



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2025 Volume I: Art, Design, and Biology

Preface

In April 2025 the Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools® accepted teachers from sixteen public school districts in eleven states and the District of Columbia to participate in five national seminars led by Yale University faculty members. The Initiative, which builds upon the success of a four-year National Demonstration Project (1998-2002), promotes the establishment of new Teachers Institutes that adopt the approach to professional development the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute developed and has followed since 1978.

Teachers Institutes are educational partnerships between universities and school districts designed to strengthen teaching and learning in a community's high-poverty, high-minority 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.

Thirty-nine of the teachers, named Yale National Fellows, were from school districts that are planning or exploring the establishment of a new Teachers Institute for Chicago, IL; the Navajo Nation, AZ; Pittsburgh, PA; Richmond, VA; San José, CA; locations in Texas, and the District of Columbia. Other National Fellows came from existing Teachers Institutes located in New Castle County, DE; New Haven, CT; Philadelphia, PA; and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Overall, about half of the National Fellows participated in national seminars for the first time.

The National Fellows attended an Organizational Session of the seminars held at Yale on May 3-4. The seminars reconvened on campus during a ten-day Intensive Session from July 8-19 and concluded in mid-August when the Fellows submitted their completed curriculum units. The five seminars were:

- “Art, Design, and Biology,” led by Timothy Barringer, Paul Mellon Professor in the History of Art
- “The Art of Writing and Revision,” led by Jessica Brantley, Frederick W. Hilles Professor of English and Kim Shirkhani, Senior Lecturer in English
- “Graphic Narratives as Teaching Tools,” led by Marta Figlerowicz, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature
- “Teaching with and through Maps,” led by Ayesha Ramachandran, Professor of Comparative Literature, and
- “Infectious Respiratory Disease,” led by Jordan Peccia, Thomas E. Golden, Jr. Professor of Environmental 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 to high-quality professional development. This reinforces 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 their students about the seminar subject and to share with other teachers in their school district and, through our website at teachers.yale.edu, 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 five volumes, one for each seminar. We encourage teachers who use the units to submit comments online.

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

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