

# Career Tech Matters

by Dennis Franks • Feb. 22, 2019

High school can be a time of growth for our students. They come in as nervous juniors, unfamiliar with hundreds of students from nine other schools.

It can be a similar experience for our teachers.

English teacher Katie Hewitt started at Pickaway-Ross in 2014 and, like those juniors, she said she hadn't realized that she could be herself and share her passion for literature with students.

"When I allowed myself the freedom to let my nerd shine through, it allowed for more authentic engagement" with students, she said.

In the past four years, she has engaged with students through her English classes, as a member of High Schools That Work Culture Team, LAMPS, Student Council co-advisor, creator of Art Expressed and, this year, starting a book club that meets during mentoring.

It was all of these engagements that were cited in recommendations to the OCTELA (Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts) committee for its Outstanding Language Arts Educator Award, which Katie will receive at the March 2 awards



luncheon.

Being nominated by two people — Josh Younge, who won the award in 2016, and a former colleague Katie worked with while earning her degree — was almost more overwhelming than learning she had won the award, Katie said.

"The nominations and recommendations felt like the real achievement. I have great respect for the people involved and feel they have so much knowledge in this field," she said.

Learning that she had won prompted Katie to reflect on her career thus far and how she can grow and improve as a teacher.

"Strong educators shaped me and put me on this path. I want to try to repay those teachers by doing the same for my students," she said.

"I've built many relationships and watched students grow in their understanding of literature and themselves. English class can be so much more than learning where to put a comma or how to write a solid cover letter. Hopefully, I've managed to plant that seed."

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Katie Hewitt reads with students (top right); shared her poetry during last year's inaugural Art Expressed art show (far right) and presented a session about the art show at a High Schools That Work conference last summer (bottom right).

Katie has been recognized for her work by winning the Outstanding Language Arts Educator Award from the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts.

