Curiosity, Collaboration, and Authentic Engagement
At Center for Inspired Teaching, we dedicated the 2022-2023 school year to action, getting to the core of what teachers and students need in order to thrive.

We expanded on our, now award-winning, ABCDE of Learner Needs framework, creating two digital guidebooks as repositories for the research, strategies, and tools necessary to identify and address gaps in learner needs.

Following a troubling report from the CDC on the mental health and well-being of young people, we organized a series of live-streamed conversations with experts who offered actionable insights on mitigating the worst outcomes through building School Connectedness. Their perspectives -- as well as a year’s worth of additional actionable advice and strategies -- were included in our weekly collection of resources, Hooray For Monday.

Our Real World History students showcased the Inspired Teaching Approach in the community, leading a panel discussion at Busboys and Poets. Speak Truth students -- in Washington, DC and beyond -- tackled topics like political polarization, criminal justice reform, and violence in schools, with curiosity and respect.

We partnered with teachers, schools, and education systems near and far -- including Myanmar and Ukraine -- to teach teachers how to incorporate improvisational mindsets into their practice, a research-backed approach shown to increase resilience in the face of uncertainty. And with funding support from the DC Commission on Arts and Humanities, we launched the inaugural Teaching with Improvisation Fellowship, a year-long program for Washington, DC teachers.

I’m proud of the work of all my colleagues at Inspired Teaching, and the teachers, school leaders, students, and parents who’ve collaborated with us to make the school year engaging, joyful, and meaningful. There’s much work still to do in order to make engagement (rather than compliance) the norm for all students. Our team is hard at work toward achieving that important goal.

If we deepen our relationships with our students and let learner needs inform every approach, we’ll improve the school experience and well-being of the children in our care -- and ourselves as well.”
GUIDED BY THE RULES OF IMPROV

Improv has been at the heart of Inspired Teaching since our founding. Our work has always been about building strong relationships and mutual respect between teachers and students and infusing joy into the classroom. We know teaching is an art, and we teach teachers to think and behave like improvisational actors.

The yearlong Teaching with Improvisation Fellowship began in June 2023 with three days of in-person professional development for 27 DC teachers. The focus of this Institute was to help teachers listen attentively; hone their observation skills; and engage their curiosity and empathy to deepen not only their understanding of academic content but also their understanding of their students and how they learn. Fellows left the three-day Institute with a renewed connection to their practice and enthusiasm for continued professional learning as part of the Fellowship in the school year ahead.

Surveys showed that:

- 100% of participants rated the learning as useful or very useful for their work and as engaging or very engaging
- 100% of participants reported that the session was relevant to someone teaching their content area and grade level
- Participants learned how to build more meaningful relationships with students

In their own words, here are some of the things teachers had to say:

“Your workshops inspire me to connect deeply with my students, and as an administrator, to connect more deeply with our instructors.”

“Thank you for all these life-affirming ideas!”

“This was a reminder that there is still joy in teaching no matter how challenging it has become.”

“From the moment you greeted us each day with such open hearts, to the way you invited us to ask questions as we were waking up to the day, to the way we parted for the day, excited about our homework assignments, all this, plus of course all the activities had me feeling completely engaged with the workshop, with my fellow educators, and with life itself.”

SAY "YES, AND..."
(Student as Expert)
- Agree. Then build, don’t block.
- Listen fully. Allow yourself to be changed by what you hear.

PLAY BIG.
(Joy)
- Allow your imagination to guide you.
- Prioritize joy.

EMBRACE MISTAKES.
(Wide-Ranging Evidence of Student Learning)
- Practice failure.
- Seek opportunities to learn from what goes wrong.
CULTIVATING CRITICAL THINKING

Inspired Teaching’s youth programs model what authentically engaging learning looks like when classroom instruction is rooted in the Inspired Teaching Approach.

Real World History

Real World History students completed oral history projects that were archived at the DC Public Libraries, and competed in the National History Day Competition, where two students won first place this year! In February, students were featured on a panel at Busboys and Poets for a Black History Month A.C.T.O.R. (A Continuing Talk on Race) event. Fifty people attended the talk in which panelists including scholars and historians discussed the importance of oral history in sharing culture and tradition.

Students completed internships at the White House Historical Association, the National Archives and Records Administration, the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, and the People’s Archive.

- 92% of students said the class helped them identify ways to improve their communities and the world.
- 100% of students said it changed the way they think about history and the world.
- 92% of students said they felt more prepared for college and/or careers after taking the course.
- 88% of students in the course showed measurable growth in analytical skills (sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization) over the year according to the Stanford History Assessment.
- 100% of internship supervisors agreed that they were pleased with their intern’s performance. One supervisor said of his intern, "Just outstanding. We were very lucky to have his assistance and support."

Speak Truth

This past school year, Inspired Teaching's Speak Truth seminars brought together students from dozens of public, public charter, and private high schools in Washington, DC. In each Speak Truth session, students discussed topics ranging from violence in schools to the benefits and drawbacks of reducing the voting age.

Based on student feedback

- 96% of students rated Speak Truth as excellent or very good
- 93% of students said that Speak Truth exposed them to new ideas and perspectives.
- 91% said that Speak Truth was more enjoyable than their experience at school that week.

“I learned a lot more about history as an action, rather than a noun. I learned about the process, about what archiving is like, how history can be remembered, how history can be viewed through different lenses and different frames. That was new to me, the process of history instead of just what happened 100 years ago.”

22-23 Real World History Student
**SPREADING THE WORD**

*Kappan Magazine | May 2023*

In an article titled “PD to promote a ‘Yes! And...’ mindset” Aleta shared insights and expertise in how the world of improv provides a model for the kind of professional development that is both engaging and relevant to teachers.

**The Instigator of Thought Challenge wins an Anthem Award**

The Inspired Teaching Instigator of Thought Challenge, an innovative, educator-created tool that offers teachers powerful activities that teach them to replace outdated compliance-based methods with authentic, engaging, student-led learning, won Bronze at this year’s Anthem Awards.

**Clear Your Messages | February 7, 2023**

Aleta spoke with *Clear Your Messages* host Tania Heller, MD, FAAP, about Center for Inspired Teaching, what it means to really listen, the power of play, and the importance of curiosity.

**Aleta is a HundrED Ambassador**

HundrED.org | January 2023

Aleta was selected to join the HundrED network, which aims to “identify, amplify, and facilitate the implementation of impactful and scalable education innovations,” as an Ambassador and looks forward to learning from other education changemakers, as well as sharing Inspired Teaching’s mission with an international audience. In addition, The ABCDE of Learner Needs was shortlisted for the HundrED Global Innovation prize.

**A Digital Library of Institute Resources**

Throughout the 22-23 school year we published monthly guides for teachers featuring activities and resources tied to that month’s Institute theme. All are available for free download on our website.
FY 2022-23
Finances

$469,309
SUPPORT AND REVENUE

What these numbers made possible:

- 24 live, online Monthly Institutes for training, targeted school visits, and highly impactful presentations for academic leadership on the Inspired Teaching model.
- Launch of the yearlong Teaching with Improvisation Fellowship for DC Teacher Leaders, who are now leading transformative professional development within their own school communities.
- We reached 10,000 teachers in the United States and internationally, including 3,808 in the Washington, DC region.
- 52 weeks of Hooray For Monday, a collection of actionable insights, expert advice, and practical resources -- and a podcast -- for educators, parents, and all adults invested in transforming the learning experience.

Online resources that provide lesson plans, community building, and tools for teacher reflection and growth (Instigator of Thought self-guided professional development activities, ABCDE Website and lesson plan library.)

EXPENDITURES

- Contributions 62.8%
- Government Grants 30.4%
- Donated Goods and Services 6.7%
- Teacher Training 46.3%
- Fundraising 3.7%
- Administrative 2.6%
- Youth Programs 47.4%

$498,845
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