

September 30, 2008

Volume 2

The Ambassador

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship/index.html>

Washington Ambassadors Settling In

By the beginning of August, the excitement and enthusiasm that the fellows generated during their Summer Summit transformed into action in Washington. They met people in their offices and made everyone around the Education Department (ED) aware that teachers had arrived to be put to work. Once the staffers discovered five eager teachers to bounce ideas off of, the fellows' calendars quickly filled with meetings, briefings,

and myriad activities. Much of their focus in August and September lay in establishing the foundation of their work at ED. They each created an individual action plan that outlined how their tasks this year will benefit ED, the teaching profession, the fellowship, and themselves personally. This action plan is meant to guide the fellows and keep them focused upon the goals of the fellowship. The following articles are snapshots of how the

Washington Fellows began to accomplish their fellowship goals, as told in their own words.

Teaching Ambassador Videos may be seen at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherfellowship/videoquotes.html>

Top: Jon Eckert, Steven Hicks
Middle: Jocelyn Pickford, Stephanie Canada
Front: Julie Shively, Bobbi Ciriza Houtchens, Gillian Cohen-Boyer



Bobbi Ciriza Houtchens (San Bernadino, CA) - OELA

Bobbi, a high school English and English Language teacher is a strong advocate for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Latino students. She is working in the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) this year.

In OELA, I'm working on the October LEP Partnership Conference. ED began the LEP partnership to improve assessments of English language proficiency, reading, and mathematics for LEP students. I am also helping to plan the November Native American Workshop, designed to support language instruction projects for LEP children from native American, Alaska native, native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander backgrounds. Lastly, I am working on a system for tracking actions recommended in the Title III state grant monitoring reports, as well as working with the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu>)

As part of the fellowship's outreach activities, I coordinate the fellows' input into various ED resources. These include feedback on websites such as the Doing

What Works, FREE, and College.gov; *The Achiever* Newsletter; the TV program Education News Parents Can Use, and the *Innovations in Education* series, an online ED publication. I'm excited to have contributed to the Department's decision to participate in the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas this November.

I enjoy sharing classroom and student stories with staff across the Department, bringing students' and teachers' voices and experiences to life. It's not often easy for people who live in different worlds to stay in touch with the realities that many of our most needy students face on a daily basis. I love to give examples of students who succeed despite the odds when they are given the chance to connect with their learning and are provided with proper support and instruction. I also demonstrate how the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has changed the conversation and focus at the school and classroom levels.

Jon Eckert (Franklin, TN) - OESE

Jon, a seventh grade science teacher, works in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE), which monitors implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act.

My work in OESE on state assessment and accountability has afforded me some invaluable opportunities. I have been examining issues related to differentiated accountability and growth models. These programs give states more flexibility in meeting NCLB requirements while focusing resources on the neediest students.

On September 16, I attended the first meeting of the National Technical Advisory Council. Sixteen assessment experts from around the country gathered to advise ED about issues such as performance indexes, growth models, and high school end-of-course exams as a component of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), to better prepare ED for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization.

Additionally, the National Academy of Sciences is currently creating a panel of experts to consult on broader policy issues that will impact the ESEA reauthorization. Along with 14-18 national experts (governors, non-profit

leaders, academics, district and state superintendents), the OESE Assistant Secretary and a Washington Fellow will serve as ex-officio members of the panel. I will serve in this capacity through June 2009, to be replaced by a new Washington Fellow.

As a second component of my work in OESE, I reviewed Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grants and allocations. There are 34 TIF grantees around the country, ranging from entire states to one grantee that consists of two schools.

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/teacherincentive/index.html>

Lastly, for the Office of Innovation and Improvement's School Leadership Program, I compiled a matrix of crosscutting issues with regard to evaluation methods for programs in their third year and their final year. I presented these findings at a program directors' meeting with the grantees, and facilitated a roundtable discussion on ways to improve data collection. This program provides grants to support the development, enhancement, or expansion of innovative programs to recruit, train, and mentor principals and assistant principals for high-need Local Educational Agencies (LEAs).

Julie Shively (Lawrenceville, GA)-OII

Julie, an elementary school teacher, settled in the Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) to work on the Teaching American History (TAH) grant program and provide input into the Troops to Teachers program.
<http://www.ed.gov/programs/teachinghistory/index.html>

My primary job at the Department involves reviewing the work of the TAH grant program from its inception seven years ago through today for its effectiveness in improving teacher content knowledge and delivery of traditional American history.

As a reserve Air Force officer, I want to place more former military members into the classroom so I am working with the Troops to Teachers and the Department of Defense's education agency to increase the numbers of "troops" who become teachers.

As a math teacher, I am also working with the Mathematics and Science partnership in ED. This program supports projects to improve

math and science education through partnerships, which include a high-need LEA and the mathematics, science, or engineering department of an institute of higher education. I am helping to find ways that the recommendations from the National Math Advisory Panel Report can get from the federal level into the hands of the classroom teacher. Four other fellows and I recently participated in the first National Math Panel Forum, where we collaborated with district and state math coordinators, college math department heads, math organization members, and textbook representatives to find ways to incorporate the findings into state and district math curricula.

In a related area, I am beginning to work with the Interagency Aerospace Revitalization Task Force in an effort to bring more physical science to the middle school and high school levels so that students will see all the options that aerospace/aviation career fields have to offer. I want to show the link between the math findings and physical science.

Steven Hicks (Los Angeles, CA)-OII

Steven, a kindergarten teacher at a charter school, advocates for the youngest school children in the Office of Innovation and Improvement's Charter School program.

Wow, two months have just whizzed by since I started my Teaching Ambassador Fellowship Program at the U.S. Department of Education. Every time I tried to write this article my computer told me that I had e-mail and asked if I want to read it *now*. Meanwhile messages popped up from my calendar telling me I had a meeting in five minutes or, worse, that I missed my meeting. My job is quite eclectic, and every day is a virtual hurricane of meetings, events, briefings, brown bag seminars, phone calls, and looking at my calendar planner every five seconds to make sure I haven't missed something critical to the future of American education. But I'm not complaining. I love it here in the Cubicle Jungle!

My time here at ED has been divided between a focus on charter schools and early childhood education. My first month was spent in the Charter School Program (CSP) Office, <http://www.ed.gov/programs/charter/index.html>, which is one of nine discretionary grant programs in the Office of Parental Options and Information (OPOI). The charter school director, Dean Kern, and his team have all the facts and details of the 4,303 public charter schools in 40 States and the District of Columbia. Coming from California where 240,000 students attend public charter schools, I just thought that charter schools were everywhere, but oh contraire! Twenty-six states have imposed limits or caps on the number of charter schools allowed to exist, and ten states do not have charter school laws, and are therefore ineligible to receive access to state funding. This was all pertinent to my first week at ED, when Kern had me jump in to co-facilitate a panel of grant readers for non-SEA (non-state education agency) grants - individual charter schools in states that have enacted a charter school law but do not have a state CSP grant program. The next week, I listened in on long but fascinating SEA grantee monitoring report conference calls.

This week, I am planning an event to honor the fifteen Charter Blue Ribbon Schools

<http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/2008/2008-schools.html> and creating the Charter School Teachers Institute slated for June of 2009 here in DC.

In my other assignment at ED, I am on a scavenger hunt to find all the ways in which the Department provides early childhood education, services and professional development. As you may or may not know, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides the majority of educational, health, nutritional, and other services to a little over a million disadvantaged children aged 0-5 through Head Start, Early Head Start and the Child Care Bureau. But there are a lot of other services that are being provided to our youngest citizens through state, local and federal resources. I have recently been invited to be part of the newly formed Early Childhood Working Group. This group administers the grants for Early Reading First, Even Start, and Early Childhood Professional Development. Other office of ED funds grants for infants, toddlers and preschoolers with disabilities, and various ways states can use Title I funds for preschool. I have also met with the "Good Start, Grow Smart" Interagency Workgroup, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/initiatives/gsgs/fedpubs/GSGSBooklet.pdf> the collaborative federal effort to coordinate programs supporting children's early learning. In addition, ED encourages children's reading development through funding educational television and support materials. I'm trying to put all these pieces together for myself, and it is my quest to make it clearer for parents and educators as well.

So that's what I'm focused on right now, but who knows? I may break out of my silo: that means go outside my department. It's a word from this new language I am learning called EDlish. If you have ideas on how the Department can support quality teaching and learning, please e-mail us!

I have to go now. I just got another alert from my calendar, the phone is ringing, people are holding impromptu meetings in my office, and my e-mail box is bursting the levy at 250 messages. And I thought multitasking with kindergartners was a challenge! As Dean always says, "Welcome to the government!"

Stephanie Canada (Shawnee, OK)-OSDFS

As a physical education teacher, Stephanie wants to ensure that all children receive the tools to create a healthy lifestyle. To that end, she works in the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools (OSDFS)

It has been an interesting journey thus far as a Washington Fellow. Since my arrival in July I've been inspired and challenged by the extraordinary individuals here in D.C. as well as the educators in classrooms across the nation.

My work here at ED is primarily with the Carol M. White Physical Education Program grant. The work within this program is both challenging and extensive, and I am pleased to be part of the office and involved in such an important component of education.

One component of my work with the fellowship is to take advantage of educational experiences that

I would otherwise never have as a classroom teacher. I have attended meetings on "the Hill" that not only deal with issues of childhood obesity but also the future of education. I heard from staff here at ED and from other education advocacy groups. Some of my most memorable meetings are of course meeting with First Lady Laura Bush and Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, speaking with the Einstein Fellows, and touring the Library of Congress, where we viewed original documents like George Washington's diary. As an educator these are powerful experiences and learning opportunities that will be embedded in who I am as a person and teacher, thus impacting my future practice and students' learning.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be here working in Washington D.C. at ED, and appreciate all who have had a part in creating such a wonderful program.

Classroom Teaching Ambassador Fellows

The twenty Classroom Fellows returned to their hometowns to learn how to juggle the pressing needs of preparing for another school year with the additional duties of being a Teaching Ambassador. By remaining in their schools and continuing to interact with students, teachers, administrators, and parents, the Classroom Fellows provide the continued link to the classroom that federal government employees often lack. This is the critical component of the fellowship. As evidenced

in the following articles, the classroom fellows are taking full advantage of their new role to highlight teachers' voices at their schools, in their districts, and in their states.

The Classroom Fellows also completed an action plan that focuses their time on learning about and sharing feedback on particular policy areas of interest as well as providing public information and sources to fellow teachers and colleagues.

Tammie Schrader - Cheney, Washington

Tammie teaches high school science and is interested in performance assessment and teacher compensation from the perspective of the science career changer.

I received my copy of the No Child Left Behind Act, and am busy working with our local educational service district superintendent to decipher how the state interprets NCLB for the districts. I learned the names of the people at our state level who are responsible for decoding and passing along information about NCLB. I met with my local principals and superintendent to discuss changes in

ways we can impact policy and AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress).

I also e-mailed our state superintendent and hope to meet with her soon. I contacted my state house and senate representatives to get an idea of the educational legislation in progress at both the state and federal levels. So far, I have heard back from my state senator's office to establish a meeting time for us.

I am just beginning to understand the meaning behind the saying that "knowledge is power."

Federal Resources for Education Excellence (FREE) has federal resources for classroom teachers sorted by subject. It is found at <http://free.ed.gov/>

Jensi Kellogg-Andrus - Watertown, South Dakota

As an Advanced Placement biology teacher, both in the classroom as a distance-learning instructor, Jensi hopes to affect formal policy toward technology, especially for gifted and Advanced Placement.

Time sure flies when one is having fun and is really busy! I can't believe it has been over two months since our wonderful experience in D.C at the Teaching Ambassador Fellowship Summit. As teachers, we are certainly experiencing time flying in preparing for and starting another school year, beginning fresh to make things even better than the year before. With all the hustle and bustle, I have only had time to start planning what projects I will work on during my time as a Classroom Fellow. Upon reflection, I realized that it doesn't matter if I am a teacher or employee of ED; our goals are the same: to help ALL children of our nation achieve their highest levels.

My focus in September has been pinpointing a policy question that I will research in order to make recommendations to ED in the spring. I settled on seeking information about the most effective uses of technology in schools that successfully contribute to student learning; and how the local, district, state, and federal government might support these uses. I will be working with liaisons in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education's (OESE) Enhancing Education Through Technology program, the Office of Educational Technology, and the Office of Innovation and Improvement's (OII) Technology in Education Programs. Having access to these liaisons will lead me to an understanding of how we can utilize technology to increase student achievement. In addition to researching, learning, and offering suggestions to ED, I am planning to help teachers integrate technology at a higher level to increase student collaboration, creativity, and problem solving skills. I want to help teachers learn how to move to more student-centered instruction incorporating the use of technology.

In addition, I had the privilege to meet with my state's Secretary's Regional Representative (SRR), Pat Chlouber. We attended my state's board of education meeting, where she presented information about the progress of NCLB, Native American education summits to be held in South Dakota, and the current findings and recommendations from the National Mathematics Advisory Council, and introduced me as a Teaching

Ambassador Fellow. I then spoke about the program and its mission, vision, and goals; and explained the projects that all of us are working on.

Pat Chlouber stayed an extra day in South Dakota to visit my high school. We met with my principal and superintendent who explained what the faculty at my school does to help ALL students be successful. We have implemented new programs in the last few years such as a Freshmen Academy, Credit Recovery, Academic Resource Center, Advisor/Advisee program, and Student Assistance Program, all in an effort to help those who may need assistance in the transition to high school or an alternative way of learning to be successful.

Additionally, Ms. Chlouber, my principal, assistant principal, fellow colleagues, and I participated in a roundtable discussion about NCLB. I think the discussion really helped teachers understand the role of ED in NCLB. I felt they left with more knowledge of the federal role in the educational system, and that the people at ED are appreciative of how hard teachers work to help all students learn. I have also organized a time during our advisory block to teach our students about college.gov. This website has a wealth of information that will be very valuable to our students. The students will be providing feedback to the Department on various aspects of the website. We will also be setting up an information table during parent-teacher conferences to inform parents of the college.gov website.

I am looking forward to an exciting year in which I will work hard to make a difference in my district, state, and nation's educational system to hopefully impact our greatest resource - the children of our nation.

www.college.gov has a wealth of information that will be very valuable to our students."

Jensi Kellogg-
Andrus

This site is geared toward the student who wants to go to college but needs guidance in getting there. It is also for the parents who want their child to attend college.

Anna Walker - Naples, Maine

Anna teaches third grade and is interested in special education and teacher retention.

August was an exciting month! The Teacher-to-Teacher Workshop in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was a productive couple of days. Steven Hicks and Jon Eckert (Washington Fellows) also attended. The presenters were fabulous and they shared ideas that I took back to the teachers at my school and will use in my classroom.

I also met with the head of the Education Department at Saint Joseph's College of Maine. We discussed possible avenues for me to share my experience with "soon-to-be" teachers and how the college could increase instruction on policy and programs.

My district superintendent asked me to address the district's staff about the fellowship. I was nervous about talking in front of the WHOLE district, but once I began talking, I felt great about sharing my experience!

Look for workshop presentations by subject at Teacher-to-Teacher online at <http://www.t2tweb.us/Workshops/About.asp>

James Liou - Boston, Massachusetts

Hello fellow educators! My name is James Liou and I'm a teacher in the Boston Public School system. My most recent home has been at the Boston Community Leadership Academy as the 12th grade capstone history teacher. This year however, I've had the opportunity to work as a peer assistant in my district, working with fellow teachers on improving their instructional practice. Since returning from the Summit week in D.C., the summer's really flown by and I've settled into the beginnings of the new academic year. It's been invigorating, however, to have had the chance to work deliberately on developing my fellowship action plan, and particularly to spend time journaling and thinking through ways that I can make all the goals of the fellowship experience happen. I was also glad to have had the chance to meet up and

do some early collaboration with the other Boston area fellow, Steven Berbeco, as we sat on his North End roof deck one evening.

Since the beginning of the school year, I've focused my policy research interest towards the exploration of successful community-support strategies for its public schools - primarily ways to address the traditional tension between school districts, unions and members of the larger community. To initiate communications, Steven Berbeco and I met with our union president to introduce ourselves and our fellowship goals.

I've also enjoyed initial conversations with Rita Foy Moss, my policy liaison in the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, as she helped to give national context to the civic education initiative that I'm involved with here in Boston. The conversations and the early work have been invigorating.

"I'm feeling good about the way the fellowship is giving shape to the way I'm approaching the year - with enthusiasm, lot's of questions, and the feeling that it's going to be a good one."

James Liou

Steven Berbeco -Charlestown, Massachusetts

As a high school Arabic language teacher, Steven wants to see more teachers in this critical-needs area of education.

James Liou and I have been coordinating efforts to meet with state and city policy makers, as well as opening dialog with teacher union

leaders.

I've been looking at the Troops to Teachers program as a vehicle to develop a channel for separating and retiring servicemen and women to become critical needs language classroom teachers.

Stephanie Vickers - Independence, Missouri

Stephanie teaches middle school math and focuses her efforts on making the National Math Panel Recommendations known to her district.

Our school year is off to a great start! Looping up with my seventh graders is going to be an incredible experience (looping means that the students to whom I taught sixth grade math last year, I will teach seventh grade math to this year, and eighth grade math next year). As a teacher, I already find it empowering to know all of their strengths and weaknesses in math and

how to go from there. I am so excited and grateful for this three-year looping opportunity.

Even more so, I am excited to see my plan of action as a Teaching Ambassador Fellow begin to develop. Most of my work will be directly tied to the National Math Advisory Panel Report. I was fortunate to find Marian Banfield as my ED policy liaison. As an ED employee who helped to staff the panel, she will be able to point me in the right direction as to how I can best help ED and my district with the panel's findings. I look forward to attending the panel's forum in Washington D.C. in October.

Keil Hileman - Shawnee, Kansas

Keil Hileman teaches middle school social studies through an artifact museum that he created and maintains.
<http://www.usd232.org/education/staff/staff.php?sectionid=461>. His focus is the Teaching American History Grant program.

I have been very busy working and planning several key activities for this academic year. I sorted and organized all the handouts we received in Washington, mailed them to the appropriate people in my district, returned numerous e-mails, and conversed with other fellows regarding our projects and possible team goals for our fellowship action plans.

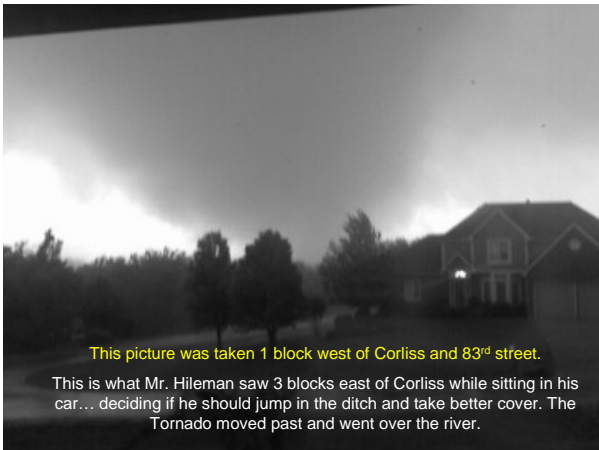
Our local paper just completed an interview regarding my work with ED, and how it will help

students and schools. Our school district asked me to plan a presentation to our school board in the near future and added a nice section to the district web page explaining my roles this year.

I am most excited about diving headfirst into my projects to create a great legacy for this program and provide a simple but effective way to let the voices of teachers be heard.

Julie Shively (Washington fellow) and I are currently planning a team presentation for the 2009 Teaching American History Grant Conference. This will be a great way to share the teachers' perspectives of content and many valuable teaching resources that ED has to offer.

I also hope to help organize and create a unique learning conference for teachers in our region through the Teaching American History Grants or Presidential Academies. There are so many amazing possibilities for this program. I'm excited to see where our plans take us during this amazing year.



This picture was taken 1 block west of Corliss and 83rd street.

This is what Mr. Hileman saw 3 blocks east of Corliss while sitting in his car... deciding if he should jump in the ditch and take better cover. The Tornado moved past and went over the river.

Kansas City-area fellows Stephanie and Keil dodged severe weather on 12 September.

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Anne Claire Tejtel

As a high school science teacher, Anne Claire advocates to inspire students to stay in school.

This new school year has gotten off to an exciting start. I've introduced the Teaching Ambassador Fellowship to my school's faculty, and I've given them an idea of the type of work I'll be doing throughout the course of the year. I hope to familiarize them with ED and

lead them to use ED as a resource on a consistent basis.

I also began discussions with guidance counselors, faculty, and administrators for a pilot program to track and support students who are "better than their numbers" to ensure that they are prepared for, and attend, college. I launched a new teacher-mentoring program to support and retain our newest faculty members. I also began communication with Teach for America (TFA) to discuss ways to magnify the impact of my position on current TFA teachers, as well as alumni both in the Baltimore area and nationally. I have been in contact with my SRRs (Secretary's

Regional Representatives), and I look forward to working with them in the coming months.

I'm excited to begin work on my collaborative project, in which I'll be focusing on ways that teachers can be leaders in their schools and beyond. I am also enjoying providing ED with feedback on websites such as Doing What Works (DWW), Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE), and www.college.gov.

As far as individual policy work, I decided to focus on college transition programs that aim to increase student investment in and graduation from high school. Finally, I have enjoyed interacting with the Washington and Classroom Fellows, learning from them, and sharing insights.

JoLisa Hoover - Austin, Texas

JoLisa, a fourth grade teacher, is working on teacher mentoring

<http://classroom.leanderisd.org/webs/jolisa.hoover/>

Since returning home from the fellowship summit, I've been working on prioritizing and selecting my objectives for this year. As an elementary educator who teaches all subjects, I've found that task to be a little more complicated than I anticipated. I have multiple interests and wanted to find the best fit, not only for me, but also for my district and ED. As a teacher who had an excellent mentor and, in turn, has mentored many teachers, I thought teacher mentoring was a natural choice. I look forward to learning about the mentoring programs that positively impact teacher quality and student achievement.

I've enjoyed being in touch with Classroom and Washington Fellows throughout this process and am already learning so much from everyone. I've accepted an invitation to speak in December at Academic Advocates Association, which is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, independent of,

but affiliated with, the Leander Independent School District. The association invited me to share my Washington experience and explain what I will be doing this year as a fellow.

Two local newspapers featured me to the delight of my fourth grade students. One local paper, *Hill Country News*, ran a front-page article with the picture of me seated next to First Lady Laura Bush. This led to some interesting comments on the first day of school. One of my fourth grade students asked me, "Didn't you meet George Washington's wife this summer?"

Link to article:

<http://www.hillcountrynews.com/articles/2008/08/26/news/news68.txt>

My ED video was listed on the NEA website:

<http://www.nea.org/dotherightthing/index.html>

Doing What Works (DWW)

<http://dww.ed.gov/index.cfm>

Provides explanations and examples of applying research in the classroom!

Cheri Isgreen - Montrose, Colorado

Cheri teaches art in two schools in Montrose and so is uniquely positioned to speak to multiple groups about the fellowship program.

My time since returning has been spent in planning and setting up my networking. I met with my Secretary's Regional Representative (SRR), Patricia Chlouber, several times; and with her visited my district's communications officer, assistant superintendent, and director of instruction.

I made contact with my policy liaison Doug Herbert, Special Assistant, Office of Innovation and Improvement who is very knowledgeable with many arts resources. Since my state is going through art education reform, he is helping me to understand that reform so I may make

contributions.

My other big project is bringing the resources of ED to the staff in my district. I have set up several list serves for a variety of topics and am in the process of registering teachers for them.

After learning about the many opportunities available from federal agencies, I passed them onto my schools. They are now pursuing the Picturing America grant, the Random House Grant, and the NASA seeds from space.

I have also led my math committee members to add their comments to the Doing What Works section called "National Math Panel: the Critical Foundations of Algebra" (http://dww.ed.gov/topic/topic_landing.cfm?PA_ID=8&T_ID=20). While it was still under revision, math teachers from around my district reviewed it and commented upon its usability.

*"One of the most powerful aspects of the fellowship is the networking opportunity it has provided."
Eric Kinne*

Eric Kinne - Fairfax, Virginia

Eric teaches high school English and is the head of his school's AVID program, an effort to keep kids in school and transition them to college.

I spent a considerable amount of time researching

the Department of Education and trying to determine where I fit in as a classroom fellow. It was excellent to learn more about the various programs and initiatives, and I can't wait to move forward with some of the key aspects of my action plan. I've had some thought-provoking conversations with Gillian Cohen-Boyer, the fellowship's program manager, about working within my areas of interest. Additionally, I've been in contact with a few other Classroom Fellows who share those interests. Specifically, Anne Claire Tejtel and I are communicating with one another about increasing enrollment in AP classes among low-income and minority students and about increasing college readiness among high school students at all

grade levels.

I have also been working on bringing the Washington Fellows out to my school since we're practically neighbors! Jocelyn Pickford, the creator of the program, and Gillian Cohen-Boyer have been instrumental in making this happen. As a result, on October 15, four of the five Washington fellows will venture out to Fairfax High School for a series of roundtable discussions with our faculty. Our teachers are stopping me in the hallway to tell me how excited they are to meet the "National Teaching Ambassadors" and learn more about the fellowship.

So far, one of the most powerful aspects of the fellowship is the networking opportunity it has provided. As teachers, we love to share best practices and learn new skills to engage our kids! Communicating with the other fellows via conference call and email has been inspiring, and I feel more energized for a new school year as a result. School just began, so my mind is wrapped around the first days of school and all the emotions and preparations that surround such a momentous occasion. It's an exciting time!

Jeanine Gelhaus - Medford, Wisconsin

Jeanine currently teaches 7th and 8th grade science at Medford Area Middle School, located in Central Wisconsin. Her area of focus with the Department is on teacher leadership.

On August 5th, I had the extraordinary opportunity to shadow a DSRR as he toured a local school. Though the acronym "DSRR" sounds like something from a thriller movie, it actually stands for Deputy Secretary Regional Representative. Learning about DSRR Todd Zoellick's position, however, was certainly an awe-inspiring, eye-opening experience for me.

Now that I know Mr. Zoellick, it doesn't surprise me that an entire entourage of officials greeted me at the beautiful Northwoods Academy. I was given an official nametag that listed my position as "Teacher Ambassador Fellow - U.S. Department of Education." The greeting I received far surpassed my expectations; I was warmly welcomed and everyone knew I was coming!

Mr. Zoellick had been invited to address the Academy's teacher participants, which numbered close to 200. I was both surprised and honored when he invited me to accompany him on stage. During his welcome, he introduced me to the group and explained my position with the Department of Education.

Then the talk took a more serious turn as Mr. Zoellick addressed some of the challenges facing the field of education. Teachers often consider the U.S. Department of Education as a far away place with nameless faces, but Mr. Zoellick replaced that image with one of energy, compassion, and humor.

Upon finishing his address, teachers surrounded him, asking a multitude of questions ranging from foreign-language to assessments, funding for schools, and NCLB. I kidded him later that he has to know it ALL. With a smile, he said, "That's part of

the challenge and part of the job."

I continued to shadow this intriguing DSRR throughout the day into the classrooms and around the school. I discovered that he is the bridge between policy makers and the teachers in the trenches. I know that those teachers' voices will be heard, and that he will relay their concerns to Secretary Spellings through his weekly communications.

NCLB is a law that has no sunset provision, meaning that the law will continue until a new one takes its place. Until its reauthorization, the Department is developing new regulations to improve the implementation of the Title I law. It has also developed a few small pilot programs to allow states some flexibility in responding to the accountability requirements of the law and experiment with potential improvements for reauthorization.

One pilot program that I learned about is the "Growth Model Pilot Program." This program looks at student growth over time instead of the standard snapshot approach of assessing a student compared with a set standard. Eleven states will be a part of this pilot program in the upcoming year: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee.

Some pilot programs resulted directly from conversations with districts, educators, and teachers. The recommendations that Congress received can be found in a document called "Building on Results." You can find it at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/nclb/buildin gonresults.html>.

I departed the Academy exhausted but thrilled to have learned so much in one day!

The Secretary's Regional Representatives (SRR) and Deputies (DSRR) are the eyes and ears of the Secretary. They travel to schools and districts within their region and report back to Secretary Spellings on a weekly basis. To find your regional representative, go to

http://wdcrocolp01.ed.gov/Programs/ER OD/org_list.cfm?category_ID=SRR