



# *Teacher of the Year*

## **Tamara Kennedy- Gibbens**

All teachers are supposed to teach and care for their students, but teachers who go the extra mile are understanding of their students' home lives, beyond patient in any situation, show grace continuously because mental health is more important than a due date, constantly reach out to those students that struggle, and show the same warmth all throughout covid on or off zoom, with or without masks.

There is a teacher that goes the extra mile every single day no matter how life is. At first it was the intentional effort used to create a warm welcome. This teacher right off the bat cultivated a setting where it was okay to be vulnerable. The content of the class was engaging, and our teacher taught us how to respectfully dive into deep and complex world issues. What a gift in today's climate to know how to navigate difficult conversations. Ultimately, they created a safe environment for every kind of student. What astonished me is that this was all done while they were on a TV zoom screen in our classroom.

I could not have imagined having the job of trying to teach a couple times a week over zoom to two groups of students. Covid was a pain and frustration for everyone; this teacher almost never complained. Over zoom, they gave us personal feedback on our assignments, so we did not lose progress in the skill of writing. They still prioritized our mental health over everything, and I know that every classmate felt this intentional care.

Never have I ever met a teacher who was so patient to every single student. I have no idea how they did it, but they never lost their cool, which is something that happens to everyone! Some students can be unengaged, disrespectful, or a pain, but this never affects the way this teacher treats them. The same amount of patience, care, grace, and intentionality is paid to everyone. My teacher validated everyone's thoughts and opinions during discussion, and that taught me that all people do have something to offer.

This teacher has gone above and beyond at building personal relationships with her students. Though she engaged every student in their interests, she was my biggest encourager this year and last year. She asked me questions and followed up after band concerts. She met with me to discuss resources for my future teaching career. She knew when I was struggling or stressed or sad, and she reached out to me and was my cheerleader, giving me kind words of inspiration and hope.

Mead high school is all about belonging, and this amazing teacher really embodies this so admirably. She has made students like me feel welcomed and that we belong. Because of her extreme skill at investing in relationships and teaching the whole student, I am inspired to be a teacher like her. It is my honor to recognize my teacher of the year, Mrs. Tamara Kennedy-Gibbens.

