Congratulations!

The Tennessee Educators of Color Alliance (TECA) is pleased to inform you that you have been selected as a member of the first cohort for the Tennessee Educators of Color (TEC) Fellowship for 2020-2021! Since its inception in 2016, TECA has been unwavering in its commitment to elevating the voices of educators of color so that systemic change rooted in policy can take place. The purpose of this fellowship is to develop, connect, and elevate teachers of color in the areas of policy, advocacy and leadership skills in order to improve outcomes for students in Tennessee. We are excited for you to be a part of this diverse group of educators who are change agents in their communities.

Change can take place at many levels in education: state, district, local building, community, or classroom. In most cases, there tends to be more flexibility and autonomy to drive the work in the direction necessary when it is localized. We believe that local policy change through advocacy and activism at the building and community levels will spur change at the district and state levels. We want to position a collective of educators of color to be catalysts and lead the change that they want to see in their local context.

Due to COVID-19 and the structural and systemic racism that has been on display, resulting in civil unrest, many of the social injustices that we have known to always exist have been exacerbated over the last few months. Many of these inequities that play out for students, especially students of color, in the broader community, are replicated in school buildings in some capacity. We have a responsibility to ensure that school environments are antiracist, culturally affirming, and driving toward achieving educational justice for both staff and students. We believe the commitment to this work will affect change for our most vulnerable population of students; it is fitting that the efforts are led by educators that reflect the students’ backgrounds.

We have a lot of work to do ahead of us, but we are thrilled about your commitment to engage in it. Again, congratulations! We are excited for you to join us on this journey of leading change for students in Tennessee.

Sincerely,

Dr. Diarese George
Founder & Executive Director, TECA

Headquartered in Tennessee
www.tneca.org
931.561.6640

Why Create A Fellowship For Educators Of Color?

The TEC Fellowships will benefit all students! The number one factor in student success is the classroom teachers and while nearly 35 percent of Tennessee students identify as racially and ethnically diverse, only 14 percent are teachers of color. Even more concerning only 15 percent of teacher prep candidates are currently educators of color in the teacher pipeline. This disparity in racial representation between teachers and students has important implications for student achievement. In the past 5 years, the number of African American educators entering and remaining in the profession has fallen short. A 2018 report from the Tennessee Department of Education, Teacher and Administrator Retention and Ethnic Diversity in Tennessee, suggests that diverse teachers expose all students to different perspectives and experiences, prompts more flexibility in their thinking, lessens implicit racial bias and stereotypes and ultimately prepare students to interact positively within a diverse society. Additional studies have found the following positive outcomes for students of color when they have access to an educator of color lead to:

• Higher academic achievement;
• Better attendance;
• Reduced risk of dropping out,
• Lower suspensions/expulsions and
• Higher educational attainment aspirations.

Simply put, the retention, elevation and support for teachers of color is imperative for the success of all students receiving a quality public education in Tennessee.

The TEC Fellowship is good for the for the future of our educator workforce. While there are other educator Fellowships in Tennessee, TECA will host the only program for educators of color which addresses specific issues faced by educators of color through lenses of racial equity, inclusion while also equipping participants with practical training and tools to provide solutions for districts, state departments, and other organizations seeking to address the decline in retention for educators of color and success of all students.

What makes the TEC Fellowship unique in comparison to other Tennessee Fellowship programs - other than the focus on educators of color? Our program is exclusively intentional about providing educators of color the information and support they need to feel valued, have access to opportunities and connect in a safe place to engage with other educators of color working to address professional challenges, education policy and leadership issues in a White educator dominated profession. This fellowship provides a collective voice for educators of color in Tennessee.

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I am a native of Nashville. I am an educator and have worked in public, and charter education for the last 9 years. I am currently a School Counselor within Middle School and headed to High-School next year at Pearl-Cohn High School. I am a mother of a 17 year old son and he is my greatest joy. I am currently, enrolled at Trevecca gaining a PH. D in Educational Leadership.

Hope Lester-Bakari holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science from Tuskegee University and a Master of Education Degree in Administration and Supervision from Middle Tennessee State University. She fell in love with education as a career and her ability to positively impact the lives of students while substitute teaching in Chicago, Illinois, eventually earning her certification and going on to teach high school English as well as English as a Second Language. Her professional experience includes Family Literacy, Adult Basic Education, and GED, acquired as a Program Coordinator for The Center For Literacy in Philadelphia. Here in Tennessee, she’s held many positions including Writing Department Chair and English Department Chair. Additionally she has served as an Adjunct Instructor at Mottos State Community College and University of Phoenix. She’s currently a Gifted Education Facilitator with Rutherford County Schools, serving Intellectually Gifted high school students throughout the county. This year she served on the 2020-2021 Board of Directors of the SEYA Book Festival.
Meet the Fellows

JOHNATHAN BROWN
Hamilton County Schools

As a student and now as a teacher, Jonathan Brown has noticed that one of the biggest factors affecting student achievement from year to year continues to be teacher retention. When students consistently have great teachers in the classroom both achievement and culture positively increase. Graduating from Sewanee: The University of the South in 2018 with a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies and minors in both Psychology and Education, the historical, psychological, and structural barriers affecting teacher retention prompted Jonathan to join Project Inspire teacher residency in Chattanooga where he gained a Master of Arts in Teaching from Lee University in 2019.

Since stepping into the classroom as a first-grade lead teacher in Hamilton County, Jonathan has continued his passion for educational equity by combining the eye opening experiences and challenges as a teacher with action: “Teachers of color leave the profession at 2X, while white teachers are leaving at 1.5X. The numbers were shocking, but seeing this firsthand through Project Inspire's Teacher Residency Program, inspired Jasmine to inspire teacher residency in Chattanooga where he gained a Master of Arts in Teaching from Lee University in 2019.

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While there are many barriers to teacher retention, lack of support continues to be one of the biggest factors as to why teachers leave the profession. As a member of the Educator Diversity Council, Jonathan will continue to look for data-based solutions that push to support and uplift teachers of color in the state of Tennessee.

SHARON CLARK
Haywood County Schools

Sharon Clark has been a passionate certified educator at East Side Elementary School for nine years. She taught ELA/Social Studies for five years, and she’s taught STEAM for years as well as serve as district Lead STEAM Teacher for one year and Tennessee STEM Innovation Network’s West TN STEM Lead Teacher for one year. Clark graduated with an Ed.S. in leadership from Lipscomb University in 2019. She is a member of SCORE, a member of the National Organization of Phi Delta Kappa, a graduate of WestStar WestTeach, a graduate of Tennessee STEM Innovative Network’s (TSIN) Rural STEM Cohort and MEEPs Program, TSIN’s Excellence in STEM Teaching award recipient, a PBS Digital All-Star, and NSPDK, Inc., Gamma Psi Chapter’s Leadership in STEM for 2019.

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BRIGGET DAVIS
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

Brigget Davis has worked for Metro Nashville Public Schools since 2004, serving students in kindergarten through fourth grade. For the past three years, her role has been an English Language co-teacher. As an MNSPS educator, Ms. Davis has earned the distinction of ‘Teacher of the Year’ and is a recipient of the district’s prestigious Blue Ribbon Award for Teacher Leadership. Throughout her journey as a proud public school teacher, she has been guided by the belief that it is imperative to foster curious thinkers who have the courage to ask questions, seek answers, and consider the ideas of other learners. Her educational background includes a Master of Science degree from TSU in Curriculum and Instruction and an Educational Specialist degree from MTSU in Administration and Supervision. During her leisure time, Ms. Davis enjoys traveling and relaxing on the beach with her husband and children.

HEATHER DAVIS
Jackson-Madison County Schools

Heather Davis has been an educator for six years. Throughout her time in education, she has taught ELA and Math to grades 4-7. She currently serves as a sixth-grade math teacher, and new teacher mentor at Northeast Middle School. Heather is very about passionate equity in education and addressing biases amongst students and educators. Heather is exalted at building relationships with students while enthusiastically teaching them to use their voice, and advocate for themselves. Additionally, she serves as an afterschool tutor in the community center in her childhood neighborhood.

Heather holds a Bachelor’s of Science from the University of Tennessee at Martin in Integrated Studies 4-8, and is currently finishing her M.Ed at Western Governors University.
Will French (he/him/his) serves as a School Counselor at the Nashville School of the Arts in Metro Nashville Public Schools. He holds Bachelor’s degrees in English and Theatre (Macalester College) and a Master’s degree in Human Development Counseling (Vanderbilt University). Will became a school counselor to combine his passion for college access and success with culturally responsive mental health supports. He is particularly sensitive to the needs of students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students from low-income backgrounds, and students with disabilities. In his work, Will actively works to help students maximize and understand their available opportunities. Through this process, he hopes to instill a greater sense of agency and self-worth within students who have been made to feel powerless.

Prior to becoming a counselor, Will completed two years of AmeriCorps service with College Possible in St. Paul, MN, and worked as a research assistant with the Vanderbilt University Department of Special Education. Currently, while being a counselor, he engages in deep canvassing efforts with the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition and serves on the board of GLSEN Tennessee as a Co-Chair. He also works on multiple teams in the public and nonprofit education sectors to advance equity and inclusion for LGBTQ+ students across MNPS.

Through his efforts and collaboration with multiple stakeholders, including students’ families, Will hopes to promote student voice, racial justice in education, and educators’ participation in the legislative process.

Will French
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

Dr. Erika Henderson, an educator of over 23 years, serves as Associate Program Director for Regional Growth in the Southeast Region of Facing History and Ourselves. There she facilitates regional and national professional development for teachers, schools, student leaders and school districts.

Dr. Henderson is a Memphis native, who previously worked as a master teacher, a district literacy/performance improvement coach and school principal in Memphis, Atlanta, Chicago, and Nashville. Dr. Henderson graduated from LeMoyne-Owen College, and earned her doctorate, master’s, and specialist degrees from Union University. Dr. Henderson has been a New Leaders for New Schools fellow, Ed Reports reviewer, and Senior Klawe Fellow. She holds active memberships with NAACP, NCTE, TCSS, Kappa Delta Pi, and Delta Sigma Theta, Inc.

Dr. Henderson is the Youth Director for Union Grove Holiness Church. She is a loving wife, mother and grandmother who believes that “Education is the great equalizer and the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”

Erika Henderson
Shelby County Schools

Bianca King is originally from Washington, DC, where she earned a Posse Foundation Scholarship to Southeastern University. She attended the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Speech-Language Pathology. Bianca graduated from Valdosta State University with a Master of Science in Educational Leadership. She is currently enrolled at Trevecca gaining a PhD in Educational Leadership.

Bianca King
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

Madison Leathers is originally from Washington, DC, where she earned a Posse Foundation Scholarship to Southeastern University. She attended the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Speech-Language Pathology. Madison graduated from Valdosta State University with a Master of Science in Educational Leadership. She is currently enrolled at Trevecca gaining a PhD in Educational Leadership.

Madison Leathers
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

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Shelby County Schools

Tennessee Educators of Color Fellowship

Meet the Fellows

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Meet the Fellows

Bianca Martinez (She/They) is a middle school Language Arts teacher in Memphis, Tennessee with an undergraduate degree in Literature & Creative Writing from the University of California Santa Cruz and a Masters in Education from Grand Canyon University. She is a fierce advocate for racial, gender, and economic justice for all students and believes that it is powerful for students to truly see themselves in the teachers who educate them. Her work with students is informed by a restorative justice and growth mindset with the core belief being that all students have inherent value and tremendous power. In her free time, she plays rugby with the Memphis Flamingoes, does CrossFit, and drinks coffee every chance she gets.

Patricia Pryor is a native of Cleveland, OH and graduate of Ohio University (Bachelor of Fine Arts) and Middle Tennessee State University (Masters of Education). Patricia has served in education for seven years, in multiple capacities. She began her teaching career in early childhood. After earning her masters, she began teaching for Rutherford County Schools. During her time in Rutherford County, Mrs. Pryor taught 7th-grade ELA, served as chair on different committees, and created an annual student-focused advocacy workshop to address the inequities and challenges that exist for minority teenage students. After teaching in Rutherford County, she transitioned to KIPP where she taught from 2019-May 2021. Currently Mrs. Pryor serves as Dean of Culture for KIPP Antioch College Prep Middle. Patricia is excited to join TEC because she is committed to racial justice, cultural competency, empowering students of all backgrounds, creating equitable and inclusive spaces for educators, and advocating for the voiceless. Her motto is, “BE THE CHANGE THAT YOU WANT TO SEE BY SUPERSERVING YOUR COMMUNITY.”

My name is Tony Raye. I’ve worked in the Education Field for 16 years. After graduating from Gallatin High School, I earned a BBA in Business Management from Austin Peay State University. I attended Austin Peay on a 4-year scholarship to play Basketball. During my time at Austin Peay, I hit the winning shot in the NCAA Basketball Tournament. I received a Master of Education (Special Education) at Grand Canyon University. I am currently completing an EDS in Education Leadership (2021). I also worked at Nissan Motor Corporation for 10 years. I’m a tireless worker and advocate for students of Color in our Education System in Tennessee. I will always advocate for Equity and acceptance for these students. I love athletics and working with diverse people who want to change the culture to total acceptance and Equality and ALL students of Color.

My education career began in the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, Nevada. During my 15 years with CCSD I taught middle school social studies for 10 years, ran the district social studies department for two years, designed and delivered professional development session new teachers in the Onboarding Department for two years and was a Dean of Students for one year at Palo Verde High School. I received my undergraduate degree from University of Nevada, Las Vegas, in secondary social studies and a master degree in Educational Administration from the University of Phoenix. I also was the state coordinator for National History Day in Nevada and worked with the Civil Center for Education to bring We the People, Kids Voting, Trial by Pense and Mock Trial to several CCSD schools. I am passionate about social studies education and providing multiple historical perspectives so that students can see how to spot bias, critically think about the world around them and develop into informed citizens. I participated in teacher study tours with the Turkish Cultural Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities and American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants. Visiting Turkey, South Africa, Germany, Czech Republic and Poland sparked a passion for travel that lead to a pause in my career in education in 2018 to become a flight attendant with Southwest Airlines. After some memorable years traveling to all corners of the US I found my way back to what makes my heart the happiest, teaching. I am currently teaching at STEM Prep Academy in Nashville. When I am not shaping future leaders I enjoy exploring my new hometown and state, traveling, cooking and spending time with my family.
TEAH SHOPE
Bradley County Schools

Teah Shope is entering her 14th year of teaching at Water Valley Community Elementary School in Cleveland, TN. She has taught both 1st and 2nd grades and will teach 3rd grade in the upcoming school year. Teah has served Bradley County Schools as a district-wide mentor for ELA as well as for new teachers specifically focusing on how they can implement proven classroom management techniques into their first-year classrooms. She is a three-time, school-level Teacher of the Year winner. Within her classroom, Teah firmly believes that relationships are at the heart of excellent teaching. Originally from Guatemala, Teah has a deep connection to her Hispanic heritage. She uses the Spanish language to provide additional scaffolding and support to English Language Learners but also to assist their families in and out of the school setting. Teah graduated from Lee University in 2009 and won the Biblio Excellence in Teaching Award. She is currently pursuing her MEd in Educational Leadership through Carson Newman University.

BRIA SIBLEY
Hamilton County Schools

Ms. Sibley is a highly motivated, enthusiastic and dedicated educator who believes that every student has the ability to succeed and should be given the opportunity to do so. She is committed to creating a classroom and virtual atmosphere that is stimulating and encouraging to all students. She believes relationships are essential to building an engaging and positive learning community, not only in the classroom but throughout the community. Ms. Sibley believes there is strength and power in representation and strives to be a role model for her students. Upon graduating from the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga in 2014, she returned to the elementary school in which she attended as a student to teach 3rd Grade. She continues much of her ambition to the Boys & Girls Club and Youth and Family Development Centers for bringing safer havens growing up in the type of neighborhoods that she still currently teaches in.

Currently in her fifth year of teaching, she has taken on several teacher leadership opportunities such as pitching Culture Conversations to her district and successfully hosting monthly open forums for educators. She is currently in the process of building a brand. SittingWithMsSibley, which offers virtual tutoring, educational consulting, and Culture Conversations outside of the classroom. This coming summer Ms. Sibley will oversee the implementation of a Literacy Program for the Boys and Girls Club of Chattanooga to ensure students across the district are steady readers throughout the summer.

TATIAYANA WEBB
Shelby County Schools

Tatiyana earned her bachelors in Biological Sciences from the University of California, Irvine and a Masters’ degree in Public Administration from The University of Georgia and a 2nd Masters’ in Educational Leadership from Columbia University. Tatiyana has worked in youth development for over a decade. Tatiyana ran a girl empowerment nonprofit called Young Ladies With Potential. She served as Corps Member and Team Leader at a pre-school through Jumpstart-AmeriCorps. She developed and managed a tutoring program with the local middle school in Athens, GA. Tatiyana helped lead the development of a Promise Neighborhood grant, which aimed to create services from cradle to career for youth ages 0 - 24. Tatiyana also served as the Program Coordinator of a 4-week collegiate residential STEM program for high school students at UCI called COSMOS. After joining Teach for America-Memphis, Tatiyana has taught 6th-8th grade math for eight years. As a Leading Educator Fellow, Tatiyana served on the Leadership team, coaching other math teachers and developing school culture systems. Tatiyana was named Educator of the Week by W REG News Channel 3 and TN Education Lottery. Tatiyana currently teaches 8th grade math in Memphis. TN and serves as the 8th Grade Team Leader and Middle School Math Department Chair.

LA DONNA WILLIAMS
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

Dr. LaDonna Y. Williams is a native Nashvillian and proud graduate of Metro Nashville Public Schools where she has served as an educator for the past nine years and is now the Dean of Instruction at Lakewood Design Elementary School. She received her bachelor’s degree in Marketing Education - Training from the University of Tennessee – Knoxville. After enjoying a successful 18-year Sales and Marketing career, she left to answer the call to teach after completing her Masters in Teaching from Trevecca Nazarene University.

In her tenure as a teacher, she has served in several leadership roles and has been recognized by her peers as a mentor and leader and nominated as a Blue Ribbon Teacher. She led the New Teacher Academy where she trained, coached, and mentored new teachers to ensure their success and retention. She is the lead teacher for the Promising Scholars Summer Program at her school. She recently completed her EdD in Leadership and Professional Practice from Trevecca Nazarene University and is excited about her next mission to serve as a building leader. Her passion is to help every child receive equitable access to the best educational experience. She is the proud mother of two wonderful sons, James III. (Tre’), a senior at UTK and Jaren, a rising Junior at Green Hill High School in Mt. Juliet, TN. She enjoys working with the Children’s Ministry at the Temple Church, serving in her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and spending time with friends and family.
WELCOME FELLOWS!
2021 Cohort

FAITH AMBROSE
Achievement school District

HOPE BAKARI
Rutherford County Schools

JONATHAN BROWN
Hamilton County Schools

SHARON CLARK
Haywood County Schools

BRIGETT DAVIS
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

HEATHER DAVIS
Jackson-Madison County Schools

WILL FRENCH
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

ERICA HENDERSON
Shelby County Schools

BIANCA KING
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

TATIAYANA WEBB
Shelby County Schools

PATRICIA PRYOR
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

MANDY LEATHERS
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

BIANCA MARTINEZ
Shelby County Schools

TEAH SHOPE
Bradley County Schools

TONY RAYE
Rutherford County Schools

ERICA RODRIGUEZ
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

ЛАДОНА WILLIAMS
Metro-Nashville Public Schools

TATIAYANA WEBB
Shelby County Schools

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