

# Seed Grants 2017–2018 Report

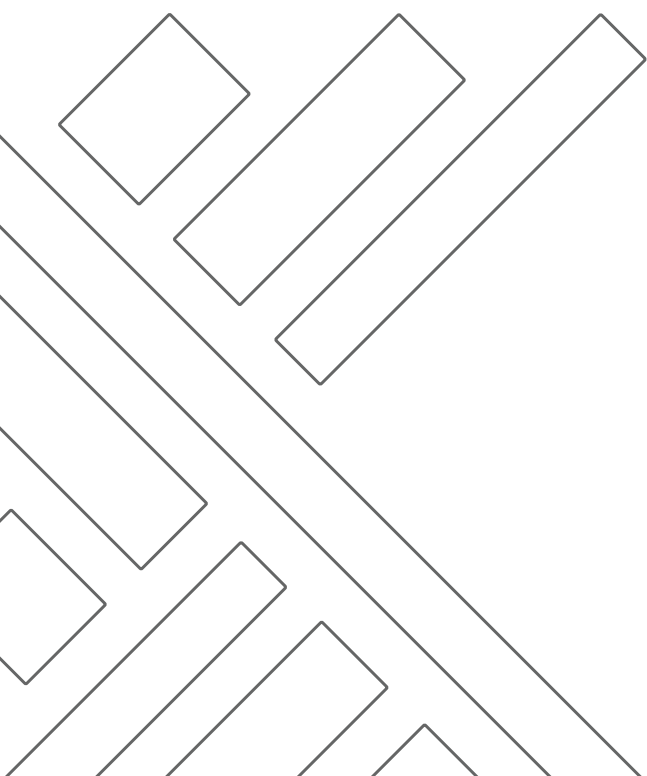


**Knowles**  
TEACHER INITIATIVE

*Transforming Mathematics & Science Education*

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# OVERVIEW:

The goal of Knowles Senior Fellows Program is to support a national network of teachers who have the capacity and drive to be primary agents of educational improvement. The program provides support in the form of grants to Senior Fellows that leverage and amplify the investment the Knowles Teacher Initiative made in them as Teaching Fellows.

Currently, the Knowles Teacher Initiative seeks to leverage this national network of teacher leaders by funding a range of Senior Fellow-initiated projects. All Senior Fellow-initiated projects begin as Seed Projects that are intended to improve education beyond Fellows' own classrooms. Seed Projects may include Senior Fellows working to enhance science and mathematics teaching and learning in high schools, providing leadership for other teachers, building a network of teachers engaged in new ideas, and/or providing leadership for schools or districts. Senior Fellows are encouraged to include colleagues from their schools, districts and beyond in Seed Project planning and implementation. Seed Projects that show exceptional results and potential for further impact will be eligible for additional years of funding; one project this year (reported on below) is in its second year of funding.

Thanks to a generous contribution from Janet H. Knowles in the amount of \$50,000 for the year beginning June 1, 2016 and \$50,000 for the year beginning June 1, 2017. The Seed Project Grants were announced to Fellows in June 2016 and we began awarding grants in the fall of 2016.

During the first year of the program, we awarded six Seed Projects Grants and an additional seven in the second year of the program, many of which extend well into the 2018–2019 academic year. The seven awarded in the second year of the program are profiled in this report and listed here:

- Complex Instruction in Science
- Southern Oregon Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Working Group
- Critical Friends Group Work
- Starting a School-Based National Board Certified Teacher Support Group
- Establishing and Expanding the Writing Community Within and Beyond Knowles, Year 2
- Growing from Within: Teacher-Led Collaborative Communities at Westlake High School
- Lunch & Learn, 2.0

The remaining Seed Project funds from Janet Knowles' contribution will be used to fund the continuation of existing projects and new projects proposed in the current year.

# PROJECT TITLE:

## Complex Instruction in Science

**AWARD DATE:** December 22, 2017  
**GRANT AMOUNT:** \$19,998

### SENIOR FELLOW GRANTEES:



**Camden Hanzlick-Burton**  
Summit Public Schools Sierra,  
Seattle, WA



**Laura Wang**  
School of the Future  
New York, NY

*“As a result of this Seed Project, we are piloting a Knowles Academy course in Complex Instruction in science this summer.”*

### PROJECT GOALS:

- 01** Increase the capacity of Fellows to implement Complex Instruction in their own science classrooms
- 02** Design a professional development course for science teachers that allows them to implement Complex Instruction in their classrooms
- 03** Create an online community centered on Complex Instruction in science for participants in the course and the wider science education community
- 04** Develop a research agenda for Complex Instruction in science

### PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Senior Fellows Laura Wang and Camden Hanzlick-Burton (both awarded Knowles Teaching Fellowships in 2012), along with Teaching Fellows Bernice O’Brien (2013 Cohort) and Lauren Kline (2014 Cohort) recognized a need for science teachers across the country to utilize teaching strategies that increased student access to learning. Fellows in these cohorts had previously learned about Complex Instruction at a Cohort Meeting during their Fellowship. Complex Instruction promotes an equitable classroom culture through the development of high cognitive demand tasks that allow students of all abilities to contribute, group work structures and teacher moves that disrupt traditional participation patterns, and techniques that help teachers develop classroom norms that promote participation and learning for all students. They were excited about what they learned and wanted to implement this strategy in their classrooms only to find that additional courses and supports existed only in mathematics. Their goal is to extend this work into science, creating a community of educators interested in enacting the practices of Complex Instruction through the development of a Knowles Academy course.

## FELLOW REFLECTIONS:

For the past number of years, Fellows wishing to learn more about Complex Instruction following their Cohort Meeting found the only additional professional development in Complex Instruction was offered by the University of Washington and was focused on Complex Instruction in mathematics. While many Fellows who teach science attended this professional development, they did not have opportunities to engage in the content in which they taught and to interact with other science teachers. This led us (a group of Senior Fellows and Teaching Fellows) to discuss what an equivalent course in science might look like and what role we might play in its development and implementation.

For this Seed Project, we decided to think big—what would we need in order to develop and enact professional development in Complex Instruction for science. We had identified some key pieces that we saw as being important to the success of the project, including opportunities to observe classrooms in which teachers utilize components of Complex Instruction, attending the 2015 Cohort’s Spring Meeting where they learned about Complex Instruction, and protected time to develop the curriculum for the course.

In January 2018, we met, along with Senior Program Officer Michele Cheyne, for three days to start the course development process. This work weekend was hugely successful, and we left with not only a detailed course objective sequence and outline, but a jump start on our course facilitation guide and a plan on who would take the lead on other components of the course. The opportunity to get away from our classrooms and other responsibilities, along with the opportunity to focus solely on this course development, was a huge benefit to our work.

A second thing that prepared us to facilitate a course on Complex Instruction in science was a result of the four days that we spent in the San Francisco Bay Area in February. This trip afforded us the opportunity to visit San Francisco International High School, where Complex Instruction is a part of their instructional repertoire. We were able to observe Complex Instruction strategies in both biology and chemistry classrooms. In addition, we were able to observe the 2015 Cohort Spring Meeting, where Fellows learned about Complex Instruction from Team Specialist Laura Evans and Senior Fellow Sangeetha Lakshimarayanan. For the first time we were able to participate not only as learners of Complex Instruction, but as students of Complex Instruction facilitation too.

As a result of this Seed Project, we are piloting a Knowles Academy course in Complex Instruction in science this summer. Senior Fellows Laura Wang and Camden Hanzlick-Burton, along with staff Michele Cheyne and Anna Monteiro, will facilitate this iteration of the course. Lauren Kline and Bernice O’Brien will be attending as facilitators-in-training. Overall, the support provided by the Seed Grant made it possible for us to engage in, and implement, this Knowles Academy course. We cannot adequately express our gratitude for the support that provided the opportunity for us to engage in this work. We believe your generosity will impact every teacher who participates in this Academy course and every student they teach.



## PROJECT TITLE:

# Southern Oregon Next Generation Science Standards Working Group

**AWARD DATE:** January 4, 2018

**GRANT AMOUNT:** \$9,420

## SENIOR FELLOW GRANTEE:



**Jesse Stonewood**  
Ashland High School  
Ashland, OR

*“Starting and running the SONGSSWG has been an excellent opportunity for me to apply knowledge and skills gained as a Knowles Fellow to benefit other teachers in my region.”*

## PROJECT GOALS:

- 01** Develop and implement a series of four professional development trainings in southern Oregon designed to help build teachers’ expertise in NGSS
- 02** Recruit and retain 10 local science teachers to participate in the six-month PD opportunity
- 03** Collect, examine, utilize, and share a variety of resources to help teachers develop their leadership capacity
- 04** Receive direct and ongoing training from a professional development coach to help design and implement valuable PD opportunities for colleagues

## PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Senior Fellow Jesse Stonewood was awarded a Knowles Teaching Fellowship in 2012. The Oregon Department of Education recommended that all districts fully implement the NGSS during the 2017–2018 school year, with it being part of statewide testing in 2018–2019. However, Jesse (and a colleague, Todd Hobein) recognized that there was wide variation in southern Oregon teachers’ knowledge and skill to implement the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) with little professional development tied to NGSS available to teachers in the area. Their Seed Project sought to remedy that by building a cadre of NGSS-skilled teacher leaders who could raise the capacity of all teachers in their area. In the first year of this grant, they have created a small network of 10 high school science teachers from eight different high schools who meet to improve their own classroom practice using NGSS. During the rest of this year’s grant, they will also begin to envision what strong NGSS-related professional development will look like for their school and colleagues.

## FELLOW REFLECTIONS:

My colleague (Todd Hobein) and I are tremendously grateful to have received Seed Grant funding for our project, the Southern Oregon Next Generation Science Standards Working Group (SONGSSWG). The overarching intention of the SONGSSWG project is to improve the quality of science education in our local region (within 100 miles of the town that we presently teach in). To achieve this using the time and financial resources available to us, we envisioned creating a small network of teachers from around our region to participate in a targeted series of professional development sessions which center on both NGSS and teacher leadership.

We are currently a little more than halfway through the execution of our grant. To date, we have completed the selection process to identify 10 qualified participants, engaged in several coaching sessions to help guide our planning process, and held two separate four-hour meetings. SONGSSWG participants are currently working on a variety of personal projects that range from improving classroom instruction, to networking with colleagues within their department, to aligning curriculum between grades at the district level. We have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants, including several who have reported that this group is the most productive and meaningful professional development work in which they have ever participated.

Starting and running the SONGSSWG has been an excellent opportunity for me to apply knowledge and skills gained as a Knowles Fellow to benefit other teachers in my region. Our sessions are styled in the manner of a short-form Knowles meeting, complete with strategic groupings, groupworthy tasks, protocols, embedded time for reflection and follow-up surveys. We use many lessons and strategies from similar “critical friends” professional development groups and strive to empower our colleagues by both honoring their work as educators, while at the same time pushing them to improve their practice. Perhaps most importantly, we want SONGSSWG participants to feel respected as professionals and develop a strong sense of collegiality with each other. The last hour of each meeting is dedicated to a “working brunch” where participants have the chance to sit down over a nice meal, take time to get to know each other, and discuss ways to collaborate and support one another.

During this first year, the primary focus will be to develop participants’ capacity to plan and implement NGSS in their classrooms, with a secondary focus on teacher leadership and collaboration. Our longer term goals (two to five years) include a shift towards a greater focus on developing leadership capacity, facilitating additional professional development opportunities about NGSS within and outside our home district, and expanding our regional network of NGSS-trained colleagues. We look forward to seeing how this group develops and grows over the next few years.

# PROJECT TITLE:

## Critical Friends Group Work

**AWARD DATE:** January 18, 2018  
**GRANT AMOUNT:** \$9,800

### SENIOR FELLOW GRANTEES:



**Ian Caldwell**  
Arete Preparatory Academy  
Gilbert, AZ



**Heidi Park**  
Jones College Prep High School  
Chicago, IL

*“Our continued exploration of Critical Friends Groups has positively impacted our local contexts, and is helping us inspire other teachers in our schools to grow as collaborators.”*

### PROJECT GOALS:

- 01** Support Fellows as they implement collaborative leadership in their schools
- 02** Build the capacity of colleagues of Fellows for collegial, reflective collaboration in schools
- 03** Develop professional development and other shareable materials that might build teacher collaboration and leadership capacity

### PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Senior Fellows Heidi Park and Ian Caldwell (both awarded Knowles Teaching Fellowships in 2012) attended Critical Friends Group New Coaches' Training facilitated by the National School Reform Faculty along with 12 Teaching Fellows (funded by Knowles professional development grants). They found the training inspiring and useful, but recognized that implementing the kind of collaborative leadership required of the Critical Friends Group model would require ongoing support that the training didn't provide. They formed a group (funded by the Seed Grant) that met virtually throughout the year where they practiced what they learned and supported one another as they took collaborative leadership into their school settings. The project culminates with the group returning to meet again in the summer of 2018, where they will plan how to share what they've learned with the larger Knowles community.



## FELLOW REFLECTIONS:

The Knowles experience taught us the importance of reflecting on our practice for our growth as teachers and the value that comes from including others in our reflections. Last July, 14 Fellows (with one colleague!) came together to participate in a Critical Friends Group New Coaches' Training, facilitated by the National School Reform Faculty and funded by Knowles professional development grants. We all came with a desire to learn how to more effectively collaborate with our colleagues in our local school settings. At the end of the five-day training, we were all excited about the possibilities of using the tools and structures of Critical Friends Groups in our local contexts. However, we realized that as some of us would be the only trained Critical Friends Group coach in our school, implementing change could be really challenging. This Seed Grant allowed us to continue our work together and support each other. We worked virtually throughout the school year and met in-person in July 2018. The July 2018 meeting gave us the time and space to reflect on our work during this past school year, and to use each other as trusted critical friends to help us plan our work for the upcoming school year.

Our group represents 11 schools in eight different states. During the 2017–2018 academic year, three of us presented work, four facilitated meetings, and 11 acted as critical friends virtually. Eight of us saw benefits in existing groups, two started new groups, and seven of us used Critical Friends Group strategies with students in our classrooms. One person used Critical Friends Group work to facilitate professional development at their school; and another developed a plan with three colleagues to run a pilot Critical Friends Group group, provide Critical Friends Group training over the summer, and roll out Critical Friends Group work to their school at large next year.

Some feedback from our members included the following:

- “Sometimes when you take a professional development you return to your classroom and forget the awesomeness that you learned there. Each virtual meeting I’m reminded of the power of Critical Friends Group protocols and therefore I’m more likely to use them in my teacher collaborations or amongst students.”
- “Participating in the virtual Critical Friends Group helped me practice my skills and reminded me of different goals that protocols can be used to achieve.”
- “I enjoyed having a support group outside of my school to help me prepare for building a Critical Friends Group at school or to do Critical Friends Group work with my team.”

Leadership is a focus of the Knowles Fellowship, but even after Year 5 of the Fellowship, we feel like we have more to learn. Our continued exploration of Critical Friends Groups has positively impacted our local contexts, and is helping us inspire other teachers in our schools to grow as collaborators. Thank you so much for your generosity in supporting our Seed Project and our continued growth as teachers.

## PROJECT TITLE:

# Starting a School-Based National Board Certified Teacher Support Group

**AWARD DATE:** February 20, 2018

**GRANT AMOUNT:** \$11,319

## SENIOR FELLOW GRANTEE:



**Latoya Clay**  
Hillside High School  
Durham, NC

*“Because of the generosity of funding through the Seed Grant, the teachers at Hillside High School have been able to benefit from abundant opportunities to collaborate, learn and grow in the teaching profession through the National Board Certification process.”*

## PROJECT GOALS:

- 01** Double the number of National Board Certified Teachers at Hillside High School over the next two years
- 02** Create a revolving network of support for certification, develop reflection tools, and create a bank of resources for future Hillside teachers who would like to become certified
- 03** Solicit a commitment from group participants to remain at Hillside to support future candidates in their efforts to earn certification

## PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Senior Fellow Latoya Clay was awarded a Knowles Teaching Fellowship in 2012. Despite National Board Certification being highly valued in North Carolina and by her district, no teachers had been able to earn National Board certification in the past several years at Latoya’s school. Several years earlier, the district had provided support funding that allowed teachers to earn certification, but that funding—and the teachers who earned certification—went away. Latoya and a few of her colleagues used Seed Grant funding to form a support group for teachers wishing to pursue certification at her school. They met regularly—including on a retreat day—to write, review each other’s work, and receive support from a coach who was familiar with the process. Five teachers submitted all or portions of the certification portfolio this year—something that hadn’t been done since district funding went away. The long-term goal of this group is to establish support for all teachers wishing to pursue certification and build the professional culture of the school.

## FELLOW REFLECTIONS:

I'm incredibly grateful for the funding provided for our National Board Support Group Seed Project. I wrote the grant in order to help me and other teachers at my school tackle the daunting National Board Certification process in a supportive and nurturing environment. National Board Certification is a highly sought after recognition in North Carolina. Board certification is widely considered to be one of the most distinguishing characteristics of a great teacher, and research shows that students of Board Certified teachers learn more than their peers without certified teachers. Additionally, having more Board Certified teachers enhances the reputation and status of a school. Although certification is the goal for many, due to the teaching conditions in North Carolina and the lack of sufficient local support, many teachers are not able to accomplish this feat.

Before the Seed Grant, I had attempted (unsuccessfully) for two consecutive years to complete the necessary components to attain National Board Certification on my own. After speaking with several other teachers at my school, I learned that many of them were having the same troubles with the certification process. After several conversations, we realized that in order to complete the National Board process, we would need the appropriate guidance, support, available time during the school day, and an accountability system in place in order to be successful. All of these needs were met with the funds provided by the Seed Grant. Consequently, we were able to create a National Board support group cohort of five teachers who all successfully submitted components for certification. Additionally, with a strong commitment from the group members, we were able to begin building the framework for this support group to continue on and have a significant impact for years to come.

Because of the generosity of funding through the Seed Grant, the teachers at Hillside High School have been able to benefit from abundant opportunities to collaborate, learn and grow in the teaching profession through the National Board Certification process. We met regularly after school, but the Seed Grant also allowed us to have several days released from our classroom duties to write for the National Board process, analyze each other's submissions, give each other feedback, and get support from a National Board certified coach. The Grant also funded a weekend retreat that allowed us to put the finishing touches on our submissions, in ways that none of us had been able to accomplish on our own in previous years.

We are very grateful for your support and know that none of our successes this year would have been possible without your help.

## PROJECT TITLE:

# Establishing and Expanding the Writing Community Within and Beyond Knowles, Year 2

**AWARD DATE:** February 20, 2018

**GRANT AMOUNT:** \$13,915

## SENIOR FELLOW GRANTEE:



### Rebecca Van Tassell

Co-Editor-in-Chief: *Kaleidoscope*:  
*Educator Voices and Perspectives*

*“This year, our Seed Grant funding has allowed us to more fully explore questions and practices that are integral to developing a robust writing community within and beyond the Knowles community.”*

## PROJECT GOALS:

- 01** Normalize writing as an activity in which teachers engage and promote writing as an essential activity of a teacher leader
- 02** Increase awareness among Fellows of the power of teacher writing and its impact on the field of education more broadly
- 03** Provide adequate supports and structures that allow multiple paths to publication
- 04** Increase submissions to a variety of outlets to make our knowledge public, including increasing submissions and readership of Knowles' own journal, *Kaleidoscope*
- 05** Increase participation of members of the writing community in supporting each other in their writing

## PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Senior Fellow Rebecca Van Tassell was awarded a Knowles Teaching Fellowship in 2009 and is currently a Co-Editor-in-Chief for *Kaleidoscope*, the Fellow-led journal sponsored by the Knowles Teacher Initiative. This is the second year of funding for Rebecca's Seed Project, which is designed to expand the teacher writing community with Knowles and extend it to the wider world. *Kaleidoscope* is a vehicle to build teachers' voices and spread their knowledge and insights both within Knowles and outside. The Editorial Board strongly believes that the writing it publishes as it continues to develop *Kaleidoscope* can counteract negative press about teachers and teaching, in addition to providing a counter-narrative for the simplistic “how-to” information and advice about teaching commonly found in both the news media and resources and publications aimed specifically at teachers. *Kaleidoscope* is uniquely positioned within the Knowles community to support and encourage a wide variety of measures to elevate teachers' voices. The Editorial Board wants to continue to promote the readership and usefulness of teacher writing, not just that published in *Kaleidoscope*, within and outside of Knowles.

## FELLOW REFLECTIONS:

This year, our Seed Grant funding has allowed us to more fully explore questions and practices that are integral to developing a robust writing community within and beyond the Knowles community. The Seed Grant allowed the Editorial Board to work on a few initiatives that are vital to our work including: the third iteration of our writing retreat, an increased presence at Cohort Meetings and an increased presence at the Knowles Summer Meeting. Each of these facets of our work are just part of what the board of *Kaleidoscope* are working on to build an inclusive and robust community of teacher storytellers.

Our work at the first in-person meeting of the writing retreat was truly inspirational. Building on the success of last year's writing retreat, we have made some changes to this year's retreat to better support our participants as we work from different parts of the country. Twelve of us came together in Albany, New York, including three collaborators from Fellows' schools. We worked together exploring our identities as writers, what we hope to accomplish with our writing, and what stories we might tell to learn more about our own practice and share that knowledge with others. We will meet again in January 2019 for a second in-person retreat, continuing the work between meetings with our small writing groups, each supported by a different facilitator who will write along with our participants.

Our work with the 2018 Spring Cohort Meetings provided a huge learning experience for the whole Editorial Board. We, at *Kaleidoscope*, want to support Fellows wherever they are in their development as writers and storytellers. Working with Knowles Program Officers prior to meetings on the parts of the meeting that utilized storytelling, writing and sharing knowledge gave us insight into how Teaching Fellows are experiencing writing throughout the Fellowship. One of the most fascinating aspects of this work for me, as I worked with the fifth-year Fellows, was listening to them grapple with the idea of knowledge—what it is, how we know we know, and how we convey knowledge about our practice to others. I'm looking forward to reading their stories this summer!

In the midst of preparing for Summer Meeting, I've taken a step back many times to marvel at the number of storytelling opportunities we are planning on providing at Summer Meeting this year. We will continue to work with cohorts on storytelling as well as offer targeted sessions on multimedia storytelling, writing to effect change, and a poster and workshop for anyone interested in writing. We are also hosting another StorySlam—an event that last year was a huge success. During the Slam, Fellows shared a brief story about their teaching, in five minutes, with no notes. Last year the stories ranged from hilarious to heartbreaking. It was a memorable event, and will be again. Summer Meeting offers us the chance to meet some of Fellows who we have been working with for the first time, strengthening our relationships with individuals in the community.

This couldn't have happened without your generous support. Each of these initiatives have required many hours of dedicated time and thought, and the means to travel to do the work with each other in person. This precious time together makes all the difference in establishing and sustaining the personal relationships that are the foundation of the community we are building. We are so grateful for the opportunity to use this funding to give back to the Knowles community and build up our capacity to share our stories with the world.



## PROJECT TITLE:

# Growing from Within: Teacher-Led Collaborative Communities at Westlake High School

**DATE GRANT APPROVED:** February 20, 2018

**AMOUNT APPROVED:** \$15,490

## SENIOR FELLOW GRANTEE:



**Sophie State**  
Westlake High School  
Westlake Village, CA

*“In the coming school year, through our Seed Grant, we will be able to provide a small stipend to those teachers who have been trained as facilitators and want to partner with another teacher to lead their colleagues in monthly collaborative meetings.”*

## PROJECT GOALS:

- 01** Train a cohort of teachers to facilitate authentic conversations about measurable school needs using the Critical Friends Group model
- 02** Engage all staff on campus in collaborative groups of Professional Learning Communities
- 03** Identify, evaluate, and create a plan to share and implement effective instructional practices across departments

## PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Senior Fellow Sophie State was awarded a Knowles Teaching Fellowship in 2012. This Seed Project builds off of two leadership grants that Sophie received while a Teaching Fellow, in which she began a teacher observation club that whet the appetite of teachers in her building for authentic teacher collaboration. During the 2017–2018 academic year, the Project began to mobilize over 30 teachers through the piloting of protocol use—tools used to structure collaborative conversations between teachers. Through this work, a group of teacher leaders were identified who will receive training in facilitating these protocols with the rest of the school. Next year, teachers are committed to working in groups to improve instructional practice across the school.

## FELLOW REFLECTIONS:

This past school year, following a cycle of school-wide accreditation, a group of my colleagues and I wanted to create a vision for a teacher-led initiative that would allow for teacher collaboration across departments. Westlake High School has some fantastic teachers doing fantastic things. We also have highly-motivated students, constantly striving (and being recognized) for academic excellence. However, one thing is obvious to our staff: we never have dedicated time to speak with colleagues from other departments who share our students—both those who are successful, and the ever-growing number who are struggling and slipping through the cracks. We never collaboratively develop curriculum across disciplines or share instructional strategies. Many of my colleagues recognize that there are difficult conversations that need to be had about student achievement, values that need to be examined and made explicit, and most of all, my colleagues recognize that in order to have these conversations, we need to be able to foster an environment where teachers feel safe and where the conversations are focused and productive, led by trusted colleagues rather than administrators or outsiders.

Through the support of our Seed Grant, we were able to set aside time for our planning team to plan for pilot meetings for staff members interested in this type of work. We held two interest meetings for staff members to share our vision and ask for feedback. We then hosted four pilot meetings between February and May that pulled in over 40 voluntary teacher attendees who were able to experience the use of protocols to structure school-wide conversations and build trust. Conversations among teachers following these meetings were overwhelmingly positive: not only did participants return for subsequent sessions, but they drew in their colleagues by sharing what they had gained. Three department chairpersons cancelled previously-scheduled department meetings on the days of pilot meetings in order to allow them to continue to attend and vocally encouraged their department members to attend. Veteran teachers approached us to share how they were encouraged that these meaningful conversations could take place on our campus and more recent-hire teachers were able to share dilemmas and successes in their practice in this safe environment.

As a planning team, we simultaneously were able to work with our campus Parent Teacher Student Association and site administration to arrange to share the cost of a week-long summer training for teachers who wish to serve as future group facilitators. Through our Seed Grant, Knowles is funding half of this training so we are able to draw on the resources of an outside organization—School Reform Initiative (SRI)—to provide training and ongoing support for these teacher-leaders. Following a presentation to our Parent Teacher Student Association, their board agreed this vision and the support of Knowles was important enough that they wanted to help fund lunch and refreshments during the summer training as well as refreshments for next year's teacher-led collaboration groups. We have 14 teachers who have volunteered to take a week of their summers (the first week in August) to be trained in this work. We are encouraged to see this impressively positive response and know that the support of Knowles in helping us craft our vision and financially supporting this work has been paramount to our success.

In the coming school year, through our Seed Grant, we will be able to provide a small stipend to those teachers who have been trained as facilitators and want to partner with another teacher to lead their colleagues in monthly collaborative meetings. We believe this endeavor has the potential to change discussions among teachers in ways that promote more effective instructional strategies and a common vision for learning to classrooms across campus. We are so very grateful for your support of this work that makes this opportunity possible.

# PROJECT TITLE:

## Lunch & Learn, 2.0

**AWARD DATE:** May 7, 2018  
**GRANT AMOUNT:** \$9,980

## SENIOR FELLOW GRANTEE:



**Kaitie O'Bryan**  
Mounds View High School  
Arden Hills, MN

*“There are few other opportunities like this for classroom teachers to make big changes beyond their classroom walls.”*

## PROJECT GOALS:

- 01** Support teachers at Mounds View High School in developing a mindset for identifying and exploring equity issues in their classrooms
- 02** Develop skills and dispositions among a critical mass of teachers for engaging in professionally risky conversations and improving our school culture so that these risky conversations are the norm

## PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Senior Fellow Kaitie O'Bryan was awarded a Knowles Teaching Fellowship in 2012. During her time as a Teaching Fellow, Kaitie received a leadership grant that supported the development of a Lunch & Learn program at her school in which teachers would present an instructional practice or routine to colleagues at lunch. At her school, this was one of the first attempts at systematically opening up teacher practice and it was very successful—over 51 different teachers participated and 98% of the teachers who participated said they would use what they learned in their own classrooms. This Seed Project intends to broaden and deepen the work that began in the first iteration of the Lunch & Learn program. The Seed Grant will fund training for a group of teachers in the development of Professional Learning Communities that will focus on issues of equity within the school. In addition, over the next academic year (2018–2019), teachers will have opportunities to participate in structured professional development (over lunch) led by these trained facilitators. The project intends to influence the school to be more equity-focused and professionally collaborative.

## FELLOW REFLECTIONS:

As a teacher, I have been rarely asked to dream big when it comes to my school. As a Knowles Fellow, I appreciated the support I received throughout my first five years of teaching, and by the end of the Fellowship, I was equipped to be a teacher leader. While I was excited to take on a bigger role in my school, there were few opportunities to remain in the classroom but also lead colleagues. The availability of a Seed Grant created that opportunity.

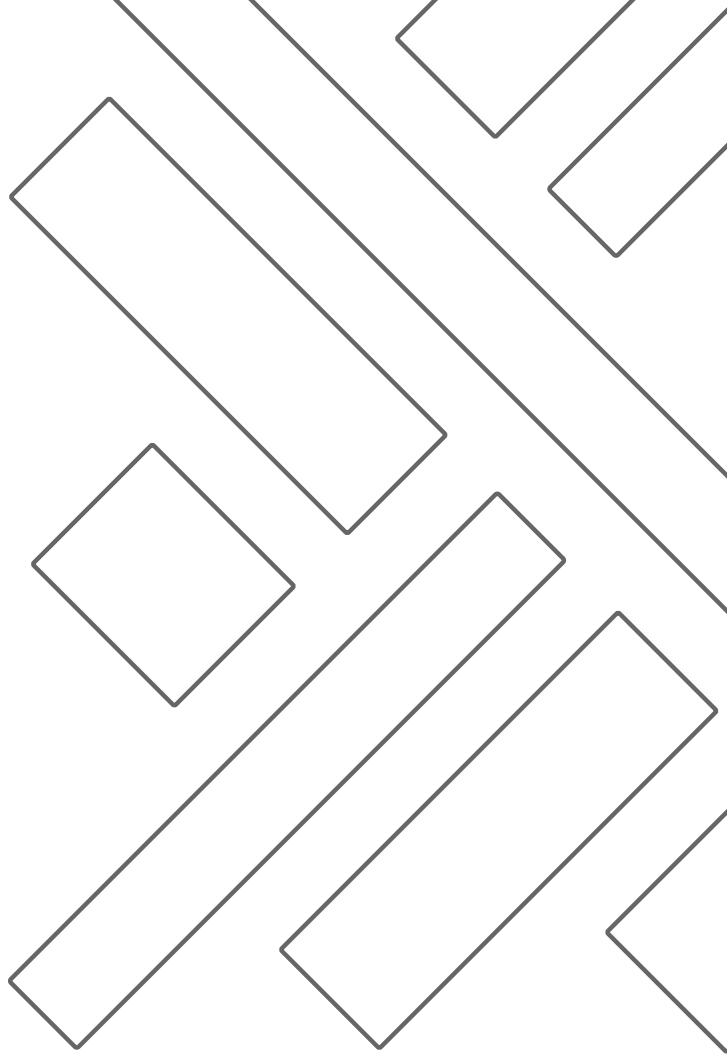
I have long been passionate about supporting every student, especially those who have gotten overlooked or “written-off” in classes year after year. While I could focus on these students in my class, I wanted to support a building culture that looked at these students first—not as an afterthought. Changing building culture initially seemed overwhelming, but I remembered a quote from a Knowles Program Officer in a meeting, that “Every system is precisely designed to get the results it is getting.” It is true that our school culture was created by people, but that also means that the school culture could be changed by people.

Going into the Germinator weekend, I knew that my goal was to support building a school culture that empowered teachers to identify a group of students often overlooked in their classes and identify how their “classroom system” is affecting these students. Germinator weekend was essential in this path to crafting the Seed Project. While I had ideas and goals, involving colleagues in this process would strengthen the actual results. The process that facilitators led us through helped our team develop a common vision of the future. There was give and take. There was time to struggle productively. There were breakthroughs. Eventually, we determined that we could train a group of teachers to use methods for talking about classroom systems with other teachers. Then, with this group of trained teachers, we would lead monthly “Lunch & Learn” sessions where participants would serve as lead in a series of structured conversations to dig deeper into the root cause of inequities in their classrooms.

When we got back to school we knew we needed to gain support from other stakeholders. We presented to building leaders and administrators with our vision together. Because we had spent that weekend developing this common vision, we were able to get support from other stakeholders and secure additional funding beyond the Seed Grant. With a group of united teachers and the promise of outside funding, the school was on board.

We will conduct our week-long training with the “lead teachers” the last week in July. From there, we will be recruiting teachers to participate in the monthly sessions with the eventual goal of making these conversations happen in participating teachers’ department meetings. The Seed Grant has lived up to its name already— it has planted the seed for a new culture to emerge in our building. I am excited for what springs from the ground this fall.

Thank you for making this happen. There are few other opportunities like this for classroom teachers to make big changes beyond their classroom walls. During the 2018–2019 academic year, we will be working with 45 teachers on this project, which is about half of our staff. The change that this grant has set in motion has significant potential and I am excited to share the results with the Knowles community next summer.



**Knowles Teacher Initiative**

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