



Doannie (center) consulting at a charity clinic in Hue

## A Laboratory for Teacher Learning

Doannie Tran, Assistant Superintendent for Professional Learning & Academics – Boston Public Schools

I majored in chemistry in college, but even before completing my degree I realized a lab was not the satisfying work setting I wanted. I found that place to be the classroom.

I spent the summer after graduation teaching English in Albania, opening my eyes to the need for equity in education. I decided to attack this issue domestically and joined Teach for America as a corps member in Oakland Public Schools. After five years, I moved to Boston to teach anatomy and physiology at the O'Bryant High School of Math & Science. This is when I ran across the Fund for Teachers opportunity.

I used my FFT grant to volunteer at a Vietnamese HIV clinic in the ancient capital city of Hue and study national HIV health policy in Hanoi to develop case studies for my students. In a span of three weeks, I researched how the confluence of non-governmental

organizations, government agencies and medical care providers interact to deliver care to HIV patients and the poor. I went from where medicine was practiced (in a charity clinic) to where medicine was taught (at the Hue University School of Medicine) to where national healthcare policies are made by staff at the Asia Foundation, Clinton Foundation and the Vietnam-CDC-Harvard-AIDS Partnership.

My fellowship helped me think about the connections between the outside world and the classroom and analyze systems that impact teachers' lives, even those they're not aware of. Such systematic thinking became the hallmark of my future in education.

A year later, TFA launched a region in the Greater Boston area and asked me to lead the professional learning for 50 corps members, a number that doubled the following year and doubled again the next. At that point, with systems in

place, I enrolled in the Harvard Education Leadership Doctoral Program. For two years, I learned under professors from the Harvard Business School, Graduate School of Education and Kennedy School of Public Policy. My final year was spent as an entrepreneur-in-residence with the NewSchools Venture Fund in Boston, creating a company called The Teaching Genome to help schools and districts empower teacher instructional improvement.

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*John Quincy Adams said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."*

# Mission in Motion

This spring, we welcome three new strategic partnerships bringing Fund for Teachers to Boston, Connecticut and Oregon.

Extending a 12-year FFT presence in Boston, the **Boston Teachers Union** now assumes leadership of the program, previously guided by BPE. This new partnership marks the first time Fund for Teachers has partnered with a union, greatly increasing our outreach to more than 5,500 local educators.

“For over a decade now, our members have benefited from FFT’s generous support of professional development that is relevant, inspiring and respectful of teachers as professionals and intellectuals,” said Paul Tritter, director of professional learning for Boston Teachers Union. “We are proud to become the local partner of Fund for Teachers and continue providing our members with opportunities to pursue their passions in service of Boston’s students.”

Building on the success of a pilot partnership last year, the **Dalio Foundation** now makes the FFT grant opportunity available to every public school teacher in Connecticut, and supports the FFT team in engaging schools and districts across the state. This year, 205 teachers applied from 115 schools and 42 districts – making Connecticut the second largest FFT region in the nation.

“The Dalio Foundation is truly fortunate to partner with Fund for Teachers to support educators in pursuing their passions,” said Barbara Dalio. “I am inspired by the creativity and energy of this year’s FFT applicants, and look forward to learning from them about their adventures.”

**The Ford Family Foundation** is giving teachers in Douglas County, OR, the opportunity to design their own professional development this summer.

“Fund for Teachers aligns with our ongoing work to support teachers,” said Anne Kubisch, foundation president. “We want to help develop networks of high-quality teachers and leaders in Douglas County. These grants will give teachers the opportunity to drive improvements in the academic and life outcomes of their students.”

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

# From the Executive Director



Karen and FFT Fellows at Business Innovation Factory’s participatory design studio at Yale University

You inspire us! When thousands of teachers took the time to apply for their own fellowships this winter, we cheered. You made a significant investment of time to think about your individual growth and the growth of your students and then took action. Hooray!

Over and over again, teachers surprise and impress us with their ingenuity, passion and dedication to students and their profession. We salute our alums, the 800 Fellows who stepped up to assist in supporting and selecting the 2016 cohort. You have provided many hours of time to new applicants, mentoring and reviewing hundreds of applications. For your dedication, we are grateful.

Whether you submitted a proposal, or supported those who did, you clearly said that rethinking teaching and learning matters. Thank you.

Fund for Teachers supports a “classroom windows thrown wide” kind of professional development. We know teachers work under constraints of limited time and resources to design creative and meaningful learning experiences. They are curious about and amenable to learning from others’ techniques and methodologies.

We know the best initiatives among and for educators take these realities into account. That’s why we work with teachers and dedicated people from kindred organizations to swap best practices, engage in collective visioning and solve shared problems.

There are about 50 million American k-12 students in school today, and there are millions more to come. To invest in teachers is to invest in their students. To invest in students is to invest in communities.

We need more leaders who are learners.

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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Touring the ruins of Persepolis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

## My Arab Summer

Amanda Schear, Withrow University High School – Cincinnati, OH

In the summer of 2011 as Iran tested 14 surface-to-surface missiles, I explored the country's complexities and contradictions on my Fund for Teachers fellowship. In a few months, my school would merge with another, bringing a new population of students with Middle Eastern heritage. I wanted to welcome them into my classroom as one informed about their culture, while at the same time craft a curriculum that engaged all of the students in new philosophies and ideas. To do so, I spent two weeks in Iran increasing my personal cultural awareness and understanding.

I traveled with Global Exchange, an international human rights organization specializing in building cross-cultural connections. We explored iconic historic and cultural sites and dialogued with teachers, students and religious leaders in Tehran, Yazd, Shiraz and Isfahan. According to my grant proposal, my goals were to "gain experience in a Middle Eastern country and develop beginning insights into a small portion of the Arab world." Once in Iran, I quickly realized my mistake, as Iranians don't consider themselves Middle Eastern at all and would never identify as Arabs.

Despite my efforts to look beyond news headlines, I had generalized Iran, Arab and the Middle East as basically synonymous. This was a huge revelation to me and important as a global citizen/teacher who sometimes makes generalizations about her students.

My fellowship learning could not be contained in one Cincinnati classroom. I gave professional development talks to peers at school, as well as members of the Ohio Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (OCTELA). After hearing about my experiences, I was asked to join the OCTELA executive board as the multicultural liaison. In this role I advocate for the under-represented, ensuring that our membership and gatherings reflect *all* voices, *all* stories.

At the district level, I was chosen for the Teacher Leader Academy and attended weekend workshops with 11 other teachers to receive advanced leadership training. I returned the following summer as an instructional coach. In 2012, I was selected as one of 20 Smithsonian American Art Museum Fellows and traveled to Washington, D.C. to learn from guest lecturers, conduct research and create a multi-media lesson

soon to be shared on the Smithsonian's web site. I was invited the following year as a Smithsonian Scholar for an advanced session. The domino effect of confidence continued when I was named a finalist for the Teaching Tolerance Educator Award, received a National Endowment for Humanities fellowship and was named Ohio Language Arts Educator of the Year.

Each of these opportunities arose from my Fund for Teachers fellowship. Realizing that Fund for Teachers believed in me, I was willing to risk trying for additional learning and leadership experiences. My learning in Iran simultaneously inspired my students and me to deepen our engagement and increase meaningful learning.

**Fund Facts:** An avid reader, Amanda is a Harry Potter fan and member of the virtual Hogwarts Running Club, where her moniker is "McGonagall's Twin." Her goal is to visit 50 percent of the countries in the world by the time she turns 50 (31 down, 70 or so to go).

Diane's students working in the Lincoln Elementary garden

# Growing Greatness

Diane Wood, Lincoln Elementary School – Norman, OK

As early as 1811, school gardens were used in Europe to provide places where students could study the natural sciences and learn vocational skills. During the Victorian era in England, school gardens were commonly part of nature study classes. In recent years, Chef Jamie Oliver pioneered a “food revolution” to reform the school lunch program and successfully petitioned the British government to place a ban on processed junk food in all UK schools.

Oliver's *Kitchen Garden Project* supports schools in the United Kingdom through food education and cooking skill classes. Schools that join the Kitchen Garden Project receive recipes and lesson plans that cover basic cooking skills, lesson plans on nutrition and access to the online community of participating schools. Scheryl Wood and I used our FFT grant to research this program in England and Scotland and turn our fledgling school garden into the



Source: [gardensite.co.uk](http://gardensite.co.uk)

setting for cross-curricular instruction and community service.

Approximately one year after learning that our grant was funded, students are actively harvesting herbs, garlic, asparagus, Brussels sprouts, spinach, lettuce, potatoes and turnips at our school. Fifth graders are preparing to plant cotton as part of their American History unit this spring and

kindergartners use their space for a butterfly garden. Our school community also includes students with autism; these students' teachers and parents are helping create a sensory garden as an oasis of calm. We hosted a Community Day in February, when students, parents, teachers, volunteers and neighbors (who are also invited to harvest produce) helped weed and prepare for spring plantings. “Watch D.O.G.S.” (Dads of Great Students) regularly repair and maintain the beds.

Our garden now extends into the community. Last fall, I spoke at the school district's annual conference, sharing how to re-create our garden and ways we're using project-based learning to engage students in all grades and disciplines. As a result of our fellowship, I was also asked to serve on the board of directors for *Earth Rebirth*, a nonprofit dedicated to placing a garden in every Norman Public School. We're hoping



Scheryl and Diane visit a school garden in Watton at Stone



Diane's student working in the school garden



Diane (left) serving with students at Food and Shelter

to help Leadership Norman build a community garden for senior adults at the YMCA, as well.

A fellow board member at *Earth Rebirth* is the kitchen manager at a homeless shelter located within walking distance of school. At her invitation, my students regularly harvest vegetables, deliver the produce, then stay to serve lunch and clean up afterwards. I can't believe how much they enjoy this extension of our garden. Afterwards, they throw on hairnets and joyfully wrestle for mops and brooms.

Teachers are always grateful to have opportunities for quality professional development, but being able to travel internationally and design our own experience surpassed all expectations. Because of Fund for Teachers, we were able to learn in a setting that would have been unobtainable through our own means. We find ourselves constantly referencing our fellowship with students

to make them aware that there are donors in the world who desire to help others achieve their dreams. Our dreams became a reality and are transforming children's attitudes, food habits and perceptions about serving others.

**Fund Facts:** Diane Wood has taught in Norman Public Schools for 18 years and received multiple grants to maintain the school's vegetable garden. She works with teachers across the district to provide inquiry-based experiential learning using the garden as a teaching tool, and was selected as Teacher of the Year for Lincoln Elementary for 2014-2015.

## A Laboratory for Teacher Learning

(Continued)

Last spring, graduation coincided with the appointment of a new superintendent for Boston Public Schools, Tommy Chang. My old boss at TFA asked if I wanted to meet Tommy and discuss the role of assistant superintendent of professional learning – the work I'm now engaged in. Every day, I consider what's in the curriculum we expect teachers to use and how we support them in that effort. I want teachers to feel like empowered professionals who have control over what they think is best, the same feeling Fund for Teachers gave me.

Through my fellowship in Vietnam, I saw myself as one who could impact the world. I realized I am someone with agency. I have something to say and ideas that work. Similar to my fellowship, I now go from where the learning takes place (BPS classrooms) to where education is taught (leading professional learning for BPS teachers) to where policies are made (collaborative interactions with district leaders and community partnerships). At every level of education, we need to think critically about structures that remove roadblocks for teachers so they can do the work that makes students successful.



Presenting as a student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

**Fund Facts:** When Doannie led professional development for TFA teachers, Massachusetts was in the top 10 percent of all regions in teacher effectiveness, satisfaction and retention. During this tenure, he also designed and executed with Boston University an alternate path to teacher certification – the only such program receiving a high rating by the 2014 NCTQ/US News and World Report study of teacher preparation programs. Learn more about Doannie's company at [teachinggenome.com](http://teachinggenome.com).



HARNESSING THE POWER OF DIVERSE TEACHING STYLES TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING



The nine-member team on a break at the PLC Conference

## Leading Our Community in Learning

Rebecca Plank - Heritage Elementary School, Waunakee, WI

How can we work collaboratively as teachers to change the focus from *our* teaching to *student* learning? Faculty from Heritage Elementary School found the answer in working as a Professional Learning Community, or PLC.

This story started several years ago when our principal observed the district's high school using the PLC model. He knew that professionals helping each other was key to meeting student needs. As the staff was introduced to the concept, a team of nine teachers created and implemented our original PLC mission statement, collaboration norms and school vision. Our team works daily toward training all staff to become the first recognized PLC Model School in Wisconsin.

To gain this recognition, our team used a Fund for Teachers grant to attend the two-day PLC conference in Lincolnshire, IL. There, we learned how to focus student learning on four pillars:

- What is it we want students to learn?
- How will we know if they know it?
- What do we do if they don't know it?
- What do we do if they already know it?

We also realized that these same questions apply to teachers. Although we planned on learning ways to help students learn, we also had time to come together and discuss what *we learned*, how we felt about it and how we see it impacting student learning. It helped us make real life connections to our work with students. We talked about what we, as a staff, are already doing in our building and what we need to implement in order to continue moving forward on our PLC journey.

Back at school, our team formed the Guiding Coalition responsible for leading our staff toward the goal of being the state's role model for Professional Learning Communities. Together, we ensure that we and our colleagues remain focused on our mission, vision and four pillar questions as a school and by grade level.

As our PLC teams learn and grow, students' standardized test scores continue to improve, helping close the achievement gap between economically-disadvantaged students and their peers. In addition, classroom instruction and learning is more consistent across

the school now, thanks to regular assessments led by our fellowship team. The staff feels they are working smarter, not harder, using data to drive curriculum that is meeting the needs of ALL learners. And, we're succeeding as a team, developing learning goals and constantly discussing and implementing best practices we see in each other.

Giving nine staff members the opportunity to attend such an inspiring and educational conference has changed our entire student population, emotionally and academically, in such positive ways. We are shifting the school culture from cooperation (co-operate/passive) to collaboration (co-laboring/active) – terms synonymous to us prior to our fellowship, but infinitely different when it comes to achieving peer and student success.

**Fund Facts:** This is the second team of FFT Fellows from Heritage Elementary to attend the PLC conference. Eighteen teachers are now trained to implement the PLC model at this school.



Catalina (second from right) with fellowship team at Tsukuba University in Tokyo

## Lesson Study Leaders

**Catalina Martinez, El Sol Science & Art Academy – Santa Ana, CA**

I'm working toward a world where parents read math story problems to children at bedtime and the chalkboard at the end of a math lesson could be mistaken for one in art. This world is emerging at my school because of my Fund for Teachers fellowship.

Colleagues at San Francisco's Hillcrest Elementary and I spent two weeks at Tsukuba University in Tokyo last summer, observing math professors plan, implement and reflect on lessons to make math class as conversational as history or literature. My visions for putting our learning to work were put on hold due to my family's relocation to Santa Ana. After hearing about my fellowship and exposure to international math instruction, El Sol Science & Art Academy (a Spanish dual immersion school) created a position for me as its first math instructional specialist.

While my peers in San Francisco continue to communicate with me as they implement the strategies we learned together, I work with teachers 400 miles

away to develop lessons and new ways of connecting to students using math. We're learning that it's not just what you say as a teacher, it's also when you say it and how you respond to students. We're rethinking our roles as math teachers and adjusting methods to meet students where they are.

To do this, I lead grade level meetings to help determine which instructional strategies match students' needs and the content taught. We also open up classrooms as laboratories. We watch peers deliver lessons, learn what works and what doesn't, then adjust our plans for the next time we're in front of the room. We don't sit in the back judging teachers, we actively observe students and gauge responses. Instead of one person looking and listening to all 26 students, we now have extra sets of eyes and ears supporting us on lessons we created together.

Being a teacher is hard. It's even harder if you don't have the opportunity to collaborate. Teachers need each other

because there's a lot of learning to be done and a lot of adjustments to be made in how we do our job. Traveling to, and observing professional development in, Japan prepared me to support teachers in learning new methods for teaching mathematics.

I have so much love for math, teaching and learning. Working with students, families and teachers is where I can affect the most change. I experienced the value of professional development in Tokyo; now, I'm implementing what I learned in Santa Ana.

**Fund Facts:** Catalina Martinez is a two-time FFT Fellow and a graduate of the Stanford Teacher Education Program.



In our next issue:

**Meet the 2016 Fund for Teachers Fellows**  
Grant recipients announced on April 5th  
at [fundforteachers.org](http://fundforteachers.org)



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## Beyond the Classroom

by Patricia Greenleaf, Alief Learning Center – Houston, TX

The main discovery on my 2011 Fund for Teachers fellowship was not about Galileo's contributions to math and science – it was that students need teachers who are willing to do whatever it takes to make education come alive for them. In fact, applying for and receiving a Fund for Teachers grant made a new phase of my career come alive for me, as well.

When I returned from my fellowship in Italy and started creating an environment that championed students' "out of the box" thinking, my peers and administration took notice. They watched my leadership skills emerge, cheered as I took the stage with Academy Award winner Richard Dreyfuss to speak on behalf of all FFT Fellows and celebrated when I won "Teacher of the Year" in our building and "Secondary Teacher of the Year" for the district. While I was content in the classroom, my peers and school leadership encouraged me to do more.

I became department chair, a member of the instructional leadership team and increasingly represented our school at the district level. As I completed assistant principal training last summer, a position opened up on my same campus. I moved from "day to day" classroom instruction to working as an instructional coach for teachers as an assistant principal. We work together on instructional strategies, mentoring, lesson planning, relationship building and student-centered learning. And as an administrator, I'm writing grants, finding resources and leading our teams toward shared success.

This expanded impact began when I boarded a plane for Italy on my FFT fellowship. I had never flown internationally or navigated a city (or country) alone. Fund for Teachers was the stepping stone to where I am now, without a shadow of a doubt. I grew in confidence and others' confidence in me grew, too. Everything I learned during my fellowship continues to push me to get better and better, for myself, my students and my school community.

**Fund Facts:** To watch Patricia's speech representing Fund for Teachers and the teaching profession, visit <http://bit.ly/FFTgreenleaf>.



Patricia on the steps of Museo Galileo in Florence