



# *Teacher of the Year*

**Donelle Osborne**

From making students feel safe and accepted to inspiring them to dream big and think outside the box, my freshman year Spanish 3 teacher has transformed students' lives in various meaningful ways. Teacher of the Year recognizes the transformational power of teachers in our lives and communities, and this courses through the classroom and qualities of this teacher. My Spanish 3 class was populated by Seniors and upper classmen, but she always made me feel at home and stripped away any obstacles between me and my older classmates.

She truly connects with all her students and continues to support them far beyond graduating her class. Seeing the motivational, participative, welcoming, and inclusive environment she forms in the classroom inspires me to lean into my aspirations of becoming a teacher. She expands beyond curriculum, rubrics, grades, or even traditional desks. She sparks creativity and liveliness through activities such as class rotations, songs, and sometimes even standing on the chairs. She's well-rounded yet fun and charismatic personality promotes growth in the lives around her. Working with high schoolers is not always an easy job. She resolves conflicts and handles difficult situations with remarkable patience and admirable tact. In the Shadle community, she goes out of her way to help not only the students, but her fellow staff members as well.

I vividly remember my worst day of high school. My freshman year crush broke my heart, I was late to school, failed two tests, and ended up eating lunch alone in the hallway. My young mind believed this was the "end of the world." I walked into Spanish gloomy and unexcited. I sat in the back row, set my backpack on the floor, and leaned back into the chair. I secluded myself from the rest of the class. Class started and I was so stuck in a slump I restricted myself from enjoying her lesson. After songs, class work, and reviewing the Pledge of Allegiance in Spanish, class ended. I bowed my head back down and reached to grab my backpack when someone sat in the seat next to me. "Mercy, is everything okay? I noticed you weren't your usual self, and I want to check in if there is anything you need." I felt so appreciated and automatically there was a shift in my day. She cared enough to take time out of transitioning classes and welcoming students in from the hallway to console me. Her willingness and want to help in any way she could struck me most. She went beyond just asking what was wrong, but asked what she could do to help. When our conversation finished, I was ready to take the rest of my day head on. I will always remember her helping hand and loving heart. She is more than a teacher. Ms. Osborne is a leader, helping hand, warm hug, but most of all, an extraordinary human being.

