



Winter/Spring 2026 | Issue #11

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The School of Education Debriefs

Updates. Highlights. Impact.

Celebrating our community, our partnerships, and our commitment to shaping the educators of today and tomorrow.

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To learn more about the Queens-Grown Upskilling Paraprofessional Program, visit us at:

<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/academics/se/upskillingpara/>



Faculty Research & Teaching

Discover how our faculty are advancing knowledge, innovating in the classroom, and preparing the next generation of educators.



Student Reflections

Voices from our students sharing their journeys, insights, and the impact of their Queens College education.



Looking Ahead

Building on our successes and embracing new opportunities to inspire, empower, and transform lives through education.



The School of Education Debriefs
Winter/Spring 2026 | Issue #11



2025-2026 Graduate Program Orientation

2025-2026
Graduate
Program
Orientation



Spring Education Scholar Series

Dear School of Education Community,

As we reflect on this academic year, I want to thank our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and partners for their continued dedication to the School of Education and the communities we serve. This year has been marked by meaningful accomplishments, exciting initiatives, and the continued growth of our programs and partnerships.

One of the highlights of the year was the School of Education/Educator Preparation Program (EPP) achieving full 7-year accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). This achievement reflects the collective work of our entire educator preparation community and our shared commitment to preparing thoughtful, skilled, and equity-minded educators. I am deeply appreciative of everyone who contributed to this important accomplishment.

We are also excited to welcome our first cohort to the Queens-Grown Upskilling Paraprofessional Program. Funded by a SUNY Workforce Development grant, this initiative reflects our commitment to creating accessible pathways into teaching and supporting paraprofessionals as they pursue certification and career advancement through financial support, targeted advising, and mentorship. I also want to acknowledge the QG-UP Program Coordinator, Laura Giatti, for her leadership and commitment to the program.

Another exciting development this year was the Education Scholars Series, which created opportunities for faculty and students to engage in conversations around research, practice, and current issues in education. For our inaugural event, we welcomed QC alum Dr. Washington Collado. Our QC education students Abigail Collado, Isaac Ramos, and Giovanni Sparks-Yi moderated a thoughtful and engaging panel session with Dr. Collado. I would like to recognize Marixa Jarvis and Hefer Bembenuity for their leadership and continued work with the Education Scholars Series and Kappa Delta Pi. Their commitment to students and professional growth continues to strengthen our community.

Throughout this newsletter, you will read stories that showcase the accomplishments, research, creativity, and experiences of our faculty and students. From literacy and TESOL to counseling, STEM, the arts, and clinical practice, these stories remind us of the many ways our community continues to contribute to education and to the lives of learners.

Thank you for all that you do to support our students and our mission. I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter and take pride in the work that happens in the QC School of Education!

Bobbie Kabuto, Ph.D

Spring Lunch & Learn Series



Kappa Delta Pi 61st Induction Ceremony



Queens High School of Teaching visit to The School of Education

“ These stories remind us of the many ways our community continues to contribute to education and to the lives of learners. ”


Antonio Sanchez

Project Focus

Change is an increasingly polarizing concept. I was born into a Hispanic household on Long Island, where I developed a deep appreciation for my roots and the connections they fostered here on Long Island. I attended school here and to this day continue to live on Long Island, intending to spend the rest of my days in this familiar environment. However, my time at Queens College has opened my eyes to many different worlds beyond my own.

**“Change can occur unexpectedly.
Only time will tell if I have the courage
to embrace it.”**

After transferring in during my second year.

I found myself reflecting on why I hadn't made this change sooner. The truth is, I had been hesitant to let go of what was familiar. However, I can't honestly say I felt regret, as I didn't embark on this journey alone. Familiar faces from my past were also taking the leap into the unknown alongside me. Those who were once merely classmates have transformed into companions throughout this



experience. Naturally, the new faces I encountered along the way have also enriched my time here.

This school's population is very diverse in its multitude of communities, and my engagement with them has cultivated a deep sense of connection. Whether I'm logging miles with the running club, enjoying inspiring concerts alongside talented performers from the School of Music, or socializing with peers in the physical education lounge, I find belonging—despite my hour-long commute. As I look toward my future as

president of Queens College's Kappa Delta Pi, I am also learning from professors who are helping me develop essential self-regulatory learning skills. While my heart is set on establishing roots in a place that has always felt like home, I have come to realize that change can occur unexpectedly. Only time will tell if I have the courage to embrace it. I'm excited to find out!



If My Thoughts Could Dream

*I've always wondered
If my thoughts could dream,
And if they could be heard,
Redundant it may seem.*

*(Now)
If a dream at rest is imagination,
And a dream at wake is an aspiration,
Then what do you call a dream in the middle?
If not either, perhaps a combination?*

*Am I equal to the material or students in
the bleachers?
Every so often, a classroom will sprout a
natural-born leader.
Was it learned, or did they enter, already
a full-fledged dreamer?*

*(Now)
Some seem to start with a purpose,
Knowing the correct road to take.*

*(But)
When moonlight shines down on the
house of within, I scribe;
There's a brief moment where benefits
show from my bribe.
Those fleeting times when I'm nothing
short of genius,
Close my eyes and feel the page: it's
proof, I'm not dreamless.*

— excerpt from “If My Thoughts Could Dream”
by Antonio Sanchez

A Journey Shaped by NYC Men's Teach

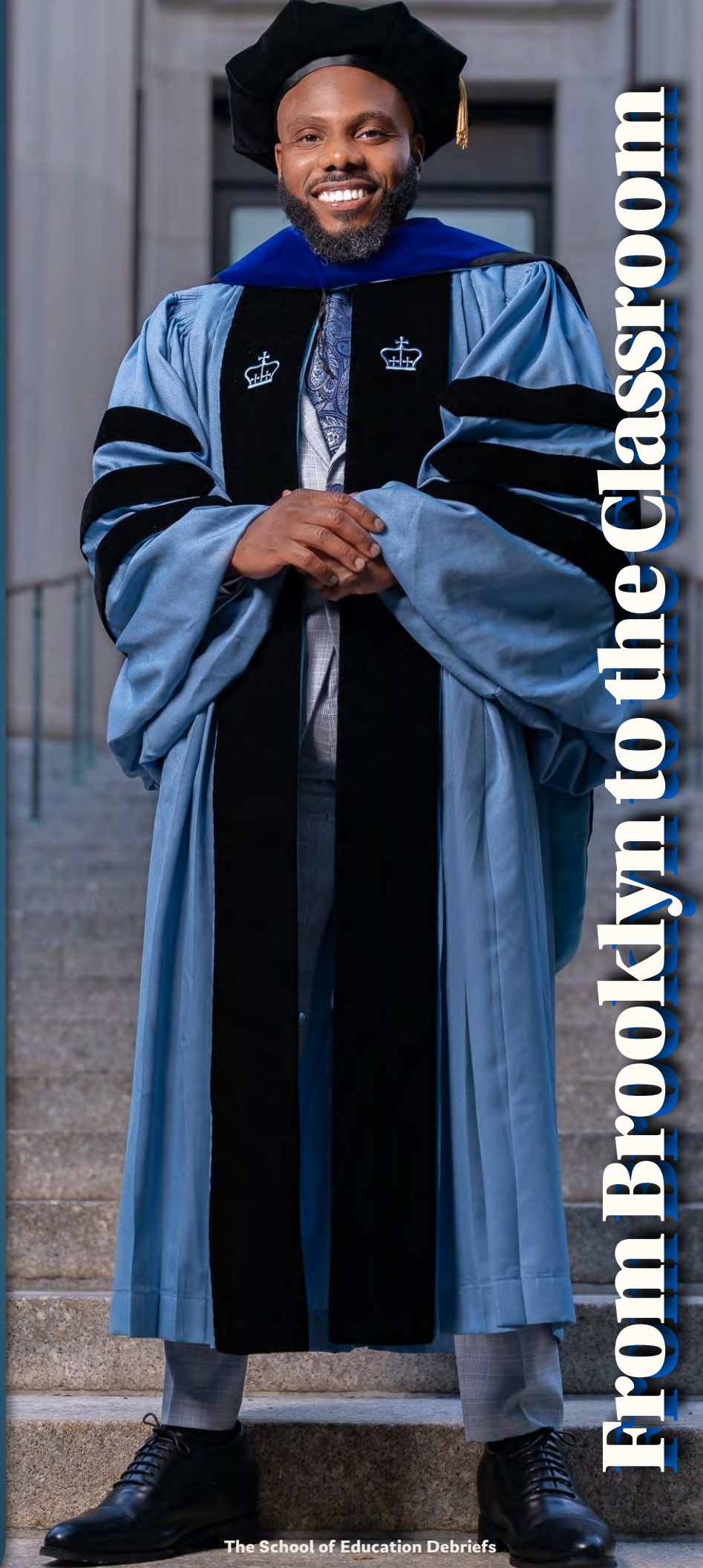
by Dr. David Beauzil

My time in the NYC Men Teach program was foundational in shaping both my identity and trajectory as an educator. As a Haitian American man from Brooklyn, entering the program meant more than preparing to teach, it meant joining a community committed to disrupting inequities in urban education. One key moment I recall was realizing that representation is not symbolic; it is transformative. Being surrounded by mentors, peers, and fellow alumni who affirmed the necessity of men of color in classrooms strengthened my resolve to serve with purpose.

Dr. Smith and Dr. Anders, the directors of the NYC Men Teach program, played a pivotal role in my journey. Their mentorship extended beyond coursework, they motivated me to complete my doctorate and supported me in navigating my teaching career within the New York City Public Schools system. Their guidance helped me think strategically about long term goals while staying grounded in daily classroom practice.

The program at CUNY Queens College pushed me to think critically about pedagogy, identity, and responsibility. It cultivated in me a deep commitment to literacy as a tool for liberation, work that would later become central to my doctoral research at Teachers College, Columbia University. In May 2025, I earned my Ph.D. in English Education, where my dissertation examined the transformative potential of storytelling through urban teacher narratives. I currently serve as a Middle School English Language Arts teacher in Brooklyn while continuing to engage in scholarship and mentorship as an active NYC Men Teach alumni member.

NYC Men Teach instilled in me discipline, self regulated learning, and a sense of collective responsibility. It shaped not only the educator I have become but the leader I aspire to be.



From Brooklyn to the Classroom



CELEBRATING *Homecoming Week*

By Edi Corea

Attending Queens College as an undergrad was a transformative experience that immersed me in the cultural melange of the "World's Borough." Interacting with people from multicultural backgrounds who were first-generation Americans, like me, was truly eye-opening. This experience further motivated me to earn my BA in History and Secondary Education from Queens College in 2019, becoming the first person in my family to graduate from a U.S. institution of higher education. Shortly after graduation, I became a social studies teacher at Westbury High School, my alma mater, where I continue to teach both general education and ENL students. Witnessing the perseverance of my ENLs as they learned English and adapted to a new country, mirroring my Honduran parents' story, inspired me to return to Queens to earn an MS in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), which I completed in 2022. Understanding the cognitive processes and the stages of language acquisition that influence a child's development is essential to being a competent and empathetic educator.

Empathizing with my ENLs has also taught me that they need support to reach their academic, linguistic, and mental capabilities, not only from culturally inclusive educators, but also from linguistically responsive mental health professionals. As immigrant children have continued to migrate to the U.S., a severe shortage of bilingual mental health professionals, including therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, has emerged. Bilingual practitioners are desperately needed at this crucial moment in our nation's history. ENL students who have mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder need access to bilingual mental health professionals to begin the healing process in their native language.

As a result of witnessing my students struggle with mental health challenges and experiencing similar adversities myself, I decided to pursue a career in the field of mental health. In 2025, I was accepted into the MS Mental Health Counseling (MHC) program at Queens, where I am currently pursuing my second master's degree. The insights I have gained thus far have helped me develop the skills necessary to become a congruent and effective therapist, preparing me to serve trauma-impacted populations, particularly immigrant children and women, veterans, and individuals struggling with addictive behaviors. The MHC MS program has and will continue to provide me with wisdom to serve others because at Queens College, *Discimus ut Serviamus*, we learn so we may serve.



LEARNING



GROWTH



PRACTICE



IMPACT



GROWING *Through Support and Community*

By Bakhtawar Zahid

My experience at Queens College has been very positive and meaningful. From the beginning, I felt supported by both the professors and the staff. The professors truly care about their students and always make an effort to help everyone succeed. They take the time to explain concepts clearly, answer questions, and provide guidance whenever needed. This has helped me grow not only academically but also personally.

The staff at Queens College is also very helpful and welcoming. They create a comfortable environment where students feel encouraged and motivated. The director of Physical Education, Professor Jessica Angelastro, does an amazing job supporting students and making sure everyone has the resources they need. She is always willing to help and shows strong leadership within the program.

I am also proud to be part of Kappa Delta Pi, an amazing honor society that has made my experience even more special. Being part of this group has helped me grow as a future educator and connect with others who share the same passion.

I would like to give a special shout out to Professor Professor Héfer Bembenuitty, Professor Robert Hoover, Professor Louis Pasquale, Professor Jessica Angelastro, and Professor Taemin Ha for supporting me throughout my college journey.





Representation. Resilience. Purpose.

A Reflection From
Quentin Brown



My journey at Queens College began with a moment of clarity. I remember discovering a video by Dr. Gibson discussing the critical lack of Black male special education teachers. As an African American man who has navigated life with a stutter, his words resonated deeply; I realized I could be the representation I didn't always see growing up.



ACADEMIC & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Building on my B.S. in African American Studies at Brockport University, I am currently pursuing my Master's in General and Special Education (Grades 1-6) alongside the BCBA certification track at Queens College. My professional foundation is rooted in five years (2019-2024) of dedicated work at a summer camp for children with disabilities. Today, I apply those lessons daily at a school for children with Autism, providing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to help students master essential life and educational skills.



IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM

The program at Queens College has been transformative. It has equipped me with the clinical tools to differentiate between diverse disabilities while reinforcing a vital truth: background matters. Students thrive when they work with someone who understands their race and lived experience. This program has taught me how to provide a "safety group" and a sense of comfort for students of color in the disability community.



PERSISTENCE AS A FOUNDATION

My academic success is fueled by self-regulated learning and persistence. Navigating my own disability has required me to be my own advocate, a trait that now allows me to show my students that a stutter or any disability is not a barrier to impact. I am here to ensure the next generation feels seen, understood, and supported.

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

LITERACY EDUCATION

ALL GRADES (PRE-K-12TH GRADE)

Advance your expertise in literacy and make a lasting impact on learners of all ages. Our program prepares educators to become skilled literacy teachers, coaches, and leaders who design and deliver equitable, evidence-based instruction that empowers every student.



DEEPEN KNOWLEDGE

Strengthen your understanding of reading and writing development, literacy theories, and evidence-based practices across content areas and grade levels.



LEAD & ADVOCATE

Learn to support diverse learners, lead literacy initiatives, and advocate for equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction in schools and communities.



APPLY & PRACTICE

Engage in field experiences and a literacy practicum that connect coursework with real classrooms and professional practice.



EARN CERTIFICATION

Program completers are eligible to recommend Certification in Literacy (Pre-K-Grade 12) in New York State.



TO APPLY

Applicants must meet the following admissions requirements: Hold an earned bachelor's degree; Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher; Have a New York State initial or professional classroom teaching certificate; submit two letters of recommendation; submit a 500-word essay explaining your interest in the program; and additional requirements may be specified on the application form. Applicants are accepted for fall admission only.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Graduate Admissions at 718-997-5200 or go to www.qc.cuny.edu/ga/ application deadlines and further information.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Dr. Anna Malyukova
Powdermaker Hall 054V
718-997-5302 | anna.malyukova@qc.cuny.edu

Why Literacy?



Literacy unlocks opportunity. As a literacy educator, you will equip students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to thrive in school, in their communities, and in life.



Rethinking the Rules of *Learning*

By Grace Pai, PhD

Grace Pai, PhD, Associate Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at Queens College, brings a research-driven and globally informed perspective to teaching, learning, and equity. Through her work, she continues to bridge research, pedagogical practice, and educational policy.

My teaching philosophy is grounded in engaging students through active, experiential learning that encourages continuous reflection while fostering student agency and empowerment. Over the past few semesters, I have received positive feedback from students regarding the integration of simulations into my math methods course. Students benefit from individual rehearsals and student-centered math discussions that complement their student teaching practicum experience.

Additionally, undergraduate students in my education technology course have participated in a virtual exchange project with Pre- and in-service teachers from National Taipei University of Education. This collaboration has facilitated a comparative exploration of digital and AI literacy between New York and Taiwan. It has been enlightening to observe how much more receptive and, in some ways, “advanced,” Taiwan appears to be in incorporating and teaching AI to students.

One of the main ways I achieve these objectives is “ungrading” my courses, which involves offering formative assessments and constructive feedback to encourage students to reflect on their learning as an ongoing process rather than just an outcome. I empower my students by giving them choices in assignments and a voice in the grading process. We engage in a collaborative class activity to develop the assignment rubric together, often utilizing generative AI to draft a preliminary rubric that we then critically assess and refine. I also conduct individual grade conferences at the end of the semester, during which students discuss their learning experiences and present the grade they believe best reflects their efforts.

I have recently completed a monograph titled *Leave No One Behind? Education for All through the Eyes of Out-of-School Children in Sierra Leone*, which will be published by Rutgers University Press. Based on over 100 interviews with out-of-school children and their parents or guardians in three rural villages, my central argument is that another purpose of education for families across the world is to earn and maintain

human dignity and relational capital. However, current international education policies are not sufficiently responding to this need.

With the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals set to expire in 2030, I present opportunities for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to achieve the next round of goals through a culturally responsive approach—one that accepts and includes out-of-school children and their families, rather than imposing external definitions of education, human rights, and children’s roles in society.

Mathematical practices such as constructing arguments and using structure are essential to students’ success in doing mathematics. Yet many Pre-service teachers approach teaching math using an “I do, We do, You do” model centered on modeling and practice. I have been guiding students in my math methods courses to embed computational thinking practices such as decomposition, algorithmic thinking, and abstraction into regular math instruction in order to deepen student engagement and make mathematics more meaningful.

In addition to future research on cultivating mathematical practices through computational thinking, I look forward to further merging my backgrounds in international and mathematics education. My current work as a US Fulbright Scholar focuses on how elementary school teachers in Taiwan implement culturally responsive teaching to close what the United Nations calls a “critical education gap” between indigenous children and their peers from majority ethnic groups.

As one of the world leaders in mathematics education, Taiwan provides an opportunity to better understand how teachers enhance learning for all students. Through this work, I aim to identify promising practices that may be applied in the United States and New York contexts.



MORE THAN A MISSION:

Building the Future of Teaching

BY NATHANIEL SMITH

Professionally, my career spans over 20 years with experience in NYC Public Schools and higher education. I have served in leadership roles devoted to social justice and student success, both of which align with my personal and professional mission-driven, engagement philosophy. As Director of NYC Men Teach, my work includes leading teacher diversity efforts geared towards the recruitment of men of color into teacher preparation programs.



Throughout my tenure, I have created and implemented diversity-in-education programs and events, co-developed SOE's diversity recruitment and enrollment plan, managed student space, and partnered with the Dean and faculty on strategic planning recommendations that impact curricula, student engagement, and professional outcomes.



Additionally, I have helped to organize job fairs and networking events, created workshops, and sent students to local and national conferences to develop as professionals. All of these roles and activities have allowed me to enhance my collaboration skills by partnering closely with various stakeholders from the President and Senior Administration, CUNY Central, NYC Public Schools, the NYC Mayor's Office, and other allies to ensure that student success, leadership development, and engagement remain center stage.



NYC Men Teach is a mayoral initiative launched by former Mayor Bill de Blasio to recruit and retain more Black, Latino, and Asian males into NYC Public Schools. NYC Men Teach has a unique partnership spearheaded by the Mayor's Young Men's Initiative, and supported by NYC Public Schools and CUNY, that coalesce to facilitate teaching opportunities for men of color. Nationwide, men of color comprise 5% of public school teachers.


**NYC
MEN
TEACH**

Nathaniel Smith
Director, NYC Men Teach
Queens College, CUNY



“

Now in our 10th year, NYC Men Teach has increased the number of male teachers of color to over 15% to bolster New York City's teacher workforce. Since CUNY is the largest feeder of teacher candidates to NYC Public Schools, NYC Men Teach has partnered with CUNY to establish 16 campus programs to strengthen the teaching pipeline. NYC Men Teach recruits undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in teacher preparation programs and/or with a strong interest in teaching. Once students are accepted, they are provided access to exclusive educational opportunities within the NYC Men Teach network such as culturally-responsive seminars, financial assistance, and direct hiring support.

One of the biggest challenges I have faced in this role is navigating the COVID-19 pandemic.



During its height, one of my students lost a child. Additionally, several students faced a myriad of issues that impeded their academic progress. Addressing these challenges required me to be a contactable, approachable, and reliable presence. As a result, students began partnering with me to run peer-to-peer mental health support groups. Parallel to these efforts, I helped to enhance student engagement through the creation of the Ubuntu mentoring program, the establishment of the Town Hall series on race, cultural diversity, and leadership, the

co-development of the Dean's Will to Change Healing Series, and the creation of the Hip Hop Cypher to connect artists, influencers, and educators with students. All of these initiatives helped to keep students engaged with each other and NYC Men Teach.

“

Student success, leadership development, and engagement remain center stage.

”

Language. Connection. Possibility.

Jennifer Stengel-Mohr

TESOL LECTURER | QUEENS COLLEGE

THE POWER OF TESOL

“
Art creates a meaningful
learning environment
where students feel
motivated to use
language.
”

We recently featured Jennifer Stengel-Mohr, a TESOL lecturer at Queens College with nearly 30 years of experience in education. Her work centers on language development and the role of the arts in supporting Multilingual Learners, drawing from her experience in both K-12 education and teacher preparation.



What motivated you to pursue a career in TESOL?

My interest in language began from a young age, having grown up in a home where more than one language was spoken. It always fascinated me how speakers could move fluidly between conversations in different languages. I was also drawn to the choices that speakers made while communicating. However, to be honest I did not know that TESOL was an option as a profession until entering Queens College as a student in the Linguistics and Communication Disorders Department many years ago.

While I entered the department with a love for language, I was unsure where that would take me. As I continued to pursue my studies, it became clear to me that I had already had skills suited for the teaching profession and I developed a desire to help every student develop their language capabilities in a meaningful and supported way.

I spent nearly 15 years in the New York City Department of Education as an ENL Teacher and Staff Developer before transitioning into a full-time position in the same department where I was previously a student.

Looking back at nearly 30 years in education, it has been such a rewarding experience to watch learners grow academically and as individuals. I have been able to learn so much from my students, their families, and the communities that I have worked with.

“
Teaching is not
an easy path, but it
is a rewarding one.
”



Tell us about your current research projects and teaching approaches.

My specific area of research for the past two decades has been focused on how the arts can impact language development. Art is present in some form in every culture, and this creates a natural bridge for learning as well as an access point for someone who is new to the language.

Art, in all of its forms, creates a meaningful learning environment where students find an immediate need and motivation to use the language that they are learning. The hands-on nature of the arts gives learners the supports needed to express themselves in a variety of ways.

In addition, the arts inherently embody the 21st Century Skills of Communication, Collaboration, Creativity, and Critical Thinking. These skills transfer across all areas of learning and help students become well-rounded learners.

My goal is to advocate for art-making opportunities for all learners, but specifically for Multilingual Learners, because these students are often absent from these types of experiences. In fact, these are the very opportunities that most enhance their development in multiple ways.



Why is TESOL a vital program for urban learners?

With over 700 languages spoken throughout New York City, it is a multicultural and multilingual epicenter of the world, and Queens College is at the heart of that. The need for ENL (TESOL) teachers is great, and there is currently a shortage of teachers in this area.

Every classroom throughout the city and most of the state has language learners in it. General classroom teachers are not always prepared for the specific needs of language development and support.

ENL teachers not only provide valuable learning supports to their students, but they are also a resource for other teachers and staff in the building when it comes to meeting this need.

In a diverse, urban environment such as Queens, TESOL plays a vital role in understanding, supporting, and advocating for the needs of Multilingual Learners, their families, and their communities.



What advice would you offer to aspiring teachers?

Teaching is not an easy path, but it is a rewarding one. There are many demands on our time, and educational trends tend to shift, but it is important to stay grounded and focused on the students as individuals.

Regardless of the curriculum or methods being used, knowing that you are in this profession to grow minds and impact learners for their future is what defines success.

It is important to reflect often on your practice. Ask yourself if you are being true to who you are as a teacher. This helps you remember why you chose this profession and allows you to contribute your unique strengths in the classroom.

We must also continue to grow professionally—seeking opportunities to read, research, and collaborate so that we can refine our practice.

And finally, are we making an impact on our students' lives every day? Do they feel heard, respected, and supported? Do they find joy in being in your classroom and have a desire for learning?

Teaching is a balancing act, but keeping our focus on students helps us find joy in the profession.

Building bridges. Opening minds.
Empowering every voice.



Building an Artist's Voice: Isaac Ramos

Academic Journey at QC



My name is Isaac Ramos, and I am currently a junior at Queens College, majoring in Art Education. Throughout my time at QC, I have had the privilege to engage in enriching experiences, including studying Ceramics and Printmaking in my studio art classes, as I actively pursue my goal of becoming an Art teacher. I owe much of my progress to the SEYS department, my dedicated professors, and the invaluable experience of observing real classrooms and learning directly from educators.

Before enrolling at Queens College, I participated in the inaugural Art Leadership Boot camp in 2023, which inspired me to continue my journey as a visual artist. This semester, I showcased one of my ceramic pieces in the art show "Magnetic Desire" at the Klapper Hall Gallery. Each of these experiences has contributed significantly to my academic and professional growth and to the development of my self-efficacy beliefs in learning and teaching. This journey has challenged me to realize my potential and transform what was once just a dream into reality. Queens College has also provided me with numerous opportunities to explore further and develop my artistic skills.

I eagerly anticipate the upcoming semesters and the new academic experiences they will bring. Here are two artworks I created at QC for my ceramics and printmaking classes.



The Architecture of Effective Teaching

Insights from Dr. Mary Theresa Kiely

Drawing from her research and decades of experience Dr. Kiely shares what continues to shape her work in literacy, special education, and teacher preparation.



What currently inspires your research and teaching?

My students are my inspiration! We work together to bring the research they are studying to bear on the problems of practice that they encounter in classrooms. The interchange of ideas creates compelling questions for me about how teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices are related in supporting students with disabilities, especially in literacy and language arts.

Much of my work explores how instructional decision-making, teacher preparation, and classroom reflection shape student learning experiences.



How can educators better support developing writers?

Teachers can choose strategies that incorporate supports for both writing skills as well as self-monitoring and self-regulation. Modeling strategies with explicit think alouds, providing opportunities for discourse about writing, and providing support until independent mastery are highly effective.

Providing daily time to write and teaching strategies for each component of the writing process allows for gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student as competence increases.

Collaboration among teachers, students, and support professionals remains an essential part of effective instruction.



Looking ahead, what continues to guide your work?

Working with preservice teachers of students with disabilities in the Graduate Programs in Special Education inspires continued exploration of how to support preservice and inservice teachers within teacher education programs and beyond.

Many teachers need support in linking supportive beliefs to effective, research supported supports. Engendering teachers' positive beliefs requires knowledge building and practice opportunities within collaborations focused on the specific needs of the individual students to realize the vision set forth in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Understanding teachers' beliefs is a step towards realizing that vision.



What approaches best support students with disabilities in writing instruction?

Instruction in writing for students with disabilities is most effective when it combines explicit teaching of strategies, opportunities for meaningful practice, and built-in supports for planning, language, and self-regulation.

Promising practices include explicit strategy instruction, structured use of the writing process, scaffolded language and sentence construction, and the thoughtful use of assistive technology and accommodations.

Approaches such as Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) help students build organization, confidence, and independence throughout the writing process.



What role do teacher beliefs play in instructional practice?

Who you are as a person affects who you are as a teacher - and that affects how your beliefs are enacted in your work, for both my students and myself. For myself, as a first generation American and first generation college student from the Bronx, I choose research questions that allow me to investigate how supportive beliefs towards diverse students with disabilities can be encouraged through teacher education and professional development. For teachers' instructional practices, demonstrating in our class projects that using the research evidence can dramatically improve student outcomes is foundational in convincing teachers to actually use recommended practices. The link between teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices for students with disabilities is an area that needs much more research. Building teachers' knowledge, self-efficacy, and opportunities to reflect and collaborate helps shift beliefs and leads to more flexible, equitable instruction.



Mary Theresa Kiely, Ph.D., Associate Professor

Graduate Programs in Special Education
Department of Educational and
Community Programs
Queens College

Her research focuses on teacher knowledge, instructional decision-making, and literacy and language arts instruction for students with disabilities.



FINDING MY RHYTHM, *Building My Future*

By Boaz Lee, Teacher Candidate

Hello everyone! My name is Boaz Lee, and I am currently a third-year student pursuing a degree in Music Education. During my time at Queens College, I have had the opportunity to grow not only as a student but also as an individual. Before entering college, I lacked true motivation to push myself, as I primarily focused on my grades and did not actively seek out new opportunities. However, my college experience has transformed my work ethic, compelling me to maintain my place on the Dean's List while continuing to strengthen my musical skills.

Coming from a New York City public school background, I did not have the benefit of private instruction and developed most of my saxophone techniques independently. In my first year, through self-directed learning, I pushed myself beyond my limits—practicing intensely and working to unlearn bad habits. Since then, I have expanded my abilities by learning new instruments such as the trumpet and violin, performing across genres including Latin, jazz, contemporary, and rock, and even conducting a piece on stage for the first time.

Beyond music, I have deeply valued the education courses I have taken at Queens College. One memorable experience took place in my Educational Psychology class with Dr. Héfer Bembenuity. As part of the course, my classmates and I applied teaching and learning principles to music by reworking the song "Dancing Queen" by ABBA. Our version reflected the role of educators:

*We are the ones who teach
Ones who lead you to better think
We can teach.
Feel your brain release dopamine.
You can learn. You can thrive.
Learning can better your life.
Ooh, you will see, why we sing.
We are the ones who teach.*

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family, friends, peers, professors at Queens College, and my former teachers. Each of you has contributed to my personal and academic growth, and I truly would not be here without your support. Thank you.



SHAPING PURPOSE *Through Practice*

By Kevin Flynn, QC Alumni

My time at Queens College reshaped the direction of my life in ways I could not have anticipated. I entered QC to pursue a master's degree in Special Education and was quickly introduced to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), a field I initially knew little about. As I learned more, my interest deepened. Once I began working in the field, I saw how seamlessly classroom theory translated into practice. Watching these principles come to life—and seeing the impact on students and their families—made the work deeply meaningful.

I also remember Dr. Lenwood Gibson explaining why he teaches: by educating rooms full of students who each go on to support countless individuals, his impact extends far beyond what he could accomplish alone. That perspective reshaped how I view education, leadership, and service.

While still in graduate school, I began working at the Manhattan Children's Center, a private school on the Upper West Side serving students ages 5–21 with autism spectrum disorder and related neurodiversities. After graduating, I remained at MCC, first as a Lead Teacher for four years and now as a Classroom Supervisor. I am a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and a Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA) in New York.

Balancing graduate studies with full-time work was demanding. Long days and weekends spent completing projects tested my determination, but the vision of where I hoped to be kept me moving forward. Looking back, the effort was more than worth it—and I know that because I am preparing to do it again.

Beyond education, I coach youth soccer and am pursuing certifications in strength and conditioning. My long-term goal is to integrate sports performance and ABA, applying data-driven principles to enhance athletic development.

Eight years later, I remain committed to learning, growing, and building upon the foundation Queens College provided. Proud to be a **QC alumni**.



LEARNING



GROWTH



PRACTICE



IMPACT



Changing Landscapes in Bilingual Education:

A Conversation with Kate Menken

Kate Menken, Distinguished Professor in the Queens College School of Education

Kate Menken, Distinguished Professor in the Queens College School of Education, conducts research on bilingual education, multilingual learners, and educational equity in New York City. In this conversation, she discusses her recent research, the changing landscape of bilingual education programs, and how the TESOL program at Queens College prepares educators to support multilingual learners.

Recently, you conducted a mixed-methods study examining access to bilingual education programs for multilingual learners with disabilities in New York City. What were some key findings?

“One of the main findings from our research is that multilingual learners with disabilities are the population least likely to gain access to bilingual education programs.”

This is concerning given the research demonstrating that bilingual education benefits multilingual learners, including those with disabilities.

Currently, 85% of multilingual learners with disabilities are enrolled in English as a New Language programs, while only 11% are enrolled in bilingual education programs. Students whose Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) require self-contained settings are especially likely to be excluded.

Can you tell us about your research study and how it was conducted?

The research team interviewed leaders from 21 of New York City’s 32 school districts, as well as citywide leaders, for a total of 37 participants. Interviews revealed barriers including what Cioè-Peña calls the “intersectional gap,” where students who are both multilingual learners and students with disabilities are often treated as belonging to only one category rather than both.

Menken explains that MLwDs can only enter bilingual programs when placement is mandated in their IEP, even though New York State policy requires access to bilingual education. School leaders may also mistakenly believe bilingual education is too challenging for these students, despite research showing that the presence of a student’s home language supports both English development and academic learning.

Another barrier is the shortage of bilingual special educators. Menken believes this is an area where Queens College can help address an urgent need. “If you are bilingual and interested in teaching special education,” she says, “I would highly recommend earning special education certification with a bilingual extension.”

How does your research contribute to the broader conversation about dual language education?

Your research also contributes to the literature on the gentrification of dual language bilingual education. What insights did your findings provide?

Menken explains that bilingual education programs in the United States grew out of the Civil Rights movement, when immigrant communities sought linguistic and educational justice for their children. Historically, bilingual programs served multilingual learners. By the early 2000s, however, dual language bilingual education (DLBE) programs—serving both multilingual learners and English speakers—became increasingly popular among middle-class families who wanted their children

What shift did you observe in attitudes toward dual language education?

She recalls parents lined up around the block hoping to secure seats in a Manhattan dual language program while multilingual learners were often placed instead in English as a New Language programs.

Researchers later described this shift as the “gentrification of dual language education,” where access increasingly benefits students with White racial privilege, English language privilege, or socioeconomic privilege. Menken and her colleagues document this issue in their 2024 book *Overcoming the Gentrification of Dual Language, Bilingual and Immersion Education*, which offers practical solutions for educators and families seeking more equitable bilingual education programs.

Why might aspiring teachers find the TESOL program at Queens College to be a supportive choice?

Queens College offers an undergraduate TESOL major, a Master’s of Education in TESOL, a Post-Master’s Advanced Certificate in TESOL, and a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics for those interested in teaching English to adults.

Queens—often called the “World’s Borough”—is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse places in the world. Many TESOL students at Queens College are themselves bilingual and from immigrant families, and they pursue this work to serve the academic and linguistic needs of multilingual learners.

The program provides a strong foundation in linguistics, along with extensive coursework in language learning, literacy, and assessment for multilingual learners. Students also complete substantial fieldwork in Queens public schools serving large numbers of multilingual students.



Voices

from the School of Education



Real experiences. Real growth. Future educators in the making.



**Dr. Aldean
Beaumont-Tynes**

QUEENS COLLEGE

I am Jamaican-born and Brooklyn-raised, and my relationship with education has always been deeply personal. As a student navigating different cultural and academic spaces, I learned early that potential is not always recognized when context is overlooked.

Before becoming a school psychologist, I taught high school, primarily working with first-generation immigrant students across a wide range of abilities. I witnessed brilliance that was not always reflected in grades or standardized measures, and I saw behaviors interpreted without consideration of culture, stress, language, or trauma.

I came to understand that learning does not happen in isolation; it is shaped by environment, expectation, and opportunity.

Those experiences led me to School Psychology and, ultimately, to Educational Psychology as the bridge between theory and lived experience. That systems lens continues to guide both my clinical work and my teaching.

Since 2009, I have taught Educational Psychology in the SEYS Department at Queens College, preparing graduate students for teacher certification. I believe theory must always connect to lived experience.

I motivate aspiring teachers by treating them as professionals in development from the very first day. I push them to move beyond memorization and ask, "What does this look like in a real classroom?"

A supportive learning environment, to me, strengthens students' capacity to think ethically and intentionally. I hold high expectations while ensuring they feel respected as emerging professionals.

The future of Educational Psychology must remain grounded in context. Motivation, emotion, identity, family systems, and culture all shape whether students can access what they know. Educational Psychology should help teachers move from "What's wrong with this student?" to "What is this student experiencing, and what does this situation require from me?" My advice to aspiring teachers is simple: master your content, but learn people even more. Notice what lies beneath behavior. Teach students how to think and persist, not just what to memorize. That is how learning becomes both lasting and impactful.



**Dylan
Torrella**



QUEENS COLLEGE



Queens College has been a place of growth, opportunity for me. The professors and staff are genuinely committed to student success and create an environment where you feel supported both inside and outside the classroom.

GROWTH & OPPORTUNITY

Queens College as a whole has been a joy to grow as a person and it wouldn't be possible without the amazing educators that guide me. The welcoming environment all stems from my professors creating a comfortable and uplifting environment.

CONFIDENCE & PURPOSE

I am very welcomed and honored to be a part of Kappa Delta Pi, which has made my experience even more exceptional. It's a pleasure to meet many more educators and like-minded people with the purpose of creating a better environment for students of today and for the future.

THANKFUL & INSPIRED

I would like to give a very special thanks to Dr. Hefer Bembenutty, Professor Jessica Angelastro, Professor Norberto Quiles, Professor Robert Hoover, Professor Anoop Balachandran, Professor Liselotte Fleming and Professor Louis Pasquale.



Fernanda Armoza

MBA, MS Ed

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM. REAL WORLD. REAL IMPACT

A Q&A with Fernanda Armoza, MBA, MS Ed

From her philosophy of teaching to her advice for future educators, Professor Fernanda Armoza shares how the FCS Education Program prepares candidates to teach with purpose, perspective, and heart.

The FCS Education Program—**Family and Consumer Sciences Education**—prepares candidates to teach in a field that connects the human body, the home, the family, and the marketplace to prepare students for life.



1 What is your philosophy of teaching in the FCS Education Program?

My teaching philosophy is rooted in a belief that learning is reciprocal. Loris Malaguzzi captured it perfectly: the teacher is always learning alongside the student. I came to education from a marketing career, and that journey fundamentally shapes how I teach. I don't stand at the front of the room as the expert; I stand beside my candidates as a fellow practitioner helping them find their own professional voice. In a program serving career-changers and working teachers, it is essential to maintain a reciprocal learning model.



2 How do you help teacher candidates see the “big picture” connection across FCS content areas?

FCS is uniquely whole. No other field sits at the intersection of the human body, the home, the family, and the marketplace all at once. I help my candidates see that a lesson on textile science is also a lesson in consumer ethics, global supply chains, and self-expression.

A unit on child development is inseparable from family structure, nutrition, and economic stability. We explore the state and national standards that anchor our lessons and the content threads that run between them. In our fully online graduate program, where candidates come from different content backgrounds, building that connective tissue is the work. I ask them to consider where the content touches and transfers to a student's real life. That question is the consistent thread.

“.....
Students don't need teachers who have only ever been in school. They need teachers who know what it looks like to apply knowledge in the real world.”
.....



6 How do you ensure candidates are prepared to teach a curriculum inclusive of diverse family structures and cultural traditions?



My candidates will teach in communities where no two families look the same. I prepare them for that reality by grounding our work in the NYS Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education framework. That means inclusivity isn't a module we visit once. Instead, responsive environments of learning become the lens candidates carry into every planning decision, from how they design a worksheet to how they frame their prompt for a Do Now. Learning to teach through that framework, rather than around it, is central to what we do.

7 What advice would you give to aspiring FCS teachers?

Trust the transition. Many of my candidates arrive unsure whether their prior life, a career in food service, healthcare, childcare, or retail will qualify them for the classroom. Students don't need teachers who have only ever been in school. They need teachers who know what it looks like to apply knowledge in the real world. FCS exists to prepare young people for life.



Inside the Classroom:

A Conversation with Jay Shuttleworth



What inspires an educator to move from the K–12 classroom into teacher preparation—and what does it take to prepare future educators for today’s diverse classrooms? We asked Jay Shuttleworth to share his perspective on teaching history and social studies, navigating complexity in the classroom, and building meaningful connections with students.

Shuttleworth reflects on his early experiences in K–12 education as a pivotal influence on his career path. He recalls working alongside student teachers from nearby universities and discovering that the process of reflecting on teaching practices was both energizing and insightful. “It was renewing, honest, and even playful,” he notes, adding that he often learned just as much from those experiences as the student teachers themselves.

Although leaving the K–12 classroom was a difficult decision, he describes his current work with both new and experienced educators as deeply rewarding—an opportunity for continuous reflection and meaningful connection across different stages of the profession.

“

Creating a classroom environment that supports these discussions requires intentionality. It’s about fostering thoughtful dialogue, respecting multiple perspectives, and guiding students to think critically and evaluate evidence.

”

In today’s classrooms, one of the most significant challenges for social studies educators is moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction. Shuttleworth emphasizes that adopting a culturally relevant and responsive teaching model is not only complex, but essential. By connecting curriculum to students’ lived experiences, educators create opportunities for deeper engagement and understanding. This approach allows students to bring their own perspectives into the learning process, making instruction more dynamic and meaningful. At the same time, it encourages teachers to remain flexible, thoughtful, and responsive to the diverse needs of their students.

Addressing controversial or sensitive historical topics presents another important dimension of social studies education. According to Shuttleworth, engaging with these topics is a hallmark of effective teaching. However, he notes that not all disagreements indicate true controversy. A key skill for educators is learning how to distinguish between issues that are open for debate, those that are largely settled, and those that may be in transition.

Creating a classroom environment that supports these discussions requires intentionality. Shuttleworth highlights the importance of establishing clear norms rooted in respect, empathy, and constructive dialogue. Equally important is guiding students to engage with evidence thoughtfully—encouraging them to evaluate sources and determine which arguments are most compelling. Through this balanced approach, educators can foster classrooms that are both intellectually rigorous and emotionally supportive.

Through his work, Shuttleworth continues to model the kind of reflective, student-centered teaching that he hopes to inspire in future educators—bridging theory and practice while keeping the focus firmly on meaningful learning experiences for every student.



Christos Argyros

SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION MAJOR



My time at Queens College has been truly rewarding. The professors are knowledgeable, approachable, and always willing to go the extra mile to help students succeed. They create a positive learning environment where you feel encouraged to ask questions, share ideas, and grow.

The staff are also incredibly supportive and always available when you need guidance. They help make Queens College a welcoming and motivating place to learn.

I am thankful for the opportunities I’ve had here that have helped me develop both academically and personally. I know the knowledge and experience I’ve gained will prepare me for the future.



Your encouragement and dedication mean a great deal.



A Transformative Journey in TESOL

by Jennifer Espinal

My journey at Queens College as a TESOL major has been both meaningful and trans-formative. Balancing academic responsibilities with professional commitments, I have not only strengthened my knowledge of language education but also increased my confidence in supporting multilingual learners. Each course has deepened my understanding of how language, culture, and identity intersect in the classroom, reinforcing my commitment to creating equitable learning opportunities for

all students.

Several key experiences have profoundly shaped my journey. Foremost among them has been the mentorship I have received from my advisor. Her guidance, support, and encouragement, along with the support of the entire TESOL department, have helped me navigate both academic and professional decisions. I credit this mentorship with

fostering the skills and confidence I need to succeed both within the program and as a student. Another meaningful milestone was receiving the Beverly R. Sanders Memorial Scholarship, which served as a significant recognition and highlight of my time in the program. Equally impactful has been the sense of community I have developed with classmates and professors, making my experience at Queens College academically enriching, inspiring, and enjoyable.

I currently work for the New York City Department of Education as a Language Paraprofessional while completing the TESOL program. In this role, I assist teachers in the

classroom, support students, help prepare instructional materials, and facilitate classroom activities. Balancing my responsibilities as a full-time employee and full-time student has required strong self-regulation, time management, and perseverance. Managing workdays, commuting, and coursework has taught me to stay disciplined and focus on my long-term goals. I rely on calendars, planners, and course syllabi to keep track of assignments, deadlines, and responsibilities, which has helped me remain organized and successfully manage both my academic and professional commitments. These experiences have strengthened my ability to take initiative and stay committed while also preparing me for the demands and realities of the teaching profession. The TESOL program has shaped my academic and professional growth. Through my experiences, I have developed as a student and as a future teacher committed to advocating for multilingual learners. Moving forward, I carry with me the knowledge and values gained at Queens College. My goal is to create classrooms where all students feel seen, respected, and able to achieve their fullest potential. The TESOL program has given me the foundation to pursue this goal with confidence and purpose.

Advancing STEAM Education:

*New Insights from
Dr. Garofalo and Dr. Farenga*

Queens College faculty continue to contribute meaningful scholarship to the field of education. In their recent work featured in a comprehensive STEAM education handbook, Dr. Stephen Farenga, Dr. Salvatore Garofalo and Dr. Daniel Ness explore the philosophical and theoretical foundations shaping how students learn across science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics.

INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH ON STEAM CURRICULUM AND PRACTICE

"This comprehensive handbook delves into timely issues in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts/architecture, and mathematics) curriculum and praxis. Cutting-edge research will help STEAM educators and researchers recognize and appreciate students' understanding of STEAM concepts, as well as capture contemporary educational, psychological, and social issues within the STEAM context. Drawing on the work of over 50 international contributors, this volume covers both emergent and established areas of research, giving voice to newcomers to the field as well as perspectives from established experts.

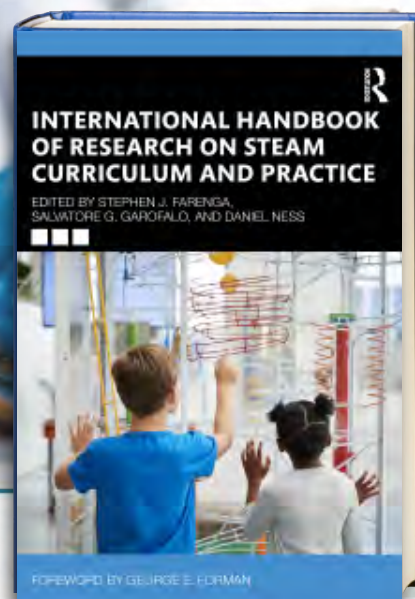
These areas are divided into four sections: Foundations, Content, Teaching and Learning Throughout the Lifespan, Equity and Enrichment, and Settings. Each topic is considered in both its historical and current context, with a focus on the interconnections between theory and practice.

This book offers a first-of-its-kind overview of STEAM curriculum development, which will be especially useful to educational practitioners and researchers of STEAM subjects, as well as teacher educators overseeing STEAM Education. This resource will also be useful for K-12 school and institutional libraries as reference material, and curriculum specialists and administrators seeking to identify methods of best educational practices within STEAM."



ABOUT THE EDITORS AND THEIR WORK

Garofalo and Farenga also explore how learning is shaped by interactions between students, tools, and environments. Their work encourages educators to think critically about how technology is used in the classroom—recognizing that while digital tools can enhance learning, they must be implemented with care to avoid cognitive overload and ensure meaningful engagement. In addition, their work calls for a shift in assessment practices, advocating for approaches that measure conceptual understanding rather than memorization. By focusing on explanation, application, and critical thinking, educators can better capture what students truly know and can do.



QUOTES FROM SELECTED CHAPTERS

Chapter 10: A PHYLOGENETIC AND ONTOGENETIC INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPATIAL COGNITION IN STEAM

Stephen J. Farenga, Daniel Ness, Salvatore G. Garofalo, and Joshua I. Rosen

"Spatial thinking ability, then, is a cross-cutting skill that overlaps many content areas and includes one's level of proficiency to position objects in a variety of arrangements... Spatial thinking ability, then, is a cross-cutting skill that overlaps many content areas and includes one's level of proficiency to position objects in a variety of arrangements."

Chapter 13: MULTIMODAL TOOLS AND COGNITIVE CONSIDERATIONS IN TEACHING IN STEAM

Salvatore G. Garofalo

"Multimodal platforms can be rather useful in STEAM learning environments. Presentation of material in multiple formats stimulating several senses provides learners with a wholistic, visual, and spatial approach to STEAM. Particularly, the ability to explore abstract concepts with visual, auditory, and/or haptic aids is invaluable to students... Multimodal platforms can be the invaluable teaching and learning tools they were designed to be, provided educators invest the care and thought necessary for appropriate implementation."

Chapter 7: STE(A)M EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Lyn D. English and Karen Skilling

"STEM education in elementary and middle school is essential if we are to develop citizens capable of dealing effectively with unforeseen problems in disruptive times. The STEM disciplines permeate our society in ways of which we are often unaware. AI, for example, is becoming increasingly prevalent in nearly every aspect of our lives. Students' development of AI literacy and STEM literacy more broadly is paramount."



RESEARCH IN ACTION

Salvatore Garofalo received the 2026 Queens College Research Award.

This award recognizes outstanding research excellence and the meaningful impact of scholarship on education and society.

Educator Scholar Series

Welcomes Dr. Washington Collado

During the Session, Dr. Collado shared a framework centered on purpose-driven leadership and the role educators play in creating meaningful impact. His discussion encouraged attendees to move beyond traditional instruction and embrace a more intentional, student-centered approach to teaching.

Students and faculty engaged in a thoughtful Q&A, followed by a book signing that provided attendees with the opportunity to connect directly with Dr. Collado, ask questions, and reflect on how his insights can be applied in their own classrooms and communities.

In addition to the Education Scholar Series event, Dr. Collado led a separate workshop later in the day for the School of Education's Supervising Teachers. Drawing from key themes in his book, *Four Pillars to Guide Visionary Educators*, the session explored:

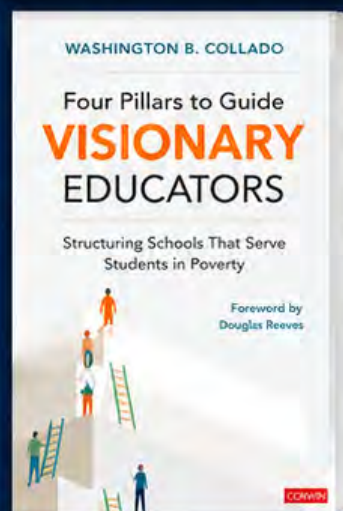
- **Pillar 1: Vision and Mission**
 - Chapter 1: Leading for Organizational Vision and Mission
 - Chapter 2: Finding Purpose: Why Do I Lead in a High-Poverty School?
- **Pillar 4: Academic and Social-Emotional Support**
 - Chapter 8: Creating Systems for Student Academic and Social-Emotional Support



The workshop provided an opportunity for meaningful conversation about how educators can best support teacher candidates as they prepare to teach and mentor today's students. Dr. Collado encouraged participants to reflect on the evolving needs of children and emphasized the importance of purpose-driven leadership, strong support systems, and intentional mentorship in developing the next generation of educators.

The event highlighted the importance of strong foundational principles in shaping effective and visionary educators.

The experience reinforced the School of Education's mission to foster dialogue, elevate leadership, and prepare educators to create lasting change in their communities and beyond.



Celebrating 10 YEARS A DECADE OF IMPACT

As part of its year-long decennial celebration in 2026, the NYC Men Teach (NYCMT) program continues to highlight the powerful impact of its mission—supporting, uplifting, and empowering men of color in education through meaningful experiences, leadership opportunities, and community engagement.



One memorable moment took place this spring when NYCMT participants were invited to attend a special taping of *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. Educators, students, and program leaders from across New York and New Jersey gathered together, creating a vibrant and well-deserved spotlight on the teaching profession and the importance of representation in education.

Among those in attendance was Queens College alumnus Chris Nicolo, recipient of the NYC Men Teach Award at NYC Men Teach Day—an honor voted on unanimously by his peers. His recognition reflected the program's continued commitment to excellence, mentorship, and educational leadership.

Continuing the celebration, NYCMT participants also visited the studios of NY1, where they engaged in discussions centered on journalism, storytelling, branding, and professional growth. The experience provided students with an opportunity to connect classroom learning with real-world leadership and media representation.

The visit concluded with a special commemorative moment featuring award-winning journalist Cheryl Wills, whose work in investigative reporting and historical storytelling continues to inspire educators and students alike. Participants reflected on themes of resilience, advocacy, and the importance of ensuring diverse voices remain present in both education and public discourse.

As NYC Men Teach celebrates ten years of cultivating educators, leaders, and change-makers, the anniversary serves as both a reflection on the program's impact and a reminder of the important work still ahead. Through mentorship, representation, and community-centered leadership, NYCMT continues to shape the next generation of educators across New York City and beyond.

