

## Member Spotlight – Melissa Cecchi

**The Bio:** I am finishing my 22nd year of teaching high school English. I have spent my whole career at Medway High School and have taught every grade and every level. I also became department head four years ago. This year I'm teaching freshman CP and honors, CP sophomores, and AP language and composition.

**A Favorite Book:** I love to teach most books, but my favorite is *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. I personally love Zora Neale Hurston and I love seeing when the light bulb goes on for my students once they are able to grapple with the dialect and understand Janie's story. I feel like I learn something new every time I teach it and it never gets old. I don't really teach contemporary novels, but I do have free-read Fridays where we all read something for fun. I also try to have my classroom library as up-to-date as possible with books that appeal to all my students.

**A Strategy:** I feel that when it comes to strategies, it depends on who is in front of me. Every year I employ different strategies depending on my students; however, I rely heavily on the writer's notebook. I have them write in it every other day. Sometimes it is used with specific guiding questions and other times it is important to me that they freewrite to get their ideas down or emotions out. We use it at different times during the class as we need it. I also write with them most of the time in order to have my own thoughts regarding what we are going to talk about.



**An Influence:** When I started teaching I did not have my own classroom, so I traveled around the school with a cart. Because of this, I was able to meet many different people in different departments. Many have retired, but a few are still teaching and they have become my closest mentors. We may not teach the same subject (one teaches physics, another art, Latin and the last, French), but we are a support system for each other. So much has changed over 22 years, but we keep each other grounded, sharing what is working and what is not. Many of us share the same students so we share strategies, too. These women have taught me what it means to be strong and have influenced how I see the classroom as not just teaching English, but teaching life.

**Something Personal:** When I am not teaching, I love to read and write. I work out and run, as well, and am a lover of opera and sing opera and classical music when I can. I enjoy traveling anywhere and hope to get to as many places as possible as I continue to enjoy life.