, and the need for growth in active listening and building trust in relationships.

To confirm your agreement that improvement is necessary and your willingness to work toward improvement, please sign this letter and return it to the Education Committee Chairman _____ at your earliest convenience.

We pray that God blesses your improvement efforts to enhance your ministry of the Gospel here at _____ Lutheran Church and School.

On behalf of the Board of Education of _____ Church,

_____, Principal _____, School Pastor

_____, Board of Education Chairman

I have read and understand the letter above and acknowledge the need to work with school leaders on a Ministry Improvement Plan.

_____Teacher _____ Date

Appendix 2

Sample Ministry Improvement Plan for Joe Teacher

- Teacher, principal, and/or faculty mentor will meet each week to discuss overall progress and relative issues to teacher success. The teacher's gradebook will be reviewed at each weekly meeting to ensure timely feedback to students.
- Teacher will prepare weekly block plans and submit them to the principal and faculty mentor. Block plans should include basic lesson objectives, procedures and assessment description. Block plans are due each Sunday evening by 8pm.
- Teacher will post daily assignments to parents using classroom website or email. Principal and faculty mentor will monitor.
- Teacher will inform principal and faculty mentor when tests in science and social studies occur. Teacher will provide principal and faculty mentor a copy of a completed study guide that has been distributed to students and communicated to parents. Principal and/or faculty mentor will review learning prior to assessment.
- Teacher will develop a detailed unit plan in science and social studies in consultation with principal or faculty member. Unit plan will show lesson timeline, lesson objectives, describe basic procedures, and include varied resources and assessments. Principal or faculty mentor will approve unit plan prior to instruction.
- Teacher will be provided a copy of *Dealing with Difficult Parents and Parents in Difficult Situations* by Todd Whitaker and provide the principal a copy of a RAN assessment for the five parts of the book. Book completion and review is due by March 15.
- Principal and faculty mentor will make weekly observations which focus on WELS Teaching Standards Four (instruction) and Eight (assessment). Observation updates provided to Board of Education at the February, March, and April meetings.

Updates on overall performance regarding the tasks outlined above will be communicated to the BCD in the March, April and May BOE meetings. Updates will be based upon the following:

- Attitude – It is important our teacher reflect Christ's love in all that he does using the foundation statement of the WELS Teaching Standards as a guide: Called teachers are public ministers of the Word who faithfully serve (1 Cor 4:2) with joy (Phil 4:2) and dedication (1 Tim 4:12).
- Effort – It is important our teacher takes ownership of the specified tasks and demonstrates a willingness to meet expectations. He is expected to seek assistance when necessary.

- Growth – It is important our teacher exhibits growth over the course of the months of the performance plan and beyond. Improved techniques consistently witnessed effort, and God-pleasing attitude will ensure a faithful recommendation for future opportunities.

This plan of action is a written form of communication and should be considered a contract of expectations required of Joe Teacher by the administration of Lutheran School during the remaining months of the 2019-20 school year. It is the prayer of Lutheran that the Teacher will be successful in this endeavor. Should appropriate improvement not be documented or witnessed, sanctions up to and including termination of the call will be considered.

The School Pastor, Principal and teacher hereby indicate he or she understands the importance and parameters of this contract for the good of the students enrolled at Lutheran School. This contract will be put in place from January 5, 2020 until March 31, 2020 with appropriate positive growth expected and reported in the February, March, and April meetings.

Signed: _____
 , Teacher

Date: _____

Signed: _____
 , School Pastor

Date: _____

Signed: _____
 , Principal

Date: _____