



# New Teachers!

Written by Vanessa Chen and Lauren Pinheiro, Staff Reporter and Photography Editor  
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## Heather Zezzo

Heather Zezzo teaches accelerated Algebra 1 and honors Geometry classes. She is currently in her third year of teaching and taught eighth grade math at Pennedale Middle School prior to coming to 'Stoga. Zezzo has two dogs, both Bichon Frises, and is getting married to her fiance Jon in December. Zezzo originally went to Dartmouth College to study engineering but then pivoted to working in finance in New York City until moving home with her mother to work remotely during the pandemic. It was then that her mother, a teacher at Central Bucks School District for over 25 years, helped Zezzo realize she wanted to pursue education. Zezzo completed both her Master's of Education and her Master's in Educational Administration at St. Joseph's University.



**Q:** Why did you decide to teach math?

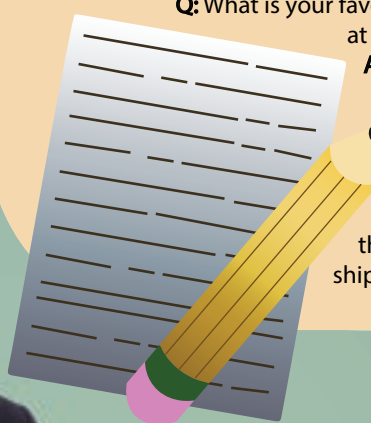
**A:** "I love working with numbers. Engineering has the numbers and the physics. I am not very good at memorizing dates and timelines of things. I always liked working with numbers in finance (too), and then when I was switching to education, math just made the most sense. I always loved math the most. And then I was really inspired by my high school math teacher who taught me AP Calculus BC (because) she was and has been my favorite teacher. I'm still in touch with her, and I actually went to her wedding last summer."

**Q:** What are your favorite books and movies?

**A:** "I love the show 'Emily in Paris', and I really like the book 'The Nightingale' by Kristen Hannah. For movies, I love '27 Dresses' with Katherine Heigl. It's a chick flick or a rom-com."

**Q:** What is your favorite part of teaching and what are you looking forward to at Conestoga?

**A:** "My favorite is seeing my students because all Conestoga students always have a smile on their faces, so it's just nice to see everybody and check in with them and then help them to succeed. I'm most looking forward to building relationships with my colleagues. I'm brand-new, and I've only spent one month basically with them, so I'm looking forward to developing those relationships and friendships with my colleagues."



## Erika Lucas

Erika Lucas teaches 10th grade accelerated and honors American Voices classes. She is currently in her 14th year of teaching and taught first grade, second grade and fourth grade for six years before moving to TESD to teach for the gifted seminars at both VFMS and TEMS. Lucas then taught at 'Stoga for a year before taking time to finish her doctoral program. She started studying at community college for two years and then transferred to Kutztown University for her bachelor's degree. Lucas then got her master's through an online program at Augustana University in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and finished her doctoral program at West Chester University. Lucas has a husband who teaches in Owen J. Roberts School District, a daughter named Cordelia in kindergarten and a golden retriever named Emmy.



**Q:** Why did you decide to become an English teacher?

**A:** "I was not a good student at all, so I always wanted to be that teacher that I needed (to say) 'Hey, I didn't love English when I was a kid, but because I didn't love it, I have tips and tricks', and I really strive to make it interesting and applicable for kids. English really lends itself to getting to know your students really well because it's very discussion based. American Voices is all about identity, and so I love that community (grows) in your classes when you're having those discussions."

**Q:** Do you have any interesting hobbies?

**A:** "I snowboarded all through college, and then I cracked my tailbone, so I don't do that anymore. But my daughter recently started ice hockey, and so I'm taking her to practices, and I'm like that ice hockey mom. We love going to Flyer games and all that good stuff. On the artsy side of things I do, I'm very inspired by TikTok and my For You page, and I like doing air dry clay and painting it and then also doing embroidery."

**Q:** What is your favorite part of teaching?

**A:** "I feel like the best part of teaching is creating that community with your kids every day. The seniors that graduated last year were my only class that I had at Conestoga (previously). And so it was really cool (because) a lot of them reached out to invite me to graduation, and some of them invited me to their kente ceremonies for the Black Student Union. It's just really neat to feel like you made an impact, not even just academically, but in life in general. It's cool to be remembered."

## Roheem Roten

Roheem Roten is an academic support teacher for grades nine through 12. He has been in education for eight years and teaching for six and a half. He began his career in stocks at Vanguard but transitioned to teaching after realizing he preferred interacting with and helping people. Roten previously worked in elementary special education at Chester Community Charter School before applying to Conestoga for academic seminar support last year. Roten initially got his Bachelor's in history and now holds a Master's in special education and early childhood from Lincoln University. Additionally, Roten enjoys rock climbing and coaching at local climbing gyms. Roten lives with his 7-year-old dog Nova.



**Q:** What made you want to pursue a career in education?

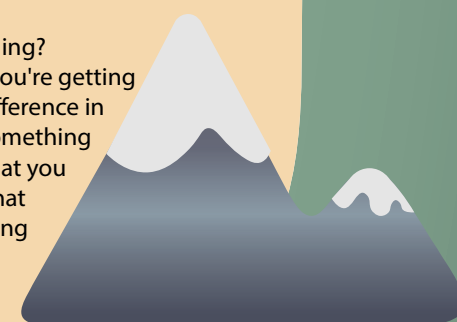
**A:** "I enjoy helping people out. I coach as well, and I have always been a people person, so at Vanguard, there are no face-to-face interactions with the people you work with, so any time you would talk to another human being who is your coworker, and it was during lunch. Other than that, you were just on the phone all day. I realized this wasn't what I wanted to do, so I took a leap of faith, and then I left."

**Q:** What is an uncommon hobby you enjoy?

**A:** "I rock climb a lot. It's a great hobby for me. It's taken me around the world to different places in the country that I would have never gone to. If you'd told me eight years ago that I would be climbing in a forest in West Virginia, I would've just looked at you like you were crazy."

**Q:** What has been your favorite or most memorable part of teaching?

**A:** "You could teach for an entire school year and may not think you're getting to a student. A lot of times you'll feel like, 'Am I even making a difference in this child's life?' or 'Is anything I'm doing even working?' Then something will happen where they will say something or use a technique that you taught, or they'll improve on a social skill, and then it's that joy that you're like 'Okay, I did make the right decision, right?' Just watching people grow and find themselves and become who they were meant to be."



**Q:** What sparked your desire to specialize in education?

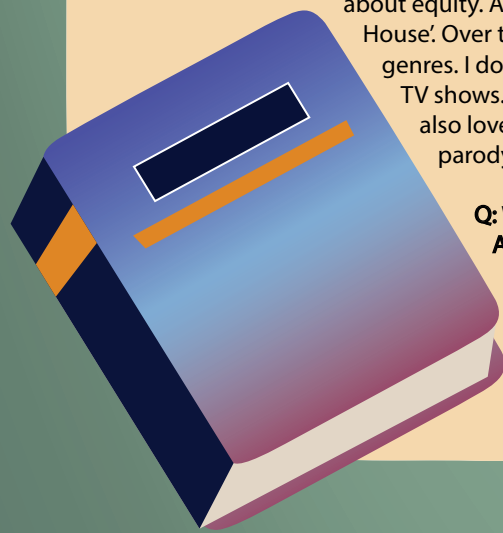
**A:** "I always had a passion for education...I felt that without knowledge, it is very difficult for people to have critical thinking skills and make sound decisions. I think it's really important for every participant in society to have exposure to education."

**Q:** What are your favorite books or TV series?

**A:** "I try to be as diverse as I can. Lately, I've been reading a lot of books about equity. Also now, I'm reading a book called 'The Kitchen House'. Over the summer, I tried to read all different types of genres. I do love reading. I am kind of a sucker for some reality TV shows. 'Love is Blind' is a little bit of my guilty pleasure. I also love 'Abbott Elementary'...Anything that's sort of like a parody of my everyday life always keeps me engaged."

**Q:** What is your favorite part of teaching?

**A:** "I really enjoy creating connections with students and giving them a purpose for coming to school and watching them grow, and watching that progress that they make and igniting, really, that motivation for them to be strong students."



## Michelle Mercogliano

Michelle Mercogliano is an academic support teacher for grades nine through 12, and works as an adjunct faculty professor at Immaculata University teaching Italian. Her career started nine years ago when she taught within the district at Hillside Elementary and spent one year in the Oxford Area School District. Mercogliano graduated from Conestoga in 2007 and furthered her education at Dickinson College for her bachelor's degree in Italian studies. After deciding to pivot her career to be a teacher, she completed the post-baccalaureate program at West Chester University and eventually got a master's at West Chester. Now, Mercogliano is working on a doctorate at Immaculata University in education. Outside of teaching, she enjoys traveling, reading and spending time with family. Mercogliano values creating connections with students and overcoming obstacles through strong relationships.

