Educator Advisory Council

2026-2027

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.

Ariel Alford

Paul Laurence Dunbar High Schol | Washington DC

Ariel Alford is an award-winning secondary educator and curriculum writer with experience in African diasporic history, decolonizing curriculum, and Black Radical Tradition. She has written curriculum and facilitated teacher education for prestigious organizations such as MacMillan Center for International Studies at Yale University, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the National Museum of Women's History. She currently serves as an active member of Teaching for Change DC Area Educators for Social Justice, Prentiss Charney Fellow with the Zinn Education Project, an executive board member of the National Council of Negro Women. Ariel used her 2023 FFT grant to explore significant cultural and historical sites throughout London and other boroughs to document Black British history, with a focus on cross-cultural connections with African Americans during the Civil Rights era and modern social justice movements, for integration into key curricular units within the 9th thru 12th grade African American History.

Dr. Jessica Culver

Ozark High School | Ozark, AR

Dr. Jessica Culver teaches high school civics, economics, and concurrent college credit history courses at Ozark High School in Ozark, Arkansas; she is in her 24th year as an Arkansas educator. Jessica is the current Arkansas Council for the Social Studies President and the National Council for the Social Studies Secondary Teacher of the Year. Jessica is passionate about civic education and community involvement and works to help students make real-world connections to learning. Jessica also works with educational organizations at the local, state, national, and international level and enjoys learning with other educators. She used her 2024 FFT grant to explore New England and Southeast Canada to understand how these rural, agricultural areas have become economically and civically successful while honoring their cultural identity and history, promote civic engagement, economic connections, student action, and community involvement in a rural classroom.

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. With his 2024 FFT grant, 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.

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 nine years, he has taught social studies and English as a New Language (ENL) to immigrant students. Vincent's additional achievements include: Grosvenor Teacher Fellowship (2025), National Educators Association (NEA) Global Learning Fellowship (2023), Pulitzer Teacher Center Fellow (2020), and a Fulbright Fellow to Vietnam (2014). 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.

Danee Pinckney

Twinsburg High School | Twinsburg, OH

Daneé is a proud graduate of The Ohio State University, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts and Sciences in Middle Childhood Education. Later, she realized her passions were more suited to high school obtained Ohio's English K-12 Certification before earning a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction: Educational Technology from Ashland University. Her dedication to pursuing personal growth as an educator has earned her recognition as a 2026 The Black Professionals Association Charitable Foundation 40 Under 40 Emerging Leader, a 2026 Travelers Award for Teacher Excellence, 2023 Twinsburg City Schools Teacher of the Year, 2025 Ohio Teacher of the Year, a Martha Holden Jennings Foundation Master Teacher Finalist. With her 2023 FFT grant, Daneé researched the ancestry of Black America through Benin, Ghana and the Togolese Republic to increase students' knowledge of Western Africa and dismantle discriminatory perspectives preventing their connections to literature, art, culture, and self-identity.

Ariana Saunders

Wyoming High School | Wyoming, OH

Ariana teaches Financial Literacy, United States History, and Women's Studies. and is a proud graduate of The Ohio State University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in History. She then completed her Masters in 7-12 integrated social studies and obtained her teaching license at Xavier University. Sanders is involved in local and national organizations and projects, including the advisory board for Boston University's African Studies Center, where she completed its teaching certificate program focused on Africa. She also serves on the National Council for Social Studies book awards committee. In 2022, she was a Fund for Teachers Fellow in Ghana, which helped inspire curriculum in the African American Studies course she taught and also led her to create lesson plans for BU about W.E.B DuBois.

Garris Stroud

Muhlenberg County High School | Greenville, KY

Garris teaches Earth and Space Science, where he brings a spirit of exploration and inquiry into his classroom. His work is grounded in the belief that teachers are uniquely positioned to identify what their students need and to design professional learning experiences that directly address those needs. Beyond his classroom, Garris has participated in international education and exploration programs and has worked to connect students with real-world questions in science and conservation. He is particularly interested in place-based education, global learning, inquiry-driven instruction, and creating opportunities for teachers in rural schools to pursue ambitious professional learning that translates directly into impact for students. He received a 2025 National Geographic Global Teacher Fellowship to Antarctica and, in 2023, used his FFT grant to complete Spanish language and cultural immersion classes in Mexico City.

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 used her FFT grant 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.

Dr. Jesse Wren

Riverfield Country Day School | Tulsa, OK

Dr. Jesse Wren serves as the Professional Development Coordinator, 4th/5th Grade Wing Coordinator, and teacher at Riverfield Country Day School. He is also the founder of the Second Horizon Initiative, a nonprofit that provides hands-on STEM education and mentorship for youth in juvenile detention centers. In addition to his work in K–12 education, Jesse serves as an adjunct professor, an At-Large Director on the National Science Teaching Association Board of Directors and has developed educational and research partnerships with individuals on death row. He is also a recipient of the Interdisciplinary Humanities Research Seminar, sponsored by the Oklahoma Center for the Humanities at The University of Tulsa, where he collaborates with scholars across disciplines to explore the role of wonder in research and society. Jesse used his 2025 FFT grant to learn about Hawaiian traditions and history to create interdisciplinary projects exploring cultural preservation and comparing Indigenous Hawaiian peoples and Oklahoma's Native American communities.