ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

CityBridge Foundation and NewSchools Venture Fund launched the Education Innovation Fellowship, a yearlong program that introduces teacher leaders to the most promising practices in personalized learning, in 2013. With the support of a $1 million grant from the Microsoft Corporation, the Fellowship has served 54 Fellows in the first three cohorts, offering them opportunities to pilot personalized learning models in their schools and fostering classroom innovation in dozens of Washington, D.C. schools. The Fellowship will continue in 2016 as a strategic investment in great teachers—the classroom leaders who can become natural change agents for their schools. The program will empower them with a toolkit of student-centered design skills that will enable them to drive instructional innovation.

In 2016, 20 to 24 new Fellows will be selected from a pool of qualified applicants currently teaching in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and D.C. public charter schools. The Fellowship program will run from January through December 2016 and will include local and national school visits, workshops, seminars, guest speakers, and technology demonstrations. Fellows will design and lead personalized learning pilot programs during the spring or summer of 2016 and will expand them in their classrooms and schools in the 2016-17 school year.

A FELLOWSHIP FOR TEACHERS TO DESIGN PERSONALIZED CLASSROOM MODELS

We believe that teachers are among the strongest levers for transformative change within schools, and we view them as both leaders and classroom designers.

The vision of personalized learning that guides the design of the Fellowship includes four pillars that operate in conjunction to tailor learning experiences to individual students’ needs and skills:
Competency-based learning ensures that students have learning goals that are broad, deep, and interdisciplinary across academic, cognitive, and social-emotional aims. Students are matched with the right content based on their skills, knowledge, and backgrounds, not necessarily on their age. They should also have the opportunity to engage deeply with material and should move on only when they have learned the skill or content; therefore, the time that each student interacts with content and skills should be variable by design.

Student autonomy means that students have a measure of control over the pace, path, and substance of what they learn. The amount of control may vary by student maturity and subject.

Purposeful and relevant study means that students have work that is engaging and that often has real-world application. The aim is to have students connect deeply with the purpose of learning in order to maximize their interest and their learning.

A strong sense of community means that students work and live in a community with deep peer and adult relationships. Students can develop relationships with adults and peers, as well as foster individual understanding of community values, expectations, and behavior at school and beyond.

To help Fellows design classroom models built on these personalized principles, we rely heavily on the human design-centered teachings of the Hasso Platner Institute of Design at Stanford University, also known as the d.school. The design process is similar to what startup companies use to build new products or what established companies use to build new divisions.

Through this process, teachers connect and empathize with the unique circumstances of their students and school communities, define the specific problem that they are trying to solve, ideate (or brainstorm) possible solutions, and build and test a series of prototypes to maximize impact. This process both unlocks teachers’ creativity and allows them to work intentionally to solve the problems in their classrooms. Because the design process emphasizes learning and rapid iteration, Fellows experience the mastery, autonomy, and purpose in their work that we hope they foster for their own students in their personalized classrooms.

Teachers have tremendous—and often untapped—potential to incubate innovation in their classrooms. Through the direct exposure to the most promising practices in personalized learning, the Education Innovation Fellowship provides cohorts of teacher leaders the opportunity to advance the field through their own leadership and through instructional innovation. In this way, the Fellowship encourages teachers to become market drivers for tools and techniques that work, and Fellows become ambassadors for the implementation of effective personalized learning models in D.C.

The first three years of this program have taught us that instituting personalization in classrooms takes much more than exposing teachers to emerging practices. Our value proposition is working with our Fellows to identify the root causes of specific problems they face in their classrooms and schools, then facilitating a design process that puts them in the driver’s seat to create solutions to solve those problems.

Ultimately, the Education Innovation Fellowship is about reimagining what classroom instruction can look like and creating more personalized learning experiences for students.
THE CONTEXT OF D.C. AND PERSONALIZED LEARNING

While the District of Columbia continues rapid improvement in student outcomes, progress is too slow to meet the needs of the city’s 80,000 public school students. Currently, the city hovers at just over 50% for academic proficiency, with a five-year average growth rate of about 1.6% per year. The rate of progress is too slow to meet the city leaders’ 2017 goal to provide most students with the quality of education they need and deserve.

Educators across the country are designing and building new personalized learning models to realize the vision of accelerated student achievement, and the field is evolving rapidly. The promise of effective personalized learning models is to leverage student-driven learning, teacher time, digital content and tools, and peer-to-peer collaboration in order to provide students what they need, when they need it. Early evidence indicates that teaching in a personalized classroom offers educators new opportunities to differentiate instruction for individual students, to motivate students to take ownership over their learning, and to extend teacher capacity to reach additional students (Gates Foundation, 2014).

With the introduction of personalized learning models in public school classrooms, schools across D.C. have the potential to accelerate the pace of academic improvement and to demonstrate national leadership in education innovation.

Educators in D.C. have demonstrated a strong interest in exploring personalized learning models:

- In 2012, DCPS created an office of blended learning that has supported schools in the selection and rollout of digital content and tools.
- Ingenuity Prep Public Charter School opened in the fall of 2013 with a personalized learning model that leverages newly developed teacher roles that maximize master teacher time for more students.
- DCPS is investing in the blended redesign of a four-school feeder pattern in Ward 8, which began in 2013. DCPS is working to expand its feeder pattern work to many more schools.
- Across 2013 and 2014, Breakthrough Schools: D.C. received more than 40 applications and awarded 13 grants of $200,000–$400,000. Breakthrough Schools: D.C. is a Washington, D.C.-based grant competition that supports educators and school leaders who are ready to design and launch new, whole-school learning models to better personalize learning for students. The grant recipients have designed or are designing or redesigning schools using student-centered, technology-enabled, and mastery-based learning.
- Monument Academy, one of the first Breakthrough Schools: D.C. grantees, opened its doors in August 2015.
- Rocketship Education, a charter management organization recognized nationally for its high-performing blended schools in California, will open its first D.C. school in the fall of 2016.
Our programs build on the growing momentum around personalized learning in D.C., moving the city closer toward an environment in which personalization is a standard component of all high-performing schools. This work in D.C. will serve as a model for expanding the pipeline of educators equipped with the skills and knowledge to drive successful innovation in their classrooms and schools.

THE 2016 FELLOWSHIP EXPERIENCE

The Education Innovation Fellowship is a yearlong commitment beginning in January 2016. Participation in the program is in addition to a regular teaching workload. Each Fellow will receive a $5,000 stipend for participation in the program, disbursed in two equal parts at the midpoint and the conclusion of the program. The program has two components: the cohort education program and pilot projects.

THE COHORT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Fellows meet one full day per month during the school year and travel together twice to observe exemplary school models across the country. The Fellowship curriculum during program days focuses primarily on developing deep practical knowledge of personalized learning and design thinking, with a secondary emphasis on broader principles of innovation, entrepreneurship, and change management. In addition, Fellows are expected to complete a considerable amount of independent work, including readings and homework assignments.

The program takes place in three phases:

- **Travel and Learn (January–March)**
  Fellows spend the first third of the Fellowship year exploring innovations in personalized learning locally and nationally. Program days feature visits to innovative schools, conversations with practitioners and thought leaders, technology demonstrations, and workshops on design and innovation. The cohort will visit a number of local schools and take two out-of-town trips to see break-the-mold school models in action, including trips to California for a week in February and Chicago for three and a half days in March.

- **Design and Innovate (April–August)**
  Beginning in April 2016, Fellows move to the design and launch of their own personalized learning pilot projects (see Pilot Projects below), and program days shift to focus on supporting the design and management of the pilots. Emphasizing collaborative small group work and peer feedback, sessions feature workshops that facilitate a deep design process (drawn heavily from the work of the Stanford d.school) and are geared toward supporting the development of those pilots. Because of the crucial importance of engaging other stakeholders (school leaders, parents, and colleagues), the Fellowship places a heavy emphasis on external communication.

- **Expand and Share (September–December)**
  Fellows’ interests drive the content and format of program days starting in the fall, and program days may include speakers, discussions, and workshops. The work during these months also focuses on planning for the annual Education Innovation Summit, hosted in December 2016.
PILOT PROJECTS

Throughout the year, Fellows will design, launch, and manage personalized learning pilots in their classrooms and schools. Spring, summer, and school year pilots will require extensive work outside of program days, including the development of written proposals and management of all work necessary to launch and run pilots successfully. Fellows have developed pilots that run the gamut of PK-12 subjects and grade levels. Examples include:

- A station rotation model in a 5th grade English classroom that enables regular, targeted small group work with the teacher, as well as independent self-paced online learning
- A new performance report, tailored for elementary students and their parents, empowering students to set daily individual learning goals and conference regularly with teachers
- A high school physics class designed for self-paced learning, where students access a playlist of individual skills and demonstrate mastery of prerequisites before moving ahead to more complex projects
- A middle school elective course designed around game development and programming skills, in which students create their own skill-based educational games

Across the year, Fellows will:

- Pilot the use of at least one new tool or instructional practice in at least one classroom during spring 2016.
- Design and lead a classroom-based pilot during the late spring or summer months, either at their home school or at a DCPS summer school site. These pilots will focus specifically on changing instructional practice to personalize student learning.
- Build on lessons learned during the spring or summer pilot to develop pilots in their home schools for the 2016–17 school year. The implementation timeline will depend on the nature of the pilots, which may vary in capacity and complexity.
- Between program days, Fellowship staff and Alumni will provide ongoing mentorship and support to Fellows in group sessions and one-on-one meetings. Coaching will focus on supporting the successful design and implementation of pilot programs and helping Fellows to apply key learnings to their pilots. In addition, Fellows will collaborate regularly with their colleagues in small working groups to support pilot development and implementation.

PERSONAL INNOVATION FUND

In addition to the $5,000 participation stipend, each Fellow will receive a personal innovation fund in the form of a $2,500 grant. Between May and October 2016, Fellows will submit proposals describing the intended use of funds in order to access their grant money. Uses may include—but are not limited to—technology purchases, independent travel to visit exemplary schools, personalized coaching, or schoolwide professional development opportunities.
**PRINCIPAL NOMINATION AND PARTICIPATION**

The active engagement of Fellows' school leadership is critical to the long-term impact of the program. A written nomination from each applicant's principal must accompany the application. The nomination should assess the potential impact of the teacher's participation in the Fellowship. Our goal is to ensure principal support for the applicant's participation and to assess the school's capacity to leverage a Fellow to change classroom practice. Although a Fellow from a school with limited desire or infrastructure could be accepted, the ideal situation includes a motivated Fellow and a motivated principal.

Because the Education Innovation Fellowship represents a significant commitment on the part of the Fellow, the Principal Nomination Letter serves a dual purpose. In addition to supporting your teacher's application, the letter also demonstrates your commitment to the applicant's participation in all components of the program should he or she be selected.

Fellowship staff will prioritize involving school leaders in meaningful ways while maintaining a strong cohort experience for the Fellows. **Principal participation includes the following components:**

- **Three program days:** School leaders will be strongly encouraged to attend three pre-specified program days (afternoons only) across the year. Other school staff may also be included, provided that the Fellowship staff, the principal, and the Fellow agree to it.

- **Spring and summer pilots:** Principals are expected to encourage the pilots Fellows design and run during the spring of 2016 and to collaborate regularly on their development. School leaders also are encouraged to host Fellow-run personalized learning pilot programs during the summer of 2016.

- **Collaboration:** All Fellows will be expected to communicate regularly with their principals on their progress in the program and to collaborate on identifying opportunities for personalized learning implementation in fall 2016. School leaders will be asked to meet periodically with their Fellows and Fellowship staff during the year.

- **Financial support:** Each participating school will receive a $1,000 unrestricted grant to cover any costs associated with having a Fellow in the program (for example, paying substitute teachers).
THE FELLOWSHIP COMMITMENT

As participants in the Fellowship program, Fellows commit to:

- Arrive on time and prepared for all Fellowship sessions, trips and events. Attendance at all sessions is required.
- Innovate with personalized learning models through classroom explorations, spring and/or summer pilots, and 2016-2017 school year pilots. Meet all program- and pilot-related deadlines.
- Build positive relationships within the cohort and actively contribute to the Fellowship community of practice.
- Continue to pursue excellence in their teaching practice and uphold all other responsibilities in their classrooms and schools.
- Miss one full day of school per month for Fellowship sessions—with the exception of February, when the cohort will travel to California and Fellows will be out of their schools for five days (February 22-26). Please note that this week includes a DCPS parent/teacher conference day on February 22. We have planned travel during this time because it will allow Fellows to visit some of most innovative next-generation schools in the country and will maximize their time on the West Coast.

ABOUT US

CITYBRIDGE FOUNDATION

CityBridge Foundation works to build a citywide system of excellent district and charter schools that serve all students in the District of Columbia. We seek out, develop, and invest in the talent and ideas needed to transform public education in the nation’s capital.

To ensure lasting impact for this work, we offer a suite of engagement opportunities for local leaders in business, philanthropy, and the community. Our goal is to equip these education champions with the knowledge and support they need to be advocates for continued, sustained progress in our schools.

Learn more at www.citybridgefoundation.org.

NEWSCHOOLS VENTURE FUND

NewSchools Venture Fund is a not-for-profit organization working to close the achievement gap by funding and supporting entrepreneurs who are creating innovative solutions to the problems in public education so that all children have the opportunity to succeed in college and beyond. Since our founding in 1998, NewSchools has raised $248 million and invested in more than 100 nonprofit and for-profit educational organizations working to promote student achievement. Recognizing that neither private charity nor capital markets alone are enough to solve the problem of education inequality, we blend the best of both approaches to ensure an excellent education is available to every child. We actively share what we’ve learned through our investments, bring together educational leaders from across the country, and advocate for smart policies at the federal level.

Learn more at www.newschools.org.