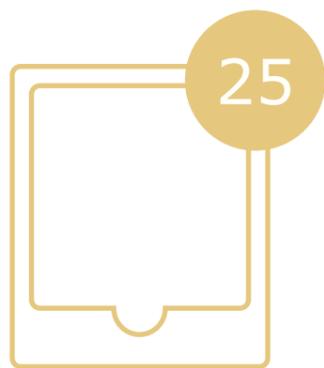




THE
GRATITUDE
LETTERS

A Tribute to the Teachers of Lyons Township High School



Dedicated to the Educators of
Lyons Township High School

THE GRATITUDE LETTERS

Compiled by Creative Writing Group

It's For You!

When we had to switch to remote learning, it was a struggle for everyone. Our teachers mean a lot to us, and since they cannot be in the classroom to teach us, we decided to create a compilation of poetry and prose to honor not only their hard work during this pandemic, but a reminder of how much they mean to us and our learning.

We spread the word on social media to get as many students as we could to submit pieces. Our prompt was simple: What do you value about teachers? This digital book is a result of that search, representing around 20 pieces from students in all grades as a way to say thank you for everything you've done. So here we present "The Gratitude Letters!"

Authors Included

CAROLINE RICE	ROBERTA KULIESIUTES
JESSICA QUINTERO	COURTNEY BATTLES
MAYA DJURISIC	NICOLE BROM
TIFFANY SPOERI	CARMEN FRIEH
WILL FINK	JORDAN KLINES
THALIR MOORTHI	SASHA KRUGER
DANIEL JELINEK	NOAH NEGORN
GENESIS MAGPAYO	MARYGRACE LANSING
JENNA LENZI	RYAN KUDIA
ISABEL KOCHANЕК	GRACE HILLMANN
MELANIE OCAMPO	VANESSA RODRIGUEZ
ADAM SOTO	JULIA ZYLSTA
CAROLINE LAVOIE	

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Teachers

MARYGRACE LANSING

Paint smiles on faces,
Provide fun in these wild times
Prompt love for learning

Value

THALIR MOORTHY

I never valued school as much as I should have. From the second I set foot in school as a freshman, I couldn't wait to be among the masses of seniors who didn't do their homework and were preparing for new lives in college. I never expected to love high school as much as I did, and I never expected to miss it as much as I do - and that's because of the teachers. Thank you, to the math and science teachers who knew I was absolutely a lost cause, and helped me anyways. Thank you to the English teachers who helped me understand great works of literature. Thank you to the history and language teachers who showed me the world and made me fall in love with it. Thank you to the arts teachers who let me explore my passions and showed me a million and one way to express myself. Thank you for caring, for dedicating your lives to bettering kids who often aren't grateful enough. Because of you, I learned to love school, and you make Lyons Township the incredible place that it is. So, once more, from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

The Fire Inside

NOAH NEGRON

Teachers:
they follow their passions
and guide our minds,
whether or not its in fashion.
They teach us all their finds.
Although they may not be funny,
they certainly try,
an attempt made to turn our day sunny-
something to learn and apply.

Now our year has ended short,
but the learning has not been hurt.
Our teachers continue to give work everyday,
so our minds do not fade away.
Some may not like it,
some may even throw a fit,
but everyone must always remember:
that they keep the fire going to keep every ember lit.

The Key To Success



GENESIS MAGPAYO

As someone who struggled to do 2+2 in kindergarten and cried over an English paper in middle school, school was always challenging for me. I was never naturally gifted. Things that didn't click for me as easily as the other kids. I started to gain a hatred for school and especially homework. As A's turned into C's my mom said that I needed to reach out for help from my teachers. She would always say, "If you ask them, then they will find a specific way to help, think of it like a strategy only you and the teacher have together. Something that will cater to you." And it did.

Since then, all my teachers have given me strategies that have helped me learn better than before. That's what's so amazing about teachers, they will always find ways to help a student. They've taught me that it will take a while to learn it sometimes and that practice is the key to success. They gave me countless problems, questions to gain that experience. Things that as almost a senior in high school, I keep to this day. Thank you teachers for teaching me skills that will last a lifetime.

NICOLE BROM

The kindness of the teachers
The togetherness of the classroom
The bonds between professors and students
I hope we will soon resume

The trust we have in teachers
Knowing we are free
To talk in class without being judged
Oh, in school I wish I could be

The helpfulness of the teachers
Explaining to you when you feel dumb
Answering your questions
Can the regular school year just come?

The chillness of the teachers
When you turn in something late
They are generous and forgiving
To go back and see them I can't wait

I miss the teachers
Who are very cool
Who always help
I never thought I'd say this but can we go back to school?

Community

Julia Zylstra

Though my time was cut short
I will not forget the memories of LT
I am glad I called LT my home for four years
LT was made special by the people, not the building
Teachers are the crafters of the next generation
They strive to make resilient people
Staying after school for stats
Struggling with an AP
The teachers understand us students
Sometimes more than we understand ourselves
When I was not understanding or getting frustrated
My teachers helped with a smile
Walking into class was always a joy
I took some of my time for granted
I would do anything to go back for one day
The environment was great for learning and building friendships
The staff truly cared
I am sad that I will no longer be taught by them
But I am grateful for the time I had
The teachers supported my dream of becoming a nurse
Whether it was a "Hello" or a fist bump when returning my exam
I knew they cared

Grace Hillmann

My computer doesn't talk.
It can't speak to me about serious matters.
It can't ask me if I'm feeling okay.
It can't even carry a simple conversation.

My computer doesn't inspire me.
It doesn't greet me in the morning when I start learning.
It doesn't tell me I can do anything I put my mind to.
It doesn't inform me about its past struggles and successes.

My computer doesn't have emotions.
It doesn't feel pain.
It doesn't show compassion.
It doesn't have enthusiasm.

And worst of all, my computer doesn't care for me.
It doesn't mind if I fail.
It doesn't want to know about my interests.
It doesn't care if I am here on this Earth.

But you do.

You talk to me openly about topics that can be difficult.
You inspire me to go after my dreams.
You have sympathy and compassion towards all of us students.
And best of all, you care for me even though you aren't required to.

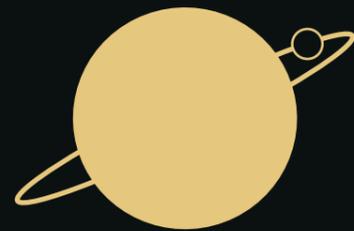
Thank you for everything you do.



At Home

JESSICA QUINTERO

I feel right at home with a computer on my lap and curled up in bed. I'm desperately trying to pay attention to a pre-recorded lecture, but find something integral missing. A certain spark that comes with learning face to face. It's hard to pinpoint, but all I know is that it's lost in translation when it comes to screens. Maybe it's the fact that it's hard to focus when Zoom makes every lesson feel like a meeting. Yet, in these times of disconnection and poor internet connection, teachers still manage to make me feel less at home. They break the drab routine. With every message of support and understanding, every corny joke, and cleverly crafted pun, and the videos with faces I haven't seen in months: I start to feel less at home. Like I'm back in school, in a simpler time when my sleep schedule wasn't a wreck and learning had more purpose. Yes, it's nice to feel less at home.



TIFFANY SPOERI

I really miss being in an environment with my teachers because they are always encouraging. I really value how teachers have an abundance of students but still manage to make every child feel special. I miss having them there in person and letting me ask all the questions in the world and still taking the time to make sure everyone is understanding the material. I think teachers deserve a lot more credit and appreciation for all that they do.

Tribute to Teachers

ADAM SOTO

The halls echo with laughter no more
The patter, flip flop of their shoes are no longer heard
The janitors have no more chore
They act as if these trials leave them undeterred,
We used to audibly share our resentment
We used to despise the sound of the waking alarm very morning
Now we wish we could take it all back with discontentment
But all we can do is sit in our houses and sit in our mourning,
The people that talked while we were learning
The ones who we looked up to
The people who praised us for our earning
The ones who helped when we were blue,
Teachers were there for us everyday
I wish I could just have one day of school back
But instead we are order to keep them at bay
And we search for the days of joy and fun that now lack.

You've Been Robbed!

DANIEL JELINEK

I would hope there would be a gratifying feeling when graduation knocks on the door. Dressed in a freshly ironed blue cap and gown, I was truly ready to go all out in the final sprint of High School. With grandiose bells chiming in the background, I was prepped to dominate the graduation stage with frizzy hair and a pale of summer sweat. Taking the smooth roll of paper from the instructor, I untie the plastic fabric red ribbon to unroll the thick sheet of professionally hand-crafted paper.

Comic Sans; size eleven-point font:

"You've been robbed. -Coronavirus 2020"

What a time to be alive.

So in my final moments here at Lyons Township High School I would like to truly thank all teachers and staff for this wonderful display of effort and care towards the students. I'd like to thank the English Department for favoring me exceptionally. I'd like to thank the Math Department for enabling me to draw on their desks. I'd like to thank the Science Department for helping me realize I suck at science. I'd like to thank the History Department for being incredibly passionate about their subject. And lastly, I'd love to thank the Practical and Creative Arts Department for giving me an outlet to push my teenage angst in a picture frame (I'm coming back for my art you're not allowed to keep it.) In all my years at LT, there wasn't a single teacher I didn't like, and that's the truth.

Thank you Lyons Township for putting up with me, even though I lit the classroom on fire three consecutive times—don't ask. The wisdom I've gained is immeasurable, and the friends I've made are irreplaceable. See you at the reunion Class of 2020.

Until next time.



The Last Words

ISABEL KOCHANEK

Our final goodbyes came too early. Our final days as seniors spent online. I miss being greeted by my teachers as I walked into their rooms. I miss seeing them in the hallways and saying hello. I miss sitting in their classrooms everyday listening to their voices as they taught us the lesson for the day. I wish I could thank them one last time for all their support and encouragement throughout the years. It feels odd having to speak to them through a computer screen, not being able to walk up to their desk and ask them a question. I miss all the laughs and giggles, all the little inside jokes. I want to be back in the classroom. I want to have the chance to say my final goodbyes in person. Thank you LT teachers. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I wish it didn't have to end like this.

We Miss You

SASHA KRUGER

We miss walking in everyday
and seeing your vibrant faces.
We miss getting lectures:
from the Civil War
to F Scott Fitzgerald.

We miss having actual conversations with you—
even if its school related.
We miss almost falling asleep
during educational movies
just because it gets us out of the house.

We miss the guidance you gave us
because you're not our parents.
We miss how you understand us
and how much you genuinely care.
We miss sitting in those tiny desks,
half asleep, but anxious to learn.

We miss you
and how you guys always want the best for us,
or how you formed strong bonds with us
that we will never forget.
We will never forget the impact
you teachers made on us.

You make us stronger
and want to better ourselves.
We would like to say thank you
and we miss you

Blue, Shining Gold

CARMEN FRIEH

She felt like she was stuck in a bubble:
no noise and no color.
But they helped her take a breath
and she saw their golden smiles.

They didn't care about the faults that she held,
they only wanted to help her.
So she reached for their hands
and they took away her bubble.

They taught her patience with others,
they taught her a lifetime of knowledge,
they taught her dedication.
They taught her blue and gold should walk together.

Now she sits and waits patiently
for the day that she can return.
For the day that blue and gold shine brighter than ever.
She can't help but miss the last of the real ones.



School Memories

ROBERTA KULIESIUTES

I miss the teachers at Lyons Township High School very dearly. They are super understanding and very helpful. I miss all the fun activities we did to learn, I miss the interesting topics we talked about, and I just miss seeing everyone's familiar faces that used to bring a smile to my face everyday. Teachers mean a lot to me because they listen very well, they understand, and they try to prepare us for the future for our own benefits. They work to make our lives easier and better. I am very thankful this year that I have met so many amazing teachers and friends, and I will make sure to visit all of them next year!

Take charge
Energetic
Anchor the school
Caring
Helping
Encouraging
Reliable

CAROLINE LAVOIE

Nothing

RYAN KUDIA

The classroom bare empty
and hallways deserted.
No laughter from students in the lunchroom
or basketball games in gym.

The seniors spend their last semester at home
with a face to a computer screen,
completing their e-learning tasks.
This is how they will remember their final days.

But we thank the teachers:
those who were forced to move their lessons online,
to teach 4,000 students each day
from inside their own home.

They must prepare us for AP exams
and the years ahead.
We are so proud of our teachers
who have made the best out of this difficult time.

The classroom is where we can connect with friends
Be creative and learn new things
But we are unable to be there
That is as sad as it goes

The teachers mean so much to every student
But we cannot describe the effort you put forward to help us E-learn
And for that nothing can stop us
From showing you how great you are





To My Teachers

COURTNEY BATTLES

Thank you for introducing me to all of the -ologies
For helping me learn about the heart and all the arteries.
Thank you for teaching me everything
For preparing me for what the future brings—

You've handed me it all, even the things I did not want--
(Even when I have acted so nonchalant)

You've given up your mornings to us
Even when all we do is fuss

We want to repay you so bad-- you have no clue!
Whenever we didn't understand something you'd come to our rescue
There's nothing for us you wouldn't do
You helped believe in us and so we grew.
Everything we learn it is all from you

You teach us verbs and nouns we didn't even know
We value you way more than you know!

All the night you went without sleep to grade--
Look at what young adults you've made.

A world without teachers is a world without sun.
You would give us anything to say that we've won.
Because we did and it all started with you
Everything you taught us--it was all true--
If someone asks how I got here, I'll say "Who?
My teachers that helped me all the way through!"

Being There

MAYA "MOSTACCIOLI" DJURISIC

For four years, you've been there. Whether 'there' was answering questions about the course material before class, or talking to me about things that had no relation to the class afterwards, or sitting me down and giving me a gentle shove to do something I was trying to avoid. Whether 'there' was stopping me in the hall to say hi whenever you passed, or giving me your time to write a letter of recommendation, or encouraging me when I needed it the most. And I can't count the number of minutes turned hours turned days I spent trying to put that into words. I don't think I did, really, because whether you've known me for eight weeks or eight semesters you've always been there, and I don't think I can ever really explain what that meant to me, and what it still means to me. So thank you, LT teachers and staff, for being there for me and for all of us. I'm sorry I never got the chance to show any of this in person.

WILL FINK

I remember going to school as a freshmen. Coming from a smaller school, I was very scared of the large chaotic environment. As I strolled into my first-period class, all of my fears washed away. I was greeted by a very nice and energetic teacher who told the class that she was here to help us in any way she could. Through my years at LT, I have had various experiences like that. Every class I go into, I can find a teacher that is ready to help me learn and grow. That is what makes teachers at LT so special--they want to see us grow and do well at everything we do.

Things I've Learned

MELANIE OCAMPO

We are encapsulated in stories.

We keep them within us like a cactus holding water in desert heat.

They need to be told for them to stay alive, and we as people need to hear stories to live.

My English teachers taught me that.

They've taught me how to tell stories, how to animate them to life, how to give life to others through the stories. They've taught me a lot.

My Orchestra teacher taught me that music is another language in itself: sometimes it's only a single rhyme, a sometimes whole poem or a lesson that is never finished until it's learnt.

I've found that getting all the right notes won't matter if you don't rest properly, and I now know that creativity is one of the few things in the world you cannot replicate.

My Math teachers gave me problems to solve, but also new perspectives to consider.

Patience was shown to me by my Chemistry class.

Kindness was given to me from my Health class.

On average the heart pumps 5 liters of blood throughout your body, but my Anatomy teacher taught me that the love you show people will equate to a thousand times that amount.

Of many other things I've learned I've found that my mother's avocado tree is much like a brain, my Psychology teacher taught me that.

You can water it and give it sunlight but some leaves will die off anyway.

It may not be a sign of illness or disease, but only it's personal version of synaptic pruning; finding better connections and forging different routes.

The plant still grows and sprouts new leaves. I think it's very resilient for that.

Like neurons finding new pathways out of chaos, it is learning right along with me.

From Me and My 10-Year-Old Self

CAROLINE RICE

Dear Teachers,

I was never a loud student. Raising my hand in class was classified as a dangerous and risky feat. I can still remember my fourth grade speech about the life of Jane Goodall where I, dressed in the best makeshift safari gear I could put together the night before, spoke for seven minutes with my legs physically unable to stop shaking for the last six. For the longest time I was convinced this anxiety would hold me back from my full potential. Little by little, certain moments began to change that. The classrooms that felt like homes. Books that made me want to write an entire paper. Comments that made me wonder if maybe I really am smart. Inquiries that involved conversations so interesting fears temporarily melted away. Lessons that made me realize how much more I want to learn. Stories told that brightened everyone's morning, that lifted a smile onto each tired face. Inside jokes shared between a teacher and their 20 something students. Dear teachers, thank you. For helping me grow when I thought I couldn't and allowing me to grow when I knew I could. My legs don't shake when I give presentations anymore.



Thank You, Spanish Teachers

JENNA LENZI

I'm struggling to find the right words that could possibly thank you for impacting the past four years of my high school experience, because without the language teachers that I had, I would've had a really tough time. Time is a funny thing, and I remember wishing I didn't have to wait so long to go to college- but now I'm sitting here wishing I could walk all the way back in time to my freshman year spanish class and learn about the preterite tense. Spanish has always been the one thing I look forward to in my schedule every year, and I can genuinely say I've loved and appreciated each one of the teachers I had. Four spanish teachers in a row that positively influenced me, helped me learn, and encouraged me to continue growing. Thank you for La Catrina, Gran Hotel, and El Internado, and the great lessons everyday. I'm grateful for the countless memories and fiestas, and being able to learn a wonderful language. Spanish teachers, keep doing what you're doing- you just might be someone's favorite teacher. Gracias por todo, Jenna Lenzi.



Thanks to All

VANESSA RODRIGUEZ

If there were no teachers where would I be
This is what I would see
Kids with nothing to learn
Which would spike a concern
Kids would just be laying around
And our lives would be turned upside down
We need teachers to make us cool
So we don't look like a fool
To all the people that work at our school
Let's give them a thanks because they're super cool

Teachers

JORDAN KLINES

Teachers make schools flow,
constantly help students grow.
And although we can not see face to face,
we are so thankful for your grace.
And as we now live without you,
everything is tougher and new.
In academics you are the lifeblood that fuels us.
You are the oil to our bus.
Even though you make us work,
you are by no means a jerk.
No matter what anyone may say:
you better us every day.
Thank you for all the work you do.
We are so thankful for you.

About Creative Writing Group

Lyons Township High School's "Creative Writing Group" was founded in 2019 by Carmen Frieh and Sasha Kruger, with Language Arts teacher Nicole Lombardi as advisor. Writers share their work and give each other positive feedback and encouragement, then set the prompt for the next meeting. This year Creative Writing Group hosted and showcased work at a "Writer's Cafe" and "Open Mic Cafe's" in the North Campus Library. Open to all students, Creative Writing Group is amiable and flexible to accommodate students' busy lives.

The mission of LT's Creative Writing Group is to encourage personal growth through writing, to inspire writers to express their voices, and to foster school community through shared writing.



A Book Impossible Without You.

THE GIFTED WRITERS OF LYONS TOWNSHIP
for donating such wonderful writing to our Table of Contents.

NICOLE LOMBARDI

for fostering and encouraging the creation of "The Gratitude Letters." The Best Advisor we could ask for, truly.

THE STUDENTS OF CREATIVE WRITING GROUP

for compiling this gift, and giving the students of Lyons Township an outlet to send letters and love to our teachers.

A HUGE THANKS TO THE DEDICATED STAFF OF LYONS TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

for, despite the unprecedented circumstances, continuing to inspire and teach the students of LT. You have played such an important role in our lives, and for that we are ever grateful.



thank you for a wonderful
year,
and many more.