

# The Post-Journal

## Salamanca High School Earns National STEM Recognition



Salamanca High School's STEM leadership team poses with the conference's keynote and award judges. Submitted photo

SALAMANCA — Salamanca High School has been called many things since it unveiled its award-winning Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) program: focus school, groundbreaker, pathway district.

Now it can add a new label: national STEM Excellence.

Salamanca City Central School District, a rural school facing generation poverty and connectivity concerns and located on the southern edge of the indigenous territory of Seneca Nation of Indians, was named a national school of STEM Excellence recently at International Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC) in Miami, Fla.

First awarded in 2015, the STEM Excellence Award is designed to highlight a school's interdisciplinary approach to STEAM education, demonstrating the effective integration of science, technology, engineering, art, and math into authentic learning opportunities for students.

*"Schools that provide high-quality STEM learning opportunities are truly living out the vision of what a 21st-century education should be, which is why we seek to highlight some of the nation's most outstanding programs through the STEM Excellence Awards,"* said Jennifer Womble, program chair of FETC.

Just three high schools in the United States and Canada earned the distinction, and Salamanca High School is the only New York state winner since the award's inception.

*"It is very rewarding to be recognized at this level for the work our teachers and administrators have invested in creating dynamic and focused learning experiences for our students,"* said Assistant Superintendent Dr. Mark Beehler. *"It is equally as rewarding to see our students engaged in meaningful work and excel academically."*

The FETC Conference is in its 40th year and brings together teachers, businesses and industry partners to serve schools from across the northern continent.

*"The recognition of Salamanca's STEAM program by FETC is not only a wonderful acknowledgment of the dedication of students, staff, advisers and business partners, it is also an indication that together we are moving closer to our vision of developing a quality STEAM ecosystem, right here in Salamanca,"* said Aaron Straus, the district's STEAM and Adult Education Coordinator.

The Salamanca STEAM program has been closely watched since its inception five years ago. The initiative was conceived as a partnership between District leadership, teachers of Salamanca, and the larger STEM professional community.

*“Our collective journey into the 21st century and STEAM programming began with a realization that our educational platform must keep pace with the changing technological environment,”* said Robert Breidenstein, Salamanca superintendent.

Salamanca High School, meanwhile, initially helped start “*silos*” STEAM programs to generate awareness among the faculty and excitement from the student community.

*“At the beginning of the program we were all silos,”* said business teacher and Part 107 drones instructor, Kim Dry. *“We incorporated our knowledge, technology, and creativity all for the benefit of our kids.”*

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