Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2026 Volume I: The Kids are not the Threat

Preface

In April 2026 the Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools® accepted teachers from eighteen public school districts in twelve states, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the District of Columbia to participate in six 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.

Fifty-one of the teachers, named Yale National Fellows, were from school districts that are planning or exploring the establishment of a new Teachers Institute for Anchorage, AK; Chicago, IL; Denver, CO; the Navajo Nation, AZ and UT; Pittsburgh, PA; Richmond, VA; San José, CA; Tulsa, OK; Bryan and Hearne, TX; and Washington, D.C. Other National Fellows came from existing Teachers Institutes located in New Castle County, DE; New Haven, CT; and Philadelphia, PA. Nearly 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 1-2. The seminars reconvened on campus 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:

- "The Kids are not the Threat," led by Roderick Ferguson, William Robertson Coe Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and of American Studies
- "Latinx Histories, Cultures, and Communities," led by Albert Laguna, Associate Professor of Ethnicity, Race & Migration and American Studies
- "Asian American History and the Making of the US Immigration System," led by Mary Lui, Professor of American Studies and History
- "Resistance from Aristotle to Star Wars," led by Feisal Mohamed, Professor of English
- "Chemistry of Cooking," led by Gary Brudvig, Benjamin Silliman Professor of Chemistry, and
- "Asking Questions in Biology," led by Paul Turner, Rachel Carson Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

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 six 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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