

## **LWML Grant Proposal for Divine Shepherd Classical Lutheran Academy**

**1. Name for the grant that is descriptive of its purpose (limit of 50 characters, including spaces and punctuation marks).**

Divine Shepherd Classical Lutheran Academy Grant

**2. Monetary amount requested for the grant.**

\$25,000

**3. Name of organization being helped, geographic area of impact (does the grant affect a city, country, world), estimated number of lives being impacted by this grant (a range of numbers is acceptable), demographic of lives being impacted by this grant (does this grant affect a certain age, gender, ethnicity, income level, nationality, etc.), and purpose of grant funds (i.e. programs, scholarships, training, ministry, specific supplies).**

Organization being helped: Divine Shepherd Classical Lutheran Academy (DSCLA)

Estimated number of lives impacted: Estimating 7 to 12 students, approximately 50 family members, and other members of the congregation and community

Demographics of those impacted: Students aged 5-10 years old, both male and female, residing in the greater Rapid City metro area, of varied socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

Purpose of grant funds: The purpose of the requested grant funds is to help purchase the following:

- Curriculum materials aligned with a Lutheran Classical Academic model
- Funding for Friday field trips to community businesses, museums, and other related events
- Electronic resources for the 2026-2027 academic year (and beyond), as outlined in the provided budget (Appendix A).
- Garden materials for the school community garden
- Funding for student recruitment

**4. Name, address, phone, and email of the person or group submitting the grant.**

Erin Norman  
7308 Wedgewood Dr.  
Black Hawk, SD 57718  
(605) 391 4383  
[DSLCAcademyTEA@divineshep.org](mailto:DSLCAcademyTEA@divineshep.org)

**5. Name of the submitter's LWML district president and her contact information.**

Cathy VandeBraak

129N. La Salle Ave.  
Sioux Falls, SD 57110  
[vandebraak4@gmail.com](mailto:vandebraak4@gmail.com)

**6. Name and contact information of the LCMS district president where the grant recipient is located.**

Rev Randy Sturzenbecher  
3501 S Gateway Blvd  
Sioux Falls, SD 57106  
(605) 361-1514  
[dpsturz@sddlcms.org](mailto:dpsturz@sddlcms.org)

**7. The name and contact information of the grant administrator (must be a person or an organization that is in the United States).**

Pastor Dennis Mercer  
7308 Wedgewood Drive  
Black Hawk, SD 57718  
(605) 787-6438  
[dslcpmercer@divineshep.org](mailto:dslcpmercer@divineshep.org)

**8. The name and contact information of the agency to whom the funds will be sent.**

Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church and School  
7308 Wedgewood Drive  
Black Hawk, SD 57718

**The proposal needs to be in resolution format, with four or less "WHEREAS" statements that can be entered into the electronic form (limit of 1,500 characters, including spaces and punctuation marks).**

*Resolution*

**WHEREAS** God commands us to "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6), and

**WHEREAS** the Divine Shepherd Lutheran Church (DSLCLC) congregation in Blackhawk, SD identifies a need for a Christ-centered education for the children of its congregation and the local community, and

**WHEREAS** the rich, historical classical academic model provides a valuable educational experience beyond recitation of facts and passing of tests but instead focuses on gaining the tools of discernment, discipline, and self-education, and

**WHEREAS** Divine Shepherd Classical Lutheran Academy (DSCLA) is unable to be fully funded by the DSLC congregation in its year of inception to meet the above need, be it

**RESOLVED** that the LWML SD district votes the sum of \$25,000 to help fund DSCLA

### Mission

Our mission at Divine Shepherd Classical Lutheran Academy (DSCLA) is to follow the command of Jesus to teach the nations, supporting parents by nurturing their scholars in their Baptismal identity in Christ.

### Vision

DSCLA provides a classical education approach through the application of grammar, rhetoric, logic, and critical thinking for the development of creative life-long learners.

### Location

The funds will be used locally at DSLCA, in Blackhawk, SD, within the current church building. Space is already available for a single, multi-grade classroom, with allowable capacity for 12 enrollees.

### Timeline (see Appendix B)

The congregation and leadership of DSLC have prayerfully contemplated the establishment of DSCLA for over 10 years. Even before our preschool first opened its doors to enrollment in 2012, there was always hope that DSLC could eventually expand its enrollment to include elementary-aged children, continuing to build on a Christ-centered school. This mission expanded with the Early Childcare (ECC) Center in 2017, welcoming children from 6 weeks old up through pre-kindergarten. These two missions now serve around 45 students throughout the week.

During the research stages, DSLCA partnered with SOARING Education Services (<https://www.soaringeducation.org/>) to efficiently work through the inception of DSLCA. We also spent considerable time examining different prevailing educational models, drawing on experiences of members of the congregation with prior educational teaching experiences with the standard educational model, the Montessori model, and the classical academic model. Several board members have reached out by phone to different classical schools and the Consortium for

Classical Lutheran Education (CCLE) to explore challenges and best practices. Pastor Mercer and Mrs. Norman attended the 2024 CCLE conference in Seward, NE.

Through the concerted, rigorous, and passionate efforts of the board, along with the support of leadership and the congregation, DSLCA generated all necessary articles of inception and opened its doors in the fall of 2024 with an enrollment of 5 students (two kindergartners and three second graders). The first year, which ran from September 3, 2024, to May 22, 2025, was successful, with significant learning on the part of students, staff, and the board of directors, paving the way for improvements in the next year(s). The 2025-2026 school year has a planned enrollment of 7 students (two kindergartners, two first graders, and three third graders). The second year will begin September 2, 2025, and will end May 22, 2026.

The school is also lovingly supported by the congregation. The congregation and local community annually support the ECC and Academy with a “legacy banquet,” which raised around \$9,000 (total funds raised minus expenses) in support of the school and ECC. We intend that DSLCA will be self-sustaining in the future through tuition monies, fundraising, and separate charitable gifts from interested parties, but at this time the funding is limited due to the initial stages of growth. Please note that the congregation stands behind the mission for raising the brightest Lutherans and future leaders to, in turn, spread the Word of God in their families, communities, and workplaces.

Budget (see Appendix A for full budget)

The projected budget for the 2025-2026 school year totals \$86,775, with \$52,500 budgeted for teacher salary and benefits, \$3,000 for curriculum, and \$2,800 budgeted for field trip/activities and for technology-related costs.

We have arrived at a tuition cost of \$5,400/year per student. This has taken into consideration several factors, including (a) the cost of locally available private school options, (b) the budget of the school, and (c) an estimate for what families can afford based on an informal poll.

As previously mentioned, our ECC & Academy have engaged in annual fundraising and receive some support from the congregation in the form of donations. We anticipate that as a fledgling mission, DSCLA will be dependent on some external funding initially while managing through the growth stages. At full capacity of 12 students, the academy will receive approximately \$60,000 per student per year in tuition and would be nearly self-sustaining.

Funds from this LWML grant will be earmarked for curricular costs, student recruitment, garden maintenance and technology-related costs, which are substantially reduced in subsequent years, as many elements of the curriculum can be easily reused, and the Chromebook laptops will also be used for at least 2 years and up to 5 years.

For the initial school year (2024-2025), the school had received a generous donation of \$10,000 from a family in the congregation with a passion for this mission. A regional LCMS congregation had also given the school a \$3,000 grant. Additionally, \$300/week is being set aside for school-related costs from the weekly offering from the congregation. In sum, \$42,000 was raised for the initial school year. Beyond the weekly offering, these funds are not recurring;

therefore, we are reaching out to apply for this grant to sustain our mission and passion for the education of Lutheran students.

#### Conclusion

We thank you for your prayerful consideration of supporting our DSCLA with this establishment grant. This is a mission near to our hearts and has been nurtured to early fruition. We look forward to continuing enrollment on this new avenue for ministering to our congregation's youth and as an outreach opportunity within our community, so that we can continue to tell all about Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Savior.

APPENDIX A  
ACADEMY BUDGET (Proposed)

Line-Item	Projected Amount	Single or Annual Cost	Single or Annual Cost
Enrollment Projection (# of students)		7	12
Salaries & Benefits		\$ 52,500.00	\$ 75,000.00
Facility Rent	Covered by church		
Utilities	Covered by church		
Furnishings/General Supplies	\$8000/year	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 8,000.00
Core Curriculum	\$3000/year	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
Field Trips/Activities	\$200/student	\$ 1,400.00	\$ 2,400.00
Technology/Computers	\$200/student	\$ 1,400.00	\$ 2,400.00
ProCare	\$100	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00
Insurance	Covered under existing church/school insurance		
Custodian	Covered by church		
Marketing	\$5,000	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Accounting Services	\$600/mo	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 7,200.00
Phone System	Covered by church		
Cash Reserve	\$125/student	\$ 875.00	\$ 1,500.00
Copier	Shared with church		
Teacher Continuing Education	2000/year	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Banking Fees	\$25/month	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Contingency Fund		\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>\$ 86,775.00</b>	<b>\$ 114,900.00</b>

Other costs that may be shared with the ECC and church:

Van usage - field trips  
Banking services  
Administration

<b>Income</b>			
Student tuition & enrollment fees	\$5,400/student**	\$ 32,400.00	\$ 59,400.00
Anticipated donations, grants, gifts, fees		\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Current funds available as of August 15, 2025	\$74,655.40 (funds shared with ECC)	\$ 74,655.40	\$ 74,655.40
<b>Projected Income:</b>		<b>\$ 112,055.40</b>	<b>\$ 139,055.40</b>
		Δ \$ 25,280.40	\$ 24,155.40 <== Profit/Loss

\*\*The teacher's children have been enrolled at a discounted rate of 50%, in accordance with our staff benefit guidelines

## APPENDIX B

### Timeline

Fall 2022:  
Established  
board and  
created  
mission/vision  
articles of  
inception

Sept 2025-May  
2026 2nd  
DSCLA  
Academic Year

Sept 2027 add  
5th grade

Sept 2024-May  
2025 First  
DSCLA  
Academic Year

Sept 2026 Add  
student  
personal  
computer  
technology for  
4th grade

Sept 2028 add  
6th grade

Pictures of Student Activities at DSLCA



