

The Transition from ALEA to ELEA 1983-1988

ALEA (American Lutheran Education Association) was founded in 1961 as an association of schools in the American Lutheran Church. Phillip Hiller wrote the history of ELEA's first 25 years: **A Wonder to Many.**

ELEA (Evangelical Lutheran Education Association) is the reorganized association of schools and preschools operated by congregations of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America). This reorganization was approved at the National Convocation on Lutheran Schools, meeting at Mundelein, Illinois in August 1988.

Planning for the New Lutheran Church (NLC). When planning began in 1983, the three church bodies used the name of New Lutheran Church until they approved the merger in 1987. CNLC (Commission for the New Lutheran Church) managed the planning process.

There was considerable concern among ALEA members about the recognition and support that Lutheran schools and preschools would receive in the NLC. Principals, preschool directors, pastors, school board members, and teachers submitted statements to the CNLC and participated in hearings sponsored by two task forces:

- Church and Education task force.
- Specific Ministry task force.

Issues regarding schools in the NLC and the ministry of Lutheran school teachers are summarized in attachments 1-6.

1. October 20, 1983 statement to Education task force by Bracht and Vetter.
2. February 29, 1984 memo to ALEA members by Vetter and Bracht.
3. April 23, 1984 statement to Specific Ministry task force by Kieschnick.
4. May 3, 1984 statement to Church and Education task force by Bracht.
5. May 22, 1984 statement to Church and Education task force by Kieschnick.
6. May 25, 1984 statement to Specific Ministry task force by Bracht.

Since recommendations regarding specific ministries were controversial, the CNLC decided to delay specific ministry decisions and conduct a study of ministry after the ELCA was formed. This study was conducted 1988-1990 (see attachment 7).

ELEA's Relationship to ELCA Division for Education

The merger of three church bodies (ALC, LCA, and AELC) into the ELCA was officially implemented on January 1, 1988. The ELCA Division for Education included three departments:

- Church colleges.
- Campus ministries.
- Early childhood education programs, elementary schools, and secondary schools sponsored by ELCA congregations.

ELEA advocated for a strong relationship with the ELCA Division for Education. In 1988, the ELCA Division for Education Board approved the following:

Recognition of ELEA as the successor to ALEA (see attachment 8).

Position statement of the ELCA Division for Education regarding early childhood education centers and schools (see attachment 9).

Appointment of ELEA director as an advisory member of the ELCA Division for Education Board.

ELEA also approved the ELCA Director for Schools as an advisory member of the ELEA National Board.

Attachments 10-12 clarify the relationship between ELEA and the ELCA Division for Education.

ELEA Constitution

The change from ALEA to ELEA specified three area boards, corresponding to:

- Western Area (ELCA Regions 1-2).
- Central Area (ELCA Regions 3-6).
- Eastern Area (ELCA Regions 7-9).

Each Area Board elected two of its members (one preschool educator and one elementary/secondary educator) to serve on the National Board. The ELEA Constitution is attachment 13.