

CONCORDIA SUMMIT FOR EDUCATORS

AUGUST 14, 2026



*Sponsored by:
CUW School of Education
LCMS
North Wisconsin District
South Wisconsin District*

ROOTED

&
Ready



G r o u n d e d i n C h r i s t
E q u i p p e d f o r A c t i o n

SCHEDULE

- Registration and Gathering 8:15 AM - 9:00 AM
- Welcome 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM
- A Sectionals..... 9:45 AM - 10:45 AM
- Keynote..... 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- Lunch & Lunch-n-Learns..... 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
- B Sectionals..... 1:15 PM- 2:15 PM
- C Sectionals..... 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Grounded in Christ - Equipped for Action

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6-7

KEYNOTE

Human-Centered AI: Teaching and Vocation in the Digital Age

*In the age of AI,
what remains
uniquely human?*

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping education, work, and society. But what is AI, really – what does its acceleration mean for our classrooms and our calling as Christian educators?



DR. EUGENE KIM

This session will define AI in accessible terms, explore the speed of current technological change, and examine how the future of work is shifting in response. More importantly, we will ask a deeper question: what remains uniquely human? Grounded in a Lutheran understanding of vocation and formation, this presentation reframes AI not as a replacement for teachers, but as a tool to steward wisely. Participants will explore practical educational exemplars that keep humans at the center, prioritizing wisdom over efficiency, relationships over automation, and formation over information. Together, we will consider how Lutheran schools can lead courageously in an intelligent age while preserving the sacred work of teaching.

Dr. Eugene P. Kim earned his PhD in Comparative/International Education from UCLA and is an influencer and change catalyst for AI in K-20 educational environments around the world. Dr. Kim authored the AI Adoption Framework (2025) and Artificial Intelligence Adoption Inventory (2024) which together are used across schools and colleges to empower AI integration. As an AI thought leader and researcher, he is on the Orange County Department of Education's AI Forward Advisory Board which impacts over 30 school districts across Southern California, is a consultant to the nation's largest private schools, and is co-founder of Genesis AI Research Lab. He is featured in and was consultant to the documentary film Blindsided by AI: The Bigger Picture (2024).

A SESSIONS

- A1** **Designing Effective Rubrics for Student Success and Targeted Feedback** by Dr. Seth Westfall
- A2** **Job Satisfaction, Leadership, and An Anxious Generation: Insights for Training and Retaining the Next Generation of Teachers** by Dr. Ben Washburn
- A3** **Taming the Digital Deluge: Simple Strategies for High Impact Distraction-Free Work** by Paul Tuskowski
- A4** **Regulation Strategies** by Dr. Amanda DeSua
- A5** **Practical Information and Strategies for Meeting the Needs of Advanced Learners in Your Classroom** by Jennifer Cosgrove
- A6** **Reclaiming Rhythm: Why Music Matters More than Ever in Today's Classrooms** by Dr. Kirsten Kasten
- A7** **Putting the Science of Reading into Practice: Routines for Success** by Dr. Kristy Piebenga
- A8** **The ABC's of Defending Your Faith** by Dr. Brad Alles
- A9** **Attention, Identity, and iPads: Raising the Screen Generation** by Professor Jonathan Balsman
- A10** **Come Away and Rest with Jesus: A Bible Study on Rest** by Deaconess Stephenie Hovland
- A11** **Transforming the First Day of Class: Leading with Teaching & Learning and Not Due Dates & Assignments** by Dr. Preston Cosgrove
- A12** **Mentoring Young Coaches** by Dr. Val Keiper
- A13** **The Work of Care: From Insight to Action in Building Psychological Safety** by Patrick Uselding
- A14** **Prompt Like a Pro** by Dria Setter

- A15** **Financial Fitness for Life** by Amy Klein
- A16** **Interactive Notebooks: They Aren't As Scary as They Seem!** by Adrianna Lubner and Megan Shanks
- A17** **Integrating Sandtray/Sandplay into Educational Settings** by Professor Jennifer Bargmann
- A18** **Options for All: Accommodations and Modifications in the General Education Classroom** by Professor Jennifer Clemens and Dr. Linda Hensel
- A19** **Mission-Aligned Momentum: Using Stakeholder Voice to Drive Continuous School Improvement** by Dr. Steve Gerner
- A20** **Revolutionary Leadership for Lutheran School Educators** by Dr. James Pingel
- A21** **Building a Deeper Understanding of the Scientific Method in a Christian Setting** by Dr. Michael Young
- A22** **The Inside Scoop on Child Development Research** by Dr. Kathleen Kannass
- A23** **A Blueprint for Building a School that Lasts: Clarity, Alignment, and Sustainable Growth- Start with Community Research** by Dana Kirchoff and Ryan Kirchoff

B SESSIONS

- B1** **Filling the Gap – Young Teen Lit for Ages 13-15** by Crystal Zahn
- B2** **From Data to Daily Instruction: Designing Targeted Literacy Teaching After aimswebPlus** by Dr. Mona Zignego
- B3** **PE Best Practices Made Simple** by Professor Tim Mueller
- B4** **The ART of Regulation** by Professor Laura Adameak
- B5** **Nature Bookmaking with Young Children** by Dr. Amy Lindgren

- B6** **Rethinking Reader Response: Getting Students Excited to Read and Think** by Dr. Kristy Piebenga
- B7** **Don't Be Your Authentic Self...Be Your Best Self** by Dr. Jim Pingel
- B8** **Faith Integration Strategies** by Dr. Brad Alles
- B9** **When Math Moves, Minds Move** by Professor Jonathan Balsman
- B10** **Beyond "I'm Sorry": The Work of Forgiveness in the Classroom** by Stephenie Hovland
- B11** **In the Dragon's Crosshairs: The Daily Spiritual Warfare** by Pastor David Fleming
- B12** **NotebookLM: Your Own AI File Cabinet** by Dria Setter
- B13** **What's New, Old, and Controversial in the Reading World Today** by Dr. Val Keiper
- B14** **The Work of Care: Strengthening Classroom Wellbeing Through Reflective Practice**
by Patrick Uselding
- B15** **Retirement Planning for All Ages** by Amy Klein
- B16** **Highly Sensitive People: Why It's Important to Recognize this Personality Trait** by
Professor Jennifer Bargmann
- B17** **Igniting Curiosity in the Age of Instant Knowledge: Engaging Every Student Through
Active Learning** by Dr. Steve Gerner
- B18** **Assessment is a Conversation** by Dr. Paape
- B19** **Supporting Speech and Language Development in Preschool and Elementary
Learners** by Dr. Elizabeth Eernisse and Dr. Mikaely Schmitz
- B20** **Immersive AI Experience - Bots, Gems, and GPTs** by Dr. Eugene Kim
- B21** **A Blueprint for Building a School that Lasts: Articulate and Align Your
Differentiated Program** by Dana Kirchoff and Ryan Kirchoff

B22 **Power Discipline for Positive School Improvement** by Professor Bryan Wright

B23 **Improving Phonemic Awareness in Young Readers** by Ashley Stege and Rachel Schultz

C SESSIONS

C1 **All Things Literacy: A Teacher Q & A Discussion** by Crystal Zahn

C2 **Moving Beyond Outdated Leadership Stereotypes: How the Cycle of Care Reframes Accountability, Excellence, and Care in Christian Schools** by Dr. Mona Zignego

C3 **Small Data, Smart Decisions** by Dr. Kirsten Kasten

C4 **Lutheran Schools as Mission Outreach** by Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador and Dr. Alan Freeman

C5 **Building Positive Classroom Culture Through Movement (K-8)** by Professor Tim Mueller

C6 **ZOOMING in on God's Creation: Ecological Perspective-Taking with Young Scientists** by Dr. Amy Lindgren

C7 **Tedious Task or Wondrous Work? Using Writer's Craft Across Genres** by Dr. Kristy Piebenga

C8 **Understanding Neurodiversity: Making Space for Every Mind** by Professor Laura Adameak

C9 **AI Governance for Schools: Leading Faculty, Staff, and Students** by Professor Jonathan Balsman

C10 **50 Ways to Study the Bible** by Sherri Baiertl

C11 **One Size Does NOT Fit All: Various Approaches to Faith Integration in the Middle and High School Classroom** by Dr. Preston Cosgrove

C12 **Help, I'm Bored! Or Why Groundhog's Day is an Insightful Movie** by Pastor David Fleming

- C13** **First on Scene: A Behavioral Health Primer for Educators** by Dr. Laura Kaae
- C14** **The Immersion Framework: How to Bring Joy, Purpose, and Rigor to Classic Literature** by Professor Benjamin Balsman
- C15** **Fostering Student Self-Regulation with Grace and Empathy** by Dr. Linda Hensel
- C16** **SR³ – Teacher Evaluation & Growth Support System** by Professor Bryan Wright and Mark McBeth
- C17** **The Curious Case of the Math Classroom** by Dr. Adam Paape
- C18** **"Phun" (Fun) With Phonics** by Professor Lori Ladiges
- C19** **Increasing Student Engagement During Lectures** by Mike Loveless
- C20** **Communication Styles in the Classroom: Improving Student Relationships** by Ashley Stege and Rachel Schultz
- C21** **Fill My Cup and Let it Overflow: Move from Empty-hearted Obligation to a Joyful Response to God's Mercy and Grace** by Dr. Michael Uden
- C22** **Meeting the Needs of All Learners** by Kim Roethel
- C23** **United in Coming Alongside School Families** by Dr. Tanya Calendo



LUNCH & LEARN BONUS SESSIONS

L1: Current Trends and Tips for LCMS Teacher Placement with Dr. James Juergensen

Are you a new administrator still trying to figure out the ins and outs of the placement process and how to request a candidate? Are you a veteran administrator with wisdom to share about past experiences or wondering how things have changed in the placement/call process over the years? What are some strategies for requesting candidates and/or “recruiting” candidates? What in the world is a designation, and why do we use that process with first placement candidates? What are the latest trends in the world of teacher placement across all of the Concordia University system? This session will be an informal time to ask questions and share successes and concerns regarding teacher candidate placement. Grab your lunch and join us for some great conversation!

L2: CUW PhD and EdD Programs at CUW: Leadership in Innovation & Continuous Improvement (LICI) with Dr. Kathleen Kannass and Dr. Preston Cosgrove

Leadership in Innovation and Continuous Improvement “LICI”-- our name says it all. At CUW, we offer you two exceptional doctoral degree options with faith, integrity, and rigor. Whether you choose our LICI EdD program or LICI PhD program, your degree will support you in excelling in your leadership capacity and professional development. But when is the right time to start? How will I be successful and balance doctoral coursework, work, and life in general? And why would I want to do this? Come explore these questions, learn about what CUW has to offer you, and have some fun!

L3: Stepping into Leadership: Christian and Public School Leadership at CUW

Are you ready to take the next step in your calling as an educator? CUW’s Christian and Public School Leadership programs are designed to equip educators with the skills, knowledge, and faith-based leadership principles needed to step into impactful leadership roles. Whether you are called to serve in a Lutheran or Christian school setting through our non-licensure Master’s degree, or are seeking Wisconsin Administrator Licensure as a Principal, Superintendent, Director of Instruction, or Director of Special Education and Pupil Services, our programs provide meaningful, practice-based preparation for today’s evolving educational landscape. As schools face increasing complexity, strong and thoughtful leadership has never been more essential. Join us for this lunch breakout session to explore your next step, ask questions, and discover how Concordia can support your growth as a leader who influences not just systems, but the lives within them.

LUNCH & LEARN BONUS SESSIONS

L4: Counseling Cafe with Dr. Laura Kaae and Professor Laura Adameak

Do you find joy in supporting your students' success, not only in the classroom but within their relationships and healthy emotional development? Do you have a knack for noticing a student's unique strengths and how God might use those in a future vocation? Then School Counseling might be your calling! Join us to learn more about the Counseling Program at Concordia. If you are not looking for a career change, but want to consider a master's degree in an area that explores biopsychosocial development, mental health, and counseling skills, then our non-licensable Counseling Foundations degree might be for you. We can also provide you with information regarding our Clinical Mental Health Degree. We look forward to seeing you and discussing how our program might be the right fit for you!

L5: Read - Lead - Transform with Dr. Kristy Piebenga

In today's classrooms, educators are navigating increasing reading gaps, diverse learner needs, and the growing demand for evidence-based instruction that truly reaches every child. If you feel called to deepen your impact as a reading educator, this session is for you. Join us to explore Concordia's Literacy Program, designed to equip teachers as highly skilled, reflective practitioners in both the Reading Teacher and Reading Specialist licensure pathways. Whether you are working to strengthen foundational reading skills, support struggling readers, or lead literacy initiatives within your school or district, our program prepares you with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to make a lasting difference. Grounded in the science of reading and responsive to the complexities of today's learners, our program integrates assessment, intervention, and leadership, while never losing sight of the relational work at the heart of literacy. If you are not pursuing licensure but desire to grow your expertise, our master's degree options offer meaningful pathways to expand your practice.

WORKSHOPS: SESSION A

A1: Designing Effective Rubrics for Student Success and Targeted Feedback by Dr. Seth Westfall

As educators, we must assess our students to ensure effective learning and success. We use assessments as a way to measure learning and growth over time. Effective rubrics can be pivotal in supporting authentic assessment in both measuring success and in providing targeted feedback for continued growth. In this session, we will identify key characteristics in effective rubric design and work collaboratively to revise or draft a rubric for immediate classroom use. Participants should come to the session with either an assessment or draft rubric as the focus of our work together. [Elementary, Middle, Secondary]

A2: Job Satisfaction, Leadership, and an Anxious Generation: Insights for Training and Retaining the Next Generation of Teachers by Dr. Ben Washburn

Dr. Washburn will share insights from his dissertation research that focused on the relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and principals' leadership style. He'll share those findings along with what research says about our next generation of teachers and provide insights and lead discussion about how we can train and retain the next generation of teachers and leaders in schools. [PK-12, Administration]

A3: Taming the Digital Deluge: Simple Strategies for High Impact Distraction Free Work by Paul Tuskowski

Is work consuming more and more of your time leaving you drowning in a digital deluge? In today's hyper-connected, tech-saturated workplace, the pressure to maintain focus and manage endless notifications has never been higher. The result: burnout, decreased quality of work, and the feeling that work is consuming your personal life. Come to learn strategies to help improve productivity, increase satisfaction, decrease distraction, and better balance professional and personal responsibilities. [PK-12, Administration]

A4: Regulation Strategies by Dr. Amanda DeSua

In the modern classroom, academic success is inextricably linked to emotional well-being. This workshop is designed to move educators from a state of "putting out fires" to cultivating a proactive environment of co-regulation. Participants will explore the neurobiology of stress and gain practical, evidence-based tools to manage their own nervous systems while supporting their students in doing the same. From mindfulness to rhythm and relationships building, educators will learn how to rewire the brain in a positive way. Furthermore, participants will learn about how to boost students' emotional intelligence, create a safe space for learning and how to engage in self-care as well. [PK-12]

SESSION A

A5: Practical Information and Strategies for Meeting the Needs of Advanced Learners in Your Classroom by Jennifer Cosgrove

“Those smart kids in my class? They will be fine!” But will they? What are we doing as teachers to continue to challenge and engage our brightest students? We know differentiation is important, but it takes intentional planning...how do teachers already overwhelmed with the demands of the job and all it entails do this effectively? This sectional will provide an overview of what gifted education may look like in many elementary and middle schools. It will also touch on how to recognize these advanced learners, the characteristics and needs they may have, and will explore in greater depth specific math and language arts strategies and resources that teachers can put into practice immediately. [Elementary, Middle]

A6: Reclaiming Rhythm: Why Music Matters More than Ever in Today's Classrooms by Dr. Kirsten Kasten

As young children experience increasing exposure to technology and fast-paced digital content, educators are seeking developmentally responsive ways to restore attention, connection, and joy in learning. This workshop explores how integrating music into classrooms supports brain development, self-regulation, language and literacy, social-emotional growth, fine and gross motor skills, and sustained engagement. The session also highlights music's unique role in building classroom community and fostering collaboration, especially for young learners navigating attention challenges. Teachers will leave with practical, easy-to-implement strategies that position music not as an add-on, but as an essential tool all teachers can utilize for nurturing whole-child development in today's technology-saturated world. [EC, Elementary]

A7: Putting the Science of Reading into Practice: Routines for Success by Dr. Kristy Piebenga

The Science of Reading. This phrase is jumping out at us everywhere we turn. But what exactly does it mean? What does it change? And what should you do? In this session for K-3 educators, we will discover the excitement that is the Science of Reading. Much more than a phrase, this research-based understanding of literacy processes reveals God's incredible design for language and literacy learning. We will clarify the research and then dive into research-based routines and strategies that you can easily implement in the classroom for essential skills in phonics, decoding, fluency, and oral language. You will be prepared for effective instruction and intervention with early readers! [EC, Elementary]

A8: The ABC's of Defending Your Faith by Dr. Brad Alles

Apologetics, or defending the faith, is as easy as ABC: A is for Archaeology, B is for Bible, C is for Christ Jesus. Find out more and get answers to questions about the truthfulness of Christianity so you are always ready to give a reason for the hope you have (1 Peter 3:15)! [PK-12]

SESSION A

A9: Attention, Identity, and iPads: Raising the Screen Generation by Professor Jonathan Balsman

Today's students are growing up in a screen-saturated world that is shaping attention, relationships, identity, and learning long before they enter our classrooms. Drawing from Jonathan Haidt's *The Anxious Generation* and Jonathan McKee's *Parenting Generation Screen*, this sectional offers a parent and educator perspective on what this reality means for schools and families. Grounded in a Lutheran understanding of vocation and formation, the session moves beyond concern to practical response. Participants will explore what families are navigating at home, how screen habits influence development and learning, and how teachers can partner with parents to cultivate healthy attention, relationships, and faith-informed formation in the students entrusted to their care. [PK-12, Administration]

A10: Come Away and Rest with Jesus: A Bible Study on Rest by Deaconess Stephenie Hovland

Bring your Bible (or app) and explore Mark 6:30-32 together. This Bible study will help us see how Jesus intends us to rest in the midst of our very busy vocations. As Adam and Eve started their first work week by resting with God, we also can start our school year, and every day, by resting with God. [PK-12, Administration]

A11: Transforming the First Day of Class: Leading with Teaching & Learning and Not Due Dates & Assignments by Dr. Preston Cosgrove

The purpose of this sectional is to demonstrate one method for transforming the first day of any middle or high school class with a student-led emphasis on teaching and learning. Conventional wisdom holds that the first day of class matters. But far from a mere slogan, research continues to demonstrate that an intentional, coherent approach on the first day can have lasting effects. This sectional will 1) offer a concise overview of research themes on the first-day of class; 2) engage participants in an experiential, first-day simulation; and 3) allow for a reflective dialogue on their own first-day approaches. [Middle, Secondary, Administration]

A12: Mentoring Young Coaches by Dr. Val Keiper

Lutheran school athletic programs need committed coaches who understand not only the sport but also the mission of the school. This session will be a moderated discussion with experienced coaches – collegiate, high school and middle school – as we discuss ideas that work. [Middle, Secondary, Administration]

SESSION A

A13: The Work of Care: From Insight to Action in Building Psychological Safety by Patrick Uselding

Psychological safety is essential for learning, collaboration, and leadership – and in Lutheran schools, it reflects our shared calling to care for every person as God’s beloved creation. This sectional introduces a practical framework for building psychological safety through four core leadership behaviors: Predictability, Curiosity, Humanity, and Repair. Participants will explore what psychological safety looks like in classrooms and teams, why it matters for student learning and educator wellbeing, and how small, consistent behaviors shape school culture. Through a self-assessment and strategy-building process, attendees will identify one meaningful next step and leave equipped with practical tools to strengthen trust, belonging, and courage in their school communities. [K-12, Administration]

A14: Prompt Like a Pro by Dria Setter

Unlock the magic of Generative AI (Gemini, ChatGPT, CoPilot) by learning how to speak its language in a way that truly works for your role in education. This session moves beyond simple "ask and receive" by showing you how a well-crafted prompt acts as a bridge between your teaching goals and the AI's capabilities. We will walk through the creative process together, from writing your first draft to refining it until the results are exactly what you need. You'll leave with the confidence to turn AI into a reliable teaching partner that saves you time and sparks fresh ideas for your students. [PK-12, Administration]

A15: Financial Fitness for Life by Amy Klein

Financial wellness is an important component of our overall wellness. This session will provide a toolkit of actions you can take to improve or maintain your financial well-being, such as having a financial plan, saving and investing for the future, and using credit wisely. You'll leave with a better understanding of how to be a good steward of the financial resources God has entrusted to you. [PK-12, Administration]

A16: Interactive Notebooks: They Aren't as Scary as They Seem! by Adrianna Lubner and Megan Shanks

Have you seen other teachers use interactive notebooks in their classrooms and always wondered how you could implement them into your classroom as well, but weren't sure where to start? Join us as we go through how we use them in our classrooms while having a little fun in creating one of your own. Feel free to bring your own scissors, glue sticks, and other fun school supplies. [Elementary, Middle]

SESSION A

A17: Integrating Sandtray/Sandplay into Educational Settings by Professor Jennifer Bargmann and Professor Carla Herried

Learn to incorporate the use of sand in the classroom or other learning environments to promote emotional awareness, teach coping skills, and utilizing this avenue for learning. This session focuses on indirect ways it can help in classrooms or learning environments while promoting alternative assignment completion. Participants will explore ways to utilize sandtray/sandplay to encourage creative writing, support learning challenging concepts, provide tactical experiences to increase connections with material being taught, encourage teamwork, teach limits and boundaries, and to use this as an alternative for assignment completion, increasing emotional awareness, and teaching coping skills.

[PK-12]

A18: Options for All: Accommodations and Modifications in the General Education Classroom by Professor Jennifer Clemens and Dr. Linda Hensel

Do you have a wide variety of learning needs in your classroom? What options do you have for accommodating differences in learning in your classroom? We will talk about the difference between accommodations and modifications, and some universal tools that teachers can use in their classrooms to reach all learners. You will leave with strategies that you can implement in the coming school year. [EC, Elementary, Middle]

A19: Mission-Aligned Momentum: Using Stakeholder Voice to Drive Continuous School Improvement by Dr. Steve Gerner

Continuous improvement begins with listening well. In this session, school leaders will learn how to design and implement meaningful surveys for parents, students, staff, and community members that generate actionable insights—not just data. Participants will explore practical strategies for analyzing survey results to identify patterns, strengths, and priority growth areas. The presentation will demonstrate how to translate stakeholder feedback into clear, measurable goals aligned to the school’s mission and strategic vision. [Administration]

A20: Revolutionary Leadership for Lutheran School Educators by Dr. Jim Pingel

These are times that try our leadership souls. This workshop will equip you to lead and serve with courage, clarity, and biblical inspiration in your personal and professional vocations. You’ll learn practical ways to strengthen your communication and persuasion skills, refill your spiritual “bucket,” focus on what matters most, steward time faithfully, remember your why, and build a revolutionary legacy. Whether you lead a school or simply want to grow as a servant leader in every vocation, you’ll leave encouraged and ready for the leadership plans God has in store for you. Bonus: Each attendee will receive a free copy of Dr. Pingel’s recently published devotional, *Scared Inspiration: A Devotional Journey Through the American Revolution and God’s Word*. [All]

SESSION A

A21: Building a Deeper Understanding of the Scientific Method in a Christian Setting by Dr. Michael Young

Thinking “like a scientist” is a learned skill. It has many important aspects and can be described with a variety of 4 or 5-point models. The purpose of this section is to introduce a deeper “college-level” understanding of the scientific method, so that the relevant skills can be practiced at all levels in age-appropriate ways. The types of logic (inductive and deductive reasoning) used by the scientific method will be introduced and then illustrated at a range of age levels, using examples such as simple “sink/float” and straight-forward seed growth experiments. The goal is to be able to intentionally recognize and develop the thinking skills that are sometimes glossed over when the scientific method is presented as formulaic outline. In addition, for each example in the presentation, time will also be taken to give examples of how a Christian perspective may be incorporated in ways that are more or less helpful to reinforcing a Lutheran understanding of relationship between science and religion. [Elementary, Middle, Secondary]

A22: The Inside Scoop on Child Development Research by Dr. Kathleen Kannass

Dive deeper into meaningful research on child development that can be applied to everyday settings with developmental psychologist Dr. Kathleen Kannass. We’ll dig into research on play, learning, attention, cognition, and the importance of teacher-child closeness. Come learn what research has to offer you and optimize your early childhood classroom. [EC]

A23: A Blueprint for Building a School That Lasts: Clarity, Alignment, and Sustainable Growth: Start with Community Research by Dana Kirchoff and Ryan Kirchoff

Strong schools do not improve by accident. They grow with clarity, alignment, and purpose because they know who they serve and who they are. This first session of two by Blueprint Schools invites educators and school leaders into the foundational work of building a school that lasts. Develop a clear and practical framework for sustainable growth that’s rooted in community insight, internal alignment, and a compelling, consistent story. In this session, you will learn how to conduct an area school study, facilitate meaningful parent interviews, identify and articulate your school’s distinct Program Pillars. This workshop provides a strategic starting point for schools seeking renewed focus, vision, direction, and clarity, all based on the needs of the people they’re called to serve. [Administration]

WORKSHOPS: SESSION B

B1: Filling the Gap- Young Teen Lit for Ages 13-15 by Crystal Zahn

Young teens are often stuck between "middle grade" and "YA," leaving 13-15 year-olds without books that speak to their unique experiences. This session explores the publishing gap, why it matters for adolescent readers, and how it impacts engagement and literacy growth. Participants will learn practical ways to connect teens with books: author studies, genre exploration, mentor texts and promoting books in your classroom, gives "in-between" readers access to compelling stories. [Middle]

B2: From Data to Daily Instruction: Designing Targeted Literacy Teaching After aimswebPlus by Dr. Mona Zignego

Too often, screening assessments generate reports, but not clear instructional action. After aimswebPlus testing, educators are left asking: Now what? This session bridges that gap by walking teachers and instructional leaders through a clear, repeatable process for analyzing aimswebPlus data and designing targeted literacy instruction that aligns with how the reading brain develops. Using the author-created aimswebPlus Post-Assessment Instruction Playbook, participants will learn how to move from benchmark data to purposeful grouping, skill-aligned instruction, and progress monitoring within a strong MTSS framework. Grounded in the Science of Reading, the Simple View of Reading, and the Reading Rope, this session emphasizes building foundational skills first—regardless of grade level—so instruction matches students' actual needs rather than assumptions. Participants will analyze sample data, practice grouping students by specific skill gaps, and connect assessment results to concrete instructional moves using curated resources and intervention tools. [EC, Elementary]

B3: PE Best Practices Made Simple by Professor Tim Mueller

This hands-on session equips K-8 educators with easy-to-implement PE activities that build essential movement skills while fostering confidence, teamwork, and caring for God's gift of the body. Participants will leave with practical strategies and engaging activities that encourage students to stay active, support one another, and joyfully develop healthy habits. [Elementary, Middle]

B4: The ART of Regulation by Professor Laura Adameak

This session will equip educators with evidence-based, art-centered strategies to support student regulation, focus, and emotional well-being. Grounded in neuroscience and thoughtfully integrated with a Christian worldview, participants will explore how creative practices calm the nervous system, support learning, and honor the whole child—body, mind, and spirit. Teachers will leave with practical, classroom-ready art activities that foster peace, connection, and readiness to learn. [PK-12]

SESSION B

B5: Nature Bookmaking with Young Children by Dr. Amy Lindgren

Children naturally love to play and create! Nature bookmaking is a great way to blend art, literacy, multisensory inquiry, and environmental education for young learners. Bookmaking allows for creative expression and can set the foundation for a deeper connection to nature and place. In this session, we will explore various bookmaking styles that can be created by children using recycled or natural materials. Join us to create a few simple books and brainstorm ways we can use bookmaking to help young children connect, explore, and engage with the world around them. [EC, Elementary]

B6: Rethinking Reader Response: Getting Students Excited to Read and Think by Dr. Kristy Piebenga

As teachers, we want our students to be active readers and thinkers! However, typical Reader Response requirements may often limit students' level of thinking...not to mention enthusiasm. Through the lens of research and theory that support the work of Reader Response and comprehension, we will explore how to meet the standards while also meeting students' needs, interests, and learning styles. You will be equipped with a wide variety of engaging strategies to immediately implement in your classroom for whole-group, small-group, and independent student success. You will be excited to see your students get excited about reading AND thinking! [Elementary, Middle]

B7: Don't Be Your Authentic Self...Be Your Best Self by Dr. Jim Pingel

Are you the same person you were ten years ago? Twenty years ago? Which version of you is your authentic self? Our culture preaches that you need to be your authentic self in all ways and in all situations. But is that God's plan and design for your life? In this session, we will explore the traps and pitfalls of authenticity or "being your authentic self." Then we will examine and unpack the many ways, only by the grace of God, that you can be your best self – for your students, school, friends, and loved ones. Whether you are a teacher (at any level) or administrator, get ready to be challenged and encouraged all in same session. [All]

B8: Faith Integration Strategies by Dr. Brad Alles

Learn 12 instructional strategies for the integration of faith and learning. From your room's surroundings to lesson planning to student interaction, discover ways to integrate God and a biblical perspective into everything. [PK-12]

SESSION B

B9: When Math Moves, Minds Move by Professor Jonathan Balsman

Math classrooms don't have to be sit-and-get spaces. When students move, talk, and interact, their thinking moves too. This energetic, hands-on sectional explores how daily movement can spark discourse, deepen understanding, and wake up the math brain. Participants will try out strategies such as graph dancing, stand-and-talk routines, building-thinking classroom ideas, and other movement-based structures that can be used right away across grade levels. These approaches can serve as warm-ups, cool-downs, brain breaks, or even quick formative assessments. Grounded in research on cognition and engagement, this session invites teachers to reimagine math class as active, social, and full of life. And yes, you will be moving! [Middle, Secondary]

B10: Beyond "I'm Sorry": The Work of Forgiveness in the Classroom by Deaconess Stephenie Hovland

Confession and forgiveness are integral for the Lutheran classroom. How do we teach it, model, and use it? Learn about the value and goals of confession and forgiveness as well as different techniques to convey the Gospel. [PK-12, Administration]

B11: In the Dragon's Crosshairs: The Daily Spiritual Warfare by Pastor David Fleming

Surveys reveal that many church workers have experienced higher levels of conflict and criticism in the last few years. It's prudent to learn how to manage conflict, to lead with wisdom, and to not be quick-tempered but be long-suffering. But there's also spiritual warfare involved. If you're a faithful worker in our Lord's kingdom, Satan hates you, your school, your church, and your family. Ultimately Christians are to ground their joy, confidence, and conscience in the judgment of Christ. [PK-12, Administration]

B12: NotebookLM: Your Own AI File Cabinet by Dria Setter

Discover how to develop a powerful, interactive "file cabinet" through the use of NotebookLM. Learn how to streamline lesson planning, generate instant instructional resources, and create a safe, AI-powered hub to promote inquiry and accessibility. Become a master of NotebookLM and increase your workplace efficiency while providing personalized, evidence-based learning. [PK-12, Administration]

B13: What's New, Old, and Controversial in the Reading World Today by Dr. Val Keiper

Some many things drive the reading dialogue amongst educators today. This session will provide a discussion on things like the Science of Reading, AR, classical approaches, and others relating to what works and maybe what doesn't work in the everyday classroom. [EC, Elementary]

SESSION B

B14: The Work of Care: Strengthening Classroom Wellbeing Through Reflective Practice by Patrick Uselding

Educators shape the daily environments where students experience belonging, safety, and growth. Yet many classroom practices that influence student wellbeing operate beneath the surface – unnoticed, unmeasured, and unspoken. This interactive session introduces the Classroom Wellbeing Audit, a reflective, research-informed tool that helps educators identify strengths, surface hidden stress points, and design small, meaningful shifts that support student mental health. Participants will explore five domains of classroom wellbeing (relationships, routines, environment, communication, and instructional practices) and use the audit to self-assess their current practices. Through guided reflection, paired discussion, and strategy sampling, educators will leave with a concrete, classroom-ready action plan they can implement immediately. Grounded in Lutheran values of care, vocation, and community, this session invites educators to see wellbeing work not as an add-on, but as a natural extension of their calling to serve students with compassion, wisdom, and intentionality. [Elementary, Middle, Secondary]

B15: Retirement Planning for All Ages by Amy Klein

In this session, financial educator Amy Klein will unpack the Concordia Retirement Plan pension and the Concordia Retirement Savings Plan 403(b). Get answers to all your questions about these valuable benefits and learn how they work together to provide income when you retire. No matter your age, you'll leave this session loving your pension and knowing what you can do now to prepare for a successful retirement! [PK-12, Administration]

B16: Highly Sensitive People: Why It's Important to Recognize This Personality Trait by Professor Jennifer Bargmann

Did you know that about 20-30% of us are Highly Sensitive People (HSPs), and we see the world a bit differently from everyone else? Because we take in twice as much information, we experience things uniquely. This workshop is designed to help you understand what makes someone an HSP, whether you are one yourself, and how you might need to adjust your approach in the classroom when interacting with an HSP. [PK-12, Administration]

B17: Igniting Curiosity in the Age of Instant Knowledge: Engaging Every Student Through Active Learning by Dr. Steve Gerner

In an era of abundant knowledge and instant access to information, teaching shifts from delivering content to facilitating deeper, active learning. Educators prioritize strategies that spark curiosity, collaboration, and critical thinking. In this session, you will explore practical strategies to foster both emotional and cognitive student engagement. [Elementary, Middle, Secondary]

SESSION B

B18: Assessment is a Conversation by Dr. Adam Paape

What if assessment wasn't the end of learning – but the beginning of better teaching?

This section reframes formative assessment as an ongoing conversation between teacher and students. Instead of viewing assessment as a grade or event, we'll explore how intentional checks for understanding, hinge questions, feedback moves, and instructional adjustments create responsive classrooms where learning accelerates. Grounded in research on formative assessment and feedback, this session highlights practical routines that help educators elicit evidence of student thinking in real time and use it to guide next steps. We'll examine how to clarify learning intentions, gather meaningful evidence during instruction, and provide feedback that moves learning forward rather than simply labeling performance. Participants will leave with concrete strategies to make assessment visible, actionable, and instructionally powerful. Discover how shifting from evaluation to conversation can transform daily practice – and ensure that what happens next in your classroom is driven by what students actually understand. [Elementary, Middle, Secondary, Administration]

B19: Supporting Speech and Language Development in Preschool and Elementary Learners by Dr. Elizabeth Eernisse and Dr. Mikaely Schmitz

Effective communication underpins learning, relationship development and faith formation. As educators committed to the holistic growth of every child, recognizing the nuances of communication disorders is vital for fostering both academic excellence and social-emotional well-being in our students. This presentation will clarify the distinct differences between speech (articulation, fluency, voice) and language (receptive and expressive skills), highlighting typical developmental milestones from preschool through elementary school. In addition, it will outline both subtle and overt indicators that a student may require professional support. Beyond identification, this session will provide practical, evidence-based strategies to support communication in the classroom immediately. We will also discuss best practices for approaching parents and navigating the referral process for support services with empathy and professionalism. [EC, Elementary]

B20: Immersive AI Experience - Bots, Gems, and GPTs by Dr. Eugene Kim

AI tools are now ubiquitous in education, commonly used for lesson planning, productivity, and creative design. Efficiency is good. Student engagement is better. This immersive session explores how bots, Gems, and custom GPTs can move beyond task assistance into dynamic classroom experiences. After a brief overview of how these AI tools work, participants will engage in a live GPT experience designed to model rich learning in action. Educators will explore how AI can facilitate meaningful dialogue, immersive simulations, critical thinking, and real-world problem-solving while strengthening, not replacing, the teacher's relational role. Participants will leave with practical models for keeping human formation and vocation at the center of AI-supported learning. [PK-12, Administration]

SESSION B

B21: A Blueprint for Building a School that Lasts: Articulate and Align Your Differentiated Program by Dana Kirchoff and Ryan Kirchoff

Strong schools do not improve by accident. They grow with clarity, alignment, and purpose because they know who they serve and who they are. Clarity must translate into alignment. Once you have defined your program pillars, the next challenge is making sure students and teachers experience them every day. Your classrooms, expectations, systems, and faculty commitments must reflect who you say you are and what you say matters most. Differentiation is not just what we say; it's what we actually do. This second of two sessions by Blueprint Schools focuses on bringing your program pillars to life in tangible and sustainable ways. By the end, you will have a framework for developing two foundational components of an aligned school: A living Educational Philosophy and Collective Commitments that guide daily decisions and behavior. [Administration]

B22: Power Discipline for Positive School Improvement by Professor Bryan Wright

Discipline should not carry a negative connotation. Effective behavior change does not require suspensions or expulsions to be successful. Power Discipline reframes discipline as a proactive, instructional process rather than a punitive response. It is built on two core principles that guide both staff and students in developing accountability, consistency, and respect. By emphasizing clear expectations and purposeful responses, Power Discipline supports high academic standards while maintaining order, safety, and structure in classrooms and hallways alike. [PK-12, Administration]

B23: Improving Phonemic Awareness in Young Readers by Ashley Stege and Rachel Schultz

Phonological Skills are a foundational piece of teaching young learners how to read. In this session, participants will explore how God designed the brain in relation to developing phonemic awareness and the ability to read. We will dive into how the brain processes letters and sounds and examine a few roadblocks that may occur during the process. Participants will identify the gaps in their students' phonological awareness skills, and understand exactly why errors are being made. Once the error is pinpointed, teachers will select activities to implement in the classroom to support growth in those areas. [EC, Elementary]

WORKSHOPS: SESSION C

C1: All Things Literacy: A Teacher Q & A Discussion by Crystal Zahn

Teachers, come together for this interactive session to share experiences in the literacy classroom, ask questions, and share strategies that work! Whether it's designing a unit you've been thinking about, engaging a reluctant reader, or building a classroom library, participants will leave with practical ideas and new connections. This session focuses on collaboration, reflection, and peer-to-peer learning. [Middle]

C2: Moving Beyond Outdated Leadership Stereotypes: How the Cycle of Care Reframes Accountability, Excellence, and Care in Christian Schools by Dr. Mona Zignego

In high-accountability educational environments, leadership is often associated with outdated stereotypes—emotional distance, relentless urgency, and the belief that being “hard” on people is a sign of care and effectiveness. While these approaches are frequently normalized and even praised, research and experience suggest they undermine trust, limit professional growth, and contribute to burnout. This session invites Christian school leaders to critically examine these outdated leadership stereotypes and consider a more faithful and effective alternative. Using the Cycle of Care as a practical leadership framework, participants will explore how excellence and accountability can coexist with dignity, clarity, and genuine care. Grounded in ethics-of-care research, transformative leadership theory, and practitioner-based study, the Cycle of Care offers leaders a repeatable way to lead with conviction without defaulting to fear-based or performance-driven practices. Participants will apply the Cycle of Care to common leadership situations—including feedback conversations, instructional coaching, and high-stakes decision-making—to see how care and accountability function together rather than in opposition. [Administration]

C3: Small Data, Smart Decisions by Dr. Kirsten Kasten

Use student data in practical, manageable ways that lead directly to instructional action. This session emphasizes the identification of the most useful sources of data, such as formative checks, unit assessments, MAP or other assessment data, and applies a simple framework to leave with a clear actionable plan to guide differentiation and support student learning. Rather than analyzing all available data, this session focuses on identifying which data matters most for day-to-day instruction and how to use it to guide next instructional steps. [PK-12]

SESSION C

C4: Lutheran Schools as Mission Outreach by Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador and Dr. Alan Freeman

Lutheran schools have always been more than places of academic instruction—they are living expressions of the Church’s mission. This presentation invites Lutheran school administrators and teachers to reflect on how our schools serve as powerful mission outposts in an increasingly diverse and church-detached world. Together, we will explore the unique calling of Lutheran education as a ministry as you provide a Christ-centered education and a witness to students, families, and the community. Participants will consider how faithful Lutheran identity, excellence in teaching, and intentional relationships with students and families create natural pathways for outreach and evangelism. Practical examples and guiding principles will illustrate how schools can engage families with little or no church background while remaining firmly rooted in Lutheran theology. This session will encourage educators to see their classrooms, hallways, and communities as mission fields, and their roles as administrators and teachers as vital partners in God’s work of sharing Christ’s love. Participants will leave with renewed purpose, theological clarity, and practical insights for strengthening their school’s mission outreach both within and beyond the school walls. [PK-12, Administration]

C5: Building Positive Classroom Culture Through Movement (K–8) by Professor Tim Mueller

This interactive session shows how purposeful movement can foster a positive, Christ-centered classroom culture, increase student engagement, and nurture character rooted in God’s Word. Designed for K–8 teachers, it features movement and brain break activities that can be done in the classroom, promoting cooperation, self-control, and leadership. Participants will leave with practical, hands-on strategies to help students learn, move, and grow together in a faith-filled environment. [Elementary, Middle]

C6: ZOOMING in on God's Creation: Ecological Perspective-Taking with Young Scientists by Dr. Amy Lindgren

Young scientists learn about the world around them through their senses, play, and active exploration. However, the phenomena children wonder about are often difficult to observe, occur over periods of time, or are abstract. To avoid scientific misconceptions, it is important that children learn to hone their skills of observation, but more importantly, learn to actively “participate with” living creatures and non-living elements in the world around them. In this sectional, we will explore how to capitalize on “zooming” or play with a change of perspective as a way to hone observational skills and develop a sense of place. Join us to explore nature-based strategies and children’s literature that promote key scientific competencies in young scientists including perspective-taking, inquiry, observation, and a sense of wonder. [EC, Elementary]

SESSION C

C7: Tedious Task or Wondrous Work? Using Writer’s Craft Across Genres by Dr. Kristy Piebenga

If you’ve ever heard a student say, “I hate writing!” you are not alone. For some students, writing is a tedious task. But it doesn’t have to be that way! In this session, we will look at how writer’s craft can turn a tedious task into wondrous work. Through the use of rich mentor texts, you will explore how to engage students in all writing genres with ideas, structure, detail, voice, and conventions. A plethora of strategies and practices will be shared, and you will see what implementation looks like through examples of classroom use and student writing. You will soon find your students eager to engage in the wondrous work of writing! [Elementary]

C8: Understanding Neurodiversity: Making Space for Every Mind by Professor Laura Adameak

Neurodiversity recognizes the natural variations in how people think, learn, process information, and interact with the world. This session invites educators to explore what it means to embrace neurodiversity in educational settings. Participants will gain a foundational understanding of common neurodivergent profiles and learn practical strategies to create supportive environments where all students can thrive. Foster a mindset shift; from seeing differences as challenges to recognizing them as strengths, and to build classrooms where every mind feels seen, valued, and empowered. [PK-12]

C9: AI Governance for Schools: Leading Faculty, Staff, and Students by Professor Jonathan Balsman

School leaders everywhere are being asked to respond to artificial intelligence, yet many lack a clear framework for governing its use across faculty, staff, and students. This sectional equips administrators to design and implement a comprehensive, schoolwide AI governance plan that clarifies expectations, protects data privacy, and aligns with instructional and institutional priorities. Using Concordia’s governance model and the deployment of BoodleBox as a case study, participants will explore how to establish guardrails for classroom use, staff productivity, and student learning while creating a coherent institutional approach to AI adoption. The focus is not on tools alone, but on leadership decisions that shape ethical, sustainable, and mission-aligned use of AI across an entire school community. [Administration]

C10: 50 Ways to Study the Bible by Sherri Baierl

Walk through a variety of ways to approach scripture. Some familiar, some that you may not have thought of. [Middle, Secondary, Administration]

SESSION C

C11: One Size Does NOT Fit All: Various Approaches to Faith Integration in the Middle and High School Classroom by Dr. Preston Cosgrove

Lutheran educators are tasked with the incredible opportunity to form their students via Romans 12:2: the transformation of their minds. And given the trajectory of American education, such faith-integration opportunities are increasingly important. But similar to how educators don't rely on a single technique in their teaching, faith-integration can be approached from different perspectives. As a result, this sectional will 1) highlight how/why faith-integration is the defining piece of what makes Christian education "Christian;" 2) provide a brief overview of six different approaches for faith-integration; and 3) allow for reflection and conversation about participants' own experiences, questions, and takeaways. [Middle, Secondary, Administration]

C12: Help, I'm Bored! Or Why Groundhog's Day is an Insightful Movie by Pastor David Fleming

God designed us for joyful "leisure." In fact, the word "school" is from the Greek word for rest ("be still" Psalm 46:10): a happy receiving from our Lord. But, of course, we all suffer boredom. There's a particularly dangerous form, "existential boredom," that saps the energy, joy, and delight out of teachers, students, and parents. The world's answer is endless amusement and grabbing our cell phone, but that is draining. We'll look at how to understand our callings in life, rejoice in our life together at school, church, and home; and foster habits that free us from what the ancients called "acedia," and flourish in the work-a-day world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom. [PK-12, Administration]

C13: First on Scene: A Behavioral Health Primer for Educators by Dr. Laura Kaae

Educators are often on the front lines of students' mental health concerns and in many cases, the first adults to notice when a student is struggling. However, knowing what to look for and how to respond can feel unclear. First on Scene is a psychologist-led primer designed to equip teachers and administrators with foundational mental health knowledge for today's classrooms. Participants will learn to distinguish developmentally typical behavior from clinically significant concerns, recognize early warning signs of anxiety, depression, trauma-related stress, and risk behaviors including substance use and self-harm. Participants will learn how to respond within appropriate professional boundaries that best serves the student and the rest of the classroom. This session emphasizes early identification, practical decision-making, and clear referral pathways – empowering educators to respond confidently, calmly, and effectively when student mental health concerns emerge. [PK-12, Administration]

SESSION C

C14: The Immersion Framework: How to Bring Joy, Purpose, & Rigor to Classic Literature by Professor Benjamin Balsman

Many middle and secondary students view classic literature as a locked door—a collection of dense, outdated texts that feel disconnected from their modern lives. As educators, we often feel forced to choose between simplifying the material for engagement or maintaining a rigid academic structure that leads to student burnout or apathy. This session presents a proven framework and a method that restores the heart of the Literature class by treating texts as living environments to be explored rather than just books to be read. Built on comprehensive neuroscience and cognitive learning theories, this curricular design moves beyond the dry, clinical analysis of texts. Instead, it invites students into the narrative through sensory-rich atmospheric environments, collaborative tactile investigations, surprise problem-solving experiences, authentic, student-led projects, and much more. While modeled through the worlds of Mystery, Sci-Fi, Fantasy, and Horror, this highly adaptable framework can be applied to any literary genre or existing curriculum type. By aligning creative engagement with high-level academic expectations, the difficulty of unabridged texts becomes an inviting challenge. Beyond academic skills, this framework emphasizes the pursuit of purpose and meaning. It utilizes the profound themes of the classics to facilitate deep moral inquiry, equipping students to improve their character, expand their depth of thinking, and strengthen their Christian faith. Ultimately, this framework doesn't just teach students how to analyze literature; it serves a deeper calling to spark a lifelong joy for reading and a purposeful pursuit of Truth within the world's greatest stories. [Middle, Secondary]

C15: Fostering Student Self-Regulation with Grace and Empathy by Dr. Linda Hensel

What is self-regulation and how do we foster it in our students? We will discuss how the lack of self-regulation impacts our classrooms and why students may lack self-regulation. A variety of strategies to assist students in developing self-regulation will be considered. These strategies are carried out by incorporating God's grace and empathy into our work with students and each other. [EC, Elementary, Middle]

C16: SR³ – Teacher Evaluation & Growth Support System by Professor Bryan Wright and Mark McBeth

SR³ is a structured, growth-focused teacher evaluation and support model designed to monitor instructional effectiveness while keeping student growth at the center of the process. Rather than serving as a punitive tool, SR³ provides educators with clear checkpoints, targeted feedback, and actionable next steps to strengthen classroom practice. As both a coaching framework and an evaluation tool, SR³ helps schools strengthen teacher capacity, make informed personnel decisions, and ensure that every classroom is led by an educator positioned for success. [PK-12, Administration]

SESSION C

C17: The Curious Case of the Math Classroom by Dr. Adam Paape

What if the real problem in math class isn't that students can't do the work—but that we've made the work too predictable? This sectional explores mathematics teaching as a pedagogy of curiosity, where questions drive thinking and reasoning takes center stage. Grounded in research from mathematics education and learning science, we will examine practical routines that promote productive struggle, meaningful discourse, and rich problem solving. Participants will experience strategies such as "Notice and Wonder" launches, low-floor/high-ceiling tasks, and structured strategy comparisons aligned with the Five Practices for orchestrating discussions. We'll focus on instructional moves that make student thinking visible and shift classrooms from answer-getting to sense-making. You will leave with concrete tools to cultivate engagement, deepen reasoning, and sustain high expectations—making curiosity the engine, not the extra, of your mathematics classroom. [Elementary, Middle, Secondary]

C18: "Phun" (Fun) With Phonics by Professor Lori Ladiges

With the recent passage of Act 20 in Wisconsin, phonics is an important component in teaching reading. Act 20 is a Wisconsin state law that requires all Wisconsin public schools and private institutions to instruct 4K to 3rd-grade students in science-aligned literacy and all public schools to assess reading levels to achieve proficiency in reading before 4th grade. This interactive sectional will revisit phonics principles and will give teachers practical strategies to use with their students. Although phonics is typically taught to elementary students, students who struggle in middle school and high school will also benefit from the knowledge of phonics. Thus, this sectional could apply to all levels of education from PK through 12th Grade; it's never too late to learn phonics! So--let's have some "phun" (fun) with Phonics! [PK-12]

C19: Increasing Student Engagement During Lectures by Mike Loveless

In recent years, "lecture" has become something of a bad word due to the growing emphasis on student engagement. But can a lecture be engaging? Can students actively process information presented in a lecture format? Absolutely. While we don't want to return to the old "stand and deliver" or "sit and get" approach, lecture still has a meaningful place in the 21st-century classroom when it is intentional, interactive, and well-designed. In this breakout session, you will discover how to incorporate lecture within a balanced instructional approach that honors student voice and participation. You'll explore practical, research-informed techniques that help students connect with your content and learn strategies for creating purposeful pauses that encourage reflection, processing, and academic conversation. Join us for this session to rethink what lecture can be—dynamic, student-centered, and deeply engaging. Walk away with tools you can use immediately in your classroom. [Middle, Secondary]

SESSION C

C20: Communication Styles in the Classroom: Improving Student Relationships by Ashley Stege and Rachel Schultz

Communication is a vital component to successful teaching and relationships. In this session, participants will explore the way that they communicate with students, parents and colleagues. They will discover their default communication style and how it can be beneficial and challenging in different situations. By developing greater self-awareness and adaptability, teachers will gain practical tools to foster positive interactions, reduce misunderstandings, and encourage open communication. Teachers will also focus on the communication styles of the learners in their classrooms. Understanding the default communication styles of their students and learning how they interact with their own personal style can strengthen teacher-student relationships, foster a more positive learning environment and drastically increase academic gains. [EC, Elementary, Middle]

C21: Fill My Cup and Let It Overflow: Move from Empty-hearted Obligation to a Joyful Response to God's Mercy and Grace by Dr. Michael Uden

This session invites participants to rediscover balance through intentional self-care rooted in Christian faith. The session will explore the concepts of balance, Sabbath rest, and contemporary expectations and standards for self-care. Key practices will include nourishing your body and mind, recognizing boredom as a blessing, and the vitality of Holy Scripture and solitude with God within one's daily life. Participants will be encouraged to pursue simple pleasures and pastimes, extend grace to themselves and others, and identify their superpowers through the CliftonStrengths and Chapman's love languages. Let's work to help our cups overflow into others' lives with authenticity and purpose. [PK-12, Administration]

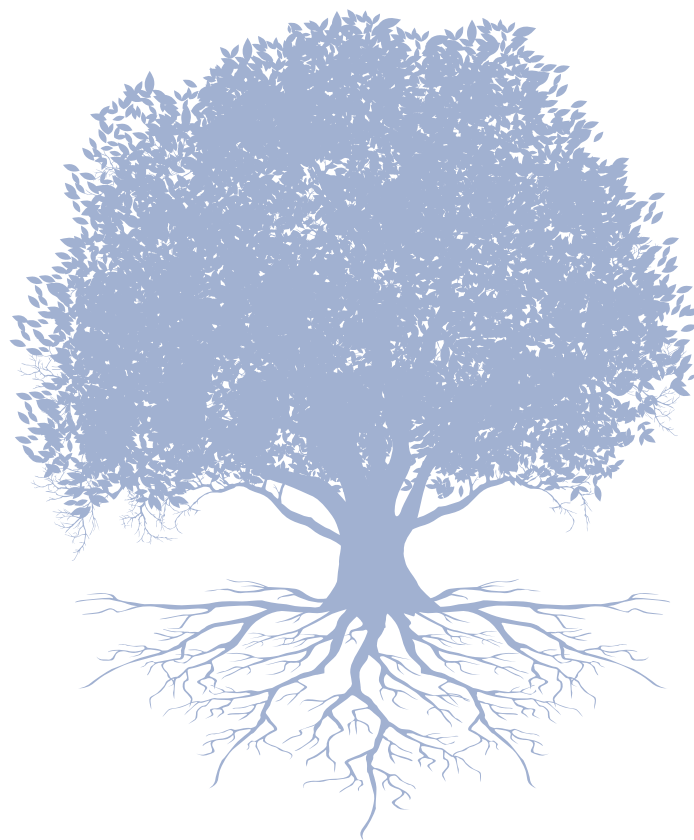
C22: Meeting the Needs of All Learners by Kim Roethel

Our classrooms are filled with a variety of learning styles, abilities, attitudes, and backgrounds. Many of our students have different learning needs, but may not qualify for special services or additional support outside of the classroom. What can we do in the general education classroom to meet their needs? Universal Design for Learning is a framework that can be applied to any curriculum or content area. It empowers teachers to use the skills, knowledge, and tools they have to create lessons and an environment where all their students can learn. It equips teachers to remove barriers to learning and encourages students to be active and engaged learners. In this sectional, you will learn about Universal Design for Learning and gain some practical ways to incorporate this framework into your classroom. You will see how making small modifications can not only help students with learning challenges, but also challenge or reassure other students in the classroom. [EC, Elementary]

SESSION C

C23: United in Coming Alongside School Families by Dr. Tanya Calendo

While serving as a principal at an LCMS school in Arizona, Dr. Calendo completed a doctoral project in ministry focused on understanding the real needs of school families. That research led directly to meaningful ministry impact on that campus. After moving to an LCMS school in Illinois, she used that foundation, gathered fresh input from families and staff, and worked collaboratively with church and school leaders to shape ministry opportunities unique to this new community. This session shares a practical and hopeful process rooted in both insight and teamwork. Data and collaboration can open doors, but lasting impact happens when church and school leaders move from working in silos to serving as one united ministry team. Pastors, principals, teachers, and ministry staff aligning vision and priorities creates momentum that blesses families in tangible ways. You will leave encouraged and equipped with adaptable tools, guiding questions, and clear next steps to strengthen a unified ministry approach on your own campus. [PK-12, Administration]



SECTIONAL LEADERS

Professor Laura Adameak

Laura Adameak, MEd, Licensed School Counselor, is an educator and program leader with a deep passion for counseling, student well-being, and the holistic care of those who serve in education. She currently serves as the Assistant Director of the Graduate Counseling Program at CUW. Prior to her current role, she served as a high school counselor and art educator for over 20 years. Her work centers on supporting future school and professional counselors through thoughtful training, faith-informed values, and evidence-based practices that nurture the mind, body, and spirit. She is especially drawn to initiatives that promote renewal, creativity, and sustainable self-care for educators and students alike. She can be reached at Laura.Adameak@cuw.edu.

Dr. Brad Alles

Dr. Brad Alles is an Associate Professor of Education at CUW, with 38 years of teaching experience. He has won the Concordia Nebraska Outstanding Student Teacher Award, the Milwaukee Lutheran HS/Heartland Funds Teacher of Merit Award, the South Wisconsin District Teacher of the Year Award, and the CUW Master Educator Award. Besides speaking nationally in 26 states, Brad has two books: *Life's Big Questions, God's Big Answers* and *Starting at the End*. He also has a DVD called *Big Questions, Biblical Answers* which is also available on Vimeo. You can visit his website which focuses on apologetics and worldviews at bradalles.com.

Sherri Baierl

With a passion for ministry and a wealth of professional experience, Sherri embodies dedication and creativity in serving her community. Since March 2018, Sherri has co-founded and actively contributed to citySERVE, a transformative initiative aimed at enriching the lives of individuals through service and compassion. Sherri's commitment to ministry extends beyond SERVE. From participating in Women's Baptisms at BC Jail Ministry to spearheading the Inmate Christmas gift drive since 2013, she has consistently demonstrated her dedication to uplifting those in need and her commitment to nurturing spiritual growth and community engagement. Sherri's academic pursuits further augment her expertise, with ongoing studies towards an MS in Christian Theology, MA in Management and Organizational Behavior, and dual BA in Youth Ministry/Christian Education and Arts Management/Nonprofit Management with a concentration in Graphic Design.

Professor Benjamin Balsman

Benjamin Balsman is a graduate of CUW with a Bachelor's in Elementary Education with science and theology minors. His first call in 2012 was a rural, multi-grade position at St. John in Suring, Wisconsin where he taught all subjects from 4th-8th in a single classroom. He obtained a Master's from CUW in Teaching & Learning in 2018 and took a call to St. Paul's West Allis in the same year, where he has taught a mix of math, science, literature, P.E., and religion, with additional responsibilities in areas of curriculum planning, technology, and student leadership. He currently teaches for CUW's Accelerated Online Education program. Professor Balsman married his wife Stephanie in 2018 and welcomed their first child, Daisy, in 2025, and are expecting another. He can be reached at Benjamin.Balsman@cuw.edu.

Professor Jonathan Balsman

Jonathan Balsman is an Assistant Professor of Education and Mathematics at CUW, where he teaches courses in assessment, instruction, planning, mathematics methods, and educational psychology. Before joining the full-time faculty in 2022, he taught high school mathematics and theology, an experience that continues to shape his passion for forming thoughtful, faithful educators. A graduate of CUW, Jonathan earned his BA in Lutheran Secondary Education and Mathematics and later completed an MA in Mathematics Education from Aurora University. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Educational Leadership at Liberty University, focusing on faith-informed instruction in mathematics classrooms. Jonathan enjoys supporting future teachers, exploring new ideas in AI and education, and staying active outdoors. He and his wife, Kate, live in Jackson, Wisconsin, with their daughters. He can be reached at Jonathan.Balsman@cuw.edu.

Professor Jennifer Bargmann

Jennifer Bargmann, MS, LPC, LMHC is a humanistic, strengths-based, emotions-focused, professional counselor who provides services to a variety of people in four states (Colorado, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa) through teletherapy. Her practice focuses on highly sensitive people, working with others in the helping professions, eating disorders, self-injury, grief/loss, supporting caregivers for those with cancer, and narcissistic abuse. Jennifer supervises others who are entering the counseling profession, is a trained school counselor, presents on a variety of topics throughout the year, and is an adjunct professor in the CUW graduate counseling program. She has developed an innovative way to utilize Sandtray Therapy through teletherapy with the support of another professor and professional counselor. She can be reached at Jennifer.Bargmann@cuw.edu.

Dr. Tanya Calendo

Tanya Calendo has served in Lutheran education for over 25 years as a teacher and administrator. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Education, a Master's degree in Counseling, and a Doctor of Ministry, equipping her to bring both instructional leadership and a Christ-centered understanding of families to her work. Tanya knows firsthand the impact of a caring faith community: her mother's family immigrated in 1954, and an LCMS church and school in Kansas came alongside them to offer help and hope in their first years in America. For the next two generations, her family has both received encouragement from and contributed to LCMS church and school communities. She believes the strongest ministry impact happens when church and school leaders work together as one united team to come alongside families. Married for 25 years and the proud mom of three adult sons (and a busy Goldendoodle), Tanya treasures family life. Outside of work, she enjoys time in nature, meaningful conversations, and sunny days.

Jennifer Clemens

Jennifer Clemens is an educator at St. Paul Lutheran School, Grafton WI and also performs adjunct activities for CUW. She, a CUW Alumna, has a Master of Arts Degree from Cardinal Stritch University with a license in Learning Disabilities and Reading Teacher. Currently, Jenny teaches third grade, but she used to be a Resource Room teacher for 20 years for Lutheran Special School and Educational Services (Now Journeys) and served students with a wide variety of behavioral, academic, social, and emotional needs. She is passionate about being an advocate for students with learning difficulties.

Jennifer Cosgrove

Jennifer Cosgrove is the talent development teacher at Stormonth Elementary in the Fox Point-Bayside School District. Jennifer has taught in both middle school and elementary settings, and has been a gifted education teacher/coordinator for the past 16 years. She has her Bachelor's Degree in Education from Taylor University, and a Masters Degree in Educational Leadership from Cardinal Stritch University. Additionally, Jennifer has a Mentoring Certification from Cardinal Stritch University. Jennifer works with students, teachers, and parents in her role to ensure that students receive appropriate opportunities for challenge and growth.

Dr. Preston Cosgrove

Dr. Preston Cosgrove is a Professor in the School of Education at CUW, where he teaches Research, Design Thinking, and the Christian Leader Journey courses in the interdisciplinary leadership doctoral program. He and his wife Jennifer have been married for 21 years and have two teenage daughters. Beyond work, he enjoys being outdoors with his family, prioritizing reading, and also playing wheelchair basketball (seriously!). Preston and his family are active in their church, where he currently teaches a teenage Sunday school class and leads a weekly men's bible study. He can be reached at Preston.Cosgrove@cuw.edu.

Dr. Amanda DeSua

Dr. Amanda DeSua is School Counselor in Waukesha, WI and has been in the profession for over 20 years. She also teaches as an adjunct professor for CUW and Lakeland's counseling graduate programs. She has written two children's books, *Frog Slime: A Child's Guide to Calming Down* and *Panda's Pause*.

Dr. Elizabeth Eernisse

Dr. Elizabeth R. Eernisse, CCC-SLP serves as Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) at CUW. She holds a doctorate in Communication Sciences and Disorders as well master's and bachelor's degrees in Speech-Language Pathology. Dr. Eernisse's clinical experience and research interests focus on speech, language, and literacy in preschool and elementary populations, curriculum development, and assessment. She currently teaches graduate courses in child language disorders, professional issues, and counseling. She can be reached at Elizabeth.Eernisse@cuw.edu.

Pastor David Fleming

Pastor David Fleming serves DOXOLOGY as Executive Director for Spiritual Care. He remains a part time pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church and School in Grand Rapids, MI where he served as Senior Pastor from 1993-2019. He's a regent at CUWAA. He and his wife, Jo Marie, née Wunderlich, a Lutheran educator, and have three married children and several grandchildren. He delights in Lutheran schools, educators, students, and their families. He's served church workers in Australia, Latvia, Germany, Ghana (West Africa), Canada, and the United States.

Dr. Alan Freeman

Dr. Alan Freeman currently serves as Education Executive for the South Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Previously, he served as Director of Schools for the LCMS, where he supported and equipped Lutheran schools nationwide in their mission of Christ-centered education. Dr. Freeman has also served as Education Executive for the Missouri District-LCMS and as headmaster of Concordia Preparatory School in Towson, Maryland. Throughout his ministry, he has been committed to strengthening Lutheran schools, supporting educators and leaders, and advancing the Gospel through educational excellence and faithful mission outreach.

Dr. Steve Gerner

Dr. Steve Gerner is an education leader and speaker with more than 30 years of experience in public and private education. He has taught students from first grade through college and served in senior leadership roles including Professor, Dean, Administrator, CEO, and Consultant. As the author of *Superhero Educator: How to Teach with Superior Skills and Success*, Dr. Gerner delivers engaging, evidence-based keynotes and workshops that inspire educators to strengthen instructional practice, leadership capacity, and student outcomes.

Dr. Linda Hensel

Linda S. Hensel, Ph.D. is a Professor of Education and Department Chair of Special Education at CUW. She teaches behavior management, curriculum and methods and assessment courses for pre-service special educators. Prior to coming to higher education, she taught learners with a wide variety of abilities at the early childhood level. Her research interests include educating learners with varying abilities in private schools, using problem-based learning with students studying education, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. She can be reached at Linda.Hensel@cuw.edu.

Professor Carla Herried

Carla Herried, MS, CFD is passionate about supporting those in the counseling profession by providing trainings in a variety of settings and by providing instruction and supervision to graduate students who are entering the field. Carla is a practicing school counselor and has collaborated on several courses within the counseling program at CUW. She has provided educational opportunities about highly sensitive people, utilizing sand or sandtray therapy in the educational setting, and recognizing, responding to, and preventing burnout. She can be reached at Carla.Herried@cuw.edu.

Stephenie Hovland

Stephenie Hovland equips educators to nurture student faith while tending their own spiritual care. A deaconess, veteran teacher, author, and pastor's wife, she shares real life wisdom to spark and kindle faith development. Find Stephenie's Arch books at CPH.org, her kids' devotion booklets at CreativeCommunications.com, and her contact information at StephenieHovland.com.

Dr. James Juergensen

James D. Juergensen, an Associate Professor in the School of Education and Director of LCMS Teacher Placement, joined Concordia's faculty in 2011. Before that time, he served as a teacher, coach, and administrator in Lutheran middle and high schools for 10 years. He then served for 8 years as the Director of Secondary Education at CUNE. An alumnus of CUW, he earned his doctorate in educational leadership from Cardinal Stritch University in 2004. Dr. J is a member of the CUW athletic hall of fame for basketball and baseball. He is blessed with an awesome wife Stephanie (a CUW grad and Lutheran school teacher) and 3 children, who are all teachers in Lutheran schools. He can be reached at J.Juergensen@cuw.edu.

Dr. Laura Kaae

Dr. Laura Kaae, PsyD is the program director for Concordia's graduate program in School and Clinical Mental Health Counseling. She is a licensed clinical psychologist and current behavioral health officer for the Wisconsin Army National Guard. Prior to her role at CUW, she has served as a military psychologist throughout the US and in the horn of Africa region. She holds a masters degree from Texas A&M – Central Texas in Counseling Psychology and doctorate in Clinical Psychology from American School of Professional Psychology in Washington, D.C. She can be reached at Laura.Kaae@cuw.edu.

Dr. Kathleen Kannass

Dr. Kathleen Kannass is the director of the Leadership in Innovation and Continuous Improvement (LICI) PhD (www.cuw.edu/phd-lici) and EdD (www.cuw.edu/edd-lici) programs at CUW. She is a developmental psychologist by training, and her areas of expertise include cognitive development in infancy and early childhood, attention control, research methodology, and statistics. Kathleen enjoys teaching Sunday School and is a member of the Faith Development committee at her church. She and her husband have twin boys, and they enjoy spending time outdoors, especially in northern Wisconsin. She can be reached at Kathleen.Kannass@cuw.edu.

Dr. Kirsten Kasten

Dr. Kirsten Kasten has spent the past 25+ years in education shaping minds and hearts, from the tiniest learners in early childhood classrooms to high school musicians to aspiring doctoral scholars. As the Assistant Dean of Curriculum, Licensure, and Assessment and Assistant Professor at CUW, she teaches human relations and research methods, while also serving as a dissertation chair. When she's not teaching or researching, she's spending time with her three amazing daughters, alongside her husband of 26 years, a fellow educator and coach. She can be reached at Kirsten.Kasten@cuw.edu.

Dr. Val Keiper

Dr. Val Keiper received his Master's degree from University of Wisconsin Milwaukee and his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia. He is the last connection between the old Concordia campus near downtown Milwaukee and now in Mequon. He began both the Early Childhood program at Concordia in 1983 and the baseball program in 1982. He has been married to his wife, Karen, for 42 years. He has raised 3 boys – all of whom graduated from CUW – and has two grandchildren. Dr. Keiper tirelessly works to develop relationships with the students, faculty, and staff God places around him, and continues to dabble in the athletic world while assisting with the baseball program at CUW. He can be reached at Val.Keiper@cuw.edu.

Dr. Eugene Kim

Dr. Eugene P. Kim earned his PhD in Comparative/International Education from UCLA and is an influencer and change catalyst for AI in K-20 educational environments around the world. Dr. Kim authored the AI Adoption Framework (2025) and Artificial Intelligence Adoption Inventory (2024) which together are used across schools and colleges to empower AI integration. As an AI thought leader and researcher, he is on the Orange County Department of Education's AI Forward Advisory Board which impacts over 30 school districts across Southern California, is a consultant to the nation's largest private schools, and is co-founder of Genesis AI Research Lab. He is featured in and was consultant to the documentary film *Blindsided by AI: The Bigger Picture* (2024).

Dana Kirchoff

Dana Kirchoff is the Founder and Principal Consultant at [Blueprint Schools](#). Dana has served schools, churches, and ministries across the country for over 20 years in the roles of Strategic Growth Consultant, Vice President of Growth and Marketing, and, at the beginning of her career, as a teacher. In addition to consulting and leading Blueprint Schools, she avidly presents, writes, and shares on social media on the subjects of organizational development, marketing, and growth. Dana lives in Appleton, Wisconsin with her husband Ryan and their two children.

Ryan Kirchoff

Ryan Kirchoff is a Lead Consultant of Student Learning at [Blueprint Schools](#). Ryan serves as Instructional Coordinator at Fox Valley Lutheran High School. In the past, he has served as Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the PreK-12th grade program at Divine Savior Academy in Doral, FL, and as Athletic Director at California Lutheran High School in Wildomar, CA. He is passionate about student learning, helping school ministries develop Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and using AI to equip and empower teachers. Ryan holds a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and a Bachelor's in Education.

Amy Klein

Amy Klein is an Accredited Financial Counselor® and Senior Financial Educator at Concordia Plans, where she supports LCMS church workers in improving their overall financial health so that they are in a better position to serve in their ministries and share the Gospel. Before joining Concordia Plans, Amy served as a business and personal finance teacher at Lutheran high schools in New York, Michigan, and Missouri.

Lori Ladiges

Lori Ladiges is a longtime teacher-educator and educational consultant with over 40 years of experience in general education, special education, and literacy. She taught at Kohler Public Schools for 20 years as a learning disabilities specialist. Lori was a full-time professor for 17 years at Cardinal Stritch University training preservice and inservice teachers in the areas of literacy, special education, and nursing education. In addition, she advised action research students, supervised student teachers and practicum students, and served in various leadership roles at Cardinal Stritch University. Lori was a literacy interventionist in the Sheboygan Area School District for five years. She has presented at local, state, regional, national, and international literacy and special education conferences. Lori continues to teach as an adjunct professor at CUW and is a Title 1 Teacher in Sheboygan for private schools. She can be reached at Lori.Ladiges@cuw.edu.

Dr. Amy Lindgren

Amy Lindgren is an Associate Professor of Education and the Elementary/Early Childhood Department Chair at CUW. She received her B.A. in Elementary Education with an emphasis on science and her M.S. in Early Childhood Education from CUW. Prior to her call to higher education, Amy taught middle school, preschool, and kindergarten for fifteen years in Lutheran schools in both Ohio and Wisconsin. She completed a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership with an emphasis on Early Childhood Education from CUC. Her dissertation is entitled: *The Development of Teacher Agency in Nature Preschools: Perceptions of Teachers and Directors*. Amy has served at CUW since 2011 and teaches most of the methods coursework in the Early Childhood Education Department as well as Elementary methods coursework in Science and Social Studies. She can be reached at Amy.Lindgren@cuw.edu.



Mike Loveless

Mike Loveless is in his 33rd year of teaching social studies at Martin Luther High School, teaching eight different courses in the department. He has served as the Social Studies Department Chair for the last nine years, and has been the instructional coach for the last three years. He earned a Master's of Education from Cardinal Stritch and a Master's of Arts in History from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

Adrianna Lubner

Adrianna Lubner is in her seventh year of teaching Kindergarten at St. Paul's Lutheran School in Oconomowoc. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Lutheran Early Childhood Education from CUW and her Master's of Education in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Trauma and Resilience from Concordia University Nebraska. Adrianna enjoys making learning come to life in her classroom by using project-based learning, interactive notebooks, and multi-grade peer mentoring.

Mark McBeth

Mark McBeth began his education career in 1990 and has served as a teacher, principal, director of secondary schools, service center leader, and state and national consultant. A leadership coach and learning facilitator, he is dedicated to putting student learning first while helping organizations build practical systems that last. Mark co-hosts the Educational Relevance with Bryan Wright and is author of The Distributed Toolbox. He also leads multiple entrepreneurial ventures, bringing real-world perspective to continuous improvement, culture, and results.

Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador

Rev. Dr. Nathan Meador serves as President of the South Wisconsin District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Prior to his election as district president, he served as Mission Executive for the South Wisconsin District, providing leadership and support for mission and mercy work throughout the district. Rev. Dr. Meador has served for 25 years as a parish pastor in Illinois and Wisconsin. His ministry experience at both the congregational and district levels informs his passion for Lutheran schools as vital partners in the Church's mission and outreach. Rev. Dr. Meador is a proud alumn of CUW.

Professor Tim Mueller

Tim Mueller has taught K-8 physical education at Erin School since 1992, focusing on movement skills, teamwork, and character development. A national presenter, he was named 2016 Wisconsin and 2017 SHAPE Midwest Middle School PE Teacher of the Year. As an adjunct professor at CUW, he trains future educators to create engaging learning environments shaped by Christian values. Tim specializes in team building, leadership development, and fostering positive, Christ-centered classroom cultures. He can be reached at Tim.Mueller@cuw.edu.

Dr. Adam Paape

Dr. Adam Paape serves as Assistant Dean for Academic Operations in the School of Education at CUWAA. He works closely with faculty, staff, and school partners to support undergraduate, online bachelor's, and graduate initial licensure programs across Wisconsin and Michigan. His work centers on strengthening teacher preparation and ensuring candidates are well supported from admission through licensure. Adam is especially interested in practical classroom strategies, thoughtful integration of emerging technologies, and meaningful connections between faith and learning. He values collaboration, steady improvement, and preparing educators with both confidence and competence for today's schools. Outside of work, he enjoys time with his family and finding creative ways to bring both clarity and a touch of humor to professional conversations. He can be reached at Adam.Paape@cuw.edu.

Dr. Jim Pingel

Dr. Jim Pingel currently serves as the School of Education Dean for CUWAA. As an active member of ALSS (Association of Lutheran Secondary Schools), he also advises and does consulting work for many Lutheran schools across the country. He has published books on Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Christian education, and pedagogy, as well as devotionals on the American Revolution and Christian athletics. He and his wife, Michelle, are blessed with two children, Joshua and Josie. In his leisure time, Pingel enjoys reading, traveling, and rooting for the Green Bay Packers. He can be reached at James.Pingel@cuw.edu.

Dr. Kristy Piebenga

Dr. Kristy Piebenga has been an educator for over 20 years in various roles—classroom teacher, university professor, conference presenter, and literacy consultant. Kristy holds an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction, an M.Ed. in Literacy, and an Ed.D. in Literacy. She is committed to supporting the development and implementation of effective teaching and learning practices in classrooms and accomplishes this in her range of work with K-12 teachers, preservice teachers, and graduate students. She is passionate about building students' success as readers, writers, and thinkers while helping them grow as the uniquely-created individuals God intends them to be. When she's not teaching, she is most likely sitting somewhere cozy with a good book in hand. She can be reached at Kristy.Piebenga@cuw.edu.

Kim Roethel

Kim Roethel has been the resource teacher at Trinity Lutheran School in Sheboygan for three years. Before becoming the resource teacher, she taught first grade for 12 years. Kim has master's degrees in Literacy and Special Education. In her current position as a resource teacher, Kim enjoys getting to know her students, where they excel and what challenges them, and using this knowledge to help each student succeed in the classroom. When not teaching or volunteering at church and school events, Kim enjoys reading and traveling with her family. Kim and her husband, Jeff, have three children. Peyton is studying elementary and special education at CUW. Casey attends Sheboygan Lutheran High School and Carson attends Trinity Lutheran School.



Dr. Mikaely Schmitz

Mikaely T. Schmitz, Ed.D., CCC-SLP is an Associate Professor of Speech-Language Pathology at CUW and a practicing speech-language pathologist. She holds master's degrees in Speech-Language Pathology and English Language Learning and earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership with research focused on language, identity, and educational access. Dr. Schmitz has over 20 years of experience working with preschool and elementary students in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. Her work centers on early language development, literacy foundations, executive function, and trauma-informed practices. She can be reached at Mikaely.Schmitz@cuw.edu.

Rachel Schultz

Rachel Schultz joined the CfUT team as a participant in 2007 while attending Wisconsin Lutheran College for her B. A. in Early Childhood Education. As an undergraduate, she taught summer school at St. Marcus in Milwaukee. Rachel officially joined the CfUT team in January 2017 as a Talent coach. Prior to joining CfUT, Rachel served for six years as a teacher at Atonement Lutheran School in Milwaukee teaching primarily English Language Arts. At Atonement, Rachel worked with the team to turn the middle school culture around and build a standard aligned reading curriculum. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband Dan and their three children.

Dria Setter

Dria Setter's 25 years in education span teaching, coaching, and driving innovation. At I4PL (CESA 1), she's spent over seven years supporting Midwest schools in fostering empowered learners through tech and learner-centered practices. She's also a nationally endorsed COSN/AESA Lead Trainer, guiding school systems in K-12 Generative AI readiness.

Megan Shanks

Megan Shanks is the 7th grade homeroom teacher and Head of the Upper School at St. Paul's Lutheran in Oconomowoc. She currently teaches a variety of middle school science classes, math and co-teaches buddy STEM. She has implemented interactive notebooks in her classroom for 10 years and loves how this tool helps students with a variety of learning styles. She enjoys leading the outdoor education program for the middle school students at her school.

Ashley Stege

Ashley officially joined the CfUT team as Talent Coach in 2015. Ashley participated in the CfUT program in 2007 while attending Wisconsin Lutheran College for her B.A. in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Psychology. As an undergraduate, she helped pilot the first CfUT summer school program as a first grade lead teacher under the direction of Krysta DeBoer. In 2010, Ashley was awarded the Judy Voight Urban Service and Leadership Award for her commitment to excellence in urban education. Prior to joining CfUT, Ashley served as a third grade teacher and Dean of Early Childhood at St. Marcus Lutheran School in Milwaukee. In 2018, Ashley received her Masters degree in Leadership and Innovation from Wisconsin Lutheran College. When she is not working to impact education, she enjoys spending time with her husband Ben and their five children.

Paul Tuskowski

Paul Tuskowski is in his eleventh year serving as the IT Coordinator, technology teacher, and track and cross country coach at Racine Lutheran High School. He teaches various classes, including Information Technology, Computer Aided Drafting, Agricultural Sciences, and Web Design. Paul holds a Master's degree in Library and Information Sciences from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is passionate about preparing his students for success in a wide range of career vocations. Paul resides in Oak Creek with his wife and two kids and enjoys gardening, woodworking, and running in his spare time.

Dr. Michael Uden

Michael Uden, Ph.D., serves as Vice President for Strategic Partnerships and University Marketing and Chief Strategy Officer at CUW, a role he has held since 2023. With 36 years of professional service spanning K-12 and higher education, Dr. Uden has dedicated 28 years to Concordia University Wisconsin in progressively responsible roles. He holds a BA and MS in Education from CUW, and a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the UW-Madison. Married to his wife Theresa, Michael is a proud parent of six and grandparent of nine. His CliftonStrengths—Strategic, Achiever, Responsibility, Learner, and Developer—reflect his commitment to helping others discover their gifts and invest those in others through ministry. Dr. Uden can be reached at Michael.Uden@cuw.edu.

Patrick Uselding

Patrick Uselding is a systems-minded leader, ICF-credentialed coach, and resource designer who serves as a Project Lead and Lead Coach on the Community Learning & Engagement Team at the Rogers Behavioral Health Foundation. He collaborates closely with schools through the School Partnerships for Wellbeing program, co-designing professional development, strengthening team culture, and helping build sustainable, trauma-aware systems of care. Before joining Rogers, Patrick spent nearly thirty years in education as a teacher and school counselor. A proud CUW graduate at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, he brings deep experience in education, counseling, coaching, and school partnerships. His warm, strengths-based approach equips educators and leaders with the clarity, confidence, and next-day strategies needed to build safe, connected learning communities.

Dr. Ben Washburn

Ben Washburn is an Assistant Professor of Education at Wisconsin Lutheran College. He is a CUW alumnus, earning both his M.S. Ed. and Ed.D., and he is a former adjunct professor at CUW. Ben has over 25 years of experience in K-12 education serving as both a classroom teacher and principal. His areas of interest are in content area teaching strategies and educational leadership.

Dr. Seth Westfall

In her many roles at CUW, Dr. Westfall collaborates across the institution to design effective courses, coach effective pedagogy, and ensure alignment between program outcomes and effective assessment practices. She has been in the education field since 1996 as a special education teacher, general classroom teacher, instructional coach, literacy coach, and administrator before moving into higher education. Dr. Westfall identifies as a student-centered leader and educator with a passion for effective teaching and learning. She can be reached at Seth.Westfall@cuw.edu.

Professor Bryan Wright

Bryan R. Wright has served for more than thirty years as a lead administrator across a wide range of programs focused on educational reform and school improvement. His leadership is grounded in his personal educational code, the Respect Law: Respect is earned—not simply given—but common courtesy is demanded of all. This principle has consistently guided his work in building strong, accountable school communities. As a lead principal, Bryan's schools demonstrated measurable success, including improved attendance, reduced negative discipline incidents, and increased academic performance. Working collaboratively with instructional teams, he focused on strengthening four essential areas: positive school culture and climate, student and staff engagement, an aligned and viable curriculum, and leadership density. These efforts resulted in sustained improvement and recognition through multiple awards and honors. Currently, Bryan serves as an Adjunct Professor at CUW, teaching Leadership in Administration and Cultural Change. His educational philosophy is shaped by prior roles as a Milwaukee police officer, history teacher, department chair, director of alternative learning, coach, and assistant principal – experiences that continue to inform his practical, student-centered approach to leadership. He can be reached at Bryan.Wright@cuw.edu.

Dr. Michael Young

Dr. Young completed his Ph.D. in Molecular Cell Biology at Washington University in St. Louis, and has been teaching both advanced biology classes (genetics is his favorite) and core science classes for education and non-science majors for 22 years (9 at Concordia Irvine + 13 and counting at CUW). He has presented about paradigms regarding science and Christianity, written about creation from a Lutheran perspective, and edited informational booklets for two board games with scientific themes. He can be reached at Michael.Young@cuw.edu.

Crystal Zahn

Crystal Zahn is a reading teacher, interventionist, and literacy advocate in her twelfth year of teaching. She is passionate about fostering a love of reading and believes every child should have the opportunity to meet a book that speaks directly to them. Crystal has presented at LEA where she shared strategies for empowering middle school readers. She enjoys creating a classroom environment where students are inspired to read widely and deeply, and models the joy of reading through her own lifelong love of books.

Dr. Mona Zignego

Dr. Mona Zignego is the Chief Schools Officer for LUMIN Schools, a network of urban K–8 Lutheran schools serving the Milwaukee and Racine areas. She oversees academics, instructional coherence, leadership development, and network-wide systems for literacy, assessment, and professional learning. Mona is the author of *Transforming Teaching Through the Cycle of Care*, a leadership and instructional framework that integrates ethics of care, academic excellence, and Christian formation. Her work draws on practitioner-based research, including qualitative self-study examining leadership behaviors in high-accountability school systems. Mona regularly supports school leaders and coaches in navigating accountability with clarity, conviction, and sustainability—without fear-based or performative practices. She is passionate about helping Christian educators move beyond outdated leadership stereotypes and lead in ways that honor dignity, stewardship, and long-term excellence for both students and staff.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to the Concordia School of Education, the LCMS North and South Wisconsin Districts, and all of the session presenters for the incredible energy, dedication, and prayerful planning that makes the Concordia University Summit a true reflection of our theme: Rooted and Ready: Grounded in Christ – Equipped for Action. Your efforts have helped us grow deeper roots in Christ and inspired us to step forward in faith, ready to serve. May God bless each of you for the ways you have equipped and encouraged our community.

