

SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT  
ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS  
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FOR

Emmaus Lutheran School

840 S. Almansor Street

Alhambra, Ca. 91801

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## **Chapter I: Student/Community Profile**

Emmaus Lutheran School is a private Christian school located in Alhambra, California, an eastern suburb of Los Angeles. Established in 1941, Emmaus has been at its present, six-acre location at 840 South Almansor Street since 1950. The campus sits in a residential neighborhood, housed on two sides by Almansor Park, a very large park facility, and is overlooked by the San Gabriel Mountains. Currently, Emmaus has a well-rounded, academic program for preschool through eighth grade. Emmaus Lutheran School is part of the Pacific Southwest District (PSWD) of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), one of more than 1,500 schools nation-wide.

Emmaus has been a part of the San Gabriel Valley for 80 years, and has been a beacon to the community it serves. In 1941, a Christian day school was established. Emmaus Lutheran School has been dedicated since first opening in 1941 to help young people, through God's grace, lead active Christian lives and excel academically, socially, and physically. Emmaus Lutheran continues to grow and change to meet the needs of its diverse families and the demands of the 21st century.

Emmaus has nine teachers, two Extended Day Care staff, a school secretary, a financial secretary, a full time school aide and one part-time aide. The current elementary enrollment is 114 students. The campus has eleven classrooms including the preschool facilities, gymnasium and kitchen, administrative offices for both the school and church, a library, a multipurpose room, used by both the school and the church, and the church sanctuary, used to hold weekly chapel and other school worship services. There are separate playground areas for the preschool, kindergarten and elementary grades. There is a large grassy area for students to use and one large black top area, which has four basketball hoops in place and accommodations for two volleyball courts. Emmaus, in accordance with the Alhambra Recreational Departments, uses Almansor Park for P.E. and recreational purposes.

Emmaus Lutheran School serves a culturally diverse population. The ethnic breakdown of Alhambra consists of 51% Asian, 34 Hispanic, 9% White, and 2% Black or African American. The school's current enrollment is made up of 68% Asian, 13% Hispanic, 3% Caucasian, and 17% Multi-Ethnic, which reflects the ethnic breakdown of its immediate community. Emmaus has strong ties to this community, having had a presence for over 80 years. The school pursues ways to be involved in the community, such as partnering with businesses and organizations, and participating in community activities.

## **Chapter II: Progress Report**

Since its last full WASC visit in 2017, Emmaus has experienced significant changes in leadership. Emmaus Lutheran Church called a new administrative pastor; the principal accepted a call to serve as principal of a Lutheran high school; one vice-principal, who also taught fourth grade, accepted a job offer in 2021. The volume and nature of these changes were challenging, but school leadership has been working to mitigate the impact. A new administrative pastor has been called, a new fourth grade teacher is in place, and after careful deliberation, the board chose to appoint two teachers as interim co vice-principals to lead the school, while taking a year to select a new principal.

In this time period there have been improvements to the physical infrastructure, including the addition of a covered lunch area which doubles as an outdoor classroom. The school also installed two shade structures over the playground areas. The front parking lot has been repaved, and a new security door, accessed by security code, has been installed to enhance campus security. The school upgraded its Wifi capabilities in response to COVID-19 as the school went online. In 2021, Emmaus purchased a chromebook cart with 20 computers, three new projectors, and two desktop computers to boost the delivery of instruction using technology.

Curricular changes include the addition of a new mathematics curriculum in grades 6-8, with geometry being offered online in collaboration with Lutheran High School of Orange. The English Language Learner (ELL) program was incorporated to provide instruction to international students and those needing English language development, and Spanish instruction was added at all grades. COVID-19 has necessitated a pause to the ELL program as with the Spanish program. As conditions improve, the school plans to restart these programs. Emmaus continues to offer a rich afternoon slate of classes including art, piano, cooking, chess, archery and soccer.

As with schools across the nation, Emmaus was closed on March 13, 2020. After two weeks, the school transitioned to online instruction before welcoming students back to campus on March 8, 2021. After returning to on-campus instruction, the school continued to offer remote learning through the 2020-2021 school year to serve the needs of families communicating that preference. At present, all instruction is in-person. Pandemic concerns did result in a significant drop in school enrollment, but the school reports the return of some of its families and new enrollments with the passage of time.

### **Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up**

The school identified and responded to five areas of need:

1. Develop a strategic master plan
2. Evaluate and disaggregate assessment data

3. Create a formal written evangelism plan
4. Review and update existing personnel handbooks
5. Address vocabulary development among students

## **Responses**

### **1. Strategic Master Plan**

Emmaus considers the ongoing development a master plan as integral for the health and success of the school as it focuses on student learning. A rough draft of the plan was drafted, but not finalized due to the fluctuations in leadership personnel. In 2018, the PSWD sent a revitalization team “to evaluate the overall ministry.” The completion of this process was halted in the wake of COVID-19 and changes in leadership staff. While the development of the master plan is ongoing, Emmaus has worked with the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF, an organization that provides faith-based financial services) and a representative recommended by the PSWD to help get Emmaus’ financial affairs in order. These measures resulted in the addition of a new treasurer and financial team and several new inhouse procedures. Although this is not a strategic plan in the traditional sense, cash flow projections and long-range projecting are the start to an overall ministry plan.

### **2. Assessment Data**

Emmaus is pleased with its testing program. In addition to the Accelerated Reading used to measure reading, comprehension, and vocabulary in Kindergarten through Grade 8 since 2015, Emmaus replaced the ITBS with the MAP Growth and MAP Reading Fluency NWEA tests in 2019. These assessments were not completed in the fall of 2020 and winter of 2021 while the school was online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers review MAP Growth reports with the students and parents during Parent-Teacher conferences. Some teachers create specific goals for their students through NWEA. The analysis of test results led Emmaus to increase its focus on strategies to improve reading in grades 6-8. The school also revised its curriculum guide to reflect the way its Comet Commitments (SLOs) are being implemented in the classrooms.

### **3. Evangelism Plan**

Emmaus Lutheran Church and School considers the school family as their “mission field.” Emmaus faculty and pastors used resources from Lutheran Hour Ministries “Intentional Outreach Plan for Lutheran Schools” to create an evangelism plan for implementation in the 2021-22 school year. Aspects of the plan include open worship services for families throughout the year, weekly student chapels, staff daily devotionals and monthly Bible studies, an intentional incorporation of Bible study in the Religion curriculum, the inclusion of virtual mission tours, and service projects. During Lutheran Schools Week, students are invited to be baptized at a Sunday worship service.

#### 4. Policy Handbooks

The school continually reviews and updates its policy handbooks “to meet legal obligations and improve the efficiency of school operations.” The 2015 handbook created with the assistance of Paychex, was replaced in 2017, when the school contracted with Ministry Works as its payroll service and a resource for HR support. At present, the church council is reviewing and revising the employee handbook.

#### 5. Vocabulary Development

Recognizing the need for a school-wide approach to improving vocabulary, a school development committee was established. One of its goals was to recommend curricular changes that would lead to improved vocabulary across the grades. The Accelerated Reader was added to all grade levels, assisting teachers with an assessment tool and benchmark assessments throughout the year to see the growth of students.

Emmaus implemented a specific vocabulary curriculum, Wordly Wise. Vocabulary was made as a separate report card grade beginning in second grade. Over the 6 years, Emmaus has noticed positive improvements in test scores and writing assignments. The school also implemented an ELL class using the IXL program. This class was first taught by a full-time teacher, then a part-time teacher. As international student enrollment declined due to COVID-19, instruction was provided by one of the teachers as a part of departmentalization.

Emmaus reports that student learning was directly impacted by the intentional improvement of vocabulary curriculum and instruction. Student writing and comprehension have also improved. English language learner students showed good progress especially with one-on-one instruction and the modifications provided for them in the classroom.

### **Chapter III: Self-Study Process**

Emmaus has identified four Student Learner Outcomes (SLOs), called Comet Commitments, to define the school goals for students:

Christ, Curriculum, Character, Community

#### CHRIST

- Students learn and apply Bible truths.
- Students develop their faith through daily living, devotionals, daily prayer, worship, music and drama.

## CURRICULUM

- Students read, write and calculate guided by California and Federal curriculum standards in the areas of Math, Science, History, Language Arts, Fine Arts, and Physical Wellness.
- Students develop communication, critical thinking, and problem solving skills in all curricular areas.

## CHARACTER

- Students demonstrate respect and responsibility towards others.
- Students show leadership, sportsmanship, and cooperation through a variety of experiences.

## COMMUNITY

- Students serve others within the school community and the community at-large.
- Students participate in campus events that reach out to the community.

After the WASC mid-term visit in 2017, Emmaus continued the process of school improvement under the leadership of the school's principal with limited input from stakeholders. With the change in administration there was a gap in the process before the newly appointed interim co-vice principals focused the attention of stakeholders on the self-study process. In 2021 a leadership team was selected and focus groups were organized under the leader of a faculty member. Each focus group included members of all stakeholder groups, except students. Student involvement was limited to surveys for feedback. The coordinator completed the introductory sections of the report with the focus group leaders in collaboration with faculty and staff, pastors and church council members, administrators and school board members, and parents produced their sections to complete the study. The document was completed in December 2021 in preparation for the February 6-9 WASC visiting committee's arrival.

The school places emphasis on the Comet Commitments (SLOs) as indicators that students are educated in accordance with the vision and goals of the institution. The Comet Commitments are effectively communicated to students and parents in writing, are displayed in classrooms and throughout the campus, and verbalized in school gatherings.

Data analysis of student and parents surveys led the school to address the areas of language development and mathematics. Faculty review of MAP testing has led to improvements in the delivery of vocabulary instruction K-8, with improvements demonstrated in year-end assessment and improved writing.

Emmaus is committed to ongoing improvement of its entire program as evidenced by the participation of the staff, parents, board members and church leadership in the accreditation self-study process. In addition, the church and school leadership, in March 2021, sought counsel from the Pacific Southwest District school ministry office. The focus of this consultancy was to clarify/unify the mission of the church and school, and to address declining church

membership and joint fiscal concerns. Strategic planning, financial management and recruitment have been strengthened by these collaborations. The academic program is also closely monitored by the leadership team and classroom teachers.

The school has identified long-range action plans targeting these areas of need: strategic planning, fiscal solvency and recruitment, and continued professional development for staff and faculty aimed at preparing teachers to more effectively impact what students learn as they pursue the academic standards of the various disciplines to meet the ACS-WASC and NLSA criteria.

## **Chapter IV: Quality of the School's Program**

### **CATEGORY A. ORGANIZATION FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

#### **A1. School Purpose**

Emmaus Lutheran School is operated by Emmaus Lutheran Church, an LCMS congregation. The church identifies Christian education, and the school in particular, as its primary mission opportunity. (Secondarily, the church has a Chinese ministry and congregation, an outreach to the Chinese community that surrounds the church and school. )

The school acknowledges its purpose in its own mission statement, "Emmaus Lutheran exists in order to help young people, through God's Grace, lead active Christian lives, and excel academically, socially, and physically." The school's Comet Commitments further define the school's goals for students: Christ, Curriculum, Character, Community and the school's programs reflect consistency with the school's mission and schoolwide learner outcomes.

The school's mission and Comet Commitments were developed in consultation with stakeholders and are communicated to staff, students, parents and others by a variety of means: public displays, school publications, a student Scavenger Hunt, and in the weekly newsletter with a Comet Commitment of the Week feature. The school's accreditation process and annual reviews provide a process for regular review and revision of the school purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes.

#### **A2. Governance**

Emmaus Lutheran School has a governing board, the Board of School Ministries, that exists as part of the overall congregational governance structure. The congregation's constitution and bylaws outline clear procedures for the selection and terms of board members. Each of the six board members must be members of Emmaus Lutheran Church and serve for a two-year term. Board members may be re-elected for multiple terms. Most current board members have done so. The school administration members serve ex-officio. The church's constitution and the

board's policy manual define the duties of board members and serve as resources for board agendas and operation. The board's policies are connected to the school's vision, mission and Comet Commitments.

The school community understands the Board of School Ministry's role. Board meetings are open to the public (except for executive sessions) and board actions are communicated to school families. Faculty members are assigned to attend one meeting during the school year to share events in their classrooms, but some faculty members choose to attend board meetings on a regular basis.

The Board of School Ministry recognizes its roles are to design policy, strategically plan, monitor student progress and audit fiduciary matters while leaving day-to-day operational decisions to the administration. The board's policy handbook clearly outlines the duties of board membership and a plan for self-evaluation, but training and evaluation have not occurred in some time. This is an area of growth.

Two teachers are temporarily filling in as co vice-principals and therefore are seeking counsel from the Board of Ministry on a regular basis. At this time, the board is not conducting formal administrative evaluations.

There is a clear complaint and conflict resolution procedure based on Matthew 18. The procedure is communicated in the board policy manual, the staff handbook and the parent handbook.

### A3. School Leadership

The school is currently without a principal. The former principal left the school in Summer 2021. Two teachers are acting as co vice-principals while the church/school leadership seeks and interviews candidates for a new principal.

The school has administrator- and faculty-written policies and procedures documents that define the relationship of the leadership and staff, but lacks adequate position descriptions for each member of the staff. There is a staff handbook, but it is in need of updating. Staff members are empowered to take actions that improve student performance and achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes

The acting school administrators are on the LCMS roster, demonstrate personal Christian faith and are committed to Lutheran education. They are qualified for their roles and provide spiritual leadership for the school and community.

The small size of the school and the current administrative structure necessitate extensive collaboration and shared responsibility among all faculty members for planning and

achievement of the schoolwide learning outcomes. All faculty members take on extra roles for the good of the school and its students. Emmaus' school size also makes necessary communication easier as faculty members are in frequent contact with each other (both formal and informal.)

#### A4. Staff

Emmaus Lutheran School expresses a preference for hiring educators who are on the LCMS roster, however there is a shortage of such teachers available so the majority of the faculty are not. There is not a formal plan for training such teachers in the tenets of Lutheran theology. All teachers are Christian and are qualified for their roles. All teachers understand the mission of Lutheran schools and are empowered and equipped to ensure implementation of the school's Lutheran identity.

The staff handbook outlines responsibilities, operational procedures and codes of conduct, but has not been updated since 2015. This is an area of growth.

All teachers take on responsibilities outside the classroom that utilize their particular skills and abilities in order to further the mission of the school and the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes.

Currently there is no formal teacher evaluation process in place, but faculty members are involved in Learning Walk Snapshots, an informal process that encourages collegial observation and collaboration.

The school supports professional development for the faculty who are invited to attend the annual Lutheran Educators Conference (LEC) as well as participate in other professional training opportunities including induction and GLAD training. There is not currently a process in place to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development and its effect on student performance.

#### A5. School Environment

Emmaus Lutheran School demonstrates care, concern and high expectations for students. Its small size and small student-to-teacher ratio mean that teachers know each child well and are able to provide individual attention to each. Because of the ethnic and language diversity of the students, the school staff is sensitive to the needs of English language learners and international students. Staff members have been trained in GLAD (a program for language acquisition) and the school has a support program for ELL students.

The school recognizes and celebrates student successes in a variety of ways: merit, honor and Principal's list awards, character and sports awards, Colossal Comet recognition, annual subject awards and display of student projects.

There is an environment of mutual love and respect between students, faculty, administration and the rest of the school community who speak well of each other and demonstrate care and concern for the well-being of Emmaus Lutheran School. The parents, in particular, uphold the Emmaus staff as the reason for their satisfaction with the school.

The school facility is safe, secure and maintained. Students move about the campus in an orderly fashion to minimize disruptions and ensure the safety of others. The school has an intercom system and teachers have walkie talkies available for emergency use. There are plans and drills in place for fire, earthquake, and lockdown emergencies as well as plans/training to keep students safe when online.

#### A6. Reporting Student Progress

Emmaus Lutheran School regularly reports student progress to the governing board and to school parents. The school monitors student progress using MAP testing (three times per year), Accelerated Reader assessments, as well as quarterly school progress reports and report cards. Teachers meet with parents formally in parent conferences as well as informally as requested.

MAP testing is new to the faculty (they have had only one complete round) and the administrator acknowledges the need for additional faculty training in the use of scores to inform instruction and improve student performance.

#### A7. School Improvement Process

Emmaus utilizes the accreditation process to facilitate school improvement. The accreditation process is collaborative and involves all stakeholders in examining critical learner needs and achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes. This process results in an action plan that is reviewed annually as part of the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) reporting process.

At this time, the energies of the school leadership are directed toward the future leadership, increasing enrollment and the long-term sustainability of the school. This leaves little time/energy for aligning professional development, teacher evaluation and allocation of resources. This is an area of growth for the future.

## **Areas of Strength for Organization for Student Learning Category**

- The school's mission and ministry as a Lutheran Christian school are evident in the school environment and in the words/actions of the staff members and students.
- The Emmaus faculty is extraordinarily committed to the mission and ministry of the school. Faculty members are beloved by students and parents alike.
- The size of the school and small student-to-teacher ratio mean that teachers know each child well and are able to provide individual attention as needed.
- The acting administrators have been and continue to be effective in their roles, providing leadership in a time of pandemic and transition.
- The school campus is both safe and pleasant.

## **Key Issues for Organization for Student Learning**

- Update staff/parent/board handbooks and develop accurate position descriptions for all positions.
- Provide training and self-evaluation opportunities for the Board of School Ministry.
- Align professional development, teacher evaluation and resources for student performance improvement.
- Provide training in Lutheran theological distinctives for non-Lutheran teaching faculty.

## **Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

- Stakeholder interviews
- Observation
- Walkthrough of physical plant
- Parent/Staff/Board handbooks

## **CATEGORY B. CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT**

### **B1. What Students Learn**

Emmaus meets and/or exceeds standards for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Teachers and staff have regular meetings to discuss how curriculum and instruction are aligned with state standards. Teachers collaborate on identifying Power Standards for each grade level

and ways to address these standards as students progress through grade levels. The process for curriculum review focuses on one subject area per year seeking to ensure vertical alignment. Emmaus also works with other schools and the district to get feedback.

Teachers address student needs in a variety of ways. Technology has become a prominent component in every classroom and is integrated both in daily lessons and with extensive computer class curriculum. Teachers and parents work together to facilitate student learning. Most classrooms utilize active boards and cameras to enhance the lessons. Teachers seemed very comfortable using these tools and used them effectively for their grade level.

The administration and staff at Emmaus Lutheran School is committed to creating a rigorous, well rounded learning environment focused on student learning. The technology program at Emmaus provides more opportunities for students to develop skills at their academic level. The implementation of MAP growth assessments, the continued use of STAR reading assessments and Mathseeds/Mathletics, and the teacher collaboration meetings on Power Standards and Grade-level meetings show that Emmaus is dedicated to teaching the building blocks of 21st century learning.

The Mathseeds/Mathletics and MAP are tools used both to teach and assess at grade level. Emmaus has made a conscious effort to expand student learning by using these tools. The school adopts curriculum and teaching methods to provide academic rigor for their students. Students are engaged in the lessons and have bought into the Comet Commitments as presented to them on a regular basis.

Based on this data, teachers are better able to set goals for each student, allowing students more opportunity for personal growth and academic progress. Teachers have found that there needs to be a unified writing curriculum so that student learning builds upon previous years as students progress through the grade levels.

The MAP data presented by the school shows that Emmaus students test above the national averages in math, reading, and language arts. Each grade level shows consistent growth and performance that is either just above the averages or greatly exceeding the averages. The school is aware that in the area of writing standards and curriculum there is a lack of consistency and are actively looking for ways to address this.

## B2. How Students Learn

MAP Testing was implemented in the 2018-2019 school year. Teachers have limited training on how to read the scores and how to understand the reports. The teachers at Emmaus Lutheran School plan to use the data to create goals for students and to level where needed to support differentiation in the classroom. Report cards and any additional information regarding a students' needs are also available in their cumulative file.

Teachers and staff also participate in “Learning Walk Snapshots” where they visit classrooms of fellow teachers. These walks are not formal evaluations but rather just what the name implies, a snapshot on a given day, of a specific lesson. Teachers then share this information and discuss the findings that day.

The staff at Emmaus Lutheran School recognizes that they play a vital role in helping students establish goals based on their strengths and interests. The teachers work hard to provide a relevant and comprehensive curriculum that is engaging, effective, and accessible so that all students are prepared for a successful future. Emmaus teachers engage in learning opportunities outside the classroom to ensure that they remain current in their fields of study and find new ways to connect students to the content that is taught. Emmaus’ staff seeks professional development in areas of technology integration, and research-based learning. Workshops attended include LEC, Google for Education, SLED, and GLAD. After workshops, teachers share the information they learn with the rest of the teaching staff.

The staff indicated that LEC was one of the best tools for staff development. Teachers are also able to acquire supplemental materials used at the school.

The staff and leadership indicated that the MAP testing is a tool that is helping them to better assess student progress and they are looking forward to further training on this program for the teachers. Teachers are able use the basic information from these reports to design and modify instruction based on the individual needs of students.

All classrooms have some form of technology including Activeboards and cameras. Depending on the grade level and the content these were used effectively. Students were engaged in the lessons and these tools added to the overall flow and pace of the classroom.

### B3. How Assessment Is Used

Emmaus teachers use a variety of assessment tools to determine that the students have acquired a specific body of knowledge in focus. Teachers question the students during the lesson to check for understanding. Students demonstrate knowledge about what they learned using the whiteboard, posters, small group presentations, flipgrids, and individual projects. Traditional methods of assessment include observations, quizzes, tests, and journaling. Upper grade teachers use technologies including apps like Nearpod, Quizizz, and Kahoot to check for understanding.

Pre-testing and review are done both formally and informally using KWL charts, Think-Pair-Share, Quizizz, Jeopardy, Quiz-Quiz-Trade, and Sage & Scribe, and a variety of other methods to check for understanding.

Group and individual projects are used in all grade levels Kindergarten through Eighth grade. Examples include book reports, state reports, Science projects, animal reports, and student-created models. Teachers monitor progress informally and formally as these projects

are being developed. Emmaus teachers also implement differentiation based on knowledge of subject material utilizing various methods of test forms.

MAP Testing provides a snapshot of each student's ability in tested subject areas and provides information about gaps in knowledge. Teachers use these findings to develop lesson plans to match individual student goals. Mathseeds and Mathletics are implemented in all grades to focus on individual skill improvement in math. Accelerated Reader is used to address deficiencies in reading. Student Google accounts and additional online applications (Flipgrid, Nearpod, Kahoot, Quizziz) are used in the classroom and are password protected to insure the integrity of work completed and turned in.

Emmaus teachers use a variety of methods to measure students' growth and to strengthen their skills. STAR Reading and Mathseeds/Mathletics allow students to practice their reading and math skills while progressing at their own level, effectively differentiating the learning so all students can advance at their own pace.

Math classes in seventh and eighth grade are leveled to provide students math instruction for their individual skill set. High achieving students may take Geometry through an association with the local Lutheran high school.

### **Areas of Strength for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

- Clear lesson plans aligned with State Standards followed up with engaging lessons in the classroom.
- Teachers are well prepared and create a classroom environment where students want to learn.
- Teachers and staff collaborate on a regular basis and support each other to continually improve learning in the classroom.

### **Key Issues for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

- Vertically align the writing curriculum
- Provide further training in MAP assessments and their application to improve student performance

### **Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:**

- Classroom observations
- Focus group discussions
- Student interviews

## **CATEGORY C. SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GROWTH**

### **C1. Student Connectedness**

Emmaus Lutheran School has many services in place to encourage students' academic and social growth. Emmaus invites community members to speak to students about various careers and professional opportunities, such as police, fire fighters, and zookeepers. Counseling services are available through church pastors. Teachers are willing to help students with content and assignments during breaks and after school. In addition, for a small fee, students can get homework help and tutoring with qualified teachers. If students are identified as performing below academic standards and are in need of greater intervention strategies, teachers refer parents to have their student tested in the public school system. If a student at Emmaus has an IEP, teachers work in conjunction with professionals provided by the district to implement accommodations to meet the specific needs of the learner.

Emmaus utilizes several academic strategies to provide for interventions and individualized instruction. The Accelerated Reader program allows teachers to set individualized goals based on the student's reading level. The program tracks progress as it strengthens reading fluency and comprehension.

The ELL program is available for students whose primary language is not English. This is beneficial, especially for the students who are in the I-20 program. To identify at-risk learners, teachers use other resources such as grade level assessments, STAR Reading, NWEA MAP scores, unit and lesson tests, classwork, and observations.

Emmaus recognizes the value of a collaborative environment to promote learning. Teachers meet regularly to discuss curriculum, how to support learners, and grade level events. In addition, teachers have opportunities to observe colleagues, share advice, and offer constructive feedback through "Learning Walks". Not only do the teachers collaborate to develop instructional techniques and personalized approaches for their learners, but the students collaborate through centers, STEM activities, and peer-to-peer tutoring.

Emmaus Lutheran School is the church's primary outreach and therefore, the faculty and pastors have created an Intentional Evangelism Plan. It is the school's goal to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Evangelism is demonstrated through focusing on Growing in the Word, Living in the Word, Bible instruction, and encouraging family connections to the church and school. staff prays daily for students and their families and invites them to Sunday worship. One way the families are led to worship is when their student is singing in the choir or playing hand bells at Sunday worship service. The Emmaus staff recognizes the value of evaluating their evangelism plan mid-year to assess progress and make needed adjustments.

Students at Emmaus are encouraged to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities to grow in their faith, develop communication skills and practice responsibility. Activities that are

available include: handbells, computer class, choir, Spelling Bees, in-class dramas, Extended Day Care and sports. Opportunities to serve on student government for grades 4-8 encourage leadership and collaboration. These programs align directly with the Comet Commitments: Christ, Curriculum, Character, and Community and help students to grow academically, socially and physically. Emmaus has demonstrated high involvement in after school sports. School spirit is encouraged through pep rallies and individual accomplishments are recognized through awards given by coaches.

Emmaus provides access for all students to curricular and co-curricular activities. The staff reflects on student involvement after analyzing feedback from parents via formal surveys and informal conversations. After determining that K-8 field trips are relevant to the current curriculum, the staff will move forward with planning and leading students on field trips to enhance the learning program. Emmaus provides fund-raising opportunities to make sure that the costs of field trips do not overburden families and to allow equal access to all students. In addition, all students in grades 4 -8 are encouraged to join a sports team if they are interested.

To meet the needs of the student population who fall below standard, teachers meet with administration and parents to address student challenges. If necessary, students are referred for testing and evaluation through the public schools to see if they meet the requirements for educational support services.

Students are comfortable bringing concerns to teachers. Teachers and administrators listen to students and collect data from student surveys to gain feedback about how students view their educational experience at Emmaus.

## C2. Parent/Community Involvement

Emmaus recognizes the correlation between parent involvement and support and school success. Although recently, COVID restrictions have impacted parent involvement. In the past, Emmaus has required Parent Participation Hours. Parents have opportunities to serve by actively partnering with the school staff to coordinate the Book Fair and other events such as the Fall Festival, Christmas Extravaganza, and Easter Egg hunt. Emmaus parents are involved and desire to help the school/teachers in a variety of supportive roles.

Parents and family members are welcomed and encouraged to attend worship services at Emmaus Lutheran Church, especially when their student is participating in the service. There are numerous opportunities to watch their students perform through choir (grades K-8), hand bells (grades 6-8), concerts, and plays.

An integral part of the SLOs is the fourth "C" of the Comet Commitments: Community. Community involvement and partnership with local businesses benefits Emmaus. Guest speakers from the community (police officers, firefighters, etc.) speak to students in assemblies

and individual classrooms which builds a sense of community in the students and demonstrates leadership. Local businesses have also donated funds and items to support the school in various ways.

Comet Commitments (SLOs) are posted in classrooms and around campus. Emmaus effectively communicates the Comet Commitments to parents at Back to School night along with highlighting one Comet Commitment each week in the Comet Connection (newsletter).

### **Areas of Strength for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth**

- Excellent relationships between teachers, students, and parents (students have a voice and teachers have built relationships with students and parents)
- Homework Help is a great resource for students and lead by qualified teachers
- Comet Commitments (SLOs) are connected to the academic standards, the curriculum, and the co-curricular activities
- An ELL program is in place to help younger students learn to speak, read and write English
- The committee developed and is implementing an intentional Evangelism Plan
- Websites, Social Media pages, and email communication (Comet Connection) are informational and kept up to date
- Test scores are shared with parents during parent teacher conferences in the fall
- Student and parent surveys are conducted throughout the year which provides relevant feedback for teachers and administration
- Strong participation by students in athletic program, choir, handbells, student government, and drama provide for an important link to development of Comet Commitments

### **Key Issues for Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth**

- Improve collaboration and communication between church and school ministries
- Develop a written counseling plan for students

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

- Stakeholder interviews
- Observation
- Walkthrough of physical plant
- Parent/Student Surveys
- School website
- Faculty meeting agendas/minutes
- Interviews with student council and parents

## **CATEGORY D. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **D1. Resources**

Emmaus School leadership, staff, School Board, and Church Council carefully consider the school's mission, Comet Commitments (SLOs) and academic standards when making decisions about allocating available resources and funds. Maintaining a safe and secure environment for the students is a top priority. Leadership solicits input from parents and teachers before expenditures are determined by the administration and school board. To supplement income, Emmaus holds various fundraisers and has been able to update technology, support curriculum needs, add playground equipment, purchase books, and give the staff gifts with these funds. Title II Funds from the Alhambra Unified School District and budgeted money are used for professional development that supports the established goals to improve student achievement. Curriculum materials and an updated WIFI system was purchased using PSWD grants on behalf of the Trinity Lutheran Church Educational Endowment Fund. In addition, Emmaus Church has used private donations to complete upgrades around the campus such as a pavilion and re-paving a parking lot.

The principal, Board of School Ministries, and finance committee develop an annual budget based on the needs of the school. When determining the needs of the school the following are considered: test scores, program, curriculum, and SLOs. Once the budget is drafted and approved by the Church Council, the proposed budget is presented to the congregation and requires a 2/3rds majority to pass.

Emmaus Lutheran Church and School is situated on 6 acres and provides a spacious facility for curricular and co-curricular events. The Church Council has a Board of Trustees who oversee the upkeep of facilities which includes classrooms, administrative buildings, library, playgrounds, sport fields, outdoor basketball courts and gymnasium with a full kitchen. Emmaus has enlisted church volunteers, who are overseen by the Senior Pastor and a member of the Board of Trustees, to help take care of maintenance around the campus. Also, Emmaus has contracts for routine services that are necessary in maintaining a safe and clean environment.

The school is completely fenced; visitors may enter through a locked security door with a camera. The main school building has an alarm system.

Support materials and classroom supplies are part of the budget; teachers are allocated \$300 per school year to purchase necessary instructional materials. Book Fair proceeds are used to enhance school and classroom libraries. Emmaus has technology in place to augment the learning program. Each classroom has WIFI access points and ACTIVEboards. The students at Emmaus utilize both laptops and Chromebooks; teachers are able to integrate technology into their lessons. Emmaus has contracted with Beyond Technology Education so that students have access to technology and designated instructional time weekly. Technology projects correlate with the grade level curriculum.

Emmaus recognizes that their greatest asset are the members of its faculty, administration, and support staff. All teachers hold a bachelor's degree, several hold a Master's, and most have a teaching credential or are in process of earning a CA teaching credential. Administration places a priority on hiring LCMS-trained teachers. Prospective teachers are thoroughly vetted and interviewed before a recommendation for hiring is made to the school board. When new teachers are hired, there is a support system in place and formal and informal observations are performed by administration to ensure that "best practices" are fostered. To encourage professional growth, teachers are given the opportunity to attend professional growth training and the annual LEC educator's conference. It is noted that teachers have not received a salary increase for several years; during the visit there were discussions about a possible increase for the 2022-23 school year. Teachers and staff are dedicated to providing students with an excellent education with Christ at the core.

## D2. Resource Planning

Emmaus has been resourceful as they navigated COVID challenges and low student enrollment. School and church leadership review financial summaries and forecasts monthly. The church obtained a line of credit from the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, obtained a Small Business Administration Loan and received Paycheck Protection Program from the Federal Government. Also, the church and school went through a "revitalization" process and are currently working on the development of a Strategic Plan. This process will help Emmaus become more fiscally stable and plan more effectively for the future.

Emmaus seeks to solicit feedback from staff, administration/leadership, and parents when developing long-range plans. They do so through bi-annual parent surveys, parent-teacher conferences, and monthly staff meetings. It is vital to a strong academic program that all curriculum and technology utilized at Emmaus is research-based.

Stakeholders including faculty, staff, parents, alumni, students, and members of Emmaus Lutheran Church, work together for the future planning of the school in order to carry out the mission. Their collaboration is evident in fundraising and accomplishing projects that enhance the learning environment and safety of the school. Administrators create monthly reports for the school board which includes information about the Elementary School, Preschool, and Extended Day Care program. The pastor attends school board meetings. The Church Council is also informed of the school's highlights each month. Parents and teachers are welcome to attend school board meetings. Students are also part of the driving force when it comes to making decisions. They may voice their opinions and thoughts through surveys, informal conversations, and participation in student government.

To promote transparency, Emmaus communicates using a variety of strategies. Information is communicated via the church and school websites, newsletters, social media, and Around Alhambra newspaper.

Emmaus has developed a marketing plan which includes signage, website, newspaper ad, and advertisement with the Alhambra Chamber of Commerce. The school has a professional marketing video and advertises on Facebook, Instagram and KKLA radio. Emmaus seeks to add more strategies for marketing to the community which includes promoting the school to local churches, promoting upper grades to local schools that end at lower grade levels, and improving Yelp reviews.

### **Areas of Strength for Resource Management and Development**

- Facilities at Emmaus include a large campus, library, gymnasium with stage. Classrooms are large enough to accommodate additional students.
- Committed faculty and staff who are invested in the school and willing to use their strengths and resources to go beyond the typical teaching expectations
- School contracts with Beyond Technology to provide Technology Program for K-8 students
- Staff have opportunities for professional development and are encouraged to attend Lutheran Educators Conference (LEC) each year.

### **Key Issues for Resource Management and Development**

- Develop and implement a strategic plan for marketing the school in order to improve enrollment

- Further develop the International Student program
- Provide salary increases that will allow Emmaus to maintain quality teachers and staff
- Improve third source funding e.g.rental property, alumni donations
- Strengthen partnership with parents through a more organized Parent Teacher League (PTL)

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

- Observation
- School Budget
- Stakeholders interview
- Walkthrough of physical plant
- Parent surveys
- Board of School Ministries Meeting Minutes

## **Part B: Schoolwide Strengths and Critical Areas for Follow-up**

### **Schoolwide Areas of Strength**

1. The Interim co-vice-principals are providing extraordinary leadership during a difficult period of pandemic and transition.
2. The Emmaus faculty demonstrates exemplary commitment to the mission and ministry of the school. They are well-prepared and create classroom cultures where students are supported in their personal, spiritual, and academic development.
3. Stakeholders agree that administration and faculty have created a school environment best described as “family.”
4. There is strong participation by students in extracurricular activities including athletic programs, choir, handbells, student government, and drama, providing an important link to the demonstration of Comet Commitments.
5. School contracts with Beyond Technology to provide a technology program for K-8 students.

## **Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-Up**

1. Update staff/parent/board handbooks and develop accurate position descriptions for all positions.
2. Vertically align the writing curriculum
3. Create and implement a professional development plan, including providing further training in MAP assessments and their application to improve student performance
4. Improve collaboration and communication between church and school ministries
5. Develop and implement a strategic plan for marketing the school to improve enrollment and providing fiscal resources for school sustainability

## **Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement**

Emmaus has identified four schoolwide action plans in its continued commitment to deliver a quality education experience to its students while ensuring the ongoing viability of the school:

### **1. Implement a cycle of curriculum adoption and review**

Emmaus has committed to ongoing curriculum review and adjustment to meet the needs of its students. Changes in vocabulary curriculum and Math have resulted from this process in the last cycle.

### **2. Complete and implement the strategic plan**

The school continues to recognize the need for a strategic plan to address its viability. Conditions have led to this being suspended to deal with pressing issues arising from the pandemic and changes in church and school leadership. Leadership recognizes that a successful plan needs to incorporate leaders of church and school due to the intricate nature of their relationship tied to shared resources and facilities.

### **3. Implement a marketing plan**

The school recognizes the importance of marketing to expand its ministry to the community. Leadership has committed personnel and resources to the development and implementation of a plan to build its enrollment and secure resources to fund its ministry.

### **4. Create and implement a professional development plan**

Emmaus Lutheran School will need solid administrative leadership, a healthy church-school relationship and solid financial footing to accomplish the schoolwide action plan. The school has assigned responsible parties, identified a workable timetable, resources needed and

assessments for each of its action plan tasks. The school may benefit from the inclusion of representative members from the non-administrative faculty on committees working on the action plans.