



Summary Report 2024-2025 Fellowship Year



Prepared by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science
Office of Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists
<https://science.osti.gov/wdts/einstein>

Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program

Program Overview

The Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship (AEF) Program provides a unique opportunity for accomplished K-12 educators in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to serve in the national education arena. Fellows spend eleven months, beginning in September of each year, working in Federal agencies or in U.S. Congressional offices, bringing their extensive knowledge and classroom experience to education program and/or education policy efforts.

Overview of the 2024-2025 AEF Fellows

2024-2025 AEF Participants	
Number of total AEF Fellows	15
Number of high school teachers	7
Number of upper elementary and middle school teachers	8
Number of states represented by the Fellows	11
Number of Fellows who have been teaching more than 10 years	11

Table 1. Summary of the 2024-2025 AEF Fellows

Hosting Federal Agencies and Congressional Offices for the 2024-2025 AEF Fellows

Federal Agency Placements
U.S. Department of Energy (1 Fellow)
U.S. Department of Defense (4 Fellows)
U.S. Department of Homeland Security (1 Fellow)
U.S. Geological Survey (2 Fellow)
U.S. Library of Congress (2 Fellows)
Congressional Office Placements
Representative Melanie Stansbury (NM-1)
Representative Raul Grijalva (AZ-7), Congresswoman Yassamin Ansari (AZ-3)
Representative Burgess Owens (UT-4)
Representative Glenn Ivey (MD-4)
House Committee on Education and Workforce

Table 2. Hosting Federal Agencies and Congressional Offices

*AEF Congressional Office placements are sponsored by U.S. Department of Energy

Program History

The AEF Program, now in its 35th year with 398 alumni, operates under the Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Act of 1994 (Pub. L 103-382). The legislation states that the Department of Energy (DOE) administers the AEF Program including recruitment, application and selection, and overall management.

The AEF Program is designed to meet the following objectives identified in the legislation: 1) to provide outstanding elementary and secondary STEM education teachers the opportunity to bring to Congress and appropriate branches of the federal government the insights, extensive knowledge, and practical experience of classroom teachers; 2) to increase the understanding, communication, and cooperation between Congress and Federal agencies; and 3) to increase the understanding, communication and cooperation between the federal government and the STEM education community.

The Federal science agencies that host Fellows have as part of their goals to support STEM education to help ensure a future workforce is sufficiently prepared to contribute to the emerging science and technology fields. Fellows are placed in education offices where they provide insights during project conceptualization and assistance with established programs. The Congressional offices that host Fellows, sponsored by DOE, either have a strong STEM portfolio or want to increase their portfolios within their offices.

AEF Program Scope

Fellowship Support

All Fellows receive a monthly stipend of \$8,200, which is paid by the sponsor's offices. Additionally, Fellows can request to receive up to \$5,000 for travel and fees associated with their professional development during the Fellowship. All current benefits for are available on the program website: <https://science.osti.gov/wdts/einstein/Benefits>

Application

Interested educators can access the application from mid-August through mid-November. The on-line application is located on the DOE website at: <https://science.osti.gov/wdts/einstein/How-to-Apply>

The application consists of three sections:

- Questions highlighting educational background, professional experience, professional activities, awards, and publications;
- Five essay questions; and
- Three letters of recommendation, one being from a school district official.

The responses to the questions on the application are used to assess the eligibility of the application. While most of this information is fact-specific, it provides a way to make both a quick and qualitative evaluation when compared with the responses in the essays.

Application Review and Selection

The application review, selection, and placement process is communicated in detail and posted on the AEF web page: <https://science.osti.gov/wdts/einstein/How-to-Apply/Application-Review-and-Selection-Process>

Positions Descriptions

Host offices interviewing selected candidates, the semi-finalists, must have, in advance of the interviews, one-page position descriptions that detail the workload requirements and planned responsibilities within the office. The semi-finalists can then gauge their interests and capabilities in the positions and determine the best fit for their individual needs.

Contributions to the Host Offices

Fellows are regularly recognized for making significant contributions to their host offices. Most of this is managed and guided by position descriptions under the guidance of host office supervisors.

The Fellows in each cohort are usually a collaborative group and are encouraged to share ideas and work together to expand upon tasks and inevitably deliver projects beyond expectation. Position accomplishments are observed by program management during the four required “reports and presentations” due throughout the Fellowship.

Fellows’ Professional Development

Fellows are required to establish individual professional development plans designed around high-level goals that combine to advance the knowledge and skills of the Fellows. These plans help the Fellows identify goals and objectives and establish “actions” that will contribute to the achievement of the high-level goals.

The professional development resources available to Fellows from science agencies, STEM policy experts, advocacy organizations, and other STEM education stakeholders may not exist at this level at any other time in their career. The establishment of a plan with milestones will help ensure a valuable experience both within and outside their host offices and in the future.

Outcomes

Fellows complete the AEF Program with a portfolio of opportunities to share with colleagues and students. The portfolios include information on undergraduate and graduate internships, scholarships, the national research infrastructure supported by the Federal government, how to compete for grants, the latest research on advancing STEM education, and opportunities that inspire students towards STEM careers.

The experiences gained are personally and professionally valuable and subsequently shared with colleagues. By gaining a clearer understanding of educational issues at the national and local level, Fellows become recognized leaders for the ability to convey substantive information and influence the future of STEM education.

Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program Accomplishments of the 2024-2025 Fellows

Name	Background	Sponsor/ Host Office Accomplishments
Jorge Ambriz	Arizona High School Math	U.S. House of Representatives, Office of Congresswoman Raul Grijalva and Yassamin Ansari Jorge worked in the office of Congresswoman Raul Grijalva and Yassamin Ansari Fernandez (AZ), where he was assigned the portfolios of K-12 education and veterans affairs. Jorge has worked with numerous stakeholders within those portfolios, including Congressional liaisons, advocacy groups, Congressional offices, federal agencies, Congressional researchers, and constituents. In the K-12 domain, several accomplishments include preparing the Congresswoman for hearings and drafting the memos that inform the Congresswoman of these committee proceedings for the Education and Workforce. In his other portfolio areas, Jorge had an array of achievements. He wrote the letter addressed to the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Secretary of Defense to address recent findings on the deportation of veteran service members and provided an honorary memo to respond to the passing of Rep. Grijalva. Jorge will transition to teaching in a new mathematics classroom in the fall.

Veena Black	Georgia Elementary School	U.S. House of Representatives, Office of Burgess Owens Veena was assigned the portfolios of Elementary Education, Childcare/Social Welfare, Healthcare, and Medicare/Medicaid. She conducted meetings with advocates and lobbyists across these areas. She was able to obtain bipartisan co-sponsors for the healthcare bills which aligned with Congressman Owens's office. Another key accomplishment is when Veena visited Utah and held roundtable discussions with teachers. Veena met with the Lieutenant Governor and connected with many Utah educators. She utilized these connections to highlight some of the schools and educators and wrote floor speeches for Congressman Owens to orate on the House floor. Veena will return to the classroom as K-4 teacher in the same district.
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Judy Butcher	Texas Math Middle School	Department of Defense – Office of Naval Research, Naval STEM Coordination Office (NCSO) Judy raised awareness about the STEM resources available at the national level, offered by NSCO and other federal agencies by working with Naval Air Station Patuxent River, BUMED, the Naval Postgraduate School, and with the Naval Surface Warfare Center Indian Head. I've shared these resources by presenting at the NSTA conference in Philadelphia, SLECoP in Chicago, the Texas Women and Girls in STEM Conference. Judy also created curricular resources alongside personnel at the U.S. Naval Academy and the Naval Surface Warfare Center Dahlgren. Judy also provided support for Naval STEM-related endeavors at events such as Bring Your Child to Work Day at the Pentagon. She interviewed scientists and engineers for the Naval Horizons video contest and visited several Navy labs throughout the nation. Judy will leverage the relationships she made at the national level within the Naval STEM outreach program pipeline to begin creating a STEM Ecosystem in West Texas. Judy will teach robotics and social studies to 6th grade students in the same district in the fall.
Sarah Compton	Illinois Environmental Science, Biology, Chemistry High School	Youth in Education and Science (YES) office at the United States Geological Survey (USGS), Office of Science Quality and Integrity (OSQI) Sarah's major project for the entirety of the fellowship was an educator professional development workshop that she co-developed with a team of Geology, Energy, and Minerals (GEM) scientists. This workshop has been tested fields with educators from the DC metro area and will be utilized in the Fall with USGS resources. Sarah also led the development of a USGS data visualization/data literacy resource for teachers. She created a universal student document that will be used for all visualizations that contain five questions to help guide students and teachers through the process of making sense of USGS data. Sarah also provided expertise and guidance to the creation of an Amphibian Week card game. The game was a collaboration between the Ecosystems Mission Area and multiple Amphibian Research and Monitoring Initiative (ARMI) regions. Sarah will return to the same district teaching high school environmental science and biology in the fall.

Nathan Diehl	Maryland Biology/AP Biology High School	Strategic Education and Outreach Office, Naval Surface Warfare Center - Carderock Division (NSWCCD) Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), Department of the Navy, Department of Defense. Nathan's notable accomplishments include creating a teacher externship program for local teachers in the DMV to provide a model for Naval Surface Warfare Centers around the country. He created a template similar program to help reinforce and grow the STEM pipeline for the Navy. Additionally, Nathan was able to create two new lessons for the Seaworthy STEM curriculum and field test them. He spearheaded a math "quick lesson" that focused on elementary grades and created a hybrid history/engineering lesson on the David Taylor Model Basin. Nathan will return to the same district teaching middle school science in the fall.
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Jessica Fries-Gaither	Ohio K-5 Elementary Science	Library of Congress Professional Learning and Outreach Initiatives (PLOI) and Informal Learning Office (ILO) divisions Jessica developed lesson plans centered around supporting K-12 teachers in their use of primary sources through blog posts, journal articles, virtual and in-person presentations. She provided collaboration with the Teaching with Primary Source consortium members. Jessica designed preparations for the development of materials related to The Source: A Creative Research Studio for Kids at the Library (slated to open early 2026), including items available for visitor use and workshops for school groups. Jessica has created 6 ‘Teaching with Primary Sources blogs’, she has written two articles for the National Science Teaching Association (NSTA) journal, The Science Teacher, one of which was published in the March/April 2025 issue, and one that will be published in the July/ August 2025 issue. She has presented about Library resources and programs at the Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Consortium meeting in November, the NSTA national conference in March, and the American Library Association (ALA) conference in June. Jessica will return to the same school, teaching elementary science, and will publish her 9th book in the fall.
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Dara Gardner	Colorado Science Middle School	House Committee on Education and Workforce Dara worked on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which had passed as an update in the House in the spring of 2024 and was in four-corners negotiations with the Senate. For the Chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee, Dara led a WIOA hearing to prepare the bill for reintroduction and scheduled and met with advocacy groups that had a stake in the bill. For the ‘AI in Education’ hearing, Dara led the ‘Screentime in Schools’ Act. She led research, created memos, vetted and interviewed the witnesses, led the Legislative Assistant briefing and provided the Chairman briefing notes. Dara provided subject matter expertise into different types of teacher apprenticeship programs from around the country. Dara will return to Colorado, teaching in a 6th grade science classroom, in the fall.
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Janet Kahn	Virginia High School Physics	Representative Glenn Ivey, Maryland District 4 Both in the district and DC offices, Janet met with constituents, organization members, and lobbyists, focusing on the full life cycle including formal and informal pre-K through higher education, healthcare, aging, disabilities, and STEM education issues Furthermore, Janet supported connections between youth and opportunities that can open doors to STEM careers by visiting high schools within the district. In the DC office, her focus was on supporting the office with federal funding and other legislative and policy options to inform Congressman Ivey of the needs in the district. Janet will provide research consultations for high school students in Fairfax County and will continue to provide her wealth of experience and subject matter expertise to the Physics community.
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Katie Mauro	CT Elementary K-4 Digital media Specialist	Air Force-Space Force Department of Defense Engineering and Technical Management Directorate As a member of the Space Force outreach team, Katie was responsible for the 'STEMtoSpace' and 'STEMtoSky' programs, curating five elementary focused STEM lessons and pairing literacy with all STEM lessons. These duties evolved over time due to lack of online attendance into asynchronous lessons. Due to Katie's adaptation of lessons, online attendance increased by 1,288%. Katie also led a 360° tour of an Air Force laboratory and took additional initiatives creating <i>ABCs of STEM: US. Air Force & US. Space Force</i> children's book and activity journal, which is currently in print and will be ready for electronic distribution in the Fall. Katie also maintained a robust outreach and collaboration with the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force, providing subject matter expertise for K-5 literacy. Katie will return to her school as a K-5 digital media specialist in the fall.
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Zachary Minchow-Proffitt	Virginia Physics, Chemistry, Earth Science, Biology High School	Department of Energy, Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists (WDTS) Zak supported the National Science Bowl (NSB). He organized the science day speakers, reviewed questions, and planned the NSB Divisional Team Challenges, middle school enrichment activities, and assisted with various logistics associated with the hosting of the National Science Bowl finals. On the WDTS team, Zak also played a role in assessing applications for internship programs and assisted with outreach. Zak visited four national labs to assess ways that they were engaging their communities and provided feedback concerning STEM internships and placement programs. With the Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program, Zachary aided with the monthly podcast as a form of outreach for the Fellowship. Zak will return to his school teaching high school research and biology in the Fall.
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Ralph Pantozzi	NJ High School Mathematics	Library of Congress At the LOC, Ralph was tasked with examining the collections of the library for representations of mathematical thinking across human history, from ancient Babylonia to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. He utilized his findings to create blog posts for teachers and families, articles for publication in professional journals, conference presentations, and school program content for students K-12. Ralph also worked with Library of Congress personnel to conduct collaborative research within LOC collections and shared ways that Library personnel can highlight mathematics in their ongoing work through brown bag seminars and lead an interdisciplinary STEM initiative with the Young Reader’s Center, Informal Learning Center and created a video and blog post for the Rare Books Division. Ralph’s plans are to return to his district in the fall to teach mathematics within his district, write a book on mathematics, and conduct professional learning at conferences.
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Selene Verhofstad	TX High School/College Chemistry	Department of Defense Office of the Undersecretary of Defense, Office of STEM Engagement Selene led the DoD STEM website improvement project to streamline educator access to STEM resources across various DoD components. She created timelines, gathered feedback from educators, and established a framework for enhancing the website's usability in terms of teacher resources. Selene also represented DoD STEM at multiple national conferences including NSTA, the Texas Women and Girls in STEM summit, and created a lightning talk at Google Pittsburgh Headquarters, where she helped raise awareness of DoD STEM programs and provided federal outreach. In addition, Selene facilitated professional development sessions for DoD STEM Ambassadors, helping coordinate their upcoming convening and supported their participation in national conferences. Selene also was on the JSHS Planning Committee and Judged the Behavioral Sciences category. She supported USPTO's Noche de Ciencias, where she connected with Spanish-speaking families to assist with Federal outreach initiatives. In the Fall, Selene will teach Community College and seek public office.
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Victoria Thompson	CT Middle School Earth Science, Physical Science	United States Geological Survey, Office of Youth and Education in Science (YES) A large portion of Victoria's time was dedicated to establishing and cultivating partnerships with organizations providing data science for indigenous communities. During her Fellowship, Victoria took a Data Analytics course that focused on using Tableau as the platform for importing and visualizing data and utilized this course to create curricular materials for USGS's outreach efforts. Additional work has been done to connect to conferences that hold communities not typically reached by USGS. Victoria has also been part of the team designing and building a module for the website Data in the Classroom, which will use USGS data to help students build their data literacy. Victoria presented at the American Geophysical Union conference (AGU), South by Southwest Education (SXSWEDU), National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) and EarthX. Victoria will return to her middle school classroom teaching 7th grade science in the fall.
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Charles Wang	TX High School Computer Science	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Department of Homeland Security (OHS) Academic Engagement Branch (AEB) Stakeholder Engagement Division (SEO) At CISA, Charles created 'Cyber Nibbles' and 'Cyber in a Box' materials to assist teachers integrating cybersecurity into their classrooms. These materials consist of a warmup activity slide deck, designed to embed 4-minute cyber security discussions into core K-12 subjects like ELA, science, math, and social studies. Cyber in a Box consists of resources around four core topics of: Strong Passwords, Software Updates, Multi-factor Authentication, and Phishing. These instructional materials are aligned with CISA's "Secure Our World" campaign. Charles ensured each resource was accessible, equity-minded, and aligned with CYBER.ORG and CSTA standards. He provided both technology and non-technology options for delivering the content, as well as self-paced or educator-led options. Charles provided outreach to NICEK12, EdCon, and WeTeach_CS on behalf of CISA. Post Fellowship, Charles will travel abroad and stay connected and by providing SME to the Computer Science community. Currently, his teaching plans are undetermined.
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Nancy Penchev	Florida K-5 Technology Integration	Rep. Melanie Stansbury (NM-1) Nancy’s portfolio include education (birth to death); family issues; hunger; financial services and banking; space, science, and technology; telecom and broadband; arts. During her tenure with the Congresswoman, Nancy worked with caucuses such as caucuses like Aerospace, STEM, Museums, National Humanities, and TRIO. Nancy found co-sponsors for letters concerning protecting the department of education, demanding the return of funds for NEH and NEA grants, and asking the DoD to return books to the DoDEA libraries. Nancy has also worked on the Teacher Pay Parity Bill which aims to increase the pay of teachers who work at reservation schools or in BIE schools. Nancy has presented at multiple conferences this year, including ISTE, Texas Distance Learning, NSTA, Al Salsa Jam, and New Mexico Science Teachers Conferences. Nancy is undecided as to where she will transition next.
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