

SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND
COLLEGES**

FOR

**APOSTLES LUTHERAN SCHOOL
5828 SANTA TERESA BLVD
SAN JOSE, CA 95123**

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Focus On Learning, 2010 WASC Edition

**Marilyn Lynch, Chairperson
Principal, Stanbridge Academy**

**Karrie Madrigal
Teacher, Faith Christian Academy**

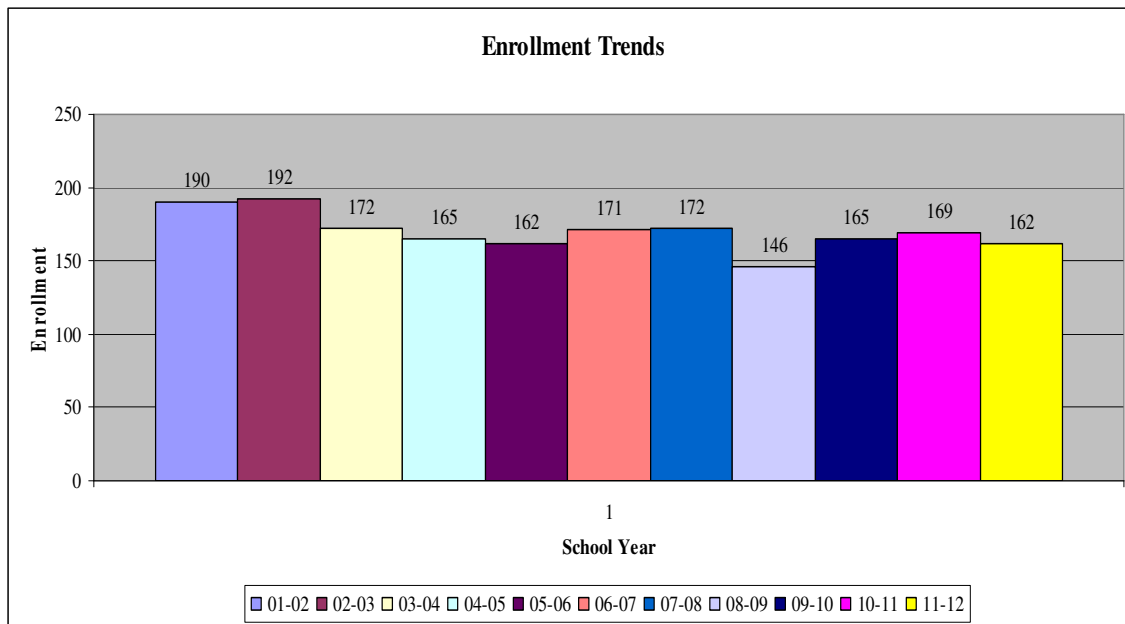
**Cynthia Cody Probasco
Teacher, Fremont Christian School**

**Sarah Rogers
Teacher, Mission College Preparatory**

Chapter I: Student Community Profile

Since the 2001-02 school year, Apostles has maintained an average student enrollment from junior kindergarten through eighth grade of 169 students. Apostles Lutheran School is located on the corner of Santa Teresa Boulevard and Blossom Avenue in a residential, middle-class neighborhood of San Jose. The school was established in 1969 as an extension of Apostles Lutheran Church's mission to nurture families of the church and the community with Gospel truth. Apostles Lutheran Church and School is a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), the third largest Lutheran church body in the United States. Apostles Lutheran School receives support for its ministry from the synod (church body) headquarters. Currently, Apostles serves 164 students with ten full-time instructors, one principal, a part-time tutor, and several support staff. The Apostles Lutheran School board oversees the daily operations of the school.

During the 2008-09 school year, Apostles initiated the SOAR Program, which provided significant tuition assistance to low income families. In the 2011-12 school year, the SOAR program was discontinued. Financial aid to low-income families is still granted.



Since the 2003-04 school year, the Asian and Caucasian population has declined while the Hispanic and African American population has increased. Financial aid offerings have changed the demographics of the school community.

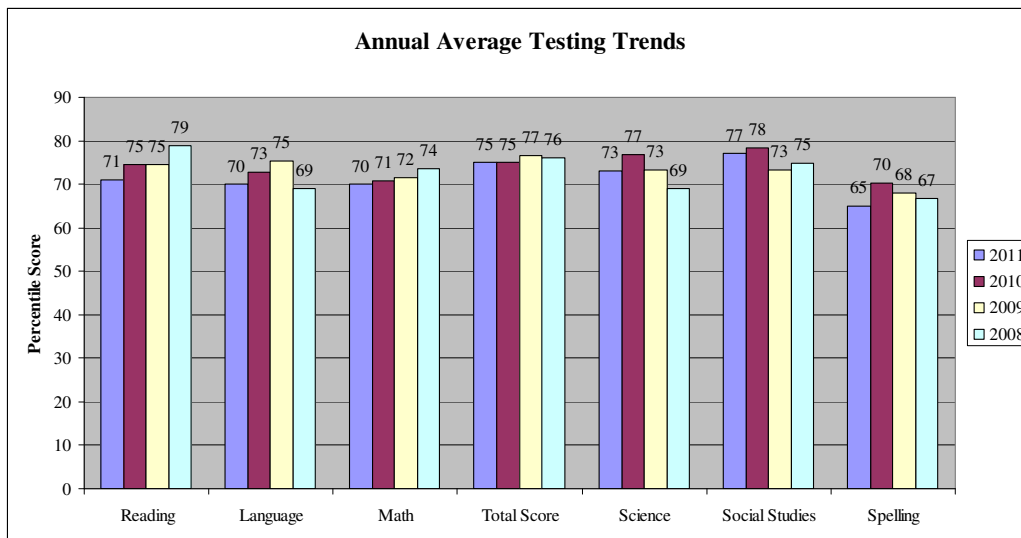
Apostles serves children according the following priority: ALC members, other WELS members, unchurched or Non-Christian families, and families attending other Christian churches. Since 2005-06 the percentage of church member children attending the school has declined from 70% to 52%. This is due to two primary factors: smaller families and 6th – 8th grade students transferring to other schools. Enrollment in the middle school has experienced a decline in the past five years, while enrollment in the elementary grades remains strong.

School Year	Apostles Members	WELS Fellowship	Other Christian	Non Christian	Unchurched	Total	Member Percentage
2006-2007	94	4	28	14	26	166	57%
2007-2008	81	4	44	18	29	176	46%
2008-2009	76	2	34	2	36	150	51%
2009-2010	82	2	31	7	50	172	48%
2010-2011	81	1	51	31	4	168	48%
2011-2012	85	2	51	3	21	162	52%

Since 2008-09 tuition has risen by 3% annually. In the past two years, the number of families on assistance is 36%; a need is recognized to maintain average revenue per student that is more equitable to the increase in tuition. Although the number of member families has risen each year from 2008-09, the number of non-member families has not grown. Prior to the 2010-11 school year, ALC fully subsidized member families who required financial assistance; however, the church is no longer able to fully subsidize financial assistance.

ALS has utilized the Terra Nova Third Edition Complete Battery Test since the 2008-09 school year. Testing is completed in September. The 2011-12 eighth grade class has seven students, and the 2008-09 eighth grade class had four students. Terra Nova considers sample sizes smaller than ten as statistically insignificant and does not provide aggregated data by class average in any subject area or any comparison to national or local averages. All data for these two classes' averages has been calculated by the administration whenever the sample size is less than 10. Terra Nova reports the 50th percentile as the national average in all curricular areas.

The four year average school-wide Reading score is 75 and the four year average for Math is 72. In Science, the four-year average is 73 and the Social Studies average is 76. Overall, the four-year average for all curricular areas is the 73rd percentile. Although classes typically score above the 70th percentile, there has been a decline in reading and language arts scores. The faculty has noted language arts and math as areas for curricular improvement; improvement goals and plans are included in the school-wide action plan.



Parent surveys have been conducted in 2008-2009 and 2010 -2011. Twenty-two families responded in 2008-2009 and fifty-six parents responded in the 2010- 2011 school year. The 2010-11 Parent Survey asked families to identify their opinions on various aspects of school climate, academic performance, and extra-curricular offerings. The survey results showed that no more than 10% of respondents were dissatisfied with any area of school climate and no more than 6% dissatisfied with any school characteristic. Survey results stated that 85% of parents are satisfied with Apostles School.

Chapter II: Progress Report

After the initial visit in 2007, the committee recommended the following eleven areas for improvement:

1. Devise and expand an elective program in the middle school curriculum.

Three elective classes were added in the 2008-09 school year for middle school students. These electives are Economics, Explorations, and Lab Skills.

2. Research and develop a plan to increase enrollment in all grades (K-8)

A marketing plan was devised which includes recruitment letters to preschools, direct mailing to targeted families, attendance at community fairs and events, Open Houses, ads placed in local print publications, improved school website; increase in tuition assistance; enrollment of international student(s); and research and development of a high school one year at a time.

3. Implement a regularly scheduled financial audit.

The school uses Quickbooks and relies on financial direction from the church finance committee. Although all audits must be initiated by the church administration, outside agencies for tuition and auditing are currently in place.

4. Develop a school board policy manual.

A School Policy Manual was completed in the fall of 2010 and is reviewed annually by the school board.

5. Revisit the ESLRs for possible modifications and solicit input from all stakeholders.

ESLRs are in place, but no stakeholder group could consistently identify what the ESLRs are. After discussion with focus groups, teachers, principal, parents, and students, the visiting committee recommends better communication of ESLRs to all stakeholders in a simplified format.

6. Devise and implement a plan that addresses the need for facilities update, ie. gymnasium.

The church's property and facilities committee, in conjunction with the school board, oversees necessary repairs and development of school buildings. After discussion with stakeholders, there is an interest for building a gymnasium; however, the gymnasium project is on hold until funds become available.

7. Develop and implement a technology plan that ensures continuous upgrading of computers and other technology. Computers should be networked to facilitate the access of teachers' records into a school database.

A technology plan has been adopted. In 2009 the school website was retooled, network servers were replaced and upgraded, teachers were issued laptops, student computers were replaced and upgraded. In 2010 Power School was implemented to host school records and grading solutions online, the school installed an electronic bell and intercom system, and migrated to Google Apps for network access to email, calendar, and documents. In 2011 the school's website server was hosted by a third party for better reliability and security. Currently a process is in place to purchase and install mounted projectors and interactive whiteboards in classrooms. Future technology plans include upgrading the one story school building to Ethernet cabling, the implementation of a three-year upgrade rotation of hardware, and the upgrade of school's website.

8. A written curriculum is needed for all curricular areas K-8.

All core curricular areas have a written curriculum, which is reviewed in accordance to a schedule

developed by the principal and faculty.

9. Develop and implement a plan to determine the disposition of records/transcripts should the school cease to exist.

A plan is in place to store offsite records and transcripts in a storage company should the school cease to exist.

10. Develop a plan that establishes multiple measures to assess student mastery of the curriculum.

A faculty committee compiled various assessment measures and made them available online. In January 2011, a school-wide writing assessment was developed, which has already begun to validate progression in writing.

11. Incorporate critical areas for follow-up into a viable school-wide action plan.

After the initial visit, the follow up areas served as the school's action plan. The majority of the action plan was accomplished, and plans are in place for future growth to complete the action plan.

Chapter III: Self-Study Process

The self-study process began in the 2009-10 school year. The faculty and school board were divided into teams to gather evidence for chapters one through three. These findings were summarized and submitted to the leadership team. The leadership team attended the WASC training sessions in preparation for a WASC visit in the spring of 2011.

Apostles welcomed a new principal who applied for an extension to WASC. WASC granted a one-year extension for visitation in the 2011-12 school year.

In the fall of 2010, the team leader called for parent volunteers, faculty and board members to form focus groups, and he appointed focus group leaders. The focus groups gathered evidence for the assigned sections and the leadership team supervised the focus groups' progress of the self-study report.

Apostles Lutheran School strives to provide an excellent academic and co-curricular education with a Christ-centered focus. The school imparts knowledge and skills in a curriculum that encourages cultural interests, promotes physical health and education, and develops special gifts and talents of individuals.

Expected Schoolwide Learning Results

The creation of the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs) began in the spring of 2007. In preparation for the initial WASC visit, a faculty committee studied ESLRs from other schools. During several professional development days, the faculty refined the ESLRs and asked for input from Apostles School board members. These ESLRs were submitted in the initial WASC visit application.

Apostles Lutheran School serves families of the congregation and community with excellence in Christ-centered education. Apostles is focused on educating the whole child. This means focusing on every aspect of the child's development -- including the Spiritual, Academic, Social, and Physical domains. Therefore, students who graduate from Apostles will meet these outcomes:

Spiritual

Sp.1 Learn Jesus is their Savior and the only way to heaven.

Sp.2 Reflect God's love to others.

Sp.3 Apply Scriptural principles to daily living.

Academic

A.1 Use God-given abilities in pursuit of academic excellence.

A.2 Demonstrate a strong foundation in all academic areas.

A.3 Apply critical thinking skills as lifelong learners.

Social

So.1 Respect people and cultures worldwide as God's creation.

So.2 Model God's love through interpersonal skills.

So.3 Demonstrate effective communication skills through speaking, writing and technology.

Physical

P.1 Recognize their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit.

P.2 Demonstrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for healthy living.

Apostles created surveys to elicit parent feedback regarding the ESLRs; however, the feedback did not warrant any changes to the ESLRs. In the 2010-11 school year the faculty reviewed the ESLRs and found no changes needed. During the visit, in discussion with the focus groups, principal and faculty, it became apparent that the ESLRs need simplification and refinement.

The self-study accurately reflects the school's program for students. Evidence was gathered and documented in a variety of ways, including samples of student work, Terra Nova test results, stakeholder surveys, staff input, and parent participation.

Chapter IV: Quality of the School's Program

Category A: Organization for Student Learning

A1. School Purpose

Apostles Lutheran School (ALS) serves families of the congregation of Apostles Lutheran Church (ALC) and extended community with excellence in Christ-centered education. The school is an outreach of the ALC purpose of reaching people with the truth of the gospel. The ESLRs reflect the school's mission to educate the whole child: spiritual, academic, social, and physical. The achievement of an ESLR is recognized on a weekly basis by the school principal and certificates are presented to students. The principal also mails a letter home to the awardees' parents. The visiting committee discussed the ESLRs with stakeholders and verified that the chapel presentations of ESLR awards make a major impact on the students and their parents.

A2. Governance

The all-male school board is the governing authority of ALS. The policies and procedures adopted by the board are in alignment with the school's mission. In conjunction with the principal, the board ensures these policies are enforced and the ESLRs are achieved. The board empowers the principal and faculty to determine curriculum and instruction; the principal and vice-principal evaluate teacher performance.

A3. School Leadership

The school leadership is comprised of the school board and principal. These two bodies empower the teachers in their individual classrooms, communicate schoolwide information to all stakeholders, and maintain a positive school culture. Collaboration days, weekly memos, and morning devotions involve staff in shared responsibilities and actions to ensure ESLRs are being met. The Faculty Handbook, Constitution and Bylaws of Apostles Lutheran Church and School and the Apostles Lutheran Church and School Reorganization Flow Chart clearly delineate and empower the staff to support one another and the students in their quest for a quality education on behalf of all students.

A4. Staff

ALS is a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). WELS has a teacher-training program that prepares teachers for both spiritual and secular instruction and classroom management. All faculty members are credentialed or are in the process of obtaining a credential. As members of the congregation, teachers are devoted to completing their assigned responsibilities, maintaining their commitment to the school's purpose, engaging in monthly collaboration days, and enhancing student learning both academically and spiritually. Faculty is assigned subjects and co-curricular activities based on skill and interest. Staff members are evaluated on an annual basis.

A5. School Environment

ALS is located in a residential section of San Jose. School parking lots are used by students for sports. The church sanctuary is used for weekly chapel and special functions including drama productions, assemblies, and whole school meetings. The school environment at ALS provides well-maintained and clean facilities coupled with a nurturing and caring school environment. While visiting classes, members of the team observed that some classrooms were left unattended during teacher transitions to other classrooms. For student safety, it is advised that this lack of supervision be revisited. It was also noticed that the school's exterior gates were not closed during school hours and that the shared facility is used by the church community and students at the same time. The visiting committee recommends that the school investigate measures to better secure the campus after student drop-off and before student pick-up.

Religious classes, devotions, and chapel services promote respect for differences, trust, caring, and Christian conduct. The school practices emergency drills regularly and an emergency preparedness plan is posted in each classroom.

A6. Reporting Student Progress

The school regularly communicates student progress through newsletters, progress reports, report cards, and formal and informal parent teacher conferences. The online grading system is not utilized by most students and parents. Students in grades 3 – 8 are tested annually using the Terra Nova 3 standardized test, and the results are reported to the school board and parent community. Teachers nominate students for ESLR achievements and awards certificates, which are presented by the principal after chapel service on a weekly basis, and a letter is then sent home to parents telling them about their child's mastery of the ESLR. All classrooms display student work.

A7. School Improvement Process

Monthly collaboration amongst administration and faculty as well as meetings with school board members and the principal facilitate school improvement. The effectiveness of teachers and the principal is formally reviewed annually, and forms are submitted to the church body (WELS). The principal and school board members provide for accountability through monitoring of the schoolwide action plan. The visiting committee recommends the formation of a formal parent organization to improve schoolwide communication and stakeholder involvement.

Category A: Organization for Student Learning: Areas of Strength

- ALS' religious mission and philosophy are supported through daily Bible-based instruction, devotion and prayer
- Dedicated principal and teachers are nurturing and accessible at all times to parents and students
- A devotion service each morning and a weekly Bible study is available for faculty to build camaraderie and provide spiritual encouragement for the daily rigors of the classroom
- Teachers nominate students for ESLR achievements; award certificates are presented after weekly chapel services
- There is a principal and teacher evaluation process in place, and principal and all teachers attend two WELS-supported conferences a year

Category A: Organization for Student Learning: Key Issues for Growth

- Improve stakeholder involvement by communicating ESLRs to all stakeholders in a simplified format
- Develop a parent group for improved stakeholder involvement and more effective schoolwide communication
- Communicate more effectively how to use Power School and the benefits of checking it more regularly to students, parents, and teachers
- Investigate measures to better secure the campus after student drop-off and before student pick-up
- Address lack of supervision during teacher transitions to other classes

Important evidence from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Conference with parents, students, pastors, and focus groups
- Collaboration agendas and web site
- Terra Nova assessment results
- Emergency preparedness plan
- Observation of classrooms
- Observation of school campus
- Observation of morning devotion
- Parent Handbook
- Bylaws of Apostles Lutheran Church
- Church and School Flowchart

Category B: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

B1. What Students Learn

ALS begins its day at 8:15 am and ends at 3:15 pm. Kindergarten and Jr. Kindergarten end at 11:45 am. The curriculum is clearly addressed in the Parent Handbook and is Christ-centered with daily religious instruction, devotion and prayer. Monthly collaboration sessions are conducted to review and assess the curriculum, analyze writing assessments and test scores, and study current trends, methods, and issues in education. Teachers attend two WELS conferences annually where they collaborate with colleagues and share resources. The faculty has identified improvement strategies for math and language arts based on declining Terra Nova test results and are reflected in the school's action plan.

Curriculum for all core subjects is aligned to the school's ELSRs and CA state standards and supplemented with standards-based textbooks. Students who exemplify the ELSRs are recognized publicly with a certificate after a weekly chapel service; however, neither students nor parents seem familiar with the school's ELSRs. A benchmark writing assessment is given twice a year and assessed collaboratively by grade level teams. A newly launched high school program offers exciting opportunities for growth.

B2. How Students Learn

Teachers at ALS are dedicated and provide a nurturing, academic, and spiritual program for students. It is evident that teachers have worked hard to establish positive routines and behavior expectations that result in a respectful learning environment. However, when teachers transition to other classes, they leave students unsupervised in the classrooms at various times throughout the day.

Teachers submit professional growth plans each year and develop instruction and assessment goals annually. The visiting committee encourages participation in staff training to detect social deficits and learning differences so that interventions could be implemented in the classroom. Teachers perform peer observations to improve their instructional and management techniques and become better acquainted with other teachers' style of instruction. Teachers meet in cross grade-level groups to address pertinent issues including instruction, classroom management, student performance and assessment.

The principal maintains a teacher collaboration web site, which hosts links to professional resources, testing data, and curricular documents. While the school has computers in every room, further integration of technology into the curriculum is recommended.

Students are exposed to several educational resources beyond textbook learning, such as field trips, online resources, teacher-provided supplemental materials, and community speakers. There is no cohesive language arts textbook series in place for grades 1-8. Recently, the school streamlined the timing of math instruction so that students who excel are now allowed to go beyond their grade level. Students display

excellent work in regular classroom activities as well as in the academic fairs and other projects.

B3. How Assessment Is Used

Formative and summative assessment data informs instructional decisions and modifications at all times. There has been a new schoolwide writing assessment and the teachers assess student mastery of content standards, but not ESLRs. The teachers regularly use assessment to modify instructional and curricular planning and analyze students' work during collaboration meetings.

ALS students in grades 4-8 demonstrate a four-year average on standardized tests at the 73rd percentile across all core curriculum. After reviewing assessment results, the faculty identified a need to improve math and language arts scores.

Category B: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Areas of Strength

- Principal and teachers are considered by parents and students to be the foremost positive aspect of the school
- Apostles' principal and teachers collaborate to improve academic and spiritual performance of students
- It is evident that teachers have worked hard to establish positive routines and behavior expectations that result in a respectful learning environment
- A variety of assessment techniques is used throughout the school
- Students who excel in math are now allowed to go beyond their grade level
- The standardized test student score average is at the 73rd percentile in all core areas
- Newly launched high school program offers exciting opportunities for growth
- The principal maintains a teacher collaboration web site, which hosts links to professional resources, testing data, and curricular documents

Category B: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: Key Issues for Growth

- Improve stakeholder involvement by communicating ESLRs to all stakeholders in a simplified format.
- Intentionally connect ESLRs to assessment and curriculum planning to improve student learning.
- Improve schoolwide mathematics and language arts proficiencies.
- Attend professional development classes, workshops and/or conferences on detection of potential social deficits and learning differences
- Integrate technology into the curriculum more efficiently.
- Address lack of supervision during teacher transitions to other classes

Important evidence from the Self-Study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Parent Handbook
- Terra Nova test results
- Conference with students, parents, and focus groups
- Collaboration agenda and web site
- Classroom observations
- Observation of student work
- Bell schedule
- Textbook observations
- Parent surveys
- Faculty Handbook

Category C: Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

C1. Student Connectedness

Students at Apostles Lutheran School are connected to a system of Church-based and school-based support services and co-curricular activities within the school and with other Lutheran schools. Apostles Lutheran School celebrates students who achieve key ESLR goals publicly and in letters to their parents.

While teachers at Apostles Lutheran modify assignments and provide tutoring as needed, much of the personalized student support comes from an on-site tutor. The tutor provides one-on-one resource assistance in math and language arts, but this resource service is fee-based, so not all students' individual needs are being fully met. In addition, teachers could benefit from more training in determining potential learning issues.

School support systems exist at Apostles Lutheran. During the enrollment process, students are screened and there is a process to identify how best to serve students. Additionally, the school provides private ESL assistance, Bible classes, and counseling services with the church's pastor.

The strategies that Apostles Lutheran uses to support student growth, development, and learning include frequent parent contact, discussions among teachers about students, religious instruction, religious reflection, and encouragement and support for student participation in extracurricular activities. Public celebrations of students' accomplishments and displays that showcase student work build self-esteem and show connection to ESLRs. Peer groups are combined through intramurals and the chapel buddy system. This enhances student cohesiveness within the school community.

Co-curricular offerings include science and social studies fairs, interscholastic and intramural sports, choir, musical performances, robotics, worship services, and events with other Lutheran schools, including a spelling bee, quiz bowl, choral fest, track meet, volleyball mixer, and basketball tournament.

C2. Parent/Community Involvement

A Parent Handbook is formally distributed containing the school's purpose, curriculum, as well as other important information. Parents are partners in the educational process at Apostles Lutheran. The teachers send weekly e-mail newsletters and meet with parents as needed. However, it is clear from focus group meetings that Power School is under-utilized.

Parents volunteer frequently to assist teachers with photocopying, correcting, and chaperoning, and they visit the classrooms as guest speakers and guest readers. Parents receive letters home acknowledging when their children have achieved an ESLR accomplishment. 95% of parents report that they are satisfied or highly satisfied with parent involvement at Apostles Lutheran. However, no formal parent organization currently exists, and that parent organization could potentially facilitate involvement from parents who are not church members.

Apostles Lutheran students are involved with various activities within the community. Apostles Lutheran Church hosts many community activities that draw potential students in, including a Vacation Bible School staffed entirely by Apostles Lutheran School teachers.

Category C: Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth: Areas of Strength

- The faculty address ways to support student growth during Collaboration days - both collectively and in cross grade-level groups
- Students are encouraged to use their God-given abilities to excel in all things. This remains the focus of all co-curricular activities
- A number of co-curricular opportunities are offered with high participation among the student body
- Dedicated principal and teachers are nurturing and accessible at all times to parents and students

- Individual and co-curricular achievements are recognized publicly after chapel services and purposefully connected to the ESLRs
- ALS provides a safe and fun before and after school care program (homeroom) with hours that benefit working families in the Silicon Valley
- Apostles Lutheran School teachers staff a two-week Vacation Bible School in the summer that is open to the community
- Parents generously volunteer their time and resources at Apostles Lutheran School
- Students of different grade levels come together for intramural sports and chapel activities, promoting student cohesiveness

Category C: Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth: Key Issue for Growth

- Establish a parent teacher organization
- Connect ESLRs to student progress reporting
- Research ways to make tutoring service available to all students
- Participate in additional training on identification of special education issues
- Communicate more effectively how to use Power School and the benefits of checking it more regularly to students, parents, and teachers

Important evidence from the Self-Study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Parent Handbook
- Tutor’s schedule
- Collaboration agenda and web site
- Conference with focus groups, teachers, parents and students
- Observation of classrooms
- Progress reports and report cards
- Teachers’ and principal’s newsletters
- Student form for incomplete homework

Category D: Resource Management and Development

D1. Resources

Apostles Lutheran School (ALS) is owned and operated by Apostles Lutheran Church. Both policies and resource allocation are set in the church’s Constitution and the School Policy Manual. Voting members of ALC (voters) have ultimate authority over the school’s operations and the school board and principal are responsible for the day-to-day governance of the school. Most resource decisions relating to the school are handled by the school board and principal. School board members, principal, vice principal, all permanent teachers, and office staff are also members of the Church and have opportunity for input in church voters’ meetings.

Most of the school’s resources, the physical facilities and a significant subsidy of the operating budget are provided by the church. The ALC subsidy is determined by the ALC Coordinating Council in consultation with the school board’s financial secretary. The school’s budget process begins in January of the prior school year, with input from the school staff. The school board proposes a preliminary budget and a finalized tuition schedule which the voters approve in February. In August the school board presents the final budget for church vote. Enrollment and finances are reviewed monthly by the principal and school board. Overall revenue limits opportunities for teacher pay increases; further increase in student body size as well as enhanced fundraising can help. Salaries for called workers (permanent teachers and principal) follow the recommendations of a “Synod Code” provided by WELS, with adjustments for local cost of living, but at the current time, pay rates are below the synod code. In 2010-11 an audit of the finances was completed. In recent years, bookkeeping has been overseen by an external paid agency. Plans are in place to hold internal audits every year and more formal external audits every three years. The school facilities

are adequate to meet the school's purpose and are well-maintained, although campus safety could be improved by maintaining a perimeter about the campus. The school board allocates financial resources to purchase needed items as part of the yearly budget process and the principal publishes a "wish list" on the school website for donations.

As a school belonging to the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), ALS is especially well positioned with regard to sourcing of teachers and principals. WELS operates a teacher training college (Martin Luther College [MLC]), and most teachers and principals have received a bachelor's degree from this program.

The school offers 20% tuition discounts to church member families. Approximately 30% of member and nonmember families receive financial aid as determined by FACTS Grant and Aid Assessment.

D2. Resource Planning

Significant steps have been made to better maintain the future of the school since the initial accreditation. School long-range planning falls under the purview of the church's master plan. The church long-range planning process should continue including input from the school board and school staff.

Since tuition income provides the majority of financial resources, marketing the school is vital. A marketing budget is provided each year, and is administered by the principal in consultation with the school board. A 9th grade program was added in 2011-12 with intentions to add additional grades in the next three years.

Category D: Resource Management and Development: Areas of Strength

- ALC provides significant support for ALS' ministry in regard to facilities, facility maintenance, utilities, and operating cost subsidy
- Explicitly defined roles among several office staff members in handling of funds provides a system of checks and balances to prevent mishandling of funds. Bookkeeping by an external paid agency is now in place
- Monthly oversight of finances by school board helps catch errors and further reduces likelihood of mishandling of funds
- Well defined budget and tuition income forecasting processes provide for well informed and accurate budgeting of resources
- Church and school ministries on the same property allow effective sharing of facilities
- Recent broadening of financial aid program has allowed the school to maintain a student body of 160+ students and sufficient tuition income to support one teacher per grade (no combined classes)
- Newly launched high school program offers exciting opportunities for growth

Category D: Resource Management and Development: Key Issues for Growth

- Explore funding opportunities in order to raise teacher salaries

Important evidence from the Self-Study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- ALC Constitution and Bylaws
- ALS Policy Manual
- School Budget
- School board and voters' meetings minutes
- Interviews with teachers, principal, and parents
- Meeting with focus groups

Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement

The school addressed the eleven growth areas of follow-up that were in the prior school accreditation. Evidence indicates that these recommendations were integrated appropriately into the school's program. The Visiting Committee feels confident that the majority of these areas were addressed and recognizes that there is still needed growth in some areas.

The Self-Study has identified the strengths and areas of growth for the school. Through observations, review of evidence and conversations with principal, students, parents, staff, and board members, there is agreement that the school provides a nurturing learning environment for students.

Schoolwide Areas of Strength

1. Dedicated principal and teachers are nurturing and accessible at all times to parents and students
2. Principal and teachers are considered by parents and students to be the foremost positive aspect of the school
3. The nurturing school environment and church community are welcoming to all
4. It is evident that teachers have worked hard to establish positive routines and behavior expectations that result in a respectful learning environment.
5. The principal maintains a teacher collaboration web site, which hosts links to professional resources, testing data, and curricular documents
6. Teachers nominate students for ESLR achievements; award certificates are presented after weekly chapel services
7. Generous before and after school care hours benefit working families
8. Students who excel in math are now allowed to go beyond their grade level
9. The standardized test student score average is at the 73rd percentile in all core areas
10. Parents generously volunteer their time and resources at Apostles Lutheran School
11. A newly launched high school program offers exciting opportunities for growth
12. Students of different grade levels come together for intramural sports and chapel activities, promoting student cohesiveness
13. Explicitly defined roles among several office staff members in handling of funds provides a system of checks and balances to prevent mishandling of funds and bookkeeping by external paid agency is now in place

Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up:

1. Improve stakeholder involvement by communicating ESLRs to all stakeholders in a simplified format
2. Develop a uniform language arts textbook series for grades 1-8
3. Develop a parent group for improved schoolwide communication and stakeholder involvement to include all parents of the school community
4. Attend professional development classes, workshops and/or conferences on detection and intervention of potential social deficits and learning differences
5. Address lack of supervision during teacher transitions to other classes
6. Integrate technology into curriculum, and address Power School training to stakeholders

Apostles Lutheran School has developed an action plan that focuses on three areas: improve stakeholder involvement and improve proficiencies in language arts and math. The leadership team in collaboration with focus groups and faculty developed the action plan based on the areas of growth identified by each focus group during preparation of the Self-Study report. The visiting committee is confident the school will continue its plan of action to improve student achievement and to meet the needs of all students. We recommend that the ESLRs be simplified so that all stakeholders understand their value and meaning. We also recommend that the action plan includes the integration of technology and the usage and purpose of Power School.

Existing factors that support school improvement:

- Strong commitment to Apostles Lutheran School is evident in all stakeholders
- The positive attitudes and selfless commitment of the principal, faculty, board, pastors, and parents
- The integration of assessment activities in order to give direction to curriculum improvement

Impediments to school improvement that the school will need to overcome in order to accomplish any of the action plan sections:

- Secure more professional development opportunities for teachers
- Form a parent group
- Emphasize marketing to increase enrollment
- Research additional funding opportunities

Soundness of Follow-Up Process to Monitor Accomplishment of Schoolwide Action Plan

Measures of success for each action plan initiative are in place and will be monitored by the school principal and members of the school board. The visiting team is confident that the school will continue to grow and improve.