

2006 HONOREE

Christopher C. Vicari

Yonkers Middle/High School, Yonkers, NY
High School Humanities Education • 11th Grade English



Years Teaching: 14

Average Class Size: 29

Classes Taught Per Day: 5

School's % of ESL Students: 41%

School Type: Public, Large City

Type of Class: International
Baccalaureate

“Teaching and learning should be a multi-sensory experience. Since my students come from all different ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, I know they are as diverse in their learning styles as they are in their skin tones. Therefore, I try to reach out to all of them by allowing them to live literature, not just study it. I want them to see, taste, hear, smell, and feel these great works from the depths of their souls. I believe firmly that if diverse people share common positive experiences, they will learn to love each other and embrace peace. Whether I am teaching Shakespeare, Gibran, Dante, Allende, Homer, Basho, or Morrison, my approach is to make each day as unique and memorable as possible. I use music, art work, charades, paintings, photographs, food, candles, fountains, chimes, plants, and flowers to arouse the emotions and creative energy of my students. As a musician, I also play various instruments to pique their interests – music is a great way to bring literature to life. Once students know they have support, they feel safe; self-esteem, determination, and creativity begin to soar. It is then that miracles can occur.”

“My teaching is definitely shaped by the experiences and talents my students bring with them to the classroom. At

the end of each week, we hold a ‘Bonus Day Friday’ so students can express their understanding of the texts according to their interests. Dancers illustrate conflict in Macbeth through ballet, tap, or step; singers perform original musicals based on the tragic and triumphant finale of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, and artists paint symbolic, spiritual portraits of Siddhartha to reveal character change. The students have proven to me time and time again that their capacity to create is boundless.”

“Mr. Vicari prepares and conducts each lesson like a symphony teaching students to see, to feel, and to think beyond the written word, to make connections at a more meaningful and deeper level, and to listen to the beat of the unspoken word. He instills a love of the English language, creating a real sense of a moment in time, a mood, an aura stimulating students’ imaginations to capture a quintessential scene or dialogue. Mr. Vicari is truly a master teacher modeling his love of literature and his dedication to his profession to both his students and colleagues alike.”

– *Ralph Vigliotti, principal,
Yonkers Middle/High School*

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS:

Kinder Excellence in Teaching Award Finalist (2006) • NHR Outstanding American Teacher (2006) • Sam’s Club Teacher of the Year (2002-03) • New York University Teaching Grant (1997-98) • Fulbright Scholarships (1995 and 1997) • Notre Dame Scholar Award (1991) • Vassar Book Award (1991) • Westchester County Legislator’s Service Award (1991) • John F. Kennedy Memorial Citizenship Award (1991)