

2023

# Educator Comments

#### ANNEMARIE GERRISH

"As a teacher, I strive to teach mathematics in a way that will be relevant to their future and build memorable experiences and relationships. I am here to serve and care for students, and the members in our school community. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with young people and blessed to call it my life's work."



## SHANNON HOUTROUW

"Congratulations Class of 2023! You are one of the best cohorts I have ever worked with. Somehow, in spite of all that may have been lost due to the pandemic, you guys kept your fire and your enthusiasm for learning. You also made coming into work each day a joy again, and I thank you for that. Your passion for excellence honors are well deserved. Keep making us proud!"



#### **BRAD SCHMIDT**

"I try to keep my standards high to force students to reach beyond basic compliance. I also try to look for metaphors and lessons in every activity to teach lessons beyond the curriculum and sport to shape students into becoming not just great athletes or scholars, but great humans."



#### LINDA F. LEE

"Equipping students for the future is a multi-faceted, nuanced task that requires constant change. Students can only be ready for the future if they embrace their true selves, and what's important to them. By providing engaging, realistic literature, students are able to explore characters and themes that help them to develop a better understanding of the world and their place in it."



## COLLEEN T. CHAPOTON

"At 5:00am when my alarm goes off, I already have a smile on my face. I absolutely love going to school! These talented students make every day an adventure. . .filled with humor, joy, and learning. Their curiosity and passion, their thoughtfulness and resourcefulness, their ability to problem-solve, communicate, and reason, are beyond incredible. They tolerate my corny jokes, awe me with their talent, and inspire me to be the best person I can be. Teaching is a beautiful gift, and I am so blessed that part of my package includes Ava, Jason, and Lydia. Thank you for this honor. Thank you for making my days so special. I am incredibly proud of you and I will always be cheering you on. Congratulations!"



# CHRIS CZUK

"I set high-expectations for my students because I know that they all can meet and in some cases like Elijah, exceed them. I try to keep students focused on what they can control, their preparation, their attitude and their effort; instead of what they can't control."



#### MARY HENDRICKS

"Sydney, congratulations on receiving the Excellence in Education Award. What a welldeserved honor to recognize your amazing academic, sports, and fine arts achievements. You excelled in all areas as a result of your focus, persistence and hard work. That shows how well rounded you are. You have been a leader from second grade and throughout high school. Your kindness and generosity just naturally attract people to you. I can't wait to see what the future holds for you and all the amazing things you will accomplish. Many blessings to you as you move onto this next phase of your life. You have such a bright future ahead of you. Thank you for making me a part of this journey. It was an honor and pleasure to be your second-grade teacher. You always touched my heart."



#### CHRIS ENDERS

"For me, the joy of teaching all comes from making connections with students and getting to see them persevere and grow into the best version of themselves. Kayla Nichols is an amazing young person who I'm honored to have had as a student. She regularly challenges herself and has a curiosity for learning that is unmatched by her peers. Kayla, I'm proud of how hard you've worked and excited to see the great things you will do. Congratulations!"



#### **LUCAS REWA**

"It is my belief that positive relationships are the key to success in life and that is what I strive for in my classroom. I want my students to feel like they have a voice in my class and that I have their back. Those positive interactions are likely going to have a much greater impact on students' lives than any the details of a famous battle or historical figure. If students can leave my classroom able to effectively communicate their ideas and are open-minded, they will be able to build their own relationships and find success in their lives after high school."



#### REGGIE WALTERS

"Robert is a tremendous student who is willing to push himself inside and outside the classroom. Gifted academically, he managed to do this while committing himself to both Cross Country and Band. In the classroom he independently studied to be successful in AP Calculus BC, which is a rare feat. He is gifted, committed, and you won't meet a much nicer kid. Congratulations Robert!"



#### RACHEL JANSEN

"I am lucky to work with students like Claire who inspire me every day. She is genuine, funny, and a kindhearted individual who reminds me that I love what I do. She is dedicated to true understanding and takes time out of her days to help others when they are struggling. My hope as a teacher is to not only inspire students to step more fully into themselves, but to put good out into the world with every chance they get, and Claire lives this philosophy every day."



#### ERIC LANCASTER

"Olivia is a joy to have in my IB/AP Psychology class. Not only is she bright, but she is engaging and comes in each day with a smile on her face. She has done an outstanding job this year and I am not at all surprised by her winning this award. She is smart, committed, a leader, and I know will do great things in her future. I love teaching Psychology because of how relatable it is to students and their lives. I love forming connections with the content and the students and it is the type of class that engages students with great conversations and stories. I would hope that when students leave my class, they have a better understanding of themselves and others."



#### MICHAEL SINCLAIR

"I have had the incredible privilege of teaching some of the brightest minds in southwest Michigan, and I have come to realize that the best way of equipping students for the future is to (1) show them all the opportunities available to them, (2) set high standards that they can and want to achieve, (3) push them hard, and (4) celebrate their successes. The support of friends, family, and teachers is and always will be the most important part of their lives, and I want them to know that I am with them."



#### DARCY BANITT

"Congratulations to all the students being honored. I am sure each and every one of them has attained the characteristics I try to instill in my students: perseverance, determination, the ability to believe in themselves, and above all a love for learning (for the sake of learning). I believe if my students are able to carry these characteristics with them from my classroom they will be equipped for any future of which they dream. April, you've got this! Go for it!



#### JESSICA CLARK

"My goal as an educator is to support my students as they pursue their passions, instill confidence to think critically, and develop reflective practices that lead to a love of learning through continued growth. Madison exemplifies someone who strives for excellence in all areas of her life. She displays the characteristics that prove her to be adept at overcoming challenges and she possesses the motivation to succeed in whichever pathway she chooses. Maddy is a phenomenal young lady and I know she is destined for great things."



#### JASON WAGNER

"Over the last four years I had the privilege of watching Nina approach everyday with determination, kindness, integrity and a smile. She has truly been an inspiration to me and those around her. I am so excited to see all the wonderful things she will accomplish in the future."



