

# Foundational Principles and Guiding Statements for WELS Schools

Every WELS school embraces and sustains a culture of ongoing improvement, as our school ministries serve Jesus, who is to be honored and gloried in all we do.-We intend this document to be a tool to that end. We can't claim to know what plans are best for each school and congregation, but we pray this document can serve as a framework for discussion, study, and improvement planning. May the Lord of the Church bless the efforts of all who serve to carry out the mission and vision of our schools.

## **Foundational Principle #1**

**WELS schools proclaim Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls.**

***1 John 4:9 – This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.***

### **Guiding Statements**

**a. WELS schools are founded upon and teach the full counsel of God in its truth and purity.**

This guiding statement reflects the truth that a ministry's foundation must be God's inspired Word as revealed to us in the Bible. If our schools are built upon or teach anything that is not in harmony with God's Word, they will fail in their ultimate purpose—the spiritual growth and development of the students and their families.

- Deuteronomy 6:6-9 – These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.
- 2 Timothy 3:15-17 – From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

**b. WELS schools have clear, biblically-based statements of mission and vision that reflect Christ's mission for the Church.**

This guiding statement implies that congregational and school leaders will develop, regularly review, and communicate clearly **written mission and vision statements**. These statements will flow from the written mission and vision statements of the congregation and drive the planning and practice of the school.

- Psalm 37:5-6 – Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noontday sun.
- Colossians 3:16 – Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**c. WELS schools permeate their entire educational program with the Word of God.**

This guiding statement highlights a significant blessing unique to our Lutheran Schools. God's Word is the foundation upon which all instruction, programs, and activities are grounded.

- Psalm 111:10 – The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.
- 2 Corinthians 10:5 – We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

## **Foundational Principle #2**

### **WELS schools proclaim Jesus Christ to equip children for lives of Gospel-motivated service.**

***Ephesians 2:10 – For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

#### **Guiding Statements**

**a. WELS schools prepare students for their Christian lives with curricula, programs, and activities that serve the whole child.**

This guiding statement affirms that our Lutheran schools will offer curricula, programs, and activities that serve students according to the five domains of child development: spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and social. While all five domains are important, spiritual development is given the highest priority.

- Ephesians 5:15-17 – Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.
- Colossians 2:2-4 – My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.

**b. WELS schools equip students to share the love of Jesus with others.**

This guiding statement reminds us that part of the spiritual training we provide our students will include preparing them to be witnesses for our Savior.

- Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

### **Foundational Principle #3**

## **WELS schools partner with parents and with the congregation.**

***Psalm 78:4 – We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.***

### **Guiding Statements**

**a. WELS schools partner with parents and caregivers in the God-given responsibility to train their children in the truths of God’s Word.**

This guiding statement embraces the truth that God has given parents and caregivers the primary responsibility to train their children in the Lord. We consider it a joy to work with the families the Lord sends to us from diverse backgrounds and home situations. As we carry out this ministry, our goal is to serve their spiritual needs.

- Proverbs 1:8 – Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.
- Proverbs 22:6 – Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.
- Ephesians 6:4 – Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

**b. WELS schools help to carry out the mission and vision of the congregation by nurturing those in the faith and reaching out to those in spiritual darkness.**

This guiding statement builds upon the Great Commission as foundational for the ministry of our congregations and schools. Our Lutheran schools teach those who are members of our congregation and reach out into the community.

- Matthew 28:18-20 – Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
- Luke 19:10 – For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

**c. WELS schools develop and implement written outreach and evangelism plans as part of the congregation’s mission and vision.**

This guiding statement asserts that the school has an important role in helping the congregation achieve its mission to reach out with the Gospel. A well thought out written plan assists school leaders in working through the many issues that arise when we intentionally use our schools for outreach and evangelism. This plan is rooted in the congregation’s mission as drawn from God’s Word, consists of clear policies, and contains specific procedures that encompass every aspect of this work.

- 1 Peter 3:15 – But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

### **Foundational Principle #4**

**WELS schools are concerned with the quality of and care for called workers.**

***1 Corinthians 4:1-2 – So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.***

#### **Guiding Statements**

- a. WELS schools have called workers who understand that the Word of God is living and active.**

- Hebrews 4:12 – The word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edge sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

**b. WELS schools have called workers who demonstrate that personal spiritual growth is their highest priority.**

This guiding statement is built upon the truth that the Word of God is the means through which God works in our lives. By the Word of God, the Holy Spirit creates and strengthens faith, imparts knowledge, and equips his people for works of service.

- 1 Peter 2:2-3 – Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

**c. WELS schools have called workers who regularly gather together around the Word of God.**

This guiding statement emphasizes the importance of unity within the ministry team as they live the love of God they are preaching and teaching. This unity is demonstrated by joint **devotions**, **Bible studies**, and worship. This love and unity will also be demonstrated by building up, encouraging, and strengthening each other. They will season their words and actions in ways that reflect their gospel-filled hearts.

- Acts 2:42 – They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 – Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.
- Hebrews 10:24-25 – And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as your see the Day approaching.

**d. WELS schools have called workers who correctly teach and apply Law and Gospel.**

This guiding statement affirms that called workers are equipped to apply God’s Word to their own lives and the lives of the parents and students they serve. Called workers will regularly study God’s Word so they can **apply law and gospel properly**. Students are blessed as they are served by called workers who understand and properly apply law and gospel.

- 2 Timothy 4:2 – Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage —with great patience and careful instruction.

**e. WELS schools have called workers who model Christian living.**

This guiding statement emphasizes that the gospel produces fruit in people's lives. Called workers show the love of Christ and put their faith into practice as they interact with students, parents, congregational members and the people in the community.

- Philippians 2:5 – Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.
- 1 Timothy 4:12 – Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.
- 1 Timothy 4:16 – Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.
- James 2:18 – But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

**f. WELS schools have called workers who demonstrate Christian love as they serve their students.**

This guiding statement reminds us that the children of our schools are not products in a system, but are precious souls redeemed by Jesus' blood. It is our God-given privilege and responsibility to care for the children entrusted to our care.

- John 21:15 – "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

**g. WELS schools have called workers who demonstrate Christian love in all of their personal and professional relationships.**

This guiding statement reminds us that God places us alongside fellow Christians to serve his people. Jesus' love motivates us to reflect his love to one another. Satan sows the seeds of hatred, jealousy, and discord in order to undermine the work of the church. The Holy Spirit equips us to demonstrate Christ-like love in all our relationships.

- John 13:34 – A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.
- Galatians 5:22-24 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.
- Ephesians 4:15-16 – Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- 1 John 4:7,11 – Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

**h. WELS schools have called workers who develop and carry out written ministry development plans that include professional growth.**

This guiding statement stresses the importance of ongoing professional growth for teachers. Research shows that the teacher is the key component in determining student success. Methods and trends in education are constantly evolving. The teacher utilizes current, research-based educational theories and methods that help carry out the school's mission.

- 1 Corinthians 10:31 – So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
- Ephesians 2:10 – For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
- Matthew 10:16b – Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

**i. WELS schools have called workers who are professionally accountable.**

This guiding statement acknowledges that as professionals, called workers will welcome **feedback** related to their performance. Called workers reap blessings when they receive input related both to their strengths upon which to build and areas that need attention and improvement. As a result, the students and families will also benefit from a school that has a culture of accountability.

- Proverbs 27:17 – As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.
- 1 Corinthians 4:2 – Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

**j. WELS schools financially support the ongoing professional development of their called workers.**

This guiding statement encourages calling bodies to foster a professional growth culture in their schools. Students and families are blessed by the ongoing professional growth efforts of their teachers. Calling bodies also provide the necessary resources of time and financial support for teachers to grow professionally. Calling bodies consider **recommendations** of the *Continuing Education for Called Workers Task Force* in determining a minimum level of support.

**k. WELS schools recognize the significant role served by the school principal/director and provide funding for training in educational leadership and an appropriate amount of time devoted to school leadership and administration.**

This guiding statement highlights the research-based findings that (apart from our Savior's guidance and direction) the principal/director has direct impact on a school's climate, teacher quality, and instructional excellence. Our traditional leadership model for the role of the principal/director is no longer able to meet the demands involved with leading a school ministry. Inadequate training and insufficient **school leadership and administration time** and support are at the crux of many issues and challenges facing our school system. It is imperative that schools provide training, time, and financial support for their school leaders.

- 1 Timothy 5:18 – For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his wages.”

## **Foundational Principle #5**

### **WELS schools conduct all aspects of their ministry to the glory of God.**

***1 Corinthians 10:31 – So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.***

#### **Guiding Statements**

**a. WELS schools strive for ongoing, systematic improvement in all aspects of their ministry operations.**

This guiding statement makes it the stated goal of every Lutheran school to meet or exceed established and accepted standards of excellence. The **accreditation process** is a valuable tool in creating and sustaining a culture of ongoing improvement, and it provides the means and standards to assess and strengthen all aspects of school ministry. WELS schools will strongly consider seeking and maintaining accreditation.

**b. WELS schools have clearly defined enrollment policies and procedures.**

This guiding statement identifies the need for carefully crafted **policies and procedures** related to enrollment that are in harmony with the mission and vision of the school. These policies and procedures assist school leaders in fostering a Christian atmosphere and maintaining good order in the school.

- 1 Corinthians 14:40 – Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

**c. WELS schools employ sustainable funding models.**

This guiding statement emphasizes the need for the congregation to approve an annual budget that is in keeping with good stewardship principles, is fiscally sound, and is sufficient to meet the school's mission, vision, and objectives. The **funding model** includes an appropriate balance of congregational support, tuition, and other sources of income.

- 2 Corinthians 8:7 – But just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us – see that you also excel in this grace of giving.
- 2 Corinthians 9:7 – Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

**d. WELS schools use current, research-based educational materials and resources.**

This guiding statement encourages schools and teachers to pursue academic excellence. Current, research-based materials and resources, including the appropriate use of technology, provide teachers with excellent tools to serve the children.

**e. WELS schools have attractive, well-maintained buildings and grounds that reflect our attitude toward Christ and his mission.**

This guiding statement recognizes the importance of exercising God-pleasing stewardship of our God-given facilities. Keeping our buildings and grounds attractive and in good repair sends a strong message to the members of our congregation and community that we care about our ministry. This honors our Savior, who deserves our best in all things.

**f. WELS schools value and utilize the resources of our synod and participate in ministry with our brothers and sisters in the WELS.**

This guiding statement underscores that our schools are stronger “walking together” than we are operating solely as individual entities. While our congregations and schools are autonomous, blessings are realized when schools work together, sharing resources and supporting the common mission of all of our schools. WELS schools strongly consider participation in the synod's **Voluntary Supplemental Contribution Program**, which will help strengthen our entire school system.

- Ecclesiastes 4:12 – Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
- Ephesians 4:3-4 – Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

**g. WELS schools employ governance models that facilitate carrying out the school's mission and vision.**

This guiding statement implies that a variety of school governance models exist. Congregation and school leaders will analyze how their school is governed as it pertains to the established mission and vision statements of the school. If they determine improvements are necessary, they will create a governance system that best serves the mission and vision of the school.

To conclude, we pray with the Psalmist:

***May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children.  
May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us –  
yes, establish the work of our hands. (Psalm 90:16-17)***