

Jessica Kimmel **Star Teacher**

When I walked into her Math III class on the first day of my sophomore year, I knew her class would be different than all of my previous math classes. For a long time, I had to rely solely on myself to learn the odds and ends of mathematics, because of that, I quickly found easy patterns to most of the problems and shortly after my love for math dwindled.

It wasn't long after the first day of my sophomore year that I realized my experience in her class would be a good one. There was little time for me to adjust to a fast-paced curriculum, a different learning style, and a woman who loves colors; but I cannot complain. Our journey together began in Math III, which was fairly new to the both of us, then continued through IB Math, which quickly became the best class I have ever taken, through the twists and turns of AP Statistics last semester, which we are both still a little skeptical of, to finally the haven that is AP Calculus, a class I looked forward to taking almost as much as she looked forward to teaching. She taught me all of the math my little heart desired, and for that, I will be forever grateful.

She is a woman who lives for her children, cupcakes, and calculus, and I cannot thank her enough for making me fall in love with math all over again.

Thank you, Mrs. Kimmel – you have helped me more than you know.

Gaby Fonseca
Hunter Huss High School
Star Student 2018



Gaston County Schools

Katy Bradley **Star Teacher**

A commonly held idea in education is that great teachers go above and beyond simply teaching curriculum. In spite of that, I did not fully comprehend, until sitting in Mrs. Bradley's classroom, the single element which best characterizes an outstanding teacher: passion. From walking across the tables to captivate her students to creating interactive learning environments both inside and outside of her classroom, Mrs. Bradley exudes passion in every facet of her job as a teacher.

Mrs. Bradley is extremely supportive of her students both inside and outside of the classroom. On any given day, she remains at school long after the bell rings at 3:00 with students who come to relearn material or to work on lab experiments. Her innovative teaching style is incredibly effective and adaptive to ensure that she adequately teaches every student. Although it is inconvenient, Mrs. Bradley is at virtually every basketball game and other sporting events to support her students and fellow teachers.

Mrs. Bradley is not only passionate about teaching, she is dedicated to improving the community as well. She takes time outside of school to test water samples for the Catawba Riverkeeper, which gives her current and former students an application for the information she teaches about water quality in her AP Environmental Science class. She has also created a movement to revitalize the garden areas around the South Point campus with her own time and resources.

Mrs. Bradley, thank you so much for being the first teacher to make me want to incessantly spew facts I learned in class that day. Thank you for making me feel guilty any time I accidentally have a plastic water bottle. Thank you for allowing me to explore science more in depth, for checking on me when I do not seem like myself, for the ridiculous amount of Bozeman videos and podcasts, and for the fact that I have an entire sheet of paper memorized. Most of all, thank you for encapsulating the qualities of a true Star Teacher.

Jessica Helton
South Point High School
Star Student 2018



Gaston County Schools

Charles Gardner **Star Teacher**

All my life, I've felt as if nothing was ever certain. But, it's been these uncertainties, such as an absent father or even my future, that have led me to seek things that would never leave. Mr. Gardner, my Star Teacher, was that person.

Looking back, at the most critical points in my high school career, he was there supporting me. Near the end of my tenth grade year, Mr. Gardner, my former science teacher and close mentor in robotics, talked to me in the hall about the bad grades I had received that year. In those few moments, I realized I wasn't only failing my grades, myself, or my family, but him too.

After that day, I discovered a new fear that would change everything: failure. But to me, failure is not really a fear; it's more like a safety net to save me from disappointing others for not doing my best. I picked myself up and pursued a brighter future, not because someone criticized me for terrible grades, but rather because the concern came from an individual who, by investing time creating a connection with me, I knew firmly desired my success. Through this, I learned that it's these relationships that teachers like Mr. Gardner cultivate with their students that have the most impact on our lives.

I recently spoke at the Charlotte City Council Meeting with regard to creating a greater electric vehicle presence on the roads, and Mr. Gardner was there supporting me. Because of the countless moments of laughter, the many instances of encouragement, and his unyielding presence in my life, I stand here now.

Today, I want to end with thanking Mr. Gardner for being my teacher in the classroom, my mentor in robotics, and my dearest friend everywhere else. Thank you.

Selvin Lendos
Gaston Early College High School
Star Student 2018



Gaston County Schools

Trip McGill **Star Teacher**

Starting my freshman year, I took chorus because I got tired of band and my mom said I should. Little did I know that the man sitting on a stool beside the piano – wearing that shirt and tie that he didn't like wearing but did just because Joey Clinton told him he had to – would change the course of my life forever.

People like Trip McGill do not come around very often. I have never met someone who pours their life into everything they do like Mr. McGill. When people have the opportunity to attend a performance by one of his choirs, some are touched by the beauty of the choir or the message of the piece, but the thing that they never see is the one of most importance to me.

When he conducts, Mr. McGill is taken to another place and it is clearly visible by his facial expressions while conducting. All his hard work, passion, and beliefs are visible in those moments. Everything Mr. McGill does can be summed up right there. Everything he does is for his students, nothing else matters; all that he thinks about is putting us first and getting us to be the best we can be.

I recall one specific moment, on the stage of Carnegie Hall. I will never forget the look – that half smile just as he prepares to bring us in by taking the breath – in that moment we realize that he has brought us to the pinnacle; all of our hard work has paid off, and we can now just let the work speak for itself. That is just one of the many moments of Trip McGill that I will never forget.

Thank you for everything you have done for me and all the others in your life.

Lathan Flake
Ashbrook High School
Star Student 2018



Gaston County Schools

Melanie Hawkins **Star Teacher**

During my time at Cherryville High School, I have had quite a few teachers. Among them, the teacher that has had the biggest influence on me is Mrs. Hawkins.

I first had Mrs. Hawkins last year in AP English 11 and had her again this year in AP English 12. When she first told us that we would have to write essays every day in class, I was intimidated, to say the least, but later realized how beneficial this would be. Every day consisted of Mrs. Hawkins preparing us for the exam, whether it be by analyzing a book together, writing an essay, or practicing released multiple choice questions.

Thanks to Mrs. Hawkins, my classmates and I were able to pass the AP exam last year and are fully equipped with the skills that we need to pass it again this year. Without her teaching us these skills, I would not be as prepared to begin college as I am today.

Something I have always admired about Mrs. Hawkins is how much she truly cares about her students. Anytime someone needs advice or help with any problem, whether it be English, college, or life, she is always willing and more than happy to give it. Mrs. Hawkins also forges close bonds with her students and truly gets to know them on a personal level.

She is not simply a teacher, but a friend. Mrs. Hawkins never ceases to encourage me in my current and future academic endeavors as well as provide direction when I need it most. I admire her both as a teacher and as a person and am honored to have been in her class. I know she will continue to influence the students at Cherryville High School just like she has influenced me.

Taylor Paputseanos
Cherryville High School
Star Student 2018



Gaston County Schools

Allison Henry **Star Teacher**

I would like to introduce Mrs. Alison Henry. I had the privilege of having Mrs. Henry for two semesters of AP Calculus during my junior year.

Going into the class, I was very nervous and unsure because I have never had an affinity for math and lacked confidence in my ability. However, over the course of the semesters, Mrs. Henry changed that. She was able to take an extremely complex subject and break it down in a way that students could understand it, making it relatable, and yes, sometimes even interesting. I began to recognize that I could approach increasingly complex problems and achieve success, which helped me to believe in myself in an area that in the past I had considered to be my weakness. She never grew tired of answering my questions and was dedicated to assuring that each of her students stayed on track, even meeting with us on test days at seven am for a final review.

Mrs. Henry was not only concerned with her students' academic success; she cared about our growth as people. At Christmas time, Mrs. Henry invited those who wanted to participate to donate money for underprivileged students at Forestview. We went shopping and wrapped the gifts as a class, experiencing the spirit of giving to our fellow students. At the end of the year, Mrs. Henry used the final weeks of school to develop our "life skills," bringing in local experts to teach us things like how to change a tire, banking, and budgeting.

Through Mrs. Henry's dedication and support, I grew as an individual and tapped into my potential both in and out of the classroom. Perhaps she said it best when speaking about her students, "I believe in them ALL, some just need that push to believe in themselves."

Allison Roney
Forestview High School
Star Student 2018



Gaston County Schools

Joseph Yavelak **Star Teacher**

Throughout my four years at Highland School of Technology, I have been incredibly fortunate to be surrounded by such a great faculty that is genuinely concerned with students' success. Not only is everyone's dedication truly outstanding, but their persistence in consistently pushing us to become the best versions of ourselves and to reach our full potential is something I have come to really appreciate. In that way, Mr. Yavelak is the epitome of a Star Teacher.

I have had Mr. Yavelak for Precalculus, AP Statistics, and currently, AP Computer Science Principles over the last three years. His incomparable teaching style, remarkable ability to explain complicated concepts in simple terms, and overall presence to answer the many questions that I had has enabled me to develop a solid foundation for all math I might encounter in college and in the future.

I specifically remember the time when Mr. Yavelak asked me what I wanted to major in, and as a sophomore, I was still at a loss. He strongly encouraged me to enroll in AP Computer Science Principles, and I did. His class has undoubtedly pushed me out of my comfort zone and has exposed me to an entirely new field that I was previously aware existed, but knew next to nothing about. In all, I've really enjoyed his class, especially since he made it as interesting and collaborative as he could. At the same time, I found it quite enlightening as well since it enabled me to realize that computer science might not be the best fit for me to pursue. For that, I will always be thankful.

I cannot thank you enough, Mr. Yavelak, but thank you so much for everything.

Priya Shah
Highland School of Technology
Star Student 2018



Gaston County Schools