

FROM FREMD STUDENT TO AWARD WINNING ENGINEERING TEACHER



When Michael Karasch looks back on the start of his freshman year at William Fremd High School, he admits he was not in the best position academically.

“My family moved to the area just before my freshman year,” said Karasch, who graduated in 1999. “I was not on the best path coming into that year. I was not getting particularly good grades, but it was a fresh start at a new school and Fremd embraced me.”

Following his college graduation, Karasch began working in computer programming, but did not feel that fit with his desire to help others.

“I found that I really enjoyed helping other people rather than simply doing the work myself,” he said. “I felt there must be something more. So, after assisting other teachers, I found I wanted to help make people the best they could be.”



Sixteen years ago, that desire brought Karasch back to his alma mater, where he began teaching engineering at Fremd High School. Currently he teaches two different engineering classes as well as a biology class. He says there is a great overlap between science and engineering.

“I heard it said once that the first time you try something, it’s science; the second time, it’s engineering,” Karasch said. “In science, we talk about discovery, research, and development, whereas in engineering, we’re refining. There is a giant overlap in where those things meet. When I teach science, I’m teaching engineering as well because we talk about recreating experiments and how to design their own experiments and how to revise their work.”



Project Lead the Way President and CEO Vince Bertram presents the award for the PLTW Engineering Teacher of the Year to William Fremd High School Applied Technology teacher Michael Karasch October 25, 2021.

Karasch's dedication to his students and dedication to the field of engineering was recognized in October when he was named the Project Lead the Way National Engineering Teacher of the Year.

Following the announcement, Karasch said he was flattered.

"I feel like there are a lot of people doing amazing work," he said. "The PLTW teachers across the country are some of the best people I met and have had the privilege to work with. To be selected for this from among them is humbling."

After nearly two decades teaching engineering, Karasch said he still finds joy in his work and does his best to give his students the same sense of belonging Fremd gave him years ago.

"The best thing about being an engineering teacher is that we get to play all day," he said. "I never have to explain why we are learning the things we are. It's all in the design. There is no greater motivation than being able to help a student build something neat."

Karasch also finds joy in his work because he can give back to his school.

"Every time I'm here," he said, "I feel like I am giving a little back to Fremd for

everything they did for me.”