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# Farmers Branch Addison Carrollton

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## Classroom crush

Michelle and Phillip met, got engaged at Farmers Branch school **12**

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ESTIMATED VALUE: \$370,000

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# Couple's love story began in third-grade classroom

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Submitted photos by JOSH MIDDENDORF

**Michelle Nienhiser and Phillip Yager** met in the third grade at Mary Immaculate Catholic School in Farmers Branch. They studied in the classroom where he would one day propose to her.



By **ROSEMARY MARTINEZ**  
Contributor

**M**ichelle Nienhiser and Phillip Yager met in third grade.

Yager was new to Mary Immaculate Catholic School in Farmers Branch when he joined Sherry McCord's students in 3C. It was the classroom where Nienhiser and Yager learned about static electricity, where they were drilled on their times tables and, unbeknownst to them at the time, where Yager would one day ask Nienhiser to marry him.

Nienhiser's strongest early memory of Yager occurred one afternoon in 3C as the class was working quietly. A friend of Yager's announced loudly, "What, Phillip? You have a crush on Michelle Nienhiser?"

Nienhiser was mortified. She didn't have the courage to even face Yager until middle school.

"I was just embarrassed to even look at him," she said.

The two lost touch after graduating from Mary Immaculate, which goes through eighth grade, in 1998. They went to different high schools and colleges.

Then, in 2008, a Mary Immaculate classmate organized an informal 10-year class reunion. Yager and Nienhiser took a liking to one another.

"I found out she was not only still pretty, but gorgeous and had a great personality," Yager said. "But I knew if I didn't kiss her that night, I wouldn't get another chance. Putting all fear aside, I took a leap of faith. It was the best decision of my life."

## Happily ever after

Two years later, after a Saturday mass at Mary Immaculate Church, Yager took Nienhiser to revisit their original meeting place, 3C.

It was dark and there was only one light on at the end of the hall, right outside McCord's classroom. Yager turned the knob and said, "It's open! Should we go inside?"

Nienhiser agreed.

To her surprise, there were three desks pushed together in the middle of the room with two photos of them from third grade, a floral arrangement, flower petals and votive candles.

It only took a few moments for Yager to tell Nienhiser that he loved her and wanted to grow old with her. He dropped to one

## HEAD OVER HEELS

*Neighborsgo* asked Michelle Nienhiser and Phillip Yager for their advice on relationships. Here's what they had to say:



**Nienhiser:** You really do have to find your best friend and find somebody you can laugh with throughout life.



**Yager:** It's all about the little things. If you can remember that, you'll be fine. For example, I kept our first date dinner receipt and used it as a bookmark for a journal, where I kept all the stories of how I proposed and what I went through. It's a small but great sentiment that showed her how much I love her.

Nienhiser and Yager, respectively, in their third-grade photos from Mary Immaculate.

knee and right there, where they met 18 years ago, asked Nienhiser to marry him.

She accepted. Yager queued up music and the two danced.

Later, Nienhiser learned that the proposal had been recorded on a video camera, planted in the room by his helpers — Nienhiser's sisters, Cheryl and Julie, and Nienhiser and Yager's third-grade teacher, McCord.

"I can't wait to show our kids the video," Yager said.

What started off as an awkward grade-school friendship will end happily ever after. The couple plans to marry in November.

"He's my best friend," Nienhiser said. "He never fails to make me laugh."

*Rosemary Martinez contributes to neighborsgo.com on behalf of Mary Immaculate Catholic School. Carrollton/Farmers Branch/Addison neighborsgo editor Ruth Haesemeyer also contributed to this report.*