

Frequently Asked Questions about the CLEF Medallion School of Distinction Program



Students, teachers, staff and administrators at our school are teaming up with the Chicagoland Lutheran Educational Foundation (CLEF) to achieve CLEF's Medallion School of Distinction designation. The following are Frequently Asked Questions about the Medallion School program, how a school can apply for the Medallion program, how it can receive badges and Medallion status, and how the CLEF Medallion program benefits our school.

Q1: What is the Chicagoland Lutheran Educational Foundation (CLEF)?

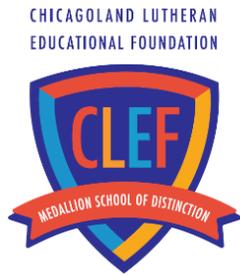
CLEF is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization that for the past 27 years has provided scholarship resources, professional development, and program and consultative services to a community of 22 Chicago Lutheran schools. Ranging from preschool to high school, these schools offer an enriching educational experience in a values-based Christian environment. Thanks to the generous support of CLEF Board of Directors, who covers the cost of CLEF's operating expenses, 100 percent of every donation funds the programs and services that directly benefit Chicago Lutheran schools and the students they serve. For more information on CLEF, go to www.clefchicago.org

Q2: What is CLEF's mission?

The mission of CLEF is to empower urban Lutheran schools to deliver innovative, quality education in a Christian environment.

Q3: What is the CLEF Medallion School of Distinction program?

The Medallion School of Distinction program is designed to provide Lutheran schools in Chicagoland with a clear vision of what outstanding Lutheran education looks like, so that they can strive towards increasing levels of excellence. The Medallion program provides a set of standards against which a school can be measured and which, if achieved, credibly demonstrate that a school is truly a school of excellence. The program identifies criteria and levels of excellence in four categories critical to parochial school success. Each category is then divided into two "Badges of Distinction". A school earns a Badge of Distinction ("badge") after



demonstrating excellence in that area through a rigorous assessment program. After a school earns all eight badges, it has achieved the right to be designated a CLEF Medallion School of Distinction.

Q4: *What is the purpose of CLEF’s Medallion School of Distinction program?*

The ultimate purpose of the Medallion Program is to encourage Lutheran schools in Chicago to demonstrate that they have met rigorous standards of excellence in academic rigor combined with a solid foundation of Christian values. CLEF envisions a future in which all Lutheran schools in Chicago are model hubs of high-performance, innovation, and student success, shaping the city’s youth into conscientious, Christ-centered, and responsible citizens. CLEF intends to provide resources and support to the schools throughout the Medallion program as they move through the process of achieving badges and ultimately Medallion status.

Q5: *How was the Medallion School Program designed?*

The Medallion School of Distinction Program is the culmination of two years of study and research by a team of professors at Concordia University Chicago and other in education and mission-driven leadership to define attributes of a truly outstanding Christian school. This study included an extensive review of existing school recognition and accreditation programs; a study of the best practices and innovations in teaching, learning and educational environments; collaboration with subject matter experts and school leaders around the country; and feedback from principals CLEF schools.

Q6: *Is the Medallion program an accreditation program?*

Although the format and process for achieving Medallion School status may resemble school accreditation programs, the Medallion program is NOT an accreditation program. CLEF firmly believes in the value of accreditation programs and strongly encourages each school to seek accreditation from respected agencies. The Medallion program, however, establishes what innovative Lutheran education in an urban setting should aspire to become and to what it should be held accountable. The Medallion program is designed to provide schools with a roadmap for continuing improvement. The standards and assessments, which are an integral part of the program, are based on evaluating and setting high expectations for the quality of

administrative, operational, and academic functions and outcomes, in addition to compliance. The onsite assessments and evaluations are designed to enable a school to demonstrate the excellence of its operations and academics in a structured and systematic manner.

Q7: What are the Medallion categories and badges?

The Medallion Program identifies four categories critical to school success and sustainability, and allows the school to achieve two Badges of Distinction for each of those categories:

- School Culture – The culture of a school defines its operating values, beliefs, norms and behaviors. It establishes the faith-based environment in which learning takes place and the nature of the relationships within the school and the broader community. This category is divided into two badges:
 - Christian Principles and Spiritual Formation
 - Community Engagement
- Student Learning and Academic Achievement - A school’s record of academic excellence is critical to its long-term success. In this category, excellence is defined as not only meeting commonly held educational standards and best practices, but also as integrating innovations in curriculum design, instruction and assessment. The standards in this category assess the strength and effectiveness of curriculum and instruction to support student learning and academic excellence. This category is divided into two badges:
 - Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
 - Innovation in Learning
- School Leadership and Sustainability – A school’s success and longevity depend on strong leadership, governance structures and financial planning to ensure its long-term viability and integrity. This category is divided into two badges:
 - Governance and Staff Evaluation
 - Financial Sustainability and Enrollment
- School Environment and Health and Wellness – Students need a safe, secure and healthy environment in which to learn and grow. The safety and aesthetics of the school campus and the health and well-being of the school community contribute to overall environment of learning. This category is divided into two badges:
 - Facilities and Infrastructure

- Health and Wellness

Each category includes specific standards and criteria that schools can use to assess their overall performance and level of excellence in that category.

Q8: *What are the expectations if a school chooses to participate in the Medallion Program?*

- Its principal will participate fully in [Pathways to Excellence](#) quarterly intensives for school leaders;
- It will participate in CLEF-offered professional development opportunities that support Medallion program goals, such as CAPS, ITI, and other professional development opportunities;
- It will engage in “cohort” support events provided to schools that may be working on earning the same badge or focusing on similar areas of improvement;
- Its principal will cooperate fully with his/her instructional and leadership coaches, including maintaining scheduled appointments and sessions, responding to feedback and coaching, and providing coaches with requested information and/or materials to support in action planning for badge and Medallion applications;
- It will participate as fully as possible in School Board development workshops;
- It will provide requested key performance metrics throughout the year to support with assessments and progress evaluations, including enrollment and student test scores;
- It will furnish all of the information needed for the assessments to determine whether a badge has been achieved, and will cooperate in all phases of that assessment.

Q9: *How will a school benefit if it achieves badges and Medallion School of Distinction?*

The Medallion Program offers a participating school the opportunity to develop higher performing, financially sustainable, and Christian-based schools. It provides a clear roadmap for schools to follow as they demonstrate increased degrees of excellence in the four categories of achievement. Successfully earning badges and ultimately achieving Medallion School of Distinction status gives a school a credible basis on which to assert its excellence. CLEF believes that a school can use its achievements in the Medallion program to assist in its retention and recruitment efforts as it attempts to increase enrollment.

Q10: *How does a school progress through the Medallion School program?*

All Chicago Lutheran schools are encouraged to participate in the Medallion program. As it moves through the Medallion School process, a school will have access to all CLEF programs, including coaches with subject matter expertise, technical and financial support, and professional development for teachers and the leadership team. The process that a school follows in order to move toward Medallion status is as follows:

1. Declaration of Intent
2. Action Planning for earning badges
3. Self-assessment against badge rubric
4. Collection of evidence
5. Submission of application and evidence
6. Evidence review by a CLEF badge assessment team
7. Site visit by CLEF badge assessment team
8. Badge award or recommendations
9. Celebration and recognition!

Q11: *How does a school get awarded Medallion School of Distinction status?*

When a school has received all eight badges, it may apply for Medallion status. The CLEF's Medallion assessment team will make a final review of evidence and will either recommend the school be awarded Medallion status or it will provide the school with feedback regarding what it needs to address in order to achieve Medallion status. The school will have a 12-month grace period during which to address these areas of improvement without having to reapply for badges. If the school passes the Medallion assessment team's evidence review and final site visit, it will be awarded official Medallion School of Distinction recognition and rewards. This will include a major financial award to the school, along with marketing support to enable the school to promote its outstanding achievement among the school community and the community at large.

Q12: *What will the Medallion Program help schools do?*

- Utilize CLEF resources while on the pathway to excellence
- Prioritize opportunities for improvement;
- Better understand their strengths, competitive advantages, and challenges;
- More effectively promote their value proposition to parents and stakeholders

- Improve school reputation;
- Drive enrollment through more compelling messaging;
- Gain access to more focused support and resources;
- Once a badge is earned or Medallion status is achieved, the school can celebrate successes and improvements;
- Contribute to school pride, as well as increased enrollment and retention;
- Earn financial incentives as badges as awarded;
- Launch effective marketing initiatives that tout the excellence of the school in ways that are meaningful to current and prospective families.

Q13: *How will the Medallion Program allow CLEF to help schools?*

- Recognize and reward schools with community recognition and financial incentives as they meet milestones of excellence
- Develop and implement individualized support for each school;
- Support school leadership to track process, identify goals, and strive for milestones of excellence;
- Provide compelling evidence of the viability of Lutheran schools in Chicago as CLEF raises additional funds from donors to support all of the programs it provides to Chicago Lutheran schools.