



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

*to strengthen teaching in public schools®*

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2015 Volume V: Problem Solving and the Common Core

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## Preface

In April 2015 the Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools® accepted public school teachers from twenty school districts in eight states and the District of Columbia to participate in six national seminars held at Yale University. The Initiative is a long-term endeavor to influence public policy on teacher professional development, in part by establishing exemplary Teachers Institutes for high-need schools in states around the country.

Teachers Institutes are educational partnerships between universities and school districts designed to strengthen teaching and learning in a community's high-need public schools. Evaluations have shown that the Institute approach exemplifies the characteristics of high-quality teacher professional development, enhances teacher quality in the ways known to improve student achievement, and encourages participants to remain in teaching in their schools.

Seven of the Yale National Fellows came from school districts that are participating for the first time this year: District of Columbia Public Schools; Franklin-McKinley School District in San José, CA; and Cape Henlopen School District, Indian River School District, and Polytech School District in Delaware. Forty-two of the Yale National Fellows are from school districts that already are planning or exploring the establishment of a new Teachers Institute for the Bay Area, CA; Chicago, IL; the Diné Nation, AZ and NM; Pittsburgh, PA; Richmond, VA; San José, CA; and Tulsa, OK. Other National Fellows came from school districts with existing Teachers Institutes located in New Castle County, DE; New Haven, CT; and Philadelphia, PA. Overall, nearly two thirds of the National Fellows were participating for the first time.

The National Fellows attended an Organizational Session of the seminars held in New Haven on May 8-9. The seminars reconvened during a ten-day Intensive Session from July 6-17 and concluded in mid-August when the Fellows submitted their completed curriculum units. The six seminars were:

- "Literature and Information," led by Jessica Brantley, Associate Professor of English;
- "Explaining Character in Shakespeare," led by Paul H. Fry, Professor of English;
- "Problem Solving and the Common Core," led by Roger E. Howe, Professor of Mathematics;
- "History in our Everyday Lives: Collective Memory, Historical Writing, and Public History," led by Mary T. Y. Lui, Professor of History and of American Studies;
- "Using Film in the Classroom," led by Brigitte Peucker, Professor of Film Studies and of German; and
- "Physiological Determinants of Global Health," led by W. Mark Saltzman, Professor of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering.

The purposes of the program are to provide public school teachers deeper knowledge of the subjects they

teach and first-hand experience with the Teachers Institute approach. This increases their leadership in an existing Teachers Institute or prepares them to lead the development of a new Teachers Institute. Each teacher writes a curriculum unit to teach his or her students about the seminar subject and to share with other teachers in their school district and, over the Internet, with teachers anywhere. The curriculum units contain five elements: content objectives, teaching strategies, examples of classroom activities, lists of resources for teachers and students, and an appendix on the district academic standards the unit implements. In these ways the curriculum units assist teachers in engaging and educating the students in their school courses.

The curriculum units National Fellows wrote are their own; they are presented in six volumes, one for each seminar.

The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute® is a permanently endowed unit of Yale University, which undertook the National Initiative in 2004.

James R. Vivian

New Haven

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