



AEA Welcomes Our Newest
Team Members!



Katie Baltas, Principal, Lakewood Campus

Hello! My name is Katie Baltas and I am the Principal at the Lakewood Campus. I attended Wittenberg University and Cleveland State University. I have been an educator for 17 Years both as an Intervention Specialist and an administrator. I am engaged and a proud aunt to 4 nieces and nephews. I am a lifelong west sider, collector of Squishmallows, and a foodie at heart.



Taylor Beck, Elementary Teacher, Strongsville Campus

Hi, my name is Taylor Beck. I will be teaching 5th grade at the Strongsville campus. I have a bachelor's degree from Baldwin Wallace University and this is my second-year of teaching. I live with my wife, my cat, and four dogs. We are expecting a baby girl in January of 2023. I am a coach and basketball trainer in the area. One hobby that I enjoy is playing party games with family and friends.



Jennifer Dillon, Intervention Specialist, Lakewood Campus

My name is Jennifer Dillon. I went to grade school in Westlake and graduated from Lorain Catholic High School. I attended Bowling Green State University and received a bachelor's degree in special education. I went on to work for Elyria City Schools, got married and traveled around Europe before having my two daughters. After teaching for a few years, I went back to school to receive a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Cleveland State University. Through the years, I have been very active with my children whether it be coaching volleyball or being a Girl Scout troop leader. Now that my children are older, most of our quality time is centered around traveling and taking care of our miniature dachshund. I'm looking forward to this new chapter of my life at Albert Einstein Academy and helping your child thrive and reach their fullest potential.

Derek Farley, Middle School Teacher, North Olmsted Campus

Hello, my name is Derek Lee Farley. I will be teaching middle school math at the North Olmsted campus. I have a bachelor of science degree in middle school math and language arts from Ashland University. I have been teaching for five years. I have a three-year-old daughter, Arietta and I love reading, writing and drawing. I was the first person in my whole family to graduate from high school and then the first to go to college.





Shelby Friedel, Counselor, Strongsville Campus

Hello! My name is Shelby Friedel and I am the School Counselor at the Strongsville campus. This will be my first year as a school counselor and I'm excited to get started. I attended Thiel College for my bachelor's in psychology as well as Kent State University for my Masters in School Counseling. When I'm not at school, I love spending time with my family and playing volleyball. A fun fact about me is that I played volleyball in college and I'm now coaching 8th grade volleyball at Columbia Middle School.



Melissa Katsaris – Smith, Middle and High School Teacher, Strongsville Campus

Hello, my name is Melissa Katsaris-Smith. I will be teaching ELA Grades 6-12 at the Strongsville Academic Center. I have a Master's of Science in Education that I earned from Franciscan University of Steubenville, as well as a B.A. in English Literature from the same school. I have been teaching for twenty-six years. I am originally from Steubenville, Ohio. My husband Matt, who is from the Cleveland area, and I met online, and we have been married for ten years. I have two cats, Evie and Stanley. Stanley's official name is "Lord Stanley." (My husband and I are Pittsburgh Penguins fans.) We like trying different restaurants, but we especially love Italian food and going to the West Side Market to eat the desserts from Theresa's Bakery. I enjoy reading historical fiction and watching Netflix. I also like watching cake-making competitions on the Food Network. My day is not complete until I do the Wordle. (Actually, I really LOVE any word game or puzzle!) I actually ENJOY grocery shopping. My favorite fruit is a pomegranate.



Elisabeth Lewis, Elementary Teacher, Strongsville Campus

My name is Elisabeth Lewis and I will be teaching 4th grade this school year! I graduated from Kent State University with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education (PK-5th). I also have an International Baccalaureate certificate in Teaching and Learning. This will be my first year of teaching, but not my first time in the classroom. I worked at a daycare while earning my degree, and my student teaching was with a 3rd grade class. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, watching Korean dramas, and going on walks with my Siberian Husky. Fun fact: I went on a mission trip to Teacapan, Mexico where I helped to build a widow's home!



Samantha Mannion, Middle and High School Teacher, Lakewood Campus

Hello, my name is Samantha Mannion. I will be teaching middle school and high school science at the Lakewood campus plus a few electives. I have earned a bachelor's of science degree in biology from the University of New Hampshire, and I have completed a teaching certification program through Malone University. This will be my sixth year in education. I live with my fiancé and my pet cat, Mica. I like to travel, eat Asian style food, and play video games and board games in my free time. I love to read and write. I am especially interested in fantasy and horror genres when it comes to movies, TV, books and games. I have traveled to Cyprus, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Guatemala and Belize. I have swum with sharks multiple times (no cage!) and am a huge shark fanatic! A major bucket list item for me is to visit South Africa and see the Great Whites breaching out of the water in person.



Ariana Moran, Intervention Specialist, North Olmsted Campus

Hello, I am Ariana Moran. I will be a middle school intervention specialist at the North Olmsted campus. I graduated from University of Saint Francis, majoring in special education. This will be my first year of teaching, but I hope to make it a year full of success with all the students. I have three siblings who live in Michigan, New York, and Indiana. I have two dogs: Willow and Shiloh. Fun fact: they are sisters and mimic each other by sleeping in the same position. Some hobbies I like to do throughout the year are to run, read and bike. A fun fact about me is that I have been to the largest truck stop in Iowa.



Viktoria Paulic, Kindergarten Teacher, Strongsville Campus

Hello my name is Viktoria Paulic and I will be teaching Kindergarten this upcoming school year. I graduated from Cleveland State University with my early childhood degree and this will be my 2nd year teaching. When I'm not in the classroom I can be found playing with my dog Riki, reading a book, or dancing! I can't wait to meet all of you and have a wonderful school year!



Courtney Preston, Intervention Specialist, Strongsville Campus

My name is Courtney Preston. I just graduated from Bowling Green State University with a degree in Inclusive early childhood education. I am both a Pre-K-3 general education teacher and intervention specialist. I am excited to get know and work with all students. I will be the intervention specialist for grades K-6 at the Strongsville campus. I love to watch each student achieve their goals and conquer the hard questions. I have been in a classroom or in a day care for the past four years working with students of many different ages. My passion for teaching came from being the student that had to work harder and having a teacher believe in me. I want to do the same for all students. My favorite food is chicken, my favorite movie is The Incredibles, and my favorite book is Chicka Chicka Boom Boom. I love fall, photography and camping.



Stephanie Puma, Intervention Teacher, North Olmsted Campus

Hi, my name is Stefanie Puma. I am so excited to start at Albert Einstein Academy as an Intervention Teacher. I attended Baldwin-Wallace University where I earned my Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education. I graduated in 2004 and started my career teaching Preschool. I have been teaching for 12 years and have experience in First grade, Kindergarten, and most recently small group reading intervention. Myself, my husband, my two children ages 12 and 7, and three-year-old Labradoodle named Jax, reside in Strongsville. When I am not teaching, I am watching my daughter figure skate, swimming with my son, going on walks with Jax, or sitting around a bonfire with my husband. I look forward to a great and successful school year and can't wait to get started!



Nicole Rayokovich, District Title 1 Reading Specialist

Hello! My name is Nicole Rayokovich and I will be the Title I Reading teacher this year at the Strongsville campus. I graduated from Cleveland State University with my Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education. Prior to this, I taught PreK for two years. I have two children, I mean dogs, Lulu and Spencer- they are best friends. In my free time, you will find me reading. I've read 20 books this year, currently deciding what my 21st will be. I could easily eat pizza every day for the rest of my life.



Louise Robison, Middle School Teacher, North Olmsted Campus

Coming soon!



Laura Roggy, Kindergarten Teacher, Strongsville Campus

My name is Laura Roggy and I will be teaching Kindergarten this year at AEA Strongsville. I have been teaching for six years and four of those years were in kindergarten. I absolutely love the energy and the excitement that students have at this tender age and I love sharing the passion of learning with them. I have a degree from the University of Houston in Interdisciplinary Studies, which is a fancy way of saying I earned a degree in both early childhood education in addition to elementary education in a five-year program. I have been married for 18 years to my husband Andrew and we have two wonderful daughters. Savannah is 14 and will be going into high school this year, and Ava is almost 7 and she will be attending AEA with me. We also have a dog named Happy that just turned ten years old. I love to learn how to cook new cuisines, read interesting books, and go hiking with my family. I will be a little silly with my class singing songs and dancing during classroom brain breaks. I cannot wait to meet my new kiddos this year.



Taru Taylor, Middle and High School Teacher, Lakewood Campus

Hello. My name is Taru Taylor and I hail from Washington, D.C. but I did make Cleveland my home some seven years ago. Before that I lived ten years abroad, mostly in South Korea teaching English literature and other subjects. I have also taught on the West Bank in Ramallah and backpacked around Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. As for schooling, I have a law degree and an undergraduate degree in philosophy. My hobbies include chess and samurai movies.



Jennifer Walden, Counselor, Lakewood Campus

I am Jennifer Walden and I am the school counselor at Lakewood AEA. I grew up in Lakewood and attended Ashland University where I received my bachelor's degree in Social Work and my LSW. I come to AEA after 25 years working for the Positive Education Program (PEP) mostly with high school students. I am married and have three children, two in college and one beginning high school. We have an active yellow lab, Mona, a senior rabbit, Snickers and two ball pythons, Damian and Monty. We enjoy hiking, kayaking, and family game nights and we are big Star Wars fans.



Rodney Wayne, High School Teacher, Strongsville Campus

Hi, my name is Rodney Wayne. I am the high school social studies teacher at the AEA Strongsville Campus. I am a veteran of the United States Air Force. I graduated from The University of Akron with a Bachelor's of Science in Education, focusing on English Language Arts and Social Studies, and have been teaching for five years now. I have a daughter and two cats. I like all sports, but have coached basketball, golf, soccer, and football. I am a big gamer and when it comes to shows and movies, I love sci-fi, horror, and comedy.



Andrew Wolens, Middle School Teacher, Strongsville Campus

Hello, my name is Andrew Wolens and I will be teaching MS Social Studies plus a few electives at the Strongsville campus. I earned a Bachelor's of arts in History from Notre Dame College. This will be my fourth-year teaching. I am interested in music, cartoons, videogames and I play guitar. Fun fact: I am a collector of Vinyl Records and CDs.