



ECOLOGY PROJECT  
INTERNATIONAL

# EPI TEACHER FELLOWSHIP

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



# EPI TEACHER FELLOWSHIPS

## 2025 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



### PROGRAM HISTORY & OVERVIEW

Since 2000, Ecology Project International (EPI) has involved more than 117,000 students in conservation education field programs in five countries. In 2013, EPI began hosting an educator-exclusive course, now known as the EPI Teacher Fellowship, which immerses teachers in EPI's experiential education curriculum.

The Teacher Fellowship is an 8-day field workshop designed to engage participants in hands-on investigations, community science research projects, and inquiry-based learning activities that strengthen understanding of key ecosystems. This powerful field experience incorporates cross-curricular learning experiences that inspire classroom instruction and understanding of the complexities of global environmental issues.

### PROGRAM CONTACT HOURS

- 40 hours of active participation in daily activities

### PROGRAM DATES & CONTACT INFORMATION

- **3.29.2025 - Costa Rica**      Costa Rica Contacts: Keri Geiser - [keri@ecologyproject.org](mailto:keri@ecologyproject.org)  
Christian Bazzano - [christian@ecologyproject.org](mailto:christian@ecologyproject.org)
- **2.22.2025 - Mexico**      Mexico Contact: Jules Stuber - [jules@ecologyproject.org](mailto:jules@ecologyproject.org)
- **4.19.2025 - Yellowstone**      Yellowstone Contact: Grace Davidson - [grace@ecologyproject.org](mailto:grace@ecologyproject.org)

**Office information:** 315 S 4th St E • Missoula, MT • 59801 • 406.721.8784

### EPI PARTNERS

- Pacuare Reserve (CR)
- Tirimbina Biological Reserve (CR)
- Centro Interdisciplinario de Ciencias Marinas (MX)
- National Park Service (YEL)

# EPI TEACHER FELLOWSHIPS

## 2025 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



### EDUCATING, INSPIRING, & EMPOWERING NEW LEADERS

At EPI, our mission is to inspire youth with nature and empower them with science, fostering tomorrow's leaders. We envision a diverse movement building communities that cherish and restore the ecosystems that sustain them.

EPI was founded around three principal values: scientific literacy, environmental protection, and cultural exchange.

We acknowledge the challenges facing our planet today and aspire, together with our students and teachers, to help create a motivated, informed, critical, and creative citizenry who, based on a better understanding of nature and their role in it, practice positive behaviors.

**The Question:** How do we nurture the next generation to appreciate the role of science in addressing local and global problems related to climate change, sustainable development, and resource conservation?

Educators need to develop a robust understanding of science in order to incorporate science-related competencies in their classrooms. They need to use inquiry-based techniques to guide students in the tools and skills of research. They need to experience critical ecosystems first-hand in order to teach about their importance to global health.

**Our Approach:** EPI Teacher Fellowships address these needs by engaging participants in hands-on investigations, community science research projects, and inquiry-based learning activities. These authentic learning experiences are set in ecologically sensitive and biodiverse locations in Yellowstone, Costa Rica, and Mexico, where the integrity of natural systems and the complex human interactions within them are observable as part of one interrelated system. These locations help model the importance of using authentic life experiences to teach science. Our professional staff of instructors implements a robust curriculum that focuses on promoting environmental literacy through the incorporation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

In the pre-field phase of the Fellowship, beginning with your invitation to our online learning platform, EPI works to familiarize Fellows with the field work ahead. Short writing prompts and an open forum for discussion are intended to provide building blocks for group formation and assess baseline knowledge and expectations.

During the Teacher Fellowship, participants get a close-up view of complex ecosystems and their interconnected relationships between soil, water, plants, wildlife, climate, and people. We explore how organisms have adapted and survived the test of immense competition to become unusual, diverse, and fascinating. Experiencing these unique ecosystems encourages a "new set of glasses" for one's local environment and provides a wider context for exploring significant questions, such as: What is biodiversity and why does it matter to me? What factors determine the biodiversity of these ecosystems, my hometown, and our planet? How will climate change affect them? How will it affect us locally? As a global citizen, what is my responsibility? How can I use this experience to improve my teaching?

In the post-field phase, we provide a framework to cement your findings from the field and implement them into your teaching, and we gather your experiences to share widely.

# EPI TEACHER FELLOWSHIPS

## 2025 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

### FELLOWSHIP LOCATIONS

**Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem** - As soon as you touch down in Bozeman, Montana, you'll understand why this ecosystem inspired our national parks. The landscape's singular beauty, abundance of wildlife, and fascinating thermal features combine to make this high-altitude plateau unique. Fellows will pursue a suite of research projects with teams from the National Park Service, spending time on foot or snowshoe (depending on weather conditions) and collecting data on species migration and land use in and around the park.

**Baja, Mexico** - While camping on this UNESCO-protected biosphere reserve, Fellows conduct a snorkel-based census of marine invertebrates and learn about the island's unique desert ecosystem. Based out of EPI's student campus in the city of La Paz, Fellows meet with local teachers and students and explore the culture of the city. The program includes a range of water and land-based activities, including boat access and educational excursions. Fellows are expected to snorkel and participate in ongoing monitoring projects.

**Costa Rica** - Based primarily on the Caribbean coast, Fellows monitor a protected tropical beach alongside instructors and researchers, in search of nesting leatherback sea turtles. These censuses are conducted at night, on foot. Fellows should expect long days in tropical conditions during this unique opportunity to participate in the conservation of Earth's largest turtle species. Fellows will also explore biological rainforest reserves and learn about tropical forest ecology.



### MENTAL PACKING LIST

Of all the things you bring into the field, **the most important will be your open and inquiring mind.** During the Teacher Fellowship, you'll be guided by your curiosity, inquiry, and drive for discovery. Unlike a typical classroom course of study, this experience offers the opportunity to overcome fears, build confidence, recharge enthusiasm, explore different teaching techniques, reflect, and develop connections with fellow educators while spending time in critical ecosystems. Your outcomes are rooted in your personal investment, preparation, and willingness to engage.

### FELLOWSHIP GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**Develop your familiarity with EPI's approach to education through field science & cultural exchange.**

- Build a global perspective of the rich and interconnected nature of societies, cultures, and environments, as well as an awareness of the personal actions needed to sustain them.
- Observe the impact of globalization on local communities and ecosystems.
- Reflect on how personal experiences, choices, perspectives, and assumptions fit within the larger global context.

**Celebrate & reconnect with the fundamentals of how students learn.**

- Identify specific ecosystem-related topics that can be used to create engaging standards-based STEM learning experiences for students and communities.
- Identify research activities, protocols, and teaching strategies that can be used at a local level to engage students in inquiry-based learning and address national curriculum standards in a variety of subjects (e.g. science, social studies, language arts, & Spanish language).
- Deepen understandings of how to effectively use inquiry-based explorations as a means of constructing knowledge about the world.

# EPI TEACHER FELLOWSHIPS

## 2025 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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### **Provide unique experiences & activities to take back to your classroom.**

- Engage in hands-on guided explorations of your site's ecosystem.
- Explore and describe the basic structure, components, and function of an ecosystem, and explain its role in maintaining a healthy global ecosystem.
- Understand different types of field investigations and how to use them to develop inquiry-based explorations with students.

### **Build a supportive network of science educators working toward similar goals.**

- Engage in group conversations on challenges and opportunities in 21<sup>st</sup> century education.
- Share lessons, examples, and successes from your home institutions with a supportive group of engaged educators.
- Identify challenges to overcome in applying these concepts in the classroom — where help is required, how Fellows can encourage each other, and how to develop an action plan.

### **Introduce you to EPI's work & promote future student courses to program sites.**

- Participate in field research projects developed by EPI and its research partners to gain an appreciation for the opportunities and rewards of field research.
- Gain competency in using traditional field research tools as well as digital technology to monitor and evaluate different ecosystem components.
- Explore how basic tools and protocols of scientific exploration, as well as innovative science education resources, can be used to deepen knowledge and understanding about ecosystems, your local environment, and the world.

## **PROGRAM FORMAT**

### **Pre-Departure**

The Teacher Fellowship takes place primarily in remote field locations. Before departure, EPI provides Fellows with background information, readings, a pre-course assignment, and curriculum documents through an online platform. Thorough participation in the pre-departure program greatly enhances the experience for all participants.

### **In the Field**

The field component of the Teacher Fellowship takes full advantage of learning resources in each course's home ecosystem. Each day offers new learning opportunities and is broken into morning and afternoon sessions. Sessions last 2-3 hours and include an initial challenge or question as well as a guided reflection activity. Field sessions are designed to actively engage participants via guided natural history explorations, inquiry-based learning activities, community science research projects, cultural explorations, and more. Incorporated into each session are activities designed to help participants deepen their understanding of best practices in inquiry-based learning and sustainability science.

Daily sessions are facilitated by course instructors, guest faculty, researchers, and local naturalist guides (in some cases). The following page contains an example of sessions and associated topics planned for the Teacher Fellowship.

### **Upon Return**

The future of our planet depends on our youth. As teachers, we have the responsibility to help our students develop the dispositions, knowledge, competencies, and behaviors they will need to actively participate in a sustainable future. As an EPI Teacher Fellow, your task is to share and apply what you learn with your students, your district, and your community. Drawing upon all that you experience with us, what commitment will you make? What impact will you have? What legacy will you leave? We provide the tools, resources, and facilitation to stay connected to one another and share stories and successes.

### COMMON SCIENTIFIC COMPETENCIES CONNECTIONS

Session Title	Ecological Knowledge / Competencies Connection
Types of Questions for Field Research Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask well-defined questions to conduct an investigation.</li> </ul>
Descriptive Field Investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan a field research procedure, identifying relevant independent and dependent variables.</li> <li>• Plan for control of your design and level of accuracy required.</li> <li>• Decide how much data is needed to produce reliable measurements, and consider any limitations on the precision of the data.</li> </ul>
Comparative Field Investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use spreadsheets, databases, tables, charts, graphs, statistics, and mathematics to collate, summarize, and display data and to explore relationships between variables, especially those representing input and output.</li> </ul>
Correlative Field Investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize patterns in data that suggest relationships worth investigating further.</li> <li>• Distinguish between causal and correlational relationships.</li> </ul>
Research Project Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify gaps or weaknesses in explanatory accounts.</li> <li>• Identify flaws in arguments; modify and improve them in response to constructive feedback.</li> <li>• Use text, tables, diagrams, and graphs to communicate understanding or to ask questions about a system under study.</li> <li>• Make oral presentations of results and conclusions and engage in appropriate discourse with other Fellows by asking questions and discussing issues raised in presentations.</li> </ul>

# EPI TEACHER FELLOWSHIPS

## 2025 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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### PROGRAM ASSIGNMENTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Fellows are expected to:

- Review and respond to pre-departure readings and activities.
- Share and apply what they learn during the field experience.
- Be a positive, active, engaged team member before, during, and after the field experience.
- Maintain a daily journal while in the field.
- Submit a post-course reflection paper about their field experiences.

### PRE-COURSE ASSIGNMENT

**Objective:** Using the template available on your Fellowship’s Google Classroom platform, review and respond to pre-departure readings and activities.

- Contemplate the ways that you would like to see EPI’s Teacher Fellowship influence your teaching practice and help you grow personally and professionally.
- Share your expectations and hopes to inform course instructors of your personal and professional goals.
- Explore background information on the field location you’ll be visiting.

**Due Date:** This activity is due **one month before your course departure date**, and should be submitted through the Google Classroom platform once complete.

### ON-COURSE & POST-FELLOWSHIP ASSIGNMENTS

**Description:** While you’re in the field with EPI on your Teacher Fellowship, we’ll ask you to keep a daily journal—in your own journal or in the space provided in your EPI course journal. Plan to use this space to reflect on your daily experiences. Beyond describing what happened, challenge yourself to analyze those events and reach the *why* that underlies them.

The field portion of your Fellowship is an intensive period of learning, study, and reflection. How do we hold on to the knowledge and experiences obtained on course? You will be asked to write a reflection paper using your daily journal and the prompts provided on your Google Classroom platform.

**Due Date:** The reflection is due **one month after your course return date** and should be submitted through the Google Classroom platform once complete.

**Our Goals:** Every EPI Teacher Fellow serves a community of learners back home; our goal is to help you extend what you learned through your field experience to create the largest possible impact upon your return. By keeping a daily journal and synthesizing those thoughts into a reflection paper, we’re aiming to lock in the knowledge and experiences you gained in the field, making them accessible and meaningful.

### OPTIONAL COLLEGE CREDIT

After the completion of your Fellowship, EPI can provide a letter verifying the completion of 40 PD hours. Additionally, you can receive graduate credit through one of our accrediting universities. Separate registration and fees apply, as well as additional assignments. Check in with your Fellowship Contact about specific requirements.



Meet the 2025  
**MEXICO**  
Teacher Fellows

FEBRUARY 22 - MARCH 1, 2025

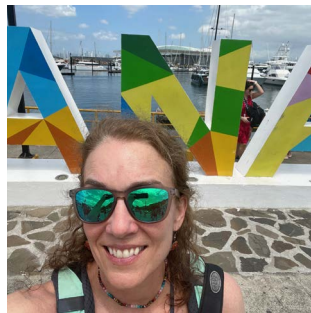




**KAREN BENDORF**

Karen teaches Oceanography, a course she started two years ago at her high school with much time devoted to developing the class so all students can appreciate the ocean and how we are impacted by it. Her background is Exercise/Sports Science (Wake Forest) & Sports Medicine (Indiana) with many

years experience as an ATC, CPT, & teaching Anatomy. A native Long Island-er she has always loved the water; her best college class was SCUBA. She has Rescue diver cert, loves to travel, and learn more about the Ocean. She loves her dogs, fostering rescue puppies and anything involving the outdoors!



**MELISSA DAVIS**

Melissa has an MS in Zoology and a passion for all things related to nature and conservation. She has been teaching for over 20 years. She currently teaches AP Environmental Science, Marine Science, and Biology 2 at a high school in Charleston, SC. She has been a volunteer at

the Avian Conservation Center's Medical Clinic for 11 years, helping treat injured shorebirds and birds of prey. Melissa also volunteers with the sea turtle patrol on Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge. She enjoys reading, hiking, traveling, and hanging out with friends and family, including her dog.



**CHARLIE DISHMAN**

Charlie has a Masters in Arts and Teaching and is currently teaching High School Biology in Portland, Oregon. Over the past 14 years Charlie has worked in a variety of grades and environments, including public schools, charter schools, outdoor schools, and international schools. They have

been working with the queer and trans student group to both find support and create action. Charlie is working to develop an after-school science program for LGBTQIA2S+ youth. They have a lovely spouse of 25 years and an amazing 13 year old son. Charlie regularly uses "forest bathing" and hiking to relax themselves.



**JASON GARVER**

Jason has been teaching science for over 16 years, sharing his excitement for science, nature, and being outdoors with younger generations. For the past 8.5 years, he has taught high school science at a public, alternative high school in Kalispell, MT. Jason graduated from Montana

State University with degrees in Biology, Broadfield-Science Education, and a Master's degree in science education. He is excited to join EPI in continuing to embrace and foster a love for learning outdoors with young students. Beyond the classroom, you will find Jason outdoors, chasing water year-round with his family and their dog.



**CALLIE HARWARD**

Callie Harward received her Master's in Teaching Science from Northern Arizona University. She taught 8th grade science for 4 years and is now the Program Coordinator for an outdoor overnight STEM camp. Designing and teaching a curriculum that is hands-on and fully outdoors is her dream

job. Callie gets energy from seeing students follow their own curiosity and participate in real, meaningful science. In her personal life, she loves to be outside, whether river rafting, backpacking, or paddle boarding. But staying in to read or paint is quite a fulfilling day, too!



**LAURA JIM**

Laura is an experienced educator at Hawai'i Preparatory Academy, where she teaches marine biology with a focus on coral reef ecology and scuba diving. She co-directs the school's Sea Turtle Research and Stranding Program and holds a B.S. in Biology from the University of Oregon.

Laura's diverse background includes work as a Peace Corps aquaculture specialist in the Congo, coral and clam farming in Micronesia, and sea turtle research across the Pacific. A dedicated environmentalist, she also leads fishing line recycling and coastal cleanups on Hawai'i Island, creating immersive, field-based experiences that inspire her students in marine conservation.



**CHARLIE RUFF**

Charlie is a National Geographic Certified educator at Shelby High School in Shelby, North Carolina. He teaches Biology, AP Environmental Science, and Peer Group Connection; a peer-to-peer mentor program for freshmen students. Along with teaching, Charlie also coaches baseball and soccer. In 2022, he

earned his Master's Degree from Miami University through Project Dragonfly. He traveled to Belize for his coursework, and it was there that he found a passion for conservation and ecotourism. Outside of teaching, Charlie cherishes quality time with his son, Moxley, and enjoys the outdoors with friends and family.



**JESI SEIFERT**

Jesi teaches Interdisciplinary Science & Research Stratford STEM Magnet High School in Nashville, TN. The ISR program is a career pathway that trains students to be scientists, using many different fields of study, while encouraging the participation of underrepresented students in

STEM fields. Jesi works with community partners to provide her students with innovative research opportunities and to create living labs at school, including establishing an apiary, installing pollinator and prairie habitats, and increasing urban forest canopy on campus. She hopes to use the wonders of science to foster life-long curiosity and love of learning in her students.



**SALLIE SENSENEY**

Sallie Senseney teaches biology and earth science in Western North Carolina. She earned a BA in Biology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a MS in Biological Sciences from Clemson University. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and a 2023 Presidential Award for Excellence in

Mathematics and Science Teaching state finalist. Sallie recently finished a five-year project during which she organized professional development for K-12 teachers in her district, created a STEM lab at her school, and traveled abroad to study education in other countries. Sallie enjoys running and being near mountain rivers and streams.



**RACHEL STAGNER**

Rachel is the STEM Coordinator and High School STEM educator at Templeton Academy in Washington, DC. Rachel is passionate about empowering students to think critically and connect science to their everyday lives through project-based learning and fieldwork. She is committed to increasing

the number of underrepresented students who pursue science as a career choice and using STEM education to address social and environmental justice. Rachel earned a B.S. in fisheries and wildlife management with a minor in environmental studies from Michigan State University. She earned her M.S. in teaching and an M.Ed. in secondary education from Portland State University.



**JAIMIE TEEL**

Jaimie Teel's career goals have always centered on preserving the world's ecology. She earned a B.S. in Wildlife Management and Ecology and, after several years of fieldwork, went on to complete an M.S. in Environmental Science. Although she worked as a scientist, Jaimie realized that

her greatest impact could be made through education. With 15 years of experience teaching secondary life science, she is passionate about helping her students see the world as an integral part of their community. Drawing on her travel experiences and research background, Jaimie strives to inspire excitement for science in her students. Outside of the classroom, she enjoys road-tripping with her daughters, hiking, backpacking, and reading.



**KATHERINE WATKINS**

Katherine is a dedicated high school advisor and science teacher with 9 years of experience in small public charter schools in Minnesota. She teaches a range of subjects, including chemistry and environmental science, with a passion for literacy. Katie holds a BA in Environmental Science

from the University of Minnesota, Morris, and a Teaching License from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Currently, she works at Northwest Passage High School, an expeditionary and PBL school, where she empowers students to engage with real-world issues through projects and experiential learning. In her free time Katie enjoys the outdoors and traveling.

A woman wearing a black baseball cap, sunglasses, and a pink jacket is looking down at a white notebook she is holding. She is standing in a grassy field with rolling hills and scattered trees in the background under a blue sky with light clouds. The foreground is filled with tall, green grasses.

# Meet the 2025 **YELLOWSTONE** Teacher Fellows

APRIL 19 - 26, 2025



**GABRIELA ANAYA**

Gabriela Anaya is a lifelong resident of southeastern Wisconsin. She holds a master's degree in adult education and recently earned her PhD with a specialization in reading, language, and literacy. Gabriela's 25 year instructional experience spans diverse settings: non-profit, corporate, K-12, and

higher education. When not immersed in literacy initiatives, Gabriela enjoys quality time with family, participating in authentic travel experiences, listening to podcasts, and getting in 10,000 steps.



**ASHLEIGH BOMAR**

Ashleigh is in her twentieth year of teaching and is currently teaching 6th grade earth science at Veritas Academy in Austin, TX. She earned a Master of Arts Degree from the University of Texas-Austin in Middle Science Education - Earth/Environmental Sciences. Ashleigh has been passionate

about teaching her entire life and loves instilling wonder in students, exposing them to the amazing locations throughout our world and encouraging them to be creative, curious learners. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her family, church, traveling, and doing anything outside, especially horseback riding.



**AMY CARBONI**

Amy is in her 26th year of education and is a teacher of IB Marine Science and IB Biology at Clearwater Central Catholic HS in Florida. She earned her BS in Marine Science from Eckerd College. She cares for a 200g salt water fish tank in her classroom. Summer months are spent as a director of a local

marine science education program. Beyond the classroom, she is a wedding and event planner. Time with her husband and two sons is often spent traveling for competitive soccer. She is also an avid concert goer and loves to country line dance.



**KATHY CLOWE**

Kathy teaches environmental science, wildlife biology and marine biology in the Global Ecology magnet program at Poolesville High School. She got her degree from the University of Montana, and during the summers, she enjoys educational travel to locations with charismatic megafauna.

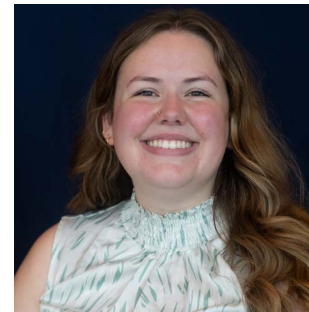
Her hobbies include: ice cream, reading, walks, lists, being outside, and sewing. Kathy lives in West Virginia with her husband, sister, and the cutest dog in the world.



**REYNAND DUMALA-ON**

Dr Reynand Dumala-on has extensive experience teaching physical and life sciences. He currently teaches in California. Rey holds certifications from multiple countries, including the UK, USA, Canada, and the Philippines, and has earned awards such as the Outstanding Teacher - Silver Award in New

York. Passionate about STEAM education and the integration of science, ethics, and faith, he is also an international speaker. During his free time, Rey enjoys outdoor activities like hiking, camping, and writing inspirational content on social media.



**EMMA ERDMAN**

Emma is the Lower School STEAM Teacher at GEMS World Academy in downtown Chicago. She specializes in life science by curating an educational collection of animal ambassadors through a partnership with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Emma is involved

in Chicago's science community, such as the Field Museum Ambassadors, Shedd Teacher Advisory Council, and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum C3 Leaders. She also leads afterschool programs such as Invention Convention, Zoology Club, and Pollinator Garden Design Club. In her free time, you can find Emma camping in a nearby state park or curled up with a fantasy book.



**KIMBERLY GRENZINSKI**  
Kim is a high school Biology teacher currently teaching 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students Neuroscience and Animal Behavior on a two year loop. She is a second year teacher who used to work as a Zookeeper at the Central Park Zoo in New York. Her classroom focus is on inquiry-based learning and collaboration. In her free time, Kim likes to spend time with her fiancé, Sean and her pets, Shea and Nala. She is a lover of the ocean and marine animals of all kinds and works to educate others on the importance of conserving marine life.



**AMANDA GUILBERT**  
Amanda has been a New Hampshire high school science educator since 1999. She currently teaches Integrated Life Science, AP Biology and Chemistry. She has earned a B.S. in Biology and Chemistry, an M.Ed. in Secondary Education and a CAGS degree in Educational Leadership with a Principal's Certification. Amanda has led many experiential learning trips with students to Belize and Denmark as well as throughout the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Amanda loves to be outside - skiing, hiking and mountain biking and enjoys sharing her love of the natural world with her own children as well as her students.



**KELLY HARTZELL**  
Kelly has been a North Carolina science educator for 15 years and is currently at the NC Leadership Academy where she instructs AP Biology and APES. Previous awards include the NC outstanding teaching award and being an NC Climate Fellow. In the summer, she is a consultant for College Board in AP Biology.

She lives in the Triad with her husband and two children, Henry and Korra. Past adventures include taking students to the Galapagos and to Costa Rica. Current adventures include finding new mountains to hike, enjoying science fiction, and being disappointed with Instagram recipes.



**KARIN JAKUBOWSKI**  
Karin Jakubowski is an instructor at Connecticut State College where she teaches biology and coordinates the environmental science program. She is also an adjunct instructor at the University of New Haven where she teaches marine science. Her research involves working with coral reef dependent communities in the Caribbean and raising awareness about pollution in marine environments. Karin earned her PhD in 2021. During the summer she teaches climate change professional development workshops and trains volunteers to be stewards of Long Island Sound. She lives with her husband, two sons, three dogs, a tortoise, and a couple of chickens.



**EMILY KOTWAL**  
Emily Kotwal teaches Environmental Science and Technology at Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School in Lexington, MA. As a career and technical education instructor, she has the opportunity to spend vast amounts of time outside with her students, engaging them in

real research projects in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Throughout the school year you will find her with students in the woods, tide pools, wetlands, and more. Unsurprisingly, outside of school you'll find her doing the same but with her husband, sons, and dog!



**MICHAEL ORMANDY**  
Michael serves as the Bitterroot Wildlife Internship Coordinator for MPG Ranch, a conservation property focusing on restoration, research and education. He is also the Field Operations Manager for MPG North. These positions allow him the unique opportunity to collaborate with and learn from an impressive lineup of ecologists. When he's not on the ranch, you'll likely find him recreating outdoors with friends or his wife and two dogs.



**NANCY YOUNG**

Nancy teaches Biology and AP Environmental Science in Acton, MA. She earned her masters degrees in science education and wildlife biology and conservation. Prior to being a science teacher, Nancy worked as a fishery biologist for NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service where she managed

listed species under the agency's purview. Nancy loves any opportunity to take students into the field to collect data and practice the methods environmental science. Nancy loves to exercise, hike with her labrador retriever, try new recipes and spend time with her husband and three adult sons.



A large sea turtle, likely a Galapagos tortoise, is shown resting on a dark, sandy beach. The turtle's head is turned to the right, and its body extends towards the left. The background is a blurred expanse of the beach and the ocean under a hazy sky.

**Meet the 2025**  
**COSTA RICA**  
**Teacher Fellows**

MARCH 29 - APRIL 5, 2025



**KIM ABRAHAM**

Kim started her teaching career as an English language instructor in Japan. For the past decade she has taught high school biology, marine science, and anatomy in Salem, Oregon. Kim has a B.S. from the University of Oregon and Masters degrees in Secondary Science Education and in Urban Planning from The

University of Arizona. Kim has lived in Germany and Japan and traveled with her family to Peru, Mexico, and the U.K. When not teaching she loves to travel and explore the Pacific Northwest with her family. Kim looks forward to connecting and learning with other educators during her fellowship.



**MICHELLE ARNHOLD DAVIES**

Michelle Arnhold Davies is a faculty member at Minnesota North College, located in the rural, northern Minnesota town where she grew up. Michelle delights in watching her students engage with the woods and water that made her first fall in love with the natural world.

At Minnesota North, Michelle teaches a wide range of biology courses and is the advisor to the Sustainability Club. Michelle obtained her Bachelor's degree in Neuroscience from Colorado College and her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from the University of Minnesota. She was recently nominated for the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities' Award for Excellence in Teaching.



**MIRSHISH BOYD**

Mirshish Boyd is a certified English teacher with seven years of experience, including three years facilitating all core subjects, where she finds the sciences the most exciting to teach. A passionate citizen scientist, she delights in exploring the wonders of the natural world and thrives

on lifelong learning. Outside the classroom, she enjoys hiking, traveling, and diving into books that broaden her perspective. Known for her engaging teaching style and boundless curiosity, she inspires students to view learning as an adventure and to explore the limitless possibilities within themselves and the world around them.



**CHRIS CARILLE**

Chris is an educator in NYS that has taught twenty different courses. They have covered high school biology, earth science, veterinary science and environmental science through adult accelerated biology and environmental science at the undergraduate level. He earned a Bachelor's (2008) from

SUNY Oneonta in Adolescent Education and Biology and a Master's in Zoology (2011) from Miami University of Ohio's Global Field Program. His education included short-term research projects and community-based conservation work in Costa Rica, Thailand, Borneo, Peru, Australia, Belize, India, and Paraguay. Outside of education Chris can be found backpacking, rock climbing, kayaking, traveling, or practicing photography.



**HOPE HOWARD**

Hope earned a PhD in Biology/ Environmental Engineering after studying oceanography and microbiology at Georgia Institute of Technology. Hope previously worked for the Department of Energy, where she led the soil and groundwater program. Her research through the years included studying hot

spring bacteria in Yellowstone National Park, bioremediation, and exploring microbial activity across the globe. Seven years ago, she transitioned to a career in education and now teaches Biology/AP, Environmental, and APES at a high school in South Riding, VA. Passionate about fostering authentic learning experiences, Hope aims to ignite curiosity and encourage deeper thinking in her students.



**LINDSAY MANZO**

Lindsay has been a high school science educator in Missoula, MT for the last 10 years. Her focus has always been to provide place-based original research opportunities to her students in Biology, Wildlife Biology and AP Environmental science. Before she was a teacher, she lived and worked

in remote wilderness locations for 15 seasons. She fell trees, built bridges, created rock staircases, taught teenagers to use saws, counted salmon running up rivers, etc. In her spare time, Lindsay likes to hike, bike, throw clay, camp, ski, run and spend time with her partner and daughter.





**PATRICIA MCGAFFIGAN**  
Patty has been a middle school science educator for 24 years in Massachusetts. After 19 years of fun and learning as a classroom teacher, she shifted into her current role of Science Coach for Cambridge Public Schools. Her department team works diligently to increase the confidence and competence

in the science disciplines of every CPS student, so they are ready to step into whatever path they choose. Patty enjoys being outdoors in the natural beauty of landscapes Massachusetts has to offer, from the beaches to the mountains.



**SHAWN O'NEILL**  
Shawn O'Neill is a former elementary school teacher with 27 years of teaching experience and currently serves as a professor at Bridgewater State University. As the science methods teacher for pre-service educators, she is passionate about equipping future teachers with the tools and confidence

to bring meaningful STEM instruction into elementary classrooms. She is a dedicated advocate for STEM education and frequently speaks at conferences nationwide, inspiring educators to embrace science teaching and foster curiosity in their students. Shawn loves reading, collecting shells, and spending time with her husband, three children, and their many fur babies!



**JERRAN ORWIG**  
Jerran is the Sr. Manager of Conservation Leadership Programs at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden in Ohio. She supports their graduate students (Miami University/ Project Dragonfly), ZooTeens, global Coexistence Fellows, and Zoo staff as their conservation leadership identities, knowledge,

skills, and experiences grow. She's on the Training Committee for the National Network of Ocean & Climate Change Interpretation (NNOCCI), working with communicators to engage people in productive climate conversations. She has a B.S. in Biology from Calvin University and an M.A. in Zoology from Miami University. Jerran loves her pesky rabbit, using her passport, Disney, reading, ice cream, and the Michigan Wolverines.



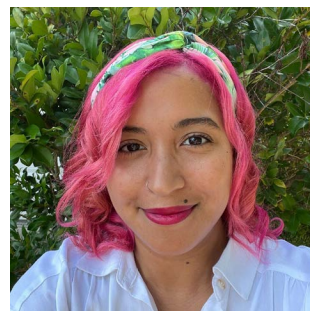
**PHYLLIS ROBINSON**  
Phyllis has been teaching high school biology and AP Biology since 1983. Though she tried to retire two years ago, she returned to the classroom this year to teach AP Biology again. She has a degree in biology from UNC-Chapel Hill and a Master's in Life Sciences from UMD - College Park. She loves

when students make those aha! connections in class as well as seeing them echo her own passion for all things biology. Both she and her husband are Volunteer Rangers and Master Naturalists with Maryland State Parks. She enjoys scuba diving, hiking, and singing in a choir.



**LARA MEREDITH SCHOENHOFER**  
Lara Meredith is a University of Florida graduate with a degree in Plant Pathology. She currently teaches AP Environmental Science, Chemistry, Biology, Earth Sciences, and Forensic Sciences at a private school in Atlanta. Having lived across the

globe, including England, Saudi Arabia, Australia, and Hong Kong, Lara brings a worldly perspective to her teaching. An avid and highly competitive Hunter Jumper rider, she rode for the University of Florida and continues to pursue her passion for equestrian sports. She is also a former Junior Olympic swimmer and now enjoys playing lacrosse.



**CHRISTINA SMITH**  
Christina Smith is a dedicated South Carolina high school science teacher with eight years of experience inspiring students to see themselves as scientists. Holding two master's degrees, she combines a strong academic foundation with a passion for hands-on and innovative interdisciplinary

learning and curriculum development. Christina created an on-campus apiary and greenhouse as unique educational tools and leads kayaking-based water quality testing excursions to a local state park. With a mission to inspire curiosity, critical thinking, and stewardship of the planet, Christina is a passionate educator who believes every student has the potential to make a meaningful scientific impact.



**JENNIFER STOVER**

Jennifer is a National Geographic Certified Educator who has been teaching for over 14 years. She has a bachelor's in Anthropology and a master's in Biological Science from Miami University as a part of Project Dragonfly/Global Field Program. She is serving as a Society for Science Advocate, is the STEM

Coordinator for Lufkin ISD and is on the Board of Directors for the Ellen Trout Zoo. She has worked as an archaeologist, as a National Park Ranger in her years prior to teaching. Jennifer is married to her high school sweetheart and they have one son.



**AVRIL WIERS**

Avril spent her formative years smuggling baby toads into her dollhouse. Her love of nature led her to spend two summers at the University of Michigan Biological Station before moving to Alaska to earn her M.S. in Outdoor and Environmental Education. When she moved back to Michigan,

she was fueled by her curiosity to develop a field-based environmental science program at a career and technical high school. These days, students are collaborating with community partners to restore a local trout stream. When she's not teaching, Avril loves trail running, mountain biking, and hanging out with her daughter.



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