



2018 KALAMAZOO AREA

## **Excellence in Education**

# **Student Comments on Significant Educators**

# Andrea Hudson



Ms. Hudson has been a significant educator to me since my sophomore year, when she taught BMA. She has repeatedly gone out of her way to help me prepare for my future. She is always happy to help with college and career decisions. Her willingness to help, compassion, and support, even after moving schools, has made her significant to me.

**- Cali Lawrence**

# Colleen Grueter



My significant educator is my National Honor Society adviser. She is significant to me because she has taught me how important it is to care for others through many community service events. Because of her, I will continue to help others in need even after I leave her classroom.

**- Daryn Dratt**

# Michael Sinclair



Mr. Sinclair was my junior year physics teacher at KAMSC. Over the course of the year he had the ability to not only teach a demanding course that contained entirely new information, but also provided guidance for my own professional and educational future. Mr. Sinclair embodies what a teacher stands for, he makes a demanding curriculum attainable, pushes students to think in all areas, and has held each of us accountable for our own education. Mr. Sinclair introduced the idea of teaching to me and has supported me in every way he can to help me realize my future potential as an educator. Even in my senior year, he continues to push me to pursue nothing but greatness and has reassured me countless times of the opportunities my future holds if I apply myself and never settle.

**- Brianna Salome**

# Trish Pollard



Mrs. Pollard has taught me to love literature, despite my lifelong commitment to STEM. Knowing and appreciating the written word has opened my mind to the vast world of human emotion and creativity. I look back on my defiance to participate in language arts in utter disbelief, and I am certain that without this woman, I could never have grown to become the person I am today.

**- Madylin Eberstein**

# Beth Rhodes



I've had the privilege of taking classes with Mrs. Rhodes for nearly half of my high school career. From freshman biology to AP Biology, every class that I've had with Mrs. Rhodes not only broadened my general knowledge of science, but also my way of thinking critically. And although I do not plan on pursuing a career in biology, AP Biology has been my absolute favorite class from all of high school because Mrs. Rhodes had the ability to make the material we were learning in class every day new and interesting (all after teaching similar material for nearly three decades!). (1/2)

# Beth Rhodes



And to say that Mrs. Rhodes knows what she is talking about when she is teaching her classes would be more than an understatement. From glycolysis to signal transduction pathways, Mrs. Rhodes knows it all. She challenges her students with complex material and open-ended lab procedures. And on top of her excellent teaching style, Mrs. Rhodes encourages her students to pursue their interests in STEM. In this regard, Mrs. Rhodes thinks not only about our performance in the classroom as students but also how we might impact the rest of the world. (2/2)

**- Autumn Cain**

# Brad Portis



Mr. Portis has made a significant impact on my learning experience through high school by creating a classroom environment that led me to realize my potential in learning. Mr. Portis has taught me to study and ask questions throughout learning. His class and personality have led me to understand and benefit from both intensive and supportive learning which has had a lasting impact on my life.

**- Samuel Christensen**



# Modhi Alshehri



Mr. Alshehri is an enthusiastic and effective teacher with an immense amount of knowledge in the subjects of mathematics and physics. I appreciate that I have been given the opportunity to call Mr. Alshehri my teacher for three years of high school, as I understand that he wants our class to be prepared for the future and whatever challenges it may bring. Mr. Alshehri taught me the subjects of Pre-Calculus, Advanced Placement Calculus BC, and Advanced Placement Physics C. I would like to thank Mr. Alshehri for all the time and effort he has put forth in order to bring up an intelligent generation of scholars.

**- Skyler Flietstra**

# Michael Sinclair



Mr. Sinclair was my physics teacher in my junior year and not only sparked my curiosity in physics, but also my desire to learn. He helped me to become better at asking questions and exploring new ideas. He has also guided me through college explorations that seemed overwhelming, and has supported me in endeavors outside of school as well.

**- Madeline Hinkley**

# Anna Deming



Not only was Mrs. Deming a wonderful fourth-grade teacher, she also has grown to become a dear, dear friend to our entire family. Even now, eight years later, I still get to learn from her outside of the classroom. The memories I've made with Mrs. Deming, from sewing my own dress to planting and cultivating daylilies to maneuvering through the gnarled branches of her apple trees, are ones I'll cherish forever.

**- Marleigh Thorn**

# Emily Marillier



Mrs. Marillier has been my Latin teacher for the past three years and has taught me a great deal about the Latin language and Roman history. With characteristic enthusiasm and an extensive font of knowledge, she has advanced my entire educational experience by pushing me to excel in all areas of study. She has inspired me to be an exemplary student and person.

**- Mary Ankenbauer**

# John Beck



Mr. Beck makes learning enjoyable. He is passionate about history and makes class interesting. He pushes me to do my best and to excel in my studies. He is an excellent home room teacher because he is personal and caring. I love the atmosphere of his classroom. Mr. Beck is a wonderful example to all the students and demonstrates Christ-like behavior.

**- Alicia Nagel**

# Kari Lockett



I had the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Lockett ever since my sophomore year when I took her chemistry class. The rigorous curriculum has prepared me for college and has allowed me to improve myself as a student. I have acquired valuable skills that I know will help me throughout my years at the collegiate level. Thanks to Mrs. Lockett, I feel confident heading to college and have solidified my interest in science.

**- Arif Amini**

# Kari Luckett



Mrs. Luckett was one of the most influential teachers in my life. She is the one teacher that was always there for me in any situation good or bad. I could go to her to her for anything and for that I am extremely grateful. She did not care what showed on the report card, she cares about her students more than anything. But, most of all her passion for Chemistry inspired me to pursue science at Michigan State University.

**- Thomas Ankley**

# Joshua Gottlieb



Mr. Gottlieb has been instrumental in my growth as both a student and a person. In school, he not only masterfully teaches physics in a way that every student can grasp, but he also graces us with countless music and movie recommendations, as well as endless life advice. I've been fortunate enough to get to know Mr. Gottlieb outside of the classroom too, as he allowed me to participate in his business, which remains one of the most fruitful experiences of my life. Most importantly, through many games of hide-and-seek with his children, he has welcomed me into his family. Ultimately, he is the manifestation of human potential and a model and mentor worthy of emulation.

**- Jake Fales**



# Rex Hafer



Over the past two years, I have had the privilege of knowing Mr. Hafer as an AP U.S. Government and AP Comparative Government teacher, and as a National Honor Society adviser. His dedication and passion for his work is truly inspiring. His enthusiasm for the material makes learning fun and I look forward to his class everyday. Mr. Hafer has not only helped me to become a better student, but also a better person. He has cultivated my love for politics and his unwavering support has given me confidence in my abilities going forward. I cannot begin to thank Mr. Hafer enough for the countless life lessons he has taught me and the insightful advice he has provided.

**- Josephine Fonger**

# Shannon Houtrouw



Having been my computer science and math teacher for the past three years, Mr. Houtrouw has been a constant throughout my high school education. From my time spent in his class, I've witnessed him provide endless opportunities for his students to succeed. He is constantly busy arranging transportation for programming competitions across the states, it's a wonder how he has time to sit down and chat with us. Yet he does. His door is always open to students; I've always felt welcomed whenever I stopped by his classroom after school, whether it was to code or to just sit down and chat. With his unending excitement to anything computer science, he is the reason why I have a fascination for computer science. Thank you Mr. Houtrouw!

**- Nathaniel Goenawan**

# Colleen Chapoton



Ms. Chapoton teaches in such a style that inspired me to learn, to ask the questions that really allow one to gain an understanding. She brings fun and joy to the art of the biology and without her methods I wouldn't have the same passion for science as I do now. Not only did she take time out of class to allow students to ask questions, but she also took time out of her daily schedule. Her love for biology and teaching is certainly something I will miss and will be forever grateful for.

**- Cian Johnson**

# Rex Hafer



What struck me when I first met Mr. Hafer at summer cross country camp freshman year was his impeccable attitude: driven and positive. During AP Government junior year, I learned about the structure and functions of U.S. government through Mr. Hafer's thorough lectures and creative activities. Most importantly, however, I learned the benefits of having an enthusiastic and focused approach when working to accomplish a goal. Hafer's engaged coaching, along with the hard work of each athlete, led the men's cross country team to a regional championship and a state meet qualification my senior year. Mr. Hafer has been a significant educator for me because he has an excellent attitude both in the classroom and on the running course. I have learned many valuable lessons through Mr. Hafer's teaching and coaching that I will use throughout the rest of my life.

**- Owen O'Neil**

# Al Nieboer



Mr. Nieboer genuinely cares about his students. He goes above and beyond what is required of him to ensure the best possible learning experience. He has taught me many science skills that I will carry with me into the future; even more importantly, he has taught me how to learn effectively. He always tells us to think conceptually; for me, this means to think beyond the facts. He challenges us to apply what we learn to the real world. Beyond learning, Mr. Nieboer has fun with us. Every class, he either gives us trivia questions or a joke of the day. Although simple, it sets the tone for class every day. His classroom is a place to enjoy what you learn and engage in the topics. That environment has been invaluable to me.

**- Adam Ritsema**

# Christiene Bartley



Chris has been involved in the greater Kalamazoo area and has been an inspiration to me my whole life because of her relentless effort to nourish the parks and gardens of this wonderful city. She has always encouraged me to be involved in the community and I thank her for the countless opportunities she has made available to me. Her love and empathy towards others will always be cherished by the people she encounters, and because of this, has taught me to be a more engaged citizen.

**- Evelyn Bartley**

# Becky Cooper



Mrs. Cooper has provided an essential role in both my emotional and academic development. Being a student of hers for two years has been a pleasure. She renewed and nurtured my passion for writing from a young age in ways I truly believe will impact my future. In essence, she helped provide me with a world view, something I define as priceless. I can only hope that others have the privilege to be her student for many years to come.

**- Sonata Davis**

# Luke Cook



Luke Cook has been my private cello teacher since I was ten years old, and in that time he has served as my mentor in every musical endeavor I have taken. He makes the experience of learning an instrument fun and engaging for his students, is always supportive and manages to put things into perspective. Luke understands his students, helps them feel comfortable with their instrument, and also provides a fantastic musical education. He has helped me gain confidence that extends to every aspect of my life, and has certainly made me a better student in the process.

**- Emma Fergusson**



# Becky Cooper



Ms. Cooper provided me with three years of unmatched English education, bridging my years from middle school into high school seamlessly. She taught me everything from developing my own voice and learning how to use a semicolon correctly to learning how to structure a research paper. She never let me turn in anything less than my best work and it paid off for me, as I learned how to write strong pieces even when I had a limited amount of time. Outside of our academic work together, her classes helped develop me as a person, assisting me in finding my voice off the paper and standing up for my beliefs. She taught me how to eloquently represent my opinions and communicate with others from all backgrounds.

**- Abigail Guimond**

# Christina Holmes Stegman



Sra. Holmes is significant to me because not only has she taught me Spanish for three years, she has been a constant presence in my life that I can talk to if I ever need help. She is very down-to-earth and cares about every student immensely--she makes sure everyone understands the subject she is teaching before she moves on. She makes learning Spanish exciting and is one of the reasons I want to pursue it in college.

**- Madeline Guimond**

# Brianna English



I am so lucky to have had Ms. English as a teacher. In her class, I enjoyed how her assignments make me think about new ideas and how she encouraged me to share those in our class discussions. With her help, I developed my writing skills in a way that I know will lead me to succeed in college. She challenged my writing in a way that I had never experienced before, striving to make sure that it was not just good, but the best it could possibly be. (1/2)

# Brianna English



Ms. English worked with me when I was struggling to make sure that I would still succeed, despite the difficulties that I was facing. I have become more confident in the subject area because of her teaching. I was able to not only have her for AP Language and Composition, but also for Yearbook. Her dedication to creating the yearbook is inspiring and under her guidance I saw it flourish. Ms. English has made my high school experience more positive and productive. (2/2)

**- Kristina Hubbell**

# Shani Walton



Mrs. Walton is an outstanding teacher. She taught me math for my freshman and sophomore years of high school. What makes her my choice for significant educator is that she is willing to go the extra mile for any one of her students. She also inspired me to go into a career where I can continue in math.

**- Kyra Gerlofs**

# Jake Klinger



Mr. Klinger has been my chemistry teacher for the past two years. Chemistry has become my favorite subject which has given me the desire to further my education in this area. Through his “Family of Advanced Chemistry” he has created a family atmosphere in the classroom that promotes belonging and unity which has positively impacted the learning experience for me and my classmates. Mr. Klinger has also been a great encouragement in my faith journey.

**- Madeline Kokmeyer**

# Modhi Alshehri



Mr. Alshehri has been a significant educator in my life over the last three years. He is very patient when he teaches, and always encourages students to approach him with questions; he always talks to everyone with a smile on his face and is truly enthusiastic about teaching math. I think that Mr. Alshehri is an amazing teacher as he always uses diagrams and proofs to derive the equations we use so that students understand the fundamental meaning behind the equations. I have had an awesome time working with Mr. Alshehri throughout high school and I can only hope that I will have a great math teacher like him in college.

**- Pavitra Attanayake**

# Chris Czuk



Mr. Czuk teaches quite a few math and science classes at Portage Central High School. I took his AP Statistics class in sophomore year, and I've been taking his two-year IB Higher-Level Physics class since junior year. That's three-quarters of my high school career, and it's been a pleasure working with him throughout. I even enjoy the assessments; he practically writes a Star Wars fanfiction to connect the problems. He maintains a perfect balance between fun and focus. Mr. Czuk's classes have improved my interpretation of reality and reinforced my enthusiasm for physics. I feel as though I know what I'm getting into, now, and I look forward with confidence to college. Mr. Czuk has provided me with a sense of direction for my career in science, and I am grateful for his dedication.

**- Stuart Botfield**



# Shannon Houtrouw



I have been Mr. Houtrouw's student for three years now. I entered his computer science class as a timid sophomore with little knowledge of computing, but Mr. Houtrouw's enthusiasm and unwavering support for his students provided me with the tools necessary for success.

Throughout high school, he has guided me through difficult problems and had confidence in me even when I didn't have it in myself. His persistent passion for teaching and learning inspires me to put forth my best effort not only in his class, but in life's endeavors. Mr. Houtrouw introduced me to a world I would have never explored on my own, and I can't thank him enough for it.

**- Sanjna Chalasani**

# Colleen Chapoton



Throughout my entire academic experience, I have never met anyone just as incredibly kind or as infectiously passionate as Ms. Chap. She is the kind of person who is able to brighten my day with a single smile, and I truly don't know where I would be now if I hadn't been lucky enough to be her student.

**- Teanne Davis**

# Tama Salisbury



Ms. Salisbury ignited my passion not only for politics, but also for cultural studies. She taught the first history class I have ever taken, and her instruction on the Arab-Israeli conflict truly sparked my interest in the study of the Middle East. She advised both my Internal Assessment on LGBTQ civil rights in the United States and my Extended Essay on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and her guidance was vital to my academic success in historical research. She has continuously spurred my work in the PCHS Democrats Club, advocating for political activism in the community, and has always been the first to congratulate me after a debate win. I am extremely grateful for the constant mentorship she has given me throughout my years at Portage Central, both academically and personally.

**- Mitchell Harpenau**

# Shannon Houtrouw



Mr. Houtrouw instructs with a vibrancy that has never once wavered or paled, and his earnest passion for computer science manifests itself every time he steps into his role as an educator and mentor. His teachings transcend the textbook, they have personally paved the way for my own curiosities and led me down paths I never thought I'd have the opportunity to traverse. And all along the way, Mr. Houtrouw has demonstrated deep, genuine care for my future and faith in my potential: I'm truly thankful for these last three years of his steadfast belief and inspiration, both within the confines of the classroom and far beyond.

**- Liya Jin**

# Modhi Alshehri



Mr. Alshehri has been a constant source of encouragement and inspiration throughout my high school career. Mr. Alshehri has fostered my passion for math, science, and learning as a whole. His love for teaching and education has fueled my passion for exploring academics and pursuing various academic challenges. Mr. Alshehri has inspired me to achieve great things in life, and I would like to thank him for all the encouragement he has given me over the years.

**- Shray Rastogi**

# Judith Deem



Even though she hasn't officially been one of my teachers, as my grandmother she has been one of the biggest influences on my life. From helping me learn to read and write as a child, to demonstrating how to be a courteous, loving, and hard working person, she is an example of how I would like to live my life.

**- Benjamin Friedman**

# Ben Neal



I would like to recognize Mr. Ben Neal for his inexhaustible passion for education--education not just in the classroom but also in life. His enthusiasm while teaching developed my own interest in English - a seemingly impossible feat worthy of recognition in itself - and his emphasis on developing his students as individuals forged personal habits that will help me as I not only continue my education but also seek to overcome life's obstacles. It's not easy to significantly impact a student's life, which is why it takes a great teacher to do so. Thank you, Mr. Neal, for being that great teacher.

**- Camden Kalleward**

# Modhi Alshehri



When I first met Mr. Alshehri, I was an apprehensive freshman. Now I am a confident senior ready to pursue a degree in mathematics. Mr. Alshehri has really pushed me to go beyond expectations in coursework (precalculus, multivariate calculus, and now AP Physics C) and has increased my ability to comprehend mathematics intuitively. Additionally, Mr. Alshehri nourished my love for math competitions and math challenge problems. I am very grateful for Mr. Alshehri. He shows dedication for his job, and love for his students. I am proud to be his student.

**- Owen Langejans**



# Shannon Houtrouw



Many will tell you what to do. Many will give you advice in a thousand words. Many will just accept you at your face value. But Mr. Houtrouw, he told me what not to do. He taught me not a thousand languages, but the power of code. He did not accept me at my face value, but challenged me all the time with USACOs. He helped me raise my bar to give the best of my performance. Coming from India, I really wanted to take advantage of the wide spectrum of all the amazing opportunities that were available to everyone. And Mr. Houtrouw served as the medium for me to be able to make use of them all. Mr. Houtrouw showed me what 'Blood, Sweat, and Code' brought to a REAL Code Warrior. Thanks for the memorable years of high school, Mr. Houtrouw!

**- Siddhant Pagariya**

# Shannon Houtrouw



Mr. Houtrouw has been a part of my high school education for three years now, and in this time he has taught me not only how to understand and enjoy computer science, but also how to face life's challenges. Through both guidance and firsthand examples, he has provided me with the tools to overcome hardship in its every form. Without him, I definitely would never have continued to pursue computer science past the basic level, especially as a female in a seemingly male-dominated field. He has never stopped believing in my abilities and I am so grateful to have had him as a teacher and a mentor.

**- Lauren Park**

# Colin Killmer



It was in his class freshman year that I first developed my love for physics. The class was engaging and fun which inspired me to pursue studying physics. Mr. Killmer was always extremely helpful in and out of class. He treated all of his students fairly and was invested in each and every one of their futures.

**- Marco Pastrana**

# Tracey Branch



Tracey Branch has been an outstanding role model for me over my high school career. He has contributed more time and effort to my success as both a student and an athlete than any other coach or teacher. He was my English teacher for two years, and has been my football and weight lifting coach for over four years. I respect him sincerely and he has helped shape me into an adult!

**- Garrett Davis**

# Kurt Phelps



Kurt Phelps has helped me to not only become a better student in the classroom, but a better person overall. Throughout his four years as my high school football coach, he worked to instill valuable character traits into each of his players. What really set him apart was how much he cared for his players. He truly wanted each and every one of us to succeed; as a football player, an employee, a husband, and a man. I have learned who I am and who I want to become in large part because of his influence.

**- Riley Piper**

# Cory Hinga



This teacher is responsible for a lot of my success as a student. He teaches his subject very well and is also an extremely caring teacher. He is always there to help anyone, as well as be there to offer advice. He goes above the responsibilities of his job title if need be. For example he took the time to write me a letter of recommendation for my college applications, which he put a lot of time into. More than any student could expect of a teacher.

**- Ronald Sagers, III**

# Daryl Zartman



Mr. Zartman is a teacher that actually makes his classes fun. Whether through stories or activities he excels at making sure students have success while enjoying themselves. The best thing about Mr. Zartman is that he is a teacher that is honest. He will give an honest response to how he sees things while many teachers hide behind what they actually think.

**- Austin Bresnahan**

# Cheryl Hach



When I first entered high school I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do with my future. I was pretty good at math and English, but science classes were harder for me to enjoy. It was not until my sophomore year when I took a discussion class where every Wednesday morning a group of students would meet to discuss science literature with Ms. Hach that my interest in science and the living world was really ignited. Since then Ms. Hach has been my biochemistry, bioethics, biomedical science, AP environmental science, human genetics, organic chemistry, and microbiology teacher. (1/2)



# Cheryl Hach



Ms. Hach has enabled me to explore how the systems of life all work together, from DNA coding how organisms grow, to how our muscles can coordinate movement, and to the chemical reactions working at the atomic level that make everything in our world work the way it does. I am extremely fortunate to have been able to have Ms. Hach as a teacher for the last three years. Without her I may never have found my passion for learning how and why the living world works the way it does.

**- Autumn Locey**

# Eric Teall



Mr. Teall is a significant educator in my life because his door is always open when I need help. Whether it be a project that I'm struggling with or recommendations to colleges, Mr. Teall has always used his own time after school to help in any way that he can. I know that I am not the only one of his students who relies on him in this way, and I think that we are all deeply appreciative of the thoughtfulness and care that he devotes towards each of our conversations. I believe that his dedication to his work and to his students makes him an exemplary educator, and personally, a significant factor in helping me to where I am today.

**- Morgan Preston**

# Troy Smith



I have learned so much from my film teacher. He has taught me about film, life, and who I am as a person. He introduced me to film, and is the reason I plan to pursue film as a career. Through all the time I've known him, he has pushed me to do my absolute best in everything I do, and has taught me how to achieve excellence. I am truly grateful for him as a teacher, and he is also my dad.

**- Alexander Smith**

