ASPIRE Leadership Development Program

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE HERZOG FOUNDATION

Leadership University

A year-long, mentor-driven leadership development program for current and future **Lutheran school administrators** — grounded in Scripture, Christ-centered character, and the practical skills great schools demand.

COHORT YEAR
2027–2028

12	22	8	2	All
Months	Scholars	Mentors	Intensives	LCMS Districts

Great Lutheran schools begin with great leaders.
This program equips the servant-leaders who will shape the next generation of Lutheran education.

SEVEN LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

I Trustworthy Character
Who you are when no one is looking

II Relational Intelligence
Building people and lasting teams

III Vision Alignment
Casting a compelling preferred future

IV Insightful Wisdom
Long-view, filter-driven decisions

V Clear Communication
Inspiring, motivating, and listening well

VI Persevering Courage
Grit, initiative, and tough calls

VII Change Leadership — Moving schools toward the preferred future with courage and clarity

PROGRAM FORMAT

- Monthly virtual cohort sessions (August–May)
- Small cohort mentor relationship, full year
- Intensive I — June 14–16, 2027 (2.5 days, in person)
- Intensive II — TBD June 2028 (capstone presentations)
- School-based capstone leadership project
- Leadership Certificate upon completion

WHO SHOULD APPLY

- Current Lutheran school principals
- Aspiring principals preparing to step up
- Ministry staff growing toward leadership
- Open to participants from any LCMS district

CHOOSE YOUR TRACK

TRACK 1
Principal & Administrator Development
For current or aspiring principals ready to deepen operational, spiritual, and strategic leadership capacity.

TRACK 2
Emerging Leader Development
For teachers and ministry staff who sense a calling to greater leadership and want to grow in vision and influence.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."
EPHESIANS 2:10 · ESV

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY
The Stanley M. Herzog Foundation
Catalyzing Christ-centered K–12 education nationwide

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
SWD-RMD-PSD-ALSS
Office of Lutheran Schools

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Details subject to change.

ASPIRE Leadership Development Program

In Partnership with the Herzog Foundation

Participant Application

2027-2028 Cohort

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. Submit the completed application, including contact information for two professional references, to Dr. Alan Freeman at freeman@swd.lcms.org.

- Application deadline: **February 15, 2027**
- Acceptance notifications: **March 1, 2027**
- Maximum cohort: **22 participants**

Questions: Dr. Alan Freeman | freeman@swd.lcms.org | (636) 486-5200

1 | Track Selection

Select one track. Your selection determines whose approval is required in Section 5.

☐ Track 1	☐ Track 2
Principal & Administrator Development	**Emerging Leader Development**
For current or aspiring principals and administrators	For teachers and ministry staff growing toward leadership

2 | Personal Information

*Fields marked * are required.*

First name *

Last name *

Personal email address *

Personal mobile phone *

3 | School & Position Information

School name *

_____

School address (street, city, state, ZIP) *

_____

Current title / position *

_____

Years at this school *

_____

Years in current position *

_____

Work phone *

_____

Work email address *

_____

Other positions held at this school (title and years)

_____

_____

Positions held at other schools (title and years)

_____

_____

All degrees earned (degree, field of study, institution) *

_____

_____

4 | Church & Ministry Affiliation

Home congregation *

_____

Pastor's name *

_____

Are you a communicant member? * ☐ Yes ☐ No

LCMS district *

_____

Are you rostered / roster-eligible? * ☐ Yes ☐ No

5 | Application Essays

Please answer each question thoughtfully. Your responses help us understand your heart for Lutheran school leadership and match you with an appropriate mentor.

1. How did you hear about this program, and why are you applying? *

2. Describe your sense of calling to Lutheran school leadership. How has God shaped you for this role? *

Consider your spiritual gifts, life experiences, and formative moments.

3. What are the greatest challenges facing Lutheran schools in your LCMS district today? *

4. What do you wish you had known earlier about school or ministry leadership? What gaps are you hoping this program addresses? *

5. Describe a leadership situation where you had to make a difficult decision or navigate significant conflict. What did you do, and what did you learn? *

6. Where do you see yourself in five years? How does this program fit into that vision? *

There are no right or wrong answers. We are looking for self-awareness and a sense of direction.

6 | Supervisor / Board Approval

Complete only the approval subsection for your selected track. Approval and support are required before submission.

Track 1 — Board Chair or Governing Authority

For Principal & Administrator Development applicants

Board chair / governing authority name * _____

Title * _____

Email address * _____

Phone number * _____

By signing below, I confirm that:

I have reviewed the *Aspire Leadership Development Program* overview and understand what participation requires, including the monthly time commitment, the two multi-day in-person Intensives, and any associated costs.

Signature * _____

Date * _____

OR

Track 2 — Principal / Supervisor

For Emerging Leader Development applicants

Principal / supervisor name * _____

Title * _____

Email address * _____

Phone number * _____

By signing below, I confirm that:

I have reviewed the *Aspire Leadership Development Program* overview and understand what participation requires, including the monthly time commitment, the two multi-day in-person Intensives, and any associated costs.

Signature * _____

Date * _____

7 | Professional References

Provide two professional references who can speak to your character and leadership potential. References should not be family members.

Reference 1

First name *

Last name *

Title / role *

Relationship to applicant *

Phone number *

Email address *

Reference 2

First name *

Last name *

Title / role *

Relationship to applicant *

Phone number *

Email address *

8 | Applicant Commitment Statement

By signing below, I confirm that:

- All information provided in this application is truthful, accurate, and complete to the best of my knowledge.
- I have reviewed the *Aspire Leadership Development Program* overview (page 1) and understand what participation requires, including the monthly time commitment, the two multi-day in-person Intensives, and any associated costs.
- I commit to attending all monthly virtual cohort sessions (August–May) and both in-person Intensives — Intensive I (June 14–16, 2027) and Intensive II (June 2028). I understand that missing more than two virtual sessions or either Intensive may result in removal from the program without a certificate of completion.
- I will engage consistently and in good faith with my assigned mentor, including scheduled one-on-one meetings, assigned readings or reflections, and any mentor-directed activities throughout the program year.
- I will complete a school-based capstone leadership project and present my findings and outcomes at Intensive II. I understand this project is a graduation requirement.
- I will participate as a full and contributing member of my cohort — engaging respectfully, honoring confidentiality, and supporting the growth of my peers.
- I have the support of my school's governing authority (Track 1) or principal/supervisor (Track 2) to participate in this program and have obtained the required signature in Section 7.
- I understand that acceptance into the program is not guaranteed and that the ASPRIE team reserves the right to admit participants based on program fit, cohort balance, and available capacity.

Printed name *

_____

Applicant signature *

_____

Date *

_____