

Roa Selected as Finalist for ATHENA Award

by Beth Nash

Mid-West Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) Coordinator Lourdes Roa has been selected as one of 10 finalists for the 35th Annual ATHENA International Award®. This award recognizes women for their outstanding professional achievements, contributions to the community and active assistance to other women in attaining professional excellence. She will be recognized on April 22 via a virtual awards ceremony, where the top winner will be announced. The ATHENA Award is sponsored by the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce.



In her role at Mid-West RBERN, Roa supports 71 public school districts, and private and charter schools with English Language Learners (ELLs), bilingual education and world languages. She collaborated with local agencies and schools in resettling families in the community after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico. She served as regional delegate for the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE) and co-edited their newsletter. Roa enthusiastically supports her colleagues and current staff members in their pursuit of higher education goals.

Roa has fostered relationships with higher education students as an instructor of graduate courses in bilingual education at SUNY Brockport, Buffalo State College and Nazareth College. She is proud of her former students becoming teacher leaders and administrators. She is also an advocate of women leading socially-, emotionally- and spiritually-balanced lives. Roa is a certified yoga teacher and mindfulness instructor, supporting teaching mindfulness in K-12 education. She even volunteers to teach a bi-weekly yoga class to staff at BOCES 2 to improve wellness initiatives.

A comment on a feedback survey for Mid-West RBERN stated that “Lourdes Roa has been a tremendous support! She goes above and beyond – willing to talk through all sorts of challenges and devise solutions, as well as strengthen the morale of individuals serving ELLs.”

On receiving notification of her finalist status, Roa replied, “Thank you very much. It’s a real surprise!”

McElhaney Honored with 2020 Better Beginnings Award

by Chris Klem

Katie McElhaney, who teaches a Medically Fragile 6:1:1 class located in Brockport’s Hill Elementary School, was recently recognized with the 2020 Helen Bach Moss Memorial Better Beginnings Award. Sponsored by the New York State Department of Education Board of Regents, the award celebrates elementary teachers who are gifted in finding and nurturing the strengths of each student and fostering trusting relationships among pupils, parents, teachers and administrators.

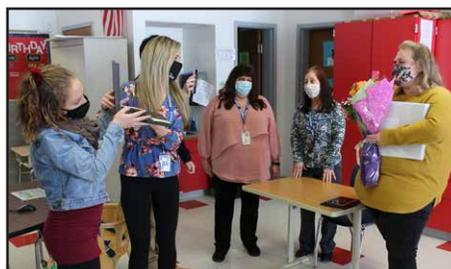


McElhaney was nominated by her colleagues, who included Math Specialist Tina Bonfiglio and the Instructional Specialist team; Special Education Paraprofessional Laura Lockhart and Speech-Language Pathologist Jennifer DiLeo; and Special Education Supervisor Debi Walton. Special recommendations were submitted by 6:1:1 parents Gina Fazzina, and Maria and Hector Hernandez, with personal comments on “Why I Love My Teacher” from students Jasmine and Anthony.

In the eyes of her students, McElhaney is a hero. She makes Jasmine “Happy!” Anthony communicates with his device: “Ms. Kate make, I’m so happy.” He said his teacher helps him: “Do work. Make good choices.”

Anthony’s parent, Gina Fazzina, sees McElhaney as “a remarkable woman and teacher” who “cares as much as we do about our son’s education and future.” The Hernandez family is grateful for the exceptional progress their son has made, thanks to his teacher’s patience, understanding and encouragement. They note that she challenges their son to use his communication skills in class and out, to “socialize with other students in the hallways, making connections and sharing experiences.”

McElhaney’s coworkers see her as a “consummate professional,” “true innovator” and “one of the most inspirational and passionate teachers I have worked with.” DiLeo said, “Kate’s classroom is a very unique, but beautiful place, for students with significant complex needs to receive the intense support they need, and also where they go to be accepted, loved and challenged to ... become the best versions of themselves they are capable of being.”



A surprise presentation on Jan. 20 in McElhaney’s classroom was attended by coworkers and BOCES 2 administrators, and shared with her proud family members over Zoom. During the ceremony, she received the Better Beginnings Award plaque and a cash prize of \$1,000.

Condolences to:

Lisa Bayer on the death of her grandmother; **Kaitlyn Hoag** on the death of her grandfather; **Patti Polino** on the death of her mother; **Lisa Steen** on the death of her mother; the family of **Joyce Warner** (retiree).