

GREAT PLAINS LUTHERAN

THE GRAINS

FALL 2023



*President's Message
Meet our new Faculty
By the Numbers*

Gifts and Donors





PRESIDENT DAVID MAERTZ

The Ultimate Influencer

So many people and things in the world around us try to convince us of who we should be, how we should think, and what we should do. And many of these influencers are not good and godly. That is why it is so important that we be grounded and stay connected to God through his Word.

That is what Great Plains Lutheran High School, by God's grace, strives to do.

We are confident that this year's theme – Convinced – is helping us maintain this focus. Convinced that the Bible is God's Word and the source of truth, we look to his Word as the ultimate influencer in our lives. And convinced that Jesus died for all, we trust that Christ's love will compel us to live for him – to live as lifelong disciples of Christ.

What does that look like at GPLHS?

A dormitory where 62 students from 7 states and 5 countries live and work together, grow in personal and interpersonal skills, ending their day together with a devotion based on a truth from God's Word.

Classes and activities where students grow not only intellectually and physically and emotionally, but also spiritually as they are connected to Jesus and given opportunities to exercise their faith.

A partnership where faculty and staff and families look for ways to support students as they develop their gifts and discover how they can live to God's glory.

People from near and far who give of their time and talents and resources in support of students they often have not and perhaps never will meet – because they are convinced that time spent focusing on eternal truths will be blessed, and therefore the Christ-centered education offered at GPL makes a life-changing difference in the lives of today's youth.

We could not do this without you. Thank you for helping us nurture students as followers of the true God through his eternal Word – the ultimate influencer.



"For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)



Administration

Rev. David Maertz

President, Interm Principal

Rev. Karl Schauland

Campus Pastor

Mr. Jeff Roloff

Director of Mission Advancement

Mr. Christian Weseloh

Board Chairman

2023-2024 School Theme

Convinced

Our Mission

Great Plains Lutheran High School provides a Christ-centered education to assist families in nurturing students as lifelong disciples of Christ.

Teachers

Mr. Matt Bauer

Mrs. Emily Cantwell

Mrs. Linda Guthmiller

Mr. Mike Haugly

Mrs. Jayne Jaeger

Mr. Sam Kleinke

Mr. Eric Martens

Mr. Alex Mielke

Miss Nicole Porter

Mr. Ryan Rosenthal

Mr. Aaron Schleusener

Mr. Michael Starr

On the cover:

A photo depicting our various fall activities - photo by Sarah Roloff

Meet Our New Faculty!

ALEX MIELKE - SPANISH INSTRUCTOR



Alex Mielke
Spanish Instructor

Alex Mielke originally hails from just outside Milwaukee, WI from a little farm town called Muskego. He received his degree in Spanish Education from Martin Luther College in 2014 and received his masters in Teaching Spanish from the University of Southern Miss-Hattiesburg in 2021. After graduating MLC, he served three years at Nebraska Evangelical Lutheran High School as a Dorm Supervisor and Spanish Teacher.

After that he taught Spanish at Rocky Mountain Lutheran High School for six years. Now he, along with his beautiful wife of five years, Rachel, and daughter, Maya, who is six months old, are back in the Midwest and ready to rock and roll!! In his free time, he enjoys being with his family, playing and listening to music, watching sports, running, and playing the occasional video game.

After a couple weeks of school, Alex says, "I feel extremely blessed to be able to serve at GPL. As my family and I have settled in, it is easy to see all the positives around us. GPL has a very tight-knit community of avid supporters that have been extremely kind and wel-



The Mielke Family

coming to our family. Other teachers have also helped my adjustment both inside the classroom with what needs to happen as well as figuring out Panther culture outside of the classroom. Students are very driven individuals who not only strive to do well in their classes and are very respectful but are



equally enjoyable to engage in conversation outside the school day as well. We are also definitely huge fans of the Watertown traffic (or lack there of)! Coaching cross country has been invigorating getting to see how hard the runners work as they shave minutes off their personal records. Finally, the facilities are phenomenal to be able to do what we do here at GPL and do it well."

"Some of the challenges for us have been finding out how to be involved in all the school's events. We are blessed to have so many things going on at school at once! Not only that, but also continuing to seek out ways to get involved in the community and participate in all the events that go on in Watertown itself has been an exciting adventure. Also, from a teaching perspective how to best bring Spanish to a town in South Dakota has been an exciting opportunity I anticipate overcoming."

"All in all, the Panther family has been very quick to welcome us, from student to faculty to students' families, and we feel incredibly blessed to be a part of everything here in Watertown."



Emily Cantwell - Learning Resource Coordinator



Emily Cantwell

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15

When reading this passage, we often concentrate on how Christ has died for all out of love—and understandably so. What we often read, but neglect to take to heart is the second part, “we no longer live for ourselves, but for him.” At Great Plains we are blessed with the opportunity to teach this truth, but it goes far beyond this. We get to live it. How better to live for him than to convince the next generation of this truth—we live for him.

In my role as Learning Resource Coordinator, this is exactly what I am privileged to do every day at GPL. I work individually, in small groups, and in classrooms supporting teachers and students alike to help them see that God made them for a purpose. He created them with their own unique abilities and talents to live lives of service to him. Often students who are uniquely challenged with school get caught up in their failures and forget their God given purpose or even doubt they can serve this purpose. In the past, some families felt their needs were too great for our school to support without additional help, causing us and them to lose the chance to be strengthened in these truths every day.

My role is to listen, teach, guide, support and pray for these students to succeed in our school so they can continue to see how God has crafted them and created them with intention and purpose. Their challenges are

not a burden or weakness, but rather precisely how God created them, and I strive to encourage and support them through these challenges so they can be successful in high school and beyond. I will help them capitalize on their strengths, as well as learn strategies for their areas of struggle, all with the end goal of preparing them to live for Christ in whatever path God has planned for them.

Since the beginning of the school year, I have been blessed to serve many students in multiple capacities within the Learning Resource Center. For those eligible, I collaborated and created accommodation plans for 10 students as well as facilitated the referral process for two students leading to correct identification of special education eligibility. During the school day, I observe in various classrooms to identify ways students can be more fully supported, I run three Guided Study Halls in which students are taught study skills and homework completion strategies, I teach one math intervention period, as well as one period of social skills intervention. Along with planned student support and classes, on a daily basis 10-15 students utilize the Learning Resource Center for help on homework, writing skills, test anxiety, study skills, reading and math support, or simply to work through challenges they encounter as high schoolers.



Working in the Learning Resource Center



Teaching High School 101

Along with directly working with students, I collect and monitor student data to ensure students are not falling through the cracks and are given support proactively, rather than reactively whenever possible. I provide small professional development to teachers of instructional strategies to better support struggling learners. I also collaborate with staff on instructional strategies and resources for maximizing student success socially, behaviorally, and academically.

Our goal at Great Plains is simple and right there in our mission: we are focused on preparing students for lives of service to their communities and their Lord. Adding this new position allows for us to ensure this mission is achieved for ALL of our students, preparing them re-

regardless of their abilities or talents- for all are able to live lives for Christ. I thank you for the opportunity to serve GPL and God's Kingdom in this capacity. Praise be to our Father in heaven!

Now a little bit about me. I grew up in northwest Arkansas, went to Nebraska Lutheran High School and then on to Martin Luther College to get my bachelors degree in Elementary Education. After graduating in 2013, I declined to take a call to instead pursue my Master's in Special Education from the University of Kansas. I worked as a graduate research assistant in the Department of Special Education, and after completing my degree, I spent two and half years serving as a project coordinator working to build sustainable, proactive school systems to prevent school failure and support school success. I had the pleasure to conduct research and coordinate efforts across states in early prevention for students at risk using behavioral screening instruments, and implementation of evidence-based behavior interventions and classroom management practices.

In 2017, I received a call to teach grades 2-4 at Mt. Olive Lutheran School in Overland Park, KS. It was my joy and privilege to serve at the school until I received a call to serve at GPL this past spring. I feel blessed to be in this position to support students and look forward to seeing how God will work through me for the good of his Kingdom.



My husband Casey and I have been married for 8 years. He works at Big Stone Therapies as a Physical Therapy Assistant. We have two daughters, Marlow (5), and Ida (2), who keep us busy and laughing, and one rescue pup, Luna. We love getting together with people and finding things to do with the kids around town. I love the outdoors, reading, being with the kids, and trying new foods!

I am really looking forward to getting to know all the students and families! We are so excited to be part of this awesome community!

Please stop by and say hi!

Nicole Porter - Dorm Supervisor



I am Nicole Porter. I'm from New Ulm, Minnesota. My family and I have also lived in Arkansas and Florida. I graduated from Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School in 2019 and then from Martin Luther College in May of 2023 with a degree in Elementary Education and an endorsement

in Math. My father is a professor at MLC and my mom works at a daycare in New Ulm. I have 2 younger sisters and an older sister with a baby. I enjoy playing soccer and watching baseball. I also enjoy hiking, doing puzzles and hanging out with friends.



Here at Great Plains, I have the privilege of serving as a dorm supervisor and math instructor. During the school day, along with monitoring one study hall, I teach two sections of Geometry and one section of Consumer Math. I have always enjoyed math and I enjoy teaching it as well. In the dorm, I work alongside two other dorm staff to keep the dorm running. We serve meals and offer our help with things they may need as the dorm are their "home away from home." This can be just being a person to talk to, assisting with student conflict, as well as keeping our dorm feeling comfortable and safe. I truly enjoy getting to know the students in the dorm as individuals. It is a goal of mine to work to help these students feel welcome and safe both in the dorm and at school. I am blessed to also take part in our extracurriculars. A few opportunities I have are taking stats for home varsity football games, line judging for both JV and varsity volleyball, and choreographing the Choral Fest Pops Concert piece for Honor Choir (we will be polishing that all the way up until the concert). I thank God for these opportunities and truly appreciate the welcoming staff we have here at GPL and our amazing students.





By the Numbers

Our current enrollment is 137.

We have students from 6 countries: China (1), Democratic Republic of the Congo (2), Ethiopia (1), South Africa (1), South Korea (1), and the USA (131).

We have students from 7 states: Alabama (3), Florida (1), Hawaii (1), Minnesota (26), North Dakota (2), South Dakota (97), and Wisconsin (1).

There are 74 girls and 63 boys.

There are 62 dorm students and 75 commuting students.

We have 41 freshmen, 29 sophomores, 40 juniors, and 27 seniors.

107 students (78%) are W/ELS, 8 (6%) are members of other Lutheran denominations, 15 (11%) are members of other Christian churches, and 9 (6%) are kingdom prospects.

Over 90% of students are involved in one or more cocurricular activity.

Mission Advancement - Opportunities



MISSION ADV. DIRECTOR
JEFF ROLOFF

Wow, time never seems to slow down. We are into the fall and nearing the end of the first quarter of the school year. God has given us so many amazing blessings and I thought it would be good for us to take some time to rejoice in them.

We have a faculty of teachers that is working hard to share their knowledge, skills and passion with 137 amazing young people. We have a staff of support personnel that work to make sure that this ministry continues to function well and to God's glory. We have 137 awesome young people that grow in God's Word every day! We continue to have many people support this ministry with their time, talents and treasures.

This year we were blessed with the opportunity to try something new. With our annual Fall Festival moving to the spring, we decided to set aside a day this fall to celebrate the ministry of GPL. On GPL Day we asked congregations in our region to remember our ministry. Our faculty had the opportunity to share the joys of their ministry at several congregations in the region. Many of you responded by sharing gifts, words of support, encouragement and your attention with us. Thank you to those of you who participated in the silent auction. I pray you had fun! Even though it was not the major purpose of GPL Day, we were blessed to receive over \$7000 through the auction and through special donations to be used toward our ministry.



We have been blessed to use some time to reflect and study our campus needs, and look at ways to best utilize our buildings, land, staff and faculty. We are using this time to study the need for more classroom space, how to improve our campus appearance and ways to best utilize the land God has blessed us with. Presently we are concentrating on the configuration of the additional classrooms that had been included in the *United in Praise*

campaign. At the same time we need to consider other areas of our campus as well. We need to be planning and studying areas like parking, landscaping, use of green spaces, and outdoor athletic facilities. Please, as we move along with this process of studying and planning, share your thoughts and ideas. We would love to hear them!

Yes time might seem to fly by, but the blessings we receive from God are always worth taking the time to reflect on and rejoice in. All these other things are fun to enjoy and talk about, but in the end we are convinced that Christ loves us and will continue to bless us no matter how fast time seems to fly by.

Alumni Happenings



Ben Hallauer (Class of 2002) and his family went to Caicos. This was their son, Henry's (pictured), first international trip.

Please Note Fall Festival Is Moving!

Our annual festival will be making a change. Traditionally held in the fall, the festival will be held in the spring in conjunction with the Spring Theater Production. The Musical this year is "Bye Bye Birdie." Saturday, April 13, 2024 is the date. Please be on the lookout for further information.





**1200 Luther Lane NE
Watertown, SD 57201-8200**

Return Service Requested



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Upcoming Events

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Oct. 27 | Trunk or Treat 6:30 - 8:00pm |
| Nov. 3-5 | WELS Choral Festival at
Wisconsin Luther College
in Milwaukee, WI |
| Nov. 4 | Auxiliary Meeting 10:00am |
| Nov. 4 | Delegate Meeting 10:00am |
| Nov. 8 | Honor Society Red Cross
Blood Drive |
| Nov. 22-24 | Thanksgiving Break -
NO SCHOOL |
| Dec. 3 | Christmas Concert 3:00pm |
| Dec. 3 | Fall Awards Ceremony 4:30pm |

Tickets are selling fast!



Lorie Line will be performing at GPL'S auditorium on Sunday, December 10 at 3:00pm. Purchase your \$60 ticket online at lorieline.com

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