



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April 2026 I CAN STEM New Jersey Role Model Announced

Chatham, N.J. — The New Jersey STEM Pathways Network (NJSPN) is excited to announce Sheila Tabanli as its April I CAN STEM New Jersey Role Model. We are honored to welcome Sheila as part of our 2026 I CAN STEM Role Model Class.

The I CAN STEM initiative highlights individuals who are expanding access, opportunity, and visibility in STEM across New Jersey. While many honorees work directly in STEM fields, I CAN STEM also proudly uplifts leaders whose advocacy, strategic vision, and commitment to equity help strengthen New Jersey’s STEM ecosystem. Each year, 12 role models are featured—one per month—recognizing individuals who have made significant contributions to STEM education, workforce development, and community impact.

Sheila is an Associate Teaching Professor of Mathematics at Rutgers University–New Brunswick and a globally recognized leader in STEM education. With more than 25 years of experience spanning K–16 classrooms, her work centers on expanding access and opportunity in STEM by bridging the gap between research and practice through asset-based, evidence-driven approaches.

Grounded in cognitive science and social-emotional learning, Dr. Tabanli developed an interdisciplinary course that has demonstrated sustained reductions in DFW (D, F, and withdrawal) rates in gateway mathematics courses. Widely regarded by students as a “trendsetter” and “game changer,” her work led to the creation of the RR2PG (Reducing the Research-to-Practice Gap) instructional framework, as well as the CONNECT-STEM Community of Practice, a cross-disciplinary faculty network advancing inclusive, evidence-based teaching.

As a Rutgers fellow, Dr. Tabanli authored a guidebook and developed the 3C Pedagogical Model—Compassionate, Connected, and Community-centered learning through cognitive apprenticeship. She is the recipient of the Rutgers–New Brunswick Chancellor’s Faculty Excellence in Broadening STEM Access Award and the 2026 NJ STEM Educator of the Year Award. Deeply inspired by her students’ resilience, Dr. Tabanli remains committed to empowering the next generation of diverse STEM leaders.



For more information and to submit a nomination visit <https://njstempathways.org/i-can-stem/>.

The NJSPN was created in 2014 and is managed by the Research & Development Council for New Jersey. It includes over 800 STEM leaders from across the State and connects all STEM stakeholders-K-12, higher education, non-profit, informal providers, business, philanthropists and government. NJSPN has eight STEM learning ecosystems as part of an international network of ecosystems supported by the STEM Funders' Network. You can learn more about the Jersey STEM Pathways Network and New Jersey's STEM Ecosystems by visiting www.njstempathways.org.