

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nashville Public Education Foundation Awards Educators for Identifying Solutions to Systemic Education Challenges

NPEF's Teacherpreneur program harnesses educator innovation and provides cash prizes totaling \$25,000 and seed funding to break down barriers to student success

NASHVILLE, TENN. – March 2, 2023 – The Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF) hosted its second annual Teacherpreneur pitch event on March 1, 2023, at the Fisher Center at Belmont University. The program, launched last year, is intended to harness the passion and expertise of public school educators by supporting them in developing innovative solutions to address systemic inequities and build schools where all students thrive. Concepts focused on topics such as increasing supports for English Learner students and families, providing academically rigorous and appropriate instruction for students with disabilities, building welcoming and inclusive cultures for LGBTQ students, and ensuring equitable access to transportation for after school activities.



The 2023 Teacherpreneur cohort (from left to right): Christopher Reid, Kate Sundell, Sarai Ovalle, Sam Singer, Taylor Edens, Dr. Jennifer Love, Tabatha Barner, Jonathan Parrish, Kellee Hill, Nathan Fields. Not pictured: Anna Bernstein.

At the pitch event, the cohort of 11 Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) educators presented their ideas to a panel of judges, representing both education and entrepreneurial expertise, including Harry Allen, NPEF board member and Chief Relationship Officer of Studio Bank; Shani Dowell, founder and CEO of Possip; Dr. Renita Perry, Chief of Innovation with Metro Nashville Public Schools; Courtney Ross, Senior Manager of Community Engagement at Amazon; and Dr. Michelle Springer, Chief of Student Services with Metro Nashville Public Schools. Dr. Adrienne Battle, Director of Schools with Metro Nashville Public Schools, kicked off the event to welcome and congratulate the Teacherpreneurs.



Dr. Adrienne Battle, Director of Schools with Metro Nashville Public Schools addresses the crowd at the 2023 Teacherpreneur pitch night.

“Educators are powerful agents of change, and our city’s public school teachers have a depth of knowledge and expertise on how to best support students and families across our district. This year’s Teacherpreneurs are representatives of the innovation happening within Metro Nashville Public Schools every single day,” said **Katie Cour, President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation**. “We are incredibly proud of the work these educators have accomplished and look forward to supporting this year’s winners as they begin to implement their solutions with generous support from Amazon.”

This year’s Teacherpreneur winners, in addition to cash prizes, will also receive access to seed funding to pilot their projects:

- Dr. Jennifer Love, an AVID coordinator and teacher at East Nashville Magnet High School, earned first place and a prize of \$10,000 for her idea for a program to incorporate a social-emotional learning curriculum in student athletics to provide increased access to mental health supports for high school students.
- Nathan Fields, a science teacher at Hillsboro High School, earned second place and a prize of \$7,500 for his plan to create an interactive, challenge-based program designed alongside students to grow interest and achievement in science curriculum.
- Sarai Ovalle, an 8th Grade English Learner Teacher at Antioch Middle School, earned third place and a prize of \$5,000 for her idea for a program to increase access to magnet schools for academically advanced English Learner students.



Teacherpreneur first place winner with Amazon representative and NPEF President. From left to right: Courtney Ross, Dr. Jennifer Love, Katie Cour.

Also winning a cash prize was Kellee Hill, a science teacher at Whites Creek High School, who earned the Community Favorite award, coming with a cash prize of \$2,500. This award, sponsored by Possip, was determined by online voting on video previews of the cohort’s pitches and audience voting at the pitch event. Hill’s idea would aim to provide supports to science teachers to help them make Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) curriculum more accessible and engaging for English Learner students.



Teacherpreneur community favorite winner with Possip CEO and NPEF President. From left to right: Shani Dowell, Kellee Hill, Katie Cour.

“Amazon is proud to support these innovative educators in implementing solutions to some of the toughest challenges they see affecting students in their classrooms and schools,” said **Courtney Ross, Amazon’s Senior Manager of Community Engagement in Nashville**. “We value the opportunity Teacherpreneur provides to learn from the expertise of our city’s educators and invest in their solutions to effect positive change in our public schools.”

In addition to the first place, second place, third place, and community favorite prizes, the remaining participants of the cohort each received a \$1,000 cash prize in the name of Kay Simmons, the founding executive director of NPEF, then called the 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:

- Tabatha Barner, Glencliff Entrepreneurship STEAM Magnet Elementary School
- Anna Bernstein, Bellevue Middle School
- Taylor Edens, Early College High School
- Jonathan Parrish, W.A. Bass Alternative Learning Center High School
- Christopher Reid, Cole Elementary School
- Samantha Singer, Glencliff High School
- Kate Sundell, LEAD Academy High School

For NPEF, the program serves as an opportunity to promote the excellence and innovation within Nashville's public schools, while educating the community about important education topics and elevating solutions-driven conversations. NPEF regularly celebrates other inspiring educators of MNPS at its annual Public Schools Hall of Fame and the Blue Ribbon Teacher Awards.

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About the Nashville Public Education Foundation

The Nashville Public Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that works to remove the barriers to educational experiences by highlighting success, serving as a thought partner 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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