



FFT Fellows with a professor at Havana's Intercultural Center

## Mental Health + Physical Health = Academic Success

Sahar Khatri, Highbridge Green Middle School – Bronx, NY



### HEALTH & WELLNESS

I am proud to work in a school that supports students beyond their academic needs. Ninety-seven percent of our students live in poor and unstable circumstances, which often results in socioemotional and behavioral issues, lower academic performance and poor health. Our staff consistently reflects on ways to help students and their families cope with the challenges of their reality: being first or second generation immigrants of poverty trying to navigate unfamiliar and often confusing systems.

Despite economic challenges, Cuba is globally recognized as a leader in public health and education, with a well-developed school health program and literacy rate of 99.7 percent. Furthermore, Cuba does not prioritize or distinguish between mental and physical; instead, the two are considered a "single unit." In the Bronx, where we see almost five times as many children hospitalized

for asthma-related complications and twice as many children diagnosed with diabetes than the rest of the United States, students' barriers to physical and mental health regularly impact academic performance. To learn how Cuba integrates student wellness into the curriculum, my team and I designed a fellowship which created a first-of-its-kind professional learning community between American educators and Cuban health professionals in collaboration with the Cuban Health and Education Ministry.

Our Fellow team included four middle school educators: Johanna Marte, Elizabeth Martinez, Graciela Pichardo and me. We were joined by one of our school's math teachers, a social worker and a counselor from a high school in Queens. This dedicated team enrolled in a two-week course at the National Institute of Hygiene, Epidemiology, and Microbiology in Central Havana taught by a talented and experienced team of

professors, psychologists, pediatricians, educators, social workers and community workers. We explored health curriculums and programs addressing HIV and sex education, LGBTQ, mental health and special education. When not in class, we observed Havana organizations providing services around these issues.

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Executive director Karen Webb (center) with the Dalio Foundation's Andrew Ferguson and Barbara Dalio at a celebration of FFT's Connecticut Fellows.

## Addressing Mental & Physical Health to Achieve Academic Success

(Continued)

Our biggest take-away was the centralized collaboration among the community, schools, medical personnel and families. Students as young as five years old are identified for educational, behavioral and emotional services, creating a preventative approach to health and education. Our team brought elements of this back to the Bronx to strengthen relationships with families and build further connections within our community. Implementing Family Teacher Teams (FTT) is one of component of this plan. Instead of traditional parent/teacher conferences, we meet as a team of parents and advisors to go over student progress, practice strategies to support students at home, set goals and build networks with other families. In addition to the FTT, our school is also a member of the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. The fellowship in Cuba gave us an opportunity to reflect on conversations we have with families during these visits and the necessity of discovering students' past social and emotional experiences within the education system so we can support their needs.

Beyond our school, we are collaborating with feeder elementary schools to learn about the needs of our students before they enter our building. The journey ahead is long, but our ultimate goal is to create brave spaces for conversations around sex education, LGBTQ rights, and mental and emotional health, and we will do so through a long-term collaboration with peers in Cuba.



Sahar accepts her course certificate from Dr. Aguilar, one of the program directors

**Fund Facts:** Sahar is a Math for America Fellow, founding math teacher at the Highbridge Green Middle School and member of The Global Math Department – an online community of math educators. Read more about her fellowship at <http://bit.ly/FFTkhatri>.

## From the Executive Director

These values define the enduring character of Fund for Teachers: who we are, what we stand for, and how we do our work. These values also amplify our mission, foster leadership and provide the foundation and framework for our work with teachers, Fellows, Board, staff and partners. They are the principles against which we measure the worthiness of our decisions and actions. We hold ourselves accountable for transforming these values into action.

### Excellence

A passion for excellence and improvement drives our work. We – and our teachers – are on a lifelong quest to do more and be more for students. FFT looks for the best ideas to move student growth and achievement forward. Together, the Fund for Teachers team – our Fellows, staff, Board and partners – inspire and support each other to do more than we think we can.

### Respect for the Teaching Profession

FFT respects teachers as professionals charged with nurturing our country's future workforce and citizenry. Because teachers often know best how to meet the needs of their students, they need to be empowered with self-directed opportunities to enhance and improve their skills in order to advance student achievement.

### Opportunity Finder and Risk Taker

FFT supports teachers who identify achievement gaps, seek out solutions and strive for the stretch goal. This trajectory requires awareness, inquiry, empathy and resilience. People discover their abilities, values, passions and responsibilities in situations that take them outside their comfort zones.

### Self-Directed Life-Learners

Teachers who model a passion for life-long learning inspire the same in their students. The best professional learning combines passion, a deep understanding of students' strengths and needs, compelling purpose and challenge. Professional learning is both a personal process of discovery and a group activity. FFT supports self-directed professional learning that develops the teacher and students and strengthens the school and broader community.

### Catalyst

Teachers are the catalysts of their students' future, sparking curiosity by creating learning experiences that provide something important to think about, time to experiment, time to make sense of new learning, and opportunities to apply learning to new situations. Teachers are agents of change who incite, encourage and even push students – and each other – to be and do more than they thought possible.

### Collaboration

Innovation does not happen in isolation. Ideas that are shared amongst many lead to new and better ideas. Ideas are strengthened when the creators exchange ideas and learn how to influence others to reach a common goal.

### Empathy

Real and deep immersion into our students' cultures and their learning styles builds empathy and respect for different perspectives. Empathy for our students, colleagues and ourselves is critical to understanding the diverse students and communities we serve and removing the obstacles to their learning.

By adhering to these values, Fund for Teachers begins our seventeenth year of accelerating the work of America's finest teachers. Please join us.

Ever Forward,

Karen K. Webb  
Executive Director

## 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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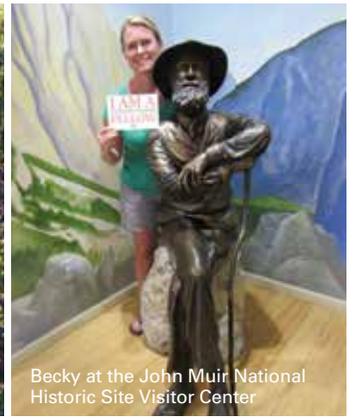
Doannie Tran  
Assistant Superintendent, Professional Learning  
Boston Public Schools



Becky in Yosemite National Park



Documenting her field trip at the local nature park



Becky at the John Muir National Historic Site Visitor Center



A sample of student work from the field trip



Students intensely observing their surroundings in Colchester

# This Land Is Your Land

Becky Granatini, Colchester Elementary – Colchester, CT



## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

Last summer, I had the amazing opportunity to research environmental awareness and positive action projects through the work of John Muir, an early advocate of wilderness preservation and founder of The Sierra Club. I explored sites influential in his life’s mission, such as his homestead in Martinez, CA, and Muir Woods. However, it was Yosemite National Park’s stunning vistas, starlit skies and peaceful surroundings that remain with me. Through conversations with many park rangers, Muir experts and conservationists, I developed a deeper understanding of Muir and how his work with “difference makers” drove his success.

I returned to school energized and excited to share this experience with my

students. In early October, I organized a grade level visit to a local woodlands area for students to closely observe seasonal changes in the environment. Students practiced mindfulness as they listened to the noises of nature, and then recreated those sounds into a “nature symphony” with percussion instruments and the help of our music teacher. Students also documented sensory observations through contour drawings and nature journals so they could remember their visit through specific evidence. We continue to build knowledge about trees, wildlife and flowers by learning through online resources and text also purchased with my FFT grant. Students are now creating field guides for younger peers and developing positive action projects to replicate John Muir’s impact. My

ultimate goal is to create an outdoor learning space where students co-exist with nature as they learn.

This experience opened so many doors to new learning and taught me to dream even bigger. I had no idea just a few short months ago how much I would grow and how empowered my students would feel. My Fund for Teachers fellowship continues to be a life-changing experience for me and I am certain the impact will be far reaching and life-changing for my students, as well.

**Fund Facts:** As a second grade teacher and STEAM lead teacher, Becky infuses the arts and meaningful problem solving into her teaching. She was named the Connecticut Association of School Librarian’s Teacher of the Year for work with a Library Media Specialist.

## Also



**Martin Lincoln**  
Gore High School – Gore, OK

Completed outdoor education programs in Alaska’s Denali National Park and Kenai National Park to change the focus of Outdoor Education classes from sport hunting to wildlife stewardship.



**Laura Newman & Jocelyn Rivera**  
Henderson K-12 Inclusion School – Boston, MA

Volunteered with the Sea Turtle Monitoring Program at the Nature Conservancy in St. Croix, US Virgin Islands, to develop science and language arts units on conservation/stewardship.



Donna with her warped loom at the Taos Arts School

# Weaving Together a Balanced Life

Donna Matovich, Winston Middle School – Winston, OR



## ARTISTRY

It's the 21st Century! We communicate with immediacy across the entire world, cure diseases and send humans into space. Who would have thought that educational reforms would call for us to teach skills such as artistry, imagination and personal expression? And how would I do that with seventh graders? I decided to go back to basics, and what is more basic than the study of a culture whose creativity and artistry has thrived throughout the centuries?

Thus, this summer on my Fund for Teachers fellowship I found myself in New Mexico learning to weave Navajo rugs. We began every day at the Taos Art School with a song of greeting and thanksgiving to the world around us, but the first day we tackled the most important step in weaving a rug, which is warping the loom. According to our teacher, Pearl Sunrise, "If the warp [lengthwise yarns that hold the tension on a loom] is too loose or too tight, uneven or unbalanced, it will show in the final project; just as if people are uneven or unbalanced it will show in

our attitudes, health and relationships." My first lesson to apply with students: Thinking with a creative mind is difficult if it is strung too tightly. I now take five minutes at the beginning of class to check our balance – to see if we are "uneven." A few minutes of quiet reflection on the topic of the day helps calm and unwind the restless seventh grade mind.

As we wove, Pearl shared that the Navajo way of learning is through observation. Children learn by watching family members perform creative tasks. When the child starts showing curiosity in an art, they are provided tools and the means to learn. Pearl was taught as a child, "Just make it beautiful. When you get tired, go outside and look around." The foundation of the Navajo culture is that they are connected and grounded to the earth. Lesson Two: Take the time to observe my students, listening for sparks of interest to help bring them to life.

Lastly, the Navajo culture is an oral one. After completing my work in Taos, I traveled to the Indian Pueblo Culture Center in Albuquerque where I found this quote: "When we share

our stories, the teller and the hearer are connected to one another and our culture is preserved." Lesson Three: Communicate. We are losing the ability to have normal conversations without the interference of an electronic device. Teaching kids to listen, then respond to one another has been a challenge. Through holding discussions and encouraging them to share opinions, I am encouraging kids to look outside of themselves and into the lives of others.

On my fellowship, I learned to *stop* - taking the time to unwind the creativity; *look* - making an effort to unleash curiosity and imagination; and *listen* - hearing students' thoughts, ideas and opinions. Only then can we, together, keep life balanced and "just make it beautiful."

**Fund Facts:** Donna has taught all subjects (even vocational agriculture) in elementary, middle and high school over her 31 years in the classroom. She earned her National Certification as an Early Adolescent Generalist and thrives on giving students opportunities to experience history in action.

## Also



**Team representing all elementary schools**  
District Center #58 – Kansas City, MO

Completed language and cultural immersion classes in Guatemala to enhance a district art curriculum lacking in Latin American representation and better serve a growing and underserved ELL population.



**Joshua Spees**  
Waynesboro High School – Waynesboro, VA

Document through photography water issues across the southwestern United States to encourage students to combine research with personal interest to create meaningful art that influences culture and ideals.



Fifth grade Mathletes apply strategies from Hamburg



Team Mathletes arrive in Hamburg

## Rote Learning vs. Radical Math

Taiese Carson, Jessica Harrington, Christopher Kenny, Ariel Kramer, Capital City Public Charter School – Washington, DC



### PROBLEM SOLVING

Every adult knows that middle school is hard. Asking students to embrace math in the way most math teachers historically do makes it even harder. Our math team is piloting a “Mathletes” curriculum to encourage high-performing students’ learning, but we want to tap into strategies for reaching struggling students, as well. To learn how educators from around the world are succeeding in their classrooms, we designed our fellowship to attend the International Congress of Mathematical Education (ICME) in Hamburg, Germany.

Attending ICME was vital for us because we learned research-proven strategies to improve our practice. The session on reaching all levels of students emphasized the importance of assigning a deep challenge during class and allowing students to appropriately struggle while solving the problem. We also observed the social impact of students sharing their work and building upon their knowledge base, including the errors. Presentations on teaching

students with disabilities provided us with ideas for teaching students with a variety of needs, not just academic. Our favorite session dealt with kinesthetic learning by graphing equations with students’ body movements.

A surprising outcome was the idea of using math to create social justice. Several presenters discussed the historical, political and cultural dimensions of math and its relationship to society. One could easily view math as an isolated topic; however, it is very much embedded in the Presidential election, data teachers use to close the achievement gap and how our students view the world. One speaker closed out her speech by asking the audience how we can “teach mathematics so that people stop killing each other.” She asked participants to find ways to see the work of teaching math as a collective agenda that fosters relationships, builds students’ math identities and encourages the loving and doing of math across content areas.

Traditional professional development experiences focus on localized issues.

At this conference, we observed cross-continent comparisons of math practices that promote student achievement. Through a variety of lectures from researchers and interaction with more than 3,000 educators from all around the world, we bonded as a team and established goals for our department and our students. South African mathematician Caroline Long wonderfully states, “Students in grades 6-8 are forced to make radical changes in their math learning and those who don’t make them are dependent on rote learning for the remainder of their math education.” We can either allow students to depend on memorization or we can help them see the love, creativity and inspiration math has to offer. Our team is ready to be the catalyst that sparks that change. We are ready to make the difference in students’ lives.

**Fund Facts:** All four members of this Fellow team have either completed or are working on graduate degrees in math education.

### Also



**Dana Cox**  
Dulles Middle School  
Sugar Land, TX

**Melissa Sanchez**  
Highlands Elementary  
Sugar Land, TX

Explored the world’s foremost innovative and creative learning environments in Switzerland and Germany to inspire school- and district-wide integration of research-based instructional practices that encourage invention, global-thinking and problem-solving.



**Michael Fox-Boyd**  
Bishop McNamara High School – Forestville, MD

Created a virtual field trip to Russia to design an interactive curriculum in which students follow the footsteps of Leonhard Euler (one of the world’s greatest, but somewhat unknown, mathematicians) and apply insights to solve community problems.



Andrea (center) with community advisors at the *Crossed Pollinations* opening reception

On her fellowship exploring the Hengduan Mountains

## Mapping Out Community Connections

Andrea Lofthouse-Quesada, Alhambra High School – Alhambra, CA



### MULTICULTURAL LITERACY

Environmental Science is the science of places. I teach with mantras, such as: “Everything must come

from somewhere, everything must go somewhere.” We map locations of oil extraction or rubber plantations. We outline topography to better plan for natural disasters or understand the movement of migratory birds. My environmental science students utilize mapping to tackle challenges guided by the engineering process.

For five weeks last summer, I crossed the map of China, exploring the tropics in Guangzhou and Xishuangbanna, as well as alpine locations in the Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan and Mount Emei in Sichuan.

It was no coincidence that I designed my Fund for Teachers fellowship to learn in China, the country of origin for 25 percent of my city. I interviewed a conservation scientist from Sichuan University on the impact of the Yangtze River flood in 1998. I also learned from an ecologist with the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanic Garden; by teaching mapping and research skills and mentoring young scientists, her work

drives conservation research throughout Southeast Asia.

Returning home I felt more connected to the broader landscapes of Asia and felt passionate about these places and their resident plants and animals. I also felt more strongly that science and biodiversity conservation is a *practice* and discovered a new role for myself as an educator: bringing together diverse communities by celebrating the beauty of nature. I wanted to share my passion for the plants of China – camellias, roses, magnolias – and the nature conservation movement there.

Fast forward 15 months to September 20th and the *Crossed Pollinations* Exhibition and Community Festival! I spearheaded this interactive series of nine art/nature workshops at the local library and farmer’s market. The educational exhibition presented eight themes demonstrating universal experiences of nature and profiling Chinese environmentalists. One incredible outcome of my fellowship and the festival was the development of our community’s Youth Ambassador Council. I recruited students who were either multilingual and/or recent

immigrants from our high school and East Los Angeles College. During *Crossed Pollinations*, they engaged the public and facilitated festival programming in Mandarin, Cantonese and Spanish, creating inclusive spaces while becoming community leaders.

One East Los Angeles College student shared this remark with me via text:

“I really admire Andrea, who has courage and determination to do what she wants to do. In China, students can’t do what they want to do, they only study for the final exam. We study for our freedom and hope one day we could do what we want, but gradually we get lost, we forget what we really like. When I saw Andrea make big effort in her project, it touch me a lot. Helping her is just like releasing my soul which holds my dream.”

**Fund Facts:** Andrea returns to China this spring for more research on flowers and biodiversity conservation practices. As a board member of the Chinese American Education Association, she has been invited to facilitate more local cultural programming; she is also learning to speak Mandarin at East Los Angeles College, where she regularly runs into former students and Youth Ambassadors.

### Also



**Rachel Agosto**  
Berwick Alternative K-8 School – Columbus, OH

Explored and documented the African influences in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic to increase understanding of Afro-Latino culture and help students make cultural connections with the ethnically-diverse Latino culture.



**Brad Ollmann**  
St. Anthony Park Elementary – Saint Paul, MN

Studied Latin dance and percussion in Mexico, Guatemala and Colombia, improving linguistic fluency and musical proficiency, to better meet the needs of Spanish-speaking students and their families.



Students in the new fabrication workshop

## Computer Aided Career Prep

Scott Larson, North Baldwin Center for Technology – Bay Minette, AL



### DIGITAL LITERACY

At the recommendation of local employers, my school purchased a Computer Numerically Controlled (CNC) lathe for our carpentry department last year. This machine, in addition to a CNC router, paved the way for learning that would provide our economy with computer programmers and operators. However, there were no state-approved courses using these tools. I submitted a course description and outline for two new classes to the Alabama State Department of Education’s Career and Technical Education department and, last spring, obtained approval for two new Computer-Aided Design Wood Technology classes. Now, I just needed to learn how to teach them.

With my Fund for Teachers grant, I enrolled in two woodworking courses at Anderson Ranch in Snowmass, CO. For one month, I learned about furniture design and craftsmanship through digital design/fabrication workshops. All were



Scott on his fellowship last summer

extraordinary experiences in project based learning with highly regarded artists, designers and craftsman as instructors. As a bonus, I was continually engaged with artists and designers, which resulted in a highly creative environment in which to explore and learn – exactly the type of environment I hoped to create in my classroom.

Utilizing CNC technology in our school’s new design and furniture building workshop, students are now growing in creativity, ingenuity and innovation while applying academic skills to real world problems. By designing

and producing functional items, students are developing marketable skills for high demand, high wage jobs.

The biggest impact of my fellowship was not the much-needed technical skills, but learning those skills in an atmosphere that reminded me what is possible in the right environment. I am inspired to create an atmosphere of exploration where students learn technical and 21st century skills that prepare them for future endeavors. I believe students pick up on a certain energy when their teacher is inspired and excited. After my fellowship, I am both.

**Fund Facts:** In Scott’s six years of teaching, he has been named Teacher of the Year, SkillsUSA District Advisor of the Year, and his program received the Go Build Alabama Career Technical Education Program Award. Read more about his fellowship at <http://bit.ly/FFTlarsen>.

### Also



#### Technology Team Norwalk, CT

Attended the International Society of Technology in Education, the world’s largest tech conference, in Denver, CO, to learn about tangible resources and hands-on teaching strategies that further innovate classrooms within the district.



#### Jennifer Gagner Orange Avenue School – Cranford, NJ

Researched the ancient site of Pompeii to create a virtual field trip for students which they will use to recreate the city using MineCraft and provide solutions for protecting the city against volcanoes/earthquakes.



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## Mission in Motion

One of the tenants of the Kauffman Foundation's human capital strategy is teacher retention. We do not want to lose the high quality talent we currently have in Kansas City. Consequently, our collaboration with Fund For Teachers has allowed us to empower teachers to dream big and figure out what they need to inspire them to stay in the classroom. Together, we have been able to send grant recipients to destinations of their choosing to continue their learning and growth as classroom teachers. The FFT Alumni network in Kansas City is growing bigger and stronger and teachers are working together across schools to form partnerships that capitalize on all of their fellowship learning. We just kicked off this year's grant cycle with a huge turnout of potential applicants who were advised by FFT Fellows who know what it takes to succeed. We are really excited to see what this year's teachers will choose to pursue for their development and the advancement of their students. We, as you, are inspired by all of these teachers and the work they do in the classroom to impact our world.

Corey Scholes  
Director, Education  
Kauffman Foundation



Corey delivers the good news to a new FFT Fellow in Kansas City.