



Quest  Learn
School for digital kids

MEET THE Q2L TEAM!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Elisa Aragon

Executive Director of School

Elisa brings twenty-four years of experience with the New York City Department of Education to her role as Executive Director of School, having received her principal certification in 1997. Originally from Maryland, Elisa moved to “the big city” after her sophomore year at the University of Maryland (Go Terps!) and graduated from City College of New York with a Bachelor of Science degree, magna cum laude. Elisa started teaching in the New York Public Schools in 1984 at Park West High School and then transitioned to the CMSP Model School, teaching 7th and 8th grade Humanities. As part of her teaching career with the NY City Department of Education she worked in the basement of homeless shelters, working tirelessly to effect the cycle of poverty for the young mothers who were her students, and their babies, who are our future.

After obtaining a Master of Science in Education from Hunter College with a 4.0 average, Elisa continued her post-graduate studies at Fordham University, achieving a Professional Diploma in Education and earning her SAS. Elisa continued her work in the public school system in the role of Assistant Principal Administration. For eight years Elisa focused her passion and talents as an instructional leader, supporting and honing the skills of classroom teachers who were teaching the most at-risk population of students in NYC. In June 2008, Elisa was selected to participate in the elite New York City Leadership Academy, the centerpiece of Chancellor Klein’s mission of transformation for our public education system. Elisa provided administrative support during the September 2008 roll out of the innovative NYC iSchool in Soho, a selective 9 – 12, fully integrating 21st century technology in a progressive model of interdisciplinary, real-world, problem-based instruction. Elisa left her administrative position at the highly successful and respected High School of Telecommunication Arts to accept a leadership position as principal with Quest to Learn. Her dynamic leadership style, experience and deep knowledge of instruction make her a perfect fit with the goals and mission of our school.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Katie Salen

Executive Director of Design (Q2L) | Executive Director, Mission Lab

Katie is the Executive Director of the Institute of Play, and Professor in the Design and Technology, Parsons the New School for Design. As the lead institutional partner for Quest to Learn, she has led development of strategic partnerships, including those with Pearson, The New School, and the MacArthur Foundation DML research network. She has extensive experience working with young people in the area of media creation and game design, and has a deep knowledge of issues surrounding the potential integration of digital media, games, and technology into learning environments, like schools, libraries, and museums. Katie has published three books that have come to serve as seminal in the research field of games and learning: *Rules of Play*, a textbook on game design, *The Game Design Reader*, and *The Ecology of Games: Connecting Youth, Games, and Learning*, all from MIT Press. She has worked as a game designer for over 10 years and is co-editor of *The International Journal of Learning and Media*.

Katie has received over \$2.5 million in funding to support her work with the Institute of Play and Q2L in the past 2 years from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Pearson Foundation, and Intel. She has degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and the Rhode Island School of Design.

FACULTY

Pierre Dizon

Learning Strategist, Grade 6

Pierre is a born and bred New Yorker, who grew and has lived in Jackson Heights, Queens, all his life. After receiving the Posse Foundation's Leadership scholarship, Pierre headed to Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, where he earned his Bachelor's degree in American History. Pierre became committed to working with children—and decided to do it for the rest of his life—after working as a cabin counselor at a Hole in the Wall Gang Summer Camp in Ashford, Connecticut and as a teacher at Breakthrough Collaborative in Norfolk, Virginia. Pierre returned back home to New York upon acceptance into the New York City Teaching Fellows program. He is currently pursuing his masters at City College of New York. Last year, Pierre taught at I.S. 230 in Queens, gaining valuable experience working with a wide variety of students. At Quest to Learn, he will work alongside all of the 6th grade teachers to insure that students will learn to the best of their abilities.

C. Ross Flatt

Being, Space & Place domain teacher, Grade 6

Ross attended Gettysburg College where he earned a Bachelors in History, with a content specialty in World History and a particular focus on Modern Europe. Ross has taught history at St. Joseph Regional High School in Montvale, New Jersey and Global Studies at The Scholar's Academy in Queens, New York.

Lauren Gabriele

Sports for the Mind domain teacher, Grades 6 and 7

Lauren grew up in Los Angeles where her view of the world was shaped by the characters, narratives, images, and sounds emanating from the popular culture around her. Realizing her passion for storytelling, Lauren pursued a Bachelor of Arts in History at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. At Reed, she learned about ideas, contexts, culture, traditions and historiography. Lauren earned a Masters of Fine Arts in Photography and Video from California State Fullerton. There, she grew to understand the importance of the visual and oral articulation of ideas and the effective and purposeful use of technology in education. Lauren received a Masters of Arts in Computing and Technology from Teachers College, Columbia University, where she learned about the infinite possibilities of citizen journalism. For the past seven years, Lauren has been a media arts high school teacher in Los Angeles. She has taught New Media, Animation, Filmmaking and Digital Imaging. In 2009, Lauren became a National Board Certified teacher.

Audrey Geis

Learning Strategist, Grade 7

This past year Audrey joined the New York City Teaching Fellowship and worked as a Special Educator in Brooklyn. Audrey graduated from Emerson College with a Bachelor's of Science in Organizational and Political Communication, an experience that well-prepared her for this work. While in Boston, Audrey coordinated Emerson College's Alternative Spring Break program and participated in multiple service trips addressing issues of disaster relief, homelessness, and education. She also worked as a volunteer coordinator for Peace First (formerly Peace Games) where she coached volunteers and taught peacemaking and conflict resolution through cooperative games to elementary and middle school students. Audrey received the Jennifer Stowers Quintal Visionary Award at the 2009 Emerson Recognition Awards for her work in these areas.

Lara Gerstein

Wellness domain teacher, Grades 6 and 7

Lara was born in Paris, France and spent her formative years living in both Paris and New York City. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Antioch College and a Masters from New York University's Steinhardt School of Education. Lara is a trained modern dance teacher with a strong background in the integrated body and mind learning field of somatics. For the past 11 years Lara was the dance teacher at Newcomers HS, a high school for new immigrants located in Queens. In addition to directing an arts-in-education program, Lara has worked as an assistant producer for Dancing in the Streets, where she produced site-specific dance performances in public places. Lara has been a practitioner of Proprioceptive Writing, a meditative writing technique, for 15 years and is now working towards her teacher certification.

Leah Hirsch

The Way Things Work domain teacher, Grade 7

Leah Hirsch has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Santa Cruz in American Studies. While at the University of Santa Cruz, Leah was a Merrill Scholar, a member of Phi Beta Kappa and a winner of the Chancellor's Award. Leah holds a Masters of Arts from Brooklyn College in Middle Childhood Science and Environmental Education, with a Biology specialization, and a Multisubject Credential from San Francisco State University in Multicultural Education. Leah worked as the Program Director for the Fresh Air Fund's Camp Hayden Marks in Fishkill, NY, from 1999-2006, and also served as the Afterschool Program Coordinator at the James Lick Middle School in San Francisco, CA. Leah has worked as a 4th Grade Multisubject Teacher at PS 26 in Brooklyn, a Science Cluster Teacher, an 8th Grade Science Teacher and a 7th Grade Summer School Math Teacher. Leah is excited to join Q2L and looks forward to being in a creative learning space with collaborators and kids who love to learn and play!

Alicia Iannucci

Codeworlds domain teacher, Grade 6

Alicia is originally from Western NY. Alicia is certified in Secondary Mathematics Education and received both a Bachelors of Science in Mathematics and a Masters of Arts in Education from Adelphi University. While at Adelphi, Alicia became a member of the National Mathematics Honors Society, the National Leadership Society and the National Education Leadership Society. A former math and writing tutor, before coming to Quest, Alicia student taught at Queens High School of Teaching in Queens, New York.

Limor Levy

Being, Space & Place domain teacher, Grade 7

Limor is a native New Yorker who grew up in Forest Hills, Queens. After completing her undergraduate studies at Dickinson College, Limor applied her English major to a career in research, but promptly made a gleeful career change to education, specializing in English/Language Arts. Limor holds a Masters degree in Secondary Education from St. John's University. She is a proud member of the National Honor Society (Alpha Lambda Delta), the National Leadership Honor Society (Omicron Delta Kappa) and has been on the National Dean's List. Limor is also the recipient of the Posse Foundation's Leadership scholarship and the Americorps Service Scholarship. For the past 4 years, Limor has been teaching English and History to 7th and 8th graders at PS 127, in East Elmhurst, Queens.

Ameer Mourad

The Way Things Work domain teacher, Grade 6

Ameer is originally from Long Island, NY. He completed his undergraduate education at Queens College and his graduate work at Columbia University. Ameer is naturally inquisitive, and has spent a significant amount of time doing research in a genetics lab and has also worked as a tutor, camp counselor and a lab technician. Ameer's enthusiasm for science and engineering makes him uniquely suited for his role as the teacher for The Way Things Work domain.

Ginger Stevens

Learning Strategist, Grades 6 and 7

Ginger grew up in New Haven, Connecticut and has also lived in Philadelphia, Seattle, and now Queens, New York. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from Haverford College and a Masters of Education in General and Special Education from Hunter College. Before joining the founding faculty at Quest to Learn, Ginger worked as a middle school English, History, and Math teacher at the Churchill School in Manhattan. In addition to her work in the classroom, Ginger has a wide-range of experiences as an environmental educator. She has worked at Wave Hill, a public garden in the Bronx, where she developed and led art and science programs for students with special needs. During her time in Seattle, she was the University District Youth Coordinator at Seattle Youth Garden Works where she helped teenagers grow and sell their own vegetables through a garden-to-market education and employment program. At Quest to Learn, Ginger works collaboratively with all of the domain teachers to help students develop learning strategies that work best for them.

Margaret Tanzosh

Codeworlds domain teacher, Grade 7

Margaret began her career in the computer industry, starting her own print and web design firm and teaching computer classes and computer graphics, to everyone from corporate clients to School of Visual Arts students. Margaret credits her own children as the impetus for her active engagement in the NYC Public Schools. She has held multiple PTA board positions at PS 40 and NYC Lab Middle School. Margaret's passion to teach was reignited through her involvement with her children's schools. It inspired her to attain a Masters in Education from NYU Steinhardt School and to work as the 8th grade math teacher at the Salk School of Science in May and June of this year. Margaret loves math, and loves teaching others how to think and approach problems through the exploration of math.

STAFF

Wendell Lissimore

Assistant Principal

Wendell Lissimore II, was born and raised in NYC and attended Harlem Preparatory High School. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Washington D.C.'s Howard University. Wendell continued on to the military and did a two-year term in the army before embarking on a career in education. He then went on to City College in New York where he earned a Masters of Education in Mathematics Education, a Masters of Science in Educational Leadership and an Advanced Certificate in Education Administration.

Wendell has been teaching mathematics for the Department of Education for 22 years and has experienced great success teaching on both the junior and high school levels. He has taught everything from 5th grade math to AP Calculus, including two summers teaching advanced mathematics and calculus in the City College Science & Technology Entry Program (STEP) program.

As the new assistant principal, Wendell is eager to apply his skills and expertise to Q2L's game-based learning model and concepts of dynamic systems. He is looking forward to contributing to the continued success of Quest to Learn.

Rachelle Regine Vallon

Wellness Coordinator and Guidance Counselor

Rachelle Regine Vallon was born and raised in New York City. Rachelle graduated from Hofstra University in Long Island, NY, where she majored in psychology and minored in dance. While at Hofstra, Rachelle realized her passion for dance and her desire to support minority adolescents through counseling and received recognition on the Deans' List for the 2004 and 2005 Spring Semesters. In 2007, Rachelle received a Masters of Science in Education with a specialization in School Counseling from Hofstra University. While pursuing her graduate studies, Rachelle was involved with the Counseling Club, the Lambda Nu chapter of the National Counseling Honors Society, Chi Sigma Iota and received the John Dewey Van Buren Endowment Scholarship. In 2007, Rachelle began her career as a High School Counselor in a charter School in the Bronx, NY, where she provided counseling services to special needs and at risk populations; coordinated the first annual college awareness day and taught dance for sophomore physical education.

Israel Tavares

Community Associate

Israel is Quest to Learn's Community Associate, who helps out with everything-everywhere! He was born and raised in New York City's South Bronx, just a couple of blocks away from Yankee Stadium. As an energetic and athletic teen, Israel was always active in basketball or engaging with peers. Israel went on to study at SUNY Buffalo State College and graduated on both the Dean's List and Honor Roll with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, with a concentration in Mathematics. While at Buffalo State, Israel was also active in various school-student organizations.

Today, Israel is an achieving brother of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. In his spare time, Israel participates in a step team for his fraternity, community service projects and has a hidden passion for entertainment. Israel has been progressively involved with working with children since he was 14. He has been a part of afterschool programs, summer recreational centers for youth, day camp programs, and has received an award for "Exemplary Performance as a Teacher in an Urban School" while student teaching at Buffalo State College. Israel is happy to be a part of the Quest to Learn team.

Adina Delgado

School Secretary

Adina was born and raised in Spanish Harlem. Adina has worked for the New York City Public School system for approximately 18 years. She has worked primarily in elementary schools as a pupil accounting, payroll, principal, and purchasing secretary. In addition, Adina has participated in the Saturday Academy Program, Curriculum Planning Scheduling as well as the Afterschool/Harlem Children's Zone Program. Adina is Quest to Learn's school secretary, and will be responsible for all administrative duties. She is very happy and eager to join the

Quest to Learn community.

MISSION LAB

Leah Gilliam

Director of Projects, Q2L Portfolio

Leah Gilliam is a artist, designer and facilitator, who is fascinated by the transformative power of play. Leah has a rich history creating media art and designing user experiences and has worked with everything from board games and big games to experimental video and wearable technologies. Until she left to pursue her love of game design in 2006, Leah was an Associate Professor of Electronic Arts at Bard College as well as the Chair of the Arts Division. As Director of Projects of the Institute of Play's Q2L portfolio, Leah is drawn to the vitality and potential of both formal and informal learning spaces. A 2008 graduate of NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program, Leah is also a winner of a Tisch School of the Art's Dean's Fellowship. Leah's recent projects include Lesberation, a board game inspired by the rebellious beginnings of the gay-rights movement and Set || Clear || Limits, a presentation exploring the impact of design and technological constraints on artist/engineer collaborations in the 1970s.

Rebecca Rufo-Tepper

Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development

Rebecca has been working in the New York City public school system for ten years. After receiving a master's degree in English Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, she taught high school and middle school English and Social Studies for seven years in Brooklyn and Manhattan. In addition, she was a staff developer at East Side Middle School, a public school in Manhattan, for two years. She is professional development facilitator for the Holocaust Educators Network in New York City and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. Rebecca's research has focused on professional development and school reform. She has presented her work at national conferences, including NCTE, NMSA, and ISCHE. Recently, Rebecca was an adjunct instructor of English Education in Hunter College's Curriculum and Teaching Department and worked with Pam Grossman at Stanford University on a research project on New York City ELA teachers. Rebecca completed her PhD in Urban Education in May 2009.

Arana Shapiro

Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Technology Integration

Arana has been working in the field of education for ten years. Her first teaching position was in the Inglewood Public School District, where she taught for three years. In Inglewood, Arana served on the district curriculum review team, helping to develop and implement new curriculum in this small district. Upon moving to New York City, Arana began working at Teachers College (TC), Columbia University's Early Childhood Education Program. At TC, Arana helped develop the Early Childhood Education department's new student teacher program by visiting New York City public school classrooms and finding appropriate placement and mentorship for TC students. It was during her work at Teachers College when Arana began working with a group of educators to develop curriculum for a new school, The School at Columbia University and subsequently became a founding faculty member of The School in 2003. Arana's desire to bring new media technologies into the classroom prompted her to migrate from the classroom to the technology team at The School and later to the Lead Educational Technologist position at the Ross Institute, where she integrated technology into K-12 classrooms at both The Ross School in East Hampton and Ross Global Academy Charter School. In addition, Arana was a reading specialist for Groundwork for Youth in East New York Public Schools. She has presented research at many national education conferences, including AERA and NCTM. She received her Masters of Arts in Education with an emphasis in Second Language Learning and Acquisition from Pepperdine University, and did coursework in TC's Communication and Education program. Currently, Arana is pursuing her Master's in School Leadership from Bank Street.

Chloe Varelidi

Creative Director

Chloe Varelidi designs games, spaces and narratives for cities, plants, animals, far away lands, children and grown ups. These designs take the form of multimedia pieces that vary from household robots to installation art to games. Chloe has a background in Architecture and Engineering and also holds an MFA in Design and Technology from Parsons, The New School for Design. Since 2007, she has been part of the Institute of Play team, working with youth and developing innovative tools that embrace game design as an agent of learning and change. In her free time she works in her own studio, in Brooklyn. As a member of various collectives she has designed games for the Solar One Festival, the Philip Johnson Glasshouse Organization, and has exhibited in the 2008 Shenzhen / Hong Kong Biennial of Architecture & Urbanism, the 2nd Annual Exhibition of Art and Science in Beijing, the 5th Pan-Hellenic Architectural Exhibition, the 2005 New Trends in Architecture in Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific and the 2005 International Biennale, in Florence.

Claudio Midolo

Senior Game Designer

Claudio Midolo left Italy searching for a place to explore audio-visual design, photography and interactive systems, finding in New York City and Parsons, the ideal environment to follow his passions. During the course of the two years he spent at Parsons, the New School for Design as a MFA Design and Technology student, he focused his research on the creative possibilities of code and the intersection of digital technology, human creativity and communication. He presented the soundFishing project, a procedural sonic sampler, at the MobileMusicWorkshop08 conference in Vienna and a year later he joined the 2009 MobileHCI in Bonn, Germany with his master thesis 'Phototropic Memories. During June and July 2009, Claudio was in Zambia to implement the StopStockouts mobile advocacy campaign as an Open Society Institute fellow. He's currently part-time faculty at Parsons teaching Foundations of Time-based Digital Media. In collaboration with the Social Science Research Council and various institutions, Claudio also works as a producer for the Design for Learning team helping to implement the New Youth City Learning Network. He is honored to join the Institute of Play and Quest to Learn teams as a game designer, creating fun learning experiences for what he sees as the school of the future. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife Clio, his beloved cat Mimi and continues to follow his creative passions.

Brendon Trombley

Game Designer

Brendon Trombley is a game designer and adventurer originally from the Adirondack region in upstate New York. He has since made his way to the big city to explore the potential of games to positively impact the world. He loves to create designs that not only educate, but also inspire people to explore and participate in the world around them. In 2008, he graduated from the New Media Design and Imaging program at Rochester Institute of Technology. His experiences there, introduced him to a wide-range of design and technology methodologies—from game design and programming to animation and graphic design. Brendon greatly enjoys his multi-disciplinary focus and participating in different aspects of the creative process. From 2008 to 2010, he designed and developed online learning tools and experiences at Kognito, a New York City based e-learning firm. As a new member of the Institute of Play, he's very excited to craft fun and engaging missions and learning experiences for the students at Quest to Learn. Currently, Brendon is also involved in several projects, including Chamball, a new sport fusing elements of dodgeball and martial arts and Brothers in Farms, a strategy game that teaches about sustainable agriculture techniques. When he's not creating and designing he loves adventure, exploration and new experiences of all kinds—be it traveling, hiking or rock climbing.

Paola Guimerans

Lead Mentor, Bonus Round, Afterschool Program

Paola Guimerans is a Spanish-born artist, educator and graphic designer based in New York. For the past few years, she has had a multi-disciplinary art practice focusing on the fields of graphic design, illustration and physical computing. Paola loves to teach art and has an interest and passion for creating new educational tools that combine electronic and virtual media with traditional art techniques. Paola has worked as an Art Director and Graphic Designer for international companies such as Samsung, Microsoft and Café del Mar Music. Paola has exhibited her artwork in many different cities and developed collaborative artistic projects at Eyebeam Art and Technology Center, NY; Medialab Prado, Madrid and Sonarmatica, Barcelona.

Loretta Wolozin

Assessment Consultant

Loretta teaches and coordinates the Research and Writing curriculum for the MFA Design and Technology at Parsons The New School for Design. At Parsons, Loretta co-founded Lime Learning Lab (2002-2004), dedicated to K-12 classroom-based research of learning-media projects. Forging a partnership with The College of New Jersey's Early & Elementary Teacher Education program, Loretta launched and participated in classroom testing of the prototype, Kinderboard on Kindertable, in two New Jersey schools with divergent demographics. Loretta's publications include Look Duck Feet: Kinderboard on Kindertable (The Prototype) Goes to Classrooms and Literacy Inventory Protocol (LIP): Pedagogical Tool for Iterative Prototype Design. Prior to joining Parsons, Loretta put her Permanent Secondary Teacher's Credential to work as Education Editor for 25+ years at Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company (Boston). Loretta has deep knowledge of contemporary research on learning and has worked closely with leading learning scientists. She holds an MFA in Design & Technology (Parsons School of Design), an M.A.T. in English Education, B.A. in English Literature (The University of Santa Clara), and a Permanent California Standard Secondary Teacher's Credential (English/History).

Evonne Tsang

Director of Business

Evonne handles finance and human resources, and is the general corporate monkey for the Institute of Play and Mission Lab. She has worked in human resources for PricewaterhouseCoopers and Barnes & Noble College Bookstores. She is very excited to combine her corporate experience with her geeky interests in support of innovative public education, gaming, design and digital media. Evonne is a native New Yorker fortunate enough to have attended some great public schools before earning a B.A. in English with a minor in Creative Writing from NYU. She is the author of two genre books for children and young adults, and is working on three more books for her publisher. She is an avid practitioner of Google-fu and thinks wearing jeans to work is pretty keen.