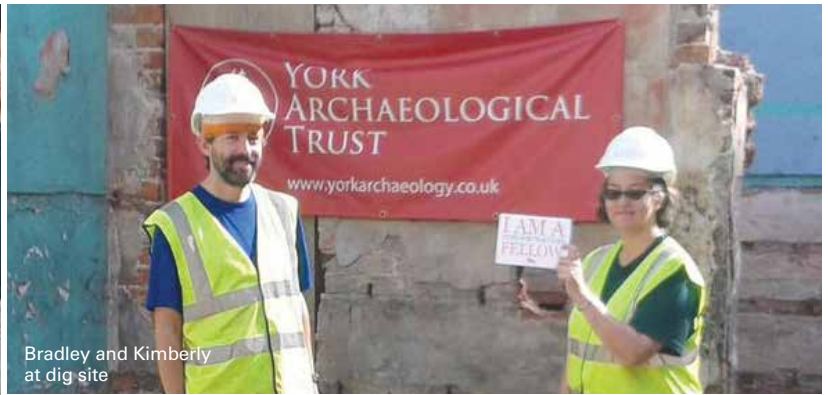




Students plan a simulated dig on first day of school



Bradley and Kimberly at dig site



Bradley uses a frame to plot dig



Students create frame for school dig

## Excavating Education

Bradley Quentin – Sinclair Elementary & Kimberly Boyce-Quentin – Piney Point Elementary, Houston, TX

History in elementary schools most commonly references Pilgrims, Washington and/or Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. Our belief that history is an ideal vehicle to unite all the elementary curriculum led us to our Fund for Teachers fellowship, channeling childhood dreams of becoming Indiana Jones and joining an archaeological dig in York, England, under the auspices of the York Archaeological Trust.

With expert tutelage of the staff from Archaeology Live, we learned how archaeologists uncover, interpret and preserve historical objects for future generations. We researched sites encompassing the Stone Age to the Victorian Era across the United Kingdom and Ireland and learned skills used by archaeologists to bring these places (and the people) back to life. We travelled to many UNESCO World Heritage sites, witnessing human achievements superseding cultural difference and

belonging to all. This realization, even more than the skills we learned, is what we hope to communicate. By providing opportunities to interact with objects of antiquity we brought back (although only replicas!), we will create a portal through which students will learn about Stone Age artisans, second century centurions and medieval villagers – lives not so different from our own.

On the first day of school, we introduced students to places we explored and objects we saw – Roman tiles with dog and cat footprints, Viking pottery bearing the artist's mark, and ancient ceramics gouged centuries later by a Victorian gravedigger. Future projects include imagined excavations of fairy tale sites to demonstrate how context tells the story behind found objects, and trash bag excavations revealing how sometimes the most informative items civilizations leave behind are found in rubbish pits, not in

gilded tombs. Most ambitiously, we are creating actual digs on our campuses to recreate the thrill of uncovering an object and to inspire discussions about how and why that object came to be there. Our students will make inferences and draw conclusions about the people whose artifacts they discover. They will use math, science, language arts and technology to observe, measure, record, research and communicate all that they find and learn during the course of their excavation season.

*Continued on page 4*

*In this issue, Fellows search for and find deeper meaning in their learning and student outcomes.*

## Mission in Motion

*"Modeled off my fellowship experience, students are building expertise on threatened ecosystems and changing their world."*

- Matt Strand

Polaris Expeditionary Learning School – Fort Collins, CO

### Project Description

Conduct reef dives and coral restoration of endangered reefs in the Florida Keys to apply biodiversity, symbiosis, and ecology themes to writing lessons and explore these metaphors for each individual's unique role in contributing to a healthy school culture and community.

### Fellowship Experiences

- Earned scuba certification
- Researched the degradation of Florida's coral reefs
- Contributed to conservation efforts of the Coral Restoration Foundation
- Developed a middle school environmental literacy unit based on experiences

### Student Impact

- Researched endangered ecosystems on a global scale in collaboration with science curriculum
- Hosted school dances and a crowdfunding campaign to raise money for a "field trip" to the Florida Keys
- Group of 20 7th-10th graders earned scuba certification
- Volunteered with the Coral Restoration Foundation to tag coral fragments, remove algae and harvest healthy coral
- Planted 100 healthy coral, more than any other volunteer group to date
- Wrote and performed an original song about their new learning



Matt (center) with students before a dive in Key Largo

**Fund Facts:** Matt holds a Master's degree in educational research and a Ph.D. in educational leadership. Watch the mini-documentary Matt created chronicling his students' volunteer work at <http://bit.ly/COCoralition>.

To keep the momentum going, donate at [fundforteachers.org](http://fundforteachers.org)



## From the Executive Director

### PAYING IT FORWARD

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*"I want other teachers to find inspiration within their field of study and continually challenge themselves as educators."*

Summer months filled with aspirational pursuits resulting in autumn months of innovative implementation - this just never gets old.

For Fund for Teachers, every season is one of learning. FFT asks teachers to propose fellowships that are creative and optimistically-dynamic each autumn, beginning October 1; volunteers and stakeholders spend winter months selecting grant recipients; and in the spring, we notify our newest Fellows who finalize plans for summer fellowships. Their hardest work, however, arrives when students do – the work of putting into practice implementation plans outlined in their grant proposals. Fund for Teachers directly invests in teachers' ideas for impact.

For 16 years, Fund for Teachers has focused on educators as the unit of change. We collaborate with our 6,400+ Fellows and partners to not reinvent the wheel, but forge new territories. I am continually grateful for the talented teachers across the country whom I'm privileged to meet. I spent much of the past few weeks writing notes to the Fellows listed above, thanking them for "paying it forward" with gifts to fund future fellowships. Teachers have the power to change the world with their work – these particular teachers are also changing peers' careers and students' instruction with their donations.

Extensive research on school reform proves that quality teachers are integral to successful results. This is noble work and we value the vital role you play in it.

Ever Forward,

Karen K. Webb  
Executive Director

Head to our website for information, inspiration and resources.

[WWW.FUNDFORTEACHERS.ORG](http://WWW.FUNDFORTEACHERS.ORG)

## Our Mission

Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and professional growth of teachers by recognizing and supporting them as they identify and pursue opportunities around the globe that will have the greatest impact on their practice, the academic lives of their students and on their school communities.



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Emily (left) and Joan by a sign students made to congratulate the new Fellows



The sight that inspired Flip-Flops4Fiji



One student's donation weeks before school started



Checking out new magnifying lens

## When Flip-Flopping is a Good Thing

Emily Litman and Joan Buonafide – Learning Community Charter School, Jersey City, NJ

Flip-flops! The perfect footwear to take to an island paradise, right? That's what we packed for Fiji, nearly half way around the world from our school. We designed our fellowship to investigate ecosystems and develop students' appreciation for conservation efforts, so we brought plain flip-flops for exploring coastal regions and rainforests, and dressier ones for volunteering at the Nagigi Primary School, located 45 minutes away from the town of Savusavu on the island of Vanua Levu.

We were prepared for much of what we encountered. We expected the Fijian Islands to be stunningly beautiful, and they were; we also expected the people to be among the nicest and friendliest, right again. We planned to volunteer at a school with limited supplies, so we packed a small quantity of school supplies with us – markers, chalk and some basic magnifying lenses for scientific research.

What was most surprising, however,

was seeing half of the students arrive at school barefoot. During our discussions with the school director and head teacher, we learned that many students come from mountain villages and, for these families, footwear is not a financial option. These shoeless students walk several miles to school, then home again, over unpaved mountain paths. Instantly, "Flip-Flops 4 Fiji" was born.


Our school maintains a strong service learning program, which a shoe drive complements. Not only are flip-flops the main type of footwear in Fiji, but they are relatively inexpensive in the United States. The price point enables our students to participate more fully, regardless of their own family income.

We originally hoped to collect 150 flip-flops, in all sizes, for each student to receive a pair. We spread the word via social media one month before school started and, quickly, our school community exceeded that goal. So we're now reaching out to additional

organizations in Fiji that could benefit from shoe donations, expanding our simple project into a much greater global endeavor. We envision our school community providing shoes for any student in need on the island of Vanua Levu, the second largest island in Fiji. We are also working with Fiji Airways to assist in the delivery of flip-flops and other supplies.

A Fijian farewell song includes the line "Forget not, when you are far away." We could never forget our learning there, or the ripple effect in our school and theirs. Vinaka vakalevu Fund for Teachers! Thank you!

**Fund Facts:** Emily teaches fifth grade math and Joan teaches seventh grade life science and eighth grade chemistry and physics. You can learn more about the STEM side of their fellowship at [msbandmslitmanbula.tumblr.com](https://msbandmslitmanbula.tumblr.com).



Remains of  
Hadrian's Wall

# Asking the Right Questions

Chris Dolgos  
Genesee Community Charter School – Rochester, NY

*As educators, we know the best professional development has us wearing both student and teacher hats – acquiring new skills and knowledge, then applying both in service to our students. The genius of a Fund for Teachers fellowship is that educators can propose and pursue their own original research, reveling in the role of learner. In order to prepare for student learning, I knew I had to dive deep with teacher learning. Crafting the right guiding questions gave a framework to my fellowship researching the intersection of Romans, Britons and Picts at ancient sites across Great Britain. These are my questions and this is what I discovered:*

## ***What can the artifacts of the past tell us about the people who lived there?***

When we think of ancient civilizations, we imagine awe inspiring structures and expansive empires, but so much can be learned from the smaller details of everyday life. Learning to look closely requires time and practice. Crafting a question that focuses on something concrete can be the first step in opening the door to deeper knowledge. Something as small as a brooch from a tunic or the statue of a household god allowed me to linger in the past and ask questions that I might not have otherwise considered.

An artifact that held special interest to me was the curse tablet, a small sheet of pewter that contained a “curse” upon those who had crossed an individual, either personally, in business or perhaps even through the physical theft of an object. The curse was then thrown into a spring that fed the baths near the temple of Sulis Minerva, the local goddess, in what is today Bath,

England. What struck me was that even people who were illiterate could hire a scribe to record their curse for them. I had not imagined Roman society as a whole to be particularly literate and this record of everyday writing by everyday people forced me to reconsider my own misconceptions about history.

## ***How do walls both protect and punish those on either side?***

One key to good research is to be aware of bias. By considering only one perspective, one risks oversimplifying history. The focus question on Hadrian’s Wall was intended to provide my students with a concrete example of how societies build walls to control the “other.” As the Romans sought to exert their control across Britain, it became clear not everyone was going to play nice with them. Over the course of hundreds of years, Roman legionaries and their auxiliary forces quelled revolt after revolt. In 122 C.E., Emperor Hadrian called for a fortified wall to be built parallel to the Stanegate Road, an east-

west artery across northern England to protect the Romans and their Briton allies. The barrier sent a very clear message to the Calendonians to the north, as well as other restless Celtic tribes to the south, that Rome controlled this land. Yet, because the Romans and Britons relied on trade the wall had to be porous, allowing for the transit of goods and people. Today there are calls for physical barriers to protect our borders just as the Romans did long ago. Americans are beginning to re-examine the socio-economic and racial barriers in our society. Hadrian’s Wall will be an interesting case study to get students thinking about cycles in history and barricades – both seen and unseen – in their community.

## ***Why do some cultures endure while others perish?***

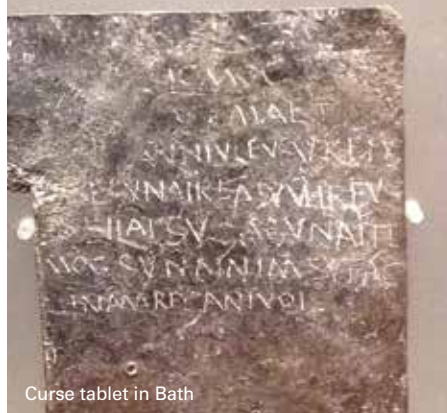
Open-ended questions like this drive the learner to seek out more information because the answer can be so elusive. Cultures adapt and change and my FFT fellowship provided me with clear



Posing with Emperor Hadrian



Bronze bust of Sulis Minerva in Bath



Curse tablet in Bath

examples of this phenomenon. As I got further along in my research, I discovered that this idea of “perish” was, in many cases, incorrect.

The Romans who called Britain home brought with them their gods. They also adopted the local Celtic gods and goddesses into their pantheon, often combining or identifying them with the Classical gods. Sulis Minerva was the realization of the Roman goddess of wisdom and the local Celtic goddess of the spring and justice. My research yielded that the Romans were willing to adopt new ways if it provided an advantage, whether engineering techniques or military strategies or even deities. The Roman abandonment of Britannia at the dusk of the Roman Empire allowed a hybrid Romano-British culture to take root, which evolved further as successive waves of invaders and immigrants made their contributions. The Roman influence on Britain can still be seen in architecture, language and written works, and perhaps most surprising, in the one-

million British who can claim ancestry from the original Roman forces that called Britain home. In fact, this September, thousands of people will gather at Hadrian’s Wall to celebrate and learn about the enduring legacy of Ancient Rome.

As our students return to their classrooms and we put our teacher hats back on, let’s celebrate the power of asking questions. Questions have taken FFT Fellows around the globe and home again. I know the questions I asked and the answers I found will continue to have a profound impact on my teaching and I can’t wait to see the impact on student learning.

**Fund Facts:** Chris teaches sixth grade, is a rare three-time FFT Fellow and is also a NY Educator Voice Fellow. You can learn more about his fellowship at [learningliveshere.blogspot.com](http://learningliveshere.blogspot.com).

## Excavating Education

(Continued)

As much as we expect the students to enjoy this project-based learning, our greater hope is that they develop a personal connection with their human heritage. It is a feeling we experienced many times on this trip: at Bru’na Boine walking down the dark, narrow passage inside a Neolithic barrow that predates the pyramids in Egypt; standing in the ruins of a Roman barracks in Wales; sitting in the shadowy rainbow of 13th century stained glass participating in a service written during the Reformation – we felt a visceral sense of continuity.

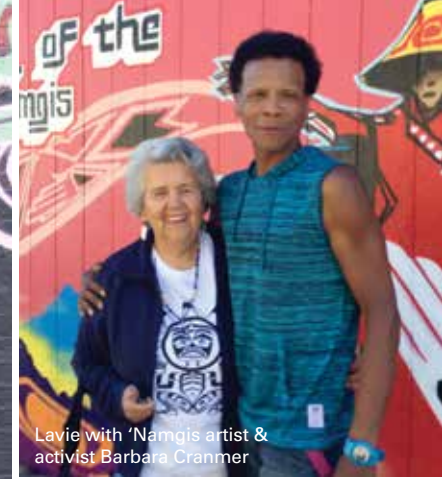


Kimberly and Bradley survey a medieval church cemetery.

**Fund Facts:** Bradley teaches third grade, serves as campus director of Code.org and was honored as Teacher of the Year. Kimberly serves as the campus G/T coordinator, UIL sponsor, robotics teacher and is a three-time campus Teacher of the Year. You can learn more about their fellowship on the blog they maintained for students at <http://bit.ly/fftdig>.

**2016 GRANT APPLICATION**  
available October 1 at  
**FUNDFORTEACHERS.ORG**

Students with their "See a Scholar" mural at Avers & Ogden on Chicago's west side



Lavie with 'Namgis artist & activist Barbara Cranmer



A mural Lavie painted with 'Namgis youth

## Hip Hop Arts Grounded in Social Justice

Lavie Raven, North Lawndale College Preparatory High School – Chicago, IL

On Alert Bay, a small island north of Vancouver Island in British Columbia, lives the 'Namgis First Nations tribe. These indigenous people, dating back as far as 500 BC, survived ongoing subjugation by British incursions and continue to struggle for restorative justice. Incredible glyphic art, evident throughout the community, resembles the wild-styles of Chicago's graffiti; 'Namgis folktales also resonate with "rap as art-form" descended from griot storytelling descendants from West Africa. I designed my Fund for Teachers fellowship to learn from the 'Namgis about self-expression and activism through the arts. By helping young people there illustrate and illuminate their culture, I learned how to better help my own students do the same.

Last spring, my students and I conducted some pre-fellowship activities. Together, we created a "See the Scholar" program to discuss the ongoing violence suffered by brown and black youth in the United States by police – experiences similar to those suffered by the 'Namgis at the hands of the British Crown and Canadian government. My

students painted a mural reflecting their concerns and we hosted a symposium on racially-charged incidents, led by a legal defense activist, a radical debater from Northwestern University and a spoken word poet from Harold Washington Community College. I took all of these experiences and perspectives with me to Alert Bay.

Upon meeting those serving as my guides, I shared our "See the Scholar" learning as a means of introduction. I then spent my four-day fellowship researching and honoring the 'Namgis tribe's cultural survival in the face of opposition. I interviewed curators at the local museum, activists at the Umista Community Center and the family responsible for the tribe's exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC. I learned about cultural survival, the role of the arts in community and efforts to engage future generations. After working with youth to identify social issues of concern, we created seven murals for the community on spaces identified by elders and artists.

My time spent in Canada was the beginning of a cross-cultural

conversation that provides teachers and youth in Chicago and Alert Bay the opportunity to reflect on cultural histories and find solidarity through social justice-oriented arts. This fellowship also reinforced a lesson learned during my twenty-year teaching career: Young people basically know solutions to many of the world's problems; the other 47 percent of the world (the adults) have yet to truly listen. I feel as though the 'Namgis continually encourage me in my classroom: "Be open, listen, and learn from the elders and their children."

**Fund Facts:** Lavie teaches World Studies, US History and Performative Policy Debate, coaching the school's radical debate team. He also collaborates with the Peace Warriors club and founded the school's University of Hip Hop, now in its 20th year. Lavie is a practitioner of graffiti writing and illuminated script, a rapper and is delighted to share the arts that saved his life as a child in urban Chicago.



Lara (L) with ASYV teachers



Lara with students during a weekly check-in



## Stemming the Stress

Lara Schmidt – Leadership High School, San Francisco, CA

During my seven years in urban education, one constant stands out: students are stressed. While many believe that high schoolers are only concerned with their social world, I see students dealing with serious stressors inhibiting their ability to concentrate. Some of my students are the primary caretakers of siblings while parents balance multiple jobs, others experience housing and food insecurity, and many witness violence in their homes and communities. Often, teachers and administrators don't know how to deal with trauma in the classroom and view key indicators (such as absenteeism, defiance and hyper-sensitivity) as behavioral problems, rather than coping strategies to deal with personal trauma.

America's educational system only recently began addressing the impact of trauma on learning; Rwanda started grappling with the issue 25 years ago due to genocide and the civil war. Leaders there drew inspiration from Israeli programs for young survivors of the Holocaust. My Fund for Teachers fellowship allowed me to travel to Kigali, Rwanda, to research proven tactics for

managing stress of traumatized students.

When I arrived in Kigali, I drove straight to Agahozo Shalom Youth Village (ASYV). "Agahozo" means "tears that have dried." The village is a school, arts center and residence serving orphans and vulnerable teenagers. For ten days, I joined a multi-generation service learning team, spending time with students, teachers, administrators and counselors. The times I treasured most were those spent with my "family" – a group of 16 female students. Together each evening, we reviewed the day, talked about relevant issues and worked on literacy skills. Through this experience, I appreciated the value ASYV places on *informal education*. Each new group of freshmen receives a house mother, a big brother or sister and a cousin, adults who mentor their students throughout high school, personally and academically.

The freshmen experience an "enrichment year," based on the Hebrew principle *Tikkun Halev*, which means "Repairing the Heart." Their schedule consists of art, sports, science lab classes, and a "life skills" class that

teaches self-care and communication techniques. In the second year, *Tikkun Olam*, or "Healing the World," begins. I worked alongside students building houses in the community, teaching elementary students English and volunteering in health clinics – education certainly, just outside the school.

When I asked, "What makes ASYV different from other schools?" students all spoke of the informal education. They value relationships with adults above all, feeling cared for and known. Grade level social workers contribute to this security, meeting twice a year with each student and inviting any adult who works with them to come. The collaboration results in a comprehensive plan that supports the student more completely.

Leaving ASYV, I returned to Kigali to research the informal education concept at the Kepler Institute, a nonprofit university providing quality higher education for underserved and economically disadvantaged populations. I ended my FFT fellowship at These Numbers have Faces, a nonprofit mentoring program for students. Both programs place the greatest emphasis on the student's growth as a person, and his/her ability to positively impact their world. Academic excellence is expected, but it grows from the students' social/emotional health. Once students feel comfortable in their own skin and develop the ability to communicate their emotions and needs, the intrinsic motivation to succeed academically falls into place.

I started this school year by restructuring my classroom. Weekly check-ins and the integration of social/emotional inquiries are already reducing the stress of my seniors with learning disabilities. Students communicate fears and stress about school right when they enter the classroom, then start working with more focus than I've seen in years past. I am grateful to Fund for Teachers for giving me the opportunity to grow my practice and learn from experts in Rwanda. I eagerly anticipate the coming year and new ways my fellowship will benefit the entire school community.

**Fund Facts:** Lara is a resource specialist at Leadership High School and leads the Special Education team there, as well. She previously served as board secretary of Oakland Emiliano Street Academy and is passionate about restorative justice, urban education and trauma-sensitive schools.



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## *Beyond the Classroom*

**Laura Wilbanks – Whiteface Elementary, Whiteface, TX**

Formerly a biologist for the US Fish & Wildlife Service, Laura Wilbanks has spent the last 29 years teaching students how to make a difference in their world through project-based learning. Collaborating with students on local, state and national educational competitions, Laura has helped those students earn \$800,000 in scholarships. Most recently, Laura and her students were welcomed at the White House in recognition for their approach to testing soil for arsenic – a project inspired by Laura’s 2010 FFT fellowship. The students were given the President’s Environmental Youth Award through the Environmental Protection Agency.

Laura’s personal accomplishments as a teacher include:

- President’s Innovation Award in Environmental Education
- Bartlett Award, given by the National Environmental Education Foundation for exceptional environmental education
- Wal-Mart Teacher of the Year
- Texas Environmental Excellence Award
- Soil & Water Teacher of the Year
- Texas Medical Association’s Top Texas Elementary Science Teacher

Also awarded a 2015 FFT grant, Laura spent the summer on a road trip through Austin, Portland and Vancouver interviewing experts on redesigning school playground landscapes. She plans to use her research and a \$30,000 grant she secured from the US Fish & Wildlife Service to establish an outdoor playscape for at-risk students.



Laura (center) with students at White House ceremony

“Fund for Teachers has had an immeasurable impact on the students in my science classroom, as well as on the families in our community. The ability to design and implement my own professional development means students in my school are getting specifically what *THEY* need to be successful through a well-trained teacher. Thank you to FFT for providing the best enrichment for students - whether they are at-risk, special needs or gifted - and for enriching my life through amazing adventures provided by the most generous and insightful donors anywhere!”