# GROWING DEEP

## Leadership & Formation Framework

## School Improvement Framework

Lutheran Education
AUSTRALIA

# Content List

# Purpose

The *School Improvement Framework* (SIF) reflects the Board for Lutheran Education Australia's and Principals' requests to build a document that has:

## focus on growth and improvement

Each school has, its own context with a level of diversity in its practice. As reflective practitioners of Lutheran education, principals have an imperative for growth and improvement. The school improvement tool supports this growth in the context of the individual school with the benefit of having a Lutheran lens.

## consistent Lutheran sector approach

The Lutheran Education Australia's strategic plan encourages schools to build a level of consistency throughout the sector with a clear priority in growing and improving, which is aligned with the research from the Better Schools and Quality Schools data. As a characteristic of Lutheran schools, the school improvement tool has, at its core, the vocational practices of *Growing deep*, and as such there is a fluidity of language and theology that enhances the document and aligns schools within the system.

## students at its centre with a focus on quality student learning

The overall aim of school improvement is for improved student learning outcomes to ensure they are enriched through their schooling as they grow in their faith and experience a myriad of opportunities for life beyond the school. To build a school improvement tool that supports schools to research and gather data on school performance from a range of sources will bring about a level of accountability for Lutheran schools.

## standardised accountability tool

A responsive approach to individual school needs and priorities builds a strong level of compliance and accountability that will serve to enrich all communities as they affirm their practices whilst seeking ways in which to improve. The principal and board can engage the school community in building and articulating the school's mission, vision and purpose to create the foundation for improvement throughout the school.

## continuous cyclical improvement approach

To further enhance each school's strategic planning processes, the importance of continuous improvement as a cyclic process underpins the document so that schools can regularly reflect, respond and resolve to improve. The opportunity for schools to engage in a process of evidence based self-reflection that progresses the improvement of skills and the building of resources in schools will improve the quality and capacity of the school. Embedding a cyclic process forms part of the school's culture of continuous improvement.

# Context and rationale

With the development of *Growing deep*, the leadership and formation framework for Lutheran schools, a new direction has been established for system-wide improvement. The Lutheran Education Australia's strategic plan clearly states the key themes of: strengthening Lutheran identity, strengthening and celebrating thriving learning communities and ensuring long term system sustainability. It is envisaged that the *School Improvement Framework* (SIF) will continue to be a collaborative effort between LEA, regions and schools.

The *School Improvement Framework* has been identified as a tool of need for Lutheran schools as it aligns the Lutheran lens with school improvement. There are other tools that serve a similar purpose, however, SIF has, as its core, Lutheran theology as it relates to *Growing deep* vocational practices which describe the work we all do in Lutheran schools.

The LEA Better Schools Project of 2009, 2011 and 2013 and the 2016 Quality Schools survey identified trends in the national data around teaching and learning. Lutheran schools are highlighted for their care, sense of community and belonging and the upholding of strong Christian values and this is to be celebrated. However. Lutheran schools showed areas in need of growth and SIF will support schools to build a consistent, student-centred approach to continuous growth and improvement that aims to meet a high standard of accountability. The Board for Lutheran Education Australia endorsed the writing of this document as a means of supporting Lutheran schools across Australia and asked that throughout the process schools and principals be consulted in the writing process to ensure the document is a valuable and relevant resource.

After extensive research, a number of principal leaders were engaged in the consultation, writing and evaluating of the document. Pilot schools were asked to trial the document for its effectiveness as a tool that schools can adapt for use in their contexts. Additionally, the pilot schools provided feedback on the outcomes and process and how SIF informed their school's practice. It is expected that in using this framework schools will be able to reflect on their practice, rate their progress, back this with quality data and evidence and discern a level of accountability to their stakeholders.

In this rapidly changing world it is important that schools continuously reflect, respond and review, in order to provide our students with an educational context best suited to the needs of the 21st century learner. The *School Improvement Framework* aims to support schools through the school improvement process whilst providing a level of accountability in practice.

# Vocational practices

## Excellence in learning

Lutheran schools value excellence and creativity in teaching and learning. A culture of challenge and support nurtures enthusiastic, independent learners, committed to lifelong learning.

Excellence in teaching and learning is focused on improving student outcomes which includes spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, cultural and social dimensions.

All learners should have access to quality learning experiences that ensure they develop their God-given abilities so that they may enrich the world.

High expectations are established through reflective practice, collaborative planning, monitoring, providing feedback and reporting on the effectiveness of learning.

The learning environment promotes active engagement, risk taking, motivation and a strong learner voice.

| Elements | Indicators of effectiveness | |
|---|---|---|
| *Culture of challenge and support that promotes learning* | 1.1 | The school community has a shared vision and can articulate the priority of excellence in learning. (GD) |
| | 1.2 | A culture of challenge and support with high expectations and mutual accountability. (GD) (NSIT 3) |
| | 1.3 | The school has a systematic learning agenda for all. (GD) (NSIT 3) |
| | 1.4 | Community members are committed to a culture of collaboration and rich relationships within and beyond the school. (GD) (NSIT 3) |
| | 1.5 | Strategies and processes to enhance the wellbeing of community members. (GD) (NSIT3) |
| | 1.6 | School actively demonstrates a well-supported and established culture which promotes positive behaviour and personal accountability through restorative practices, forgiveness and grace. (GD) (NSIT3) (QAS 2) |
| *Quality learning experiences through systematic curriculum delivery* | 1.7 | Curriculum is designed and sequenced to develop independent, lifelong learners and creative individuals so they may enrich the world as global citizens. (GD) (NSIT 6) |
| | 1.8 | Curriculum provides for breadth and depth of quality learning experiences with adjustments to ensure success for all. (CIF 5) (GD) (NSIT 6) |
| | 1.9 | Student learning and progress is measured, monitored and reported using a diverse range of strategies. (GD) (CIF 5.3) (NSIT 6) |
| | 1.10 | Curriculum is resourced to ensure engagement in learning. (NSIT 6) (QAS) |
| | 1.11 | The school has clear achievement standards at class and school levels. (NSIT 2) |
| | 1.12 | Teachers have high expectations for every student and ambitious goals for advancing classroom performances. (NSIT 8) (CIF 5.1) |
| *Quality and research based pedagogical practices* | 1.13 | School staff demonstrate an understanding of the importance of productive and enriching relationships and experiences to ensure successful learning, and work to build mutually respectful relationships across the school community. (GD) (NSIT 3) |
| | 1.14 | The school has developed a common and agreed understanding of effective teaching and learning, assessment and pedagogical practices which includes spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, cultural and social dimensions. (GD) (QAS2) (NSIT 8) |
| | 1.15 | The school encourages a culture of teacher reflection, action, collaboration and teamwork that results in supporting students through early intervention. (GD) (CIF 5.2) (NSIT8) |

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| | 1.16 | The school creates learning environments in which all students and community members (all learners) are engaged, challenged, feel safe to take risks, have a strong learner voice and are supported to learn. (GD) (NSIT 8) |
| | 1.17 | Teachers enhance the learning of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. (AITSL 1.2) (CIF) |
| *Professional learning* | 1.18 | School has a professional learning culture that ensures opportunities are created for teachers to reflect, work collaboratively, learn from the practice of others within and beyond the school. (GD) (NSIT 5) |
| | 1.19 | School has a systematic approach to professional learning which aligns to the school's strategic priorities and improvement plan. (GD) (NSIT 5) |
| | 1.20 | School consistently evaluates its staff learning activities to ensure best student outcomes and the effective embedding of quality practise. (GD) (QAS) (NSIT 5) |
| | 1.21 | All teachers are devoted to the continuous improvement of their own teaching and focused on the development of knowledge and skills required to advance student learning. (NSIT 5) |
| *Assessment and reporting* | 1.22 | Assessment processes are aligned with curriculum and are designed to clarify learning intentions, establish where individual students are in their learning and monitor learning progress. (NSIT 6) |
| | 1.23 | Reporting processes are aligned with curriculum and designed to provide parents, families and students with information about the achievement of curriculum intentions and progress over time. (NSIT 6) |
| | 1.24 | Teachers provide consistent, regular and timely feedback to students that clearly communicates the actions individuals can take to make further learning progress. (NSIT 8) |
| | 1.25 | Teachers encourage self and peer assessment for learning. (QAS 2.5) |
| | 1.26 | Teachers routinely reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and adjust their practice accordingly. (NSIT 5) |

## As evidenced by:

- Vision is displayed and can be articulated by staff
- Programs for learning support and enrichment
- Documentation to support learning agenda, eg, teaching and learning framework, scope and sequence, mapping against curriculum such as ACARA, state-based certification and IB
- Timetabling for teacher collaborative planning, examples of community engagement, partnerships with Lutheran and other schools
- Teacher PLPs, professional learning records
- Student individualised programs and goals
- Provision of professional and pastoral care services
- Embedded wellbeing programs
- Behaviour management policy and procedures
- Assessment and reporting policy and procedures
- Teacher planning, notes, minutes of meetings, student data
- Examples of student survey, reflections, grievance procedures, parent information sessions, student voice, SRC
- Examples of ways schools provide for the needs of students from diverse cultural, religious backgrounds
- Assessment and reporting samples
- Moderation processes

# Ongoing improvement and innovation

Improvement in Lutheran schools is guided by LEA or school values, vision and mission.

Excellence is pursued through a culture of reflection, collaboration, innovation and creativity.

Evidence is gathered to develop and implement improvement plans and policies for the continuous development of teaching and learning, the institution and its facilities.

Ongoing professional learning encourages all members of the community to achieve high standards and develop their service and leadership capacity.

| Elements | Indicators of effectiveness |
|---|---|
| *Explicit improvement agenda* | 2.1 Improvement and innovation is a priority. (NIST 1) (CIF 2) <br> 2.2 The governing body and all school leaders are committed to innovative initiatives to improve outcomes for all students. (NIST 1) <br> 2.3 The school responds to student diversity to ensure individual and collective student success. (NIST 1) (GD 2.1) <br> 2.4 The school clearly articulates goals and strategies for improvement and all stakeholders share in the commitment to achieve school wide innovation and improvement. (NIST 1) (GD 2.1) <br> 2.5 Improvement plans and policies are developed and undergo continuous review to ensure quality teaching and learning. (GD 2.1) (NSIT 1) <br> 2.6 There is a strategy for promoting the school's improvement and innovation agenda to the wider community. (GD 2.1) <br> 2.7 Excellence is pursued through a culture of reflection, collaboration, innovation and creativity. (GD 2.1) (NSIT 5) |
| *Strategic directions* | 2.8 The school's values, vision and mission are constantly referred to in identifying improvement. (GD 2) (CIF 2) <br> 2.9 The school's strategic plan is developed through consultation and communicated with all stakeholders in the school community. (CIF 2) (NSIT 1) <br> 2.10 The school's strategic plan provides the direction for improvement and innovation and is responsive to the review process. (CIF 2) (GD 2) <br> 2.11 The school drives ongoing improvement and sustainability. (GD 5) <br> 2.12 Development of leadership capacity through professional practice drives the school's strategic intent. (GD 2) |
| *Effective and systematic use of data* | 2.13 The school identifies, gathers and analyses a range of data for school improvement including input and feedback from students and parents. (CIF 6) (NSIT 2) <br> 2.14 The progress of student improvement in learning is monitored and is used to inform decisions, interventions and initiatives. (CIF 6) (NSIT 2) <br> 2.15 The school communicates the outcomes of data analysis to the school community (CIF 6) <br> 2.16 Teaching staff have access to student achievement data and regularly use this to inform strategies for student improvement. (CIF 6) (NIST 2) <br> 2.17 All staff are committed to building their skills in the analysis and use of a broad range of student data. (CIF 6) <br> 2.18 The use of data builds a culture of self-evaluation and reflection. (CIF 6) |

As evidenced by:

- A clearly developed and articulated vision statement that is constantly referred to
- Structures and processes in place to cater for diversity
- The school communication channels are used to inform the community
- There is a review cycle for policies, procedures and strategic improvement plans
- The school's mission, vision and values are visual throughout the school
- Surveys and meetings regarding improvement agendas are held
- School direction is communicated widely using a variety of mediums
- Professional development is prioritised according to the school improvement plan
- The school has a plan for the collection and use of a range of data
- Data has identified gaps in student learning and staff monitor improvement and growth
- Student data is used to inform teaching practices
- Annual reports, newsletters, information sessions inform stakeholders of the school improvement agenda
- Training / learning opportunities are given to staff
- Teachers plans and programs include reflection on the effectiveness of student learning and growth

# Strengthening Lutheran identity

Lutheran schools, as agencies of the Lutheran Church of Australia, share a recognisable Lutheran identity in which the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities in the school.

The rituals, symbols, visual displays and practices convey the school's Christ-centred identity.

The school community is regularly involved in Christian worship which includes daily devotions.

Christian Studies is an essential and distinctive part of the formal curriculum.

Lutheran schools deliberately and intentionally share and live the good news of Jesus Christ with students, families, staff and the broader community.

Opportunities for faith nurture are actively promoted and maintained.

| Elements | Indicators of effectiveness |
|---|---|
| *Vision, mission and values* | 3.1 The gospel of Jesus Christ informs the mission, vision and values of the school, learning and teaching, and all activities of the school.<br>3.2 The school deliberately and intentionally shares, and lives the good news of Jesus with students, staff, families and the broader community.<br>3.3 The strategic plan identifies key directions and improvement goals to strengthen the Lutheran identity.<br>3.4 Staff individually and collectively explore and reflect on their contribution to the mission and ministry of Lutheran education as they live out their vocation.<br>3.5 The rituals, symbols, visual displays and practices of the school convey its Christ centred identity. |
| *Christian teaching* | 3.6 An environment that nurtures trust and listening enables open, sensitive and critical exploration and reflection on issues of faith and theology.<br>3.7 The school draws upon research and collects appropriate data to inform and discern appropriate responses to issues.<br>3.8 Staff explore Lutheran theological perspectives that shape the beliefs and practice of Lutheran education.<br>3.9 Staff build their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, through consistent opportunities to explore and reflect upon biblical and Christian perspectives.<br>3.10 Care for the world and service to others is central to the life of the school as demonstrated in its teaching and experiences. |

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| *Faith formation and practices* | 3.11 Opportunities for faith growth and encouragement, regardless of faith backgrounds, are provided for the staff, students and community. |
| | 3.12 School community provides regular opportunity for Christian worship. |
| | 3.13 Devotions and prayer with and for staff and students occur daily. |
| | 3.14 Prayer is central to the school community with opportunities provided for all to experience and use different forms of prayer. |
| *Christian Studies* | 3.15 Christian Studies is underpinned by an articulated vision and is designed and mapped across the year levels. |
| | 3.16 Quality learning in Christian Studies occurs through sufficient time and budget allocation. |
| | 3.17 Quality learning occurs in Christian Studies through pedagogy that supports student engagement, connection and deep thinking. |
| | 3.18 Christian Studies is assessed, reported and reviewed regularly using research methods that engage students, teachers and the community in reflecting on the vision and practice of it as a curriculum area. |
| *Pastoral care* | 3.19 Relationships between members of the school community are guided by Christian love, grace, forgiveness and reconciliation. |
| | 3.20 Processes and programs for underpinning care and welfare of the community (students, staff and parents) creates a sense of belonging and develops resilience and wellbeing. |

## As evidenced by:

- Vision, mission and values are clearly articulated, visible and known by the stakeholders, in publications, policies and experienced by the community (lived and breathed)
- Members of the community can share the school story
- School programs reflect the priority given to worship, devotions, Christian Studies
- Visual surrounds witness to Christian faith
- Staff can witness to the Christian faith and the opportunities that exist for learning about the Christian faith and for spiritual nurture
- Staff and students volunteer/initiate to lead and support service, opportunities
- Staff understand the Christian Studies curriculum and have a strong grasp of Lutheran theology, supported by high quality resources and ongoing professional learning
- Community members
- Range of programs are integrated and highly effective as evidenced by student and family feedback/conversations/data
- Staff actively participate and share the benefits of formation opportunities in the school

# Community building

Lutheran schools value the richness and diversity of the wider community and other education sectors.

Positive and strategic partnerships are developed and maintained with students, families, local Christian communities, the broader community and Lutheran education.

Relationships are built on support, collaboration, trust and reconciliation.

The Lutheran school community lives out the gospel and is active in service of others.

The multicultural and multi-faith nature of Lutheran education and Australian society fosters understandings of diverse cultures.

Lutheran education promotes the understanding of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

| Elements | Indicators of effectiveness |
|---|---|
| *Positive and strategic partnerships between students, staff, families, local Christian communities, the broader community and Lutheran education.* | 4.1 School builds and nurtures strong partnerships with parents and families by creating a culture of welcome, inclusion, and a shared responsibility for student learning and wellbeing. (CIF 8.1) (NSIT 9) |
| | 4.2 The school builds partnerships with local businesses, indigenous communities and community organisations and services to improve opportunities and outcomes for student achievement and/or wellbeing. (NSIT 9) (GD – Networking and strategic relationships) (CIF 8.2) |
| | 4.3 The school uses a variety of cooperative communication strategies to gain and share material between home and school. (CIF 8.1) |
| | 4.4 Inclusive protocols and procedures to facilitate parent and home engagement are documented, resourced, implemented and regularly reviewed. (CIF 8.1) |
| | 4.5 School is committed to developing and nurturing wider-community partnerships where mutually beneficial learning and service opportunities are investigated and undertaken. (GD) (NSIT 9) (CIF 8.2) |
| | 4.6 School works in partnership with local congregations to foster the mission of the Church and build connections. (CIF 8.2) (GD) |
| | 4.7 School works in partnership with the local congregations to provide opportunities to nurture the personal faith development of students, staff and families. (GD – nurturing faith) |
| | 4.8 School's partnerships are mutually beneficial, sustainable, reviewed regularly to ensure effectiveness, and have become an accepted part of the culture of the school community. (GD) (NSIT 9) |
| | 4.9 School celebrates and encourages its achievements within and beyond the school. (CIF) |
| | 4.10 Staff, students, parents and the local congregations are active contributors to school decision making and planning processes that support learning and community engagement. (NSIT 9) (CIF 8.3) GD) |

- School and community events have a high level of parent and family attendance and participation
- Networks are developed where services are readily available for school community members in need.
- Partnerships with community businesses and groups further develop the practical application of classroom learning.
- Documented partnerships with other organisations and service providers.
- School uses multiple media to maximise two-way communication and parents readily engage and reciprocate through these means
- Documented procedures to facilitate parent and home engagement
- Schools have established mutually beneficial relationships that should be local, regional, national and international.
- Combined school congregation events and services are planned and well supported.
- Regular Bible studies, worship, opportunities for sharing of theological knowledge are planned and supported

# Leading effective organisation and management

In Lutheran schools roles, responsibilities and procedures are clearly articulated so that staff can participate in its smooth and efficient operation.

Data and knowledge management methods and technologies are used to ensure that resources (human, physical, technological and financial) are efficiently organised and managed to provide an effective, safe and caring, growth-oriented learning and working environment.

Strategic planning ensures the ongoing improvement and sustainability of the school/early childhood service. Best practice is built upon effective collaboration between the governing body, staff, students, families, church and others.

| Elements | Indicators of effectiveness | |
|---|---|---|
| *Administration and resourcing* | 5.1 | The school has policies, practices, procedures that clearly articulate roles, responsibilities and accountability that supports the delivery of the school's vision and mission and smooth operation. (GD) (CIF 9) |
| | 5.2 | The school has highly effective processes that lead to responsible use of the school's human, physical, financial and technological resources to maximise student learning. (CIF 9) (NSIT 4) (GD) |
| | 5.3 | The schools' budget is aligned to the school's vision, mission and strategic priorities. (CIF9) |
| | 5.4 | The school engages in rigorous and detailed financial management to ensure sustainability and compliance. (CIF9) |
| | 5.5 | The school community has a proactive and shared understanding of individual and collective responsibility to be accountable for meeting school, system, church and government requirements. (QAS 3.5) |
| | 5.6 | The school regularly and methodically collects data for planning, decision-making, problem-solving and responsibility at the classroom, school, system and government level. (CIF6) (NSIT 2) |
| | 5.7 | All teaching staff have access to a broad range of relevant student data to ensure the provision of an effective, safe, caring, growth oriented learning and working environment. (NSIT 2) (GD) |
| *Leadership* | 5.8 | The school demonstrates a strong Lutheran identity and provides opportunities for spiritual formation. (CIF 8) |
| | 5.9 | The governing body, principal and staff are united, committed to and explicit about implementing the school's strategic priorities to improve student outcomes. (NSIT 1) |
| | 5.10 | The school structures enable a shared leadership model where all staff participate in a range of opportunities to be familiar with, impact and contribute to leadership in the school. (QAS 3.1) |
| | 5.11 | Effective strategies for staff development, staff induction, succession planning, professional learning, faith formation, leadership development and performance review are developed and implemented. (CIF 3) |

| *Safe and supportive environments* | 5.12 The school creates a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment that is centred on the values of Lutheran education to support learning for all students. |
| | 5.13 The school has systems and policies in place to ensure the safety and support of all community members. (CIF 7) (NSIT 3) |
| | 5.14 The school has programs and practices in place to build positive and trusting relationships among staff, students and families. (CIF 7) (NSIT 3) |
| | 5.15 School policies, practices and programs acknowledge God as creator and promote environmental sustainability through ongoing care for the world and all people. (GD – Our foundation) |

## As evidenced by:

- Policies, procedures, role statements are active and in use
- Facility master plan with rationale for student learning
- School budget, record of annual auditing
- Regional evidence of budget compliance
- Data is available and used
- Teachers can show and articulate how data is being used to inform their teaching and support student learning
- School's strategic priorities have clear improvement agenda
- Professional and student opportunities that support spiritual formation

# Glossary of terms

BLEA – Board for Lutheran Education Australia

BSP – Better Schools Project

CIF – Continuous Improvement Framework for Catholic Schools (Catholic Education SA)

GD – Growing deep

SIF – School Improvement Framework

NSIT – National School Improvement Tool (ACER)

QASF – Quality Adventist Schools Framework (Adventist Schools Australia)

QS – Quality Schools