

2017 Pierre Educational Foundation

Evening of Excellence

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the page, framing the central white area.

2017 Educator of Excellence Nominees

These educators were nominated
by the 2017 Scholars of
Excellence for the impact they
made in students' lives.

Rodd Bauck

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Bauck influenced my education and my life greatly by pushing me. When I was deciding what classes to take as a high school freshman, I didn't want to take Choir, but he challenged me to do so. Later, as a sophomore, I wasn't sure if I wanted to audition for SD Honor Choir, but he pushed me again and helped me to audition.

Now, I look back, and with a full list of musical accomplishments, I thank Mr. Bauck for teaching me. His influence will extend into the musical scholarships that I hope to receive, and it will be a joy to me for the rest of my life.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Kim Bierle

Georgia Morse Middle School

While many teachers at T.F. Riggs have had a positive impact on me, Ms. Bierle has made a notable one. When I first moved to Pierre my sophomore year, she was more than welcoming. I first met her as a volleyball coach and shortly after she tuned into my mentor. She taught me not only volleyball skills but life skills as well. She taught me where perseverance, hard work, and dedication can lead me.

She's supported me and encouraged me even in my moments of failure. She sets a great example of this. I have always looked up to her as a role model. Her genuine integrity and character has changed the lives of others, including me. She has faced many challenges, including battling cancer, but overcame them with her head still high. Ms. Bierle is an inspiration. She has motivated me to never give up. Overall, she has influenced the person I am today.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Kelly Brandt

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Brandt had a big impact on my education because I enjoyed his classes. I think that he is a great teacher because I learned a lot in his classes. He also makes his classes enjoyable even though they can be challenging. I enjoy his classes because he uses stories from his experience that are relevant to what he is teaching and the stories are usually fun.

I took chemistry and am currently taking physics with Mr. Brandt. Those classes have been some of my hardest classes, but because they are hard, I feel that I am more prepared for classes that I will have to take in college.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Pat Cordell-Kramer

T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. Kramer was the first teacher I had that really pushed me to do better. School had been easy and then I was learning things about grammar in Spanish class that I hadn't even learned in English. After the initial shock of actually having to put in effort, I began to appreciate Mrs. Kramer's sense of humor and her caring nature.

She was always the first person to notice if I was having a rough day. She brought cookies to class once because she thought they looked pretty and every time I wore sweatpants to class she'd ask if I was feeling okay. Around semester test time she made sure to prepare us for our test, but she understood we were stressed about other classes too and she often mentioned we all needed to relax because we would certainly do just fine. I can't thank Mrs. Kramer enough for all the times I was super stressed about something and she would rationalize everything with me until I realized I would be fine. She is a fantastic teacher and I learned a lot more than Spanish in her classroom.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Jeff Dykstra

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Dykstra was a good teacher and always very light hearted. He made class fun and understood when we had outside activities that may have interfered with homework. He was always there early in the morning to help students understand the more difficult concepts in class. He always had time for a laugh and a nickname to make you smile.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Roger Edwards

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Edwards was an amazing teacher to have in middle school. He was my eighth grade history teacher, and I enjoyed every moment in his classroom. Mr. Edwards taught me that history doesn't need to be taught with a teacher in front of the classroom with a power point teaching the class, but to act out what truly happened in history. I loved, that as students we would go up in front of the classroom and play scene out of history while he taught the class a lesson about history. Each day was a different history lesson, but ones I will never forget. This type of teaching method helped me to comprehend and retain the information better than in any other classroom.

Mr. Edwards taught me that in life, and in school to keep an open mind. You never know what to expect each day. When I would walk into his classroom, you never knew what we were going to act out in class, and in life you never know what will happen throughout the day.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Guy Hunter

Georgia Morse Middle School



Mr. Hunter was my Algebra 1 teacher in 8th grade. He was not only a great math teacher, but he also prepared me for getting ready for high school and learning responsibility. He taught me the importance of going above and beyond in order to accomplish what goal I have down the road. Mr. Hunter also taught me about taking initiative for my actions and to do things without being asked to do it. Overall, Mr. Hunter was not only a great math teacher, but also great in teaching me and my classmates how to be responsible and preparing me for my high school years.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Kim Kahler

Buchanan Elementary



Mr. Kahler was my 5th grade teacher at Buchanan Elementary. He blended his humor into every subject he taught. He would make puns off of state names while going over geography. While he was reading to the class, Mr. Kahler would try to use different accents to represent each speaker during dialogue even if a little old lady happened to be speaking. I looked forward to going to school, because I knew there was chuckle to be had. Besides making me eager to show up at the Buchanan School doors every morning, Mr. Kahler helped make me a better teacher.

Every year Mr. Kahler would teach each and every single one of his students how to play chess. By the time I arrived in 5th grade, I already knew how to play chess and had been to a few tournaments. Knowing this, he let me improve my own chess skills and teaching skills by letting me teach the other students how to play.

Those who learned fast helped me hone my own chess expertise. Those who were learners helped me gain the virtue of patience. I find that having patience is one of my favorite qualities and I have Mr. Kahler to thank for it.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Wade Kippley

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Kippley has impacted not only my education but also as an individual. Mr. Kippley started the Governor to Governor program in Pierre, which I was lucky enough to be a part of. In the program, Mr. Kippley taught me how to be a tutor and a mentor for other students. He exemplified how to be a good person and how one person can impact a community. Through the Gov to Gov program and following his example, I have learned to step out of my comfort zone to help others and to be a person of integrity, empathy and compassion.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Chad Kringel

Buchanan Elementary



Mr. Chad Kringel has greatly changed my life forever. He is the perfect combination for a teacher, driven to teach the material, but also have some fun while doing it. I can only think of a handful of teachers that have made an impact on me the way Mr. Kringel has. Mr. Kringel changed my life because of the dedication not only to me, but also to every single one of his students. I felt that I could go to him about anything under the sun and he could give me good advice that I could understand.

I can still go to him with any of my needs and he will help in any way possible. Mr. Kringel doesn't just talk to me in his spare time, he makes time to talk to me and have an intentional conversation. I am thankful that I can call Mr. Kringel not only a teacher and role model, but also a friend and close confidant.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Harvey “Skip” Kurth

T.F. Riggs High School



I first had Mr. Kurth in my sophomore year for economics. Many people told me that Mr. Kurth was a tough teacher, but he really just expects hard work and determination from all of his students. One of Mr. Kurth's strongest traits is his sense of humor. I now have Mr. Kurth for A.P. Government and Current Issues, and I spend about half of each class laughing. No matter what the circumstances, Mr. Kurth can always make a student smile.

In class, Mr. Kurth always knows what he is talking about, and teaches it in an easily understandable way. Mr. Kurth realizes that both teachers and students are equally important in the process of education, and teaches in a way that acknowledges that. I enjoy being in his class because I feel like I have a lot of freedom to do whatever I need to optimize my chances of succeeding, and also have clear, easy to follow boundaries.

I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Kurth in Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) as well as school, and have gone to a National FBLA Conference and several state FBLA conferences with him. When Mr. Kurth is leading a trip, he always makes sure that everything is handled in a precise matter, and that everyone is everywhere that they are supposed to be.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Jay Mickelson

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Mickelson has impacted my education, as well as many other students at Riggs, through his passion and love for teaching. All of his students benefit from his excitement and depth of knowledge about countless subjects. No matter what class he is teaching, he often takes a few "birdwalks" away from the discussion to teach a valuable life lesson or just share a funny story.

Known affectionately as "Mick", he genuinely cares about his students' education, occasionally going the extra mile to help them in the evening at his own home. He also brightens the days of many at Riggs by making his rounds of the classrooms each morning to greet teachers and students alike. The way Mr. Mickelson loves, life, teaching, and his students has inspired me and many others who know him. His example has encouraged me to reach higher and strive for greatness in my education and the rest of my life.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Kate Olson

T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. Olson is the teacher that has impacted me the most through my education career. She has been my teacher a couple different times. In middle school, she taught the Computer Applications class and she was my yearbook advisor. Right now, Mrs. Olson is my youth internship advisor. Youth internship is a class where I get to go work at a public facility during school. Every Mondays and Fridays, we meet up to talk and report back to my working progress. I currently work at the Little Spa on the Prairie.

Mrs. Olson and I can relate and talk about our products that I sell. I give her recommendations. It's nice to have a teacher that you can relate to about your same interests. Besides talking about makeup, she has educated me about how to be in the work force. She listens to my questions and always has an answer. She taught me how to interact with customers to provide the best customer service. She has taught me a lot of helpful lessons that will be helpful to me in my future career.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Jayson Poppinga

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Jayson Poppinga impacted both my education and my life significantly. I was lucky enough to have him as a teacher for two years in a row, in both Biology and College Biology. His class was challenging but he taught in a way that made things easier to understand, and if not, he was always ready to explain things in a different way. When I had questions or needed extra help, he never failed to make time for me, and made sure I felt confident about the material before leaving his room. He always greeted students with a friendly face and his great sense of humor made class even more enjoyable.

Out of all of my classes in high school, I feel like his class had the most impact on me. The bond he had with his students was a special one. Unfortunately, he moved to Sioux Falls, but I have no doubt that students appreciate him there as much as we did here.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Kim Rogers

Georgia Morse Middle School



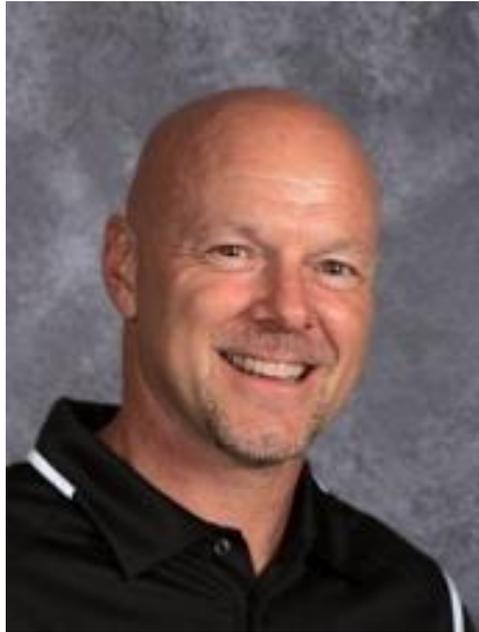
Throughout my years of education, I have had many amazing teachers and counselors in my life; however, Mrs. Rogers, a counselor at Georgia Morse Middle School, has had the biggest impact on my life by far. From the first day of sixth grade until now, Mrs. Rogers has always cared about me in a way that many teachers cannot find the time to do. She took the time to get to know me, and every other middle school student, making me feel important and valued. Mrs. Rogers always asked me questions, often asking who I wanted to be and what my goals were. I can now confidently say that I hope to be someone like her. She taught me how to care about others and how to have empathy. She influenced my life tremendously, teaching me how to live each day to the fullest and have a positive attitude.

Even though she was not my teacher, she taught me many important life lessons. I will be forever thankful for the love she has for all of her students, including me.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Tom Rogers

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Rogers has been my teacher for the past three years. He has helped me be able to learn many trades to strengthen my desire to being a mechanical engineer. He has taught me the classes as follows: Architectural Drafting, Intro to Draft and Design, Welding 1, 2, and 3, Intro to Architecture and Construction, and Cabinetry.

He is a teacher who is always willing to go the extra mile if you are willing to. He is always able to help in any way possible. Whether it is spending time after the bell to help you finish up or sit down with you to help you figure out a program. He is a teacher that will always give a helping hand.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Samantha Schuetzle

T.F. Riggs High School



The teacher that has the most influence on me would be Mrs. Schuetzle. She was my math teacher my junior year. Her techniques and examples made math an easy subject to learn. She always would put extra problems on our math tests that would push us to try harder things. She always wanted the students in her classroom to learn. She also encouraged me to further my math education by taking college classes. She always believed that I would be successful in my college classes. I have taken both College Algebra and Statistics. She always has a willing heart to help students that may not always understand.

She offered help even when students may not always need it. She offered her help if I was ever struggling on my college classes, and to me that showed that she truly cared about helping me learn and understand even when she was not my teacher. Mrs. Schuetzle is an excellent teacher. She has inspired me to always push myself, and that has helped me become the student I am.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Jay Schwartz

T.F. Riggs High School



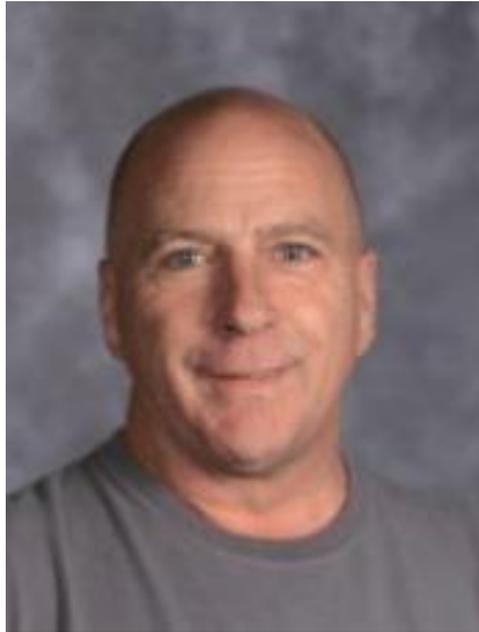
If someone asked me the question, "What is your favorite subject?" two years ago, odds are I answered with English or Science, not math. I received a D on my semester test in math my sophomore year and was really struggling with the subject at the time. Since then, math has really grown on me. Mr. Schwartz has been my math teacher for the past two years, and he has played a big part in helping me really enjoy the subject. If there is ever a time I don't understand something, he is always more than willing to help me outside of class.

Two years ago, I would have never guessed I would be considering majoring in mathematics, but here I am. Mr. Schwartz has been an amazing teacher these past two years, and I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to be his student.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Dan Snyder

T.F. Riggs High School



Mr. Snyder taught me to work hard, laugh at myself, and most of all, to believe in myself. Not only did he show me that I could do anything that I put my mind to, but he encouraged me to try my best at whatever it was I decided I wanted to accomplish. Mr. Snyder has taught me to love everyone for who they are, and to just enjoy life. He is a remarkable man, and I hope to be as great as he is someday.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Lisa Starr

T.F. Riggs High School



A teacher is defined as a person whose occupation is teaching others. Mrs. Starr taught me more than language arts. She taught me the meaning of life. Sometimes the most unexpected people come into our lives and change us. Mrs. Starr is one of those "once-in-a-lifetime people." Statistics show that one in four kids are bullied on a regular basis. I, for one, was one of those kids for my middle school career. My bully thought it was okay to shove me into lockers, cut my hair, and say hurtful words in front of my classmates. I took that for over two years. One day after school, Mrs. Starr was demonstrating the proper way to handle a bully. It hit home, and I started crying so bad that I dismissed myself to the hallway. Mrs. Starr followed me out and hugged me. She said she would always be open to talk.

Opening up to someone when you need help is one of the hardest things to do. I needed a friend desperately who could accept me in my worst. Mrs. Starr filled that role perfectly. I was battling depression and suicidal thoughts. Mrs. Starr saw potential in me. She helped me set simple goals for myself to encourage positive thinking. The first goal: think of one good thing that happened during the day and go to bed with that thought on mind. Mrs. Starr's friendship with me continued to grow. She took me running multiple times a week, tutored me in math, came to my dance recital, and she even took me to Presho to run my first SK. Most importantly, she was helping me build that self-confidence I needed. She became more than a teacher to me; she became one of my closest friends.

I can honestly say Mrs. Starr saved my life. She and I continue to talk even though my life at Junior High is past me. "Mama Starr" will always hold a special place in my life. I got a second chance.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Amber Stout

Jefferson Elementary



Mrs. Stout influenced me into appreciating school and learning. My mother usually says I am very self-driven, but I do not believe I would have gained this self-drive without the influence from Mrs. Stout.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Elizabeth Vogt

T.F. Riggs High School



Mrs. Vogt has greatly impacted my academic career by not only expanding my knowledge, but making me anxious to achieve more. She truly lights a fire for wisdom in her students. Her zeal for English bubbles over into her teaching through her lessons and can't help but infect her students also. She makes her class not only diverse and enjoyable, but also very worthwhile.

She teaches English, but also life skills and items her students will use long after they leave T.F Riggs. In this way she creates a lasting effect on the students of Riggs High that they are not soon to forget.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Hyrma Zahkahi

T.F. Riggs High School



Hyrma Zakahi is the teacher that has made the most impact on my education. Ms. Z was first my teacher when I took high school Spanish as an eighth grader. As a little eighth grader everything about high school scared me. Zakahi helped me boost my confidence. When I had her as a teacher my freshman year she helped me adjust to the change and thrive because of it. Every year I was in Zakahi's homeroom. She said that I was the student that she could trust to take attendance when she was still at the middle school teaching Spanish and could not make it back to Riggs on time. One year I was placed in another teacher's homeroom and she went to the office and had them move me to her homeroom.

I tend to be a shy person. Ms. Z also encouraged me to come out of my shell and to some creative extracurricular. She convinced me to be in the One-Act play as an extra my first year. I loved it. I actually participated the next year and had a blast. Zakahi told me one morning that at their meeting the teachers were asked to name one student that made them want to go to work every day. She told me that her person was me. Zakahi made a huge impact on me, and I know that I had one on her.

- TF Riggs Class of 2017

Congratulations on your
nomination. Thank you for
making a difference in the Class
of 2017!