

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nashville's First-Ever Teacherpreneur Program Awards Educators for Breakthrough Ideas

Top prize of \$10,000 awarded to Pearl-Cohn teacher to enhance supports for new teachers

NASHVILLE, TENN. – Feb. 25, 2022 – The [Nashville Public Education Foundation](#) (NPEF) hosted its inaugural Teacherpreneur pitch event with support from the program's founding partner, Amazon, on February 24, 2022. The program, announced last year, is intended to harness educator innovation to remove systemic inequities and build schools where all students thrive.

“The inaugural Teacherpreneur winners are examples of the innovation happening within Metro Nashville Public Schools every single day,” said **Katie Cour, President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation**. “The pandemic has highlighted so many systemic inequities facing our students, so we are proud of the work these educators have accomplished and can't wait to watch their ideas flourish thanks to the financial support from Amazon.”



The inaugural Teacherpreneur cohort. From left to right: Alyssa Janco, David Meyers, Daven Oglesby, Nikki Bolling, Quanita Adams, Nita Smith, Addison Barrack, Chriseni Pulse, Justin Montenegro, LaKeshia Rayford, Paula Pendergrass, Dyetra Olige.



The Teacherpreneur panel of judges. From left to right: Michelle Gaskin Brown, Dr. Keri Randolph, Shani Dowell, Dr. Mason Bellamy.

The inaugural Teacherpreneur cohort, made up of twelve Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) educators, participated in a series of design sessions over the past six weeks to help conceptualize and develop their prototypes. The Teacherpreneur experience culminated in a final concept pitch event judged by a panel of experts including Dr. Keri Randolph and Dr. Mason Bellamy, the Chief Strategy Officer and Chief of Academics and Schools with Metro Nashville

Public Schools (MNPS), respectively; Michelle Gaskin Brown, Manager of Public Policy with Amazon; and Shani Dowell, Founder & CEO of Possip.

The inaugural Teacherpreneur winners, in addition to cash prizes, will receive seed funding to pilot their projects:

- **Quanita Adams**, a math teacher at Pearl-Cohn Entertainment Magnet High School, earning first place and a prize of \$10,000 for her idea to create a network of supports for novice teachers in schools that experience high teacher turnover.
- **Daven Oglesby**, Exceptional Education teacher at Lakeview Elementary Design Center, earning second place and a prize of \$7,500 for his plan to support special education students to develop independent living skills in the elementary school classroom.
- **Addison Barrack**, a Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) teacher at Margaret Allen Middle School, earning third place and a prize of \$5,000 for her plan to design a flexible school environment for students who need to work to support themselves and attend school simultaneously.



Teacherpreneur first place winner with Amazon representative and NPEF President. From left to right: Michelle Gaskin Brown, Quanita Adams, Katie Cour.

Also winning a cash prize was LaKeshia Rayford, technology teacher at Glencliff Entrepreneurship STEAM Magnet Elementary School, who earned the Community Favorite award, coming with a cash prize of \$2,500. This award was determined by online voting on video previews of the cohort's pitches and audience voting at the pitch event. Rayford's idea would empower students to address cultural gaps with their peers and teachers through a supportive model.

"These inspiring teachers are implementing solutions to some of the toughest challenges facing our city's public schools," said **Courtney Ross, Amazon's senior manager of community engagement in Nashville**. "The Teacherpreneur program is moving the needle in Nashville and we're thankful for the opportunity to partner with them."

The remaining participants of the inaugural cohort each received a \$1,000 cash prize in the name of Kay Simmons, the founding executive director of NPEF, then called Nashville Alliance for Public Education, who died in November 2021. The Kay Simmons Award recognizes progressive ideas and bold steps to enhance public education.

Recipients of the Kay Simmons Award are:

- **Nikki Hendricks-Bolling**, Shwab Elementary School
- **Alyssa Janco**, Eagle View Elementary School
- **Justin Montenegro**, Martin Luther King, Jr. Magnet School

- David Myers, J.T. Moore Middle School
- Dyetra Olige, LEAD Southeast High School
- Paula Pendergrass, Robertson Academy
- Chriseni Pulse, Cumberland Elementary School
- Nita Smith, I.T. Creswell Middle School of the Arts

NPEF's Teacherpreneur program represents the innovation that is possible when teachers are engaged as change-makers both in and beyond the walls of their classroom. Teacherpreneur joins a portfolio of NPEF's regular celebrations of inspiring MNPS educators at its annual Public Schools Hall of Fame and the Blue Ribbon Teacher Awards, as well as investments in teacher leadership such as the College Access Champions Fellowship and supporting MNPS' Teacher Leadership Institute.



MNPS Director of Schools Dr. Adrienne Battle at the inaugural Teacherpreneur pitch event.

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About the Nashville Public Education Foundation

The Nashville Public Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works to remove barriers for students by promoting excellence, serving as a critical friend to Metro Nashville Public Schools, convening stakeholders, and advocating for change so all students can thrive in school. More information is available at nashvillepef.org.

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