



My teacher is...

resilient



2020 GRANT RECIPIENTS



Angie Church
Berkley High School (Berkley, MI)

“Angie models resilience through her actions, motivating others to persist and move ahead. This is true for Angie, whether persisting through this pandemic or persisting in helping students repair broken self-images to recognize themselves as competent, capable learners.” -Bill L.



Linsey Dykhouse
Brookwood Elementary (Kentwood, MI)

“Linsey is unflappable. She is never without a kind word and a bright smile. Somehow, she is able to bring this positive attitude into our lives even now.” -Paul H.



Tara Dzirbowicz
Parkside Elementary (Rockford, MI)

“Mrs. DZ cares about our emotions and support. She spent her own money to buy every student in the class their own Beanie Boo that we can keep on our desks every day and they keep us company when we need it.” -Sadie P.



Kristin Everts
Portage Northern High School (Portage, MI)

“We chose to have [my son] do virtual learning from home, and Ms. Everts was right there every step of the way. Encouraging him, providing extra support when needed, and making sure he was getting support from his teachers.” -Dan W.



Sue Hendriksen
Hudsonville Early Childhood Center (Hudsonville, MI)

“While Zoom was a way to visually connect, Sue wasn’t satisfied with the content she was able to share. Sue started recording videos of herself reading books that she would have read in the class. When the size of the videos became problematic, she created a website to share with them and provide more resources for the kids and parents.” -David H.

Monica House

Mary Helen Guest Elementary (Walled Lake, MI)

“You can put a brick wall in front of Mrs. House and she’ll find a way to create a door to walk through that wall. She’s resourceful in ways that I have never seen. She’s always coming up with new ideas to help students learn.” -Hillary G.



Lisa Johnston

Evergreen Elementary (Allendale, MI)

“Lisa was asked to consider having a Type 1 diabetic student and his service dog in her classroom. When she realized the severity of his diabetes, she studied his condition so she could be aware of his needs and understand the disease.” -Joyce A.

Stephanie Josepher

Verde K-8 School (Boca Raton, FL)

“She was highly organized and prepared with lesson plans. She was strict and engaged the children on their computers at all times. From the beginning, she laid out the expectations for the students with virtual learning.” -Julie B.



Sarah Krupansky

Pattengill Elementary (Berkley, MI)

“Ms. Krupansky was instrumental in redesigning special education curriculum with virtually no notice to provide an immediate and robust online instructional response, providing my medically compromised son with safe opportunities to continue learning throughout a global crisis.” -Daniel C.

Elizabeth Liebler

Holy Spirit Catholic School (Grand Rapids, MI)

“Now that school has been in full swing for a few months, Elizabeth has continued to adapt to her new normal. She’s approached each new obstacle as an opportunity to better her student’s learning experience and keep them safe during this difficult time.” -Jesse L.





Bryony Lowe

Crestwood Middle School (Kentwood, MI)

“Mrs. Lowe is the heart and soul of Crestwood Middle School. Her resilience brings hope, comradery, and laughter to both staff and students.” -Mandi F.

Michaela MacGirr

Crystal Lake Elementary (Benzonia, MI)

“Being the crafty and caring person she is, she made a yard sign for each of her students that said “My teacher misses me” and put a special note about each student on the back. She spent one day driving around Benzie county to place the signs in each student’s front yard.” -Michelle W.



Lynda O'Malley

Rockford High School (Rockford, MI)

“O'Malley taught us there truly are no excuses, even in a pandemic you can still work hard. She taught us we don't need a weight room, we don't need a gymnasium, and we don't need a track to run on. We just need to have ourselves and the mindset to accomplish anything.” -Courtney C.

Angela Sabin

Kent City Elementary (Kent City, MI)

“Last school year, she promised her children a pizza party at the end of the year for all their hard work. With COVID shutting down schools, Angela took it upon herself to carry out that promise. She dressed in a pizza costume and hand delivered personal pizzas to each of her students while maintaining social distancing for them.” -Michelle G.



Lee Sanchez

Little Hands Montessori (Richland, MI)

“She decided to start her own school Little Hands Montessori to fill the void in our community. With a positive outlook, spirituality, and active coping strategies she made a plan to fulfill her long-held dream of opening a bilingual (English and Spanish) schoolhouse for children ages 3-6 years old.” -Maren U.

Laura Schmitt

San Juan Diego Academy (Wyoming, MI)

“Laura took the time to create a vlog for her classes. Each week, she received and answered questions on camera to make sure they were all feeling heard and, hopefully, a little more connected with each other and with her. What makes Laura special as a teacher in 2020 is not just that she is resilient. It’s that she has been imparting resiliency on her students, even before the pandemic.” -Ryan S.



Lauren Scholtz

Jeffers Elementary (Spring Lake, MI)

“The thing I noticed most about Lauren is her commitment to teach children in her classroom how to be kind and to love one another and themselves. Throughout the year Lauren taught the children about random acts of kindness, how important it is to love each other even when we are different and about mindfulness.” -Tarah K.

Kyra Siverly

Ionia High School (Ionia, MI)

“During the spring when students were distance learning, she drove 45 minutes from her home in Grand Rapids to Ionia, almost everyday, to drop off a personalized curriculum for each of her students at their residence. With each delivery, she included a personalized note and a small gift to help her students know that she was thinking of them.”
-Michelle T.



Kara Stevens

Caledonia High School (Caledonia, MI)

“Though she has gone above and beyond to adapt this school year, Kara Stevens has not wavered in her pursuit of choral excellence. She has conceived and taught ingenious ways to sing in a mask that are effective to the listener, yet educational for the performer.” -Ryan L.

Sarah Stevenson

Belmont Elementary (Belmont, MI)

“Through all of the trials and triumph she never, ever lost joy and in a very difficult time the kids needed exactly that, JOY. She is the reason my daughter and many other kids LOVE school. She is the reason that my child will succeed because school is fun and interesting, it’s a place of joy and safety. It’s a place where resilience is demonstrated.” -Emily B.





Grace Stynes

Forest Hills Central High School & Pine Ridge Elementary (Grand Rapids, MI)

“Grace gets to know all 400 of her in-person students and works to build relationships with her 170 virtual students. She acknowledges them as individuals and helps them cope with the crazy world around them through stories, songs and art. She instills in them a love of learning, not only for art, but in the greater world. She is truly a resilient teacher.” -Barbara S.

Julie VanderLaan

Byron Center High School (Byron Center, MI)

“Throughout her time teaching at Byron Center High School, the art programs have been chipped away year by year. More video and photography classes are being taken away, and less funding goes to the art division. However, Mrs. VanderLaan never loses hope, and never gives up the fight for her students.” -Alayna A.

Not Pictured



Zach Ward

Calvary Schools of Holland (Holland, MI)

“Within one weekend our school had developed an online schooling plan. Mr. Ward was one of the key teachers to help develop and implement this plan. Online classes started that Monday, and it went great.” -Muireann C.

Jenna Zamzow

Little Hawks Discovery Preschool (Holland, MI)

“In a pandemic world, without access to the school’s outdoor playspaces and nature preserve, she turned her students into explorers of their own backyards. She filmed weekly videos and helped create activity guides for her students from nearby woods or a local park, often with her hammock or dog accompanying her.” -Dan C.



Chandra Ziegler

Forest Park Elementary (Crystal Falls, MI)

“In April of last year while the students were virtual for the end of the school year, Chandra created a YouTube channel called the ‘Yoopers Schoolhouse’ to ensure the kids were still learning every day! Not only did she focus on reading and math, but she also shared about social justice issues, diversity, meditation, yoga, inspirational poems, stories, and outdoor learning.” -Rae J.