

Celebrities & Notable Public Figures Thank Their Most Memorable Teachers

CELEBRITIES

Patti LaBelle, Singer

Ms. Eileen Brown
John Bartram High School
Philadelphia, PA

"Ms. Brown was very special because she was my mentor. She was very helpful to my family and me. She and I became close friends and are good friends. After so many years, we still spend time talking on the phone."

Constance Marie, Actress, "The George Lopez Show"

Ms. Nancy Strict
Hancock Park Elementary School
Los Angeles, CA

"During one of our art projects, Ms. Strict (third grade teacher) pointed out to me how good I was. She gave me one-on-one time and went on to say that I was great at recreating the details on my art project. I, of course, grew more confident in my work and majored in art."

Megan Mullally, Actress, "Will and Grace"

Mr. Steven C. Surbeck
Casady School
Oklahoma City, OK

"My high school English teacher, who for some reason assigned me the role of Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* when we read it aloud in class—it was the first time I'd ever done anything remotely like acting, and I thought, *hmmmm...*"

Zoe Saldana, Actress

Ms. Dilia Miseses
Ritmos Espacio de Danza
Dominican Republic

“Dilia taught me the importance of perseverance and discipline one must have in order to obtain results that will bring you happiness and success.”

Ruben Studdard, Singer

Mr. Joseph Smith
L.M. Smith Middle School
Birmingham, AL

“Mr. Smith introduced me to so many genres of music and taught me how to appreciate them all.”

Hilary Swank, Actress

Mr. Eric Sellereit
Happy Valley Elementary
Bellingham, Washington

“Mr. Sellereit gave me my first acting job in my school production of *The Jungle Book!*”

Wilmer Valderrama, Actor

Mr. Edwin Tucker,
Taft High School
Los Angeles, CA

“Mr. Tucker has never forgotten what he has in common with his students...which is that he was a kid once, therefore he will always be able to be heard by his students, who feel 100 percent respected and validated.”

Michelle Williams, Singer, Member of Former Grammy-Award Winning Destiny’s Child

Mr. Chuck Powers
Jackson Elementary School
Rockford, IL

“Wow....I have more than one memorable teacher.....ummmmmm let me see.....my elementary school sixth grade teacher...his name is Mr. Powers from Jackson Elementary School in Rockford, IL. Mr Powers had a way of connecting with his students and not being judgmental. He was easy to talk to yet he was stern. Mr Powers was a man who even the meanest child didn't want to disrespect! I also liked the fact that we would have 'Subway' days where we'd

order Subway sandwiches and eat them in class around lunchtime! You know, as a kid, things like that mean something..."

Oprah Winfrey, Entrepreneur

Ms. Mary Duncan
Wharton Elementary School
East Nashville, TN

"Teachers are often the people who inspire us the most. I know I wouldn't be where I am today without my fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Duncan. She so believed in me, and for the first time, made me embrace the idea of learning. I learned to love learning because of Mrs. Duncan."

NOTABLE PUBLIC FIGURES

Doug Atchison, Director and Writer, "Akeelah and the Bee"

Mr. Robert Larabell
Arcadia High School
Phoenix, AZ

"Mr. Larabell challenged me as a writer, demanded discipline in my use of language, and inspired me to deeper levels of critical thought—and he did all of this with a high level of erudition and a whip-smart sense of humor."

Robert L. Curbeam, Jr., (Captain, USN), NASA Astronaut

Dr. Frances (Kosnik) Alderson
Woodlawn Junior High School
Baltimore County, MD

"She taught me the importance of foreign language in the education of a successful person, regardless of their primary course of study. I still use my German to this day in both work and social situations, and I have since taken classes in both Russian and Japanese."

John Paul DeJoria, CEO and Co-Founder, Paul Mitchell

Mr. Wachs
John Marshall High School
Los Angeles, CA

“Mr. Wachs was my 11th grade business teacher at John Marshall High School in Los Angeles, and his big impact came when he caught me and my friend Michelle passing notes during his lecture. He announced to the class that Michelle and I were the two students least likely to succeed in the entire school. He wasn't entirely right. Michelle became Michelle Phillips of the Mamas and the Poppas and she's in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, and I did all right eventually. But, in a way he was very much right because if you don't pay attention when knowledge or opportunity come your way, you're going to be the loser. And if you have knowledge, you can make opportunity happen. There came a moment as a young adult when I was living in the back of my car and picking up pop bottles to feed my son. I remembered Mr. Wachs' insistence on focus. So I focused on the fact that I had once successfully sold encyclopedias door to door. If you can do that, you can do anything. It restored my determination and self belief.”

Ed Lu, NASA Astronaut

Mr. Jack Yengo

R.L. Thomas High School (now called Webster Thomas)

Webster, NY

“Coach Yengo taught us the value of hard work and perseverance.”

Steve Robinson, Astronaut

Ms. Betty Doke

Rheem School

Moraga, CA

“Mrs. Doke was a science teacher (now retired but still very active in California education). She was the most encouraging teacher I have known and worked tirelessly to develop her students' individual talents and interests. She applied great creativity to her presentation of the world of science, and each student was made to feel that his or her own special interests were the highest priority to Mrs. Doke. Her encouragement for my own interest in science and engineering was a significant force in my choice of careers, and she has stayed in touch by attending each of my launches on the space shuttle.”

ATHLETES

Ethan Albright, Guard, Washington Redskins

Mr. Joe Franks
Grimsley Senior High School
Greensboro, NC

“Joe’s passion and enthusiasm for teaching makes learning in his classroom a joy. It is very unique to be able to connect with high school kids and to teach with such a genuine caring attitude the way Joe is able to do it.”

Mark Bruener, Tight End, Houston Texans

Mr. Randy Hancock
Aberdeen High School
Aberdeen, WA

“Mr. Hancock’s dedication to his students was unmatched by any of my teachers. He taught his students how to be young adults. He encouraged us to look further than just the surface with everything we did. I can honestly say he was a big inspiration for me.”

Marc Burch, Forward, Los Angeles Galaxy

Mr. Ken Poe
Turpin High School
Cincinnati, OH

“He taught my whole family and taught in a special way.”

Mom

“In ninth grade, my mom was my teacher in English...so in the grander scheme, she is DEFINITELY my favorite!”

Chris Burke, Second Baseman, Houston Astros

Mr. John Price
St. Xavier High School
Louisville, KY

“The reason I liked Mr. Price so much was because he had a wealth of knowledge about everything. He had stories and little tales that weren’t in text books. He wasn’t just reading along with us. He added a lot of insight and actually made history fun.”

Zack Crockett, Running Back, Oakland Raiders

Mr. James L. Jones

“Mr. James L. Jones (principal) played the roll of father, teacher, and friend, especially when I had my oldest daughter when I was 16. I could have easily steered off into the wrong direction, but he pushed me to be a great father. He picked my classes so that I got the best education and made sure I kept a certain GPA for my college years. [He] instilled in me the goal of going to college—not only to go but get a degree to better my life ...”

Steve Cronin, Goalkeeper, Los Angeles Galaxy

Mrs. Weldon

Earl LeGette Elementary School

Fair Oaks, CA

“She taught me and cared the most. I still visit her when I am in town.”

Landon Donovan, Forward, Los Angeles Galaxy

Mrs. Godding

Edison Elementary School

Ontario, CA

“She taught me how to grow up using positive methods.”

Brian Dunseth, Defender, Los Angeles Galaxy

Mr. Derrick Kerr

Damien, La Verne, CA

“He was my Spanish teacher and soccer coach.”

Michael Enfield, Forward/Midfield, Los Angeles Galaxy

Dennis Enfield

Ventura High School

Ventura, CA

“He cared for all of his students and spent time outside of school to help students in school and life. He stressed improvement as a grading priority as well as encouraged students to have fun. He was a passionate teacher as well as funny.”

Jay Feely, Kicker, New York Giants

Mr. Robert Weiner
Jesuit High School
Tampa, FL

“Without question the best teacher I ever had was Robert Weiner ... He inspired as well as educated, and his life was the greatest educational tool he had. I respected him so much I asked him to be the best man at my wedding!”

Josh Gardner, Left Midfielder, Los Angeles Galaxy

Mrs. Rayford
Creek High School
Kary, TX

“She pushed me to get better grades and never allowed me to just get by.”

Akbar Gbaja-Biamila, Linebacker, San Diego Chargers

Mr. Guy Reed
Audubon Junior High School
Los Angeles, CA

“Mr. Reed is truly committed to excellence as a math teacher. He is not only a teacher of math but a teacher of life. He helped me understand the meaning of commitment by having perfect attendance for 30 years. He never took a day off. That motivated me on and off the field.”

Chris Gomez, Third Baseman, Baltimore Orioles

Mr. Rob Wigod

“[H]e was a great mentor, not only was he a great teacher but [he also was] a good baseball coach.”

Alan Gordon, Striker, Los Angeles Galaxy

Mrs. Keller
Gilbert High School
Gilbert, AZ

“She was a teacher who really cared about me and wanted me to make something out of myself, when times were bad. If not for her, I would not be here today.”

Kevin Hartman, Goalkeeper, Los Angeles Galaxy

Mr. Mills
Belle Heth Elementary School
Radford, VA

“Mr. Mills was always mixing things up so that everyone was interested. He made learning very exciting.”

Ramon Hernandez, Catcher, Baltimore Orioles

Dad

“My dad ... always pushed me hard and wanted me to do the best I could in everything. When everything goes bad, he taught me to keep my head up. He gave me a lot of confidence.”

Larry Izzo, Linebacker, New England Patriots

Ms. Jo Ann Pearson
Broad Run High School
Ashburn, VA

“She was good friends with my varsity football coach, Jerry Smith, and she helped keep me focused on my schoolwork so that I would be able to continue to excel in athletics. Without her constant motivation, I wouldn’t have achieved what I have achieved in my life thus far. I am very grateful that I had people like her and Coach Smith looking out for me when I needed some direction in my life.”

Nick Leckey, Center, Arizona Cardinals

Ms. Bennie Gillam
Timberline Elementary School
Grapevine, TX

“She really cared about us. I still get letters from her to this day. She has even seen me play versus the Cowboys. She would have mystery readers who would come in and read a story to us and hang out for a bit with us and help with our schoolwork. It has inspired me to read to kids on Tuesdays during the season. We always did cool things like International Day where everyone

brought food from another country. My mom brought up a crepe maker and we had crepes with powdered sugar and syrup, it was so much fun. She is always happy and upbeat, a person who truly loves her job. She made coming to school fun day in and day out.”

Brad Lidge, Pitcher, Houston Astros

Mr. Coble
Cherry Creek High School
Denver, CO

“He taught World History and World Geography and he was extremely smart and very animated. He loved what he was doing and he has made me like it ever since.”

Rodrigo Lopez, Pitcher, Baltimore Orioles

Ms. Elisa

“[S]he really was passionate about teaching, she could handle all subjects and I learned a lot from her.”

Darnerien McCants, Wide Receiver, Philadelphia Eagles

Mr. Donald Becker
Delaware State University
Dover, DE

“He set me free as an artist.”

Melvin Mora, Third Baseman, Baltimore Orioles

Mr. Walter Rodriguez

“[He] was the one who made me play baseball.”

Roy Oswalt, Pitcher, Houston Astros

Coach Gant (health teacher, football/baseball coach)
Weir High School
Weir, MS

“My favorite teacher was my Health teacher, Coach Gant. He was also my football coach and baseball coach. As a teacher and coach, he got the most out of me and really got me to push myself.”

Chad Qualls, Pitcher, Houston Astros

Mr. Stockstill
Eschelman Avenue School
Lomita, CA

“Mr. Stockstill was my first grade teacher and he taught me all of the subjects. I am a big math guy and I have to thank him for that. I remember the different card games he would play with us to help us learn addition. I had a lot of fun in his class.”

Shelton Quarles, Linebacker, Tampa Bay Buccaneers

Ms. Joan Woods
Whites Creek High School
Whites Creek, TN

“She took a vested interest in me as a person and not an athlete. She inspired me to be the best that I could be in the classroom and that would translate to me being a better player on the football field. Ultimately, her instruction allowed me to take tougher honors classes in high school, which in turn prepared me to be a good student at Vanderbilt University, one of the most prestigious universities in the country.”

Troy Roberts, Defender, Los Angeles Galaxy

Mr. Mcloed
Mattos Elementary School
Fremont, CA

“He was a great motivator and always willing to help students achieve their goals.”

Brian Schneider, Catcher, Washington Nationals

Mr. Joe Schwartz
Northampton Junior High School
Northampton, PA

“Mr. Schwartz was one of my favorite teachers because he treated everyone with respect and was not just your teacher but also was a friend. He gave the extra effort to help you at all costs.”

Miguel Tejada, Shortstop, Baltimore Orioles

Mr. Enrique Soto

“[He] helped me to get to the big leagues.”

Jamie Watson, Forward, Real Salt Lake
Mr. Kelly Hayes
Coppell High School
Coppell, TX

“Everyday, he met the class with a smile and brought an attitude that was contagious to having fun, and learning at the same time. This was always one of the classes i looked forward to going to daily. I still keep in touch with him and when my brother recently was in the hospital suffering from an illness, he was right there by his side, just to be there for him. Brett had also been in Mr. Hayes’ class and this just shows what kind of person he is as well as being a great mentor for every kid he teaches. This man has touched my life and helped show me some of the characteristics that a man should strive to be.”

Preston Wilson, Left Field/Center Field, Houston Astros
Ms. Duffoer
Bamberg-Erhardt High School
Bamberg, SC

“Ms. Duffoer taught me English my senior year. She was patient with everybody. I don’t know how it happened but I was her teacher’s pet. She was one of the teachers throughout the school that everyone said was really tough, but I got along great with her and I did really well in her class.”

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Rep. Gary L. Ackerman (D-NY)
Mrs. Eva Ackerman (mother)

“[S]he taught me everything I know.”

Rep. Robert E. Andrews (D-NJ)
Ms. Jean C. Parks
Bellmawr Public Schools
Bellmawr, NJ

“Mrs. Parks, my kindergarten teacher, combined the qualities of great storyteller, life-lessons teacher, and loving mother. I still keep in touch with her and cherish her friendship and love.”

Rep. Joe Baca (D-CA)

Miss Osbourne
Bartow High School
Barstow, CA

“Miss Osborne always motivated me to set high goals for myself and was an encouraging teacher. Those kinds of teachers really don’t come along that often. But she helped to build my confidence, set me in the right direction, and gave me the ‘si se puede’ attitude that I could do anything I set my mind to.”

Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)

Mr. Robert Prugh
West High School
Madison, WI

“Mr. Prugh made the 1980 Presidential elections (the first Presidential election in which I could vote) come alive in the classroom. I already had the political bug, before taking his class, but he certainly nurtured my interest in policy and the political process.”

Sen. Evan B. Bayh (D-IN)

Mr. Ferdinand Ruge
St. Albans School
Washington, D.C.

“Mr. Ruge was an inspirational teacher who instilled in me a love for a vanishing art form: written English. He emphasized clear, concise prose-not common among practitioners of my current profession.

Sen. Robert F. Bennett (R-UT)

Mr. G. Homer Durham
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT

“He had a radical notion about education. He said ‘the most important course in the political science department is Political Science 1. Since I am the department head, it follows that I should teach the department’s most important course.’ ... [He] taught me about the Constitution and James Madison and Thomas

Jefferson and the constitutional convention. Through his instruction, I read the Federalist Papers and began a lifelong love affair with political theory and the Constitution. I've always appreciated the insights I gained under the tutelage of G. Homer Durham. Even today, 50 years later, as I continue my work in the U.S. Senate, and strive to meet the responsibilities of my office, I find that I frequently harken back to the days at the University of Utah and Dr. Durham's Political Science 1 class, and how applicable and valuable those lessons still are today. He certainly made a difference in my life."

Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV)

Mr. Gary Bedunna
Mr. Herb Baker
Mr. Charlie Silvertery
Valley High School
Las Vegas, NV

Rep. Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (D-GA)

Mr. Lester Rutland
Central High School
Mobile, AL

"Mr. Rutland encouraged and inspired [me] to become involved in student government and eventually run for school, district, and state Student Council President positions."

Rep. Timothy H. Bishop (D-NY)

Mr. Clyde Thompson
Southampton High School

"Mr. Thompson instilled in me a fascination with government and public service, as well as an appreciation for history. He also taught me how to write."

Rep. Roy Blunt (R-MO)

Missouri Teachers

"As a former teacher, I recognize the challenges facing today's educators and appreciate their hard work and dedication to young people. We must work to ensure that the education system of the United States is second to none. I had many wonderful teachers over the years and I would like to take this opportunity to thank

all of the teachers in Southwest Missouri and throughout the United States for investing their time and energy into the most important resource we have.”

Rep. Leonard L. Boswell (D-IA)

Rose Varner
Thompson School
Ringold County, IA

“Mrs. Varner taught me that reading books would open the world to me and encouraged me to always do better. Her inspiration has been a guiding light throughout my life.”

Rep. F. Allen Boyd, Jr. (D-FL)

Ms. Blanche Clarke
Aucilla Christian Academy
Monticello, FL

“Ms. Clarke was the first teacher I had outside of my parents. At the time, there was no kindergarten or pre-school, so she had the awesome task of teaching my class of first and second graders what it meant to be in a classroom-how to sit still, listen, and learn. Ms. Blanche took our young wonder in the world and showed us how to concentrate it into a structured educational goal.”

Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN)

Ms. Florence Geisler
Public School 73
Indianapolis, IN

“She was the most dedicated teacher I ever had. She was tough but fair and always went the extra mile for her kids and students.”

Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-WV)

Mrs. W. J. B. Cormany
Mark Twain High School
Raleigh County, WV

“She taught me to put my best efforts into everything I undertake, a lesson so important that it has remained with me to this day.”

Rep. Ken Calvert (R-CA)

Mr. Arthur “Art” Van Matre

“He left quite an impression on [me] and really taught [me] a lot about character.”

Rep. Dave Camp (R-MI)

Ms. Rosemary Baker
HH Dow High School
Midland, MI

“Thank you for bringing intelligence and a sense of humor to the classroom. You took teaching to a higher level. I still remember you giving me the Latin and Greek derivations of many words in English class at HH Dow High School in Midland, Michigan. You were truly an inspiration to this student and many others. I will always remember your dedication and your belief in your students. Thank You.”

Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA)

Miss Lacey
Sackajewa Elementary School
Richland, WA

“[Miss Lacey] inspired a love of writing.”

Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO)

Ms. Beverly Buchheit
Shepard Elementary School
St. Louis, MO

“As an active leader in local St. Louis politics, Beverly inspired, encouraged, and supported my public service.”

Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE)

Mrs. Buckles
Tower Hill Private School
Wilmington, DE

“Mrs. Buckles taught me grammar.”

Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH)

Ms. Parma (Fiero) Samad
St. Catherine of Siena School
Cincinnati, OH

“Ms. Fiero emphasized learning about other countries. I remember one assignment, which I especially enjoyed, required us to conduct

research into other countries and cultures. Ms. Fiero asked us to put together a booklet that contained information about countries from around the world. I was fascinated by what I learned and this really sparked my interest in world affairs. I now serve on the House International Relations Committee, and I root my interest in world affairs in Ms. Fiero's lessons."

Rep. Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick (D-MI)

Dr. Tommie Johnson
High School of Commerce

"Dr. Tommie Johnson of the High School of Commerce made learning fun and reinforced my belief that I had the potential to accomplish anything. Helping young people understand the power of their dreams is a wonderful motivator and something that I worked to instill in my students when I was a teacher and continue to share with my children, grandchildren, and America's youth."

Del. Donna M. Christensen (D-VI)

Ms. Mercedes Jackson
St. Mary's Catholic School
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

"In addition to being no-nonsense, she was encouraging and understanding of the ways of a second grader, as the only African American and local teacher ... Ms. Jackson became a role model for [me]."

Rep. Howard Coble (R-NC)

Rosemary Murphy
Kernodle Middle School
Greensboro, NC

"I thank you once again for your invitation to your school. I very much enjoyed my time with the staff and students. You are an outstanding public school educator. I value the friendship of you and your family. Best regards to you and your professional and personal families."

Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS)

Ms. Emma Grace Cochran
Byram High School
Jackson, MS

“Her enthusiasm for learning was contagious. She had a great sense of humor and made being in her classroom fun, and at the same time inspired all her students to work hard and do their very best.”

Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND)

Miss Barbie
Roosevelt High School
Bismarck, ND

“She was warm, engaging, and made me think.”

Leland Skabo
Roosevelt High School
Bismarck, ND

“He also made me stretch my thinking. Each of these teachers commanded respect, and any one of them could have been a United States Senator. I am grateful for the impact they have had on my life.”

The Senator was raised by his grandmother, who was a teacher and always emphasized the importance of education in the household.

Rep. Jim Cooper (D-TN)

Ms. Coy Summerford
Madison Street Elementary
Shelbyville, TN

“The only paddling I ever got in school was from her, and I deserved it. She was strict, but she was brilliant. I was in her class when John F. Kennedy was shot.”

Rep. John Culberson (R-TX)

Ms. Sylvia Norton
West University Elementary
Houston, TX

“[She] encouraged my lifelong love of learning and helped me learn to respect and get along with others.”

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD)

Mr. Hollis Posey
Baltimore, MD

“Mr. Posey was the person who convinced me that I could achieve anything if I worked hard and simply believed.”

Prior to having Mr. Posey, Rep. Cummings was placed in special education because he was told that he “talked too much.” Mr. Posey’s encouragement helped Rep. Cummings leave special education and enter into Baltimore’s prestigious Baltimore City College High School, from where his colleagues Reps. Ruppertsberger and Cardin also graduated, go to Howard University, and then on to law school.

Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-IL)

Ms. Beaddie King

No school name

Parkdale, AR

“Ms. Beaddie was an inspiration and such a wonderful teacher. [S]he was my kindergarten teacher and then later on she was my English and literature teacher when I graduated from high school.”
Congressman Davis grew up in rural Arkansas where school was in session only five months a year. He attended a one-room school.

Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro (D-CT)

Sister Margaret Ellen

Marymount College

Arlington, VA

Rep. Charles W. Dent (R-PA)

Mr. Robert Fisher

Allen High School

“He taught courses in the Cold War and helped stimulate [my] interest in foreign policy. He actively promoted critical thinking among his students.”

Rep. Norman D. Dicks (D-WA)

Ms. Charlotte Dunn

Naval Avenue Elementary School

Bremerton, WA

Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT)

Ms. Peterson

East School

West Hartford, CT

“Mrs. Peterson was a tremendously positive teacher. In first grade, she pinned a note for my mom on the back of my jacket that read: ‘Let the proudest boy in West Hartford read his first book to you!’ Mrs. Peterson’s enthusiasm was contagious and gave me confidence to try new things and succeed.”

Sen. Byron L. Dorgan (R-ND)

Ms. Deloras Tollefson

“[She is an] English teacher, still correcting his work!”

Sen. Michael Enzi (R-WY)

Mr. Charles Popovich

Sheridan High School

Sheridan, WY

“Thank you! I still remember my geometry and trigonometry courses that you taught me. You helped to get me interested in numbers and that probably started me down the road to my getting into accounting. Then, when I served as Mayor of Gillette, you were Sheridan’s Athletic Director. You helped get everyone interested in our local football rivalries and that has lasted to this day. I have often said that one of the great joys of life is learning and keeping an active curiosity about all the different things we encounter in life. You helped instill that philosophy in me and I am still learning new things as I find

Rep. Bob Etheridge (D-NC)

Ms. Flossie Barber

Cleveland School

Clayton, NC

“In Memoriam: If I could talk to you today, I would tell you that your early lessons enabled me to achieve my goals and more. You never accepted anything but the best from me. by being stern and tough, but always caring with each and every student, you exemplified what teaching should be. Thank you.”

Coach Bruce Coats

Cleveland School

Clayton, NC

“You taught me what it meant to be a member of a team and how to contribute to the greater good. You understood what it means to do the homework, and that getting the job done lays the groundwork to achieve at a later date. I thank you for being the ultimate one-on-one teacher, and helping me to reach my goals in life. Thank you.”

Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA)

Ms. Enid Larson
Carmel High School
Carmel, CA

“She never used books, but rather she taught students to find their own answers to questions...In this way she was developing potential and encouraging students to understand their own capacities and how to do good with those.”

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)

Ms. Virginia Ryder
Grant School
San Francisco, CA

“She took me under her wing, giving me individual attention, and enabled me to go to a good high school. On this National Teacher Day, I thank Ms. Ryder for her extraordinary service and thank all of the wonderful teachers across the country who work tirelessly to ensure that our children reach their highest potential.”

Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA)

Ms. Erin Filner
Fox Lane Middle School
Bedford, NY

“My daughter, Erin Filner, inspires me each and every day—as she goes into her middle school social studies classes at Fox Lane Middle School, Bedford, NY, and gives all her energy, creativity and commitment to 150 students—who themselves are inspired to learn, think, and critique. Thank you, Erin!”

Rep. J. Randy Forbes (R-VA)

The Honorable Harry B. Blevins (current member of Virginia Senate)
Great Bridge High School
Chesapeake, VA

“He raised the funds to send me to the first Presidential Classroom for Young Americans, saying if they can train one student in government, he would then come back and make a difference in the community and help train others.”

Res. Com. Luis Fortuño (R-Puerto Rico)

Brother Francisco Guezmes

Colegio Marista
Guaynabo, PR

“He was special because he instilled in me a desire to speak and write correctly, and [he] was an example of how hard work pays off.”

Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC)

Mr. Jack Norton
Crossnore High School
Crossnore, NC

“I grew up exceptionally poor and worked as my high school’s janitor while I was a student in order to help my family. Mr. Norton recognized my talents and inspired me to be the first person in my family to graduate high school and go to college.”

Rep. Virgil H. Goode (R-VA)

Ms. Odell Parcell and Ms. Dorothy Smith
Sontag Elementary School
Franklin County, VA

“She was especially kind to every student and helped us get started in public education. Ms. Smith loved every student and was an expert at the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic.”

Congressman Goode attended a four-room framed school that housed grades one through seven.

Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA)

Dr. Irma Plaehn
The University of Northern Iowa

“Dr. Plaehn was a special teacher because she took such a personal interest in the welfare of her students beyond the classroom.”

Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ)

Mrs. Pare
Sunnyside High School
Tucson, AZ

“How can you pick one favorite teacher when there are so many teachers who have had an impact on your life?”

Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE)

Ms. Mildred Herrod
St. Bonaventure High School
Columbus, NE

“She inspired me, she challenged me, she communicated with me, and she taught me. The essential ingredients for a memorable teacher.”

Rep. Ralph Hall (D-TX)

Ms. Willie D. Yarborough

“She was the first teacher who made me believe I could be a success.”

Rep. Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL)

Mr. H.L. Douglas
Crooms Academy High School
Sanford, FL

“H.L. Douglas, a gentleman and a scholar. He coached basketball, football, baseball, and taught chemistry. [He was a] no-nonsense disciplinarian who exuded love.”

Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)

Ms. Eleanor Smith
Baldwin High School
Pittsburgh, PA

“She inspired me to go on to college at a time when the most that could be expected of me was to continue to work at the trade that I had learned. She told me that one day I would be a great poet.”

Rep. Stephanie Herseth (D-SD At Large)

Mr. John Westby
Groton High School
Groton, SD

“Mr. Westby had a profound impact on my high school years as he cultivated my interest in government and politics. He was diplomatic, yet firm in articulating his expectations of high

performance, and this kind of steady encouragement taught me the value of setting high standards for academics and for life in general. He was particularly persistent and persuasive in recruiting me to join the debate team. While I was originally hesitant, he challenged me to join and I have never regretted it.”

Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY)

Ms. Lynette Flewelling
Saugerties High School
Saugerties, NY

“She introduced me to magnificent novels and fostered my love of literature.”

Rep. Rush D. Holt (D-NJ)

Mrs. Brown
Lewisburg Elementary School
Lewisburg, WV

Rep. Michael Honda (D-CA)

Mrs. Jefferson
Mr. Flanagan
William H. Ray Elementary School
Chicago, IL

“It is with great pleasure that I recognize two teachers who have had a great impact on my life. Mrs. Jefferson and Mr. Flanagan demonstrated an outstanding ability to make me feel like more than just a student in their classroom. They acknowledged my contributions outside the school and valued me as a person. Both teachers were accessible to me as a middle school student, encouraging students with their warm and engaging personalities. I will be forever grateful for their support and the self-confidence they nurtured in me when I was a young boy. There is no doubt that teachers are the heart of our schools and the individual interactions between a pupil and their teacher is crucial to learning and shaping students’ lives. I want to thank all of our teachers for the work they do and the dedication they have for our children.”

Rep. Jay Inslee (D-WA)

Mr. Wendall McCain
Ingraham High School
Seattle, WA

“Mr. McCain not only taught me the immortal precept: ‘Do like you oughter, add the acid to the water;’ he also awakened in me the recognition that chemistry is fundamental to our knowledge of the environment. When I’m working to reduce the acidification of the

oceans by cutting carbon-dioxide emissions, it is due in part to the teachings of Wendall McCain.”

Rep. Jesse L. Jackson, Jr. (D-IL)

Mr. George Constanople
Mr. Brown
St. Albans Episcopal
Washington, D.C.

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Mr. Cleo Jones
A.J. Moore High School
Waco, TX

“Mr. Jones challenged each and every one of his students to be the best they could be and cared for them as if they were his own.”

Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD)

Ms. Donna (Cook) Gross
Vermillion High School
Vermillion, SD

“[She] inspired me to acquire an interest in literature and in writing. She also pointed out that I could be both a football player and a good student.”

Sen. John Kerry (D-MA)

Reverend John Walker

“I will never forget the Reverend John Walker. He was the first African-American teacher at our school, and he got us interested in the growing civil rights movement and, frankly, taught us all a lot about life.”

Rep. Jack Kingston (R-GA)

Mr. John Townsend
Clark Junior High School
Athens, GA

“Through Mr. Townsend, [I] learned that civics and politics was ‘cool.’“

Rep. Dale E. Kildee (D-MI)

Sister Mary Hilory
St. Mary's School
Flint, MI

“You taught me to question authority. Thank you.”

Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL)

Mr. Robert Karp
Joseph Sears School
Kenilworth, IL

“Mr. Karp invented ‘Geography Baseball’ and turned it into a rite of passage in our town. We memorized the locations of Georgia (then in the Soviet Union), Goa (in India) and the Gobi desert (in China). It sparked an interest to see each of these places and to understand America’s role in the world. I have seen each one and am now working to expand language and exchange opportunities for all American students. Mr. Karp has passed away, but I carried his legacy as a nursery school assistant, middle school teacher, and now as a congressman.”

Rep. John R. “Randy” Kuhl, Jr. (R-NY)

Mr. Harold Block
Hammondsport Central School
Hammondsport, NY

“Coach Block was a motivator—he knew what motivated each individual person and knew how to treat them based on what their specific needs were. Coach Block inspired me not only to participate in high school athletics but [also] to excel in academics at the same time, allowing me to reach my full potential in both areas. This is a critical message to all students today, no matter where they are or want to be in life.”

Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich (D-OH)

St. John Cantinus
Cleveland, OH

He “liked them all!”

Rep. James R. Langevin (D-RI)

Mr. John Jackson
Bishop Hendricken High School

Warwick, RI

“Mr. Jackson had a way of engaging his social studies class in current events, one that inspired me to become more involved in government and never stop looking for ways to make the world better.”

Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA)

Mr. T.T. Kies
CAL Community High School
Latimer, IA

“Mr. Kies was an outstanding educator who was a friend and counselor to everyone in the community. He taught mathematics in a method that made it relevant to our everyday lives, allowing students to easily grasp the real life need for studying the subject.”

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT)

Ms. Margaret Poole
Belltown School
Stamford, CT

“I had some great teachers, but I will give the prize to Margaret Poole, my fourth and sixth grade teacher, a strong, optimistic woman who taught me the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic and also encouraged me to be a leader, in an elementary school kind of way.”

Rep. Frank A. LoBiondo (R-NJ)

Father Murray
Georgetown Preparatory School
North Bethesda, MD

“Father Murray motivated the students.”

Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Mr. John C. Attig
Gunn High School
Palo Alto, CA

“Your government class was the best—from kindergarten to 12th grade, my very favorite. You are a talented teacher who made the class fun—and who would have thought then that what you were teaching me would be put to its current use 40 years later! Thank you!”

Rep. Don Manzullo (R-IL)

Ms. Evelyn Miller
Morris Kennedy Elementary School
Rockford, IL

“Evelyn Miller, my first grade teacher, changed my life: she taught me to read, she was present when I announced my candidacy for Congress, and she attended my victory party!”

Rep. Kenny Marchant (R-TX)

Ms. Georgia Ogle
R.L. Turner High School
Carrollton, TX

“When I first ran for city council in Carrollton, she returned my campaign brochure. It was corrected with a red pen for grammatical errors.”

Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA)

Ms. Mildred Bates
Downers Grove North High School
Downers Grove, IL

Mr. Edward Maas
Downers Grove North High School
Downers Grove, IL

“Teachers in high school, both negative and positive, had the greatest influence on me ... [She] said I’d never graduate from college. Mrs. Mildred Bates, while negative, made me believe in myself. Mr. Edward Maas, another teacher, pushed me hard. Mr. Maas challenged me to be better than I was. He believed in me.”

Rep. James P. McGovern (D-MA)

Ms. Donahue
Worcester Academy
Worcester, MA

“Regardless of a child’s achievement, [she] was accepting and encouraging.”

Rep. Mike McIntyre (D-NC)

Ms. Marion Thompson
Lumberton High School
Lumberton, NC

“Marion Thompson is a true professional whose love of teaching is evident in the enthusiasm, eagerness, and effectiveness she demonstrates with every class and each individual student. Both my wife and I treasure the positive and powerful learning experience we had under her tutelage. She could have been successful at any number of professions, but Marion choose teaching and elevated it to its highest level.”

Rep. Kendrick Meek (D-FL)

Dr. Sharon Wooten
Florida A&M University
Tallahassee, FL

“Dr. Sharon Wooten served as a college tutor and mentor and helped me deal with my dyslexia. Without her guidance, understanding, and patience, I would not have been able to graduate college on time. She continues to be a strong voice for those with learning disabilities, helping hundreds of other students deal with the challenges they face in college.”

Rep. Gregory W. Meeks (D-NY)

Ms. Elizabeth Anderson
Julia Richmond High School
Manhattan, NY

“Ms. Anderson went above and beyond what was required of her as a teacher and inspired young people like myself to live up to their potential. Countless times, she showed how invested she was in our achievement, like the time she rallied around me when I ran for student leadership, it sparked my interest in public service.”

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ)

Ms. Gail Harper
Union Hill High School
Union City, NJ

“She helped me overcome and master my fear of speaking in public, which obviously changed my life.”

Rep. Michael H. Michaud (D-ME)

Mr. Andy Hopkins
Schenk High School
East Millinocket, ME

“Encouraged civic involvement, even if he was Republican!”

Rep. Dennis Moore (D-KS)

Ms. Doris Everest
Thomas Jefferson Elementary School
Wichita, KS

“Mrs. Everest had the perfect balance of kindness and determination-challenging her students to be the absolute best they could be and always supporting them when they needed extra help.”

Rep. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)

Mrs. McMahan
Glen Dale Elementary
Glen Dale, WV

“Thank you, Mrs. McMahan, my first grade teacher at Glen Dale Elementary in Glen Dale, WV. She taught me to love school, to begin to learn how to read and to respect my teacher. She had a warm heart and a firm hand that helped to lead me to a lifelong love of learning.”

Rep. Jerry Moran (R-KS)

Ms. Mabel Pruter
Plainville Grade School
Plainville, KS

“Mrs. Pruter cared about each of her students, loved each one of them, but had high expectations of all students. She made it clear that I had the ability to do well if I applied myself and that it was OK to be smart.”

Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Ms. Hattie Buness
Evergreen Elementary School
Wrangell, AL

“Mrs. Bunes opened the world for me when she taught me to read, to explore, and to question.

Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)
High School Band Teacher

“He taught us about the importance of working as a team, practicing and working hard.”

Rep. Sue Myrick (R-NC)
Ms. Gross
Noble Elementary School
Tiffin, Ohio

“My sixth grade teacher, Ms. Gross, at Noble Elementary School in Tiffin, Ohio had a tremendous influence in shaping my life. She made me want to go to school and learn, taught me to accept the talents she saw in me and to develop self-confidence. I was always determined to strive to not let her down! I still think of her and thank her.”

Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-NJ)
Sister Emila Joseph
St. John the Baptist
Patterson, NJ

Rep. Ed Pastor (D-AZ)
Mr. Henry Reyna
Miami High School
Miami, AZ

“Mr. Reyna was the only Mexican-American teacher at the high school and [he] inspired me to overcome any barriers in order to achieve my goals.”

Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN)
Ms. Esther Fisher
St. Columba Catholic School
Columbus, IN

“She was my second grade and fifth grade teacher. She changed my life because she believed in me.”

Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND)
Mr. Joseph Westby

Valley City Senior High School
Valley City, ND

“Mr. Westby knew his chemistry and cared about his students. Long before he devoted his career to advancing education through leadership with the state’s education association, he devoted himself to teaching science, including to challenging students like myself. I’ve known Mr. Westby for 35 years, and after all this time I know he still can teach me a thing or two and will the next time we sit down to talk education policy.”

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI)

Brother Amian Paul
LaSalle Academy
Providence, RI

“He had an intimidating manner. He shook me into realizing I had academic potential. He did that literally by shaking me.”

Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH)

Ms. Grace Riffer
Beach City High School
Beach City, OH

“She is still alive, and [I] still correspond with her.”

Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV)

Mrs. Pickard
Searchlight Elementary School
Searchlight, NV

Ms. Marlon Walker
Mr. Mike O’Callaghan
Basic High School
Henderson, NV

“[Mrs. Pickard] taught me how to read and helped me develop a love of learning. I read a lot to this day, and that’s partly because of her. [Marlon Walker and Mike O’Callaghan] were both disciplinarians and were both strong moral examples for their students. They helped me develop my character and my conscience, along with teaching me their subjects.”

Rep. Silvestre “Silver” Reyes (D-TX)

Mr. Ralph Chavez
Canutillo High School
Canutillo, TX

“He was a no-nonsense teacher and coach that insisted on hard work and maximum effort in every endeavor. He really focused on each of us, being a mentor, a teacher, a counselor, and a friend. He took great pride in our accomplishments, especially because he worked with very limited resources. I learned that life wasn’t always fair, but that it was never an excuse to accept less than a maximum effort. Like most teachers, I now realize, he often dug into his own pocket to make sure we had what supplies we needed.”

Rep. Harold ‘Hal’ Rogers (R-KY)

Mr. Herbert Bell
Ramsey School

“Mr. Bell opened my eyes to a world much, much larger than the small rural valley where I grew up.”

Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)

Mrs. Sales
Principal Gooch
Euclid Avenue Elementary School
Los Angeles, CA

Sister Barbara Ann
Sister Frances de Chantel
Ramona Convent Secondary School
Alhambra, CA

“From the bottom of my heart, thank you. They say that behind every successful person stands a great teacher. In my case, there were four: Mrs. Sales and Principal Gooch at Euclid Avenue Elementary School, and Sister Barbara Ann and Sister Frances de Chantel at Ramona Convent Secondary School. These teachers played an important role in building my confidence, my intellectual curiosity and—in the case of Principal Gooch—my penmanship. As a Member of Congress today, I consider myself very lucky to have the opportunity to regularly visit our schools and get a window into the wonderful work that you perform every day. Thank you for opening your doors to me and demonstrating for me the critical

role teachers play in shaping the future of our country. Again, thank you for all that you do. Your contributions innumerable and your legacy is stored in the hearts of America's youth for the rest of their lives."

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI)

Mr. Frank Douglas
Craig High School
Janesville, WI

"Frank Douglas... taught me more about the world in six months than I had learned in 18 years."

Rep. Timothy Ryan (D-OH)

Mr. John Gillen
John F. Kennedy High School
Warren, OH

"Mr. Gillen taught his students that each of us had the ability to tap into untouched levels of human potential, and we had a responsibility to our community and nation to stretch to those heights."

Rep. Jim Saxton (R-NJ)

Mr. Ed Romanowski
Lackawanna Trail High School
Factoryville, PA

"He taught me many lessons about life, what it meant to work hard, to be determined, to never give up, and to be successful. Together with many of my friends and classmates, we gained much from his professional efforts and friendship."

Rep. Adam B. Schiff (D-CA)

Mrs. Barbara Abbott
Monte Vista High School
Danville, CA

"Mrs. Abbott was my Shakespeare teacher, and during the summer she would take a group of us to the Shakespeare festival in Oregon where we would camp out and watch a different play each day. (Sometimes more than one each day!) She was a marvelous teacher, with infectious enthusiasm, and showed us the beauty of the

English language. I still remember her warm smile, her laugh, her dedication to her students, and a passion for Shakespeare that she passed on to her students—a passion I still share.”

Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D-PA)

Calhoun School
New York, NY

“Thank you to my high school Current Events teacher at the Calhoun School in New York City, New York.”

Rep. José E. Serrano (D-NY)

Ms. Selma Altsman-Binder
Grace Dodge Career and Technical High School
The Bronx, NY

“This teacher brought me out of my shell and demanded the best of me in a loving, supportive way.”

Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL)

Mr. Benjamin W. Dickey
Wilcox County High School
Camden, AL

Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL)

Mr. Joe Spurgeon
Collinsville High School
Collinsville, IL

“Mr. Spurgeon strove for excellence in the classroom, gym, and the athletic field as a coach; he was unrelenting in the pursuit of excellence. Those who were fortunate to have him learned teamwork, self-sacrifice, and a strong work ethic.”

Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID)

Mr. Dwight Baker
Blackfoot High School
Blackfoot, ID

“Mr. Baker made a difficult subject interesting and easy to grasp. Throughout college and dental school, I often reflected on the lessons he taught me.”

Albio Sires (D-NJ)

Mr. Charlie Swensen
Memorial High School
West New York, NJ

“As a child born in Cuba for whom English was a second language, Mr. Swensen not only taught me English, he helped me assimilate to U.S. culture. Today, as a Member of Congress, I still think of Mr. Swensen when I make a speech or write a letter or article. I was fortunate to spend a lot of time with Mr. Swensen because he also coached my basketball team. He is a great teacher and coach, and he is a great man. He has truly made a lasting impact on my life, and I will be forever grateful to him.”

Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA)

Mr. Sterling Smith
Chinook Middle School and Tyee High School
SeaTac, WA

“He showed a passion for learning and the English language that was truly inspiring for all those of us lucky enough to have him for a teacher.”

Rep. John Tanner (D-TN)

Coach Guy Edward Phipps
Union City High School
Union City, TN

“A talented educator, coach, and, later, principal, Coach Phipps was known among his colleagues and students for choosing one special student each week to befriend.”

Rep. Lee Terry (R-NE)

Mr. Steve Sergeant
Northwest High School
Omaha, NE

Sen. John Thune (R-SD)

Ms. Margie Peters
Jones County High School
Murdo, SD

“She demanded excellence and helped [me] improve [my] writing skills. She was tough, but fair, and cared deeply about making her students better.”

Rep. Todd Tiahrt (R-KS)

Mr. Jim Prosser
Vermillion High School
Vermillion, SD

“My first quarter in geometry, I had a near failing grade. By the last quarter (sophomore year) I had an ‘A’ because Mr. Prosser took the time to explain geometry to a thick headed farm boy. He taught me for two more years, and in my senior year I was a regional winner in a national math contest. Not bad for a kid who nearly flunked out of sophomore geometry.”

Rep. John F. Tierney (D-MA)

Ms. Ann DiCarlo
Pickering School
Salem, MA

“She set demanding goals and insisted on discipline while managing to exhibit respect and concern for her students at the same time, and her ability to motivate and to encourage students to excel without exposing them to peer pressure as ‘teacher’s pet’ were skills she exercised deftly, especially when she taught me how to embrace the role of public speaker.”

Rep. Tim Holden (D-PA)

Mr. Rick Tomko
St. Clair High School
St. Clair, PA

“Rick Tomko has an amazing grasp of history. His great story telling ability made learning fun and maintained students’ interest on issues of politics and democracy.”

Rep. Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY)

Ms. McNeil
Westside Elementary School
Chadborn, NC

“Ms. McNeil had a natural way of explaining complicated subject matter.”

Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI)

Mr. Mike Denekas
St. Joseph Public School

Michigan

“Mr. Denekas truly made government come alive. When I became a member of Congress, much later on, I was able to speak to his class until he retired.”

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)

Ms. Fran Botton
Magnolia Open School
Long Beach, NY

“I knew she cared about me, wanted me to succeed, pushed me to work hard and do my best, and accepted nothing less than what she knew was possible from her students. When we finished fifth grade and faced the inevitable sadness about leaving a favorite teacher, she announced she was moving up with us to sixth grade and keeping us all together. The two years of continuity helped prepare me for success in secondary school and gave me the emotional support that every child needs as they move into their teen years.”

Rep. Anthony D. Weiner (D-NY)

Miss Noonan
P.S. 39
Brooklyn, NY

“In addition to teaching the basics of reading and writing, Miss Noonan taught the whole class to celebrate and respect the diversity of our Brooklyn neighborhood.”

Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA)

Miss Sondergaard
Alexander Hamilton Junior High School
Seattle, WA

“Miss Sondergaard was my P.E. teacher who selected me, when I was in the ninth grade, to be the leader of the Girls Afterschool P.E. program. She was one of the first adults in my youth to acknowledge my leadership capabilities.”

Rep. Don Young (R-AK At Large)

Mrs. McCall
Salem, CA

“She flunked me—and rightly so!”