Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®

Annual Report 2025

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The Teachers Institute Approach

PARTNERSHIP

Teachers Institutes bring university resources to bear on improving teaching and learning in high-need local public schools

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Institutes improve teachers' content knowledge of the subjects they teach, which strengthens teaching in the classroom

COLLEGIALITY

Faculty and Fellows engage as colleagues with each bringing their own expertise and experience to Institute seminars

PROFESSIONALISM

Institutes reinvigorate teachers' sense of professionalism, increasing confidence and effectiveness in the classroom

TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Institutes provide opportunities for teachers to develop their leadership abilities and experience while remaining in the classroom

FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am delighted to share this report, which illustrates the 2025 annual programs of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute and celebrates the 20th anniversary of the Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools®.

We began the year with the launch of a new national website at teachers.yale.edu. Originally designed in 2004, the website is home to more than 1,100 curriculum units written by National Fellows from 44 participating school districts and Institutes. During the Initiative's first 20 years, the curriculum units have received millions of views, and we are continually working to make them more accessible. The new site also includes extensive evaluation studies and reports, along with an expanded media collection.

We hope that the new version of the website honors its original intent: to present curriculum units developed by teachers in national seminars and make them available to educators everywhere; to illuminate the tenets of the Teachers Institute approach; and to encourage the development of similar programs for universities partnering with school districts around the country.

At the heart of the Institute, dedicated teachers serve in our leadership and meet regularly to plan the program, offer support, and help foster collegiality, the hallmark of Teachers Institute seminars. Their efforts in 2025 resulted in a surge of new participants in both our local and national programs, and a set of highly interdisciplinary seminars. As one National Fellow noted, "The collegiality and opportunity to interact with other teachers and with Yale faculty is deeply affirming, rejuvenating, and practice-altering."

Faculty also benefited from participation, valuing the chance to try new methods in their own teaching, work with a diverse group of educators, and learn about Fellows' students and classrooms. They treasured the opportunity for Fellows and faculty to spend extended time together, teaching and learning from one another in an atmosphere of mutual respect, open dialogue, and shared commitment to their craft.

I hope readers of this report find, as I do, fresh encouragement that the Institute model, which places public school teachers and university faculty in conversation and cooperation, offers as much promise and potential for strengthening teaching now as ever before.

Stephanie Reid

STEPHANIE REID
DIRECTOR, YALE-NEW HAVEN TEACHERS INSTITUTE

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New Haven

New School Center

The Institute supported the creation of a new Center for Curriculum and Professional Development at Clemente Leadership Academy. The program to establish Centers in New Haven Public Schools began in 1995. This is the first new Center since 2017.

YaleNews Features Fellows

In October, *YaleNews* published "A 'shared sense of awe': Showcasing work from the 2025 Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute." This story about the Fellows Showcase event highlighted the work of the Institute and featured the voices of Institute Fellows.

National

New Website Launch

The Yale National Initiative launched an updated, improved website that enhances the accessibility to and usability of our resources for educators around the world. Explore the new site and its features today at teachers.yale.edu.

New Participating Locations

Two new school districts joined the Yale National Initiative as participating locations this year, represented by Jennifer Neff of the Anchorage School District in Anchorage, Alaska, and Julian Lopez-Carmona of Denver Public Schools in Denver, Colorado.

New Haven Program

The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute was established in 1978 as a partnership between Yale University and New Haven Public Schools. Each year, the Institute offers content-based seminars in both the humanities and STEM led by Yale faculty. Institute seminars are fundamentally collegial. Faculty and Fellows engage as colleagues who share the common ground of being teachers.

Each Fellow must write a curriculum unit on a topic related to their seminar based on their own research using the University's resources. Their completed curriculum unit is then taught in their classroom the following school year and is published on our website.

Teachers applied in January and Institute Fellows were named in February. Fellows became members of the Yale community, receiving a University ID card, borrowing privileges at University libraries, and access to campus facilities and resources. Fellows attended a series of talks by Yale faculty and writing workshops in March and April. Seminars met weekly between May and July.

For nearly 50 years, the Institute has offered its distinctive brand of content-based, teacher-centered professional development to New Haven teachers. Since 1978, 845 New Haven Public Schools teachers have written 2,179 curriculum units in 244 Institute seminars.

2025 Institute Fellows

The following twenty-one K-12 teachers from sixteen New Haven public schools served as Institute Fellows and completed their seminar in 2025:

Nancy Bonilla
Clemente

Carol Boynton
Edgewood

Salvador Calatayud Ripoll
Wilbur Cross

Carmen Córdova-Rolón
Clemente

Daniel Croteau
Barnard

Eve Galanis
ESUMS

María Gómez López
Truman

Sean Griffin
Clemente

Nadiya Hafizova
ESUMS

Charnice Hoegnifioh
Wilbur Cross

John Kennedy
East Rock

Hanna Marshall
New Haven Academy

Maria Medianero
Davis Street

Jaimee Mendillo
Nathan Hale

Kasalina Nabakooza
Truman

Natalie Ochoa
Hillhouse

Jessie Simpson
Metro

John Saksa
Hillhouse

Stephanie Smelser
Sound

A'Lexus Williams
Career

Catherine Yates
COOP

OBJECTS, MATERIAL CULTURE, AND EMPIRE: MAKING RUSSIA

MOLLY BRUNSON

Associate Professor in Slavic Languages and Literatures and History of Art

In this seminar, Fellows explored how narratives and messages are embedded in everyday objects. How do things, and the materials they are made from, contribute to the articulation of local, ethnic, and national identities? How might objects reveal the lives and stories of the people who made, purchased, and used them? The content and examples in this seminar focused on objects from the rise of the Russian empire, but Fellows of all grade levels and disciplines found common ground in the practice of analyzing objects and exploring the advantages and disadvantages of taking an object-centered approach to academic study. What can things tell us? What can they not tell us? And why does this matter? These were the driving questions of our seminar.

Curriculum Units

1. Carol Boynton, “The Mitten - A Ukrainian Folktale”
2. Dan Croteau, “Writing Object(ive)s: Items as Inspiration for Literacy Work”
3. María Gómez López, “Legends and Customs of Spain: A Bridge between the Past and the Present”
4. Sean Griffin, “Utilizing Artifacts to Unravel History: The Hunt for Lincoln’s Killer”
5. Nadiya Hafizova, “Stuff Lives: Building Ethical Consumers through Object Study and Environmental Philosophy”
6. Charnice Hoegnifioh, “Beakers and Behavior: The Material Culture of the Science Laboratory”
7. Maria Medianero, “Exploring Native American, Panamanian, and Russian Cultures”
8. Kasalina Nabakooza, “Iron Sharpens Iron: Master Blacksmithing”
9. Natalie Ochoa, “Revolutions and Objects: How Objects Shape History”
10. Catherine Yates, “Material Culture in the Writing Classroom”

HISTORY, SCIENCE, AND RACISM: THE LONG SHADOW OF EUGENICS

DANIEL MARTINEZ HOSANG
Professor of American Studies

This seminar explored histories of how science and racism have combined to shape the world we live in today in many surprising ways. For example, the history of Kellogg's Corn Flakes, the SAT, marriage counseling, Ellis Island, and Yale University are all intertwined with the eugenics movement. Fellows from all grade levels and subject areas created a wide variety of curriculum units that introduce their students to the notion of scientific racism and show how eugenics specifically has been used and embedded throughout our society and culture. Together, these units demonstrate the creativity, care, and commitment of teachers who are giving students the tools to confront hard histories and imagine more inclusive futures.

Curriculum Units

1. Eve Galanis, "Eugenics and Anti-Eugenics in the Arts: Photography and Music"
2. A'Lexus Williams, "Rethinking AP: Black Women, Anti-Eugenics, and Reproductive Justice"
3. Jaimee Mendillo, "Challenging the Standard: Testing & the Fight for Educational Justice"
4. Carmen Córdova-Rolón, "Identity and Latin Cultural Heritage: Elevating Voices Against Eugenics"
5. John Saksa, "Grasping Things at the Root: Introducing a Critical Framework for Understanding Eugenics"
6. Jessie Simpson, "New Haven and the Lingering Effects of the American Eugenics Movement"
7. Salvador Calatayud Ripoll, "The Dangers of Pseudoscience. Eugenics: When Science meets Racism"
8. Nancy Bonilla, "An Anti-Eugenic Approach to Assessing Reading Comprehension in the Middle School Classroom"
9. Hanna Marshall, "Hispanic and Latine Identities: The Shadow of Eugenics"
10. John Kennedy, "Eugenics, New Haven, and Middle School Math"
11. Stephanie Smelser, "Anti-Eugenics through S.T.E.A.M. Connections"

2025 Institute Lecture Series and Workshops

March 11

"History, Science, and Racism: The Long Shadow of Eugenics"

Daniel Martinez HoSang

Professor of American Studies

March 18

"Objects, Material Culture, and Empire: Making Russia"

Molly Brunson

Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures, and of the History of Art

April 1

"How Supercomputing and Data Availability Are Changing How We Understand Our Planet"

Elizabeth Yankovsky

Assistant Professor of Earth and Planetary Sciences

April 22

"Ancient Pyrotechnology: The Role of Fire in Human Evolution"

Ellery Frahm

Senior Research Scientist, Department of Anthropology
Director, Yale Initiative for the Study of Ancient Pyrotechnology

Workshops

On March 4 and April 8, Fellows participated in workshops on curriculum unit development. These workshops presented curriculum unit Guidelines, and experienced Fellows explained how they approach writing and teaching a curriculum unit.

2025 Institute Events

Open House at Yale

The Institute held an Open House on January 7 at the Elm City Club in New Haven. The event offered prospective Fellows a chance to learn more about the 2025 Institute seminars with remarks by seminar leaders Daniel Martinez HoSang and Molly Brunson.

Fall Talk on Teaching Maps

On December 4, the New Haven Environmental History Project and Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute hosted "Teaching with Maps: New Haven Past and Present." Bill Rankin, Professor of the History of Science at Yale University, discussed the history of mapping social phenomena, while former Institute Fellow Steve Staysniak shared how he guides students at Metropolitan Business Academy in creating hands-on mapping projects, highlighting the educational value of visualizing local history.

Fellows Showcase and Reception

On September 30, the Institute held a Fellows Showcase at Sterling Memorial Library. The event provided a space for Fellows to share their curriculum units and celebrate their completion of the program. The Showcase was attended by school officials, Yale faculty, and media.

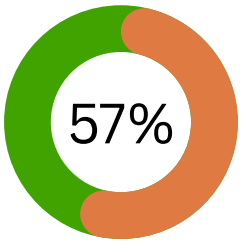
NHPS Students on Campus

On June 5, Dan Croteau, a six-time Institute Fellow and ELA teacher at Barnard School brought his students to Yale while teaching his 2021 curriculum unit on visual arts and "A Raisin in the Sun." His seventh- and eighth-grade students experienced a campus tour and a session at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library with seminar leader Molly Brunson. They also had a visit from Yale mascot Handsome Dan.

2025 Institute Results

The following data came from Fellows' anonymous responses to a questionnaire administered at the end of the annual program.

Who were the 2025 Institute Fellows?



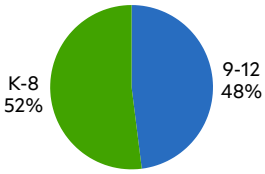
NEW FELLOWS

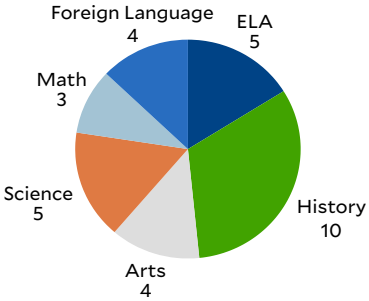
Fifty-seven percent of Fellows were participating in the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute for the first time.

GRADES TAUGHT

The Institute Fellows taught all grades from K-12.

Note: The chart describes the highest grade Fellows taught in 2025.





SUBJECT AREAS

The Fellows taught a variety of subjects across the humanities and STEM.

Note: Numbers in the chart exceed the total number of Fellows because many taught more than one subject.

EXPERIENCE

Two-thirds of Fellows had been in the district five years or less, and 81% of Fellows expect to be teaching full-time in five years, most in their current school.

67%

of Fellows had been in their present position fewer than five years

Why did the 2025 Institute Fellows participate?

2025 Institute Fellows cited the following reasons as important incentives in choosing to participate in the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute:

- Opportunity for intellectual stimulation (100%)
- Opportunity to develop curriculum that fits my needs (95%)
- Opportunity to develop materials to motivate my students (90%)
- Stipend (90%)
- Opportunity to work with Yale faculty (86%)
- Opportunity to increase mastery of the subject(s) I teach (81%)
- Opportunity to have my work published (81%)

2025 Institute Results

How did participation benefit the 2025 Institute Fellows?

All 2025 Institute Fellows agreed that the Institute seminar they participated in:

- provided them with information that will be very useful in the classroom
- gave them opportunities to work on aspects of teaching they are trying to develop

2025 Institute Fellows agreed that:

- participating in the seminar helped them grow professionally and intellectually (100%)
- they gained knowledge of their subject by participating in the seminar (100%)
- they gained confidence in their ability to teach their subject by participating in the seminar (86%)

All Fellows found the following aspects of the program to be useful:

- Seminar leader
- Program overall
- Contact with Yale faculty members
- Interaction with other Fellows
- Stipend

Institute Fellows said...

"The most valuable aspects of my seminar experience were the opportunities to engage deeply with interdisciplinary content and to collaborate with a cohort of experienced educators and experts."

"The Institute is an excellent academic and cultural experience. [It] adds depth to my presence in the classroom, gives me more resources and more dynamic learning opportunities, ultimately uplifting the New Haven Schools to be intellectually and critically on par with the best classroom teachers in Connecticut."

"My participation in the Institute not only contributed to my personal and professional growth but has also served to further the broader goals of our school community."

"The process of research, design, and reflection involved in creating the unit allowed me to delve deeper into more up-to-date and contextualized content, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches."

"Whenever I participate in the Institute I return to school with new knowledge. I also reflect on my craft and how I teach my students."

Institute Leadership

The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute provides several roles for Fellows to develop their leadership capacity and abilities while remaining in the classroom. The Institute also draws on the wider University community for leadership and guidance.

SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES

School Representatives engage in recruitment of new potential Fellows, help determine and shape seminar topics, and provide important feedback on the administration of the program.

Nancy Bonilla
Carol Boynton
Jaimee Mendillo
Kasalina Nabakooza
Matthew Schaffer
Stephanie Smelser

SEMINAR COORDINATORS

In each Institute seminar, an experienced Fellow serves as seminar Coordinator. Coordinators provide teacher leadership, help maintain collegiality in the seminar, and facilitate the smooth operation of the seminar by assisting the seminar leader and Fellows.

Carol Boynton
Matthew Schaffer

UNIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The University Advisory Council is a presidentially-appointed body of Yale faculty members that guides the general direction of the program and advises the President on the Institute.

Co-Chairs

Timothy Barringer
Jessica Brantley
Paul Turner

Executive Committee

Gary Brudvig
W. Mark Saltzman

Members

Sarbani Basu
David Bercovici
Ned Blackhawk
Jeffrey Brock
Jill Campbell
Lynn Cooley*
David Engerman
Roderick Ferguson
James Forman, Jr.
Larry Gladney*
Kimberly Goff-Crews*
Anjelica Gonazlez
Daniel HoSang
Matthew Jacobson
Pericles Lewis*
John MacKay
Feisal Mohamed
Jordan Peccia
Ayesha Ramachandran
Peter Raymond
Peter Salovey*
Ian Shapiro
C. Megan Urry
Stephanie Wiles*

** ex officio*

Institute Fellows in Molly Brunson's seminar, "Objects, Material Culture, and Empire: Making Russia"

Yale Professor Bill Rankin at Fall talk

New Haven Public Schools students on Yale campus

Institute Fellows in Dan HoSang's seminar, "History, Science, and Racism: The Long Shadow of Eugenics"

Yale National Initiative

The Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools is a program of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute. Established in 2005, it promotes the establishment of Teachers Institutes in high-need school districts that adopt the approach developed by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute since 1978.

Each year, the Initiative names as National Fellows dozens of K-12 teachers from participating locations and existing Teachers Institutes. The Initiative brings these National Fellows to Yale to participate in content-based, collegial seminars led by Yale faculty. Just as with the local Institute, the Fellows develop a curriculum unit to teach their students in the coming year, while also learning about the Teachers Institute approach to professional development through school-university partnerships.

The annual cycle began with a two-day Organizational Session at Yale in May, where Fellows were introduced to the program and attend their first seminar meetings. They returned for a two-week Intensive Session in July, where they lived on campus, attended seminar meetings daily, and worked on their curriculum unit. Completed units were due in August and published on our website in September. In November, the Fellows returned for a two-day Annual Conference where they presented their units. Students were invited to speak about learning from a Fellow's curriculum unit with superintendents and school officials in attendance.

2025 National Fellows

The following fifty-six K-12 public school teachers from nine participating locations and four Teachers Institutes served as National Fellows and completed their seminars in 2025 (names listed from left to right):

Anchorage | AK

Jennifer Neff (South Anchorage High School)

Chicago | IL

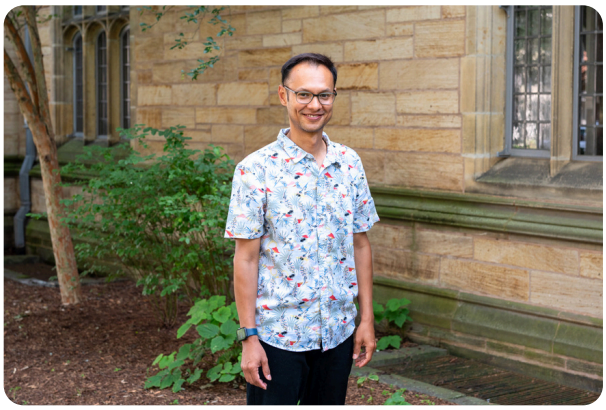
Yasmine Collins (John H. Kinzie Elementary School)
Zanneta Kubajak (Owen Scholastic Academy)
John Engelbreit (Back of the Yards High School)
Sharon Ponder-Ballard (Carter School of Excellence)
Emily Porter (MS Curie Metropolitan High School)
Adriana Lopez (Back of the Yards High School)
Francisco Liam Nuno (James Shields Middle School)

Delaware

Brandywine School District
Red Clay Consolidated School District

Holly Bryk (The John Dickinson School)
Josefa Castelli (P.S. duPont Middle School)
Stacy-Ann Morrison Thomas (John Dickinson School)
Tara Brady (Talley Middle School)
Alyssa Lucadamo (P.S. duPont Middle School)
Kariann Flynn (The John Dickinson School)

Denver | CO



Julian Lopez-Carmona (Marrama Elementary School)

2025 National Fellows

District of Columbia

Alison Wollack (Eastern High School)
Courtney White (Tubman Elementary School)
Anna Raphael (Tubman Elementary School)
Perrine Punwani (MacFarland Middle School)
Sarah Lewand (MacFarland Middle School)
Raven Dorman (Johnson Middle School)
Damon Peterson (Height Elementary School)

Navajo Nation | AZ

Kayenta Unified School District
Window Rock Unified School District

Garrick Yazzie (Baker Middle School)
Jolene Smith (Baker Middle School)
Marc Hillis (Window Rock High School)
Priscilla Black (Baker Middle School)
Miranda Clauschee (Baker Middle School)

New Haven | CT

Kasalina Nabakooza (Truman School)
Carol Boynton (Edgewood School)

Philadelphia | PA

Marla Colondres (Swenson High School)
Katherine Steiner (Overbrook High School)
Alima McKnight (Academy at Palumbo)
Anna Herman (The U School)
Danina Garcia (Vaux Big Picture High School)

2025 National Fellows

Pittsburgh | PA

Michelle Newton (Allegheny 6-8)
Lauren Hughes-Freeman (Dilworth PreK-5)
Heidi Lemon (Dilworth PreK-5)
Christopher Snyder (Dilworth PreK-5)
Renee Patrick Mutunga (Barack Obama Academy of International Studies)

Richmond | VA

Valerie Schwarz (Munford Elementary School)
Katherine Franzel (Westover Hills Elementary)
Amanda McMahon (Huguenot High School)
Alexandra Amirato (Barack Obama Elementary)
Landon Walker (Thomas Jefferson High School)
Vivian-Lee Taylor (Thomas Jefferson High School)
LJ Delao (Huguenot High School)

San Jose | CA

East Side Union High School District

Kristina Kirby (Overfelt High School)
Jiang Wu (James Lick High School)

Texas

Bryan Independent School District
Hearne Independent School District

Lori Thornton (Rudder High School)
Debra Jenkins (Hearne High School)
Vickie Young Weatherspoon (Hearne High School)
Willie Keener, Jr. (Hearne High School)

2025 National Fellows

Tulsa | OK

Tara McKee (Booker T. Washington School)
Donavan Spotz (Nathan Hale High School)
Eric Jackson (East Central High School)
Angela Sprigby (Rogers College Middle and High School)

By the Numbers

Since 2005, **655** K-12 teachers from across the country have written **1,161** curriculum units in **120** national seminars led by **39** Yale faculty.

National Fellows on Campus

Fellows with recent seminar leader Jill Campbell

Fellows at the Intensive Session

Fellows in Jessica Brantley and Kim Shirkhani's seminar

Ayesha Ramachandran's talk at the New Haven Museum

Fellows in Marta Figlerowicz's seminar

Student panel at the Annual Conference

Shades of Yale at the Annual Conference

Fellows and school administrators at the Annual Conference

For more images, visit: teachers.yale.edu/media

ART, DESIGN, AND BIOLOGY

TIMOTHY BARRINGER
Paul Mellon Professor in the History of Art

This seminar brought teachers in science, humanities, and art together to think together about how to use skills of close looking in teaching. We examined how art can illuminate the living world and how scientific thinking reshapes art, tracing synergies and tensions over two centuries. Through discussions and site visits to the Yale Center for British Art, Beinecke Library, Peabody Museum, and Sleeping Giant, we addressed anatomy, ecology, empire, representation, and race through works by various artists, culminating in a collection of interdisciplinary curriculum units for K–12 classrooms.

Curriculum Units

1. Priscilla Black, “Art and Biology of a Navajo Artist’s View of Nature and Cactus”
2. Holly Bryk, “El Cuerpo Humano: Arte, Imagen, y Ciencia”
3. Katherine Franzel, “Exploring Earth’s Natural Resources through Art”
4. Willie Keener, Jr., “Through the Lenses”
5. Kasalina Nabakooza, “Why Mosses Matter”
6. Francisco Liam Nuno, “Alebrijes: Where Science Meets Art”
7. Sharon Ponder-Ballard, “Environmental Racism Through Leaves, Legos and Lyrical Abstract”
8. Emily Porter, “La Biogeografía y La Biodiversidad en el Barrio Borikén”
9. Christopher Snyder, “Looking at Visual Art through a Scientific Lens: Looking at Science with a Visual Lens”
10. Donavan Spotz, “Constructing by Deconstructing Anatomy”
11. Katherine Steiner, “Geometry and the Art of Close Looking”
12. Courtney White, “Analyzing Avian Adaptations through Art”

THE ART OF WRITING AND REVISION

JESSICA BRANTLEY
Frederick W. Hilles Professor of English

KIM SHIRKHANI
Senior Lecturer in English

This seminar explored the relationship between reading and writing by using published essays as models for student writing. Fellows analyzed examples of nonfiction to study craft, rhetoric, and technique. They practiced those strategies daily through short writing prompts focused on a central theme. Emphasizing revision and workshop discussion, the seminar fostered a collaborative writing community. The resulting curriculum units, though varied in focus, all aim to help students grow as thoughtful, effective writers through close reading and sustained practice.

Curriculum Units

1. Tara Brady, “Using Micro-Mentor Texts to Promote Self-Discovery in Writing”
2. Josefa Castelli, “Help Me Find the Words: Rhetoric, Workshop, and Memoir in Middle School”
3. Miranda Clauschee, “Painting Pictures with Words: The Art of Sensory Imagery in Narrative Writing”
4. LJ Delao, “Remembering, Retelling, Reclaiming Stories: Decolonizing Storytelling”
5. Eric Jackson, “Defensible: The Art of Writing a Persuasive Argumentative Essay”
6. Heidi Lemon, “The Harlem Renaissance- Uniting A Community of Artists”
7. Julian Lopez-Carmona, “Voices from the Renaissance: Letters Through Time”
8. Tara McKee, “Don’t Let the Robots Win: The Importance of Writer’s Craft and Revision”
9. Perrine Punwani, “My Voice: The Making of Me”
10. Anna Raphael, “Love Letters to Our Lives: Creative Craft for Young Writers”
11. Alison Wollack, “Finding Your Voice: Reading, Writing, and Revising Personal Narratives”

GRAPHIC NARRATIVES AS TEACHING TOOLS

MARTA FIGLEROWICZ
Associate Professor of Comparative Literature

This seminar challenged the assumption that graphic narratives provide lesser reading value than traditional texts. Fellows became skilled readers of comics and graphic novels, studying how words, images, panels, and layout shape meaning and reader response. They engaged in close analysis, creative and analytic work, and read graphic narratives from diverse cultures and genres. By exploring how this form supports critical thinking, Fellows from grades K–12 created curriculum units on subjects ranging from art and writing to science and history.

Curriculum Units

1. Carol Boynton, “Mo Willems Author Study: Teaching Sentence Types”
2. Yasmine Collins, “Comics in the Classroom: Exploring Animal Adaptations”
3. Marla Colondres, “Breaking Panels, Building Bridges: Graphic Novels & Latinx Voices”
4. Lauren Hughes-Freeman, “Such Graphic Detail: Refining Reading Concepts with the Graphic Narrative”
5. Debra Jenkins, “Clock It: Speech Bubbles, Borders, and Belonging”
6. Sarah Lewand, “Overcoming Challenges in Graphic Narratives”
7. Alima McKnight, “The Meta of Manga: The Thinking Behind Creating a Graphic Novel”
8. Renee Patrick Mutunga, “Persepolis: Repairing Misrepresentation and Misconception of Iran”
9. Angela Sprigby, “Illustrated Insights: Enhancing Comprehension Through Paired Readings”
10. Vivian-Lee Taylor, “Exploring Futuristic Worlds Through Graphic Novels”
11. Landon Walker, “We Wear the Mask: Graphic Narratives and Identity”
12. Garrick Yazzie, “Dine Alchini Ba’hani through Graphical Novel Storytelling: Clan Edition”

TEACHING WITH AND THROUGH MAPS

AYESHA RAMACHANDRAN
Professor of Comparative Literature

This seminar examined maps as narrative, political, and imaginative tools. Beginning with early modern cartography, Fellows explored how maps shape our understanding of space, power, identity, and knowledge across cultures and media. They examined a range of sources, from atlases and tattoos to data visualizations and classroom graphic organizers. Tracing cartography from the sixteenth century to Google Earth, the seminar emphasized spatial literacy, critical analysis, and hands-on mapmaking. The resulting curriculum units integrate literary, historical, and scientific mapping practices across grade levels.

Curriculum Units

1. Raven Dorman, “The Touchstone Atlas: A Portfolio to Promote Transfer”
2. Kariann Flynn, “For the Record: Mapping Disparities in American Homeownership”
3. Anna Herman, “Mapping The Future”
4. Marc Hillis, “Navajo and American History Interwoven in Maps”
5. Kristina Kirby, “Topographical Trilateration and Triangulation”
6. Zanneta Kubajak, “Fight Map the Power: Radical Cartography in Music and History”
7. Alyssa Lucadamo, “Mapping Frankenstein”
8. Amanda McMahon, “Tactile Topography: Mapping, Blindness, Art, and Universal Design”
9. Michelle Newton, “Pittsburgh 412 and Beyond: The Map Files”
10. Vickie Young Weatherspoon, “A Journey through the Rural Tapestry of Our City Using Maps”

INFECTIOUS RESPIRATORY DISEASE

JORDAN PECCIA

Thomas E. Golden Jr., Professor of Environmental Engineering

Infectious respiratory diseases cause widespread illness and death worldwide. Yet effective treatments are limited, while new viruses and antibiotic-resistant bacteria continue to emerge. This seminar surveyed respiratory pathogens, immune responses, transmission, epidemiology, and infection control strategies such as vaccines, masking, and social distancing. The resulting interdisciplinary units show that robust solutions to human health and environmental problems must consider not only technological advancements but also the economic, cultural, and historical contexts of the affected populations.

Curriculum Units

1. Alexandra Amirato, "Caring for Each Other: Germs, Health, and Community Responsibility"
2. John Engelbreit, "From Pathogens to Pandemics: Systems of Control"
3. Danina Garcia, "'Efficiency & Faithfulness': How One Philly Nurse Fought Tuberculosis"
4. Adriana Lopez, "COVID-19 and Influenza and How They Affect Our Society and Future"
5. Jennifer Neff, "From Crisis to Curiosity: Using Pandemic Data to Ignite Math Thinking"
6. Damon Peterson, "A Brief History of Vaccines and Respiratory Diseases"
7. Valerie Schwarz, "Smallpox and Freedom"
8. Jolene Smith, "Tuberculosis among the Native Population within the United States"
9. Stacy-Ann Morrison Thomas, "Influenza: Routes of Transmission and Control Measures"
10. Lori Thornton, "Do Masks Work? Analyzing and Evaluating Mathematical Data"
11. Jiang Wu, "Sickness Simulator: Modeling Infectious Disease Through NetLogo"

2025 National Events

Virtual Open House

The Virtual Open House was held on January 14 via Zoom for prospective Fellows from across the country. The national seminar leaders delivered brief presentations about their seminars.

Organizational Session

The Organizational Session was held May 2-3 at Yale University. Fellows participated in national seminar meetings and attended panels and workshops introducing them to the Teachers Institute approach to professional development for K-12 teachers.

Intensive Session

Fellows returned to Yale on July 7-18 for the Intensive Session. During the Session, Fellows lived in Benjamin Franklin College, attended national seminar meetings daily, and submitted a first draft of their curriculum units. The Session also included a talk by each of the national seminar leaders and a four-day program for visiting faculty from participating locations to learn more about the Teachers Institute approach.

Annual Conference

The 2025 program concluded with our Annual Conference on November 7-8. Attended by superintendents from participating school districts, the Conference celebrated the accomplishments of the National Fellows who completed their seminars. The event began on Friday morning with a panel of National Fellows presenting their curriculum units. It was followed by the highlight of the Conference: the student panel. Five students from participating school districts were invited to travel to Yale and speak about what they learned from a Fellow's curriculum unit:

Ameen Fleming
Vaux Big Picture High School, Philadelphia, PA

Lauren Jackson
Thomas Jefferson High School, Richmond, VA

Sema'j Scott
Hearne High School, Hearne, TX

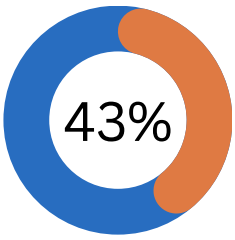
Amra Tesfaye
Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Washington, DC

Pepper Young
Baker Middle School, Navajo Nation, AZ

2025 National Results

The following data came from Fellows' anonymous responses to a questionnaire administered at the end of the annual program.

Who were the 2025 National Fellows?



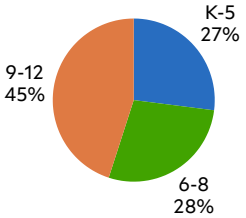
NEW FELLOWS

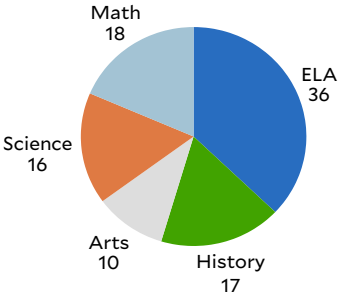
Forty-three percent of the National Fellows were participating in the Yale National Initiative for the first time.

GRADES TAUGHT

The National Fellows taught all grades from K-12 , with a majority teaching 9-12.

Note: The chart describes the highest grade Fellows taught in 2025.





SUBJECT AREAS

The National Fellows taught a variety of subjects across the Humanities and STEM.

Note: Numbers in the chart exceed the total number of Fellows because many taught more than one subject.

EXPERIENCE

The National Fellows included teachers with 2 to 45 years of teaching experience. Eighty-seven percent of the Fellows expect to be teaching full-time in 5 years, most in their current school.

45%

of Fellows had been in their present position fewer than five years

Why did the 2025 National Fellows Participate?

Fellows cited the following reasons as important incentives in choosing to participate:

- to increase my mastery of the subject(s) I teach (96%)
- for intellectual stimulation (96%)
- to develop curriculum that fits my needs (93%)
- to develop materials to motivate my students (93%)
- to work with teachers from other schools (93%)
- to work with University faculty (91%)

The Yale National Initiative provides opportunities for teachers to take more control of their teaching and curriculum by creating units designed specifically for their students. The collegiality amongst Fellows and between Fellows and faculty was also a strong motivating factor for teachers who participated.

2025 National Results

How did participation benefit the 2025 National Fellows?

Nearly all 2025 National Fellows agreed that by participating in their national seminar:

- they grew professionally and intellectually (98%)
- they gained confidence in their ability to teach their subject (95%)
- they gained knowledge of their subject (93%)

The vast majority of Fellows also agreed that their national seminar:

- provided information that is useful in the classroom (91%)
- led them to think about an aspect of their teaching in a new way (91%)
- gave them opportunities to work on aspects of their teaching they are trying to develop (91%)
- led them to seek out additional information from other teachers (91%)
- made them pay closer attention to things they were doing in the classroom (83%)

By participating in the Yale National Initiative, Fellows improve their content knowledge and develop their pedagogy. The Initiative provides an opportunity for teachers to re-engage with their profession, fellow teachers, and their students. They leave the program reinvigorated in their love of teaching and their commitment to developing professionally as educators.

National Fellows said...

"This experience has reaffirmed my passion for teaching, making it clear that I have many more years to give to the classroom. It was powerful to be surrounded by other dedicated teachers who are also striving to give their best for their students."

"Participating in YNI allowed me to create curriculum that will push my students to develop their critical thinking and research skills, help them to understand and visualize relationships between concepts, and intrigue them so they are interested in learning more independently."

"My participation in the seminar this year has reinvigorated my love for teaching. Getting to feel like a student again reminded me why I went into education."

"Professionally, I feel like a different writing teacher going into the 2025-2026 school year. I have a stronger knowledge and skill base to use to help my students learn good writing habits (and have fun learning them)."

"The most valuable part of my seminar experience was the process of researching and writing a curriculum unit tailored specifically to my students."

National Leadership

Like the Institute, the Yale National Initiative provides several roles for National Fellows to develop their leadership capacity and abilities while remaining in the classroom. It also draws on faculty from existing Institutes for support and guidance.

NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

The National Steering Committee consists of one teacher from each Teachers Institute, who help guide the Initiative ensuring that teachers play a leading role in the program.

Carol Boynton (New Haven)
Kariann Flynn (Delaware)
Tara McKee (Tulsa)
Danina Garcia (Philadelphia)

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVES

Each participating location has a teacher Representative who helps plan, organize, and conduct the Initiative's activities.

Sandy Alvarez (DC)
Brandon Barr (Chicago)
Lauren Hughes (Pittsburgh)
Debra Jenkins (Texas)
Kristina Kirby (San Jose)
Sharon Ponder-Ballard (Chicago)
Perrine Punwani (DC)
Valerie Schwarz (Richmond)
Jolene Smith (Navajo Nation)

SEMINAR COORDINATORS

In each seminar, experienced Fellows serve as seminar Coordinators, providing teacher leadership, helping maintain collegiality in the seminar, and facilitating the smooth operation of the seminar.

Carol Boynton (New Haven)
Kristina Kirby (San Jose)
Tara McKee (Tulsa)
Amanda McMahon (Richmond)
Sharon Ponder-Ballard (Chicago)
Valerie Schwarz (Richmond)

National Steering Committee and Teacher Representatives

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The National University Advisory Council consists of a university faculty member from each Teachers Institute. They help guide the general direction of the Initiative and conduct a program for Visiting Faculty from participating locations during the Intensive Session.

Deven Patel, University of Pennsylvania
Eric Rise, University of Delaware
Paul Turner, Yale University

Celebrating 20 YNI Years

Legendary educator and founding director of the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute Helen S. Faison spoke at the Intensive Session.

Seminar leaders Sabatino Sofia and Mary Miller at the opening of the Intensive Session.

National Fellow Ray Theilacker at the Intensive Session. He was the founding director of the Delaware Teachers Institute.

The first group photo of Intensive Session participants in front of Sterling Memorial Library.

The Teachers Institute of Philadelphia Case-Study Panel at the Invitational Conference.

The first panel to feature students at the Annual Conference.

James Forman, Jr., Professor of Law, and Rodney Robinson, former National Fellow and 2019 National Teacher of the Year, at the Annual Conference.

James Vivian, founding Director of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute and Yale National Initiative, at the Organizational Session. He retired in 2024.

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