



2018

**Educator Comments**

# KURT PHELPS

I've always believed that football was a means to an end, and that end is far greater than winning and losing. It is the development of the character of young students. Instilling a work ethic, learning leadership skills, and understanding the importance of selfless service for a cause bigger and greater than one's self have always been the skills that I have strived to impress on my players and students.

# ANDREA HUDSON

I always strive to get to know my students as the individuals they are and bring what they love into the classroom as best as I am able. This makes our discussions and projects more interesting and personal to them.

# BECKY COOPER

Students want to be engaged and challenged. By providing an atmosphere that fosters exploration and dialogue, our students grow excited to learn the size of their minds. As teachers, we must help our students gain confidence in their abilities and voices. Once they feel that sense of discovery and empowerment, they are on the path toward shaping their destinies. I believe the process of writing and the exploration of literature are two powerful means for preparing young people to use their critical reasoning skills to overcome the obstacles that life will inevitably place in their way...

# BECKY COOPER

...By studying the human condition, they will appreciate life's joys, both small and great as they also develop compassion and empathy for others. I feel grateful to be a part of their journey; I feel grateful for the lessons the students teach me; and I feel grateful to be a part of a community that values all of these essential aspects of education.

# BRAD PORTIS

I realize that my students will face challenges in their future far greater than I can simulate in the classroom. I know that they will reach for goals that are far beyond what they can probably even imagine right now. I try to help my students achieve well beyond what they may have initially believed they could accomplish. I try to push them past their “comfort zone,” but into an area that is still within their reach and help them become very productive. This allows students to re-focus their future goals higher and more realistically. It also helps build self confidence and independent initiative that our young people will need when teachers and parents are no longer around...

# BRAD PORTIS

...My goal is to build confidence by helping students test their limits, persevere and achieve. Sam Christensen has challenged himself, both athletically (Cross Country and Track) and academically (American Chemical Society's Chemistry Day and Scholarship Exam, National History Day National Finalist, Model United Nations, Kalamazoo Astronomical Society). Sam constructed an amazing video project on Quantum Theory. He is a super person not only because of his accomplishments and personality; but because he is willing to extend himself in order to grow. It is students like Sam Christensen who not only impress me; but inspire me to continue giving my best because they certainly do.

# AL NIEBOER

I consider it a privilege to be able to equip students for the future. What makes teaching extremely satisfying is seeing students excel because of their passion for learning, hard work, determination, and full use of their gifts and talents. Adam is that type of student. His many contributions to our school have been greatly appreciated and have served as a model to other students. I consider it a blessing to work with students who want to make a difference in this world. Adam has a lot to offer in that regard as he continues on into college and career. This is what makes the many tedious hours of lesson planning and grading all worth it!



# TROY SMITH

It is my pleasure to help students learn how to develop artistic talents and leadership skills through the medium of film. Alexander Smith has been exceptional in taking all that he has learned and creating high-quality, award-winning films. I am very proud of him and all that he has accomplished. He has been the best student that I have ever had and is an incredible person to know. I am so happy that I not only watched him grow up as my son, but also grow into an amazing filmmaker.

# TRISH POLLARD

I strive to have a student-led classroom where students are challenged to think critically and they are not afraid to question thoughts and ideas. Mady has embraced this concept. She pushes her peers (and teachers) to learn and to THINK.

# CHRISTIENE BARTLEY

Evelyn has been able to learn a lot about environmental science through application. She has practiced interviewing and inquiry while using photographs and team work to make an impact at several local sites, including helping to clear up invasive plants. I am very proud of Evelyn and I hope she feels confident about what she has learned.

# JUDITH DEEM

I have had the joy and privilege of participating Ben's intellectual growth. It has been exciting watching him develop his love of reading and his joy of learning. He is developing into a fine young man with a solid foundation upon which to build his future. I have every confidence he will continue to make this world a better place.

# JOHN BECK

Alicia is one of those rare students who strive to fully maximize their high school experience. She not only maintained a nearly perfect GPA, but was also involved in the National Honor Society, Student Government, and in the Heritage History Club. Her participation in National History Day earned her a trip to Washington D.C. as a national finalist. I am quite proud of her dedication and look forward to what she will accomplish for the Lord in the future!

# CHRISTINA HOLMES STEGMAN

It is my mission as an educator to provide an experience for all of my students where they feel challenged, cared for and embraced for what they bring to the table. Within the safety of our four walls I hope to not only inspire a love of learning another language, but also to provide a space for laughter, love and acceptance. Maddie Guimond is one of those students who has helped me maintain and nurture those values and goals and who always brings warmth, intelligence and joy to the classroom. I am so grateful to have been a part of her life and I am even more grateful that she has been a part of mine.

# SHANNON HOUTROUW

Congratulations, class of 2018. In addition to being an exceptionally accomplished group of individuals, you are also very compassionate. Your response after my hospitalization this year, was matched only by the compassion you showed after the passing of my mother. You are all top notch computer scientists, no question. But you are also fabulous people. I am so proud of you. God bless each of you in this journey we call life. I am so very grateful to have known you these three years.

# BETH RHODES

My hope for my students is that I have modeled and reinforced the idea of being a lifelong learner. My wish is that students feel confident with new ideas, problem solving and expressing themselves.



# REX HAFFER

Jo just makes life easy as a teacher. From her outstanding work in the classroom, to her leadership in NHS, all the way to her desire to willingly help freshmen, she walks everyday through our building as an unstoppable force. All of our students are irreplaceable, but losing Jo at the end of this year will create a major void in my classroom. Her compassion, quick wit, and ability to keep me in check will be sorely missed. I am so honored to have had the privilege to be her teacher for a brief time. Students like Jo are the reminder we all need for why we teach, and I will always be grateful to her for that.

# REX HAFFER

Owen taught me more than I ever taught him. He showed us all how important perseverance, balance, passion, and hard work are...and how they always win out in the end. Owen is the kid that does pushups when he doesn't have to just to make sure he keeps that edge over other people. Some of my happiest moments in the classroom and in cross country over my 13 years of education have centered around Owen. The memories of him pushing himself to achieve things that I don't know if either of us thought possible will always put a smile on my face. Over four years Owen taught me that one thing is certain, when the chips are down and it's time to make a decision...bet on Owen.

# COLLEEN CHAPOTON

We live in an amazing world. As a science teacher, I have the incredible fortune to watch students develop an appreciation for this dynamic planet that we call home. Teanne and Cian are exceptional learners. They both love to explore, question, and seek new understanding. They are strong, thoughtful, and inquisitive. I am so proud of the effort they put into AP Biology, but I am even more proud of the remarkable people that they are. Congrats, kiddos!

# BRIANNA ENGLISH

The focus of my AP English Language and Composition class is to push students to become stronger writers, readers, and critical thinkers through reading and analyzing nonfiction literature. With her determination, hard work, and willingness to challenge herself, I was able to witness Kristina make incredible academic and personal growth while in the course, and I'm so lucky to continue to work with her this year in Yearbook.

# TAMA SALISBURY

It has been a privilege to work with Mitchell and to observe his personal growth over several years. He is a bright young man with many talents, but I am most impressed by his passion and drive both in and outside of the classroom. I strive to motivate students to question thoughtfully, think critically, and engage responsibly in our community. Too, I encourage students to be unafraid of setbacks and understanding of the benefits that problem-solving can bring. Mitchell is clearly ready for the challenges that await him in his post-secondary experience...

# TAMA SALISBURY

... It is an honor to have been identified as one of his significant educators; a thank you from a student is the absolute best reward that I can receive.

# CORY HINGA

A goal of mine as a teacher, is to encourage and guide students to become their own advocates and to be problem solvers. If a student wants something, I avoid handing whatever it is to him or her, and instead I encourage students to rely on all the tools they have and the processes they have learned. I aim to use these opportunities to push students to use higher level thinking. The job of a student in my class is to prepare and perform. Students need to learn to think outside the box and strive to solve the seemingly unsolvable. Hard workers and problem solvers will go far in this world and have limitless possibilities.

# TRACEY BRANCH

When students come into the classroom it is an educator's role to create in them a curious mind, a mind that searches for truths and answers while being inspired. Educators should teach the natural truths, but then, teach the student to chase after knowledge; to discover evidence that supports or contradicts their ideas while having an open mind.

“Speak what you think now in hard words, and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradicts what you say today.” ~Ralph Waldo Emerson



