



Concordia University System

Director of Christian Education (DCE) Program Standards

Approved June 2026

Prologue:

A Director of Christian Education (DCE) is a Synodically certified, called, and commissioned lifespan educational leader prepared for team ministry in a congregational setting. The Concordia University System DCE Program Standards specify the instructional, formational, and experiential expectations that prepare students for commissioned ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as Directors of Christian Education.

These standards supplement the general CUS Church Work Program Standards and ensure that DCE candidates are equipped as faithful theologians, competent educators, and collaborative leaders in parish and community ministry. Formation of a DCE includes the development of Christian character, relational and leadership skills, and a lifelong commitment to teaching, service, and professional growth. Emphases are representative and not exhaustive; institutions may structure curricula and their outcomes differently while demonstrating alignment with these standards.

Standard 1: Foundations of Christian Education Ministry

The program forms students in the theological, historical, and vocational foundations of Christian education and congregational ministry.

- Introduction to DCE Ministry and Vocation
- History, Foundations and Philosophy of Christian Education
- Theology of Ministry and Mission of the Church
- Parish Teaching and Catechesis Theory

Standard 2: Teaching the Faith Across the Lifespan

The program teaches the knowledge and pedagogical skills necessary to design, deliver, and evaluate Christian education for children, youth, adults, and families across the lifespan.

- Catechesis: Theory and Practice of Teaching the Christian Faith
- Educational Psychology and Human Development
- Learning Theory and Instructional Design
- Adult Education and Discipleship
- Confirmation Planning and Implementation
- Parish Teaching and Equipping Others to Teach

Standard 3: Youth, Family, and Adult Ministry Leadership

The program prepares students to lead, coordinate, and resource ministry for youth, family, and adults in the congregation and community.

- Youth Ministry Theory and Practice within the Culture and the Church
- Children's Ministry, Family Ministry and Family Systems
- Adult Ministry and Discipleship
- Christian Witness, Outreach, and Evangelism
- Intergenerational and Cross-Cultural Ministry

Standard 4: Counseling, Human Care, and Relational Competence

The program develops interpersonal, human-care, and relational skills essential to the DCE vocation and congregational ministry.

- Principles of Counseling in Ministry
- Interpersonal Skills, Ethics and Boundaries in Ministry
- Congregational Care and Action Ministry
- Law and Gospel in Ministry Practice
- Emotional Intelligence and Self-Awareness in Leadership

Standard 5: Leadership, Administration, and Team Ministry

The program forms students as servant leaders who plan, administer, and evaluate parish education and ministry programs in collaboration with pastors, church staff, and lay leaders as members of a team ministry serving the mission of the Church.

- Church Leadership and Governance
- Strategic Ministry Planning, Program Administration and Evaluation
- Organizational Communication and Group Dynamics
- Volunteer Recruitment, Supervision, and Development
- Team Ministry Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

Standard 6: Mission Engagement and Cultural Context

The program prepares students to understand and engage cultural contexts for ministry and witness in faithful, mission-oriented, and ethical ways.

- Engaging God's Mission in the 21st Century
- Christian Apologetics, Worldview Formation and Contemporary Challenges to Faith
- World Religions and the American Religious Landscape
- Cultural Context, Ethics, and Ministry Practice
- Community Outreach and Missional Leadership

Standard 7: Research, Reflection, and Ongoing Formation

The program fosters habits of theological reflection, scholarly inquiry including research, and lifelong learning essential to faithful and effective ministry.

Standard 8: Fieldwork and Internship

The program provides structured, supervised experiences in congregational ministry – including a DCE internship placement of at least 12 months – to integrate learning, spiritual formation, and professional competencies for service as a Director of Christian Education.