Dear Lake Shore Public Schools Community:

Excellence in teaching deserves to be recognized. Lake Shore Public Schools proudly announces the following 2020 Teachers of the Year: Masonic Heights Elementary’s Nora Collins, Rodgers Elementary’s Emily Tims, Violet Elementary’s Erin Stasyk, Kennedy Middle School’s Heather Dunlop, and Lake Shore High School’s Marie Bednarski. These educators are recognized for their excellence in content.
knowledge, classroom management, and passion. They inspire our students by awakening belief in self, manifesting talents, and being the light.

Thank you to all 212 educators at Lake Shore Public Schools for being superhuman. You influence our youth in the most powerful way.

**Nora Collins representing Masonic Heights Elementary**

**What do you teach?**

Kindergarten

**How long have you been in education?**

0 years

**What is your top character strength?**

My top character strength is kindness.

**What is your educational philosophy?**

My philosophy of education is that all children love to learn and my job is to keep their love of learning alive. The ability to retain and apply knowledge is our most crucial skill. If you can learn, you can do anything! In my classroom learning is fun, exciting and important. Each child has their own skills, strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes. It is imperative I learn these things about each child. With this knowledge it enables me to build an environment where I can educate each student based on their needs.

I target the areas that will help develop the whole child.

In my classroom, the environment allows for academic growth but also encourages physical, emotional and social growth. To create this atmosphere I work hard to build a community in my classroom which includes studying and practicing kindness and respect. I am always the first one to model kindness and respect. I teach students how to listen, use manners, apologize and compliment others all through my own actions. To have a kind and respectful classroom, the first person to demonstrate these things must be the teacher. Once I create a safe environment for students they are able to try new things and develop their academic skills.

I truly believe that all children begin life with a love of learning and growing. My goal is to foster this love with hands on and engaging activities. I am a firm believer that during play an incredible amount of learning happens, so many of our activities are done through play and exploring. Everything that we use to learn in the classroom can also be used for play. I also trust in learning through singing, movement, chants, rhymes and dance. Keeping things fun is the best way to foster a lifetime learner.

**Emily Tims representing Rodgers Elementary**

**What do you teach?**

Art
How long have you been in education?
26 years

What is your top character strength?
Perseverance

Why and how do you advocate for public education?
My diagnosis and surgery have slowed me down a lot (I was diagnosed with brain cancer in Jan 2019). I think I have become more patient and empathetic. I point out to students that I do have a “hole in my brain” when I mess something up. I am also now one fourth blind and wear a very visible medical device on my head. I try to be an exemplary example for those who are different. I wear my nose reducing headphones with pride at assemblies, because they are a tool I need to be comfortable, but also as an example to the autistic students that it is okay to be a little different. I have had to learn to do things over again and to do things differently and that makes me a better teacher. I have sensory issues, which makes me understand others with those same issues. And students understand that I know what it is like to feel different.

Erin Stasyk representing Violet Elementary

What do you teach?
1st grade

How long have you been in education?
17 years

What is your top character strength?
I would say Teamwork. I am blessed to work with such a wonderful team at Violet!

Provide your philosophy of education statement:

My philosophy is the students need to be a part of a safe and enthusiastic learning environment in which they will be treated with respect and understanding. They need a space to learn and be creative in their thinking. I will work alongside the parents, to encourage my students to always work to their highest potential and be good learners and citizens throughout life. It is important to me that all of my students believe in themselves and throughout their lives they will always remember to “reach for the stars.”
Heather Dunlop representing Kennedy Middle School

What do you teach?

I teach 6th grade science including earth science, astronomy and meteorology. I was also the school library media specialist from 1997 until 2007.

How long have you been in education?

I have been in public education since 1991 so twenty-eight years. Sixteen of those years were as a library media specialist and 12 as a science teacher and always with middle school students. Twenty-two of those years have been here in Lake Shore Public Schools. For seven and a half years before that I taught with the Head Start Program.

What is your top character strength?

According to the character strength survey from the Positivity Project my top character strength is appreciation of beauty and excellence. I take notice of how the learning environment appears to the students and try to make that a positive experience. I also notice people’s skills, both students and other staff members, and try to create a classroom that builds success on those skills. I also really like to keep things very neat and organized so that the students can find what they need quickly and on their own.

If you were mentoring someone interested in becoming a teacher, what advice and/or guidance would you give them regarding the professions?

Welcome to teaching!

I hope that you have prepared an abundance of life skills to have at the ready when you enter the classroom each day. You will need kindness and caring of course, but I don’t think many of us plan to use many of the other skills that make us want to become teachers. Keep an open mind and remember that perspective is important. Make sure that your curiosity about the students, the staff and your subject area is sharp. Have your optimism and creativity close at hand and be willing to show your gratitude. Teaching isn’t about you and what you can do, it is about how you help others. Teaching is teamwork, the student, the parents, your colleagues, and your administration as a formidable force. Your students may not remember the curriculum, but they will remember your enthusiasm and the fact that you supported them when they struggled. I hope your time in the classroom is as enjoyable and enlightening as mine has been thus far.

Never stop your own learning.

Marie Bednarski representing Lake Shore High School

What do you teach?

American and British Literature

How long have you been in education?

34 years
What is your top character strength?

I believe my top character strength is that I am a very positive person.

Provide your Philosophy of Education statement.

I believe that education must be a combination of several factors: sparking curiosity, connecting students to the community and world around them, giving students opportunities to gain confidence in themselves: their talents, their abilities, their VOICE. A classroom should be a place where all students feel welcome, feel respected, feel safe. All students should believe that they have something to contribute and are comfortable in taking the chance to share it.

Upcoming Events

March 12
Lake Shore High School 2nd and 3rd Hour Exams (Half Day)

March 13
Lake Shore High School 4th and 5th Hour Exams (Half Day)

District End of Trimester II (Half Day)

March 14
District Science Olympiad

March 16-18
Lake Shore High School Choir Festival

March 18
District Early Release Day

Lake Shore High School College Fair @ 6:00pm

Masonic Heights Elementary PTO Meeting @ 7:30pm

For more information on our District Calendar Events, please visit this webpage.