

2023

Student Comments on Significant Educators

MICHAEL SINCLAIR

"Mr. Sinclair has had an incredible impact upon me and the entire KAMSC community. Nearly every KAMSC graduate over the past three decades has undergone the rite of passage that is his Junior physics class, a rigorous boot camp that forces you to approach the world from new perspectives. In this as well as my Freshman calculus class, Mr. Sinclair encouraged me to ask new questions of the world and to learn the tools needed to answer them. From counting ways to make change for a dollar to launching weather balloons, from critiquing Hollywood depictions of General Relativity to running our student newspaper, my most enjoyable memories from the past four years occurred when Mr. Sinclair was there to guide me and inspire me. I cannot imagine my high school experience without him."

– Benjamin Whitsett



MICHAEL SINCLAIR

"Stephanie Jevert was my sixth-grade teacher, volleyball coach, and was also a co-director of many of the musicals I've been involved in. She has always been there to encourage and support me whether in the classroom, during sports, or on the stage. I am confident that if I ever need her, she's just a call away. I appreciate all the time and effort she has put into supporting me and being personally invested in my life. Thanks Coach J, for all you've done and the fun memories...especially our jam sessions in the car!"

Madison Kilian



ELIZABETH CARR

"Mrs. Carr was my first-year instructor at the Academically Talented Youth Program. In her, I found an enduring, striking sense of safety. In her aptly-nicknamed "writing boot camp," she offered me autonomy, gave me permission to explore, and handed me the tools to think deeply and critically. In sum, Mrs. Carr offered me my voice."

– Ingrid Gardner



MICHAEL SINCLAIR

"Mr. Sinclair has been a physics teacher at KAMSC for over 30 years. Taking his physics class in my junior year, Mr. Sinclair instilled in me a passion for empirical thinking and exploration. He has also given me many opportunities, such as the ability to launch a high-altitude balloon and be secretary of the KAMSC Student Senate. Through the academic rigor of his class, I learned many study and collaboration skills, as well as persistence. He encouraged me to push myself and his application of physics problems to the real world made the class interesting."

– Maia Lintner



CHRISTINA HOLMES

"Señora Holmes is such a light in the lives of so many students. Her love for teaching Spanish is always apparent, and she maintains positive energy no matter what. The warm, welcoming atmosphere she provides is one of the reasons I love Norrix, as well as what inspired me to study Spanish after high school. Every student that has had the privilege of having Señora Holmes as a teacher would agree that she deserves all the recognition."

- Guthrie Harris



DARCY BANITT

"Out of all of my teachers and mentors throughout high school, Mrs. Banitt has had the biggest impact on my experience and aspirations. As my IB Biology teacher for the past two years, Mrs. Banitt has exposed me to the wonders and mysteries of life and encouraged my decisions to pursue a career in biological sciences. Her engaging teaching style and willingness to mentor me through the college decision journey has set her apart and made her one of my greatest role models. Mrs. Banitt demonstrates her passion for teaching by going above and beyond for each and every one of her students. I could not be more honored to have Mrs. Banitt as a mentor in my life, and I will miss her day-to-day presence in my life moving forward."

April Heskett



MELISSA FRENCH

"Mrs. French has been an extremely important teacher throughout my high school career. Many students including myself have always considered Mrs. French's classroom a safe space to learn and simply talk about life and the problems it brings. Mrs. French always comes with open ears and insightful advice on how to navigate situations, and her love for her students shines through in and out of the classroom. Mrs. French has also introduced me to the Spanish language and culture, and I don't think many students can say that they listen to Spanish music consistently because of their high school Spanish class. Mrs. French made learning fun and easy, even though we were learning a completely different language. Mrs. French has left a positive mark on every student that walks through her classroom door and has inspired many to expand their knowledge in the world of Spanish."



- Brooklyn Hamelink

MATTHEW FRAYER

"Matt demonstrates a great commitment to his players, developing personal relationships and supporting them outside the sport, while especially advocating for girls in leadership positions. Matt's coaching style allowed me to grow in a sport I didn't think was possible and he continues to support my development as both an athlete and a person."

– Clara Moss



ADAM BRUSH

"As our principal, Mr. Brush works hard every day to make everyone feel a sense of community at the high school. He makes it a priority to make connections with students, he learns students names and keeps up with our lives both inside and outside of school. You would never know if Mr. Brush was having a bad day because he is always smiling, and as the leader of our school I think that is extremely important. Mr. Brush is someone who I have always felt I can joke with and be myself around, and I really appreciate his dedication to the students at VHS. I think Mr. Brush's attitude and personality sets the tone for our entire school, which creates a great environment for myself and all my classmates to be able thrive."

Alyvia Bailey



MARY HENDRICKS

"Mrs. Hendricks provided a nurturing yet challenging academic environment for me in elementary school. She was an amazing teacher who helped me grow in math, reading, and writing skills and helped me develop a love for writing. I'm very grateful for her kindness and support over the years, not only in my education but also in my personal development."

– Sydney Van Es



BRADLEY SCHMIDT

"Mr. Schmidt is my significant educator not only because he is my Track and Field and Cross Country coach, but also because he is the most disciplined, respectful, and kind person I know. His kindness and understanding of others has inspired me to always strive to improve myself in order to be the best person I can possibly be."

– Oskar Wiedenhoeft



COLLEEN T. CHAPOTON

"Mrs. Chapoton has created a truly magical environment at school. She has created a classroom space that has challenged my intellectual abilities while still keeping me comfortable to explore and take risks. She's offered a safe space to retreat to after school to ask questions, explore unique biology topics, look into research, and even just relax. When I entered ninth grade, I knew I liked biology, but I had no idea it would become a driving force in my passion for learning. Her ninth-grade biology class really fostered my drive for science and provided me with the basics I needed to thrive. She's never shied away from labs, even when they've resulted in more work for her. The classroom has always revolved around learning first: if a lab or test or activity means us students will have a greater understanding, we do it. She is a joy to learn from everyday, even outside the classroom."



Ava Schwachter

DENNIS KOZIAN

"Mr. Kozian has had a major impact on my life and the lives of hundreds of other students that have gone through his music programs. He manages to take groups of nearly 100 kids with varying levels of experience and create incredible performances. He accomplishes this by creating a sense of community with his humor and class celebrations, taking away any pressure built by concerts. All of his students are given the opportunity and encouraged to perform solos to showcase their growth as musicians. Mr. Kozain showed me that following my passions can be done without straining myself and that I can reach my highest potential through the balance of working hard and enjoying the process."



– Karsten Wiegerink

JOCELYN CLARK

"Jocelyn was my teacher through all of elementary school. She taught me to love learning and value my community at a young age. The Montessori School created an environment where students could excel on their own path. I loved math and she found ways to keep me interested and challenged. She encouraged us to experiment in the classroom. We worked in three-hour blocks which taught me how to manage my time to get my work done before lunch and recess. She also taught me different formats to learn new material, from developing a game to sewing a pillow. The thing I liked most is Jocelyn not only did this for me, but for all the students in her classroom. She is a caring teacher and has impacted my and many lives."



- Zachary Risley

ANNEMARIE GERRISH

"Mrs. Gerrish has been a significant educator throughout my education because of her caring and welcoming personality. Also Mrs. Gerrish has been a fantastic teacher because of her constant help and support that she grants to all of her students."

– Adam Boyle



MICHAEL SINCLAIR

"Three years ago, perched on a stool in Mr. Sinclair's classroom as he lectured about Pythagoras and told us how Pythagoras died in a bean field, I was slightly intimidated but simultaneously hanging on to every word he said. Being in Mr. Sinclair's calculus, physics, geology, and astronomy classes, I have learned to respect Mr. Sinclair and appreciate his vast knowledge and passion for teaching math and science. Mr. Sinclair is always willing to talk, whether I have a question about physics or astronomy, have an update on my college search, or he wants to share a story from his past. As a result of my time in his classroom, and many hours of conversation outside of class, I have decided to pursue a physics degree in college. I am very thankful to have had Mr. Sinclair as a teacher throughout high school."

Rachel Allabaugh



AMANDA SZCZESNY

"Mrs. Szczesny has been the most inspirational teacher that I have had throughout my high school career. I had the pleasure of having her as my teacher for two years while taking AP Research my junior year and AP Psychology my senior year. She truly cares about all of her students and wants them to succeed in her classes. I have seen her make an effort to try to get to know each student on a deeper level, which illuminates just how compassionate she is. Her teaching methods are the most unique and beneficial that I have experienced, since she utilizes an unconventional approach to teaching in order for students to understand concepts in depth instead of just taking notes and recalling the information.

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AMANDA SZCZESNY

"In both of her classes, she promotes the use of advanced reasoning skills to work through problems, helping students to really engage in the material. The AP Research course, which she teaches, has been instrumental in the development of my writing skills as well as my presentation abilities and has allowed me to gain research experience in preparation for college. Most importantly, AP Research has aided in the development of my passion for research involving prospective cancer treatments. I am very grateful to have had such an outstanding teacher and for all the skills she has provided me with, which I will be able to use in order to succeed in my future."

Allison Bontrager



REGGIE WALTERS

"Mr. Walters is one of the best teachers I had. I know that it takes a lot of dedication to teach Calculus BC material a month before the AP test, especially when he is a varsity baseball coach and a student senate advisor. I know he impacted me and many of my peers, and he did well making difficult AP Calculus concepts accessible, and the workload allows for enough practice of the material. But more importantly, I feel prepared and confident as well as make complex math problems more fun to solve as I go into higher math, and I am grateful to have him as an educator."

– Robert Arce



BONNIE MOSS

"I've always had an interest in Spanish, but taking Señora Moss' class has turned that interest from being an interesting class in school to something that I know I want to major in at the next level in my education. She's a super fun and engaging teacher, and somebody that I look up to because of the relationship that she creates with every student."

Benjamin Hunter



AMANDA SZCZESNY

"Mrs. Szczesny may have a hard name to spell, but she makes teaching look easy. I had her as a teacher for both my AP Research class and my AP Psychology class. My time with Mrs. Szczesny in AP Research helped me discover my passion and possibly my future career as well as fostered writing and presentation skills that will give me a leg up in college. In AP Psychology this year I saw what true passion for teaching looks like. She is relentless in her effort to provide us with the most engaging, information packed hour of our day. Mrs. Szczesny is not just a great teacher, she is an amazing mentor who has taught me and many others how to thrive beyond the walls of our high school.

– Jackson Bowles



JENNIFER WYRICK

"Mrs. Wyrick has been my math teacher at Kalamazoo Central for almost two years. She goes above and beyond to ensure that every single one of her students can understand math. During my junior year, she encouraged me to keep learning math even though I could not fit a math class in my schedule. She treated me like one of her students and reignited my passion for mathematics after the pandemic. I can say without a doubt that I would not be successful in my KAMSC classes today without her guidance."

– Alejandro Alvarez



CHRIS CZUK

"Mr. Czuk is my IB physics teacher and he has been very significant in my education because he helped reignite my desire to learn while I was struggling with burnout. I love learning physics in his class because of the great demonstration and labs, and how his personality shines through in it all, like with quiz questions themed around Star Wars. He's an amazing teacher that really helps me grasp the hard concepts of physics, so more than just knowing how to do the math, I understand the concepts behind it, and I think that has massively contributed to my love of physics and desire to learn more about it. Mr. Czuk's presence in my educational career is the reason I once again have the love of learning that I started to lose when I entered high school."

Elijah Simmering



JENNIFER WRIGHT

"Ms. Wright, while I have only had her as a teacher for two or so years, had a very positive impact on my life during those times. She made sure everyone felt safe and comfortable in her classroom, is easy to approach, and is definitely my favorite teacher in school. Outside of teaching, she is also our NHS sponsor. She does a great job organizing everyone, and she always makes it very fun."

Reagan Howell



COLLEEN T. CHAPOTON

"Mrs. Chap is a significant educator because of her radiating positivity and passion for biology that she shares every day with each of her students. Throughout my two years in her classroom, I both discovered my passion for biology and learned how to spread optimism every day. With just one smile, Mrs. Chap lifts spirits and brightens a room."

Jason Krawczyk



PETER SANTA MARIA

"There are many qualities that Mr. Santa Maria possesses which make him such a significant educator. One of the most prominent attributes is his ability to connect with his students on a deeper level. Through his dedication to teach chemistry in innovative ways and his impressive knowledge in the field, Mr. Santa Maria is able to communicate challenging concepts effectively to his students. Prevalent in his teaching is his benevolent attitude and kind personality that makes students feel comfortable approaching him without fear of judgment. Mr. Santa Maria has high standards and expectations, but as he has made it clear to his students, he will always be supportive, even when they are struggling.

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PETER SANTA MARIA

His dedication to his students is unmatched; he goes well beyond class time and office hours to ensure that his students get the education they deserve. So with this, I would like to thank Mr. Santa Maria, not only for his dedication to teaching, but for constantly supporting me as a student, and as a person. To me, Mr. Santa Maria makes the classroom a special place and represents the very best in the education system."

Allison Tucci



COLLEEN T. CHAPOTON

"Mrs. Chapoton was my biology teacher for both freshman year and junior year at KAMSC. She helped me with the transition to high school and then she was there during my hardest year of high school, where she gave me the support I needed and a safe space to make mistakes. She has been the greatest influence in my love for biology because of how enjoyable and engaging she makes each class. Without her, I don't know that I would be going into biomedical engineering. Mrs. Chapoton is always a bundle of joy and reminds me of a ray of sunshine. I am very grateful that I was able to be taught by Mrs. Chapoton because not only is she a great teacher, but she cares about her students as people and where they are going in life. I am also extremely grateful that I had a teacher who pushed me outside of my comfort zone to help me reach my full potential as a student."

Lydia Kruis



SHANNON HOUTROUW

"For the past three years, I've been extremely fortunate to have been the student of a dedicated and altruistic teacher like Mr. Houtrouw. His passion and unwavering love for computer science (CS) energize and bring excitement to the classroom and have aided me in discovering my same admiration for the field of CS. Without Mr. Houtrouw's one-of-a-kind computer science classes and his continuous support, I would not have unearthed my interests in this field. Furthermore, I am beyond grateful for the friendship that I have been able to build with Mr. Houtrouw through the years. Whether it is having conversations during his office hours after class on Wednesday or staying in his room before school, I've held on to the fond memories that I have had with my favorite teacher as well as my role model. Mr. Houtrouw has had and continues to have a positive and meaningful impact on my high school career, and I am thankful to have a teacher like him in my life."

- Simar Bhatia

AMBER DIXON

"Mrs. Amber Dixon is a significant educator for her role in running the Michigan Youth in Government (MYIG) club, which engages high school students in the lawmaking process. Through this program, she has helped students like me develop important skills and confidence, pushing me out of my comfort zone to debate and be more outgoing. She also teaches Economics, which helps students like me learn about money and finances, empowering them to make good financial decisions in their futures."

- Ruhaan Rai



SHANNON HOUTROUW

"Mr. Houtrouw has helped me in finding my passion for computer science. For three years, he has taught me invaluable skills ranging from mathematics to coding and helped me take part in a variety of different computer science competitions. Thanks to his mentorship, I feel confident in my skills in CS and have a clear idea of what I want to pursue in the future."

— Owen Su



TIA HOHLER

"Encouraging is one of the many wonderful characteristics I can use to describe Mrs. Hohler. Whether it be supporting me in starting a Science Olympiad team, or pushing me to go above and beyond in research, Mrs. Hohler has never shown an ounce of doubt with my abilities. Through her enthusiastic teaching style intertwined with engrossing anecdotes, whoever she teaches is instantly captivated. She cultivated my love for biology through hands-on lab experiments, and thought provoking conversations. I am grateful to have a mentor who fuels my obsession of biology with her own."

Ashika Gullapalli



SHANNON HOUTROUW

"Mr. Houtrouw has been an incredible influence on my education throughout my high school career. He has been my teacher for over three years and has always encouraged and motivated me to try my best, especially through the long hours of coding and struggles with discrete math. My previous insecurity with coding has evaporated because of his help and I would not have cemented my career goals without his help. Thank you Mr. Houtrouw for all of the support you have given me over the past three years!"

Abigail Eilertson



ERIC LANCASTER

"Mr. Lancaster is an informative and understanding teacher. He makes traditionally dull lessons fun through games and anecdotal stories, not only enhancing our understanding of the subject, but capturing our interest as well. He has inspired me to take the initiative to learn more about psychology. He appears to genuinely care about students and their lives, and structures his class in a way that caters to students' needs. After only one year of benign taught by Mr. Lancaster, I can confidently say he has made an immeasurable impact on my education."

— Olivia Eby



LUCAS REWA

"Mr. Rewa encouraged asking questions and exploring my interests in and outside of the classroom. He also runs the Guild Gaming club at my school which helped me find friends and even my current girlfriend. Mr. Rewa even let me express my love for trading card and video games in class with meaningful assignments where all material was fun, engaging, and encouraging of learning and the development of thinking. He made sure class was fun. So much so that every year I had one of his classes I looked forward to going and participating. He also advised my Extended Essay and helped me significantly learn in a field which currently runs my life. He's super amicable and fair, and I will never forget the effect his classes have had on me."

— Carter Hull



JESSICA CLARK

"She was my biology teacher for my first two years of biology and my extended essay advisor for the IB diploma. I credit her for really sparking my interest in biology, specifically biochemistry, which I will be majoring in. She made an effort to connect with me as a person, even when she taught me virtually. She has always supported me and encouraged me to keep working hard to reach my goals."

— Madison Grabe



LINDA F. LEE

"Beyond every other teacher throughout my school career, Ms. Lee has opened my eyes to the world and my place within it. She taught her class with unflinching honesty, which has helped me to grow confidence in this area as well. She prepared me for the reality of the world and how to navigate it. Ms. Lee focused on student learning, applying our lessons to our lives and increasing awareness of how we are affected. Although Ms. Lee is new to my life as of this school year, I could not have been introduced to her at any better time. I am indebted to her for the guidance, wisdom, and role model she provided me every day by living her true authentic self."

Pauline Hawkes



RACHEL JANSEN

"Mrs. Jansen is significant because she genuinely cares about her students and wants them to do well. She is not there just to do her job, she is also there to genuinely make a difference in her student's lives. Though her student's sometimes interrupt her or are rude to her, this never stops her from caring about them. That is what makes Mrs. Jansen a significant educator."

Claire Mosebach



LUCAS WOLTHUIS

"I really enjoyed my time in Mr. Wolthuis's sixth grade class, but he really made an impact on my life as my cross country coach. More than any other educator, Coach Wolthuis taught me how to be a successful and caring member of society. His lessons in leadership and perseverance have always inspired me to strive to be the best version of myself. Coach has never been afraid to challenge me, both physically and personally, and I will carry his lessons with me for the rest of my life."

Drew Geiger



LAURA CITINO

"During my two years in her class, Ms. Citino has invested hours of her time to help her students go above and beyond the normal expectation for an English class. Not only does she have a vested interest in our performance in the class, but she also cares about shaping the curriculum of her classes to better represent the cultural experiences and personal interests of us students. I attribute my perseverance through stressful classes and my passion for learning to her teaching."

Alexis Loparo



CHRISTOPHER ENDERS

"Mr. Enders is one of the most genuine teachers I have ever had. When walking into his classroom, you immediately feel the welcoming and caring environment he creates. Mr. Enders is a teacher who is dedicated to teaching his students: a teacher who truly wants his students to learn. I had Mr. Enders as my AP Statistics teacher in my junior year. My classmates and I struggled with the new material, but Mr. Enders did not give up on us and would alter his teaching methods until we understood the material.

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CHRISTOPHER ENDERS

But Mr. Enders is not only an amazing teacher; he is also an amazing person in general. While I was struggling with my home life last spring, Mr. Enders would constantly check in on me and offer assistance. Mr. Enders also has helped me with numerous applications that have helped me get into colleges and receive scholarships. And while Mr. Enders is no longer my teacher, he still dedicates time to helping me with my math homework."

— Kayla Nichols



BRANDEN JOHNSON

"Mr. Johnson is always passionate and enthusiastic about every subject he teaches. He also understands and looks out for each and every one of his student's well-being and their future goals. To me and to many other students, he is a supportive guide, educator, and friend."

Syed Murtaza



MICHAEL SINCLAIR

"This educator has not only expanded my knowledge in the sciences but has provided me with a guide through life's many obstacles. Mr. Sinclair and I have had plenty of conversations about topics ranging from college to people I have had issues with to places we have traveled to books we have read. Being my physics, geology, and astronomy teacher, Mr. Sinclair has pushed me to do my best while also accepting failure and moving forward."

— Asia Hoehle



JASON WAGNER

"Mr. Wagner has always gone above and beyond when it comes to teaching his students. Staying after class, working late on perfecting our labs, and inspiring me to pursue biology as a major are just some of the few things that makes him a standout teacher over my four years of high school."

Nina Molitor



