My Favorite Teacher
Essay & Art Contest

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1st

The Student
Chloe Danielle Clark
Grade 2, Kershaw Elementary

The Teacher
Nicole Gardner
Grade 2, Kershaw Elementary

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Here’s what students think makes a great teacher

Read these essays our students have written, and you’ll have a pretty good idea of what makes a great teacher.

Our students say…
• “a teacher should be smart, caring, fun, entertaining, and an all-around great person to be around.”

And I agree. I’ve visited classrooms across our district and been impressed by how hard our teachers work to make sure all children understand. I’m also impressed with our teachers’ eagerness to take courses to find new ways to reach students, with the hours they spend preparing, with their willingness to share with one another and learn from one another.

One student really described what I’ve seen in so many of our classrooms when she wrote, my teacher “has the ability to produce a consistent level of excellence in her students.”

• a great teacher is patient. I watch our teachers explain how to solve a math problem over and over and over again, each time tweaking that explanation to unlock the “aha” moment. I watch our teachers help students write and rewrite and rewrite an essay. I watch them help students discover a concept through hands-on experiences instead of just telling them the answer.

• a great teacher listens. They listen to the child whose parents can’t afford the supplies he needs, they listen to the student who just needs to talk because her mother is dying of cancer, they listen to the student who’s crushed because she didn’t make the cheer squad.

• a great teacher makes students feel secure. As one student writes, “I used to worry twice as much as I do now.”

• a great teacher goes the extra mile. One student writes her teacher “will give us special homework to help us with the problems that we have.”

• a great teacher believes in students. As one student writes, “When I doubt myself, she encourages me.”

• a great teacher pushes students to succeed. One student says his teacher “challenges us by pushing us academically to new limits and new heights.” I always liked teachers like that, worked harder for teachers like that, learned more from teachers like that.

• a great teacher makes learning fun. One student says his teacher “makes reviewing for tests fun by turning them into games, like basketball. When you get the question right, you get to throw the paper in the trashcan, like basketball.”

• and, most of all, great teachers care. One student described his teacher/coach as someone who “thinks of all his students and players as sons and daughters. He always wishes the best for us, even when we don’t seem to deserve it.” Other students write that their teacher helps them to “understand the importance of being punctual and accountable for missing homework assignments” and “challenges me to do my best. She makes learning fun and exciting.”

Students love teachers who smile and make them laugh and make them feel comfortable in class, who know how to talk to students in ways that connect.

The drawings and essays in this publication represent the hundreds of drawings and essays submitted by our students.

And as you see and read the winning entries in this year’s My Favorite Teacher Art and Essay Contest, you’ll see these traits repeated over and over.

And as you read them, you’ll see that teachers make such a profound difference in the lives of these students.

Thank you, Lancaster News and other businesses whose support made this contest possible.

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

– Gene Moore
Superintendent
He always has a way of reaching his students

Everyone has their own favorite teacher; mine is Mr. Bobby Purser. Mr. Purser teaches Auto Collision Technology, where you learn how to paint and fix dents on cars.

He always has a way of reaching students on a teacher to student level as well as a personal level also. When he is teaching, everything just seems to seep in, and you will never forget it as long as you live.

The way he reaches his students on a personal level is truly amazing. He makes all of his students that are not academically gifted realize that they can do something other than drop out and be a nobody.

Some students are in very tough situations such as one-parent homes, no-parent homes, living with an aunt or uncle, and gang-ridden neighborhoods that are nearly impossible to escape in some situations.

Mr. Purser just has very unique ways of making students realize what their options are to get out of messes they are in, by getting them jobs in paint and body shops when they would otherwise not be able to get a job. Any teacher with those abilities is special in my book.

She is not only a teacher, but a friend

Everyone has that teacher that they have a special connection with. During school, there is always that class that is death-defying terrible, but the teacher elevates the material, making the class tolerable. Everyone has a favorite teacher; mine is Nancy Marshall.

Mrs. Marshall is my AP Calculus teacher. Her personality makes me forget about how challenging Calculus is and makes me embrace my inner nerd. The atmosphere in the class is always so laid back, but we do math that no one in the county could probably do. We are constantly learning about Calculus and about ourselves. She challenges us by pushing us academically to new limits (no pun intended) and new heights as students. THAT is what teaching is about!

To say Mrs. Marshall is a good teacher is an understatement. She is an incredible teacher with the ability to produce a consistent level of excellence in her students. Her personality helps create an atmosphere in the classroom that helps us realize that she is not only a teacher, but a friend. That is why she is my favorite teacher.

Failure is not an option in her class

A helper, a care taker, and the mother of Spanish. Mi maestra favorita es Senora Sandra Ovalles.

Mrs. Ovalles is more than just a Spanish teacher. There is not a dull moment in her class. Good or bad day, she is always there. She loves each and every one of her students, and she treats us all the same.

I like the fact that I can go to her about anything if I do not understand. At the end of the day, I always learn something new, whether it’s big or small. That’s the beauty of going to her class. Each and every single day, I walk in and out of her class, my brain is filled. I look forward to waking up to her class the next day.

When I graduate from high school, I just want her to know that she helped me make it this far. Life is beautiful, and it’s all about choices.

Mrs. Ovalles has to be the sweetest lady on earth. Failure is not an option in her class. If you do fall behind, she always gets you back up to keep moving forward for a better outcome.

Mrs. Ovalles is a very optimistic person. Each day is a new beginning. As Forest Gump would say, “Life is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re going to get,” and that’s kind of how Mrs. Ovalles’ class is each day because you get something new and tasty out of her lessons.

No matter how much I write, it will never be enough words to show her that I care.
She always kept a smile on her face

What characteristics do you think a great teacher should have? I think a teacher should be smart, caring, fun, entertaining, and an all around great person to be around. All of these qualities describe a great teacher, Paige Johnson.

I always looked forward to going to Mrs. Johnson’s class because it was always fun. She would always give us something creative and unique to do. No matter what she was doing, she always kept a smile on her face.

One day when we walked into the classroom, Mrs. Johnson had told us she had been diagnosed with cancer and she would be out taking chemotherapy. The mood going into the classroom without her there was very different. Then when she came back, I noticed something about her, she still kept that same smile on her face.

Through everything she had been going through, this showed me a new side to Mrs. Johnson. Not only was she a terrific teacher, but a strong, brave woman. She showed me to never give up even when life gets difficult.

If she can push on with cancer, I can face any challenge. I have never had a teacher as remarkable as Mrs. Johnson.

She treats all her students equally

When I first walked into Lisa Collins’ 7th grade science classroom, I knew I was in for surprise. With posters all over the walls, notes on the board, and a smile on her face to greet us at the door, I knew that year was going to be memorable.

Ms. Collins is strict, caring, and has a kind heart. She has a great personality and a wonderful sense of humor. When she teaches, she uses hands-on activities and life stories to let us relate to the lessons.

The thing I like best about Ms. Collins is that she never picks favorites, and she treats all her students equally. She respects you as a person and not just a child.

She can bring you up when you are down and always can find the right things to say. When I was younger, walking into science was a nightmare. I couldn’t stand thinking about going to science to learn about the periodic table or why the earth spins. Yet walking into Ms. Collins class changed the way I looked at science. It was almost like she opened my eyes.

He is loved and respected by our community

Some teachers fade into the past while some stick with us forever; never letting us forget them. I have had amazing teachers, but the one who is by far my favorite teacher and mentor would have to be Coach John Bundy. He teaches me soccer fundamentals and many life lessons that I will keep with me forever.

Coach Bundy thinks of all his students and players as sons and daughters. He always wishes the best for us, even to be just like him on and off the soccer field. He is a Christian man — loved and respected by our community, and by me.

Coach Bundy is one of the best soccer coaches I have ever had. He is patient, and instills in me how to accomplish the soccer move right even when I repeatedly get it wrong. He only wants the best for his players … our school … our community.

For all these reasons, and many more, Coach Bundy is absolutely my favorite teacher!
He has made history come to life

I would like to show my appreciation toward my social studies teacher, Jason Weiss. I am grateful that he has taught me the importance of “not” making the same mistakes that people have made in the history. Mr. Weiss has made history come to life in many different ways in his classes.

His fascinating stories relating history to the present time, help me to have a better understanding of his class. Mr. Weiss’s impressions of historical figures are funny and interesting. They help me remember that person and what they did in history. I like that he takes the time to do these impersonations for the class.

On the not so bright side, I have learned some things the hard way. Mr. Weiss has helped me to understand the importance of being punctual and accountable for missing homework assignments.

He helped me realize there are no dumb questions and stressed the importance of starting assignments earlier so you don’t make as many mistakes.

My social studies grade has improved since I’ve taken Mr. Weiss’ advice. I am very lucky to have a teacher that cares about me, my grades and my classmates.

She makes reviewing for tests fun

Sarah Watts is my favorite teacher of all time. I didn’t like school, but now I do because she makes learning fun and she really cares about her students.

Ms. Watts is a magnificent teacher because she makes learning easy to understand and fun! She taught us lattice, which is an easier and fun way to do multiplication. She makes reviewing for tests fun by turning them into games like trashketball. When you get the question right, you get to throw the paper in the trash can, like basketball. When we learned about Relative Position in science, we played a game where you had to go to a place in the classroom and describe your relative position. Most of all she makes the classroom fun by allowing us to dance to music and eat snacks whenever we want.

Ms. Watts cares about her students. When I doubt myself, she encourages me. When I get nervous, she calms me. She always tells us that she loves us, and if we have any problems that we can come to her.

Ms. Watts is a fun and caring teacher. To me she will always be the best teacher in the world! I will really miss her.

She makes me feel very important

Being taught by Brittany McManus is like having a mom at school.

She is very nice to me and my classmates and helps us with our problems. We just simply raise our hands and she comes and asks what we need.

Sometimes, if we need it, she will give us special homework to help us with the problems that we have. She also tutors people after school sometimes.

I feel very safe around Mrs. McManus. I used to worry twice as much as I do now. Occasionally I do feel worried but everybody does once in a while.

This is her first year teaching at Discovery School and I’m very happy she is teaching my class because if she didn’t and we went to middle school without a teacher like her, then our lives would be very different.

I will always remember Mrs. McManus even when I am in college because I will probably never have a teacher as nice as her.

I am very quiet in school and sometimes people don’t even notice me but Mrs. McManus did and she makes me feel very important. She makes everyone feel important, but I’m writing this because she is important, too.
Honorable Mentions

She makes me excited to come to class

Throughout my years of schooling, I have had many teachers. However, few teachers have made such an impact on me as Allison Skipper has. When I signed up for Advanced Placement Biology, I had no idea it would be the best class I have ever taken.

Biology is a very complex subject to learn, but Mrs. Skipper teaches it with ease. She does an excellent job of explaining things in a visual aspect. If I have a question, she always gives her best explanation. She knows how to break things down where it is easier to understand.

The energy in the classroom is always upbeat. Mrs. Skipper always has a positive attitude that is contagious. She makes me excited to come to class. The classroom atmosphere that she provides is always interesting. I am always anticipating what we will be doing next. We hardly ever sit down a full class period. She always provides an activity for us to do so we never get bored. I always leave the class feeling more knowledgeable than when I came in. This class has been one of the highlights of my senior year. I will miss Mrs. Skipper dearly next year.

She definitely makes learning fun and enjoyable

My favorite teacher is Michelle Stroud.

Mrs. Stroud is my fifth grade homeroom teacher. She also teaches Language Arts and Social Studies to me and my classmates. Mrs. Stroud has two sons and one daughter. She also has one grandson.

There are several reasons why Mrs. Stroud is my favorite teacher. She makes learning fun and exciting.

Anytime I have had trouble, Mrs. Stroud has been very encouraging. She is always helpful and challenges me to do my best.

Another thing about Mrs. Stroud that makes her my favorite teacher is, she is a very loving person.

Mrs. Stroud and I share the same last name. Everyone thinks we are related but we are not.

I would not mind being related to Mrs. Stroud, because she is my favorite teacher.
Art Contest Winners

Gena Rogers
Grade 2
Discovery School

Bethlehem Anteneh
Grade 2
Discovery School

Amanda Williams
Grade 1
Erwin Elementary

Allison Snipes
Grade 2
North Elementary

Emily Prete
Grade 2
North Elementary

C’Letah Scott
Grade 1
Erwin Elementary

Children’s 1st Medical Center
901 W. Meeting St.
Lancaster, SC 29720
283-4200

Sigmon Auto Glass, LLC
1414 Lynwood Drive
Lancaster, SC
286-0606

Chandler’s Collision Center
1575 Great Falls Hwy.
Lancaster, SC
803-285-8686

First Citizens
302 N. Hampton St.
Kershaw, SC
803-475-2380

Morphis Pediatric Group
112-C Woodland Drive
Lancaster, SC
(803) 416-5295

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