

JANUARY 2026 TEACHERS of EXCELLENCE®

Recognizing Excellence in Teaching Through Dedication, Compassion & Knowledge

PROFILE

LAKE COUNTY

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

"I love science, and being able to show students what science has to offer is why I love teaching science," Nathan Albertin says. "However, teaching a subject is a very small part of the job. Guiding students and nurturing them to discover that they can put themselves in a position to be successful is why I keep teaching year after year. Having a front seat to watch the students recognize their hard work and good choices pay off throughout their middle school years is extremely rewarding and downright fun." Throughout a family tradition for Albertin as his wife and brothers are also teachers. He is a graduate of Valparaiso University and has been teaching for 19 years.

FAVORITE TEACHING MEMORY:

"I enjoy getting out of the classroom with students to take them on field trips," Albertin says. "For many years, the eighth-grade teaching staff would take the eighth-grade class, over 300 students, to Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry. It was gratifying to see the students, teachers and parent chaperones work together to view the exhibits of tornadoes, a Tesla coil, submarines and the IMax screen. The world and the classroom have changed so much. It's incredible to think we did that not too long ago. It was such a momentous experience for all people involved that it really humbles me to remember all the smiling faces and thankfulness from all people involved for that special day."

PORTER COUNTY

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

"I love teaching because every day is different and full of real connection with students who are figuring out what they are capable of," Megan Klimek says. "I get to help them reach their goals or figure out how they are going to reach their goals. I love that I get to help students learn how to do hard things and build a life-long trait of resiliency. I am so proud when I see a student struggle, stick with it and finally have that 'aha moment.'" Klimek teaches biology and environmental science and has been teaching at Valparaiso High School for 10 years. She taught at Portage High School, her alma mater, for five years before moving to Valparaiso, where she lives with her husband and two sons.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

"My favorite class-time moments are feeling that pride and satisfaction when students begin asking thoughtful questions and applying the content beyond the classroom," Klimek says. "It is incredibly rewarding when students light up as they realize that what we're learning actually connects to their lives."

PROFILE



MEGAN KLIMEK,
Science
Valparaiso High
School, Valparaiso

PROFILE

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

Robin Pulido says that she was inspired to become a teacher by her teachers and that she loves making every child feel loved, important and capable. "I get to know their strengths, individual interests and the little things that light them up. That may be dinosaur stickers or a dance party. After almost 27 years, I've learned that kids remember how you made them feel, and that's what keeps me going. Every student has a piece of my heart whether they are my current 7-year-olds or are now the parents of my 7-year-olds. Even on the exhausting days, helping students believe in themselves is still the best part of my job." A graduate of Crown Point High School and Purdue University North Central, she has been an elementary teacher for Crown Point schools for more than 26 years.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

Pulido says she teaches to ease the pressure of standardized tests by creating core memories and joy in her lessons. "I love immersing kids into units using reading, writing, singing, painting and more. My favorite lesson was when I taught fourth grade and would teach the book 'Stone Fox.' Then I would do a unit on the Iditarod, where I could teach the standards but with highly engaged kids that would pick a musher and track them throughout the race. I was teaching math, history, writing and research. I love running into my former students from more than 15 years ago that still remember and talk about it. That's makes my heart happy."

WHY TEACHING IS MORE THAN A DAY JOB:

"Teaching as a profession is constantly changing and forces you to consistently adjust methods and use new technologies to meet students' needs," Marcus Jones says. "I teach students ranging from freshmen to seniors, which lets me observe the progress they make as they navigate high school and prepare for what comes next in their lives. My students have different individual interests, plans and goals for their futures. Being a part of a team that helps them on their journey to reach those goals makes teaching meaningful." Jones's teaching assignments include chemistry, biology and zoology. He also coaches track. Jones has been teaching for 18 years.

FAVORITE PART OF TEACHING:

"I enjoy having the opportunity to witness students in moments of success, big and small," Jones says. "These moments include getting a problem right on a homework assignment or test, obtaining a passing grade or earning an A. In my capacity as a coach, I also witness athletes improving individually and as a team. It is fun to be around the excitement and pride they have when they obtain goals they've set and worked for."

PROFILE



MARCUS JONES,
Science
Valparaiso High
School, Valparaiso

NATHAN ALBERTIN,
Science
Hobart Middle
School, Hobart

ROBIN PULIDO,
First Grade
Timothy Ball
Elementary,
Crown Point

"Teachers provide a foundation for life as we know it. Without them there would be no doctors, police officers, authors, scientists, engineers ... virtually every vocation. We appreciate and acknowledge their commitment to making our world a better place."

Best Regards,
Kenneth J. Allen



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