2016 Sloan Awards for Excellence in Teaching Science and Mathematics

Celebrating Extraordinary STEM Teachers in New York City Public High Schools

Bianca Brandon
AP Biology, Living Environment, Forensic Science, Science & Engineering Research
Staten Island Technical High School

Bianca Brandon earned her B.S. in Science Education from NYU and then went on to receive her M.S. in Molecular Biology. She spent the next 4 years working for the Department of Forensic Biology in the NYC Chief Medical Examiner’s Office before joining Staten Island Tech in 2009. There she has taught AP Biology and the Living Environment as well as two courses she created, Forensic Science and Science and Engineering Research. Her classroom is a dynamic mix of rigor, experimentation and collaboration. Mark Erlenwein, her principal, says “Bianca is the total package as a teacher of science. She keeps her classes relevant and engaging for students and her curriculum is robust and profound. Her students achieve remarkable results.”

Patrice Bridgewater-Daniel
Integrated Algebra, Common Core Algebra, Trigonometry, Intensive Regents Prep
Bedford Academy High School

In 2003 Patrice Bridgewater entered the newly established Bedford Academy High School as a freshman. Excelling in math, Ms. Bridgewater won a merit scholarship to Brooklyn College, graduated in 2010 with a degree in Math Education and returned to teach at Bedford Academy. Her exquisitely planned lessons are supplemented by two-hour tutoring sessions after school twice a week and three hours on Saturday. The School’s Parent Coordinator stresses her importance as a role model. “Patrice exemplifies a level of excellence. Students give full effort in her class. For some students, there is no better motivation.” Says Bedford Academy Principal Adilfo Muhammed. “Ms. Bridgewater’s courses embody what the ideal classroom should be: challenging, engaging, and focusing on students and their diverse needs.”

Maria Elizabeth A. Dela Cruz
AP Calculus BC, Common Core Algebra, Algebra II, Trigonometry
Newtown High School

A former civil engineer and high school teacher in the Philippines, Maria Dela Cruz was recruited to teach math by the NYC DOE in 2005. A brilliant teacher, she is recognized for her rigor and her ability to take students far beyond what they think they are capable of doing. A former student says, “I plan to be a teacher like Ms. Dela Cruz who can teach beyond an exam and get students to see math at its conceptual core. Calculus III in college was easier compared to the work we did in Ms. Dela Cruz’s class.” Another former student who is now getting his M.A. in Structural Engineering adds, “Ms. Dela Cruz is the heart and soul of Newtown High School. She is a dynamic figure who can turn even the most skeptical student into a math lover.”

Elizabeth Dowdell
Applied Physics, Algebra II, Calculus, Trigonometry
The Urban Assembly Maker Academy

With a double major in Physics and Math, in 2009 Elizabeth Dowdell began teaching those subjects at the Frederick Douglass Vll Academy in Brownsville, Brooklyn. There she created a four-year curriculum for students, which enabled her to design the school’s first senior level science electives. AP Physics C. A former principal there says, “Liz has a gifted scientific mind and knows how to share her knowledge and passion with students.” In 2014, Dowdell left Frederick Douglass to develop the science and math curriculum at the brand-new Urban Assembly Maker Academy. For freshman, Dowdell created an innovative applied physics course in which, according to the Regents Physics exam is not required at Maker Academy, as sophomore, some students elected to take it. Said one student, “We wanted to show everyone how much we know we had learned.”

Diana C. Lennon
AP Environmental Science, Regents Chemistry, Earth Science
Columbia Secondary School for Mathematics, Science and Engineering

Diana Lennon is known for her rigorous teaching and innovative projects. Although her in-class assignments are considered to be among the school’s most original, students and faculty alike point to Mrs. Lennon’s projects that take students outside the school walls as the true highlights of her classes. Principal Mira KimNightengale comments, “In Diana’s courses, students are given the tools to participate in science as a discipline. Her projects reflect how Diana prepares our students to pursue careers in science.” A colleague adds, “Diana is a phenomenal educator who knew how to create socially responsible scientists.” According to a former student, “Mrs. Lennon’s classroom was a laboratory of discovery. The world of science opened up for me there.”

Dr. Margaret Savitzky
Medical Assisting, AP Biology, Chemistry
Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Education High School

Margaret Savitzky was a chiropractor when an injury required a career change. In 2002, she joined Thomas Edison teaching AP Biology, Chemistry and Science Research and earning a reputation as superb teacher and inspiration for her students. Many have gone on to careers in healthcare, but she wanted to do more to prepare them. In 2012, supported by her principal, she created what has become her signature program, Medical Assisting: a comprehensive program of courses, lab work, practical experience and internships. Principal Ojeda says, “Dr. Savitzky’s teaching and concern represents the ethic of ‘above and beyond’ in every way. She is that teacher students will look back on as the person who opened up the world for them, encouraging them to pursue opportunities that they would not have thought possible.”

Manjot Singh
AP Calculus AB, AP Calculus BC, AP Statistics, Pre-Calculus
John Bowne High School

Manjot Singh was born in India, came to NYC when he was 13, and graduated as a valedictorian from Long Island City HS. He earned a B.S. in Mathematics and M.A. in Math Education from the City College. Mr. Singh teaches AP Calculus and AP Statistics where a large number of his students pursue math and science in college and beyond. A former student, now majoring in mechanical engineering says, “With all the assignments and resources he gives us, it seems impossible not to ace the AP exams.” Another, majoring in aerospace engineering says, “In his class I felt nourished intellectually in a way I hadn’t before as any other teacher before or since has been able to do.” Assistant Principal of Math, Toni Leiker, describes Mr. Singh as “…the most talented, creative and dedicated teacher I have ever had the pleasure to work with.”

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