



2025

---

*Student Comments on  
Significant Educators*

# Dielle Madison

“Ms. Madison was an incredible teacher. She always made me feel very safe in the classroom and created a welcoming environment where I felt I could be myself. She inspired me to go into teaching with how she made me feel as a student. She definitely teaches the hard lessons, but she does it in a way that made me feel better about them. I strive to be the compassionate, welcoming teacher that Ms. Madison always has been for me.”

**- Micayla DeWaal**



# Traci Spada

“Mrs. Spada has always carried such a warm presence. There was so many days that I didn’t want to go to class and so many that I didn’t even want to go to school. Seeing her smile and listening to her lectures always put me in a good mood for the rest of the day...”





# Traci Spada

...It has been years since I've taken one of her classes, yet she still checks in with me every so often to see how I'm doing and to talk about college. She has always been there for me and has supported me completely through my academic journey. She is exactly what every educator should aspire to be.”

**- Isabel Hardwick**



# Shannon Houtrouw

“He helped me further my education in computer science. I loved his programming logic class, I grew so passionate regarding computers, thanks to him and his class. He is such an amazing teacher who always had mine and the other students’ best interest at heart.”

**- Emilie Gensch**



# Reginald Walters

“Mr. Walters made calculus entertaining. He took a subject that is not particularly interesting and taught it in a way that made sense and encouraged me to learn.”

- Landon Harter



# Peter Santa Maria

“In a subject that is often very difficult for students to learn, he makes advanced chemistry not only accessible but also fun and interesting. He deeply cares about each student's academic and personal success and goes above and beyond to ensure that everyone truly understands the material he teaches. The time that he devotes to his students and their learning is what makes him stand out.”

**- Makenna Martin**





# Jocelyn Clark

“Jocelyn was my primary teacher at The Montessori School from 1st grade through 6th grade. She not only taught me academics, but also guided me in how to get along with people, how to solve problems, and how to love the process of learning, not just the outcome...”





# Jocelyn Clark

...The responsibility, time management, and critical thinking that Jocelyn instilled in me at a young age carried me through high school and will continue to help me throughout life. Jocelyn taught me lessons much deeper than academics and they will stick with me throughout my life.”

**- Ellie Worgess**



# Paul Schillio

“When I took chemistry, my teacher, Mr. Schillio, religiously believed in the Socratic teaching method. This teaching method was foreign and repulsed by my 13-year-old brain, but over time he showed me the value of not having course material spoon-fed in a lecture...”



# Paul Schillio

...Learning through research and asking questions takes time, and is one of the most frustrating things I have had to do in my life; However, it was also a beneficial experience preparing me for college.”

**- Zachary Villarimo**



# Betsy Ulbrich

“Mrs. Ulbrich has been a key part of my success as a student. Having gone to school with her daughter all my life, she’s seen me grow from kindergarten to now a Senior in high school. She is the guidance counselor at my high school, and is always willing to set aside time to meet with students and help them with the questions they face as they progress through high school, and life...”





# Betsy Ulbrich

...Mrs. Ulbrich has helped me stay on track in both life and high school, and therefore has had a significantly positive impact on my education.”

- **Grahm Zygadlo**



# Corey Scheffers

“Mr. Scheffers has been an essential part of my education at Kalamazoo Christian. He taught me chemistry and physics and was also the coach for Science Olympiad. As someone going into STEM (planning on computer engineering), science classes are vital to my future career. Mr. Scheffers has been both an effective teacher and supportive coach, allowing me to succeed in class and at the Science Olympiad competitions.”

**- Luke Birchmeier**



# Cindy Broekhuizen

“Mrs. Broekhuizen has been a significant educator for a very long time. When I was in 4th grade, she led a book club, which led me and many others to become avid readers throughout middle and high school. I have had her for both American Literature and Modern Fiction. In her classes, she is always working to improve. She sets aside time to work with each student on their poems and essays...





# Cindy Broekhuizen

...Many of her projects allow people to do what they feel passionate about. These projects are beneficial in preparing students for research and other assignments within further education. I truly appreciate how personal and challenging her classes are. She strives to help each student grow in their education and on an individual level so they can leave her class better prepared for whatever is thrown at them.”

**- Lizzy Prais**





# Colleen Chapoton

“Mrs. Chapoton’s vibrant classroom environment is a testament to the enthusiastic and caring teacher she is. Outside of the classroom, I know her as the KAMSC HOSA team’s fearless leader, where she teaches me and my classmates about adventure, hard work, and fun...”



# Colleen Chapoton

...I will never forget her pep talks before I competed or how she made everyone feel valued. Her knowledge, passion, and organization have taught me so much; I feel lucky to have been her student.”

**- Sophia Barnard**



# Joshua Gottlieb

“Mr. Gottlieb always gives good advice for the future, no matter what you plan on doing. He also teaches more than just physics, and I often found myself learning a lot about life after high school. His class was always my favorite, as it was a fun environment to be in and he truly connected to his students.”

**- Andrew Westcott**



# Phyllis Tifft

“Ms. Phyllis was my preschool teacher and therefore my first educator. Her teaching style created a warm environment while also establishing expectations that encouraged growth. In addition to learning the basics of preschool, I developed the ability to embrace challenges, to make long-lasting friends, and to treat everyone with kindness and empathy...”





# Phyllis Tifft

...The two years I had with her set the foundation for all future education and I will always be grateful for her significant contribution to a pivotal part of my life.”

- Clara DeWaele



# Jessica Hagen

“Jessica Hagen was one of my teachers from 4-6th grade at the Montessori School. Her focus on outdoor and hands on education sparked my love for nature and passion for helping our earth. Every student that she teaches gains a unique appreciation for and connection with the outdoors...”



# Jessica Hagen

...Throughout high school, she has remained a close mentor and friend, working with me and fellow student to certify KAMSC as a Michigan Green School.”

- Kate Risley



# Kimberly Mansfield

“When I entered fourth grade, I was in a tough place in my life. I acted out consistently, saw little to no value in education, and had no clear vision of what success would look like for me. Despite this, Ms. Mansfield showed immediate care for my well-being. She was tough, strict, and demanding, but she made sure her students understood how much she cared for them. ...Several times, I remember her asking me about my sporting events that were coming up the following weekend...





# Kimberly Mansfield

...When the games rolled around, I would look into the stands and see Ms. Mansfield there. To this day, I can't remember a promise she made (and she made many) that she didn't follow through on. Through this combination of high expectations and incredible compassion, Ms. Mansfield helped open my mind to caring for myself and putting myself in a position to find future success....



# Kimberly Mansfield

...Since having Ms. Mansfield as a teacher, my perspective on life has completely changed. I value hard work and education, and I can see a future where I thrive. I will never forget Ms. Mansfield and will always appreciate what she has done for me. May she rest in peace.”

**- Nick Alkema**



# Josh Gottlieb

“Mr. Gottlieb is a fantastic physics teacher who is very passionate about the subject he teaches. He is extremely knowledgeable in the science field and is amazing at articulating his thought process and teaching new information. He always pushes students to be their best, while doing what he can to provide students with resources to succeed. He has left a mark on many kids at Kalamazoo Central and will continue to do so.

**- Brynn Routhier**





# Brianna English

“Ms. English had a big impact on my growth as a writer and thinker. Her class was both engaging and challenging, pushing me to think more deeply about texts and express my ideas with clarity. She provided insightful feedback which helped me develop a stronger voice in my writing...”



# Brianna English

...Beyond academics, she created a supportive classroom environment that made me want to do my best. Her dedication to teaching and her students makes her an educator I will always appreciate.”

**- Eloise Dunfee**



# Michael Sinclair

“Over the past three years, I've been fortunate enough to have Mr. Sinclair as my teacher for almost every class he offers: AP Calculus AB, Physics, Geology, and Astronomy. It's been such a rewarding experience. He's always been there to help, whether I'm struggling to understand a concept or need a little extra time to catch up. His classes are challenging, but he has a way of breaking things down so that they're manageable...





# Michael Sinclair

...I've learned so much from him, not just about the subjects, but also about how to approach challenges with patience and perseverance. Even when life gets busy, he's always made sure to answer my questions and help me feel confident about what I'm learning. I really appreciate how much effort he puts into making sure his students succeed.”

**- Isaac Scavarda**



# Laura Citino

“Ms. Citino gave me the freedom to pursue my dreams, encouraging my passion for artistic expression by giving me an entirely ridiculous amount of freedom. Her class helped me understand my relationship with the media I consume and create, giving me an education that transcended the classroom, forever informing the way I perceive art and the world surrounding me.”

**- Bjorn Nelson**



# Pamela Cook

“Ms. Cook has helped me through high school as my counselor. She has made sure I have all the necessary credits and has been a lifesaver in getting me into the classes I need or am interested in. She has helped me through the college application process and answered the questions I couldn’t figure out on my own...”





# Pamela Cook

...Plus, she has always been eager to help me out with these things. I've spent so much time in her office figuring out scheduling, but she has never made me feel like a burden. Overall, she is the best counselor I could have received."

**- Hannah Boothby**



# Gregg Stevens

“I can’t remember the first conversation I had with Mr. Stevens, since he has been my art teacher since I was a freshman, but he’s been with me through my highs and lows, both in art and in my personal life. Throughout it all, he has constantly encouraged me to do my best, and, occasionally, to take a step back and do a little less than my best. Without him, I wouldn’t be where I am today.

**- Eleanor Cook**



# Sandra Gagie

“I have known Dr Gagie practically my entire life. From being my principal from preschool all the way through middle school, as well as my teacher in eighth grade, she has seen me grow up and the education I received at her school provided me with the foundation and love for learning that allowed me to thrive in high school. Above being a teacher though, she has been a steadfast role model...





# Sandra Gagie

...Founding, running, and teaching at her own school for so many years, on top of being deeply involved in her family and friends, she has shown me what true leadership looks like and has taught me to be passionate and dedicate myself fully to everything I do. I am eternally grateful that I was able to be her student.”

**- Georgia Edmonds**





# Amber French

“Mrs. French exceeds the expectations for what people expect teachers to do in today's world. Not only does she excel in teaching, she goes beyond that scope to help kids prepare for the future. For me personally, she taught me how to take notes more efficiently, how to time manage, how to prioritize, and how to study like a college student...”



# Amber French

...These lessons excelled me to my fullest capabilities, and a major reason for why I am where I am today. Mrs. French gives all students this same level of treatment and has had a major impact on many students in Parchment High School. For these reasons, I am nominating Mrs. French as my significant educator.”

**- Brady Caswell**



# Jesse Roder

“Coach Roder played a large part in my development as a person providing me with motivation, support, and guidance on and off the field. He helped create a positive team environment expressing valuable life lessons such as leadership, sportsmanship, and teamwork. Coach Roder also taught resilience and how to deal with wins and losses which helped our team build connections and grow together.”

**- Caden Ragan**





# Shannon Houtrouw

“In the three years that I’ve had the opportunity to take classes under Mr. Houtrouw, he has done so much more than teach. From pioneering the entire KAMSC computer science program to spending tireless days long after school just for students like me to practice coding problems, Mr. Houtrouw has made it clear just how committed he is to helping students like me...



# Shannon Houtrouw

...He was the teacher that first introduced me to the world of computer science, encouraging me to take part in competitive programming competitions and ultimately helping me build the foundations I needed for so many aspects of life that draw on the algorithmic problem-solving process seen in coding.”

- Jason Shaye



# Colleen Chapoton

“I honestly cannot express the level of appreciation I have for Mrs. Chap as a teacher and a person. She’s an amazing educator who has so much love for all her students, and her classroom has always been a sort of haven for me. She cares so much, and she puts so much effort into supporting her students, answering their questions, and reassuring them when projects go awry...





# Colleen Chapoton

...As a person, I strive to have as much kindness and sincerity as she does. She is one of the most understanding and joyful people I've met, and the way she puts everyone at ease is genuinely magical. When things are stressful, she has always been there at our side, empathizing with us and giving us grace, and even now that I'm not taking a class with her, I still feel like I can walk in anytime for anything...



# Colleen Chapoton

...I feel she's one of the few teachers I've had who makes the effort to connect with each of her students as people, and because of that she's made such a profound impact on my life. She has done so much for me both when I was her student and beyond, and whether it's rec letters or scholarships or chats, she's always been there for me, finding the time to accommodate me and make me feel welcomed. I've been so lucky to have had a teacher as enthusiastic, as caring, and as wonderful as she is."

**- Ningzhi Luo-Li**



# Stacey McIver

“You never forget the first person who urges you on in pursuit of something you’re beginning to love. Mrs. McIver was the first teacher to encourage my fledgling attempts at writing (even though I was still spelling practically “praticely”), and her belief in my words and stories opened the door to a world where if I could be a halfway decent writer, then everything else was possible, too...”





# Stacey McIver

...That alone merits this recognition, but the growth mindsets she equipped me and my classmates with allowed me to not only find passion for writing but to continue long after it started getting hard. Her faith in her students' possibilities taught me to have faith in mine, too, long after I left her classroom.”

- Dewen Luo-Li



# Shannon Houtrouw

“Mr. Houtrouw is the person who made me interested in coding and computer science in general, I really enjoyed his class and appreciate him reaching out all over for us to be able to compete in different competitions, it was always a lot of fun.”

- Felix Dong



# Shannon Houtrouw

“Mr. Houtrouw has been a significant educator in my life over the past three years that I've been in his computer science classes and has inspired me to pursue computer engineering in college. While his teaching has been exceptional, it is the mentorship he has provided that has had a monumental impact on my growth as a student and a person...”





# Shannon Houtrouw

...He always goes above and beyond for his students, spending weekends taking us to computer science competitions and welcoming conversations after class. If I can extend the passion and dedication he has for his students to anything in my life, I'll consider it a life well-lived.”

**- Quinn Hague**



# Kent Baker

“Mr. Baker is a significant educator in my life because of his passion for teaching and service. I love his sarcasm in history, how he ties in current events, his disciplined theory of knowledge class, and his willingness to serve the community in National Honor Society. I may not be his best student, but I enjoy everything I’ve learned from Mr. Baker throughout high school and I hope he continues his commitment to the education of his students.”

**- Siya Gupta**



# Chris Czuk

“Mr. Czuk is a highly respected physics teacher at Portage Central High School. While the classes he teaches are challenging, Mr. Czuk makes difficult concepts fun through his wealth of knowledge, clever demonstrations, and real-world applications. He encourages his students to push themselves and engage critical thinking skills to explore new concepts about how the world works...”





# Chris Czuk

...His dedication to his students' understanding of concepts makes Mr. Czuk my significant educator, for he has inspired my love of physics and greatly prepared me for a future in engineering.”

- Allison Rearick



# Modhi Alshehri

“Mr. Alshehri has been an integral part of my high school education. First my math teacher and later my physics teacher, Mr. Alshehri pushed me to a deeper understanding and appreciation of both math and physics. Furthermore, he introduced me to additional opportunities to dive deeper into these subjects, including competitive endeavors such as the WMU Integration Bee. I am incredibly grateful for his dedication throughout my high school years.”

**- David Shen**



# Chelsea Whiteoak

“Mrs. Whiteoak makes a point of truly getting to know every one of her students as a unique individual. She has supported my growth, not only as a musician but as a whole person. She sets a high standard for her choir students and provides the support and encouragement to ensure that the students can successfully achieve that standard.”

**- James Kraatz**





# Michael Sinclair

“Mr. Sinclair imbued interest and flair into each of the classes he taught me, which ranged from geology to physics to calculus. I enjoyed his story-telling style of teaching, but even more, the stories that he had to share outside of class time. I will continue to hold many fond memories of our interactions, surrounding topics such as baseball and student senate as I go into higher education and later in life...



# Michael Sinclair

...Thank you, Mr. Sinclair, for always being a funny and kind person (though you try to intimidate your physics students!). You have been an amazing role model, and somebody that I look up to as I grow as a person.”

- David Li



# Claudia Witt-Thomas

“Even the most volatile chemicals need the right spark to inflame. Mrs. Thomas is that spark for me. No matter how ambitious or unattainable my ideas were, Mrs. Thomas always supported my dreams and believed in my ability to achieve them. In the past three years, I have never heard her say that something is impossible...”





# Claudia Witt-Thomas

...From predicting caffeine content in coffee using AI to bending glass, she showed me that anything I can imagine is within reach. Mrs. Thomas also made sure that, no matter what, I felt like I belonged. Whether I was venting about an upcoming test or discussing socio-economic issues, she always listened and engaged as a friend...



# Claudia Witt-Thomas

...Her impact on my life extends far beyond the classroom, shaping the person I am and the person I now strive to become. I am truly thankful for everything Mrs. Thomas has done for me, and I couldn't be more grateful to have grown under her guidance over the past three years. Thank You!

**- Aryaman Mishra**



# Modhi Alshehri

“Mr. Alshehri has been my teacher for 3 of my 4 years at KAMSC. His classes have always been the most enjoyable because of his jokes and occasional side tangents, and also the most rewarding because of their quality. He always takes the time to help his students, and every day he brings a different math-themed tie and a passion for teaching us the way the world works...”





# Modhi Alshehri

...My time in Mr. Alshehri's classroom has not only given me fond memories of KAMSC, but also valuable learning experience for my future studies.”

- Ivan Tai



# Michelle Mason

“I’ve had Mrs. Mason for over two years now and I’ve always enjoyed her style of teaching. Their class is a difficult one but I always feel like I’m being well prepared, and I truly understand the material. They’re also in charge of my school’s Science Olympiad club, and I love being a part of that team.”

**- Miles Fagan**



# Jo Nosedá

“Mrs. Nosedá has an amazing, sunny personality and a love for art that truly inspired me. She significantly encouraged my artistic growth, and her class was hands down the highlight of my middle school years.”

- Hannah Willoughby





# Anna Kruizenga

“Mrs. Kruizenga has always been there for me as a coach and as a teacher in all my years of high school. She wasn’t like a regular teacher because she didn’t just care if I kept my grades up in her class. She always made sure I was taking the right steps towards my future goals and helped me so much with college information. I wouldn’t be where I am today without her.”

**- Arianna Pillot**



# Ronald Cung

“Mr. Cung has had a big impact on how I approach music and learning. His guidance taught me discipline, patience, and how to break down challenges/skills that go beyond the piano. While studying with him, I also started teaching other students and applying what I learned in my own way...”



# Ronald Cung

...The skills I gained from him both in music and teaching continue to shape how I take on new challenges. His influence has helped me become a more thoughtful and adaptable learner, both in music and beyond.”

**- Ethan Jastifer**





# Kristina Porter

“Ms. Porter has been my favorite teacher throughout high school because of her passion for teaching. She helped me truly enjoy the schoolwork I was doing in her classes, and is always willing to help to ensure her students truly understand what is being taught.”

**- Thomas Christiansen**



# Kristina Porter

“Mrs. Porter was the first teacher who truly showed me that science classes are enjoyable. She helped me learn that I desired to go into a chemistry-related field and that I could thrive in difficult situations. She allowed me to go further in chemistry in high school than I previously thought would be possible and enjoy all parts of the process, all while being nice and approachable so that I could ask all my questions.”

**- Grant VanWoert**



# Suzanne Rucker

“Mrs. Rucker has taught me lifelong skills that have helped me reach my full potential, and guide others to do the same. Her advice has been invaluable, and she is always there to support me in everything I do. She has become an incredibly significant part of my life, and I would not be the person I am today without her!”

**- Scarlett Hosner**





