

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.

2025-2026 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 to support the increasing number of English Learners from this country. In 2024, she earned an 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.

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



Maya Brodkey
Coliseum College Prep Academy | Oakland, CA

Maya Brodkey teaches 11th and 12th grade Humanities and previously taught in rural Northern California. She has previously participated in a range of teacher leadership development programs, including as Fulbright's Teachers for Global Classrooms, the Teach+ Policy Fellowship, and the Forestry Institute for Teachers. With a 2023 Fellowship, Maya studied New Zealand's Māori 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, I have seen firsthand the impact FFT can have on teacher and students, and I am eager to give back."



Grace Dircz
Mexico City

Grace Dircz is a bilingual curriculum coordinator, writer and teacher who began her classroom career with Teach for America. She holds an M.S. in Early Childhood and Special Education, with certification in Bilingual Education, and an M.A. in School Building Leadership and School District Leadership. In 2023, Grace designed a fellowship to research Mayan civilization, Collectivism, and the Zapatistas across Mexico City, Oaxaca, and Chiapas, culminating in private language lessons in Tulum to redesign learning around a cross-cultural perspective of Mexican history that champions indigenous advocacy from past to present.

"I am eternally grateful for my experience with FFT and consider myself one of its biggest champions. It is a privilege to give back to the organization that has shaped my professional journey so profoundly and to support the next generation of Fellows in realizing their vision."



Bridget Drain-Watters
Lynbrook Elementary School | Springfield, VA

Bridget is a 3rd and 4th grade Special Education teacher. 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."



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."



Ben Olsen
North Cedar & Hansen Elementary | Cedar Falls, IA

Ben is a teacher of gifted students and enrichment coordinator, as well as the K-12 Talented & Gifted department chair, member of the district science instruction committee. On his 2024 fellowship, Ben joined the Morpho Institute in Peru where he collaborated with scientists and other educators to experience field research that fits well within the context of developing global perspectives, understanding biodiversity and ecological systems, and inquiry-based learning for gifted learners.

"I had an amazing fellowship experience, and I've used that experience to change and enhance not only what I teach, but the way I teach and facilitate learning experiences for my students. I truly believe that I've used the fellowship the way it's intended to be used, and there's so much more to come in the future years, as well. I want to bring these ideas to future Fellows to help them see the larger picture of the fellowship."



Vincent Pham
The International High School at Prospect Heights | Brooklyn, NY

Vincent is a National Board Certified educator and son of Vietnamese refugees. For the past seven years, he has taught social studies and English as a New Language (ENL) to immigrant students. Vincent designed a 2024 fellowship to study the legacy of the Vietnam-US War in Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines by experiencing former refugee camps, volunteering with community development projects, and collecting interviews. He pursued this learning to center the Vietnamese experience for recently arrived immigrant and refugee Multilingual Language Learners. Vincent's additional achievements include: National Educators Association (NEA) Global Learning Fellowship (2023), Pulitzer Teacher Center Fellow (2020), and a Fulbright Fellow to Vietnam (2014).

"I know that Fund for Teachers was the most transformative professional experience I have ever had. That is why I am adamant that the outreach to teachers of color is vital, as they are more likely to leave the profession. It is more than just about pay raises – teachers of color need to feel empowered and affirmed. I look forward to engaging in FFT's recruitment and support sessions to increase our Fellows of color."



Danielle Wilson
Zionsville Community High School | Zionsville, IN

Danielle is a social studies teacher who won the ZCHS Teacher of the Year in 2017 and Lilly Endowment Grants in 2013 and 2021. She has also participated in multiple Gilder Lehrman, TAH, and NEH summer programs. In 2019, Danielle designed a FFT fellowship to volunteer at a food outreach program in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and to visit historic sites throughout the country. Her cultural immersion allowed her to better understand the lasting impact the Vietnam War has had on communities and encourage her students to become globally-conscience, action-minded citizens.

"With the coursework I've been doing for an Ed.D. and my role as a district equity champion, I have been honing skills and learning best practices for compassionately supporting teachers, wherever they may be in their careers. I hope to write my dissertation on how predominantly white spaces can cultivate a sense of belonging for educators of color and am excited to see how my research can expand the reach of FFT."