

Margaret Ashida
STEM Leadership Award

2018 Margaret Ashida STEM Leader K-12



Mr. Omer Zengin

High School Math educator

Robotic Team Advisor Syracuse Academy of Science STEM Leader Instructional Coach

Omer Zengin has been teaching in Upstate NY for over nine years, primarily in High School mathematics. He is currently teaching Algebra 1 and Algebra 2 at Syracuse Academy of Science Charter School. With over nine years of extensive teaching experience and hard work and dedication he achieved the goal of getting all of his students to pass the Algebra 1 Regent exam in 2017. He believes that students learn best when they are actively engaged with high-quality, rigorous hands-on lessons that incorporate technology, and group activities.

He is also an active member of First Tech Challenge which is a robotics STEM program for grades 7-12. He believes that students learn more about the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) through hands-on learning in the field of robotics by building and programming robots. Mr. Zengin also inspires students to join the schools enrichment programs, such as, Science Olympiad, Bridge Building Competitions, The MOST Steamboat Challenge, Rocket Challenge, and International Genius Olympiad at SUNY Oswego. Participating in these competitions allows students to learn more about math and science while expanding their knowledge in careers involving computer programming, business, and engineering. As you may know, getting young people interested in these fields is very important, not only to our community but also for New York and the entire US. He is also a Congressional Award Program Advisor who is helping students to make achievable and measurable goals for their personal development, community service, physical fitness and expedition/exploration. He is dedicating his weekends to guide students to achieve these goals. One of his students recently received a bronze and silver certificate from the Congressional Office. Mr. Zengin is also the recipient of numerous awards for his STEM endeavors in Central New York.

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Aaron Straus

*Instructional Coach of STEAM
Salamanca City Central School District*

Aaron is Instructional Coach for Science and Technology at Salamanca City School District. He earned his Bachelor of Science from SUNY College at Buffalo and STEM Teaching Certificate at the American College of Education. While serving as Instructional Coach for Science and Technology, Aaron led a taskforce to design a STEM-wing modeled after a manufacturing firm and introduced a certificate program in 3-D modeling, industrial robotics, and biomedical technology.

Over the course of his career, Aaron taught numerous elementary and secondary courses in robotics, trades and instructional technology. In 2010, Aaron founded STEAM Learning Solutions, a grassroots learning company, which provides reusable STEAM kits to schools, summer camps and school-age childcare providers. www.steamlearningsolutions.org

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2018 Margaret Ashida STEM Leader District Level



Kathy Southwell

*Executive Director of Curriculum, Learning and Instruction
East Syracuse Minoa School District*

Kathy Southwell is honored to be the Executive Director of Curriculum, Learning and Assessment at East Syracuse Minoa Central School District. Her professional experiences include a variety of leadership experiences, initially in the health care and private sector in science, then changing to K-12 education with teaching experience at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Kathy has systems leadership experience at the district, regional and State level, including the CNY Stem Hub, regional Science Strategic Planning, and numerous science and math advisory groups at the New York State Education Department. Over the last few years, Kathy has actively participated in the New York State Education Department's Science Steering Committee to plan for implementing the Statewide Strategic Plan for Science, including updating and implementing the New York State Science Learning Standards and providing input in the design of future assessments.

Kathy leads ESM's Strategic Planning and Implementation teams with a focus on innovating and transforming teaching and learning to prepare students to be leaders in a rapidly changing world. Inspired by her collaboration with Margaret Ashida, Kathy has been part of a leadership team developing innovative STEM learning models and career pathways at ESM. The development of student voice, leadership and strong business, community and higher education partnerships have been important priorities in the ESM Strategic Plan. ESM was recognized nationally in 2015 at the White House as one of the first STEM Learning Ecosystems.

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2018 Margaret Ashida STEM Leader Higher Education



Mary Margaret M. Small, Ed.D.
Office of Educational Partnerships
Clarkson University

Dr. Small is the Educational Partnerships Director at Clarkson University. In this role, Mary Margaret actively works to connect public schools, business and industry, and university resources to strengthen the educational experiences of pre-collegiate students and expand the instructional strategies of teachers. Under her direction, Clarkson faculty and students provide after school and summer STEM programming and discipline-specific workshops. She also coordinates summer research experiences for public school teachers and high school students. As a member of the Regional Economic Development Council's workforce development committee she works closely with industry professionals execute career awareness events throughout the seven county region.

Dr. Small holds a B.A. from SUNY Geneseo and a Masters and Doctorate from the University of Rochester. A lifelong educator, she has been a teacher, school administrator and college professor. She has a strong interest in curriculum and assessment, especially effective instructional models. Mary Margaret holds leadership positions in the North Country STEM Learning Network and North Country STEM Ecosystem. Clarkson University, under Mary Margaret's leadership, is a founding partner in the Collaborative Educator Summit, a two day cost-free professional development experience for school-based teams.