

Kunz Recognized as District's NCCAT CTE Teacher of the Year

Ashe County Schools is proud to announce that Mr. Stefan Kunz, Career and Technical Education (CTE), History, and English teacher at Ashe Early College, has been selected as the district's NCCAT CTE Teacher of the Year for the 2026–2027 school year by the [North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching](#) (NCCAT).

Kunz joined Ashe County Schools in 2016 after two years at East Wilkes High School. He began his time in the district teaching social studies at Ashe County High School before transitioning to Ashe Early College in 2021. Since then, he has expanded his impact by teaching English and CTE courses, including Adobe-based digital media, helping students build both academic and real-world skills.

His dedication to innovation and student success has not gone unnoticed. Last year, Kunz was named GEAR UP's Ashe County Innovator of the Year and went on to be considered for the 2025 regional award through Appalachian State GEAR UP—recognition that highlights the creativity and commitment he brings to his classroom.

Earl Pennington, Ashe County Schools Director of Accountability, CTE, and GEAR UP, shared his appreciation: “Thank you for your commitment every day to our students and for the progress you’ve made with Adobe programs at Ashe Early College.”

In response, Mr. Kunz said: “I am deeply honored to receive this recognition. I am grateful every day to work with such amazing students and supportive colleagues here in Ashe County. Moving into a Digital Media CTE role has been an exciting and rewarding transition. One of the best parts of this work is seeing students bring their ideas to life using these powerful tools and having the opportunity to help guide them through that creative journey.”

NCCAT will announce its CTE Teacher of the Year finalists in July, with the overall winner revealed in December.

The NCCAT CTE Teacher of the Year program recognizes outstanding educators across North Carolina and celebrates their contributions to student success. Each district may nominate one teacher annually, with selected finalists participating in professional development and interviews before a statewide winner is chosen.

Please join us in congratulating Mr. Kunz and wishing him the best of luck in the regional competition!

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Celebrating a well-deserved honor! Stefan Kunz (center) is pictured with Lindsey Williams, Ashe Early College Principal, and Earl Pennington, Ashe County Schools Director of Accountability, CTE, and GEAR UP, following his selection as Ashe County Schools' NCCAT CTE Teacher of the Year.