



2021 KALAMAZOO AREA

# **Excellence in Education**

## **Student Comments on Significant Educators**

# Kevin Langs



“This teacher was also my coach. He helped me when I moved schools to try new things and make so many new friends. He really was the person who made sure I could continue to succeed and enjoy school with all of these unusual circumstances.”

– **Aiden Drallette**

# Michael Sinclair



“Daily lessons from Mr. Sinclair are like miniature stand-up routines; Kepler's laws are woven together with the humorous antics of historic physicists. Besides being entertaining, his courses are also highly effective. From his vast experience working with KAMSC students, Mr. Sinclair has developed courses which perfectly balance challenge and support to provide his students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Mr. Sinclair also organizes and sponsors my favorite of KAMSC's yearly events: the sci-fi film fest. During the event, KAMSC students have a lock in to watch a curated list of science fiction movies selected by Mr. Sinclair. The movies, though, are secondary to the opportunity for KAMSC students to bond and make memories. Sinclair's dedication to the night is a perfect example of what has made him so impactful to me: he accomplishes the herculean feat of loving KAMSC even more than I do.”

— **Samuel Rabick**

# Christine Walmsley



“Mrs. Walmsley is a significant educator to me because she has helped me understand exactly what it is I need to do after college to be able to achieve the goals I want in life. She has provided me with support every step of the way and helped me make sure I had the right contacts and information to stay supported even after High School. Even though we are taking different routes in our chosen occupation field, she has provided me with great insight into what Psychology is and the different routes I can take to farther not only my education, but once again my dreams. Without her, I do not think I would have been able to achieve as much as I did this year.”

– **Alyssa Luce**

# Benjamin Brott



“Rare is the person in life, who, when looking back, you can say truly inspires. A person whose energy and excitement for life is so contagious that it makes you question what truly is possible in your own life. For me, that rare person is Benjamin Burl Brott. I first met Mr. Brott in the sixth grade when I took his computer science class. Mr. Brott brought an energy and excitement to his classroom that made learning fun, a skill that not many teachers can pull off. Most teachers come into class each day thinking about the material they need to teach and what they need to get done that day, whereas it seemed like Mr. Brott entered each day thinking solely about the wellbeing of each one of his students. From standing at the door giving each kid entering his classroom a high five, to asking each one of them how their day was going, it was evident how deeply he cared for his students.

**Continued**

# Benjamin Brott



Mr. Brott also brought an unmatched enthusiasm to the material he was teaching, making his classes both exciting and interesting. His energy and passion in the classroom sparked an interest in computer science that has stayed with me ever since and has helped build a solid foundation for my engineering pursuits in college. In addition to being an inspiration in the classroom, Mr. Brott was instrumental in recruiting me to play tennis in the sixth grade. Without him I would have never become an All-State tennis player my senior year. It is not often that a successful football player is convinced to quit and play tennis, but the fact that it occurred in my case speaks volumes to the relentless energy, passion and influence that Mr. Brott has brought to my life.”

– Zachary Collard

# Anne Flynn



“Mrs. Flynn has an infectious love for science and incredible devotion to her students. She made my experience with physics and AP physics, two very difficult classes, engaging and interesting through the labs and demonstrations she took the time to create. Beyond those two classes, Mrs. Flynn, being the former cross country coach, shared her knowledge and encouragement with my teammates and I, and even let us gather in her classroom before practice. Mrs. Flynn's enthusiasm and love for teaching are truly unmatched, and I can say with so much confidence that I would not be the student I am today without her aide.”

– Sarah Donovan

# Reggie Walters



“I first met Mr. Walters in 10th grade when I started calculus. Even now, two years later, it is the best class I have taken in high school. Mr. Walters brings an enthusiasm for teaching that I have only seen in a few other teachers. He genuinely cares about his students and works hard to help them all achieve success. When he teaches, he keeps it engaging and open and is always willing to answer any questions. This year, he has also stepped up to administrate Student Senate, which I am a part of. He brings the same energy and enthusiasm to this as any other class. As somewhat of a 'newbie' to the organization, he worked diligently to understand the inner workings of the club and advise as effectively as possible. In the three years that I have known Mr. Walters, he has shown me what it means to be a dedicated teacher, and looking forward I hope all students are able to experience what I have with him.”

– Jonathan McFee



# Peter SantaMaria



“Mr. S was one of the first people to recognize me for who I was as a person and not just my grades. He would see me get frustrated at my imperfection and encouraged me to keep working through my struggles. This led to me being able to talk through my incorrect ideas and find a path to correct answers. Mr. S always encouraged questions. As someone who was typically afraid of asking questions, I appreciated the normalization of curiosity and found that often my questions would lead to interesting discussions. Mr. S encouraged curiosity and creativity so much in the classroom that it inspired me to ignore societal pressures of what I should do and instead do what I wanted to do. Mr. S told me that I could do anything I put my mind to, whether it be finally doing a titration lab correctly or creating my own sub-style of ballet. Thanks to Mr. S I felt confident enough to pursue my dreams of becoming a choreographer and, if I ever make it big, I'll have him to thank for igniting the spark of creativity and curiosity in me.”

– Cora Miller

# Lisa Ouellette



“Mrs.Ouellette is the advisor of the Performing Arts Club at my school which I have been apart of since my freshman year. I moved to Michigan after 8th grade, and Mrs.Ouellette made PAC feel like a family. I am so grateful for the friendships and relationships I have formed in PAC, and these wouldn’t be possible without Mrs.Ouellette’s dedication to her students!”

– **Isabella Smith**

# Katy Briggs



“Ms. Briggs taught me Honors Composition and Literature and English Literature in high school, and in those two years I retained more information and enjoyed learning about English more than ever before. She is a phenomenal, devoted teacher whose wisdom and guidance helped me develop crucial writing skills. Thanks to Ms. Briggs, I have a passion for writing and creative expression that I never thought possible.”

– **Stephanie Lyon**

# Colleen Chapoton



“When I first started my high school career, I believed my future lied in either computer science or mechanical engineering. It was Mrs. Colleen Chapoton, however, who broadened my horizons by introducing me to biology and academic research. Now, these are my greatest passions, and I will be pursuing them as an undergraduate. With her corny jokes, positive attitude, and deep love for biology, Mrs. Chap helped me to find success with a fast-paced curriculum and made me excited to learn. I will never be able to truly thank her for the immense impact she’s had on my life.”

– **Ben Miller**

# Mark Cardwell



“Mr. Cardwell is truly one of the most remarkable teachers I have ever had. His warmth and friendliness make every student feel welcomed at KAMSC. Whether he is teaching Information Technology or Precalculus, Mr. Cardwell’s dynamic, passionate teaching style inspires his students to go the extra mile and genuinely enjoy learning. Most importantly, Mr. Cardwell’s valuable advice can be taken outside of the classroom, as he teaches his students to be kinder to themselves and others. I’m so grateful to have been taught by Mr. Cardwell during high school, and future students will be lucky to learn from him.”

– Jane Heystek

# Eric Soulier



“Mr. Soulier provides his students with every opportunity to learn, creating a curriculum based in helping each student through consistent course-individualized adaptations. Beyond the classroom, Mr. Soulier works tirelessly to answer student inquiries, while also providing additional resources to help students as they progress toward future academic and career-based ambitions. Through the teachings of Mr. Soulier, I have learned skills that transcend the walls of academia. Stemming from an application-based teaching of Advanced Placement Statistics, Mr. Soulier taught us how to analyze and interpret data quite extensively. This ability has helped me vastly as I continue to learn more about the world and the data-driven nature of the modern system within which we live.”

– **Eli Duguid**

# Rex Hafer



“One of Hafer's greatest strengths as a teacher is the degree to which he respects and listens to his students. He allows us to learn from the insights and experiences of our classmates, and empowers us to become confident and knowledgeable citizens of this country and the world. His classes have encouraged me to see my learning not only as an end in itself, but as a way to gain the understanding necessary to effect change and have a positive impact on society.”

– **Freya Kailing**

# Dylan Patterson



“Mr. Patterson values relationships with students over everything. The way that he connects with the Kalamazoo Central community shows how much he cares for every student that walks through our halls. Through my time working in our Athletic Department, I was able to find my place in our school community and feel more confident and connected thanks to the support of Mr. Patterson.”

– **Kearney Miller**



# Harold Swift



“Dr. Swift has been an incredible program director to not only the youth in Jeter's Leaders, but Kalamazoo's youth in general. His caring (and sometimes humorous) nature radiates outward, always making people feel more comfortable and open; and I've had the privilege to be surrounded by his presence for the past three years.”

– **August O'Neil**

# Al Nieboer



“Mr. Nieboer knows how to teach science well. He knows the material through and through, so he can teach me anything I could want to know. He knows how to teach a complicated subject in a way anyone could understand, and while everyone knows Mr. Nieboer teaches hard classes, they all recognize his teaching ability. Mr. Nieboer continues to provide me with the skills and experiences I need for the future, so he is without a doubt my significant educator.”

– **Kyle Miedema**

# Modhi Alshehri



“Mr. Alshehri has been my mathematics teacher for the past three years at the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center, and a very influential figure in my education. I had always enjoyed math, but his classes taught me how powerful mathematics can be and the beauty behind numbers. He has always encouraged me to do my best in his class and continue with my education. I have taken his pre-calculus, advanced placement calculus, and advanced calculus classes and every year I feel welcomed, appreciated, and challenged. Thank you, Mr. Alshehri, it has been with your support that I have gained the skills needed for higher mathematics and the confidence to achieve my goals.”

– **Anna Buck**

# Brad Schmidt



“Coach Schmidt has been an academic, athletic, and life mentor for me through my 4 years at Norrix; he is an incredibly outgoing, thoughtful, humble, and compassionate person. Coach Schmidt is very devoted to teaching a variety of math classes at Norrix, as well as coaching the cross country and track teams. His impact on his students and these programs really show the kind of quality person he is.”

– **Keegan Hughes**

# Colleen Chapoton



“Mrs. Chap is an incredible teacher who truly cares about her students. She values grit and hard work above test scores, and taught me to focus on learning instead of just earning high grades. Her classroom is always full of life and learning. In the spring, during the KAMSC research season, her classroom after school is teeming with science experiments and students doing research and having fun together. She is a mentor for students both in science and in life. I value all the time she has invested in my education, and everything she has taught me throughout high school.”

– **Ava Loncharte**

# Sveri May



“While I never had Mrs. May as a teacher in a classroom, I was with her almost every day. She is the leader and sponsor of the volunteering club, PeaceJam, and the Loy Norrix class of 2021 Executive Board. Mrs. May showed me how I can help the community in and out of school, whether that was through our PeaceJam clothing drive or our literacy project at Edison Elementary. In Executive Board she taught me how to get involved and be a leader at school. If it wasn't for Mrs. May I wouldn't be the person I am today.”

– **Joshua Schaefer**

# Matthew Porco



“I had Mr. Porco as a teacher for both AP US History and AP European History. I used to think history classes were boring and tedious. However, being in his class made history interesting and fun for me. I always looked forward to going to class because of the dynamics between students and teacher, as well as the debates and projects we did in class. Mr. Porco's class was challenging, but I am glad that he pushed us to excel and grow.”

– **Kinsey Skjold**

# Amber French



“Mrs. French is the only teacher I felt comfortable talking to about my personal life. I have always felt safe in her class and I could tell her about my family issues, and she would listen. She shows that she cares about her students on such a deep level which makes her such an amazing teacher and person. The environment she created in her classroom made it easier to learn as I was able to be distracted from the stress of schoolwork, student council, band, or my home life by my eagerness to learn Chemistry and spend time with the people in my class.”

– **Kloie Linders**



# Christine Kiel



“As my Honors English III teacher in my Junior year and AP English teacher in my Senior year, Christine Kiel has taught me many values which will be applicable for the rest of my life. She has also inspired me in other ways, most notably in teaching me the importance of hard work and creativity.”

– **Felix McDaniel**

# Pilar Forero



“There is not one day, let alone one moment, where Senora Forero is not completely invested in her students’ success as Spanish speakers, but, more importantly, as people. With the amount of passion and determination Senora Forero both exhibits herself and instills in her students, she has been a significant educator and role model in my life, and I have no doubt she has and will do so in a plethora of others’ lives as well.”

– **Aiden Eichman**

# Martine Goddeyne



“Madame Goddeyne inspired me to pursue French, which has since become a major part of my life. She went above and beyond and instilled in me a great appreciation for the French language and culture.”

– **Anna Kitagawa**

# Gail Nelson



“Mrs. Nelson always encouraged my interest in mathematics and gave me many opportunities to advance my mathematical abilities, which allowed me to pursue mathematics to a much greater depth in high school. However, it was the practices that she led for the MATHCOUNTS competitions that had the greatest impact on my mathematical skills and strengthened my enthusiasm for math. Thank you for everything, Mrs. Nelson.”

– **Kayla O’Donnell**

# Kathleen Frink



“Mrs. Frink has been my IB Math HL teacher my Junior and Senior years. She is a truly exceptional teacher in all respects. Mrs. Frink really cares about her students, and wants to see them succeed. She is always willing to answer questions, even putting aside time after school and on Fridays to answer questions. She is also extremely patient, which is especially valuable when teaching something as difficult as IB Math. I am honored to be able to nominate Mrs. Frink as my significant educator.”

– **Kyle Rachowicz**

# Colleen Chapoton



“Mrs. Chapoton has been one of the most influential educators of my high school career. Through her profound enthusiasm and passion for biology, Mrs. Chapoton has enabled me and other students to critically view the natural world using curiosity and skepticism. During my time with her, Mrs. Chapoton served as a catalyst in my education by helping spark within me a passion for biology, an interest that has left me excited and appreciative of nature’s wonders. Outside of school hours, Mrs. Chapoton also played an important role in both my and other students’ high school careers by being someone that we could turn to for advice, support, or simply laughter. For her enthusiasm, support, and dedication to excellence, I am grateful for the privilege of having Mrs. Chapoton as an educator.”

– **Abdulaziz Shebrain**

# Chris Czuk



“Mr. Czuk has been my physics teacher for the past two years. One of Mr. Czuk’s “catch phrases” my class identified is “I don’t see why not.” This phrase came from Mr. Czuk's willingness to do anything within reason to help us learn. While we were learning about harmonics he let two of our students bring in their accordions, and when we were learning about momentum we stopped class and rolled bowling balls down the hallway. I also think Mr. Czuk has done a great job adapting to online teaching. He is an amazing teacher and he inspired me to continue my education in physics.”

– **Hayden Siebers**

# Amanda Thorpe



“I’ve had Dr. Thorpe as my English teacher for the last three years. She has consistently been one of the best teachers I’ve had every year and has helped me to become a better learner. She has always understood her students better than most other teachers and therefore, she has been able to help us in any situation, especially when it comes to improving our English skills, preparing us for the SAT, getting us ready to apply to colleges, and even helping us know what is expected of us after high school. Most importantly, however, she understands the stress that is placed upon us as high school students and creates a healthy workload that ensures we learn, while also not overloading us. In my high school career, no other teacher has had quite the same impact on me as Dr. Thorpe has had.”

– **Michael Arciniega**



# Jessica Clark



“Mrs. Clark is the sort of teacher every student deserves. Her classroom provided the perfect blend of high expectations while also celebrating the smallest victories. She never gave the illusion of a safety net, instead she let us stand on our own while raising the level of performance higher. She really prepared me to be driven by my academic curiosity and my love of learning Biology not just valuing letter grades.”

– **Mairin Boshoven**

# James Young



“In addition to making me the runner that I am today, Coach Young has taught me countless things about life.”

– **Stephen Loparo**

# Shannon Houtrouw



“Mr. Houtrouw is an exceptional teacher because of the confidence he places in each student. His belief in their overwhelming potential has helped many find their own confidence and reach levels in technology they never perceived. His enthusiasm is contagious and his motivation has helped minorities who never considered technology as a future career fight against stereotypes and the unbalanced demographics currently present in the computer science field. Mr. Houtrouw's encouragement has left an everlasting impression on the lives of his students and for some, drastically changed the course of their academic careers and interests.”

– **Khadijah Siddiqui**

# Melissa French



“Mrs. French is significant to me because my first year of high school was also her first year at our school. Ever since then, Mrs. French has not only made me a better student, she has made me a better person as well. She constantly challenges me to be my best and to go chase my dreams. Overall, through all my time in high school, she has been there to help no matter what the circumstances were. Whether it was sporting events, in the classroom, or other activities Mrs. French was there to support me through it all. She is the type of person that would do whatever she could to make sure her students are going to succeed in the future.”

– **Allie Goldschmeding**

# Douglas Martin



“In my encounters with Mr. Martin, I have gained lots of amazing advice, both educationally and in my personal life. Not only does he teach with a passion that makes it easy to learn (even in first hour while kids are still halfway asleep), but he also has so much compassion towards others. It is easy to see that Mr. Martin truly cares for each and everyone of his students and he gives it his all in order to make sure that everyone succeeds. I will never forget all of the valuable new words he shared in our Monday vocabulary lessons, the countless amounts of SAT prep, and the wisdom gained from our class discussions over books read like *The Great Gatsby* and *The Crucible*. Most importantly, I will never forget the genuine care he has for all of his students and his affable persona.”

– **Maeve Stitt**

# Amanda Szczesny



“Mrs. Szczesny has been my teacher for two years, teaching me both English and Psychology. Every day she welcomes Vicksburg students with a smile and brings joy and excitement into the classroom. The passion that Mrs. Szczesny has for English and Psychology is authentic, and it inspires me to do better and attempt to achieve more. Furthermore, she cares about each student as an individual, and it is for these reasons Mrs. Szczesny is a significant educator and mentor in my life.”

– **Elijah Bombich**

# Rachel King



“In my life I have never met someone so devoted to helping others through their work as Mrs. King. Her teaching methods extend beyond being able to make the hardest of subjects easily comprehensible and motivate students to do their best in school. Mrs. King’s innate passion for helping others also manifests in the extracurricular volunteer organization “Aim Higher” in which she has organized countless outreach programs helping those in need. Her teaching is a true gift and is what makes learning fun, and the compassion and love she shares with others is what inspires me to be the best I can be.”

– **Noah Green**

# Lucas Wolthuis



“Coach Wolthuis has been my cross country and track coach since my freshman year; he also helped out with the middle school cross country and track teams during my 8th grade year. Through the numerous runs we have had together during training, Coach Wolthuis has helped develop me into the person that I am today. He has given me invaluable advice during countless long runs and has pushed me beyond my preconceived ideas of my limits during workouts. Lastly, he has helped me achieve various goals, such as making it to the state cross country meet, and helped me develop a love for running, for which I am eternally grateful.”

– **Joseph Loriso**



# Amanda Szczesny



“Mrs. Szczesny was significant in my educational process primarily because of her attitude toward trying new things and being positive. She loves being creative with her lesson plans, and encourages all of her students to venture out of their comfort zones, something I will always appreciate. She helped me find who I am and what I enjoy about life, not to mention her willingly helping with English, Psychology, and my Internship this school year. She has helped put me on track for success, something I will forever be appreciative of.”

– **Elijah Bombich**

# Shannon Houtrouw



“Having had his classes for three years, I can safely say that Mr. Houtrouw is one of the most passionate teachers I have met. He has put tremendous time and effort into building up his Computer Science program and it shows. USACO, ACSL, and NCWIT are just a few of the many different opportunities and experiences Mr. Houtrouw provides for his students. During this past year, with all of the help he gave me on different scholarship opportunities and college applications, was when I realized how much Mr. Houtrouw cares for each and every one of his students individually.”

– **Matthew Salinas**

# Modhi Alsherhi



“Throughout the three years I've had him, Alshehri has taught for an in depth understanding of the curriculum. He's always encouraged us to ask questions and for clarification. But he has also worked hard to ensure his students understood the applications of their studies. There are very few better examples of teaching beyond the test. He has made learning calculus and intuitive and fun process, and for that I thank him.”

– **Xavier Langsdale**

# Stacey Koning



“This person is significant to me because she is a great role model and has always been encouraging me to continue to push myself in school as well as in life. She also encouraged me to pursue my dreams and interests. She has made a large impact on my high school experience and continues to show what it means to be a godly woman and how to make an impact on other people.”

– **Alex Reyna-Ansorge**

# Dr. Amanda Thorpe



“Dr. Thorpe has changed the way I think and understand the world around me. She cares deeply about all of her students and is an amazing educator. It is very clear how much effort she puts in to provide a meaningful education. Her teaching has shaped me as a learner.”

– **Katelyn Knapp**

