

INTRODUCTION to Education

THIS FALL, CONCORDIA INTRODUCED A NEW CAREER DEVELOPMENT COURSE:

INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION. Over the semester, students explored the foundational elements of teaching, observed experienced educators, and even took on the challenge of leading their own lessons.

The course was the brainchild of CHS teacher John DeBoer, designed to provide students with a fresh perspective on teaching—one that goes beyond the typical student experience of homework and discipline. "There are 36,000 teacher vacancies in the United States today," DeBoer explained. "We need to help our students realize that teaching is not just about grading papers and giving tests. It is a very rewarding career if you have the right tools."



13 STUDENTS TOOK PART IN THE NEW INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION CLASS





STUDENTS SPENT
5 CLASS PERIODS OBSERVING A
WORKING CLASSROOM



STUDENTS TAUGHT 2 LESSONS IN THEIR OWN CLASSROOM WITH MR. DEBOER

DeBoer's approach to the class was intentionally immersive. "If you want to be a teacher, you need to get in the classroom right away," he said. Early in the semester, students conducted three classroom observations at Concordia Academy. "We have amazing Academy teachers who serve as excellent examples for my students to observe," DeBoer added.

After learning the fundamentals of lesson planning and teaching strategies, students stepped into their first teaching experience, presenting two lessons in Academy classrooms.

For senior Sarah L., this was the highlight of the semester. "I think I speak for my classmates when I say it was a cherished opportunity to work in the Academy classrooms," she shared. Sarah taught Religion lessons to fifth graders and described the experience as a valuable test of her classroom learning. "It was an opportunity to apply what we'd been studying in a real and exciting way."

The course concluded with a unique twist: students taught a lesson of their choice to their classmates while navigating classroom disruptions. DeBoer intentionally assigned a few students to act as "troublemakers" to simulate real-life challenges. "Managing a classroom is the hardest thing for a first-year teacher," he explained. "It's often the number one reason teachers quit their first year. By giving students a chance to experience disruptive behavior now, I hope it won't be as much of a shock later."

Parents appreciated this innovative approach. Sarah L., mother of Emily, remarked, "It's a difficult thing to enter a classroom not knowing if you'll be any good at it! These 'nearly real-life simulations' were great."



We need great teachers to rise up and become the future leaders investing in the lives of children.

Kindergarten teacher Shelley Dartmann

For senior Peder E., the class strengthened his desire to teach. "It didn't change my mind about teaching—I already wanted to teach. But it did reinforce and strengthen my confidence in wanting to be a teacher."

Sarah echoed Peder's sentiments. "That experience and the joy I found in it is what really confirmed my desire to become an educator," she said. However, she also noted the broader applicability of the class. "Most jobs include teaching in some capacity, so I think this class has benefits for students interested in a variety of careers beyond the classroom."

Kindergarten teacher Shelley Dartmann was particularly moved by the experience. "The biggest blessing for me was watching two students I had taught as kindergarteners now become leaders and teach kindergarteners," she said. "And receiving a note from another student telling me I inspired her to become a teacher was a blessing too."

Dartmann emphasized the importance of nurturing future educators. "We need great teachers to rise up and become the future leaders investing in the lives of children," she said.

The Introduction to Education class at Concordia is already fulfilling its purpose: sparking interest in teaching, equipping students with practical skills, and inspiring a new generation of educators. As students reflected on their semester, one thing was clear—this course offered a transformative experience they'll carry with them, whether they pursue teaching or other career paths.





LEADERSHIP

Nathan Domsch, Academy Principal, Interim Head of Schools

Amy Schwarting, Jr. - Sr. High Principal

Kristin Herrera, Director of Operations, Interim Director of Development

FAITH SECURE WORLD READY KINGDOM LEADERS

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 28: Jazz Concert

March 7: Kingdom Leaders Gala

March 14 & 15: Spring Musical - Sponge Bob

April 25: Academy Muscial

May 19: Graduation

Scan for more information on upcoming events



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Charista Baye (King of Kings Lutheran Church)

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Pastor Dusty White (Coram Deo)

CONCORDIA FOITHRAN WCHOOLU OF OMAHA V

Rev. Aaron Staub

INSPIRING

CROSS COUNTRY COACH OF THE YEAR!

Rev. Aaron Staub, Concordia's dedicated and humble cross country coach, has been named the Brooks Inspiring Coach of the Year, earning national recognition for his commitment to his students and the sport. While this honor is a significant achievement, Staub emphasizes that the experiences and relationships he fosters matter more than any award.

"The video and the awards will be forgotten," Staub reflects. "God gives each of us gifts to use, and I'm just doing my job. What truly matters is the impact on the kids—the experiences they have and the lives they lead after leaving here." Staub cherishes moments like running up a mountain with a former student and seeing his athletes continue to run in college.

A SURPRISING RECOGNITION Staub admits he didn't know the award existed until he received an email from lan at Brooks Running. "At first, I thought it was a scam," he laughs. He responded jokingly, never expecting to

win. With over 1,000 nominations, Brooks narrowed the field to four regional winners, ultimately naming Staub the national winner.

"It's humbling to have been nominated, let alone selected," Staub says. "I'm honored and grateful, but the spotlight belongs on the students and the program."

A short film about Staub premiered on October 6, National Coaches Day, on BrooksRunning.com, celebrating his passion and dedication. Staub plans to use the accompanying \$2,000 prize to support the school's running program, though specific plans are still being finalized.

A LEGACY OF INSPIRATION One of Staub's latest initiatives is "The Grove," an idea inspired by the story of Colm O'Connell at St. Patrick's High School in Iten, Kenya, where athletes are honored with trees. At Concordia, The Grove recognizes cross country athletes who demonstrate excellence by planting a native Nebraska tree with a personalized plaque.

"Each student gets to choose their tree, making it a lasting symbol of their journey and achievement," Staub explains. "It's about inspiring greatness—not just on the course but in life."

As a coach, Staub's focus remains on his students, helping them grow in faith, character, and perseverance. This award, while significant, is just another opportunity for him to point back to the real stars of the story: the young athletes who strive for excellence every day.

CONGRATULATIONS, REV. STAUB, AND THANK YOU FOR BEING A TRUE INSPIRATION!



I'm honored and grateful, but the spotlight belongs on the students and the program. Aaron Staub

COCCUCES FROM THE MISSION CLARITY TEAM

OVER THE SUMMER, THE CONCORDIA LEADERSHIP TEAM OF NATE DOMSCH, AMY SCHWARTING, AND KRISTIN HERRERA, ALONGSIDE THE SCHOOL BOARD OF DIRECTORS, FORMED A TRANSITION TEAM. This was done to navigate the months ahead as Nate Domsch took on the role of Interim Head of Schools in addition to his role as Academy Principal, Kristin Herrera added Interim Director of Development to her position as Director of Operations, and Jennifer Shearer moved from Accountant to Interim Director of Finance. The Transition Team eventually became known as the Mission Clarity Team and was broken into sub-committees to focus more deeply on specific topics.

These teams include community members for specialized insight, meet regularly, and work collaboratively to maintain momentum on important efforts. Much of this work is done behind the scenes but is of vital importance to the continued growth of the school and the processes of hiring new school leadership.

UPDATES TO SHARE INCLUDE THOSE FROM THE THRIVE CAMPAIGN AND CALL PROCESS COMMITTEES.

- THE THRIVE CAMPAIGN HAS REACHED OVER 6.5 MILLION
 IN PLEDGES OF THE \$10 MILLION GOAL. An anonymous
 donor has announced a \$50,000 challenge each
 month from January to June of 2025. Every new gift
 to the Thrive Campaign will be matched 1:1, up to
 \$50,000 each month.
- From July 1 to October 1, 2024 \$300,000 IN NEW
 GIFTS TO THE THRIVE CAMPAIGN WERE RAISED THROUGH A
 MATCHING CHALLENGE bringing in a total of \$600,000
 specifically to Thrive.
- NOMINATIONS FOR THE CEO POSITION. Out of 25 nominees, 10 candidates applied, and the committee expects to conclude the interview process by January 10. The next steps will involve inviting the final candidates to campus for in-person interviews. The committee appreciates the community's support and is in awe of God's guidance and provision throughout this process.
- A deep dedication to the future of Concordia is a high priority for our community and staff. Early in December, our School and Foundation Boards, staff, students, and a small group of community members MET WITH A CONSULTANT TO DELVE INTO THE MISSION, VALUES, AND OUTCOMES WE DESIRE for future generations of Concordia students and families.

These focused sessions explored our purpose, goals, and desires for the future and reflected on what

- makes Concordia the family and community we all love. In the coming weeks, a core focus group will begin working with the results of these sessions to create new Mission and Values statements accompanied by goals for Student Outcomes.
- As aligning our Mission, Values, and Student Outcomes progresses and hiring a new CEO moves into the next stages, the **CONSTRUCTION PROCESS IS COMING TO A CLOSE.** Having additional classrooms in the Sr. High and the Academy on the same campus has blessed our students abundantly in many ways. The new Nancy Griffith Worship and Performing Arts Center has been a blessing to many since it opened in November. The Concordia Junior High Musical opened up the stage on November 8 and 9 with a beautiful performance of The Little Mermaid Jr., and King of Kings Northwest held its first worship in the space on November 23. The Jr. and Sr. High Christmas Concerts brought in large crowds of families in December, and our use of the space continues to grow with activities, worship, and community events.

THRIVE CAMPAIGN PLEDGES REACH

\$6.5 M



FRST EVERSTATE CHAMPIONSHIP



GLORY BE TO GOD! This fall, the journey began for Concordia's Super Smash Brothers Ultimate (SSBU) team as fifteen dedicated students vied for the five coveted spots on the roster. Their hard work and commitment culminated in an incredible achievement: our first-ever D2 State Championship in SSBU!

Two years ago, in Concordia's inaugural esports season, Sam M. and Cale S. secured fourth place at State under the guidance of Coach John DeBoer. The momentum continued in Spring 2023, as Sawyer M. and Jim T.

led Concordia to a sixth-place finish after a flawless regular season.

This year, the team of Sawyer M., Jamey T., and Jim T. made history. With a perfect record of 18-0 in sets and an incredible 40-2 in individual games, they dominated their way to the finals.

In the championship match against Seward, the team faced its toughest challenge yet. After trading wins in the best-of-five set, they entered a nerve-wracking game five. Despite the pressure and the unfamiliar sting of losing a game during the season, Sawyer and Jamey triumphed in the final game, securing the D2 SSBU State Championship for Concordia!

While the Alpha team claimed the championship, the Beta team also showcased their talent and determination, finishing the season with an impressive 11-4 record (23-11 in individual games). Many players experienced the highs and lows of competition, some never making it onto the main stage. Yet, their dedication and support for their teammates were crucial to the team's overall success.

Congratulations to all our esports players, and especially to our D2 SSBU State Champions! What an incredible way to represent Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha!

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

TEACHING EXCELLENCE

• Kayla Marty: Selected as the 2024 Nebraska District Elementary Educator of the Year, receiving three nominations from parents.

STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

- Adelaide M.: Achieved Commended Status in the National Merit Scholarship Competition, scoring in the top 3% of juniors nationwide.
- Nathan H.: Named a Semifinalist for the National Merit Scholarship Competition. scoring in the top 1% of juniors nationwide.

ATHLETICS

- **Girls Golf Team:** Oualified for the State Tournament.
- **Softball Team:** Secured 3rd place at the Mercy Monarch Invitational, including wins against Platteview (12-0) and Wayne (7-3).
- Cross Country:
- Payton D.: Finished 7th in Class C at the State Championships.
- Girls team: Placed 14th; Boys team: Placed 13th.

- Football:

- JV team: Finished with a 6-2 record.
- Varsity team: Won 3 games, the most in the last four years combined.
- Andrew K.: Named 1st Team All-District and All-Conference.
- Asher H.: Set school records for most field goals in a season (4) and career field goals (5).
- Launched 5/6th Grade Tackle Football (4-3 record) and an Elementary Flag Football League with 40+ participants.

PERFORMING ARTS

- Esports (Smash Brothers): Sawyer M., Jim T., and Jamey T. had a perfect 18-0 season, winning the Nebraska **Esports Association Division 2 State** Championship.
- One Act Play Production:
- Won 1st place at the Midland University One Act Clash (4th consecutive year).
- Won 1st place at the Centennial Conference One Act competition (2nd consecutive year).
- Secured 2nd place at the District competition, with Adelaide M. named Outstanding Actress.

ELEMENTARY AND JR. HIGH ACTIVITIES

- Olympics Field Day: Grades K-5 participated in a summer Olympics-themed event, led by junior and senior life groups.
- 8th Grade All-State Band: Enzo I. and Laura I. were invited to participate in the prestigious event.

INDIVIDUAL ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS

- Teagan R.: Won the Iditarod Trail Mail Art Contest, with her artwork featured on mail carried by mushers in the 2025 Iditarod.

These achievements showcase our students, teachers, and teams excelling in academics, athletics, and the arts, while continuing to honor Concordia's mission to serve and grow in Christ.





Shelley Dartmann has spent her career as a kindergarten teacher weaving together lessons that extend far beyond the classroom. Among her most cherished traditions is taking her young students to visit Sterling Ridge Retirement Community, a practice that has profoundly impacted the lives of both the children and the residents.

"I've been taking children to nursing homes my entire teaching career," Shelley says. "It's a blessing I see with my own eyes—a blessing to both the Grandmas and Grandpas, and to the children."

Once a month, Shelley's class travels to Sterling Ridge, bringing crafts, songs, and their boundless energy. The children spend time on both the assisted living and memory support sides, brightening each room they enter.

The activities vary—singing beloved hymns, coloring pictures, playing games, or simply chatting—but the connection is always profound. Shelley emphasizes the importance of these moments: "This shows the little ones how they can do big things for God right now. At five or six years old, they're missionaries. They don't have to wait until they're older to make a difference."

For many parents, the lessons learned during these visits resonate deeply. Johanna B. shared a touching story about her son Beckett: "We went caroling at a nursing home tonight, and after the last song we visited with the residents for a bit. I was talking to one lady and looked up to see Beckett giving a Grandma a big HUG. Thank you

for teaching them to show love to all the grandpas and grandmas."

Shelley's efforts instill confidence and compassion in her students, shaping how they approach life's challenges. One parent reflected on how these experiences had prepared her daughter to handle a difficult situation with grace and love: "My daughter was not afraid to visit her dying Grandpa in the nursing home even years after Kindergarten. She had gone with Mrs. Dartmann so many times that she had no fear and was just like, 'This is what you do. You show love to them.' Thank you, Mrs. Dartmann, for this ministry."

Another parent highlighted the joy these visits bring: "My child looks forward to visiting the Grandmas! She loves singing with them and doing activities with them. I love that she gets to do this!"

For Shelley, these trips are about more than spreading joy—they're about nurturing faith. She often quotes Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

"The faith of a child is pure and powerful," she says. "Their willingness to love others, no matter the circumstances, is something we should never discount."

These visits also bring a spark of joy to the residents. Even those in the memory support area light up when the children arrive, their laughter and energy filling the room. The impact is mutual, a beautiful exchange of love and connection.

Shelley's prayer is that these experiences leave a lifelong imprint on her students. By showing kindness to others, they learn the importance of service and compassion, lessons they carry well beyond their kindergarten years.

For the residents of Sterling Ridge, the visits are a treasured highlight, a reminder of the power of intergenerational love. And for Shelley Dartmann, it's a reflection of her calling as an educator—to nurture hearts and minds, building a legacy of faith, love, and kindness that will last a lifetime.









RYAN HAHN 5 YEARS | BOARD PRESIDENT

I'm Ryan Hahn, president of Concordia Lutheran Schools of Omaha. With over 25 years of experience in corporate and entrepreneurial roles, I've built a career focused on strategic thinking and servant leadership. I'm co-owner of The

Exercise Coach, where my wife, Sommer, and I run seven locations across Omaha and St. Louis.

I'm passionate about creating community and transforming lives, whether through my work, faith, or service. I serve as president of GraceHill Church, which I co-founded, and I've been involved with Concordia Lutheran Schools for five years, now chairing the board. Outside of work, I'm a proud father of three daughters and love spending time with my family.



KIM SUCHA 7th AND FINAL YEAR | VICE CHAIR (CURRENT),

Our family has always been passionate about supporting organizations that matter to us, and Concordia is no exception. Our son has attended since Kindergarten, and we've been incredibly

blessed by the teachers and community here. It's been rewarding to witness the school's growth and impact, and we look forward to what the future holds for Concordia!



ALISON BETTEN 3RD YEAR | TREASURER

My husband Brady and I have two daughters who attend Concordia Academy. We worship at GraceHill Church, where Brady is a pastor. I was fortunate to attend a Lutheran school for junior high, high school, and college and am grateful to be part of a community where Jesus is at the heart of everything.

Joining the board during this unique time has been a blessing as we look at how God is calling and preparing the school to serve students and share the Gospel, both now and in the years to come.



ROB LINDAU 6 YEARS | SECRETARY

As a product of Lutheran education, I deeply appreciate the benefits of being surrounded by fellow believers. Lutheran education is not just seen in theology classes, but in every subject, where faith is woven into daily life. In a world that

often pushes God away, Concordia provides a space where faith is shared and nurtured. I serve on the board because I believe Christian education can unite us all and strengthen the Church. A strong Concordia leads to a stronger Christian community in Omaha.



CHARISTA BAYE 4 YEARS | BOARD MEMBER

A 2006 Concordia alum, I now have three children at the Academy: Benton (4th), Jada (3rd), and Remi (1st). Serving on the board has been a rewarding experience, especially during the school's big changes, like the move to Fort Street. Outside of

the board, I work as a franchise broker and am at Concordia nearly every day with my husband, who is the Campus Director at King of Kings NW. I'm excited for the future of Concordia and watching my kids grow here!



PASTOR CALEB KRUSE 3 YEARS | PASTORAL REPRESENTATIVE

Lutheran education has been a significant part of my life, from age 3 to 31, and I've been blessed by many great Lutheran teachers. I want to see more children experience that same encouragement in their faith. With four children, three of whom are

currently at Concordia, I want to ensure it's the best place for them and their friends. I enjoy serving not just on the board but also in the lunchroom, connecting with both students and teachers.



NANNETTE RASMUSSEN 2ND YEAR | BOARD MEMBER

I am the Director and Actuary of Group Valuation at Mutual of Omaha. With a strong commitment to Christian education, I am proud to be the mother of three graduates from Concordia schools and married to Pastor Jim Rasmussen. It's a privilege

to give back to the schools that have had such a meaningful impact on our family. In my spare time, I enjoy golfing, cheering on Husker Volleyball, and spending time with my family—especially as a grandmother to two wonderful grandchildren.



MATT REHBEIN ONLY A FEW MONTHS | BOARD MEMBER

I've been connected to Concordia since 2003, graduating in 2008. My wife, Natalie, graduated in 2010 and taught music here for several years. Our daughter, Alara (6), currently attends Concordia Academy, with two more children, Kaylee (4) and

Frederick (2), set to join when they're old enough.

Serving on the board allows me to give back to the school that provided me with a strong Lutheran education. I'm grateful for the chance to help ensure that Concordia continues to train children in the faith, as Proverbs 22:6 encourages: "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it."



JOSEPH RISKO 1.5 YEARS | BOARD MEMBER

Our family has been blessed with the opportunity to provide a strong, faith-based Christian education to our two children through Concordia. It's my hope that by serving on the board, I can contribute my talents to help Concordia fulfill its mission of instilling and

strengthening faith in Christ through excellence in education.



DUSTY WHITE 2 YEARS | BOARD MEMBER

With 22 years in pastoral ministry, I currently serve as the Pastor of Care and Counseling at Coram Deo Church, a role I've been in for 14 years. In addition to my work at the church, I coach pastors across the country and speak on topics like marriage and

parenting. I also serve as an Omaha Police Chaplain and am involved on the board at Concordia.

I'm passionate about Christian education and believe Concordia is a beacon of hope in a dark culture. My wife, Jaci, and I are committed to seeing it thrive. We have six children—two Concordia graduates, two currently enrolled, and two soon-to-be students.

DARD MEMBERS & NEW STAFF



JULIA BLOOM SIXTH GRADE DISCIPLESHIP. **SOCIAL STUDIES, SENIOR HIGH** RELIGION



JENNY CARLSON THIRD GRADE



GRETA GIESEKE HIGH SCHOOL SPANISH



BECKY JESERITZ ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER



DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY



ANNE KLAPPENBACK SECOND GRADE



TINA KRATZ JUNIOR HIGH MATH, **SCIENCE & STUDY SKILLS**



SARAH LOVE IGNITE 2-3



TRINA MCCOLLISTER

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

SPECIALIST, ALUMNI &

EVENTS COORDINATOR

MEET THE MANY FACES OF CONCORDIA LUTHERAN SCHOOLS!



LAURA RICE **ADMISSIONS DIRECTOR**



AMANDA WOOD EXPLORATORY SPANISH & SPANISH 1

15656 Fort St. Omaha, NE 68116

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE FOR DIGITAL COPIES OF THE NEWSLETTER, MUSTANG MEMO, LIVE SPORTS FEEDS & MORE UNDER THE "NEWS AND UPDATES" TAB!

CONCORDIAOMAHA.ORG A PUBLICATION OF CONCORDIA LUTHERAN SCHOOLS OF OMAHA FOUNDATION WINTER 2025





We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

OUNDATION BOARD

Gaye Lynn Schaffart *Board Chair*

Lee Handke Gail Hawkins A. William "Bill" Kernen Brandon Newhouse

Lloyd Probasco

Dan Vehle

Sabrina Weiss



MARCH 2024 BALANCE

\$2,760,555

JUNE 2024 BALANCE

\$2,620,073

SEPTEMBER 2024 BALANCE

\$2,624,569

DECEMBER 2024 BALANCE

\$2,608,606



FOUNDATION BOARD Update

It is said that "you can make more money, but you can't make more time." Time on earth is a limited resource God gifts to us and He also gives us free will regarding how we use our time.

As an alumni mom, the mother of three K-12 Concordia graduates, I remember fondly the time spent serving at Concordia. Whether the activity was serving lunch, coaching volleyball, taking admissions at events, working on the gala, or serving on the school board, it seemed God blessed me from the experience more than I was able to bless others. I am thankful for the conversations and relationships developed during these serving opportunities. To serve one another humbly in love is to love your neighbor as yourself.

For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). We are called to share God's love by participating in the ministry of Jesus in the world. We recognize that we don't give of our time to earn our salvation. Rather we serve others because of our salvation.

It is an exciting time at Concordia with growth in students, facilities, courses, and extra-curricular activities and each of these come with an expanding list of ways to serve Him. I encourage you to be open to where God is calling you to serve and in areas that God has planned for you. It may be uncomfortable and outside of your previous experience, but He will stretch you and change you. To God be the glory.

A SISTER IN CHRIST,

Gail Hawkins