

# CELEBRATING the Nominees for 2024 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year

Every day a New Hampshire teacher makes a difference in the life of a child. Every year the NH Department of Education honors outstanding educators who make their communities, profession, and the world a better place.



New Hampshire

**Department of Education**



# Theresa Andolina

## Berlin Middle High School

### Berlin

“I tend to sing instructions and use different voices to emphasize various aspects of the lesson. I find this helps keep students engaged as well as know that it’s ok to be a little different and it’s a safe place to truly be yourself.”



# Jennifer Atkins

## Cardinal Lacroix Academy Manchester

“I knew I wanted to be a teacher when I was in the first grade, and I will continue in education as long as I am able. It is extremely rewarding to see the “lightbulb go off” when a student learns something new.”

# Justin Ballou

## Hollis Brookline High School

### Hollis

“On the surface level, and in our modern social and technologically structured society, we should be giving ample space and choice on how students “show what they know” and how we can also showcase those learnings to a broader audience.”





# Tory Barber

## Three Rivers Middle School Pembroke

“Many students with learning disabilities come to me for help because they say asking me isn’t as scary because I know how hard it is for them. If you want your classroom to build a community, you have to be willing to share parts of yourself with them.”



# Catherine Baylus

## Laconia Middle School

### Laconia

“As a social studies teacher, it is my belief that students must learn about the world, the history of their country and community, and engage in the world around them. However, it is also my job to teach them through an objective lens.”



# Hannah Blair

## Fuller Elementary School Keene

“I relate the success in my classroom to the gardens that we plant in the spring. We hold the seeds, but the seeds need light and water to produce the fruit. The seeds correlate with the skills that need to be planted and cared for as they grow. Only when we provide these needs will the seedling prosper.”



# James Boccia

## Pinkerton Academy

### Derry

“Music teachers in New Hampshire would greatly benefit from support from their districts, as well as elevated access to and awareness of state funding and grants that are available to them. Grant programs such as those through the NH State Council on the Arts are an excellent resource, though I don’t know how many music programs in the state take advantage of their generosity and commitment to arts education.”





**SEMI-FINALIST**

## Eric Bowman

Contoocook Valley Regional High  
School

Peterborough

“I am extremely proud that enrollment in my AP US History has increased over the past 15 years. We are seeing students take this class who historically would not be considered “AP Students”. I will gladly accept a lower school average on our AP scores if it means more students are challenging themselves in ways they typically wouldn’t.”



# Emily Broadley

## Fuller Elementary School Keene

“The tools and resources that I use daily in my classroom are based around a strong understanding of the curriculum and standards that need to be taught and met. Not only having resources, but having the proper training in the resources is in my opinion one of the most important components of being a successful teacher.”



# Ritu Budakoti

## Keene Middle School

### Keene

“I want to share the joy and spark of this noble profession with others. I wholeheartedly believe that teaching is not just a job but a noble profession. Making learning for all students meaningful and fun.”

**FINALIST**



# Ryan Burgess

Manchester Central High School  
Manchester

“I work hard to stay sharp to try to create and capitalize on every opportunity to foster my students’ individual opportunities for growth. I most enjoy when students surprise themselves by achieving unexpected success shattering their own preconceived barriers of success.”



# Heather Burkett

Hampstead Central School  
Hampstead

“I truly give all I can to each lesson, which can be challenging as an elementary teacher because we cover so many subject areas. I want my students to constantly feel engaged, I want them to feel like they have an entry point into each lesson, and they have the tools they need to access the lesson and feel successful.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



**Lisa Cole**

Highland-Goffe's Falls Elementary  
School  
Manchester

“Over my 17 years of teaching I have truly come to realize that students need movement and hands-on learning to truly be successful in the classroom as well as outside the classroom.”



# David Coulon

Highland-Goffe's Falls Elementary  
School  
Manchester

“I am not perfect, but I pride myself on helping others become successful educators who will always need help and support. Being a leader, mentor, confidant, and friend with an open mindset will help you succeed and help others strive to be successful.”



# Nicole Cruz

## Manchester Memorial High School Manchester

“The deaf community I am in today is the community I chose to be a part of, and it is so important in our generation. That sense of community is what I strive to set in my classroom. I provide a judgement free zone where my students can step out of their box and create their own identity.”





# Karen Cyr-Condon

## Southside Middle School Manchester

“My belief about teaching has always been simple. The learning needs to be worthy of the student’s time. When creating a lesson, I repeatedly ask myself, “What will the student do with this knowledge?” This keeps me on track and prohibits me from assigning “busy work”.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



# Derek Dane

## Gilbert H. Hood Middle School Derry

“Students come to class with varying background, abilities, and levels of interest in mathematics. I often hear students say that they are not good at math. MY response is usually that they are not good at math - YET.”



# Kayla Dantos

## Bakersville Elementary School Manchester

“Another characteristic of a successful student is the drive and desire to learn without any incentives besides the knowledge itself. Successful students will go outside of themselves to seek information for the purpose of bettering themselves. I take immense joy in teaching students about a topic and watching them turn it into a genuine interest.”



# Jacqueline DeFreze

## Rye Elementary School

### Rye

“I think a change in our educational system needs to be in how we are preparing college students who are studying education... I feel it is our job, as educators, to prepare our students to be socially, academically, and emotionally competent. We can't assume college graduates can land a job in education and just know how to manage a group of students.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



**FINALIST**

## Sean Donahue

McKelvie Intermediate School  
Bedford

“A lot of teaching is based on trust. Trust us, as highly educated professionals, to deliver content every day in the same way we champion for the success of every student (and other teachers for that matter). Provide us with opportunities to be mentored or to mentor others... It is such a rewarding experience on both sides of the table.”



# Kimberly Dorman

Colebrook Academy and Elementary  
School  
Colebrook

“Teenagers are not difficult to work with, contrary to popular belief. Young adults are our future and to be able to guide them into their future and advise them with their choices is the most important and powerful gift you can give back to your community.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



# April Doss

Thorntons Ferry Elementary School  
Merrimack

“I ensure students are connected to the world around them by listening to and processing student-led conversations. When given the opportunity, students have many questions about themselves and the world around them. Listening is vital to student development and success.”



# Alicia Doucet

## Southside Middle School Manchester

“As someone who prides themselves on taking a constructivist approach in my classroom, I have been able to see first hand the growth and success in almost every student that has walked through my door.”





**Justine Dube**

Parker Varney Elementary School  
Manchester

“I could go on forever about all of my experiences as a teacher and how that has impacted me,... but for me it all comes back around to the importance of community and the teacher/student/family relationships I work so hard to create and strengthen.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



Elizabeth Duclos  
Pembroke Hill School  
Pembroke

“Having students doing the thinking throughout the lesson as well as working collaboratively, builds an engaging experience that allows students of all different levels to be a part of the conversation.”

FINALIST



# Caitlin Duffy

## Woodman Park School Dover

“The application of a growth mindset is extremely important to my pedagogy; I am a firm believer in recognizing my mistakes as learning opportunities, and modeling these moments throughout the school year. I desire for all of my students to accept their mistakes as a chance for growth.”



# Nicholas Ellis

## Nashua North High School

### Nashua

“I believe that in order to have a successful program, class and semester you must have each student supporting one another. When everyone is there for each other there is nothing that can't be accomplished so once they understand that the rest of the semester flows.”



# Stephanie Erickson

Wilton Lyndeborough Cooperative  
Middle High School  
Wilton

“Teachers all have one thing in common, the quest to help students learn and prepare the next generation for the next phase in their lives. One of the greatest tools and resources to be a successful teacher are the colleagues you work with.”



# Lindsay Fontaine

## Pembroke Academy

### Pembroke

“Oftentimes, after weeks of teaching content and discussing the books we’re reading, my students surpass all expectations with deep and meaningful conversations. I believe that students learn best when they are in control of their learning, therefore I often answer questions by asking questions.”



# Holly Fougere

## Kennett High School

### North Conway

“I strongly believe that the performing arts are an integral part of a well-rounded education, and I strive to instill a love and appreciation for the arts in all of my students.”



# Suzanne Fraher

## Northwest Elementary School Manchester

“Progress monitoring drives our instruction and we have seen amazing things happen from it! Students can be and feel successful in doing work that is meeting their specific needs.”





Sarah Fredrick

Monadnock Regional Middle High  
School  
Swanzey

“Student success looks different for every teacher, and for every classroom. My students are most successful when they feel comfortable in the learning environment and feel their voice matters.”



# Jacob Gagnon

## Walpole Elementary School

### Walpole

“We are helping our students navigate the world, discuss and reflect on often concerning current events, while also being surrogate parental figures for many. We want our students, first and foremost, to feel safe and loved and only then can we expect them to learn our content.”



# Jennifer Gagnon

## Northwest Elementary School Manchester

“A leader should lead by example. I pride myself in opening my room for years to interns to cultivate their desire to teach. I value their ideas and we work together to incorporate all the ideas in the classroom in a way it benefits all.”



# Abigail Gemme

Manchester Central High School  
Manchester

“Feedback from students is essential to how I measure what a successful student looks like in my classroom. Successful students in my class learn that effort matters more than anything else and that they shouldn’t stop trying..”



# Sarah Gerome

Bakersville Elementary School/  
Bishop O'Neil Preschool  
Manchester

“When the students use their own ideas to create and establish the rules in our classroom they take ownership of them and follow them with pride.”



Sara Getchell

Henry Wilson Elementary School  
Manchester

“Through collaboration, teachers can discuss techniques and strategies that have proven to be successful that other can adopt as well. This will help create a more productive and supportive environment for students to learn in.”



# Martha Gomez

## Manchester Memorial High School Manchester

“I embrace other cultures daily in my classroom and foster a teaching environment that pushes my students to do the same. To keep things exciting, I support my students to discuss topics *they* enjoy and are concerned with such as current events, music and movies.”



# Michelle Gwinn

## Rye Elementary School

### Rye

“We make a conscious effort to demonstrate joy in my classroom. When joy emerges, learning has no boundaries and can transcend the classroom walls.”





# Tina Hamelin

Colebrook Academy and  
Elementary School  
Colebrook

“A successful student in my classroom is one that shows growth and improvement from the beginning of the year to the end. This may be academic and/or social emotional growth. Growth might be indicated in improved district test scores, but it may also be shown in a student’s classwork or willingness to participate in class discussion.”



# Emily Henderson

Benjamin Franklin Elementary  
School  
Keene

“I believe a strong teacher is one who knows their own strengths and weaknesses and utilizes the team around them to continually offer support and encouragement to the students of the class.”



## Erin Hollingsworth Gilmanton School Gilmanton

“I strive to promote the idea that students all learn differently, and can advocate for their different needs, by providing choice for how my students can work and demonstrate their understanding. Through making different choices and assessing the resulting consequences, both negative or positive, students can better learn which tools and activities work best for them.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



# Sarah Jackes

## Pembroke Hill School

### Pembroke

“When students feel safe and valued and have a model of what healthy conversation and connections look like their relationships with each other are stronger. Learners need to know that their teacher is invested in them and that they care about them as a whole human, not just their learning outcomes.”



# Anna Jennison

## Beech Street School Manchester

“A successful student uses their growth mindset throughout our entire school day and encourages their peers to use positive self-talk to persevere through any challenge.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



# Ian Kaplan

## Keene Middle School Keene

“I believe my students often grow to become the best versions of themselves because I simply believe in them, and belief is a powerful thing. Belief and encouragement act as the water and sunshine that allow my students to bloom, and our community is a garden, teeming and bustling with life.”



**Karen Kearney**

Matthew Thornton Elementary  
School  
Londonderry

“Success in my classroom means that students are growing academically. They are learning to be independent and confident learners, and they are thriving in our classroom environment. It is so rewarding to see this success first hand and know I played a part in it.”



Elizabeth Kennedy  
Green Acres Elementary School  
Manchester

“As a kindergarten teacher, I get a chance during the early part of a child’s educational journey to help instill a love of learning and school.”





# Johanna Kress

## Fuller Elementary School Keene

“Teaching and exposing my students to a wide variety of healthy skills and activities is an extremely important standard to focus on as a physical education teacher.”



# Jennifer Lambert

Groveton Elementary School  
Groveton

“Teaching is rewarding every day. My classroom provides a wealth of information that is obtained through inquiry based projects, research, activities, and hands-on experiences. This gives opportunities for the children to explore, experience, and think critically.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



# Matthew Leese

## Keene High School

### Keene

“Students, more than ever, need adults to be positive role models. When students observe us speaking and acting as their advocates in the classroom, in the cafeteria and hallways, on the sports field, and on stage, they cannot help but trust and respect us.”



# Tammy Leonard

## Hollis-Brookline High School

### Hollis

“I strive to help students to feel confident in their ability to do mathematics, to be willing to take academic risks, to desire achievement beyond passing, and to demonstrate mastery of the fundamentals of the curriculum.”



# Kelly Lewis

## Loudon Elementary School Loudon

“It is important to point out to children how far they have come during the course of the year. They are so caught up in their daily lives that they don’t often reflect on what they have accomplished so far.”



**Erica Livingstone**

McDonough Elementary School  
Manchester

“Inclusion is important for students to learn from their peers. Inclusion is also a great time for my students to work on their social skills, learn how to interact with other and to just have fun.”



**SEMI-FINALIST**

## Caitlin Lomando

Mt. Pleasant Elementary School  
Nashua

“Teachers are interesting creatures. We go into our classrooms and work our magic using strategies that best fit our personalities and the needs of our students, and the reality is few people even know what happens behind closed doors. I know that I work as hard as I can every day to make sure that each child makes growth at their level and feels positive about their school experience.”



# Samantha Lyford

## Centre School Hampton

“A successful student in my classroom is seen using their resources, is taking deep breaths, is self monitoring, in control and giving it their all.”





# Cortney MacDonald

## Bicentennial Elementary School Nashua

“Kindergarten is the most rewarding grade level because the students make so much progress in one year.”



# Sean Malone

## Nashua High School North Nashua

“Building a community in a classroom is not something that happens overnight. It takes time and patience, especially with a class that speaks different languages.”



# Caroline Masterson

## Merrimack High School

### Merrimack

“It is crucial for students to learn to be connected to the world around them... Since I teach Personal Finance and that is real life skills, I try and tie the real world into what I teach daily.”



**Erica McMahon**

Henry Wilson Elementary School  
Manchester

“Learning about my students, their backgrounds, and cultural norms has been essential to interact meaningfully with them, as well as with their families, in a way that makes them feel comfortable and open to creating positive and authentic connections.”

# Jennifer Menken

## Hooksett Memorial School

### Hooksett



“A classroom community in which students have a positive relationship with their teacher and peers can make the difference in a child’s view of themselves as well as their academic progress.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



# Corinne Moher

## Pembroke Academy

## Pembroke

“Our world and our students are forever changing and to anchor ourselves, we must remain focused on what students need, where they are going after they leave us and what will give them the skills they need to lead the world they live in.”



# Nicole Moody

## Fairgrounds Elementary School Nashua

“Informal assessments are the best indicators of success for me, because a successful student is not only a student achieving well academically, but a student who is meeting their needs as a learner.”



# Gerrit Morse

## The Founders Academy Manchester

“Success in my class can present itself in many different ways to suit the particular student. No student is exactly the same, and measures of growth should be tailored to help students grow on an individual level.”





# James Norby

## Jaffrey-Rindge Middle School

### Jaffrey

“The world and culture are shifting... If education is to stay with the times it must shift too. The idea of a traditional school with teachers stuck to their boards in the front of the room and learners earning A through F grades does not suit the present world we live in.”



# Mariana O'Connor

## New Searles Elementary School Nashua

“Preschool children have a limited view of the world around them, so it is important to create a classroom environment and curriculum that they can relate to, but also one that can expand that world in a way that they can understand.”



**FINALIST**

## Gregory Parker

Manchester Memorial High School  
Manchester

“Students are successful in my class when they start to find that spark of learning. Once that emotional and behavioral foundation is laid, we can begin to build the house of learning.”



# Maureen Patt

## Broad Street School Nashua

“If you were to visit my classroom, I am certain you would find happy, well-adjusted learners who are confident in my love for them and their abilities to learn.”



# Robin Peringer

## Nashua High School South Nashua

“In the arts especially, I need students to embrace feeling safe to express themselves with the people that surround them, encourages and supported to take risks, and believe that they are creative thinkers so that they build the confidence to take their creativity beyond the art classroom.”



# Joseph Perry

Manchester School of Technology  
Manchester

“The first step toward a successful school year is to create a comfortable classroom environment. Respect, trust, and personal integrity are the cornerstones of this environment.”



# Kathy Peters

## Fuller Elementary School Keene

“I have worked with general education students as well as students identified with reading, writing, and math disabilities, children with ADHD and social, emotional, and behavioral disabilities. Success is not measured by perfection or correct responses in my classroom, it is measured by progress.”



# Stacey Pominville

## Virtual Learning Academy Charter School

“Learning through experiences offers students an opportunity to learn by doing, learn through interactions with outside experts, and learn through independent research.”



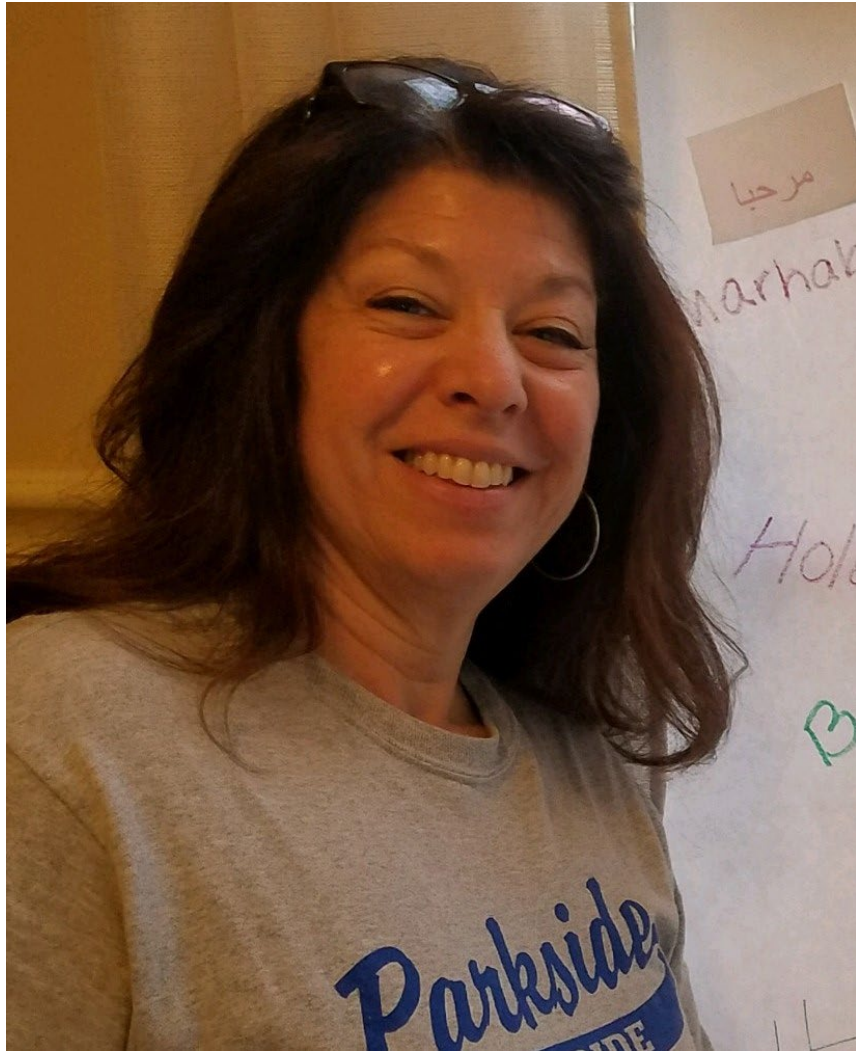


**SEMI-FINALIST**

## Robert Pooler

Hollis Upper Elementary School  
Hollis

“Connecting students to the world around them is crucial in today’s globalized world. As a teacher, I believe that it is my responsibility to help students become global citizens who are aware of their surroundings, empathetic to others, and equipped with the knowledge and skills to make a positive impact.”



# Tina Proulx

## Parkside Middle School Manchester

“When thinking of today’s world, our educational system is trying to prepare students for jobs that do not even exist yet. Technology changes our society at an exponential rate... Preparing teachers as practitioners embraces the notion of lifelong learning and continual development of the craft.”



# Kate Robichaud

The Founders Academy Public  
Charter School  
Manchester

“Teaching is my passion, I have never seen myself wanting to be in a different position in my life. I enjoy guiding students to learn and I also enjoy mentoring other teachers who may need a little assistance .”



**Elizabeth Ross**

Golden Brook Elementary School  
Windham

“It is crucial to me that my students connect to the world around them as it is a contributing factor to their growth and development. It broadens their perspective, teaches them the importance of giving back to their community and encourages their natural curiosity as they grow into global citizens.”



**Natalie Sears**

Manchester Central High School  
Manchester

“Students who have ownership of their own learning and see themselves as an active participant and manager of their own education will rise to any challenge.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



# Diane Shaffer

Highland-Goffe's Falls Elementary  
School  
Manchester

“My own path to becoming a teacher wasn't easy and it took many different detours but I never strayed from my desire to work with students. I believe that all students deserve a teacher who will champion them and help them realize their potential.”



# Kryslin Shields

Highland-Goffe's Falls Elementary  
School  
Manchester

“As the teacher, I need to be tuned into my students’ preferences. This allows me to strategically plan enrichment activities that further my students’ interest and depends their understanding and connection to what they have learned.”



# Beth Sibley

## Jonathan Daniel Preschool Keene

“My belief as a teacher of young children is to meet them where they are and help them develop new skills by including their own interests in things.”





# Stephanie Simpson Gossler Park School Manchester

“For anyone thinking of going into the teaching profession, I would express that teaching is not a job but a passion. A passion that is driven by kindness, compassion and understanding of the communities and the individuals around us.”



# Amanda Starck

## Hampstead Central School Hampstead

“Music feeds our souls, and our children need this fulfillment now more than ever. In their world of uncertainty, violence and intolerance, music is a safe place where they can express themselves while connecting to the people and the world around them.”



# Rachel Stevens

Winnesquam Regional Middle  
School  
Tilton

“I work hard each day to make sure I am doing everything I can for my students in order for them to succeed. For some students, this may be more focused on building trust first before getting to the academics; for others, it could mean pushing them beyond their comfort zone.”



**Sarah Strauss**  
Wilkins Elementary School  
Amherst

“As a teacher, I need to make learning accessible to everyone, so it is also important to make sure to include modifications to my lessons to ensure all my students feel successful.”

**SEMI-FINALIST**



SEMI-FINALIST

# Scott Thibodeau

Pembroke Academy  
Pembroke

“By allowing students to have a voice in the literature they perform, not only does that help with student buy-in to the class, but it enables them to take ownership of their ensemble and their own learning.”



# Julia Thissell

Peter Woodbury School  
Bedford

“As a teacher, I am a big believer in the power of grit, determination, and kindness and these are lessons that I strive to teach my third graders everyday.”



# Debra Todd

## Northwest Elementary School Manchester

“Working hand in hand and collaborating with classroom teachers is essential to ensure students with educational disabilities are connected to the world around them. It also allows them to make connections with their peers and develop important social skills and friendships.”



# Nicole Tommila

Dr. George S. Emerson Elementary  
School  
Fitzwilliam

“Building a strong community in the classroom is one of my goals each and every year. We need to all support and encourage one another, and in order for this to happen, our community needs to be established and maintained.”





# Michael Torgersen

## Webster School

## Manchester

“Student engagement is essential in working with students who have emotional or behavioral disorders, as without meaningful engagement, these students typically will have little or no learning occur and will often engage in interfering behaviors as well.”



# Allison Vanagel

## Manchester West High School Manchester

“In order to reach your potential as an educator, you need to have optimism and positivity. It is truly an honor to be a part of someone’s education. Your impact could be profound and life long.”



**SEMI-FINALIST**

## Andrea von Oeyen

Oyster River Middle School and  
Oyster River High School  
Durham

“Creating that sense of belonging and value in both students and staff members is essential to building a school community that is healthy, resilient, and ready to learn.”



# LeeAnn Wells

Lamprey River Elementary School  
Raymond

“Although students bring their own strengths and challenges in cognitive development, social/emotional development, life at home, and other areas, we can still band together as a classroom community and help each other learn and grow.”



# Craig Wilkins

## Belmont High School Belmont

“The key to building confidence in a student comes from gaining their trust so that they feel their attempts will be valued and supported in a positive way. Some students need to trust that you believe in them before they can make any true progress because they don’t believe in themselves.”