2024 InSPIRED Fellowship Cohort



Gus Morales

“I joined the InSPIRED Fellowship driven by a passion to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion within the educational landscape. This fellowship represents a unique opportunity to collaborate with a network of like-minded educators dedicated to fostering environments where every student and teacher can thrive, irrespective of their background. My goal is to leverage this platform to share best practices and develop innovative strategies that address the specific challenges faced by marginalized communities in education. By participating in the InSPIRED Fellowship, I hope to contribute to systemic changes that promote greater diversity of educators and create more inclusive school cultures. Ultimately, I hope to empower educators and students alike, fostering a sense of belonging and equity that transcends the classroom and influences broader educational policies and practices.”



Neva Taylor

“I decided to join the fellowship because I wanted to contribute to increasing the confidence of educators of color and support them in getting their foot in the door. There are cracks in the educator pipeline, and I wanted to be a part of a group aimed at fixing some of those inequities. I am excited to build connections, meet new people, and hopefully inspire a few educators to follow in my footsteps - to get into the classroom. All science points toward diversifying the education system being a benefit to kids of any color, not just students of color and so the goals of this fellowship should be felt by everyone.”



Erica Thomas

“I recall vividly the challenges of being a young, aspiring black educator, navigating the landscape without readily accessible resources or mentors to guide me. Being an Inspired Fellow holds significant meaning for me in my professional journey. For me, fostering Professional Networks and Communities, conducting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Audits, championing Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Teaching Practices, and facilitating Leadership Development Opportunities are not just initiatives; they are personal missions. These pillars are pivotal in shaping educators and fostering an inclusive educational environment that benefits both students and fellow educators alike.”



Melissa Melendez

“I feel that being part of this fellowship for teacher diversity and people of color is a unique opportunity to change the education landscape for our children. Melissa is of Puerto Rican descent and currently the Principal at the 9th Grade Academy for Lawrence High School. Melissa holds her Master of Social Work from Salem State College and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) in Educational Leadership from American International College. Melissa is a proud 2022 alum of Boston College’s Lynch Leadership Academy and a current fellow of Latino For Education’s Aspiring Latino Leaders Fellowship Program. Through visionary leadership and collaborative initiatives, she has spearheaded transformative programs aimed at narrowing the achievement gap and fostering a culture of belonging. Melissa believes in the power of education to ignite change and empower students to reach their fullest potential. Her hope is to share her personal and professional experiences with current and future educators as a way to empower and inspire them to achieve their dreams and create an environment where every student feels valued and celebrated.”



Kevin Madden

“My name is Kevin Madden and I am the principal of the Cottage Street School in Sharon, MA.  In my 25 years in education, 17 as a principal, I have seen our population of students and families grow increasingly more diverse each year.  This is part of a wonderful environment for our students, but I am concerned with the fact many schools do not have the diversity among the staff to reflect the families in their community.  The Inspired Fellowship is an opportunity to work with colleges, local districts, and non profits to support diversity in our teaching community and to promote programs that work with aspiring educators.  I am excited for the work of the Inspired Fellowship and am looking forward to the collaborative approach to improving and sustaining diversity in our schools.”