

FUND FOR TEACHERS

We are grateful that these teachers choose to reinvest their time and experiences back into Fund for Teachers. Their insights inform our work, helping us refine our programming to better elevate teacher and student learning.

2024 Educator Advisory Committee

Lhisa Almashy Dr. Joaquin Garcia High School | Lake Worth, FL

Dr. Lhisa Almashy is a two-time FFT Fellow. In 2020, she used a Fellowship grant to complete homestays in Vietnam to improve linguistic awareness and cultural competency through social interactions, museum visits, and lived experiences and, subsequently, support the increasing number of English Language Learners from this country. In 2024, she earned an FFT Innovation Circle grant to enroll in the Japanese American National Museum's conference "Little Tokyo: How History Shapes our Past and Present" in Los Angeles to expand cultural and historical awareness with Japanese English Learners and gain valuable perspectives on their role in US history.

"Making connections, sharing different perspectives and working to make something bigger and better than any individual is what keeps me optimistic and energized," said Lhisa. "FFT emulates the values I strive to live every day, so it is an honor and a privilege to be part of this group."

Ricardo Avello Bassick High School | Bridgeport, CT

Ricardo Avello teaches Humanities Lab and English 9. In addition to being a 2022 FFT Fellow, he is also a recipient of the Wallace Stevens Poetry Prize. Ricardo used his FFT grant to engage in Spanish Immersion programs and homestays in San Juan, Puerto Rico, while also documenting history of the Puerto Rican diaspora to create a bilingual creative writing project focused around developing student voice to better serve a larger and ever growing population of English Language Learners.

"I believe that FFT is right: Teachers know what our students and schools need," said Ricardo. "I want to be a part of the council so I can learn how to push that idea further and help give teachers students and families opportunities to experience more joy in the classroom."

Maya Brodkey Eureka High School | Eureka, CA

Maya Brodkey teaches 11th and 12th grade English and previously taught in Oakland, CA, where she developed and piloted a community research curriculum. She has participated in a range of teacher fellowships including NPS Dissonant Voices, two NEH Institutes, and the Forestry Institute for Teachers. With a 2023 Fellowship, Maya studied New Zealand's Maori language and cultural education model while investigating bi-cultural, place-based education in rural schools to incorporate findings into culturally relevant and place-based practices that are responsive to and supportive of Indigenous students.

"My Fund for Teachers fellowship shifted my ideas about my pedagogy in significant ways," said Maya. "I have seen first hand the impact FFT can have on teacher and students, and I am eager to give back."

Bridget Drain-Watters Walker Upper Elementary School | Charlottesville, VA

Bridget Drain-Watters is a 5th grade Special Education and ELA Co-teacher, as well as the school's Equity Lead and coaches the lacrosse team in her spare time. In addition to her 2023 Fund for Teachers grant (with which she attended the "Get Your Teach On" conference in Dallas), Bridget has also received the Golden Apple Award.

"The EAC is an opportunity for me to support and advise the next generation of teachers who want to improve their practice, make a difference in the classroom and broaden their own mindsets. I can't imagine a better way to support a program that has given me so much."





Jenny Johannson **River Bluff High School | Lexington, SC**

Jenny is a professor for pre-service teachers with a focus on Trauma Informed Instruction. In addition to being an FFT Fellow, Jenny was a Fulbright Scholar in Japan and received the Wil Lou Gray Award and the CEC Teacher of the Year Award. With a 2016 FFT Fellowship grant, Jenny participated in the Division of International Special Education and Services Round Table Discussions in Managua, Nicaragua, to learn about advocacy, research and networking for students with disabilities and afterwards join related clinical field work and a service project to learn how other cultures are making the change to person first vocabulary.

"I bring to the EAC a unique skill set, being in higher education and helping pre-service teachers prepare for their classrooms," said Jenny. "Teachers tend to think they are on an island in the classroom, so sharing with them the value of grants like Fund for Teachers is so important."



Lindsay Johnson **Roosevelt Middle School | River Front, IL**

Career educator of 19 years, Lindsay builds classrooms where individuals feel seen, known and valued in a community that intentionally explores diverse artists, artworks and art making activities. Thanks to Fund for Teachers in 2011, she learned animation; in 2018 she studied sewing and e-textiles; and in 2023 she apprenticed with two professional sculptors.

"In an era where teachers can feel disheartened by the seemingly constant criticism and constraints, FFT treats teachers as professionals who can think critically about their practice to development meaningful professional development for themselves that will immediately be implemented in the classroom," said Lindsay. "FFT supports and invests in those who have the most direct impact on students: the teachers."



Susie Kang **Essex Street Academy | Manhattan, NY**

Susie is a high school neuroscience and human biology teacher who has taught in New York City public schools for the last 19 years. She is a Master Teacher in Math for America and has also been a Fellow with Sci-Ed Innovators, as well as the Earthwatch Institute. With a 2008 Fund for Teachers Fellowship grant, Susie researched and volunteered in Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands for biodiversity research and environmental conservation.

"I am excited about this opportunity to collaborate with teachers outside of my school and district, and to hear the perspectives of educators who are in different parts of the country," said Susie. "I strongly believe that Fund for Teachers is one of the most incredible grant opportunities available to teachers because of the freedom given to design a learning experience that is personalized to them."



Ariadne Prior-Grosch **Academy for Software Engineering | New York City**

Ariadne Prior-Grosch is a National Board Certified science high school teacher currently teaching Earth Science. In addition to being a two-time FFT Fellow (first in 2017 to South America and in 2022 to Africa), Ariadne was named a Regeneron Fellow in 2020 and awarded a four-year Math for America fellowship.

"I like to be creative and collaborate with teachers who across the country to innovate on what WE know works and to approach different challenges with new ideas," said Ariadne. "No matter what/where we teach, I fundamentally believe that we all have the same goals: to continue to learn to better serve our students and to create opportunities for our students to be successful."



Sara Simon Morales **Art Department Team | Chicago Public Schools**

Sara Simon Morales is a 2015 grant recipient, which she used to investigate Chilean culture, history and school systems to outline a specific standards-based learning plan that maximizes the learning of students participating in a "Traveling Scholars" exchange program. Upon her return, she designed and implemented the district's first travel immersion experience program for neighborhood schools. After training peers at other schools on the program, she left the classroom to join the district's Art Department Team.

"Because my teaching career has been spent teaching among other teachers of color, I did not realize how diversity is lacking in the leadership levels in school districts," Sara said. "I so appreciate Fund for Teachers' call to action to make visible teacher leaders of diverse backgrounds and I want to use this opportunity to help play a role in that part of that mission."