

Presenter Biographies: February 22, 2022

Wendy Austin, Regional Director, FIRST Robotics

Wendy Austin has been involved with FIRST Robotics since 2006. She has coached teams at all levels of FIRST and is now the Regional Director for North and Central Florida.

Kelsey Beeghly, Science Education Doctoral Student, University of Central Florida

Kelsey Beeghly is a second-year science education doctoral student at the University of Central Florida. As part of her role at UCF, she is a graduate teaching associate for elementary and secondary science methods courses. She is also currently in her first year as instructional coordinator at Orlando Science High School. Prior to beginning her Ph.D. studies, Kelsey earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology from University of Central Florida. She is a 2016 New York City Teach for America alumna, and earned her MAT from Relay Graduate School of Education while teaching in Brooklyn. She has five years teaching experience in grades 6-12, and has taught high school biology, chemistry, AP environmental science, physics, and middle school physical science and life science. Her research interests include developing preservice teachers' conceptions of the nature of science and confidence in science teaching. She is excited to be presenting at both national and international conferences in 2022, and is a member of the Florida Association of Science Teachers, the Association for Science Teacher Education, and the National Association for Research in Science Teaching.

Steve Cercone, Program Consultant, Bluegrass Educational Technologies

Steve Cercone is the Bluegrass Educational Technologies Florida Program Consultant. Steve began his career as an electrician, obtaining Master Electrical Licenses in both North Carolina and Tennessee. In 2010, he brought his 25-plus years of industrial experience in Electrical Project Management to Bluegrass.

John Clark, Science Teacher, Volusia Online Learning, Volusia County Schools

Mr. John Clark is a senior high school science teacher and department chair with Volusia County Schools in Florida. He has taught in both face-to-face and virtual settings. He has made over a dozen presentations at NSTA conferences sharing his original lesson ideas. Mr. Clark has also represented the US State Department, NASA, and NOAA as an educational Ambassador. Prior to entering the profession, he completed a career in international telecommunications. John is the recipient of the {FL} Governor's SHINE Award for inspirational STEM teaching and was a PAEMST State Finalist.

Andy Cummings, P.E., Senior Vice President, Connelly & Wicker

Andy Cummings, P.E. is Senior Vice President at Connelly & Wicker in charge of the company's Transportation and Municipal business unit in both the Orlando and Jacksonville offices.

Andy graduated from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1985 with a B.S. in Civil Engineering. He received a M.S. Degree in Civil Engineering from Carnegie Mellon University in 1987. Andy has worked in Florida for 35 years starting in 1987 with Parsons Transportation Group (PTG). In 1997, Andy joined Connelly & Wicker as Principal. He is an Adjunct Professor at the University of North Florida since 2018. He is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the Florida Engineering Society (FES). He was the American Society of Civil Engineers Florida State President in 2001-2002. He was the American Council of Engineering Companies - Florida (ACEC-FL) President in 2010-11. He is the past Chair of the Florida Engineering Foundation (FEF).

He has been married 34 years to his wife Yvette. He has two children, Erin (29) and Nicholas (26).

Donarsha Correa, Teacher, Union Park Elementary School

Donarsha Correa is a Union Park Elementary teacher in her 7th year teaching. She has spent a few years teaching both kindergarten and 3rd grade. Originally from Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Donarsha received her Bachelor's Degree from Florida Atlantic University in Elementary Education in 2014. New to Union Park this school year, Donarsha has been loving watching her kindergarteners navigate and explore their world as the STEAM initiative class.

Christina Drake, Founder and CEO, Kismet Technologies

Dr. Christina Drake is the founder and CEO of Kismet Technologies based in Orlando, Florida. Kismet Technologies is part of the University of Central Florida (UCF) Business Incubator and a Finalist in the Mass Challenge 2021 Competition. Dr. Drake received her Ph.D. in Materials Science and Engineering from UCF where she researched and developed high sensitivity nano-oxide sensors that operated at room temperature for hydrogen detection. She was previously at Lockheed Martin Corporation where she was a principal investigator and co-investigator on several research programs. She was co-founder and co-chair of the Lockheed Martin Nano-Bio Working group. After Lockheed Martin, Dr. Drake was an assistant professor of Mechanical Engineering at Florida Polytechnic University. At Florida Poly, she served as faculty chair and trustee as well as the first coordinator of the inaugural Mechanical Engineering degree program. At Kismet Technologies, her team is developing NanoRAD, a safe, continuous disinfectant that provides safe, non-stop viruses and bacteria protection. Kismet Technologies is committed to drastically decreasing preventable infections that spread from surfaces to people. NanoRAD recently won a Tech Connect National Innovation Award and was named as Hello Tomorrow's Deep Tech Pioneers. Dr. Drake was featured on the Forbes 2021 Next 1000 list and her team was named South Florida's Healthcare Innovators of 2020.

Krista Dulany, EQUiPD Instructional Specialist, University of Florida

Krista Dulany, PhD, is an EQuIPD Instructional Specialist serving teachers across the state of Florida. Through careful consideration of the conceptual models that constitute key science ideas, she is able to transfer her dissertation work in biological materials engineering to Elementary and Middle school classrooms. Additionally, Dr. Dulany excels in using a system thinking approach in order to assist teachers in organizing classroom procedures, drafting lessons, and preparing professional development. Her research interests include STEM Education, Inquiry, Process Mapping, and Biotechnology.

Mandy Fillenwarth, Magnet Coordinator, Bay Meadows STEAM Career Academy Elementary School

Mandy Fillenwarth is the Magnet Coordinator and STEAM Coach for Bay Meadows Elementary School's STEAM Career Academy magnet program. With more than 25 years of experience in science and STEAM education, she was instrumental in the development of the new STEAM magnet program at Bay Meadows. In addition to supporting teachers and students, she sponsors an afterschool STEM competition club. She has a Master's degree in Science Education from UCF and a Bachelor's degree in Biology from Indiana University and is a past president of the Florida Marine Science Education Association.

Dr. Samuel Garcia, Education Specialist, NASA Kennedy Space Center

Dr. Samuel García Jr. serves as an Educator Professional Development Specialist at Kennedy Space Center. Prior to his position at Kennedy Space Center, Dr. García worked at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, CA. As a first-generation college student, Dr. García, understands that value of education and works diligently to facilitate authentic NASA-based STEM learning experiences for both educators and students. Dr. Garcia earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Texas Río Grande Valley, formerly University of Texas Pan American and holds a doctorate degree in School Improvement from Texas State University. In his spare time, Dr. Garcia enjoys gazing at the nighttime sky with young daughter, Sofia.

Olivia Hallac, Teacher, Union Park Elementary School

Olivia Hallac is in her fifth year teaching 4th grade at Union Park Elementary. Originally from Buffalo, New York, Olivia received her Bachelor's Degree from Michigan State University. In 2021, Olivia graduated with her Masters Degree in STEM Education from the American College of Education. Olivia is ecstatic to pioneer the 4th grade STEAM initiative class

Dr. Rachel Hallett-Njuguna, Post-Doctoral Scholar, University of Central Florida-School of Teacher Education

Dr Hallett-Njuguna has over 20 years experience in K-12 education as both a classroom teacher and district science specialist. Most recently, she spent 4 years as the Space Lab teacher at a STEM elementary magnet school. Prior to that, for 9 years she was the science specialist for Seminole County Public Schools and worked alongside K-12 teachers to design curriculum, develop assessments, and improve instruction. Her passion is supporting teachers, particularly in K-8 classrooms as they build their

confidence in science content. She has been an adjunct at UCF for 10 years teaching both undergraduate and master's level courses in science pedagogy and content including a Space Science for Educators course which she redesigned to use *The Martian* by Andy Weir as the textbook. Just recently, Dr Hallett-Njuguna became a Post-Doctoral Scholar working on a nationally funded project supporting special education teachers in STEM. This 5-year study will result in the creation of a freely available resource to improve math and science instruction for every student.

Mary Hess, K-5 STEM Resource Teacher, Goldsboro Elementary Magnet School

Mary Lynn Hess is a K-5 STEM Resource Teacher at Goldsboro Elementary Magnet School. She has spearheaded programs that include 750 square foot garden on the school campus and raised over \$30,000 in grants to enhance the programs she organizes. Her accomplishments include being a featured speaker at the state and international levels, presenter at EPCOT's Flower and Garden Festival, a book reviewer for National Science Teachers Association, National Geographic Certified Teacher, 2021 National Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award, and a featured teacher on PBS for "How Kids Learn in the Modern World."

Nathan Hicks, Special Projects Manager, Bluegrass Educational Technologies

Nathan Hicks is the Bluegrass Educational Technologies Special Projects Manager. He began his career by earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from Bluefield College. Since then he has taught Chemistry, Robotics, and Engineering in high schools and earned a Master of Science degree in Teacher Leadership and another in Education Administration. He was named Teacher of the Year for his high school.

Nathan's strong desire to see students excel in the classroom motivated him to become a VEX Robotics Coach and Skills USA Advisor. Unsurprisingly his Student Organization teams achieved excellence, including winning the KY State VEX Robotics Championship 2018-2021, SkillsUSA State Competition 2019-2021, and runner up at SkillsUSA National Competition.

Nathan's love of challenge and learning combined with his advocacy for educators using technology to make classrooms better learning environments makes him uniquely qualified for his position. His more than 26 years of experience and recent classroom practice lend him an unparalleled perspective to assess programs and provide the types of impactful solutions that STEM and CTE clients have come to rely on from Bluegrass.

Lorelie Imperial, EQuIPD Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Florida

Lorelie's research interest is focused on advancing STEM learning environments by providing support for teachers through design and implementation of professional development structures. Within EQuIPD, she is responsible for conducting research on the facilitative coaching model and other PD structures. She joined the team bringing with her research and teaching experiences in Education and Chemistry.

Jennifer Jones, STREAM Coordinator, Resurrection Catholic School

Jennifer Jones is the STREAM Coordinator at Resurrection Catholic School in Lakeland, FL, which is certified by the Florida Catholic Conference as a STREAM school. She holds a BS in Early Childhood Education from FSU and is certified by the state of Florida in PreK/Primary Education. She has 17 years of classroom teaching experience in Preschool, Kindergarten, 1st, and 3rd grades. This is her third year in the role of curriculum coordinator and instructional coach at RCS.

Missy Jones, STEAM Coach, Winter Springs Elementary - Seminole County Public Schools

My name is Melisa “Missy” Jones and I am a Florida native. I have a love of all things technology and learning. I earned my Bachelors from the University of Central Florida in Elementary Education, a Master’s in Curriculum, Instruction and Technology and a Specialists Degree in Instructional Leadership, both from Nova Southeastern University. I have received my UF Coaching Certificate and National Board Certification. I have taught in Seminole County for over 20 years at the Elementary School level, in a regular classroom setting and in the lab setting. Currently, I am working at an SCPS elementary school as a STEAM Coach and run a SMART Lab for students in K – 5. My SMART (Science Media Arts Robotics Technology) lab, allows me to model 45 minute hands-on lessons which incorporate the Engineering Design Process, Science and Technology, to students and teachers. I have helped write Technology, Science and Computer Science curriculum for SCPS. I work with the Professional Development department to offer trainings for teachers on science, STEM, computer science and technology. While my 1st Passion is teaching, but my “grown up” version of that passion, is working with and teaching teachers. I hope to inspire other educators to see to see the power and benefits behind technology and hands-on learning in the classroom, as well as, the potential for letting our students “show” what they know.

Michael Kmietowicz, Education Specialist: Curriculum and Instruction, Orlando Science Center

Michael Kmietowicz has worked at Orlando Science Center for ten years. In his role as an Education Specialist, he develops content for in-person and virtual programming, including educator professional development. He has been delivering computer science-related professional development since 2016.

Rose LeJiste, Executive Director, Black Orlando Tech

Rose LeJiste is the CEO of RL Engineering and Tech Solutions. She was born and raised in South Florida and is the proud oldest daughter of Haitian immigrants. Rose received her bachelor's in Industrial Engineering from UCF and then worked at Kennedy Space Center for 15 years. She is an epic expert in data analytics, business intelligence and optimization, process improvement and streamlining, reliability/safety engineering, performance and project management in both government and commercial environments and holds certifications in a few of these high demand tech areas. Rose currently serves as the Executive Director for Black Orlando Tech, a nonprofit committed to accelerating minority economic advancement through careers and entrepreneurship in tech. She facilitates the

organization's Tech Startup Series, an entrepreneurial development program focused on ensuring that black and brown startup founders have a solid business foundation, and the Forward Cities project for Orange County/Orlando, an initiative focused on assessing the small business ecosystem in Orange County/Orlando area pertaining to minority and underrepresented communities. Rose uses her experience to speak at various tech conferences, mentor black and brown youth, and provide guidance to young people of color who are just starting their professional careers. She is a mentor and advisor with several nonprofit organizations and loves to volunteer within her community by sharing her lessons learned from her life experiences and her STEM expertise. Rose is also a mother to a beautiful and amazing 19-year-old daughter who is pursuing her BFA in acting at USC.

Yadira Lopez, ECE STEM coach, Orlando Science Center

My name is Yadira Lopez and I am the Early Childhood Education Specialist here at the Orlando Science Center. I have an extensive background in early childhood education and my knowledge of STEM has only expanded in my time here at OSC. I am excited to be joining you all and can't wait for all the new things I can learn!

Sarah McBride, Teacher, Bay Meadows Elementary

Sarah McBride is a 2nd grade teacher at Bay Meadows Elementary. Throughout her 14 year teaching career, she has held several leadership and committee positions, including being part of the team that helped Bay Meadows transition to a STEAM magnet school. In addition to her work as a classroom teacher, she is a member of her school's Makerspace/STEAM Lab team and is co-chair of the 21st Century Learners Club, a STEAM club for K-2nd grade students. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Education degree, both from the University of Florida.

Vanessa McElwayne, Teacher, Union Park Elementary School

Vanessa McElwayne is a proud graduate of the University of Central Florida early childhood education and development program. She has been teaching for three years. This is her first year teaching second grade and she loves it! Her fifteen second graders really enjoy being a STEAM initiative class

Andrew Medearis, Life and STEM Sciences Facilitator, Flagler Palm Coast High School

I am a 20+ year educator facilitator from Flagler County Schools. Over this time, I have had the pleasure of serving the students and families at Bunnell Elementary School, Indian Trails k-8 School, Belle Terre Elementary School, Pathways Alternative School, Buddy Taylor Middle School and Flagler Palm Coast High School.

Over my time in Flagler Schools, I have gained experience in every grade k-12, including a year-long administrator internship at our alternative school, with the last 10 years spent building STEM and robotics programs and facilitating Problem and Project Based Learning in Life and STEM Sciences (Biology, Environmental Science 1 and 2, Marine Science 1 and 2 & Experimental Science 1 and 2) at the

i3 New Tech Academy at Flagler Palm Coast High School.

My passion is creating a classroom culture and environment that provides real world, hands-on and authentic learning experiences for our FPCHS students that allows them to learn all required content, while also allowing them to build the soft skills needed for them to be prepared to work in the groups and teams in their experiences beyond high school.

Teri O'Connor, STEM Teacher K-5, Orlando Science Elementary

Teri has been teaching for 18 years. She has taught elementary, middle school Physics and Biology, and STEM. She has also spent summers as a director for STEM/Robotics/Coding camps. She taught overseas for three years and worked as the Education Director for the interactive STEAM museum in Dubai. Teri currently teaches K-5 STEM at Orlando Science Elementary Charter in Orlando, Florida.

Julie Perry, Teacher, Florida State University Schools

I am a middle school teacher in my 12th year. I have taught STEAM classes for the past 4 years. Last year, I taught coding for the first time. I do not have a computer science degree and I have been learning as I go, but I think that has made it easier for me to break down the CS concepts for my students, because I had to break them down for myself first. I never saw myself following this path when I started teaching, but I have fallen in love with teaching STEAM classes and am so happy this is where life has taken me.

Ashlynn Ramirez, Principal, Orange County Public Schools

Ashlynn Ramirez is in her 3rd year of serving as the proud principal at Union Park Elementary. Her experience as a principal has been in a turnaround school, and the school turned around during the pandemic last year. Her background has been in Title 1 schools, and she has teaching experience in both elementary and high schools. She was a state finalist for Teacher of the Year in 2015. She is passionate about leveling the playing field for all students, so embedding opportunities that STEM can provide are pivotal in supporting all students for Mrs. Ramirez.

Ana Belen Ramos, ELL Compliance Specialist, Orange County Virtual School

2020-Present OCVS -ELL compliance Teacher

2015-2020 -District Compliance Specialist for ELL students at 50 plus alternative and Charter schools.

2000-2015-OCPS High school 9th grade teacher and 6-8th grade Teacher at Middle School.

Facilitator for ESOL Domain Courses required to obtain ESOL certification for teachers, and school personnel.

Avalon Tech Instructor -Adult Courses

Cordell Rolle, CEO, Rolle IT, LLC

Cordell Rolle is a tech enthusiast, community advocate and US Navy Veteran. He is also the cofounder of Rolle IT LLC, a IT Solutions company located on Florida's Space Coast that provides IT support services to federal and commercial clients. His dedication to his profession and community has allowed him to be recognized as a 4 under 40 recipient. He proudly serves on several boards focused on supporting and mentoring young adults. Outside of all that he's a tag team fighter with his partner Marla trying to raise a set of rambunctious twin boys. His words to live by "Be lucky.... Luck is when preparation meets opportunity"

Dr. Nancy Ruzycki, Doctor, University of Florida

Dr. Nancy Ruzycki holds a PhD in Physics from Tulane University, is a certified teacher, and holds National Board Certification in Physics. She is a "Modeler" and has trained at Florida International University for Modeling Physics. She teaches at the University of Florida and conducts research on engineering education and the use of models, process maps, and system thinking in teaching. She has received over 5 million US dollars in grant funding in the past three years and is the Principal Investigator on the EQuIPD grant.

Kathryn Senkarik, Art Teacher, Resurrection Catholic School

Kathryn Senkarik is thrilled to be in her 17th year as an Art Educator at Resurrection Catholic School in Lakeland, Florida. She has her BFA in Illustration from the Columbus College of Art and Design and MST in Art Education from the Rochester Institute of Technology. She has presented at the state and national levels on the importance of Early Childhood Art, Art and Math Integration, using QR codes to help create an interactive exhibit experience, and Art, Engineering and Technology integration. She believes in the Teaching for Artistic Behavior model of Art Education and primarily runs a choice based art studio in her classroom. This is her second year presenting at FEEC with her colleague and friend, Jennifer Jones.

Abdul Siddiqui, Lead Systems Engineer – ISSM, US Army - PEO STRI

Abdul M. Siddiqui started working for the US Army as a Systems Engineer in 1991. He was the Software Engineering Manager for the Bradley Fighting Vehicle System, TACOM from 1998 to 2004. He is currently the resident subject matter expert in software architecture development for systems and product lines at US Army Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation (PEO STRI). He is the Lead Engineer for Network Development and the Information Assurance Security Officer for Program Manager Synthetic Training Environment (STE). He is the Engineering Mentor and STEM Coordinator for the US Army for Central Florida. Mr. Siddiqui received his Master of Science in Software Engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School, CA in December 2000. He is married and has three boys.

Kimberly Sparger, Instructional Coach- Secondary Math, Volusia County Schools

Dr. Sparger has been a Math and Science educator in Volusia County Schools at both the middle school and high school levels, prior to becoming an Instructional Coach in Secondary Math with

VCS. Along with her coaching responsibilities, she enjoys leading professional development sessions at the school-based and district levels to improve learning and instruction. Dr. Sparger earned her Ed.D. from the University of Florida in Curriculum and Instruction, with a concentration in Educational Technology, and her M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from the University of Central Florida. Her current focus area is to enhance student engagement and achievement in Math, in particular, through the integration of Robotics, Coding, and Computer Science principles within the instructional process to inspire learners and teachers.

Corydon Strawser, Teacher, Adjunct Professor, OCPS and University of Central Florida

Dr. Strawser is an educator and curricula designer who embodies research-based pedagogy and andragogy, sound decision making, critical thinking, instructional design and planning, equity, and flexibility. He enjoys Professional Learning Communities, sharing instructional practices, analyzing data, targeting interventions, and creating cultures of collaboration.

Dr. Strawser currently teaches engineering at Lake Nona Middle School (OCPS) and Space Science at University of Central Florida.

Amy Trujillo, Instructional Coach, Orlando Science Schools

Amy Trujillo is an educational leader and innovator with over twenty years of experience in advocating for the needs of diverse learners. She believes in integrating science, technology, engineering, and math into lessons so students grasp the concepts as well as gaining the skills they need for the future workforce. She has spent most of her academic career teaching and leading in elementary school but has also taught adults in college-level courses and online learning. She is an Instructional Coach at Orlando Science Schools as well as oversees the gifted plans for students in kindergarten through sixth grade and heading the school's STEM certification. She is the author of numerous articles and other items. Her certifications and awards include: Global Math Ambassador, National Geographic Certified Educator, LEGO Education Master Educator, Certified BrainPOP Educator, Wakelet Ambassador, GoNoodle Ambassador, Nearpod Certified Educator, Kahoot Gold and Coach, and a Google Certified Educator.