

# My Favorite Teacher

Essay & Art Contest



## INSIDE

- **Art** – 2nd & 3rd place  
Grades K-2
- **Essay** – 1st-3rd place

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**The Student**

**Kiara Arias Martinez**

Grade 2, Harrisburg Elementary



**The Teacher**

**Gwen Parker**

Grade 2, Harrisburg Elementary



# Inside

She opened my eyes,  
showed me a career

Cassandra Wise .....Page 3

She treated me like her son,  
stayed hard on me

Dontavious Blair.....Page 3

He inspired me to become  
a special education teacher

Grace Revels.....Page 3

She helps me learn  
& makes it fun

Trey West .....Page 4

She inspires me to be  
the best I can be

Alexis McClean.....Page 4

She teaches more than English  
– she teaches life lessons

Preethika Yetukuri.....Page 4

He's helped me accept  
no one's the same

Zane Gaskin .....Page 5

She's nice & helps  
students reach goals

Janelle Ocegueda.....Page 5

She's honest, modest,  
interesting & makes our day

Gabrielle Pesackis .....Page 5

She can be sweet as honey

Kathleen Lin Divis .....Page 6

She cares for & helps everyone

Kaylie Snyder.....Page 6

She makes science so fun  
& interesting

Lizzy Walters .....Page 6

She's a great teacher  
doing great things

Michael Rosacco .....Page 6

## Art contest winners

Kiara Martinez..... Cover

Miana Ford .....Page 7

Conor Long .....Page 7

Kaydence Stevenson.....Page 7

# Buster Ledford

Built like a transformer & a person who transformed

**T**he blue, two-foot tall block words on the back wall say, "There are no dumb questions."

And they're the first thing I notice when I walk into Buster Ledford's classroom.

I'm a sophomore at Independence High, and I'm scared.

Scared because, well, because I'm a sophomore – and most



Jonathan Phipps

sophomore boys are pretty much scared all the time.

Of girls – should I ask her to go "Scorting" in my '85 Escort (Actually, it's my mom's car)?

Of wearing the wrong things – my Bruce Springsteen Tee? My parachute pants? My Reeboks (I couldn't afford Air Jordans)?

Of my mullet not being combed just right – business in the front, party in the back.

Of taking "real" high school courses for the first time – like Buster Ledford's *Biology I* class, the class with the blue, two-foot tall words on the wall at the back.

**B**uster Ledford's scary. A Lumbee with straight jet black hair combed across his forehead.

Built like a really, really, really squat transformer.

And a former head football coach. Gruff. No-nonsense. Say-it-one-time-and-it-better-be-done.

So I sit there scared the first few weeks.

**B**ut Mr. Ledford's a really great teacher. Really great.

He has total control in his class so I don't have to be scared.

He's ahead of his time with a lot of the strategies he uses to help us understand, remember.

He always shows us pictures when he teaches concepts – a picture of a dog running in the woods near a pond to help us remember the characteristics of living things. They all move. They all need food. They all need air.

He walks around the room carrying one of those old square yardsticks. His pointer, his make-my-gestures-grander, his pound-on-the-desk when what he's saying really needs to be remembered.

He doesn't hide behind his desk.

He's funny and makes learning about mitochondria fun.

And most of all, he's interested in us, cares about us, is there for us.

Only a few weeks into the semester, I have an after-class ritual – wait til pretty much everyone else has left, walk by his desk so I get to hear his, "See ya, Moose, hope your day's good."

That's the nickname he gives me.

He gives each of us a nickname. Now I'm thinking it's probably because he couldn't remember our names.

But to the sophomore-boy me, it's the coolest thing ever.

And that nickname sticks the rest of high school.

So cool.

**B**uster Ledford's the reason I'm a teacher.

I take a science class from him every year til I graduate.

I find out later he quit coaching football because he wanted to get back to teaching fulltime.

And I'm so glad he did.

He gives me confidence. He's a great role model. He's always there when I need to talk.

And he changes my life.

That's what all great teachers do.

**T**he drawings and essays in this publication represent hundreds of drawings and essays our students turned in for our *My Favorite Teacher Art and Essay Contest*.

And as you see and read the winning entries, you'll see these traits repeated over and over.

These essays show again and again and again that teachers make such a profound difference in their students' lives.

Every day.

Thank you to *The Lancaster News* and other businesses whose support made this contest possible.

And thank you to the thousands of parents and students who say special thank you's to teachers across our district this week.

We have awesome, caring teachers dedicating their lives to helping every child succeed.

They deserve huge thank-yous.

Every day.

*Jonathan Phipps*  
Jonathan Phipps  
Superintendent



# Essays from Grades 9-12

## She opened my eyes, showed me a career

### The Teacher



**Bridgett Plexico**

Programming  
Lancaster High

**B**ridgett Plexico is my Programming 1 and 2 teacher. I took her class to learn more about programming and get a taste of what coding is really like.

I walked away from Mrs. Plexico's class with that and so much more.

She showed us many careers involving programming and working with computers in general. If it weren't for her, I never



would have even thought about being a computer engineer.

She opened my eyes, showed me a career that captured my heart, and for that, I am very grateful.

Mrs. Plexico also taught us interpersonal skills. Knowing how to talk to people and be a leader is crucial for a successful future, and she knows that. Everybody in

her class came out with a better outlook on the future.

Mrs. Plexico isn't just a teacher to me. She is also a friend and mother figure. I always left her class with a smile on my face.

I am blessed to have a teacher like Mrs. Plexico. She is an amazing teacher who taught me so much more than her subject.

To my favorite teacher, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

### The Student



**Cassandra Wise**

Grade 12  
Lancaster High

## She treated me like her son, stayed hard on me

### The Teacher



**Charisse Witherspoon**

Business Education  
Lancaster High

**D**uring all my years in school, I have encountered many teachers—some good, some bad. I would have to say my favorite would be Charisse Witherspoon, who taught me most of the things I know about today.

She helped groom me as a student as well as a young man. Without her consistent love and guidance I wouldn't be the person I am today.

In ninth grade when I first walked into her room and heard her voice welcome me into the



class with open arms and a smile, I knew I was going to enjoy that year. I remember when she first asked me if we could have a mother-son

relationship, which meant she would treat me as she treated her very own son, or we could have a teacher-student relationship.

I knew right then I wanted to give her permission to treat me like my mother. When I did that, she stayed on me hard, making

sure my grades were up, making sure my behavior was well in class.

She even came to games and track meets to support me with my real mom. This great woman has helped me and inspired me so much that I don't know what I would do without her in my life.

She pushes me and dares me to do better in school as well as be a better young man. This is why this great woman is the teacher I call my favorite and choose to admire the most.

### The Student



**Dontavious Blair**

Grade 12  
Lancaster High

## He inspired me to become a special education teacher

### The Teacher



**William Celmer**

History  
Lancaster High

**O**f all the teachers I have had since high school, there is only one that comes to mind when I think of my favorite.

When I first walked into his classroom, I thought to myself it was going to be a rough year because history is my least favorite subject. When William Celmer started teaching, the material started to come alive with his enthusiasm and determination to teach.

He takes the time to make sure



we fully understand what he is teaching by spending time with us one-on-one. He gave us a project where we got to create our own business, and it made me realize there's more to it than just running it, like there is more to teaching than just a lesson.

Mr. Celmer cares about all of us as students and our achievements. After completing the

class, I feel like I really grew, not only as a student but also as a person.

I'm grateful for the many lessons he has taught me, and those extend to beyond the classroom.

Mr. Celmer teaches us about government and economics, but more than that, he teaches us more about life.

This is why he has inspired me to continue my education and become a special education teacher.

### The Student



**Grace Revels**

Grade 12  
Lancaster High

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# Essays from Grades 6-8

## She helps me learn & makes it fun

### The Teacher

#### Madison Cook

Special Education  
Andrew Jackson  
Middle



**M**adison Cook is the best teacher. She helps me to learn. She makes it fun, too. She lets me do my work on the carpet because I don't like desks.



She says she wants me to feel happy when I'm at school. We learn more when we are happy.

She sits with me on the bus for our trips.

She tells me I am smart and can do a lot of things all by myself. She helps me read, too.

Mrs. Cook is beautiful. I love her so much.

### The Student

#### Trey West

Grade 6  
Andrew Jackson  
Middle



## She inspires me to be the best I can be

### The Teacher



#### Stephanie Secker

Language Arts  
Indian Land Middle

**M**y favorite core teacher is Stephanie Secker because she always inspires me to do my best and to never give up on myself. I have never been good at ELA. I have always never been able to understand it that much.

But when I started 8th grade, I decided to change my ways and instead of not asking for help and just failing, I started to ask questions, and I noticed that I was doing better.

Ever since elementary school and throughout 6th and 7th grade, I have never had a good relationship with any of my teachers. Then I met Mrs. Secker, and I became really close with her. For the first time in my life, I have a good relationship with one of my teachers.

I feel like Mrs. Secker and I have a good bond because she is someone who understands me and



doesn't give up on me.

Mrs. Secker and I have good times together at school, but just because we have good times doesn't mean she doesn't discipline me.

Mrs. Secker is always lifting people up and is never the one to bring them down. I have noticed it doesn't matter who you are -if Mrs. Secker sees you are down or depressed, she is not the one to just walk away and leave then act like she didn't see you. She is the person who will walk up to you and ask what's wrong and try her absolute very best to make you feel better and make sure you have a great rest of your day.

Mrs. Secker is not the person to tear another person down. She always tells me it doesn't matter

who you are, nobody is perfect or ever will be perfect. Everyone has their own flaws, and everyone makes mistakes. That is what I love about Mrs. Secker -she doesn't have a negative attitude towards anyone. She is always so positive.

Mrs. Secker is a wonderful person. She is a caring, inspiring, trustworthy, loving, sweet, kind-hearted, and gorgeous person. I look up to Mrs. Secker because she inspires me to be the person I can be and to treat everyone the way you want them to treat you.

Mrs. Secker is my role model, and she will always have a special spot in my heart. Nothing could change that.

Mrs. Secker is someone you can always count on to be there for you. And that is why Mrs. Secker is my favorite teacher.

### The Student



#### Alexis McClean

Grade 8  
Indian Land Middle

## She teaches more than English -she teaches life lessons

### The Teacher



#### Stephanie Secker

Language Arts  
Indian Land Middle

**I**t is our job to make sure we are doing well in our studies!

The people who motivate us while we are at school are our teachers. Teachers at my school are very helpful, motivational, initiative, and caring. This essay means a lot to me; I want to show teachers I care dearly about them!

English is a subject in school where I struggle a bit. Stephanie Secker makes this subject so fun



and entertaining in the classroom by relating situations of the text to situations in the real world!

I actually met her last year, when I was in 7th grade for a service project in National Junior Honor Society. I was very eager to have her as an 8th grade teacher, and as luck would have it, I did! I was very happy after

receiving my schedule.

In class, she doesn't just teach what is required to be taught, but she also teaches us life lessons that are interpreted through the text.

Mrs. Secker is a wonderful teacher, and I love her so much! She is everything a student wants in a teacher. I am a very lucky student to have her as my English I teacher!

### The Student



#### Preethika Yetukuri

Grade 8  
Indian Land Middle



# Essays from Grades 3-5

## He's helped me accept no one's the same

### The Teacher



**Scott Barberio**  
Grade 4  
Buford  
Elementary

My favorite teacher is my 4th grade teacher.

I was not happy to start 4th grade. I struggled at first because it was the first time I was going to have a male teacher. I also knew the older I got, the harsher other kids could be.

The first couple weeks of school I begged my mom to have my class changed. I couldn't get used to the idea of a male teacher. My mom, dad, principal, and teacher all helped me work through this and I am so glad they did.

Scott Barberio has become my favorite teacher to date.

He's the first teacher to encourage me to embrace my old soul. I'm



not your normal 4th grader. I have long hair, and sometimes I get made fun of and called a girl. I love all things vintage and cars so it's hard for me to find kids my age who like the same things I do.

Mr. Barberio has helped me to accept that no one is the same and that it's ok to be different and to look different. He talks about cars with me. He encourages my artistic side. Even though I sometimes get called down in class for drawing instead of paying attention, I know he is only doing it to help me.

He makes learning fun. He's

very funny, and he speaks to me frankly, not as an equal perhaps, but like a young adult instead of a child.

He helps prepare us for real life situations and he is always willing to go the extra mile and talk out any problems we have. He tells us we can be anything we want to be.

All kids need a little help from time to time, a little hope, and someone who believes in them. I have found this in Mr. Barberio and that's why he's my favorite teacher.

As 4th grade is close to ending, I will never forget Mr. Barberio. All the laughs, all the things he has taught me and most importantly, for believing in me.

### The Student



**Zane Gaskin**  
Grade 4  
Buford  
Elementary

## She's nice & helps students reach their goals

### The Teacher



**Kelsey Carter-Carnes**  
Grade 4  
Clinton  
Elementary

My favorite teacher is Kelsey Carter-Carnes.

One reason is because she is so nice to everyone in the school. For example, when kids do something bad, she tries to help fix their mistakes. Also, she tries to tell them that is not a good choice to make.

Another reason is she is hard working. For example, she works hard for students to reach their goals. Also,



she works hard to make people feel welcome and know they don't need to be scared of coming to a new school.

Mrs. Carnes also can be funny. For example, she does anything to put a smile on your face. She can make things that look and feel boring fun—for example, social studies—but at the end there is

always something very fun to do.

My last reason why Mrs. Carnes is the best teacher ever is that she always shows kindness, respect, and love for each student. For example, if a student feels down, she tries to help make them happy and ready for a new day.

This is why Mrs. Carnes is the best teacher ever!

### The Student



**Janelle Ocegueda**  
Grade 5  
Clinton  
Elementary

## She's honest, modest, interesting & makes our day wonderful

### The Teacher



**Kristina Dudla**  
Grade 4  
Harrisburg  
Elementary

My favorite teacher is Kristina Dudla. I love all my teachers, but Mrs. Dudla is way above average.

There are so many good qualities about her that if I could name them all, it would take up the whole paper. But let me give you a couple of examples so while you're reading this, you can have a glimpse into our wonderful school day:



- Mrs. Dudla is humble and honest. She is not the bragging type and that must be hard when you are such a great teacher.

- She is modest and funny. My teacher isn't perfect, but she does have some perfect imperfections, and she makes sure to point them out. She

relates herself to us and makes fun of herself to make us feel better about ourselves.

Overall, Mrs. Dudla is an amazing teacher. They say that school is work and a bunch of other things, but with Mrs. Dudla, school is fun and interesting and I don't mind being at "work."

I am doing this so my teacher can get what she deserves.

### The Student



**Gabrielle Pesackis**  
Grade 4  
Harrisburg  
Elementary

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# Honorable Mentions

### The Teacher



**Carrie  
Hodges**

Music  
Indian Land  
Elementary

## She can be sweet as honey

Carrie Hodges has been my music teacher for six amazing years.

She is very passionate about her job and is always excited to teach us new things each time we enter her classroom.

When we first walk into her classroom, she always arranges new fun, exciting activities all of us will truthfully enjoy. Some of the activities we do are recorder,



ukuleles, maracas, and tambourines.

Mrs. Hodges has inspired me to join middle school band. She helped me find my passion for music, and I will play the saxophone.

Mrs. Hodges can be strict but also very sweet as honey! When the class does not act appropriately, she always gives the right

consequences to help us learn the appropriate way to act.

Mrs. Hodges is always prepared with recorders in case we neglectfully forget ours, so everyone can still join in on the fun!

Every Tuesday, Mrs. Hodges expertly teaches a choir at our school. She teaches us how to beautifully sing and helps us master new songs.

Mrs. Hodges is the most amazing music teacher ever.

### The Student



**Kathleen Lin  
Divis**

Grade 5  
Indian Land  
Elementary

### The Teacher



**Heather  
Preddy**

Grade 7  
Indian Land  
Middle

## She cares for & helps everyone

My favorite teacher is Heather Preddy because she is very nice, sweet, kind, smart, wonderful, beautiful, positive, fun, amazing, and the most joyful teacher I could ever ask for.

She does everything she can to make sure everyone knows what they're doing and when they're



doing it. If someone needs help, she is up for it. No other teacher is better than her.

She cares for everyone, and when I mean everyone, I mean everyone. I'm pretty sure all of her other students could say the same about her, too.

But when I started school, this day seemed so far away now this day has arrived but through her encouragement and guidance I feel like I'm ready for tomorrow's challenges.

Teachers play such an important part and role in shaping and guiding, especially teachers like her. I thank her so much for caring as much as

### The Student



**Kaylie  
Snyder**

Grade 7  
Indian Land  
Middle

### The Teacher



**Kim  
Threatt**

Grade 4  
McDonald Green  
Elementary

## She makes science so fun and interesting

Kim Threatt is the most kind-hearted teacher that I know.

She is so nice, caring and friendly. She always smiles and says, "Hi" to me when I pass her in the hallway. That makes me feel happy and special.

She was so kind to me on the



first day of school, but she made me feel less nervous and very welcomed. I love her and love being in her class.

I am excited to go every week and sad when we don't have school on Fridays. I loved when we

did the meal worm experiment. My favorite part was when we made the booklet and put our observations on what we saw.

I love the way she teaches. She makes science so fun and interesting.

And those are some ways Mrs. Threatt is the most amazing teacher.

### The Student



**Lizzy  
Walters**

Grade 4  
McDonald Green  
Elementary

### The Teacher



**Aida  
Perdomo**

Spanish  
Indian Land  
High

## She's a great teacher doing great things

Aida Perdomo is my second block Spanish III teacher, and she has made the task of learning a new language into something enjoyable.

Mrs. Perdomo has taken time out of her schedule to help me and other



students succeed in this class. She wants everyone to feel the accomplishment of success.

You would be so lucky to just sit in

and watch one of her classes, and watch all the students engaged in the learning process.

Mrs. Perdomo is an amazing example of what Indian Land High school has to offer – a great teacher doing great things.

### The Student



**Michael  
Rosacco**

Grade 10  
Indian Land  
High



# Art Contest Winners

## The Teacher



**Julia  
Craig**

Grade 2  
Buford  
Elementary

## The Student



**Miana  
Ford**

Grade 2  
Buford  
Elementary



## The Teacher



**Michelle  
Anderson**

Grade 2  
Indian Land  
Elementary

## The Student



**Conor  
Long**

Grade 2  
Indian Land  
Elementary



## The Teacher



**Jennifer  
Nowicki**

Grade 2  
Erwin Elementary

## The Student



**Kaydence  
Stevenson**

Grade 1  
Erwin Elementary

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