

2026 LEA Award Recipients

Beverly Brueggemann selected for 2026 Distinguished Retired Lutheran Educator “EncourAGING” Award

Beverly Brueggemann, of Grafton, Wis., a 50-year veteran serving in Lutheran education, public education, and in other capacities, was selected to receive LEA’s Distinguished Retired Lutheran Educator EncourAGING Award. She officially retired from St. Paul Lutheran School in Grafton in 2010. Since retiring she has been mentoring new teachers in the South Wisconsin District, trained to be a Lutheran Early Response Team (LERT) worker, and assisted Habitat for Humanity, Family Sharing, and Lutheran Counseling & Family Services.



Ms. Brueggemann graduated with a B.S. in education from University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. Bev received her colloquy from Concordia University, River Forest, Ill. She also attended Concordia, Ann Arbor, Mich., and she served her entire career years in the greater Milwaukee area.

Bev continues to serve in a variety of ways. Her pastor, wrote, “Beverly retired after a distinguished career as a teacher at our school, where she shaped generations of students with Christ-centered instruction, loving care, and a passion for integrating faith into every aspect of learning. Her impact extended far beyond the classroom; she was known for her patience, wisdom, and ability to nurture both academic growth and spiritual maturity in her students. Many alumni still speak of her influence as a guiding light in their lives.”

“What truly sets Beverly apart and makes her an ideal candidate for the "EncourAGING" Award is her continued dedication to Lutheran education and service post-retirement. She remains actively involved in mentoring new teachers at our school, offering guidance, encouragement, and practical support to help them thrive in their calling. Her gentle wisdom and willingness to share her experience have been invaluable in sustaining the next generation of Lutheran educators.”

One of Bev’s former colleagues summed up the case for her selection. “Since [Bev’s] retiring, I've worked with Bev in two main areas: mentoring of new teachers and serving on LERT (Lutheran Early Response Teams). In collaboration with Concordia University Wisconsin and the LCMS South Wisconsin District, Bev created a yearlong systematic mentoring program where she works directly with teachers that are new in the field. The program, which highlights an investment in our most valued resources -our teachers, provides weekly and monthly tips for new teachers on how to navigate their new profession. Bev shares resources with new teachers, comes into the classroom to support them, sends uplifting messages, prayers and devotions to them and even helps correct papers and set up projects. This mentoring program has been used by principals throughout the South Wisconsin District, including here at St. Paul and I'm grateful for her love and nurturing of new teachers.”



Caitlin McGaffick named 2026 LEA Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Teacher

Caitlin McGaffick was selected to receive Lutheran Education Association’s 2026 Distinguished Lutheran Elementary Teacher Award. Ms. McGaffick, has taught for eight years in third grade at Divine Redeemer Lutheran School in Hartland, Wis.

Caitlin earned a B. A. in elementary education from Concordia University, Mequon, Wis. And a M. A. in mathematics education K-6 from Western Governors University in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In initiating Caitlin’s nomination, her administrator provided a comprehensive case for Caitlin. She said, “Caitlin McGaffick is a dedicated, faith-filled teacher who inspires students to love math and Jesus. Her creativity, structure, and individualized instruction foster success. She organizes church staff appreciation, community events, mentors peers, and models excellence—making her truly deserving of this award.”

Caitlin's former pastor commented, "Throughout the years I served alongside Caitlin at Divine Redeemer, I consistently observed her deep commitment to excellence in Lutheran education and her genuine love for the students and families entrusted to her care. As a third-grade teacher, Caitlin faithfully meets the academic needs of her students while also attending carefully to their social, emotional, and spiritual growth. Her classroom is a place where children are challenged to grow, encouraged to persevere, and continually pointed to Christ and His grace. Caitlin teaches the Christian faith clearly and joyfully from a Lutheran perspective, grounding her students in the promises given to them in Holy Baptism and nurtured through God's Word.

Among her joys in ministry, Caitlin said, "My greatest joy as a teacher is watching students grow academically, spiritually, and in confidence over the course of the year. I am blessed to walk alongside students in their faith journey, helping them learn about God's love and see their gifts as part of His plan. I especially enjoy seeing students discover new ideas, make connections, and take ownership of their learning. I enjoy finding ways to make mathematics engaging such as creating my own math games and resources. It is deeply rewarding to witness students engage and enjoy resources I put time and heart into creating."

Caitlin's personal mission statement is, "to inspire and instill a lifelong love of learning, exploring, and problem-solving with Christ as the guide. I aim to encourage and inspire the spiritual, intellectual, and social growth of my students during their time inside and outside of my classroom through engaging and relevant content."



**Lindsey Bahr honored as
LEA's 2026 Outstanding New Lutheran Secondary Educator**

Lindsey Bahr was selected to receive Lutheran Education Association's 2026 Outstanding New Lutheran Secondary Educator Award. She is an English Teacher and Co-Theatre Program Director at Lake Country Lutheran High School in Hartland, Wis.

Ms. Bahr graduated from Concordia University St. Paul, MN with a Bachelor of Arts in Education with a Major in 5-12 Communication Arts/Literature Education and Minors in Lutheran Theology and Theatre. At Concordia, she served as a peer minister and peer advisor, which provided her with an opportunity to be available to other students (including new students) as someone to talk to about faith and pray with them.

Lindsey finds joy working with students. She said, "Any time I see a moment of growth, I am reminded why I love my job and why I truly know I am doing what God has called me to do. Every day I see my students understand more about the world God has given to us. They make connections about who they are, who the other people in the room with them are, and what the world is like. Because of that, they go out into the world better, ready to pass on what they have learned and make the world a more Christ-centered place."

Teaching in a Lutheran high school is not without its challenges. Lindsey said, "I love to stay active in my ministry by walking with my students as much as I can. Because of this, and like all good Lutheran educators, I tend to overextend myself. As I keep teaching, I'm learning that focusing on doing only the things I love allows more time to deeply invest in the students involved in those things. We have better conversations about their lives because I know them well. I'm learning to only commit where I need to so that I can fully commit to what matters: my students."

A parent supported her nomination, saying, "Lindsey demonstrates a strong commitment to excellence in meeting the social, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive needs of students. She teaches and lives out her Christian faith from a Lutheran perspective, modeling Christ-like service and care in her daily interactions. Her influence reaches far beyond the classroom, leaving a lasting impact on students and families alike.

Lindsey's personal mission statement is, "My life would be nothing without Jesus, so I will live my life daily knowing He is the only reason I am able to make it through. This gives me hope in the tough times and humility in the good times. I also know it is my mission as a Christian to share this Good News with as many people as I can. My students are my primary touchpoint, but I know I am also called to reach their parents, my colleagues, and anyone else I may come across along the way God has set before me."