



Briana and her students  
water bean stalk seeds



Afterschool Club members  
growing soil the natural way



Briana and Molly at The Edible  
School Garden in Berkeley



Planting a cover crop at  
Homewood Middle School

## *From Seed to STEM: Growing Learners Outside the Classroom*

**Briana Morton and Molly Knudsen, Homewood Middle School – Homewood, AL**

Learning should not end at 3 pm. In fact, we believe there are just as many (or more) opportunities for authentic learning after school. While most of the students anxiously await the dismissal bell, a dedicated group anticipate getting their hands dirty in the community garden and continuing to learn.

As educators, we constantly seek ways to learn about, grow and improve our practice. Neither of us dreamed of an opportunity like Fund for Teachers, which allowed us to do all three. From San Diego to Santa Cruz to Berkeley, we experienced successful, educational gardening programs and learned from the communities that make them possible.

Our fellowship taught us to seamlessly integrate the garden and wellness curriculum into content areas and provided us with innovative and progressive strategies to enhance learning within both the school and the community. Immediately upon our

return, our experience contributed to our school's annual summer program, Seed to Plate; we integrated curriculum, learning strategies and activities into the program based on our fellowship. Students learned how to "make dirt," test the pH of soil, harvest and store seeds, harvest and prepare food for a fresh and delicious meal, and create a beautiful table setting to sit, eat and communicate (in an age that is all about rushing and convenience).

When school started, students in our afterschool Homewood Middle Environmental Club did not hesitate to get into the garden and prepare for the fall crop. Students cleaned out fallow beds, prepared soil and learned the art and science of planting seeds. Our program also expanded to the three elementary schools, a high school and alternative school within our district. Each program received a tower garden with seeds for seasonal vegetables, fruits and herbs. This winter, a similar program

will be available at the public library, allowing even more children to have an opportunity to learn from our fellowship.

Our program is full of diversity. Our students come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, various races and cultures, academic abilities, etc. Regardless, our afterschool program fills a void for each of them who are rarely exposed to fresh produce. The greatest joy is when a student "recruits" a new student to join us because of the positive experience.

*Continued on page 4*

*Learning that extends beyond the classroom breeds curiosity, advocacy and engagement; it fosters impact.*

## Mission in Motion

"STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) has been driving education for quite a while now. I believe it is time to add art to the acronym, and the architecture and design work of Antoni Gaudí was an excellent place to start."

- Jean King, St. Stephens School – Houston, TX

### Project Description

Followed the lives and careers of Gaudí, Picasso, Miró & Dalí across the Catalonia region of Spain, observing their techniques with ceramics, tiles and mosaics.

### Fellowship Experiences

- Researched Salvador Dalí through his home/studio in Portlligat and eponymous museum in Figueras
- Embarked on a walking tour of Picasso's Barcelona, ending at the Picasso Museum
- Explored Gaudí's Casa Milá, Park Güell and Sagrada Família
- Sketched on La Ramblas and walked the Modernist Route
- Interacted with the works of Joan Miró at the artist's creative surroundings and studios at Fundació Pilar in Palma de Mallorca
- Toured the Fundació Antoni Tàpies, a cultural center and museum in Barcelona dedicated to the study of modern and contemporary art
- Enrolled in advanced mosaic and Spanish classes

### Classroom Impact

- Produce Gaudí-inspired student fashion show with costumes crafted out of upcycled and recycled materials and clothing
- Create collages and mandalas in the mosaic style enhanced with the Percolator app
- Take students on field trips to the Menil Collection for Salvador Dalí installations
- Collaborate with the history department on a unit about Picasso, his painting *Guernica* and the beginning of World War II
- Incorporate Joan Miro's determination when encouraging struggling students
- Create mosaics on "memory vessels" using seashells, tiles, glass and beads in the style of Gaudí



**Fund Facts:** Jean is a 30-year veteran art teacher and a three-time Fellow. She is the Texas Art Education Association's elementary school chair and a practicing community artist. Jean introduced the first FFT Fellow fundraising campaign 2007, challenging grant recipients to donate and vowing to match each donation up to \$100.

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



## From the Executive Director

Dear Fund for Teachers Fellows and Friends,

As I reflect on this year, my thoughts run gratefully to our special Fund for Teachers community. We all have much to be proud of and thankful for. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of you.

I salute the bright, bold teachers who developed and pursued fellowships in order to continue empowering students with guidance, encouragement and expertise. Fellows' giving of both time and treasure is at an all-time high – an indicator of their esteem for the opportunities afforded them through Fund for Teachers grants.

Over the past 15 years we have grown from a small, grass-roots organization funding sixty teachers in three locations to a national presence funding more than 6,400 teachers in every state. We have a scalable, online application that welcomes teacher innovation, creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking; regionally-based selection processes that identify the best of the best; and a database of teacher leaders, our Fellows. This successful trajectory was made possible in collaboration with our regional partners.

Fund for Teachers Fellows are newsmakers. This year, their stories have been told in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Huffington Post*, the *Contra Costa Times*, the *Norwalk Hour* and countless others. Our grant recipients were honored at the White House and distinguished as Teachers of Year in districts across the country.

I am privileged to work with a committed board of directors and a talented, dedicated staff. We are not complacent about status quo. Together we keep Fund for Teachers nimble and responsive to the challenges of new environments.

The faithful support of our donors makes all this possible. We thank you for partnering with us year after year. Every Fellow, and the students they teach, has been enriched by your generosity.

We each have an extraordinary opportunity to have a hand in shaping the future. It is this conviction that brings everyone in our Fund for Teachers community together. Thank you for your commitment. It is my privilege to serve this most worthy endeavor.

Ever forward,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen K. Webb".

Karen K. Webb  
Executive Director



Karen with Alex Blair, chair of the fall Fund for Teachers Food for Thought Breakfast

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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Poster on how to be "Sowers of Happiness" (Sijač Sreće)



JW Lab School students volunteering at a soup kitchen



The bridge site of Archduke Ferdinand's assassination in Sarajevo

## Faces of Altruism

Meredith McLaughlin, University of Wyoming Lab School – Laramie, WY

Last May, I could've easily walked down the path of burn-out. Instead, I found a route back to overflowing springs of passion that fueled my initial teaching. With my FFT grant, I observed Balkan school initiatives exemplifying outstanding civic/social justice education to formalize and sustain my school's social responsibility efforts. My fellowship had four parts: A tour of Balkan war sites; an extended period of participatory observation at a primary school in Lokve, Croatia; collaboration with the Centre for Peace Studies in Zagreb and its partner schools, and; the Interdisciplinary Social Sciences Conference in Split.

Each aspect improved my teaching, but relationships I formed while working with colleagues at Milan Brozovi School launched me to a very exciting place as a teacher. Milan Brozovi embraces a mission of student-led *changemaking* that is truly stunning in a country whose education system is still tethered tightly to communist-inspired authoritarian structures. Student after student presented amazing projects involving everything from making professional-quality music videos about bullying to

de-mining playgrounds in a formerly war-torn region of Croatia. As a result of my time spent at this school, my Wyoming students were invited to co-host an International Youth Summit in Rijeka, Croatia, next May.

The prospect of students returning with me to Croatia is changing our entire learning community. Our school was recently invited to join the Ashoka Changemaker School Network, a national community of schools dedicated to cultivating empathic individuals who work in teams to solve problems. Nearly one-third of our students joined my Force of Altruism elective and are volunteering like never before: giving up lunch periods to clean up the school; showing up on Saturday mornings to help with community gardening; serving at the local homeless shelter. Their general awareness of "altruism" is also increasing. They email me sharing examples of how they're helping others. Some of this increased interest is because volunteerism is a trip prerequisite; what's happening, though, is more and more students are catching the "altruism bug." They're telling me: "I don't care if I go; I just want

to volunteer." Because of my Balkan research of ways to orchestrate this kind of community involvement, I now am managing a "hub of do-goodness," in addition to teaching English and Social Studies.

I originally went to the Balkans in 1992, in the midst of war and at the very start of my teaching career. I had no idea then that it would be this place, 23 years later, that would catapult me to the very top of my mountain of dreams I had then as young and idealistic teacher. I can't wait to see what lies on the next page of this journey – one where I take students to a place where they can find and create peace, not just on a personal level but on a "we are really changing the world" level, a "we can stop war" level, a "we can prevent genocide" level.

**Fund Facts:** Meredith began teaching more than 20 years ago working with at-risk and homeless youth, an experience that emphasized to her the imperative of schooling in a democracy. You can learn more about Meredith's fellowship on the blog she maintained for students at <http://bitly.com/fftbalkans>.



# Off of Our Phones and Into the Present

Rod Hearn, Performing Arts Center at  
Damonte Ranch High School – Reno, NV

Rod staging the opening  
act of *Alice in Wonderland*

The epiphany happened a few days into my fellowship in Bath, England, at *the egg*, the Theatre Royal's award-winning youth company. I asked director Katherine Lazare, "Where are the kids' cell phones?"

I originally designed my fellowship to research how *the egg* produces a full-length musical with a huge cast of teens in only three weeks. As part of that research, Katherine arranged for me to visit additional summer theatre programs. I was at first reluctant to observe the class of five- to nine-year-olds using creative play to explore imaginary islands; or visit with elementary students creating a dance flash mob; or, frankly, spend a week with a group of at-risk teenage boys while they filmed pranks.

These experiences, however, turned out to be among the most memorable of the entire fellowship. With each session gently led by theatre professionals of the highest caliber, students investigated what it meant to be human and explored connections between performance skills, relationships with each other and feelings of self-worth (without taking a single "selfie").

It turns out that exploring imaginary

islands also meant vicariously encountering ideas and issues that engender fear, then conquering those fears theatrically. After only a week of working together, the group of five- to nine-year olds produced a sort of "sharing," not a polished performance, but a way to say, "Look, mom and dad, at what I learned this week." No memorized lines facilitated by instructors, but authentic expressions of meaning. Their "sharing" left me slack-jawed.

It turns out that a group of flash mob dancers were not really dancers at all; in fact, their dance skills resembled mine, so I could relate. The most surprising element emerged as the dance reflected students' hopes of what they wanted to be when they grew up — career traits transformed from normal silliness into riveting and original movement tethered to very sophisticated thinking in abstract ways.

It turns out that as at-risk teens devised their pranks, they learned a huge life lesson: the difference between what is funny and what is harmful or dangerous. These teens and tweens created and filmed from a distance amusing—and safe—pranks carried out

on unsuspecting tourists in Bath. As much as these young people like to act out, this group wanted no part of a live performance, so the "sharing" at the end of their week was a short, edited compilation of their most successful pranks. These at-risk kids beamed at their achievement. I was amazed that they learned an important life skill without it ever being preached.

The rigorous pace of instruction related to standardized assessments has increased in the United States, often shoving aside experiences that help students learn about themselves. This generation with computers in their pockets is losing their ability to "be present" in situations where they can learn what it's like to genuinely connect with other people. Theatre instruction is a place where those experiences can still be taught at a very high level, helping students learn what it is to be human.

So where were the Bath kids' cell phones?

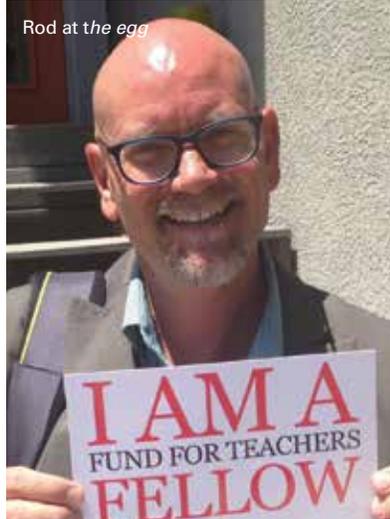
"Oh, they have them," grinned Katherine. "But they sign an agreement that when they arrive, their phones will be silenced and put away until they leave the building." Seems like a common sense arrangement, and one that exists



A student in Bath filming his prank



Rod's students performing in *Alice in Wonderland*



Rod at the egg

in my own classroom and in classrooms all over the United States. So why didn't I see teens sneaking their phones during rehearsals or "going to the bathroom" to catch the latest Snapchat? I suspect they were too busy being "present."

After 25 years, I was honestly starting to wonder if I was going to make it, so the impact of a tailor-made fellowship like this one couldn't have come at a better time. The experience also gave me a clearer perspective on what I should be doing – more teaching, less worrying about the productions. The Royal Theatre's youth program embraces this more holistic approach to actor training, rather than the detailed approach I'd grown toward.

I'm also happier with my job. I didn't know it at the time, but a vital part of this fellowship was to help me fall in love with teaching drama again, giving more attention to individual students where they are, rather than where I wish they were. And, I'm a better teacher. This type of professional development is perfect for teachers with a lot of teaching experience, but who yearn to craft their own learning experience. The [grant] money goes directly toward achieving authentic learning in both students' and

teachers' lives.

**Editor's Note:** This fall, Rod applied his epiphanies to the production of *Alice in Wonderland*, incorporating strategies learned at *the egg* to encourage young actors to be more thoughtful contributors to the process of performing. Inspired by the elementary flash mob in Bath, Rod brought in a guest artist specializing in creative movement and dance to inform students' choreography through process and play.

**Fund Facts:** Rod teaches all levels of drama and theatre technology at the district's only academy of performing arts. He is the proud recipient of the Japan Fulbright Memorial Fellowship and a Directing Fellowship at Juilliard.

## From Seed to STEM

(Continued)

We applied for this grant seeking ways to improve our practice, but we accomplished so much more. We are changing the ways our students are learning; we are changing the role the community garden plays in our school and in our community; and we are transforming what an afterschool program should look like. Learning should be fun and functional. Our Environmental Club is proof that can happen, even after 3 pm.

**Fund Facts:** In October, the Environmental Club created a "compost row" fashioned after one at The Edible Schoolyard Academy that Molly and Briana saw in Berkeley. The first chapter of Junior Master Gardeners at Homewood Middle School convenes in December. Follow the growth at [twitter.com/hcsgarden](https://twitter.com/hcsgarden).



Our Fellows donate both time and money to ensure that peers benefit from Fund for Teachers fellowships. Thank you to these teachers for sacrificing that which is most precious by *paying it forward*.

### Time

This year, more than 250 Fellows spent hours reading grant proposals and guiding the process that selects our Fellows. Based on *The NonProfit Times'* valuation of a volunteer hour, these Fellows' donation of time equals approximately \$30,000.

**Treasure** (contributing through the *Pay it Forward* campaign)

Nance Morris Adler, Anonymous (9), Corbett Beder, Debra H. Bell & the Boyceville School District, Lisa Boehlke, Tracie Boland, Janet Brasler, Amy Brewer, Jada Brown, Joy Cliett, Jonthan Coulson, Emily Culp, Rita Dahl, Tricia Davis, Bonnie Deaton, Pia DeLeon, Deni Drinkwater, Molly D'Agosta (Muir); Mary Droster, Kim Eveland, Sharon Felty, Janie Fossett, Lauren Fowler, Jeff & Cathy Frastaci, Linda Gerbode, Anna Henderson, Nancy Hess, Bonnie Hoffman, Irving Quay Hurdle Jr., Amanda Ingrassia, Doug Keel, Michael & Janet Key, Virginia Kropas, Suzanne Loosen, Rita Luk, Maggie Mabery, Barb Marten, Melissa Minkin, Lynn Molitor, Anne Morris, Briana Morton, Jenna Moser, Smith Mowry, Megan F. O'Neill, Valerie O'Riordan, David Paquette, Soledad Paulino, Nancy Pettus, Rebecca Price, Michael Prutz, Adrienne Raible, Geoff Schutte, Audrey Sherfey, Carol Scott, Doug Shuman, Kyri & Erick Sierra, Sue Smukler, Brian Strand, Susan Oliver Strange, Lois Sturch, Ryan Thelan, BeeLee Tullos, Elizabeth Vachon, Darlene Varga, Eleanor Vierling, Karen Weiss, and Monica Wright

The Multicultural Choir clad in authentic island outfits made by Marshallese parents



## Marshalling Community

Rita Hartwick, Enid High School – Enid, OK

People think of Native Americans when considering Oklahoma’s demographic. However, my school district has the fourth largest Marshallese population in the United States. One-third of our English language learners emigrated from the Marshall Islands and their culture is quickly fading as they assimilate into our rural farm community. For example, for dinner at a school event designed to share the island culture, Marshallese students served spaghetti and fried chicken from a local restaurant.

I designed my Fund for Teachers fellowship to help these students remember their heritage and share that with our school community. For three weeks in June, I lived and volunteered on Llikie, the atoll in the Marshall Islands with the most history and fewest modern conveniences. The Marshallese education system relies on volunteers from the United States to staff schools and I worked alongside teachers striving to raise education levels from the lowest among 14 Pacific nations. I also saw the consequences of the requirement to attend school only through the eighth grade.

This fall, Marshallese student enrollment in my Family & Consumer

Sciences classes jumped 10 percent because of my demonstrated interest in their culture. In addition to learning how to prepare food from the islands, students are learning traditional fabric weaving on a loom with materials I purchased on my fellowship. Outside class, members of the “Island Club” hosted an Islander Night where they shared with the student body *actual meals* common to their culture (not fried chicken and spaghetti). In October, we also hosted our first fall Independence Birth Day (IBD) in a local park, with picnic, games and volleyball. To attend, students had to have good grades and no behavior issues, making the IBD celebration an incentive and reward.

Other teachers have seen the need to include these students into their classes in a larger way, as well. The lead ESL counselor now welcomes students into her room during lunch and our choir teacher invited Marshallese parents to create dresses and shirts for the Multicultural Choir’s performance at the Governor’s Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony.

Before this fellowship, I taught in my comfort zone. I thought I explored different cultures with my students and I attended workshops focused on ethnic



populations, such as Hispanic and Native American. Now, my eyes have been opened to what it’s like coming from a culture from another part of the world with an entirely different lifestyle. As a result of my fellowship, I’m not only teaching material from textbooks, but I am also showing students what the world has to offer them – in the Pacific and in Enid.

**Fund Facts:** Rita was once a student in an unfamiliar setting herself, spending a year of high school as a foreign exchange student in Germany through Youth for Understanding. In addition to teaching Family & Consumer Sciences, Rita also serves as chapter and district advisor for Family, Career & Consumer Leaders of America.

Louis on a mountain top  
in the Pacific Northwest



## Where Has All the Nature Gone?

Louis Schede, Norwalk High School – Norwalk, CT

Most traditional high schools in the United States devote little time to building students' connection with their peers or the natural environment. Districts remain obsessed with testing, data and new initiatives that keep students confined in a building, even as mounting evidence reveals students are increasingly stressed, depressed, and/or emotionally-detached in school. Teen suicide rates increase while technology decreases kids' contact with the outside world. With my FFT grant, I hope to change that. I believe spending an extended time in the wilderness can create a sense of place, but that connection has slowly deteriorated in the 21st century.

Last summer, I participated in a 30-day outdoor course in the Pacific Northwest where I learned leadership and teamwork building skills and reflected on character and perseverance in the face of challenges. Although I'm an English teacher, I decided to address students' disconnect with nature by starting a Wilderness Club this fall. I wasn't sure how students would respond, especially students who have never truly experienced the outdoors, despite our coastal community's multi-purpose trails, tidal estuaries, wooded

glens and open meadows.

Students have shown great enthusiasm for building a connection to our outdoor environment. During weekly meetings after school, we explore our surroundings and record our observations on small white-boards. Students feel more relaxed and have meaningful conversations with each other. Phones lose importance as students choose to live in the moment. I am amazed by how quickly students' attitudes change when they are out of the building and the natural world becomes our classroom.

Together, students created a list of topics to study, including local and national parks, tree and plant identification and camping skills. These kids who previously stayed inside texting after school now enjoy being outside so much that they planned a school-wide fundraiser to pay for a one-night backpacking trip in the spring to the Adirondacks or White Mountains. The club is also organizing a school clean up event to celebrate Earth Day in April.

Applying for and receiving the FFT grant was one of the most rewarding learning experiences of my teaching career. If we really want to change education for the good, there is no better

way than by supporting passionate, dedicated teachers. Experience *is* education, and teachers who have authentic experiences will more effectively share their passions and help motivate students to pursue their own. All teachers should have such a powerful and meaningful opportunity – to pursue their dreams of inspiring students they teach, the school in which they work and the community they serve.

**Fund Facts:** For the past five years, Louis has taught various grades in New Canaan, CT, and Brooklyn, where he also served as assistant principal and director of professional development, and established a character program for students. An Eagle Scout, Louis believes that getting students motivated and engaged in the learning process is the key to effective education.

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## *Beyond the Classroom*

**Dr. Catherine Cummins – LSU Lab School, Baton Rouge, LA**

In 2013, Catherine designed her Fund for Teachers fellowship to retrace Charles Darwin's childhood, youth and college years in the West Midlands of England, Wales and Cambridge University. Her goal was to illustrate for middle school students that period of Darwin's life before he boarded the *HMS Beagle* for the Galapagos Islands, where he eventually developed his theory of evolution.

Catherine continued her fellowship learning last summer when she led a group of 13 students on an expedition to the Galapagos Islands, Quito and Riobamba, Ecuador.

"This was the perfect next step in tracing Charles Darwin's life for me," said Catherine. "I experienced the unique flora and fauna of the islands and got up close and personal to animals that have no fear of humans. It was a once-in-a-lifetime excursion for my students and me, facilitated by my FFT fellowship."

In October, Catherine presented her 2013 fellowship experience to a standing-room-only crowd at the National Science Teachers Association conference.

“ My FFT fellowship impacted every facet of my career. I have been able to share the benefits of that experience to my own faculty and a broader teacher audience through state and national meeting presentations; therefore, my self-designed professional development experience through FFT translated into professional development for many others. I will never be able to thank FFT enough for what it has done for me, for my students and for a broader learning community.”



Resting with young Darwin at Cambridge University (2013)



Leading students at the Charles Darwin Research Center in Ecuador (2014)



Presenting her FFT fellowship at the NTSA conference (2015)