



May 4, 2012

Principal Don Pipho, Principal
Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School
500 4th Avenue SW
Spencer, Iowa 51301

Dear Principal Pipho:

Attached is the report of findings for the Comprehensive School Improvement Site Visit conducted at Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School on March 27 and 28, 2012. The report is based upon a variety of interviews conducted with district staff and stakeholder groups during the indicated dates, and review of documents submitted to the Department and on-site.

The site visit was designed to assess the district's progress with its Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), provide a general assessment of educational practices within the district, make recommendations for improvement, and determine compliance with state accreditation standards and applicable federal program requirements.

Based on the findings from the comprehensive site visit, Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School maintains State of Iowa accreditation; however, non-compliance issues were identified. These issues are included in the Chapter 12 Non-compliance Matrix and the Outside of Chapter 12 Non-compliance Matrix contained in the site visit report. The school must resolve the identified issues through completion of corrective actions according to agreed upon timelines. Department follow-up will be conducted to verify resolution of the identified non-compliance issues.

The report reflects consensus of the following team members:

Department of Education Representatives:
Cindy Butler, School Improvement Consultant

Local Education Agency Representatives:
Gene Sommerfeld, Principal, St. Paul Lutheran School

It is our hope this report will provide guidance to enhance student achievement in the school and support continuing conversations among staff and community members about the local education system, how and what students are learning, and how *more* students can learn at higher levels.

As part of Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School's continuous improvement process, the school must review its current CSIP and provide revisions as needed. Revisions should be based on the school's needs assessments (including the attached report), student achievement data, stakeholder input, and established priorities. Recertification of the CSIP must be completed by September 15, 2012. Directions for revision and submission of the CSIP can be found at: <https://www.edinfo.state.ia.us/securelogin.asp>.

The Department would appreciate the school's feedback regarding its site visit experience. This feedback will inform the Department's efforts to continuously improve the comprehensive site visit

process. A short online survey has been developed and is available at the following site: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W58H5LZ>. The survey will take approximately ten minutes to complete. Responses are confidential and shared in aggregate form with members of the Department's School Improvement Team.

The visiting team again extends its gratitude to you and the Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School staff and patrons in preparing for and showing courtesy during the visit. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,



Cindy Butler, School Improvement Consultant
School Improvement Consultant
Bureau of Accreditation and Improvement Services
Iowa Department of Education



Del Hoover, Deputy Administrator
Bureau of Accreditation and Improvement Services
Iowa Department of Education

cc: Site Visit Team Members
School Board President
Iowa Department of Education Official File
AEA Office

Comprehensive Site Visit Iowa Department of Education



Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran School Spencer, Iowa

**Team Findings
March 27-28, 2012**

Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E. 14th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Vision, Mission, and Goals

In an improving district/school, the vision, mission, and goals are clearly communicated in the school and community. Stakeholders understand and share a commitment to the district/school expectations, goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. The vision guides allocations of time and resources. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Clearly articulated mission is established collaboratively with stakeholder groups representing the diversity of the community.
- Vision, mission, and goals are communicated throughout the system and community.
- The vision and mission of the district/school guide teaching and learning.
- Every five years, the comprehensive needs assessment process, with input from stakeholders, is used to review and revise the beliefs, mission, and/or vision; major educational needs; and student learning goals.
- Academic and academic-related data are analyzed and used to determine prioritized goals.
- Goals guide assessment of student achievement, district/school effectiveness, and the allocation of time and resources.
- The vision, mission, and goals support values of respecting and valuing diversity.

Noted Strengths:

1. The school board and School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) reported a commitment to the school's mission and vision. Both groups spoke of their desire to educate students in academics and Christian values. In addition, the board reported time spent the last few months revisiting the mission and reviewing all the by-laws. These actions constituted a self-study primarily centered on the relationship between the school and the association churches.
2. It was reported alumni of Iowa Great Lakes Lutheran (IGLL) do well when they move to other schools for continued education. A notebook of collected newspaper articles and pictures is available documenting the successes of alumni.

Recommendations for Improvement:

3. Although the vision and mission of IGLL is printed in some school publications and the school board and SIAC appear committed to them, the site visit team did not see the mission or vision posted in the building. Posting the vision and mission in the building could assure a continued focus of efforts by all stakeholders. In addition, including the mission and vision on board agendas, faculty meeting agendas, and all publications will give visibility to both statements and guide decisions.
4. Wanting to grow enrollment was a concern for many interviewed groups. Interviews with teachers, parents, SIAC, and school board members indicated the school needs to grow, but current facilities have limited space available for additional classrooms or large areas such as a gym. The school leadership is exploring options for a possible new facility and relocation. The site visit team encourages the school to continue developing relationships and exploring additional avenues in order to move forward with their vision.

Leadership

In an improving district/school, leaders communicate a shared sense of purpose and understanding of the district/school's values. Leaders have a visible presence, provide resources and ensure two-way communication between the educational system and stakeholders. Leaders provide encouragement, recognition, and support for improving student learning and staff performance. Leadership is committed, persistent, proactive, and distributed throughout the system. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Policies and procedures are established to effectively support district/school operations.
- The school board and district/school administrators implement an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel.
- Policies and practices are implemented to reduce and eliminate discrimination and harassment and to reflect, respect, and celebrate diversity.
- The role and responsibility of administrative leaders is supported, respected, and understood.
- A clearly defined system and expectations are established for the collection, analysis, and use of data regarding student achievement and progress with the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP).
- The capacity of staff, students, and parents to contribute and lead is built and supported.
- Opportunities for participation are provided for input, feedback, and ownership for student and system success among staff, students, parents, and community.
- Equity in access to learning opportunities and compliance with local, state, and federal legislation is ensured.
- Leaders at all levels understand and manage the change process.

Noted Strengths:

5. IGLL provides opportunity for input and feedback from a variety of sources. Three separate surveys have been conducted since 2008. The surveys were designed to get feedback on the physical facilities, comprehensive needs assessment, and future school plans. Surveys were distributed not only to parents of students, but to association church members as well.
6. Parents reported all school personnel are approachable and very open to communication. In addition, the board is accessible to them as they can attend meetings or review meeting minutes.
7. All interview groups appreciated the leadership of the school administrator. He keeps the SIAC informed of their duties, shares student assessment data, and facilitates communication between the various school committees.
8. Teachers reported they recognize and take advantage of each other's strengths to ensure the school runs smoothly. They are willing to step in where needed such as leading musical events or serving on committees.
9. Board members reported several opportunities for their own professional development such as attending training sponsored by a regional Lutheran organization and receiving newsletters forwarded by the administrator on effective boardmanship.

Recommendations for Improvement:

10. Board policy calls for an annual formal principal evaluation. Although the policy is in place, board members have not conducted a formal evaluation in recent years. In order to promote growth in effective administrative leadership, clarify the principal's role, and strengthen the working relationship between the board and the principal, the board could consider ways to institute a formal evaluation process which can continue as board members and administrators change. For assistance with this process contact Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) or School Administrators of Iowa (SAI). Information about process and tools for administrator evaluations can be found at the following web address: <http://www.sai-iowa.org/leaderstandardsandeval/>.

Collaborative Relationships

In an improving district/school, stakeholders understand and support the mission and goals of the district/school and have meaningful roles in the decision-making process. Collaboration results from a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership among stakeholders from diverse community groups. Educators in the system develop and nurture a professional culture and collaborative relationships marked by mutual respect and trust inside and outside of the organization. The system works together with balance between district direction and school autonomy. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Instructional staff is provided opportunities for interaction to focus on professional issues.
- Instructional staff constructively analyzes and critiques practices and procedures including content, instruction, and assessment.
- Instructional staff follows established procedures to resolve professional conflicts, solve problems, share information about students, and communicate student information to parents.
- Processes and procedures that invite and respect stakeholder input, support, and interaction are implemented by the district/school.
- Parents are involved as partners in the educational process.
- Positive alliances among school staff, students, parents, and diverse community groups are created and nurtured.

Noted Strengths:

11. The previous site visit report noted the collaborative relationships between IGLL and area partners such as the Spencer Community School District, Sacred Heart Catholic School, and community organizations. This cooperation between the schools and community continues today and multiple interview groups recognized this as a support for students at IGLL. Specific examples of collaboration include:
 - Hot lunch program
 - Teacher professional development
 - School busing
 - Safe Routes to School
 - Science/nature labs and instruction
 - Instrumental music
 - Library services
 - Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE)
12. IGLL utilizes many avenues of communication with parents and the school community. Methods mentioned in interviews included:
 - Weekly newsletter E-
 - News
 - One-pager in church bulletins
 - Accessibility of staff through email and phone calls
 - School website
13. Interview groups reported a positive working relationship with Prairie Lakes Area Education Association. Some of the services used by IGLL included:
 - Lending library
 - Speech therapy
 - Professional development

14. Parents reported they are involved as partners in the educational process. They have an active organized parent group, Parents in Education (PIE), they have many opportunities to volunteer, and they maintain active communication with the teachers.

Recommendations for Improvement:

15. As the SIAC prepares to begin the next Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, they might consider expanding invitations for membership. Parishioners with young children who will soon be in school can get a feel for the long-range planning, and might consider enrolling. In addition, the school might consider including high school students who attended IGLL as members on the SIAC. Their perspective might bring additional relevance for students as they prepare for the transition to public school.
16. In the previous site visit report, it was noted teachers had minimal opportunities to collaborate or participate in coaching and feedback activities during the day. Current opportunities continue to be informal and are focused on student situations or needs. To improve instructional practices it might benefit teachers to explore creative options to allow time for modeling, peer observation, and professional discussions.

Learning Environment

In an improving district/school, the school environment is conducive to teaching and learning. The environment is safe, orderly, purposeful, and free from threat of physical, social, and emotional harm. Teachers are familiar with students' cultures and know how to work effectively in a multi-cultural setting. Students are guided to think critically about learning and have opportunities to apply learning to real world situations. Classrooms are integrated with diverse learners (i.e., gender, race, special needs, at-risk, gifted). Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Rules and procedures for behavior and consequences are clearly communicated and consistently administered.
- School facilities are physically accessible and school routines enhance student learning.
- Materials, resources, technology, programs, and activities reflecting diversity are available to all students.
- The district/school provides a clean, inviting, welcoming environment.
- A clearly understood crisis management plan is established, communicated, and implemented when necessary.
- Teaching and learning are protected from external disturbances and internal distractions.
- The district/school reflects the contributions and perspectives of diverse groups and preserves the cultural dignity of staff, students, and parents.

Noted Strengths:

17. IGLL appears to provide a clean, inviting, welcoming environment. A new playground has been installed; a large, open area is available for outside activities.
18. Multiple interview groups noted the mutual respect between students and teachers. This respect is fostered in one way by a routine in which teachers sit by different groups of students during lunch time. This practice provides an opportunity for staff to develop relationships with all students attending the school. In addition, classroom rules and procedures are in place and all students appear to know them.

Recommendations for Improvement:

19. Although IGLL developed a crisis prevention plan and teachers and students appear to know procedures to follow in case of incidents of fire or natural disasters, it was noted a total lockdown is impossible as not all classroom doors can be locked. The school may want to consider other options for occupants of those particular classrooms in case of emergency. For assistance access a document titled *Practical Information on Crisis Planning* available at the following web address: <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf>.

Curriculum and Instruction

In an improving school, curriculum challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity. There is an emphasis on principles of high quality instruction, clear expectations for what is taught, and high expectations for student achievement. Educators have a common understanding of quality teaching and learning. Instruction is designed to accommodate a wide range of learners within the classroom. Teachers have knowledge and skills need to effectively implement characteristics of effective instruction. The staff accepts responsibility for the students'

learning of the essential curriculum (e.g., Iowa Core Curriculum). Instructional time is allocated to support student learning. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Educators implement effective instructional practices for each and every student.
- School and classroom tasks and activities are inherently engaging, relevant, and lead to applying knowledge to authentic tasks.
- Content, instruction, assessments, and policy are aligned.
- A shared vision of effective instruction is held by all instructional staff.
- Curriculum and instruction reflect contributions from diverse racial, ethnic, and personal backgrounds. Students are provided opportunity and time to learn.
- Teachers are provided with an instructional framework that employs research-based strategies for use with diverse learner characteristics.
- Instructional decisions utilize a process of collecting, analyzing, and summarizing data.

Noted Strengths:

20. Teachers have used the Iowa Core Alignment Toolkit (ICAT) to begin alignment work of current IGLL curriculum with Iowa Core. Administrators indicated the plan is to complete the ICAT and then move to analyzing the alignment for gaps and overlaps. Changes in curriculum may occur based on the analysis. In addition, the school has plans to review a document shared with them by another school, "The Expectations for Learning," which is a detailed grade level report correlated with the Iowa Core. When the process is complete, the report can be shared with parents to inform them of the essential concepts for students to know and demonstrate by the end of each grade.

21. Parents reported their children are well prepared academically for the next level of school. Teachers utilize different strategies for learning. Students are taught life skills, good morals and ethics, to work independently, to care and respect for others. In addition, students appear to have developed self confidence in their abilities and are willing to share their talents with various community groups. Feedback from the local public school indicates IGLL students transition well.

Recommendations for Improvement:

22. IGLL has worked to make improvements in the area of technology to support learning. The school might consider ways to address continuing needs in this area (e.g., not all teachers have access to computers in their classroom for communicating with parents or planning lessons to incorporate technology). Contact Scott Fosseen, Instructional Technologist, at Prairie Lakes AEA (sfosseen@aea8.k12.ia.us) for a technology audit and assistance developing a comprehensive five- year technology plan to guide this work.

23. The site visit team found no evidence of a long term plan for updating curriculum resources. As the district moves ahead with curriculum alignment to the Iowa Core, consider ways the school can update instructional materials and resources in order to ensure school and classroom tasks and activities are inherently engaging, relevant, and lead to applying knowledge to authentic tasks. In addition, ongoing planning should ensure implementation of the Iowa Core results in alignment of all elements of the curriculum: content, instruction, and assessment. The district is encouraged to consider the following questions:

- How can we ensure all curricular areas are reviewed in a timely manner?
- What process can be used to discuss present curriculum and identify necessary changes or additional resources?

Professional Development

In an improving district/school, staff is qualified for assignments and engages in ongoing learning opportunities to improve effectiveness. Student achievement and other sources of data are used to set goals for professional development. The district provides professional learning opportunities that include theory, demonstration, practice, and coaching. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Professional development focus is determined through the analysis of student achievement and performance data.
- Professional development is focused and based on research-based strategies.
- Professional development sessions build on one another, are distributed throughout the school year, and are sustained over time.
- Time is provided for teachers to collaborate and apply new content and pedagogical knowledge.
- An established system provides support to monitor and evaluate implementation of professional development and its impact on student learning.
- Formative student data and teacher implementation data are used to adjust professional development and guide instructional decisions.
- All school staff members, instructional and non-instructional, are provided professional development to support job roles and functions.
- Professional development activities contribute to the capacity of all school staff to develop cultural competence and to reflect and respect diversity in classroom and work environments.

Noted Strengths:

24. Teachers and administrators reported teachers of IGLL are able to participate in professional development opportunities with Spencer CSD. These activities have focused on research-based strategies in reading instruction during the past few years, and are now focused on math instruction. In addition to professional development with Spencer CSD, staff is able to participate in professional development opportunities with Sacred Heart Catholic School and Iowa District West Conferences.

Recommendations for Improvement:

25. To date only the school administrator has attended Iowa Core training meetings. Consider avenues in which more staff can learn about Iowa Core including the Characteristics of Effective Instruction and 21st Century Skills. Contact Michelle Arneson, School Improvement Consultant, Prairie Lakes AEA (marneson@aea8.k12.ia.us) for resources or access the state Moodle site at <http://moodle.aeapdonline.org> for self-directed or collaborative learning on all aspects of the Iowa Core.

Monitoring and Accountability

In an improving district/school, the district/school establishes a comprehensive system that monitors and documents performance of student progress, curriculum, instruction, programs, and initiatives. Results from assessments drive the goal setting and decision-making processes. Leadership supports a system that regularly analyzes student performance and program effectiveness. Instructional decision-making utilizes a process of collecting, analyzing, and summarizing data. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- A system for district-wide student assessments, including multiple measures that are valid and reliable, is implemented.
- Decision-making for the continuous improvement of instruction and student learning using student achievement and teacher implementation data is employed.
- The district's/school's cycle of program evaluation as noted in its CSIP is implemented.
- Summative evaluation processes are used to determine whether professional development has resulted in improved student learning.

Noted Strengths:

26. The school sets aside time in their professional development calendar for data analysis. Teachers reported they analyze grade level data to identify strengths and weaknesses. In addition, they look at individual student data from a variety of assessments including past years data to determine student growth and areas for continued growth.

Recommendations for Improvement:

27. The school is encouraged to determine a process/protocol to use whenever data are analyzed for instructional decisions. The AEA has consultants trained in a process schools can effectively use to analyze formative assessment results for strengths/obstacles, set and monitor goals, and decide on strategies to address individual needs. Contact Michelle Arneson, School Improvement Consultant, Prairie Lakes AEA (marneson@aea8.k12.ia.us) for assistance.

Small and varied class sizes at IGLL appear to result in wide swings in standardized assessment results, Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). As a result, the school administrator analyzes percent proficient in the 2nd to 6th grade span. This data is available for the last six years. However, a review of the data indicates a decline in the percent of students proficient in reading, math and science over this time period. It might be beneficial to complete an in-depth analysis of non-proficient performers to identify whether common characteristics exist (e.g., similar skill deficit or similar demographics), reviewing students' performance on all district-wide assessment instruments (i.e., triangulating data) to determine validity and reliability of results (as well as the validity and reliability of the district cumulative end of year tests) is also recommended (e.g., Are there students who are not proficient on the Iowa Tests, but are on other assessments?) This in-depth analysis may identify potential barriers to learning, and provide an additional source of data for school improvement planning. Contact Michelle Arneson, School Improvement Consultant, Prairie Lakes AEA (marneson@aea8.k12.ia.us) for assistance.

BIBLE LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM	CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE: ONE IN CHRIST K	CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE: ONE IN CHRIST GR 1	CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE: ONE IN CHRIST GR 2	CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE: ONE IN CHRIST GR 3	CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE: ONE IN CHRIST GR 4	CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE: ONE IN CHRIST GR 5	CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE: ONE IN CHRIST GR 6
MATH	ABEKA: NUMBER SKILLS BJP: MATH K-5	ABEKA: MATH 1	ABEKA: MATH 2	ABEKA: MATH 3	ABEKA: MATH 4	ABEKA: MATH 5	ABEKA: MATH 6
GRAMMAR		ABEKA: LANGUAGE 1 SCHOLASTIC: PHONICS & LANGUAGE	ABEKA: LANGUAGE 2 SCHOLASTIC: PHONICS & LANGUAGE	ABEKA: LANGUAGE 3	ABEKA: GOD'S GIFT OF LANGUAGE A	ABEKA: GOD'S GIFT OF LANGUAGE B	ABEKA: GOD'S GIFT OF LANGUAGE C
HANDWRITING	ABEKA: CURSIVE K	A REASON FOR HANDWRITING: CURSIVE A	A REASON FOR HANDWRITING: CURSIVE B	ABEKA: CURSIVE WRITING 2	ABEKA: CURSIVE WRITING 3		
HISTORY/ GEOGRAPHY	ABEKA: COOMMUNITY HELPERS	ABEKA: MY AMERICA AND MY WORLD	ABEKA: OUR AMERICA	ABEKA: OUR AMERICAN HERITAGE	ABEKA: THE HISTORY OF OUR UNITED STATES	ABEKA: OLD WORLD HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY 5	ABEKA: NEW WORLD HISTORY AND IA HISTORY
SCIENCE/ HEALTH	ABEKA: GOD'S WORLD	CONCORDIA PUB. HOUSE: DISCOVERY WORKS 1	CONCORDIA PUB. HOUSE: DISCOVERY WORKS 2	CONCORDIA PUB. HOUSE: DISCOVERY WORKS 3	CONCORDIA PUB. HOUSE: DISCOVERY WORKS 4	CONCORDIA PUB. HOUSE: DISCOVERY WORKS 5	CONCORDIA PUB. HOUSE: DISCOVERY WORKS 6
PHONICS/ SPELLING	ABEKA: LETTTERS & SOUNDS K	ABEKA: SPELLING AND VOCABULARY 1	ABEKA: SPELLING AND VOCABULARY 2	ABEKA: SPELLING AND VOCABULARY 3	ABEKA: SPELLING AND VOCABULARY 4	ABEKA: SPELLING AND VOCABULARY 5	ABEKA: SPELLING AND VOCABULARY 6
READING/ LITERATURE	M. CURRICULUM PRESS & I CAN READ & READY READER	ABEKA: 1 HOUGHTON MIFFLIN 1	ABEKA: 2 HOUGHTON MIFFLIN 2	ABEKA: 3 HOUGHTON MIFFLIN 3	ABEKA: 4 HOUGHTON MIFFLIN 4	NEWBERRY AWARDS, CLASSICS AND POETRY W/AR	NEWBERRY AWARDS, CLASSICS AND POETRY W/AR
SPANISH	6 WEEKS GRADES 1-6	TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE	TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE	TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE	TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE	TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE	TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE
PE/ART/MUSIC	ONE PERIOD PER DAY	ONE PERIOD PER DAY	ONE PERIOD PER DAY	ONE PERIOD PER DAY	ONE PERIOD PER DAY	ONE PERIOD PER DAY	ONE PERIOD PER DAY