

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

ELEA Guiding Practices set the bar for high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of school and operations. Our principles provide common ground for interaction between ELCA school and center professionals and their many stakeholders and help congregations, and schools become the best ministry partners they can be.

Given that each ELCA school or center possesses distinctive qualities, no universal solution can be applied to all. Nevertheless, ELEA consistently fosters effective governance within Lutheran schools and learning centers. The following are guiding practices to assist your committee in redefining your weekday education ministry. This guidance is overarching; we use school and center interchangeably to cover all weekday educational ministries. While living into this guidance will not answer all your questions, it will give you the foundation to move forward into the details. The ELEA is poised to assist as needed.

A ministry of the congregation: First and foremost, the congregation must recognize this honor and responsibility to the children and young people in the wider community.

Bylaws

- The bylaws of the church and school serve as a clear expression of its mission, outlining the connection between the church and the school and delineating the responsibilities of the council and the board.
- These bylaws establish the school as an integral part of the congregation's mission, with the consent of the congregational council. They also empower a board with the distinct authority to develop policies and offer oversight.
- A committee, comprising members from both the board and council, periodically conducts a thorough review of the bylaws. Any modifications and recommendations are presented to the board and council for comprehensive discussion and careful consideration.

Redefining the Relationship between the Church and School:

- The congregation regards the school as a valuable outreach initiative to the community, serving as a means of actively engaging with and extending its mission.
- The composition of the school board incorporates an adequate representation of Congregation members, ensuring a robust church presence and preserving the school's enduring Lutheran identity.
- Church and school leaders, comprising both professionals and volunteers, work together in a collaborative partnership, exercising their ministry in a unified manner.
- Every member of the leadership team, including the Council, Pastor, School Board, Director, and Church and School staff, is responsible for upholding the Lutheran identity of the school.

Roles and Responsibilities: Council and Board, Pastor and Director

- **Congregational Council and School Board:**
 - In ELCA schools and centers that are not separately incorporated, the council assumes ultimate responsibility for the prudent and effective management of the school and its finances. Council members recognize and endorse the importance of delegating authority to the school board for oversight and policy-making.
 - The board diligently works to safeguard the school's future and preserve its enduring Lutheran identity.
 - The council possesses comprehensive knowledge of the school's history, philosophy, bylaws, and strategic priorities.

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- **(Cont'd) Congregational Council and School Board**

- The board must thoroughly understand and appreciate the sponsoring church's history, philosophy, and strategic priorities.
- Regular reports from the school ensure that council members remain well-informed about its activities.
- The board ensures the establishment of appropriate reporting procedures and fosters open communication channels between the church and the school.
- New council members undergo comprehensive orientations, including information about the school's relationship with the congregation, its history, and annual and strategic goals.
- New board members receive orientations that encompass information about the school's relationship with the congregation, shared history, and the congregation's annual and strategic goals.
- The council respects and supports the distinct ministry of the director and the school board members.
- The school board respects and supports the unique ministry of the pastor and the council.
- Council members play a pivotal role in setting a positive and supportive tone for the congregation, consistently demonstrating their endorsement of and enthusiasm for the preschool's ministry through their words and actions.
- Board members play a key role in establishing a positive and supportive atmosphere within the school, consistently expressing their endorsement of and enthusiasm for the church's ministry through their words and actions.
- The council and school board collaboratively ensure the development of a healthy and harmonious church community while understanding and supporting the distinct responsibilities of each governing body.
- The board is responsible for formulating policies, overseeing the school's management, ensuring financial stability, and planning for the future.
- The board is responsible for hiring, evaluating, and supporting the director, who serves under the board's discretion.

- **The Pastor and Director**

- The pastor plays a crucial role as a vital link within the governance structure of both the congregation and the school, serving as the spiritual leader for both entities.
- The director is responsible for setting a positive tone in all aspects of the school's life and acts as an academic leader within the school community.
- The director effectively communicates the school's objectives, including its distinct character as an ELCA church school or center, to parents and the broader community.
- The pastor actively seeks visibility within the school's activities, and the director warmly welcomes their presence.
- While the director may or may not hold official membership in the congregation, they are readily visible and actively engaged in the life of the congregation.
- The pastor is entrusted with promoting the spiritual well-being of the congregation and the preschool.
- The pastor supports the council's delegation of authority to the school board for school oversight and, through the board, to the director for administrative and operational matters.
- The director assumes responsibility for the welfare and support of the faculty and staff, including hiring, evaluation, and termination. Additionally, the director sets the curriculum.
- The pastor oversees and evaluates any spiritual leaders responsible for faith formation or religious education within the preschool and consults with the director to develop religious programs for the school.
- The director collaborates with the board, overseeing all management aspects, financial affairs, fundraising, and academic programs.
- The pastor fosters understanding and exemplifies support for the diverse ways the congregation and the school fulfill the congregation's mission. They assist congregation members in appreciating the school's ministry and consistently demonstrate positive and enthusiastic support for the school, its mission, and its leaders.

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- **(Cont'd) The Pastor and Director**

- The director fosters understanding and exemplifies support for how the congregation and the school fulfill their shared mission. They assist the school community in recognizing the church's ministry and consistently demonstrate positive and enthusiastic support for the congregation, its mission, and its leaders.
- The director establishes effective communication channels with the pastor, council, and congregation.
- The director respects the pastor's role as the congregation's leader and works to cultivate a trusting and collegial relationship with them.
- The pastor regards the director as a leadership partner and endeavors to build a trusting and collegial relationship.
- The director assumes responsibility for child admissions, guides their progress in collaboration with the faculty and staff, and provides recommendations for future placements.
- The council, board, pastor, and director collaborate to establish a policy regarding the admission of children from within the church membership.

Effective Communication:

The inclusion of both school and church leadership is ensured through the representation of council and board members.

Regular weekly meetings are scheduled between the pastor and the director, as well as between the director and the board chair. These meetings foster trust, strengthen relationships, and offer mutual support to leaders tasked with modeling unity and respect.

Several joint meetings are organized throughout the year, allowing council and board members to familiarize themselves with one another, understand the priorities of the ministry partner, and engage in collaborative planning. These shared experiences contribute to building a strong leadership partnership.

Successful partnerships are built on good communication, trust, and collaboration. The "no surprises" principle is embraced, promoting transparency and supporting the partnership while enabling leaders to present a united front when faced with inevitable controversies and crises.

Leaders from both the church and the school exemplify exemplary behavior in disagreements or conflicts. A trusting partnership is sustained when leaders consistently show support for one another, even when differing opinions arise.

Council members are invited to attend school events, and an annual "Council or Congregation Visiting Day" is recommended to strengthen connections. Similarly, school board members are acknowledged and appreciated during an annual "Lutheran Schools Sunday Service."

The council and board collaboratively create agreements concerning shared space and maintenance costs. These agreements undergo regular reviews to ensure their continued effectiveness.

Strategic Planning:

The board formulates and adopts annual and long-term goals that provide direction for both the board and the director. Regular reports are presented to the council to ensure the board oversees the progress made in implementing these approved goals.

Annual joint planning sessions occur between the council and the board, fostering collaboration and ensuring alignment between the two entities.

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(Cont'd) Strategic Planning

Any formal strategic planning, discussions involving major financial initiatives, or considerations of property usage involve consultation with the leadership group of the partner in ministry. This collaborative approach ensures that decisions are made with the input and expertise of all relevant stakeholders.

Smooth Leadership Transition:

Orientation for new council and board members incorporates comprehensive training on

- Best governance practices.
- The Lutheran identity of the school.
- Understanding both the institution they oversee and the ministry partner.

During the search process for a new pastor or director, representation from the partner in ministry is included on the search committee.

In the search process, candidates for the positions of pastor or director are provided with thorough education regarding both the church and the school. They are fully informed about the diverse leadership roles and responsibilities within both institutions that accompany the position. This ensures that candidates clearly understand the unique dynamics and expectations associated with the role.

Evaluation Process:

The board conducts an annual evaluation of the director, utilizing a process developed collaboratively between the board and the director. The most effective evaluation method revolves around predetermined goals for the year and assesses the director's progress in achieving those goals.

Additionally, the board annually evaluates its performance, identifying improvement and growth areas. This self-evaluation process allows the board to continually enhance its effectiveness in fulfilling its responsibilities.

Conclusion:

It is crucial for our leaders to uphold the values that guide these principles, which include fostering healthy, faithful, and supportive relationships. We also recognize the importance of maintaining awareness of boundaries and fulfilling appropriate roles. Our leaders shoulder the responsibility and dedication to continuously educate community members about effective governance practices. Further, we embrace the partnership model that unifies the church and school, promoting collaboration and shared goals. We are confident that these guidelines will positively impact your shared ministries and encourage all leaders to follow them diligently.

Disclaimer: Kindly be aware that the information presented is not intended as legal advice and should not be relied upon as a replacement for seeking guidance from legal professionals as needed.