

ECRA's Leading Educator Ambassadors for Equity Bios

Brett Bigham is the 2014 Oregon State Teacher of the Year the only Oregon special education teacher to be named Teacher of the Year and to win the NEA National Award for Teaching Excellence. In 2015 he was given the NEA LGBT Teacher Role Model Award. He is the creator of Ability Guidebooks, a series of support books for people with autism that give step-by-step directions how to visit cultural landmarks and social events. He is president of ORSTOY, the Oregon chapter of the National Network of State Teachers of the Year and serves on the boards of Oregon Safe Schools and Clubfunder.Org.

Sydney Chaffee is the 2017 National Teacher of the Year and a 9th grade Humanities teacher, department chair, and instructional coach at Codman Academy Charter Public School in Dorchester, MA. She has spoken to audiences around the world about the limitless power of teachers and students to change the world. Sydney is a National Board-Certified Teacher with a passion for helping diverse learners grow through authentic, relevant, interdisciplinary curricula. She earned her B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College and her M.Ed. from Lesley University. Learn more at www.sydneychaffee.com.

Dr. Jemelleh Coes is Georgia's 2014 Teacher of the Year and a 2015 Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes fellow. She spent six years teaching English/language arts and math in both the general and special education setting at Langston Chapel Middle School. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Theory and Practice with certificates in Disability Studies, Education Law and Policy, and Qualitative Research from the University of Georgia where she is currently a professor in the Institute of Human Development and Disability. Her work has a laser focus on equity and disrupting traditional ways of engaging in education. She is the daughter of immigrant parents from Guyana and a first-generation college graduate.

Dr. Melissa Collins has been an elementary school teacher at John P. Freeman Optional School in Memphis for 19 years, and was a Global Teacher Prize Finalist (Top 50) (2018). She is the recipient of: Queen Smith Award, Stephen Sondheim Award, Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence, the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, the National Science Teaching Association Sylvia Shurgrue Award, and West Tennessee Teacher of the Year. She is a National Board-Certified Teacher and is a 2018-19 Fellow of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Dr. Megan Olivia Hall is the 2013 Minnesota Teacher of the Year. As a science teacher, Megan has worked with learners of many ages and levels, from kindergarteners to graduate students. A National Board-Certified Teacher, she serves as science department chair and develops anti-racist social-emotional curriculum at Open World Learning Community in St. Paul Public Schools. Megan's writing has been featured in *Education Week* and *The Science Teacher*. Her book, *Awesome Kitchen Science Experiments for Kids*, is currently Amazon's #1 best seller in Scientific Experiments & Projects. A Leading Educator Ambassador for Equity Fellow with the Education Civil Rights Alliance, Megan holds a Ph.D. in Learning, Instruction, and Innovation from Walden University.

Athanasia (“Sia”) Kyriakakos was 2016/17 Baltimore City Teacher of the Year, the 2017 Maryland State Teacher of the Year, and one of four finalists for the National TOY title, and is a world-renowned artist. She earned an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2000, her teaching certification from Central Connecticut State University in 1995 and her BFA from The Maryland Institute, College of Art in 1991. While teaching Visual Art in Baltimore, she has been a member of the Instructional Leadership Team, a Baltimore Teachers Union mentor, and in 2015, a member of the AFT Teacher Leaders program. In 2018 she received The Teachers for Global Classrooms fellowship and The Fulbright for Distinguished Teachers Award.

Kareem Neal is the 2019 Arizona Teacher of the Year and has taught self-contained special education for 22 years. For the past 11 years, he has taught at Maryvale High School. He has a Master’s degree in Special Education from New Jersey University. Kareem’s passion is in social justice issues. He is a member of the Phoenix Union High School District’s (PUHSD) Political Engagement team and the PUHSD Council of Representatives for the teacher union. He is Vice President of the PUHSD Black Alliance and director of his school’s UNITOWN diversity club. He is a PUHSD restorative justice trainer. He is the 2018 AEA Diversity Grant recipient. Kareem is currently serving his 2nd year on the Arizona K12 Center’s Teacher Solutions Team.

Estella Owoimaha-Church is a 2017 Global Teacher Prize Finalist (Top 50) and a recipient of the CTA Equity & Human Rights: Peace and Justice Award (2018), and she teaches theatre and English in South Los Angeles. She is the founder and executive director of Education Ensemble – a non-profit dedicated to cultivating inclusive, creative spaces for youth by fostering community and utilizing art as a form of direct-action. As a first-generation American, descendant of Nigeria and Samoa, Estella’s passions lie at the intersections of racial justice and arts education. She is committed to ensuring marginalized youth have equitable access to education.

Tom Rademacher (Mr. Rad to his students) is an English teacher in Minneapolis, Minnesota and the 2014 Minnesota Teacher of the Year. He teaches writing and writes about teaching on his blog. His book, published by the University of Minnesota Press, is called “IT WON’T BE EASY: An Exceedingly Honest (and Slightly Unprofessional) Love Letter to Teaching”.

Gloria Pereyra-Robertson is the 2017 Oregon State Teacher of the Year, 2017 OEA Presidential Citation Teacher of the Year, a 2018 NEA Teaching Excellence awardee and 2019 Life Changer of the Year award winner. She is the daughter of Mexican immigrants who has dedicated over two decades to working in Title 1 schools; she has taught in San Diego, CA and is currently teaching kindergarten at Washington Elementary in Medford, OR. Besides being a peer coach, mentor and cooperating teacher with SOU, Gloria is also an innovator and advocate who is currently a board member for the National Coalition for Safe Schools (NCSS).

Monica Washington is the 2014 Texas Teacher of the Year and a solution designer and instructional coach for BetterLesson, supporting teachers and other instructional coaches across the country as they make positive shifts in instruction and leadership. An educator of 22

years, Monica has received several honors and awards including being named a 2015 Milken Unsung Hero Fellow and a 2015 NEA Foundation Global Fellow. In addition to instructional coaching, Monica supports teachers through workshops, speaking engagements, and blogging for *Education Week* and *Education Post*. She serves on the Board of Directors for the National Education Association Foundation and The National Network of State Teachers of the Year.

Kelisa Wing is a Professional Development Specialist who previously served as an Assistant Principal, and an 8th grade English teacher. She is the 2017 DoDEA State Teacher of the Year, and a 2016 Association of Supervision, Curriculum, and Development (ASCD) Emerging Leader. She created a non-profit organization called #Squad Up for Education, Inc., to empower parents, students, and educators to commit to become partners in education. She also published a book called "Promises and Possibilities: Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline".

Dr. Maryann Woods-Murphy is a Talent Development and Professional Learning Specialist with more than 30 years in the classroom. Maryann is the 2010 New Jersey Teacher of the Year, the winner of the Martin Luther King Birthday Celebration Award, a 2011-2012 Washington Teaching Ambassador Fellow, an America Achieves Fellow (2011-2015), an NEA Foundation Global Fellow and the winner of the 2018 YWCA Racial Justice Award. Maryann is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Education Association Foundation and is former Director on the board of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Woods-Murphy earned her Ed.D. in Teacher Leadership at Walden University in 2016. She has co-chaired Teens Talk about Racism (teensstalkracism.org) for 20+ years, and she writes and speaks regularly on talent development, equity, global education and anti-racism.

Abdul Wright is the 2016 Minnesota Teacher of the Year and was recognized as the first black male to receive the award, the youngest, and the first from a Charter school. He is an eighth grade Language Arts teacher at Mastery Charter School in North Minneapolis, as well as an Instructional Coach and Data Team leader. He has taught Language Arts for the past six years. Mr. Wright completed an African American Leadership program and earned his degree in Education from Hamline University in 2016, and a Bachelor's degree in Communication Arts and Literature in 2011. He received the 2015 Minneapolis PeaceMaker award, and in 2018, Mr. Wright was identified as a Minnesota African American Heritage Award Honoree.