

The National Endowment for the Humanities

Supporting  
K-12 Education

## SUPPORTING K-12 EDUCATION

Through its seminars, institutes, and landmarks workshops for K-12 educators, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) supports excellence in teaching and promotes the teaching of diverse American histories and cultures.

In 2019, the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) partnered with 14 of these programs to document their impact. Surveys were administered before the program (early summer 2019, n=523), immediately after the program (late summer 2019, n=330), and one year after the program (summer 2020, n=283).

98  
percent

of respondents said they would recommend participating in their particular or another NEH workshop to a colleague.

### QUICK FACTS

#### Host institutions

include museums, historical sites, colleges, universities, and other cultural organizations.

#### Professional development programs

for teachers take place throughout the United States and provide teachers with the opportunity to explore new landscapes and distinct American cultures. Since 2020, many programs have also been offered online.

#### Programs are offered on a range of topics.

Some programs teach key moments in American history, from the landing of Pilgrims at Plymouth, to the Battle of Little Bighorn, the creation of the Transatlantic Railroad, and the Civil Rights Era. Other programs emphasize the history of science and technological innovation, the history of religion in the U.S., and teaching Shakespeare.

#### Educators represent

the wide range of U.S. educational institutions—they come from public schools, private schools, parochial schools, and even Department of Defense schools. Programs last between 1-3 weeks. Participants are awarded a stipend to offset travel expenses.

#### The programs reach thousands

of teachers each year and, through them, millions of American students during their teaching careers.

As a history teacher, it is incumbent upon me to curate the resources that my 8th grade students will use. The only way to provide a well-rounded exposure to the myriad of American experiences is to know what is out there and available.

—Participant

As an English teacher, I am always trying to show my students how a place or setting impacts people and events.

This NEH experience brought a new level of understanding to me of how important land and community are in creating history—something I am able to bring back to my students.

—Participant

100  
percent

of respondents reported that their program helped them to grow as an educator.

81  
percent

reported “significant” or “transformative” growth.

## RICH LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Educators learn from a range of perspectives. In addition to scholars and expert educators, programs provide teachers with access to community leaders and first-hand witnesses to historical events.

Hosted by Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi, *The Most Southern Place On Earth* explores the music, history, and culture of the Mississippi Delta, with an emphasis on the Civil Rights Era. Participants speak directly with family and friends of Emmett Till and gain a deeper, more personal understanding of his murder and the Civil Rights Movement.

In New York City, Theatre for a New Audience (TFANA) hosts *Teaching Shakespeare's Plays Through Scholarship and Performance*, where participants explore source material, language, and performance in Shakespeare plays. TFANA has standing relationships with theaters and performance venues throughout their region that allow them to plan hands-on field trips for their participants. Scholars at local universities provide content expertise and access to university collections that provide teachers with deeper insights into the plays' meanings.

I think we hold a deep respect for teachers as professionals at the center of all of our programming. We seek a diverse group of educators from across the country and educational settings. In our intro icebreaker for our most recent program, participants were able to find commonalities across seemingly very different educational settings.

—Project Director

The most important thing I gained was the shared experience in a scholarly atmosphere. Not only did I learn, in depth, about those who envisioned and made the Transcontinental Railroad; but I learned with a diverse group of educators, scholars, and professionals through discussions, varied media, and field trips. I learned, first hand, about the histories, passions, perspectives, and life/teaching experiences of the participants which invigorated my belief that teachers are key to the betterment of a society.

—Participant

## BROADENING PERSPECTIVES

Programs teach cutting-edge scholarship and research and provide hands-on experiences that broaden educators' historical and cultural perspectives.

At the *Teaching Native American Histories* program hosted through the University of Massachusetts Amherst, for example, participants gather at the Wampanoag homelands of southeastern Massachusetts to explore Native histories and culture and learn to incorporate scholarship that is not yet widely integrated into K-12 teaching. The project director for Historic Hudson Valley's *Slavery in the Colonial North* program said, "We use historic spaces and primary documents to tell a story that is often untold in American history, the story of slavery in the colonial North. Teachers come away with a more complete picture of our nation's history—and more empowered to teach this content in their classrooms."

83  
percent

of respondents to a year-out survey said they frequently or very frequently "challenge [their] students to think about our nation's history from alternative perspectives."

73  
percent

said they "teach about historical events from the perspective of everyday people involved."

The workshop definitely made me bring more emphasis on the individual stories of participants. It also caused me to look at teaching an event (like the Little Bighorn and all of western settlement) from the Native perspective.

—Participant

The seminar helped me to focus more on history from the perspective of underrepresented people. I definitely spent more time talking about slavery in colonial America. I tried harder to get students to understand that slavery was not just "a Southern thing" and to think about the perspective of enslaved people.

—Participant

## ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS

A central goal of these programs is to provide participants with the opportunity to deeply engage with humanities sources and topics.

Programs offer educators a chance to connect with resources they may not otherwise be aware of or have access to, both at the host institution and through the partnerships and connections the program develops. These workshops also heavily emphasize pedagogy and give teachers a chance to plan lessons together with feedback from their fellow participants and content experts. As a result, they walk away with both expanded knowledge and implementable resources.

Survey responses also demonstrate that participants move beyond the direct themes of their workshops, incorporating the same concepts across many areas of their curricula.

73  
percent

of respondents wrote about online sources as being especially useful during the COVID-19 pandemic.

89  
percent

of respondents to a year-out survey following the programs said they frequently or very frequently “use photographs and videos to teach about historical events and movements.”

64  
percent

of respondents to a year-out survey wrote about incorporating new content and hands-on, interactive activities culminating in more student-led research and richer discussions.

I was able to incorporate stories into both my science and humanities classes and ground real events to texts and give more meaning to my lessons because of what I learned.

—Participant

I have learned to acquire primary source material from more businesses, industries and museums.

—Participant



52  
percent

of respondents wrote about their enhanced knowledge when asked to reflect on the aspect of the program that was most important in the year following their attendance.

It helped me bring a local angle to studying several topics in U.S. history. Often history feels far away, but being able to show my kids the locations history happened helps make it feel real.

—Participant

I discussed our area/town, used photos, etc. to show how it was affected by a given event and compared to wider areas/the nation as a whole.

—Participant

## BUILDING PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

The hands-on experiences and rigorous learning environment also connects teachers with one another. Project directors are intentional about bringing educators together and fostering a sense of community among them.

97  
percent

of respondents felt that it was either “absolutely essential” or “very important” for educators from around the country to gather in a temporary community in one place, immediately following the program.

75  
percent

of survey respondents reported keeping in touch with fellow participants a year following the program.

54  
percent

of respondents said the network of teachers was particularly helpful in supporting their work during the COVID-19 outbreak.

This was such an inspirational group of committed educators! I am so happy we are still in touch to this day.

—Participant

I gained a large base of other teachers and connected through Facebook. And during this COVID pandemic, also from that connection, I was able to connect through another Facebook group that popped up, "Temporarily Teaching Online" and use that as a resource to see what other districts in my state and other states were doing to deal with this enormous challenge.

—Participant

## ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Participating in NEH-funded professional development programs has additional benefits for teachers and their schools.

The rich partnerships and resources at the host institutions also inspire continued learning among participants. And survey results demonstrate that participants are sharing their experiences and resources with their local colleagues, having an impact on classrooms beyond their own.

One of the members of my cohort made and shared a presentation that was geared toward other teachers, and I was able to edit (as encouraged) and present that with my colleagues, leading to further engagement with the material at my school.

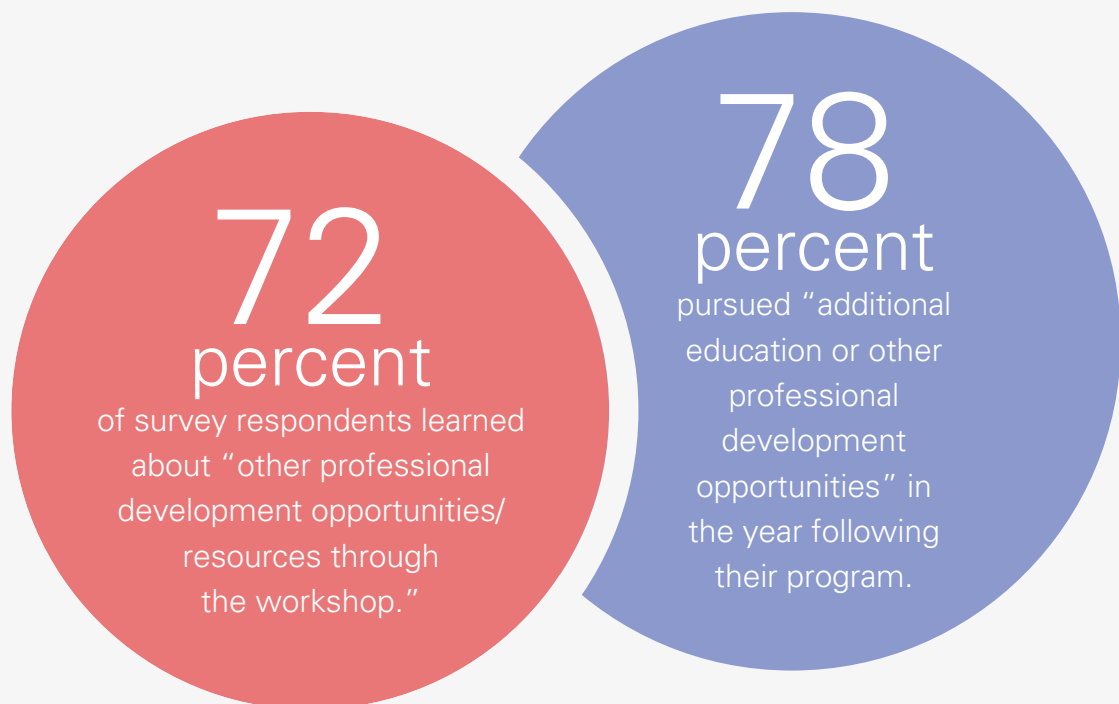
—Participant

At my state level curriculum conference, I shared information about integrating math and social studies, including data about the cost, distance, and changes in population related to the Transcontinental Railroad.

—Participant

86  
percent

of respondents shared resources with other teachers at their school in the year following their program.



We are in the process of creating a local group that explores the racial history of our community. It is the early stages but we are excited.

—Participant

The collaboration with other scholars taught me about other teacher resources and programs. I have been selected twice now for National History Day programs, I have been getting great resources from Gilder Lehrman and lastly the NEH program gave me the drive to look into Master's programs.

—Participant

**The National Humanities Alliance (NHA)** is a nationwide coalition of organizations advocating for the humanities on campuses, in communities, and on Capitol Hill. Founded in 1981, NHA is supported by over 200 member organizations, including: colleges, universities, libraries, museums, cultural organizations, state humanities councils, and scholarly, professional, and higher education associations. It is the only organization that brings together the U.S. humanities community as a whole.

The NHA is a 501(c)(4) non-profit association and is strictly nonpartisan. The National Humanities Alliance Foundation is the 501(c)(3) supporting foundation of the National Humanities Alliance. It works to research and communicate the value of the humanities to a range of audiences including elected officials and the general public.



Our *NEH for All* initiative documents and communicates the impact of the NEH on communities, organizations, and individuals throughout the country.

**Learn more at [nehforall.org](http://nehforall.org)**