



Contact: Carrie.Pillsbury@fundforteachers.org

Are We Losing Innovation to Standardization in America's Classrooms?

Fund for Teachers Convenes Industry & Educational Leaders to Contemplate the Fate of Thinking Big in US Schools

HOUSTON (July 7) – Although vital to America's future in the global marketplace, the development of leadership and innovation in schools is increasingly sacrificed to test scores. Current reforms encourage teachers and students to follow a scripted sequence, rather than foster creative learning and critical thinking – a path undermining our financial and civic future. Next week, July 11-15, [Fund for Teachers](#) convenes corporate, philanthropic and education leaders to propose an alternative course.

Fund for Teachers' five-day symposium is designed to develop a compelling vision of teacher and student leadership worthy of greater national attention and deeper investment. Participants will discuss how innovation and leadership are cultivated in their realms to then formulate ways to encourage those traits in America's classrooms. Meetings will take place at [Ucross Foundation](#) and [Apache Corporation's](#) Shady Lane property outside Sheridan, WY. Ron Berger and Corey Scholes, of [Expeditionary Learning](#), will moderate.

Participants contributing their expertise from industry, science, the arts, and education to the discussion include:

- Joni Baird – Manager of [Chevron's](#) Public and Governmental Affairs;
- Dan Challenger – President of the [Public Education Foundation](#) in Chattanooga, TN;
- Paula Harris – Manager of Community Affairs at [Schlumberger](#) and President of Houston Independent School District's Board of Education;
- Angela Maiers – Founder and President of [Maiers Education Services](#);
- Merredith Portsmore – Research Assistant Professor in Education at Tufts University; Director of Outreach Programs for Tufts [Center for Engineering Education and Outreach](#); and founder of [STOMP](#) and [LEGOengineering.com](#);
- Sam Seidel – author of [Hip Hop Genius](#);
- Alfred Solis – Director of New Media, [Buck Institute for Education](#); and
- Lisa Wing, Ph.D. – Founder and Principal, [Genesee Community Charter School](#).

Fourteen teachers/FFT Fellows adding their voices to the conversation include:

- Jessica Chan – Los Angeles teacher who, on her 2009 fellowship, identified biodiversity "hotspots" by surveying insects in Ethiopian church forests, while educating and promoting stewardship among local stakeholders;
- Erik Fogel – New York City teacher who, in June, attended the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) conference in Philadelphia with his FFT grant to learn how to

empower his award-winning school debate team with 21st century technology. In 2007, he attended Dartmouth's Forensic Union Coaches Workshop to develop that debate team at Bronx High School for Law, Government and Justice;

- Mo Stenger – Chicago teacher who explored the health and social benefits of planting, harvesting, and utilizing a kitchen garden within the school environment in Melbourne, Australia, last summer with her grant; and
- Kristy Gilpin – Zachary, LA, teacher who used her 2010 grant to follow in the footsteps of great Renaissance thinkers in Italy and France, searching for their sources of inspiration to empower students to creatively seek methods for expanding their world view.

Fund for Teachers will tweet from the event, as well as post updates at www.fundforteachers.tumblr.com.

About Fund for Teachers

Over the past 11 years, Fund for Teachers (FFT) has invested approximately \$16 million in teacher leadership, providing grants to more than 4400 teachers who share a passion to innovate and improve their teaching. Fund for Teachers grants have allowed these teachers to build new expertise, take risks, make global connections and rethink both what they teach and how they teach it. When FFT Fellows return to their classrooms, many take on new roles in their schools, catalyzing innovation and leadership in both their students and colleagues. For more information, visit www.fundforteachers.org, facebook.com/fundforteachers, or @fundforteachers on Twitter.

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