

Matt Cozzi is excited to bring his real-world experience to the English and communications classroom. Matt earned his undergraduate degree in Journalism from the University of Iowa. After several years as a professional reporter, he pursued a Master of Arts in Teaching at National Louis University. Matt comes to Wheaton Academy from Cary Grove High School and keeps his hands in the broadcasting world by hosting a regular sports podcast called “Locked on Cubs.”

Effie Damianidou will serve in the Bible and Foreign Language departments, teaching Foundations of Faith and French II and IV. She was born in Cyprus and graduated from high school in South Africa before coming to the States. She speaks Greek, French, Afrikaans, and English! She is passionate about French as well as the Bible. She has taught French at the high school and college levels (most recently as a long-term sub at Downers Grove HS), homeschooled her three children, holds two master’s degrees (One in French and one in Theological Studies), and is expected to complete her Ph.D. in Biblical Interpretation and Theology in 2026. She likes reading, traveling, cooking, and spending time with her family in her free time.

Sean Economou is excited to come alongside students as a videography teacher so they can find their artistic voices and use them for God’s glory. Sean’s passion for filmmaking is rooted in his desire to share the gospel through creative expression. As a Christian, he believes that film is a powerful tool for spreading the gospel and bringing positive change to the world. Sean holds a Bachelor’s degree in filmmaking from Columbia College. Before coming to WA, he worked for Watts of Love, where he was given opportunities to travel to remote areas of the world, tell stories, and learn how to produce films in a variety of environments. Sean directed a 2021 short film about Malawi, and it won 30 international film awards! Besides filmmaking, Sean likes photography, rock climbing, pickleball, and traveling.

Kat Haase is ready to help students flourish in their relationship with God, others, and the world. She will teach Foundations of Faith and serve as the Assistant Director of Student Activities. Kat holds a master’s degree in Educational Ministries and is completing a doctorate in Cultural Apologetics at Covenant Theological Seminary. Kat spent 22 years as a Resident Director at Wheaton College before coming to Wheaton Academy. She met her husband, Dan, at Honey Rock camp. Kat loves reading, podcasts, bike riding, and her dog.

Ethan Harsted looks forward to interacting with students and making a difference in their lives as Wheaton Academy’s Faculty, Athletics, and Operations Fellow. He recently earned a BA in Communications from Wheaton College. Additionally, Ethan is a three-time Scholar All-American Wrestler and was the National Runner-Up in the 2023 NCAA Division III Wrestling Championships. In addition to wrestling, he has experience as a football player and pole vaulter. He loves outdoor activities such as fishing, hiking, and wakeboarding.

Kelly Laschinski is passionate about bringing Spanish to the classroom and wants to use the language to help her students grow spiritually and academically. Kelly holds a bachelor's degree from William Jewell College and a Teacher's Certificate from University of Missouri, St. Louis. She has taught for 13 years in both public, private, and homeschool settings. Additionally, Kelly has experience as a WA parent, as both her sons are Wheaton Academy alumni. Kelly loves leading Bible studies, traveling, reading, baking, needlepoint, and the St. Louis Blues hockey team.

Kristen Rusthoven '08 is prepared to create stronger writers, readers, and critical thinkers as an English and Social Studies teacher this year! She loves helping students overcome their challenges and reach their goals. This will be her 11th year teaching. She earned a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education from Trinity Christian College in and a Master's in Reading from Olivet Nazarene University. She is a certified Reading Specialist. She enjoys books, creating digital art, traveling, and spending time with friends and family in her free time.

Amy Sveen looks forward to inspiring academic and spiritual growth in her students in her new role as a math teacher. Amy comes to Wheaton Academy from Clarendon Hills Middle School, where she taught algebra for five years. Additionally, Amy taught ACT/SAT/TOEFL test preparation and robotics for four years at WA Global Network's Summer English Institute for international students. Amy holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Wheaton College. She enjoys being outside, playing tennis and pickleball, reading, and spending time with her husband and one-year-old, Declan.

Shelton Thompson comes to Wheaton Academy from the Dominican Republic, where he served with Kids Alive International as a mid-term missionary. He is prepared to help his students understand that math doesn't have to be intimidating and that it can be broken down into manageable steps. Shelton always had a strong interest in math, and that passion led him to complete his bachelor's degree at the McCormick School of Engineering at Northwestern University. Besides teaching algebra and geometry, Shelton will coach cross country and track this year. Shelton likes to play board games, run, and watch movies with friends in his spare time. He is also an experienced mascot - In addition to being a student at Northwestern, he was Willie the Wildcat!

John Vandervelde looks forward to teaching the Bible to high school students and sharing God's Word with them. John is the Executive Pastor at Glen Ellyn Bible Church, where he has served since 2015. Before his call to Glen Ellyn Bible Church, he held leadership roles at LeaderTreks and Honey Rock camp. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Wheaton College. John and his wife, Kari, have five children, four of whom are students at Wheaton Academy. He loves gravel cycling, outdoor activities, soccer, and basketball.

Heather Wilkinson brings real-world experience to the French classroom, having lived in France a missionary and studied at the University of Paris. She is passionate about the language as well as ministry to the French people. Heather holds a BA in

computer science from Messiah University, and has a Certificate of Biblical Studies from Emmaus Bible College. In addition to French, she has taught English, math, computer science, and piano. Heather values opportunities to spend time with family, be in nature, garden, and explore new places. She is also a gifted Bible study and small group leader and loves hearing about people's stories and their walks with the Lord.

Lindsay Williams is thrilled to utilize her God-given gifts to deepen relationships with school parents, alumni, and friends as the new Associate Director of Development. Lindsay comes to Wheaton Academy with experience in the fields of nursing, event planning, entrepreneurship, and fundraising. Additionally, Lindsay has partnered in ministry with her husband, Sean, for over 20 years. They serve at Willow Creek South Barrington, where Sean is the Campus Pastor. Lindsay and Sean are the proud parents of Levi and Austin.