

Arthur Zankel Urban Fellowships

2023-2024

Established in 2007, The Arthur Zankel Urban Fellowship Program has provided opportunities for Teachers College students to impact the lives of students in New York City. Partnering with public schools and after-school programs, the Fellows contribute to the growth and well-being of young people through reading, mathematics, art, and other educational initiatives. Thanks to the generous support of the Zankel Urban Fellows program, hundreds of Fellows have been able to connect with and support New York City's underserved youth, forging mutually beneficial relationships.



Where true change begins.





Abby McGuire
M.A. Candidate;
Literacy Specialist

I'd like to express my sincere thanks for the support you have offered in the form of the Arthur Zankel Urban Fellowship. I am a first year graduate student at Teachers College and a 2023-24 recipient of this award. Without the support of the fellowship

I would not be able to pursue my degree, so I am immensely grateful for your generosity. In addition to financial support, the fellowship has also provided me with rich experiences at a public school in my neighborhood. I've been able to work with students and teachers who live in my community, which has brought me a sense of belonging and fulfillment as I find my place in a new city.

For my fellowship placement, I am working at Teachers College Community School (TCCS) in Morningside Heights doing literacy support work with 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students. Over the course of my work with these students, I've already seen improvements in their reading and writing skills. Additionally, I choose to focus on reasoning and critical thinking strategies with all of my students, in addition to their personal literacy goals. I feel incredibly lucky to develop an understanding of what I enjoy in the teaching field, as well as what I can learn and grow from. In addition to spending time with my students, I enjoy working

alongside the full time staff at TCCS. I collaborate weekly with the homeroom teachers for each of my students and work with them to develop plans that are appropriate for each student. Being in the position to learn from the professionals at TCCS has been exceptional and I've gained many practical insights into how to approach sessions with elementary aged students.

I am most proud of the way I've been able to build strong relationships with my students. I see each of them for a total of one hour per week, but I've still been able to develop trust with them. I've had the chance to learn about their lives and hopefully influence their relationship with literacy in a positive way. It is my ultimate goal that they will walk away from our year together with a newfound enjoyment for reading and telling stories, and a sense of accomplishment in strengthening their literacy skills. Thank you for opening the door for me to get to know these students. They have brought such joy and meaning to my life and experiences at Teachers College.



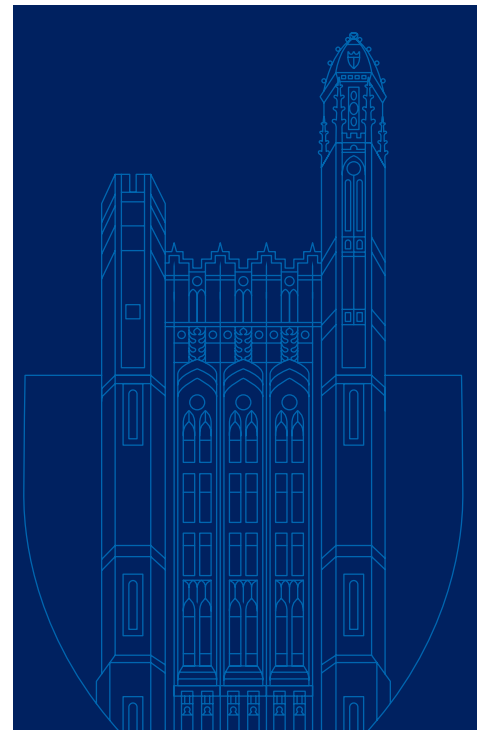
Cindy Do
M.A. Candidate; Education Policy

As a Zankel Fellow, during the fall semester of 2023 I had the privilege of teaching dance and yoga to kindergarten through second-grade students at PS 36. Through meticulously crafted lesson plans, I endeavored to impart the fundamentals of these disciplines and to create a sanctuary where students could unleash their creativity, embrace their individuality, and revel in the sheer delight of being young. I am supporting the Broadway Jr. team in preparing students from grades 6 through 10 for their upcoming performance of The Pirates of Penzance. This opportunity has allowed me to witness firsthand the transformative power of the performing arts in shaping young hearts and minds.

The student-facing aspect of the Zankel Fellowship has been an invaluable tool for personal and professional growth, enabling me to bridge the gap between theory and practice. As a former middle school science teacher in California, this fellowship

has afforded me the opportunity to continue my journey as an educator, to refine my pedagogical skills, and to forge meaningful connections with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Despite the initial challenges of acclimating to a new school culture, the joy and enthusiasm expressed by students have been immensely rewarding and are the moments I am most proud of. Witnessing their excitement as they enter the classroom and engage with the lesson brings me immense pride and reinforces the significance of the work of educators.

I am so grateful for the opportunity afforded to me through the Zankel Fellowship. My participation as a Zankel Fellow has enabled me to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students and has enriched my journey as an educator and future policymaker in ways I could never have imagined.



Cole Donovan
Ph.D. Candidate;
Philosophy and Education

I am currently working in the Bronx High School for Law and Community Service with Robert Blakslee, a fellow doctoral student in the program. He teaches Advanced Placement Literature and Research, as well as inclusion and on-level 12th Grade Literature.

Coming from a full-time teaching position into this fellowship, I have been amazed at the simple positive correlation between time spent in preparation and effectiveness of intervention. In a teaching position where you are responsible for multiple lessons per day for more than a hundred students, it is simply not possible to take the kind of extended time for observation and feedback that I have been allowed in this experience. Given the context is a literature class, our main focus is on improving student writing. In just the first semester that I have been working with these students, their effective use of transitional phrases



and organizational techniques (two areas we are particularly focusing on) has shown marked improvement and, perhaps more importantly, consistency after the period of initial improvement.

I am incredibly grateful to be able to participate in this fellowship opportunity and work alongside my TC colleague in a public school setting. This fellowship has allowed me to think deeply about the practical benefits

of ethical pedagogies—care, deliberation, and patience, all of which are ethically important traits for teachers to develop, are also practically important. In an unexpected way, this fellowship has given me the opportunity to slow down and examine my own practices of teaching while being able to continue to teach and aid the students that I have the pleasure of meeting.

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Jonathan Beltran Alvarado
Ph.D. Candidate, International & Comparative Education

I am pleased to report on the progress of my fellowship work at ELLIS Prep Academy in the Bronx this 2023-2024 academic year. As a Ph.D. student supported by the generous Zankel Fellowship, I have had the opportunity since Fall 2023 to work closely with the students and teachers at this diverse, newcomer-focused international school.

As many of the students in ELLIS Prep come from Spanish-speaking countries, I leveraged my primary language as a Colombian student to bond with them and help them improve their writing skills. In each class, I worked with a different student before I focused on Juan, a Dominican-origin student whose grades have greatly improved and is now considering applying for a community college in the CUNY system.

After Social Science, I transitioned to Ms. Bubbico's ESL classroom during the second period. In this class, students were reading the classic book *A Raisin in the Sun*. Some of the students in her classroom arrived in this country after being outside

the formal education system for several years. I invest more time in them as they need additional resources and support to be able to learn the new language at a faster pace.

As an international student, this has been a profoundly transformative experience. The Zankel Fellowship has allowed me to have close contact with the reality of the newcomer students in New York City. Inspired by the passion and deep understanding of the education of ELLIS teachers and the leadership and legacy of my advisor, Professor Regina Cortina, I am now exploring ways to contribute to this community more systematically. As co-president of TC's Association of Latin American Students (ALAS), my position has allowed me to start planning an event that will draw from TC's projects invested in newcomer education to form a panel in which program experiences will be shared to support teachers' efforts. Moreover, I am now in contact with Columbia's Institute for Latin American Studies to arrange ways to provide professional development workshops designed to elevate Latin American cultures to teachers in international schools.

José Rafael La Rosa Villacorta
Ph.D. Candidate; International and Comparative Education

I am currently a Zankel Urban Fellow at the English Language Learners and International Support (ELLIS) Preparatory Academy, a high school located in the Bronx serving recent immigrant and refugee students.

As a native Spanish speaker, my main responsibilities at the school have been to support students who are struggling with speaking, reading and/or writing during their English classes. I have collaborated with both teachers in developing and co-facilitating lessons, as well as actively engaging with students to make sure they are understanding their teachers' instructions and the purpose of every class activity.

I believe I have positively impacted the experience of immigrant students at ELLIS through resolving communication issues between them and their teachers, and by providing support in their mother-tongue language. I have improved the quality of their learning experiences, as there is a lack of bilingual teachers at ELLIS even though they serve a large population of recent immigrants from Latin American countries.

As a Ph.D. student researching the working conditions of teachers, my experience at ELLIS has opened my eyes to the many challenges of addressing the needs of immigrant students in schools. This experience has given me better insights towards understanding how teachers are constantly working to improve the academic performance of their students even under difficult conditions.

I am very proud of having the opportunity to give back to my community through this fellowship. As a Latinx immigrant who came to the United States as a child and joined a school in a city that was foreign to my parents and older siblings, I am pleased to be contributing to improving the school experience of other immigrant students in New York. I hope to continue creating a more welcoming and inclusive school experience for all the students I am working with at ELLIS.



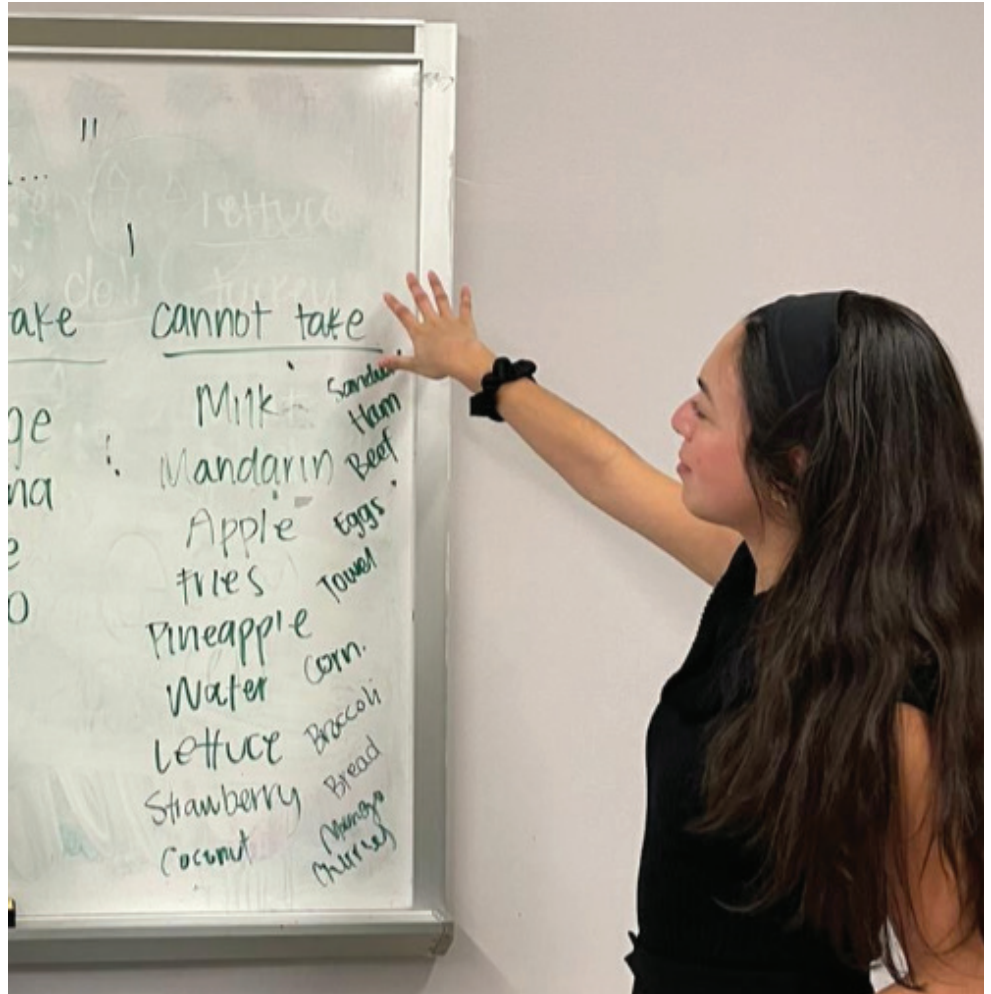
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Paola Abril
M.A. Candidate;
International and
Comparative Education

For the 2023-2024 academic year, I am serving as a Zankel Fellow at Dual Language Middle School (DLMS) on the Upper West Side. Alongside Zankel Fellow Victoria Jones, I co-coordinate an after-school, English language tutoring program and co-create and co-design a human rights-focused, English language curriculum for our students.

Through the Zankel Fellowship, I feel that I have made a difference in NYC public schools by co-leading a program that provides supplementary support to newcomer and asylum-seeking students on their English learning journey. With each lesson, we are supporting students in learning how to positively and confidently communicate in English, in and outside of school. On one occasion, I had the chance to work with two 6th grade students, and I employed different repetition techniques to help them remember certain food items and their associated colors. They were confused about the meanings of the foods and colors at first, but when I verbally “quizzed” them at the end of the lesson, they were able to match the food items to their associated colors (in English!).



While there have been challenges throughout the school year, we have worked closely as a tutoring team and in conjunction with the school’s after-school coordinator and counselor to address these issues promptly and directly. Following certain incidents, we also incorporated themes of respect, kindness, and empathy into our curriculum over the course of several weeks, during which we encouraged students to write, read, and learn about respectfully engaging with others.

The Fellowship has undoubtedly changed my perspective on what education in emergencies (EiE) looks like in an urban setting, along with the complexities of our language, speech, and tone when working with newly arrived and asylum-seeking students in EiE contexts. In the future, I would like to work at a foundation or donor agency/organization, where I can work towards increasing funding to support students (like those at DLMS) in emergency, conflict, and post-conflict environments.



Satoria Ray
M.A. Candidate; Sociology
and Education

For my Arthur Zankel Fellowship, I am serving at Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing & Visual Arts with Youth Historians in Harlem. I work with two groups of students: the library club and a tenth grade English class. My responsibilities vary by group. The library club consists of students in grades 9-12 who volunteer during their lunch period to participate in various projects. The project that I work with them on is creating an archive for the school. A group of alumni donated more than 30 boards that highlighted Wadleigh’s history (poems written by students, pictures of the students at the school during different events, fliers from various events, etc).

This fellowship has helped me make a difference in NYC public schools by allowing me to create lessons that teach students about activism and inspire them to participate in activism in their own communities. I have been able to positively impact students by providing them with skills like reading, writing, archiving, facilitating, and debating that has impacted both their performance and experience in schools. I have also been able to spark ideas in students about how they want to advocate for themselves in and outside of school.

We collaborate with the teachers weekly. We work with them to create lessons that will engage students and satisfy the requirements of the course. We also work with them to ensure they feel comfortable facilitating the lessons and will facilitate

alongside them as well. By working with the teachers in this way, students have been able to gain a deeper understanding of not only the curriculum but their school and the surrounding community. They have benefitted from the resources we bring in that their teachers might not usually be aware of or have access to.

I am most proud of all the students who have been able to learn and apply our lessons to their lives. So many of them have gained useful knowledge and skills through our work together and are actually excited about history and activism. They think so beautifully and brilliantly and being able to facilitate that has made me so proud!

Shell Avenant
Ed.D. Candidate, Communication & Education

The work I have done as a Zankel Fellow over the last two academic years has been my most meaningful Teachers College experience – as an education researcher, teacher, and member of the border Manhattan community.

The Media Justice for Social Change (MJSC) Project, led by Professors Lalitha Vasudvan and Jacqueline Simmons, aims to help young people develop critical media literacy skills as they learn to engage with social justice issues in their communities. Six Zankel Fellows work toward these goals by continuously developing a flexible and responsive curriculum of social justice-oriented Media Literacy classes, which we teach for 40 minutes a week to each of the three classes of fifth-graders (each class is taught by a different pair of Fellows; Agreni Batra and I teach Ms. Martinez and Ms. Jamieson’s class) at P.S. 187 in Washington Heights.

In addition to the academic aspects of our classes at P.S.187, I believe the fellowship project makes a positive difference in this school by diversifying its sample of teachers and supplementing its arts curriculum. For certification-related reasons, many international students at TC are unable to practice teaching during their studies (myself included). The Zankel Fellowship gives us opportunities for inclusion in our local school communities, and in doing so allows NYC public school students to learn from teachers from a wider range of national and professional backgrounds.

I have been especially rewarded by the experience of working with the same class teachers on this project for the second year in a row, as the bond we have developed allows us to collaborate more closely. My work on the MJSC project has developed my teaching skills and me valuable experience in emergent curriculum development and multimodal teaching methods. More impactfully, it has challenged



me to grow in the socioemotional skills I bring to teaching and working with other teachers. We have all been challenged this year in working as a team to develop, in real time, a cohesive curriculum that is also responsively tailored to the individual needs of our three very different classes. We have faced these challenges by learning to find, articulate and constantly focus on board shared goals, maintaining consistent contact, truly listening to and considering one another’s ideas, and trusting one another enough to be open to compromise.

The MJSC project has made the greatest impact on me as an educator by imparting me with a more collaborative and relational approach to social justice. I began this school year with a personal definition of social justice as a broad, somewhat abstract civic project oriented toward institutional reform, but I now have an empirical understanding of social justice as something we build together when we listen to one another and respond with compassion – a more personal and relational practice. I now think more about how best to cultivate social justice in my everyday actions. Overall, I am most proud of the sense of togetherness and trust we have cultivated as a class.