

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nashville Public Education Foundation Announces 2026 Teacherpreneur Program Cohort

*Amazon Sponsors Fifth Year of Public School Educators Advancing Innovation
and Driving Success in Nashville's Public Schools*

NASHVILLE, TENN. – Dec. 11, 2025 –The Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF) announced the latest cohort of the [Teacherpreneur program](#), marking its fifth year and continuing its partnership with founding supporter Amazon. Since 2021, the Teacherpreneur program has supported over 40 educators to develop their innovative solutions for removing barriers to student success, with winners receiving cash prizes and access to seed funding for implementation.

Modeled after successful programs across the country, the Teacherpreneur program offers a leadership development experience that empowers Nashville's public school teachers to develop solutions for real-world challenges in public education. Over eight weeks, 12 educators will identify a critical issue affecting student outcomes, analyze its root causes, and design an innovative solution to help their students thrive.

Some of the issues being considered by cohort members include creating employment certification pathways for multilingual students, increasing resources for family engagement programs, building support for first year teachers, and facilitating stronger connections to magnet school opportunities. The cohort experience will culminate in a pitch event in March 2026, where educators will present their ideas to a panel of community judges for a chance to win a share of \$25,000, as well as funding to support the implementation of their ideas. The fifth Teacherpreneur cohort includes:

- Courtney Antonello, H.G. Hill Middle School
- Ashley Bolan, Hunters Lane High School
- Mary Jo Cramb, Academy at Old Cockrill
- Nakia Edwards, Oliver Middle School
- Katie Fitzpatrick, Hume Fogg Magnet High School
- Molly Goss, Cane Ridge High School
- Heather Hall, East Nashville Magnet High School
- Leigh Ann Harbort, Harris Hillman School

- Madison Reeb, Valor College Prep
- Likisha Rhodes, Cane Ridge High School
- Louisa Saylor, Goodlettsville Elementary School
- Debbie West, Waverly-Belmont Elementary School

“Teachers are at the heart of our schools, and they see every day what our students need to grow, succeed, and believe in themselves,” said **Dr. Diarese George, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of NPEF**. “Teacherpreneur demonstrates the remarkable creativity and dedication of Nashville’s teachers and shows what’s possible when we empower those who know our children best to address the challenges they face. We are looking forward to seeing how this year’s cohort will remove barriers to student success and help students thrive across the district.”

The new cohort builds on last year’s class, which included winning ideas for creating supports for schools to build community gardening programs; restructuring the school day schedule to provide more consistent and meaningful collaborative planning time for teachers; and increasing access to sports and recreational equipment to promote exercise and student engagement. These concepts, along with a Community Favorite Award winner, received \$25,000 in prize money.

Last year’s winners are already making a measurable impact in their school communities. Most recently, Saul Calzadilla has brought his pilot to life by giving families hands-on experiences that promote gardening education and healthy eating. His latest event featured a professional chef leading a live cooking demonstration at Cosecha Community Development.

Other Teacherpreneur winners have also advanced meaningful solutions. With support from the MNPS EL Office, Addison Barrack created and now leads a team of Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) Transition Facilitators who help students move from the SIFE program into general education by setting goals, serving as a guide and mentor, and connecting families with resources. Additionally, Kathleen Shepherd launched Family Literacy Kits featuring bilingual books and family-friendly activities that promote literacy at home and celebrate her school’s diverse cultures and languages.

“Amazon has seen firsthand how the Teacherpreneur experience inspires educators to approach their roles in new ways, pursue leadership opportunities, and collaborate with colleagues to tackle real-world public education challenges,” said **Courtney Ross, Amazon’s senior manager of community engagement in Nashville**. “Past Teacherpreneur winners are continuing to make a difference for Nashville’s students through their pilots,

and we are proud to highlight the innovation, passion and expertise of teachers in our community through this partnership.”

NPEF encourages the community to follow the cohort’s journey [online](#) and on social media as participants develop their concepts. The community will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite educator-developed solution both online and in-person at Pitch Night.

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About the Nashville Public Education Foundation

The Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF) is a nonprofit organization committed to ensuring every child can thrive in Nashville's public schools. NPEF works to improve student outcomes in Nashville’s public schools by identifying challenges and advancing evidence-based solutions. Since 2002, NPEF's role as a catalyst for transformation has yielded tangible results in areas such as teacher professional development, teacher compensation, principal quality and college access. Learn more at nashvillepef.org.

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