



**Visiting Team Report for  
Standard Based Process  
Of  
Redeemer Lutheran Preschool**



**April 1-3, 2014  
1401 5<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Willmar, MN 56201  
Phone: (320) 235-4685  
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## FOREWORD

Becoming accredited is a strenuous process. Redeemer Lutheran Preschool and its administration are to be highly commended for their efforts in this accreditation process. The self-study document and the various arrangements for the accreditation team were done very well. It is the hope and prayer of the members of the visiting team that the enclosed document is one that is accurate and helpful for the continued improvement of Redeemer Lutheran Preschool.

The committee hereby expresses sincere gratitude to the faculty, staff, and students at Redeemer Lutheran Preschool for the opportunity to serve on the visiting team and for the many kindnesses shown to us during our visit. Each of us on the committee has grown as a result of the experience.

Redeemer Lutheran Preschool obviously is a good school. This was reflected not only in your self-study but also in the comments and observations of the visiting team. We were delighted with the whole climate of Redeemer. The school speaks out for the Christian faith to the students and to the community very effectively.

This report is carefully written and includes specific recommendations that should be considered seriously by the school and the supporting congregation. Not every suggestion needs to be followed, but each should be considered.

The four members of the visiting team worked together as one team, but each member assumed the responsibility to examine in-depth several standards. This report combines the talent of all members of the team and of the committees. The report has been written and edited by the team as a whole, with only minor editing done by the team captain.

The team captain, the consultant, and the team member pledge their continued support and assistance should you care to call upon us in the implementation process.

May the Lord richly bless the faculty and constituents of Redeemer Lutheran Preschool so that with the Lord's help you might continue to proclaim His Gospel ever more effectively through Redeemer Lutheran Preschool.

Team Captain  
Muriel Stark

### **Limitations on the Distribution, Use, and Scope of this Document**

It is the official intent of the National Lutheran School Accreditation Commission that this report be considered a privileged document, to be submitted by the captain of the visiting team directly to the administration of the school. The distribution of the report and its availability for public consideration beyond that point rests solely in the hands of the school administration. Neither the captain nor the members of the visiting team are authorized to release any of the information contained in this report without the approval of the administration of the school.

The primary purpose of the visiting team has been to examine the educational ministry of the school, including courses of study, learning materials, student needs and interests, staffing, and facilities. The visiting team has attempted to assess the effectiveness of the total school program in meeting the educational objectives the school has established for itself and in meeting national NLSA standards.

It has not been the purpose of the visiting team to evaluate individual teacher performance. The use of this report as an official assessment of any staff person's professional competency would be in violation of the process and the intent under which the school evaluation was conducted. Such use would be inherently invalid since at no time during the team visit has the team been concerned with the evaluation of individual teacher performance.

Accreditation is a process that centers around the self-study conducted by the individual school. The visiting team and its subsequent report are meant to assist the school in its own process as a guideline for continual growth. Neither the team nor its report can be presumed to be the authority for validating any claims regarding health, safety, or personnel issues. Such matters are the sole responsibility of the school.

## VISITING TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

### **Captain: Muriel Stark**

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**Areas Examined:** Statements, Administration

**Accreditation Experience:** Principal at one school during the accreditation process

Teacher on teams going through accreditation

School coordinator for the current school that I am at

Served as consultant for six schools preparing for accreditation

Served as captain or member on twelve teams

### **Team Member: Melissa Ochsendorf**

**Current Position:** Co-Director at Little Lambs LCMS Preschool

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**Areas Examined:** Curriculum, Administration, Teacher Child/Relations, and Health and Safety

**Accreditation Experience:** No previous experience on an accreditation team

**Team Member: Jodi Wambeke**

**Current Position:** Director of Early Childhood for Willmar Public Schools  
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**Education:** Mankato State – Early Childhood Minor, Family Life-Child Development – Major; MA – U of St. Mary’s – Teaching and Learning with emphasis on Parent Involvement

**Areas Examined:** Personnel, Teacher Child/Relations, Relationships, and Curriculum

**Accreditation Experience:** Once – team member

**Team Member: Donna Brau**

**Current Position:** Director of Loving Arms Childcare Center (ELCA)  
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Willmar, MN 56201

**Education:** BA-Crown College – St. Bonifacius, MN

**Areas Examined:** Relationships, Health and Safety, Personnel, and Statements

**Accreditation Experience:** No previous experience on an accreditation team

## Accreditation Recommendation

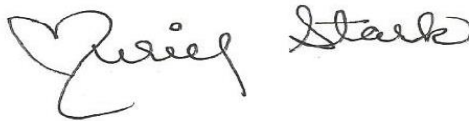
On the basis of our review of the School Profile, the NLSA Standards Checklist, and the narrative statements for Redeemer Lutheran Preschool, we...

...recommend NLSA accreditation

Name of Team Captain: Muriel Stark

Signature of Captain:

Date: April 3, 2014



Melissa Ochsendorf, Jodi Wambeke, Muriel Stark, Donna Brau

# Standard 1: Statements – Philosophy/Mission and Ministry Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN

## Overview

Redeemer Lutheran Preschool has a written mission and purpose statement that reflects the loving care that Redeemer has for children in its community. Although the wording of the mission statements are different the intent and the meanings align.

## Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The philosophy statement and the mission and ministry statement are well written and published in the parent handbook and brochures. They are posted in the classrooms and around the building. (1, 3, 4)
2. The congregation recognizes the early childhood center as a true mission and ministry of the church. (1, 2, 3, 4)

## Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The mission statement and logo should be used on all forms of communication. (3, 4)  
**Consistently use the mission statement and logo on all communications and publications. (e.g. lesson plans, registration forms, calendars, etc.)**

# Standard 2: Relationships

## Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN

### 2A: Home/Parent Relationships

#### Overview

Redeemer Lutheran Preschool provides an environment that is warm and welcoming. It is evident that there are strong relationships that are formed between families and staff.

#### Strengths

1. Communication is important to the Center between families and staff. (1, 2, 3, 4)
2. The preschool provides a variety of special activities for the children and their families offered both during and after school hours. (1, 2, 4)
3. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to participate in activities and special events. The parents fulfill requests of the staff in regards to volunteer time and supplies needed. Parent involvement is a clear strength. (1, 2, 4)
4. Communication with parents and staff is intentional, thorough, and appreciated. The phone calls, emails, and face to face discussions keep the parents informed on their child and his/her daily activities, progress and/or concerns. The willingness of staff to send a short email update is a positive link. (1, 2, 3, 4)
5. Parents are provided an hour long orientation upon enrollment. (1, 4)

#### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. There is not presently a visible, centrally located resource cart/area for families - one place where parents can find information about a variety of activities, topics and opportunities. (1, 2)  
**Provide information for families to connect with the preschool, with the staff, and with other families in a central location in addition to individual room postings. Expand the depth of information you share and include timely materials such as DVD's, current books and publications, and pamphlets for area resources, community education and recreation, and parenting education classes and tips.**
2. Opportunities to “provide a variety of parent growth opportunities” are limited. (1)  
**We suggest that the preschool continue and expand their efforts to notify parents of opportunities including, but not limited to: area early childhood and family education programs and activities.**



3. Written documentation indicates that new families are offered a one hour orientation. There is an opportunity here to expand and build a stronger foundational link between families, the preschool, and the church. (1, 2, 4)

**We recommend that the preschool program further develop the orientation program; possibly including current families in a mentoring role.**

4. At this time the evaluations of the preschool programs take place verbally at Parent Teacher conferences. A written evaluation was sent within the last year to parents. Unfortunately, only a handful replied. As a result, parents are not involved in evaluation of the program's purpose, goals, and objectives. (1)

**It is recommended that ongoing efforts be made to gather input. Some ideas to facilitate this may be to share short questionnaires at special events/parent conferences, ask teachers to inquire occasionally regarding family joys/concerns as related to the preschool programs, and/or send surveys via email or the website.**

## **Standard 2: Relationships**

### **Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN**

#### **2B: Congregational Relationships**

##### **Overview**

The relationship between a sponsoring entity and that which it sponsors needs to be symbiotic. Redeemer Lutheran Preschool clearly sees itself as a ministry of the Redeemer Lutheran Church congregation, and clearly the congregation is appreciative of the ministry of the Redeemer Lutheran Preschool.

##### **Strengths**

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Redeemer Lutheran Preschool serves as a ministry of the congregation by serving the needs of young families both in the congregation and surrounding community. (1, 2, 3, 4)
2. Congregational support for Redeemer Lutheran Preschool has been both a time and resource mix. The history of this support has been long-standing and takes the form of supplying space, utilities, and church staff support. The preschool program is highlighted regularly with special events and worship services. (1, 2, 4)
3. The public reputation of Redeemer Lutheran Preschool is excellent, thus providing both positive public relations for the church as well as getting many non-member families into the building. (1, 2, 4)
4. The pastoral leadership provides age-appropriate monthly worship and chapel experiences for the children. The classroom teachers are also actively engaged in this critical part of the planned curriculum. (1, 2, 3, 4)
5. The Redeemer Lutheran Board of Preschool Education is a group of dedicated people who joyfully serve the congregation/preschool in this capacity. (1, 2)
6. The Director of the Preschool is considered to be a part of, and attends meetings of, the congregational team. (1, 2)

## Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The intentional evangelism of the clientele without a home church is in its very early stages and proper follow through has yet to be established. Successful implementation of this goal is reliant on genuine commitment of all involved parties and a clear path of responsibility. (1, 2)

**The recommendation is that the Pastor, the Preschool Director, Board of Education, and the Outreach Board meet and write a clear description of duties and responsibilities regarding contacts and follow through.**

# Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN

## 3A: The Early Childhood Governing Authority

### Overview

The task of the Redeemer Lutheran Board of Preschool Education is to set policy and to oversee the execution of those policies. This is done by a dedicated group of parents and congregation members who have a heart for the work of Christ and how it is carried out in the ministry to everyone in the preschool program.

### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The Board of Preschool Education has demonstrated a strong commitment to the Preschool by meeting monthly to set policies and oversee their delivery. (1, 2)
2. The director attends all board meetings and has entered into a partnership with the board to do what is best for both the preschool and the congregation. (1, 2)

### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Currently evaluations are not being done for the director based on the job description.(1,2, 4)  
**Evaluations need to be done yearly. It is recommended that the Board of Elders continue to be responsible for the spiritual and physical well-being of the Preschool Director and Staff. It is further recommended that the Preschool Board of Education, which works hand-in-hand with the day-to-day operations, be responsible for evaluating the director. This is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the Preschool Director and Board of Preschool Education. This review should be shared with the Board of Elders.**
2. The written short and long-range goals for the early childhood program have not been established.(1,2)  
**It is recommended that the Board of Preschool Education set up a committee that would annually assess the current progress and future growth goals of the preschool. These goals need to be written and shared.**

3. The current church by-laws state that the Board of Preschool Education will “review the entire preschool program periodically, for effectiveness and degree of participation”. They are not being reviewed on a regular basis. (1,2)

**It is recommended that this by-law (Article 7, Section 11, Letter C) as quoted above be amended to require formal review of the preschool program and policies at least every two years.**

## **Standard 3: Administration**

### **Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN**

#### **3B: The Early Childhood Director**

##### **Overview**

The Redeemer Lutheran Preschool Director sets a friendly, stable, efficient, and Christian example for the community, congregation, and staff. The Director has enabled her staff to feel confident and competent in their daily service to the preschool.

##### **Strengths**

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The Director has remarkable longevity of service to Redeemer Lutheran Preschool (1, 2, 4)
2. The Director, as a Christian leader, addresses all issues with patience, competence, and open-mindedness. (2)
3. The Director is an early childhood director who is highly respected across the synod, the district, her program, church, and community. (2,3,4)

##### **Concerns and Recommendations**

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The current roles of the Preschool staff are well defined and clear; however the roles of additional church staff in relation to the Preschool are not clear.(1,2)

**Church staff job descriptions need to be written and shared with the preschool staff.**

## Standard 4: Personnel

### Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN

#### Overview

After interviewing all staff members of Redeemer Lutheran Preschool individually, a positive attitude was shown for the church, preschool, the children and their families. It is evident that staff are passionate for the work they do and are very supportive of all.

#### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. The love of Christ is modeled through positive, warm, supportive interaction between: staff and children, staff and staff, and administration and staff. (2, 3)
2. Policy and procedure and staff handbook are very thorough and are used for staff orientation. (1, 3, 4)
3. The administration and staff demonstrate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a commitment to the mission and ministry of the school. (1, 2, 3)
4. Redeemer Lutheran Preschool has highly qualified staff who have multiple training opportunities for professional development both in house and regionally. (1, 2, 3, 4)
5. Paid planning, curriculum and a variety of resources are provided to all teachers. (1, 2, 4)
6. The personal testimonies of all staff are very positive and supportive of the church, center and each other. (2)

#### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Staff job descriptions are outdated. (1, 2, 4)  
**Ensure that all job descriptions are updated.**

## Standard 5: Teacher/Child Relations Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN

### Overview

Redeemer Lutheran Preschool has warm responsive teachers that love the children in their care. The children are treated in a respectful, Christ-centered manner that is evident as shown by all staff.

### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Redeemer Lutheran Preschool staff provides a warm and nurturing environment that encourages learning and independence. (1, 2, 3)
2. Children are respected and loved by the teaching staff. In addition, children are respectful of each other as encouraged by staff. (1, 2, 3)
3. Staff members get down to child's level, use very calming reassuring voices, responds to children's conversation and encourages them to use language to communicate. (1, 3, 4)
4. Staff model and promote positive social interactions in the classrooms. (1, 3, 4)

### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Preschool demographics do not mirror community demographics. (1, 2, 3, 4)  
**Work on recruitment of Hispanic families by continuing to provide events for families that are open to the public, participating in the Early Childhood Fair, and delivering May baskets to families within walking distance.**
2. Staff does not consistently use verbal positive behavior guidance techniques.(1, 3, 4)  
**We encourage additional training to staff so that behavior guidance is delivered effortlessly in positive statements rather than negative statements.**



# Standard 6: Indoor/Outdoor Environment and Health and Safety

## Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN

### Overview

The environment of Redeemer Lutheran Preschool is inviting, clean, generally well-designed, and welcoming.

### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Each classroom has a telephone which provides for easy communication to the office and easy access when needing to contact parents. Staff are allowed to use their cellphones for work related communication both indoors and outdoors. (2, 3)
2. Classrooms are welcoming and well equipped. (3)
3. The opportunity for large muscle activities is greatly enhanced by a large gymnasium near the classrooms. This is available to them daily and provides the needed space for active play especially on inclement weather days. (3)
4. Children's artwork is displayed throughout the preschool: in the classrooms, in the hallways, on bulletin boards and in presentations in common areas. (3)
5. The preschool has proper Health and Safety Policies written and enforced. (1, 2, 3, 4)

### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Some equipment is beginning to show its age. (1, 3)  
**Create a schedule for rotation of equipment upgrades for the classrooms and office. Schedule an annual center walk through with the board to view recent improvements and point out the needs for improvements.**
2. The outdoor equipment is aging and will need to be replaced. Safety surfacing has been added, but the depth has not been measured. (3)  
**Our recommendation would be that you go forward with plans to renovate the playground and that all loose materials safety surfaces be measured for adequate depth. U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has created guidelines for both public playground and home playground equipment. Refer to the guidelines available at <http://playgroundsafety.org/standards/cpsc>**

3. Although first aid kits are available in both classrooms and outdoors, they are not easily seen. (1)

**It is important that the bags be properly identified.**

4. An appropriate sanitizing solution is being used. However, there is some concern about placing chairs on top of sanitized table at the end of the day. (2, 3)

**We would recommend that alternatives be explored regarding where the chairs are placed at the end of the day, or ensure that the tables be cleaned and sanitized again once the chairs are removed in the morning.**

5. The placement of the hooks where the children hang coats and backpacks is so low that coats drag on the floor and are so close together that individual items are in contact with other children's items. They are also not labeled with children's names. (3)

**We recommend that the hooks be raised and re-spaced to ensure that items are off the floor and not touching or that the preschool invest in children's coat cubbies/lockers. It is recommended that the children's names be posted above each hook or on the coat cubby.**

## Standard 7: Curriculum

### Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN

#### Overview

The curriculum used at Redeemer Preschool is One in Christ, which is a trusted Lutheran curriculum. This curriculum has been validated by parents, board, and teachers.

#### Strengths

(1 = self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Curriculum is reviewed biannually by teachers and directors to ensure that in addition to the Christian education the preschool also provides strong elements in Spiritual/Social Living, Communications Arts, Expressive Arts, Wellness and Discovering the World to ensure student growth. (1,2,3,4)
2. Assessments, portfolios and development checklists are extensive and thorough. They provide parents with a clear idea of how their children are developing when teachers share this at parent teacher conferences. (1, 2, 3, 4)
3. Classrooms are set up in a safe, warm, inviting, nurturing, developmentally appropriate manner. There is a good use of learning centers (including an altar area). (1, 3)
4. Teachers use age appropriate Christian curriculum in every age group/room. Teachers value and enjoy sharing the love of Christ through their daily interactions, Bible stories, prayer, songs, Jesus Time, and many other experiences. (1, 2, 3, 4)
5. The philosophy of the preschool is reflected in a wide variety of ways (e.g: staff interactions, classroom and classroom materials, Chapel Time, bulletin boards, and curriculum). (1, 2, 3, 4)
6. The interview process with parents, teachers, church staff and congregation members repeatedly highlighted children's kindergarten readiness skills and the high quality program. (3)

#### Concerns and Recommendations

1= self-study report, 2 = interview, 3 = observation, 4 = written documentation)

1. Transition times are not consistently used as teachable moments. (1, 3)  
**Use transition times to do a 30 second commercial for learning.  
(e.g. finger plays, songs, games)**
2. Staff has little access to multi-cultural materials, resources, or training regarding community cultures. (1)  
**The purchase additional multi-cultural materials for the classroom (dolls, books and cultural items) and staff training should be considered.**

## **Report Summary Redeemer Lutheran Preschool – Willmar, MN**

**The visitation team unanimously recommends that Redeemer Lutheran Preschool, Willmar, MN receive National Lutheran School Accreditation.**

### **OUTSTANDING STRENGTHS:**

1. The Philosophy and Mission Statements are Christ-centered and are evident daily.
2. The staff and faculty genuinely care about each other, respect each other, and work well together.
3. The director, who is highly skilled, runs a well-organized and highly effective preschool.
4. It is clear that teachers understand that discipline is an opportunity to teach children.
5. There is a strong caring relationship between children, teachers, and parents.
6. Redeemer Lutheran Preschool has an excellent reputation in the community.
7. The children are well prepared for Kindergarten.

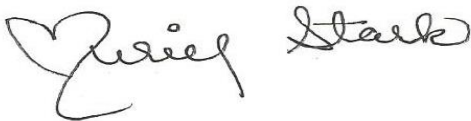
### **CONCERNS:**

1. The preschool director is not currently being evaluated.
2. The entire preschool program is not being reviewed on a regular basis.
3. The intentional evangelism follow through of the clientele without a home church has not yet been established.
4. The written short and long-range goals for the early childhood program have not been established.
5. An evaluation of the preschool program by the parents is not being done.
6. The delivery of positive behavior guidance methods is inconsistent.

We wholeheartedly compliment Redeemer Lutheran Preschool, the Director, staff, Board of Preschool Education, and congregation for their OUTSTANDING Preschool Program.

We would like you to celebrate all of your strengths and we trust that you will accept the responsibility to address the recommendations of this report.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Muriel Stark". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Signed:".

Muriel Stark, Site Team Captain

Date: April 3, 2014