



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nashville Public Education Foundation Awards \$25,000 to Educators for Innovative Ideas During Teacherpreneur Competition

Teacherpreneur 2026 cohort members vied for winning spots during the annual Pitch Night competition, where they presented their innovative ideas to address educational challenges and increase opportunities for MNPS student success.

NASHVILLE, TENN. – March 5, 2026 — Four public school educators won awards totalling \$25,000 during the Nashville Public Education Foundation’s Teacherpreneur Pitch Night held at the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Belmont University. The culminating event marked the conclusion of the fifth Teacherpreneur cohort, which engaged 12 educators in a rigorous professional development curriculum curated to challenge and encourage them. The two-month program included guest speakers and assignments that aligned with exploring change management theory, researching the root causes of classroom and school challenges, and building empathetic and strategic solutions to serve students and families.

The Teacherpreneur 2026 winners are:

- First Place, \$10,000: **Molly Goss**, Spanish Teacher at Cane Ridge High School. Molly created a program to help multilingual learners become professional interpreters by earning industry certifications in high school.
- Second Place, \$7,500: **Katie Fitzpatrick**, Math Teacher at Hume-Fogg Magnet High School. Katie designed a school partnership program between cluster schools to increase exposure, access, and opportunity for middle school students to cultivate a sense of belonging before attending and thriving at corresponding academic magnet high schools.
- Third Place, \$5,000: **Courtney Antonello**, 6th Grade English Language Arts Teacher at H.G. Hill Middle School. Courtney developed a book club for native and non-native English speakers to read and discuss books in their primary languages to promote language development and a sense of belonging and empowerment.
- The Community Favorite Award, \$2,500: **Likisha Rhodes**, Exceptional Education Teacher at Cane Ridge High School. Likisha introduced a professional learning program to help educators better understand the experiences of students with disabilities and learn about the best ways to support them in the classroom.

The panel of judges awarded the top three winners with seed funding to implement their solutions through pilot programs. However, the Community Favorite Award was determined by votes cast online by the public from March 2 to March 3, and in-person during the invite-only Pitch Night. “The Community Favorite Award brings the greater Nashville community to the table to become aware of the real challenges and barriers from an educator’s point of view, gain insight on the solutions, and recognize the heart work that fuels the hard work of being an educator and cultivating an atmosphere for increased student opportunities and success,” expressed Dr. Diarese George, the President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation (NPEF). **“Ultimately, this evening represents the necessity of listening to educators and supporting them to be change agents in their educational settings.** NPEF is proud to be able to do this through Teacherpreneur.”

The pitches were judged by a panel of leaders across business, community, and education sectors:

- Sheila Calloway, Davidson County Juvenile Court Judge
- John Graham, President of J. Graham Inc.
- Courtney Ross, Senior Manager of Community Engagement at Amazon
- Brynn Plummer, Global Head of Community and Belonging at AllianceBernstein
- Dr. Robert Wallace, Chief of Staff at Metro Nashville Public Schools

Teacherpreneur is presented in partnership with Amazon. Panelist judge Courtney Ross, who serves as the senior manager of community engagement for the tech giant, shared, **“Amazon is thrilled to partner in this incredible program that uplifts the entrepreneurial spirit alongside the first-hand experiences and valuable expertise of educators across Metro Nashville Public Schools.** We applaud their courage to see beyond the reality of the walls and halls of their schools, and their pursuit of change, creativity, and greater possibilities resulting in greater student outcomes.”

The remaining eight cohort members will receive a \$1,000 award sponsored by J. Graham Inc for their diligence and innovation. To learn more about Teacherpreneur and watch the 2026 cohort member videos, visit nashvillepef.org/teacherpreneur.

Photos:



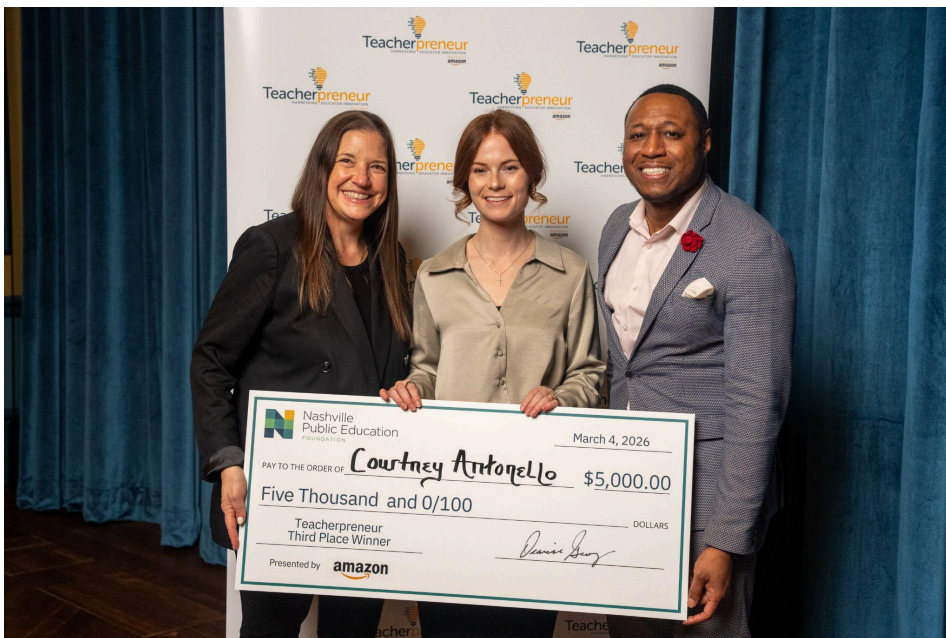
Nashville Public Education Foundation’s Teacherpreneur Pitch Night winners (left to right): First place - Molly Goss, a Spanish Teacher at Cane Ridge High School; Second place - Katie Fitzpatrick, a Math Teacher at Hume-Fogg Magnet High School; Third place - Courtney Antonello (center), a 6th grade English Language Arts Teacher at H.G. Hill Middle School; and The Community Favorite Award winner Likisha Rhodes, an Exceptional Education Teacher at Cane Ridge High School.



First place winner Molly Goss (center), a Spanish Teacher at Cane Ridge High School, is pictured with her \$10,000 check, alongside Courtney Ross (left), Senior Manager of Community Engagement at Amazon, and Dr. Diarese George (right), President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation.



Second place winner Katie Fitzpatrick (center), a Math Teacher at Hume-Fogg Magnet High School, is pictured with her \$7,500 check, alongside Courtney Ross (left), Senior Manager of Community Engagement at Amazon, and Dr. Diarese George (right), President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation.



Third place winner Courtney Antonello (center), a 6th grade English Language Arts Teacher at H.G. Hill Middle School, is pictured with her \$5,000 check, alongside Courtney Ross (left), Senior Manager of Community Engagement at Amazon, and Dr. Diarese George (right), President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation.



The Community Favorite Award winner Likisha Rhodes (center), an Exceptional Education Teacher at Cane Ridge High School, is pictured with her \$2,500 check, alongside Courtney Ross (left), Senior Manager of Community Engagement at Amazon, and Dr. Diarese George (right), President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation.

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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, including teacher professional development, teacher compensation, principal quality, and college access. Learn more at nashvillepef.org.

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