

Name: Raquel Hirsch

Grade: 12th

School: Adlai E. Stevenson High School

My Inspirational Teacher

Being placed into Mr. Fritz's Freshman English Accelerated class has changed my life forever, and has shaped me into the person I am today. At the end of the year, he made the promise that he would be our teacher for the rest of our lives; from editing essays for other classes to helping us through the college application process, he claimed he would be there. As a freshman, part of me was skeptical of this commitment. However, my freshman-self could not have been more wrong, and Mr. Fritz's commitment to this promise has shown me that there is truly no other teacher who cares about his students more than he does.

Mr. Fritz models leadership by going above and beyond his call of duty each day. Not only is he incredibly knowledgeable in the English classroom, but his wisdom and optimism for life is behind the best advice I have ever received, and has helped me through my most difficult moments. His free periods are filled by meetings with students, both current and former—even from decades ago—demonstrating the impact he's had on generations of Stevenson Patriots. I have been lucky enough to have Mr. Fritz both my Freshman and Junior years of high school, yet our connection will span a lifetime.

Beyond the classroom, Mr. Fritz fills his afternoons by sponsoring several clubs ranging from Theatre, Debate, and most notably, the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA). Sponsoring SAGA requires Mr. Fritz to be the first line of defense for students who cannot find support within their own homes, and allows him to create a safe space for all students. Essentially, everything Mr. Fritz does is for his students in and outside of the classroom, with generosity and compassion.

Taking on my own leadership roles as a Freshman Mentor and Captain of my Poms team left me with several choices regarding how I wanted to lead, yet I simply referred to the lessons Mr. Fritz has taught me beyond *The Great Gatsby*. I approach leading with his messages of patience and acceptance for others—despite inevitable differences—while prioritizing those around me. One of the key lessons I have learned from him is not to lead for myself, but with the intention of allowing others to take their own initiative. The confidence to spearhead these positions could not have been instilled without Mr. Fritz's mentorship, and the foundation of my self esteem he has helped build.

It is clear that Mr. Fritz has left an enormous impact over his thirty-three years of service, displayed by student memorabilia lining the walls of his classroom, and the many relationships he maintains today. Without Mr. Fritz, I would not have been able to navigate the rigorous academic and social expectations of high school, and find an unwavering gratitude for my community. Mr. Fritz is a role model teacher and citizen who demonstrates the definition of selflessness. I can only hope to show as much gratitude for him as care he has shown for me.