



## NEWTON INSPIRES 2022: PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

### EVENT OVERVIEW

Newton Inspires is the Newton Schools Foundation's (NSF) annual fundraising event. This year's theme is "Celebrating Classroom Creativity." We plan to shine a light on the creative and innovative work that Newton Public Schools (NPS) educators are doing in the classroom with support from grants made by NSF.

As a part of the program, we will show a short film that provides a look behind the curtain at the incredible work of NPS educators and helps donors and future donors see, feel, and experience the impact of NSF's grants. The film will also include teacher tributes from some current and former students.

After the film, we will host a panel with a representative from each of the five projects featured in the film. The five grants and programs will represent a balance of the North and South sides of Newton across elementary, middle, and high schools--demonstrating the alignment to NSF's three strategic areas, which are New Approaches in the Classroom, Professional Development, and Programs Addressing Inequities Associated with Race, Income Level and Social Identity.

[Newton Schools Foundation Impact](#)

### PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

#### **AuthorFest**

Panelist: Jill Leibowitz, librarian at Cabot School

This one-day event presented by the Creative Arts and Sciences Committee brings authors and illustrators to all elementary and middle schools to engage students in the writing and illustrating process. The day ends with an author book signing and sale that is open to the public.

#### **New Media Communities**

Panelist: Dave Weintraub, English language arts teacher at Newton South High School

New Media Communities is a project-based, innovation-focused smaller learning community that joins English and history with media production and media analysis. Students elect to join during their sophomore and junior years. They study standards-based skills and content in English and history while applying them to the world around them through audio and audio-visual projects, including documentary cinema, animation, visual arts, podcasts. This grant helps

elevate the media production work that students complete, allowing students to gain a new understanding of how the media shape consciousness and how to use media to change the world.

### **Fostering Lifelong Music Learning with the Ukulele**

Panelist: Miles Wilcox, instrumental music teacher at Ward School

A team of five elementary music teachers developed and is piloting a K-5 scope and sequence of ukulele music lesson units with the goal of establishing the ukulele as a standard general music classroom instrument. This year, the team is sharing their experiences with colleagues during elementary Fine Arts Department professional development meetings. They will make a recommendation to the department in May 2022, with a plan to establish an elementary ukulele program in Newton Public Schools.

### **Rehearsal for Life's Urban Improv Presentation**

Panelist: Rebecca Robles Taylor, English teacher at Bigelow Middle School

Rehearsal for Life's Urban Improv program is being presented this year to all students at Brown, Day, and Oak Hill Middle Schools. Urban Improv uses a structured, interactive, improvisational theater workshop to help students learn in an interactive way. The goal of this year's project is to educate students and staff about microaggressions—what they are, what impact they have, how to constructively respond to them, and how to seek support when a student experiences or witnesses them.

### **Visiting Poet Project**

Panelist: Amy McMahan, reading specialist at Newton North High School

Regionally recognized Black poet Charles Coe has been a frequent visitor to Newton North High School over the past four years, visiting approximately 12 classrooms and inspiring over 300 students per year. Mr. Coe's impact as a poet and writer who can provide writing prompts, feedback, reflection, humor, and insight into student work is remarkable; the writing of many students has been transformed through Mr. Coe's teaching. "They begin to see themselves as writers!" In 2022, Mr. Coe has been working with a small diverse class with several learning challenges. He has presented a variety of writing prompts focused on the students' identities, in order to have them create poetry and prose.

## **ABOUT NEWTON SCHOOLS FOUNDATION**

Newton Schools Foundation advances excellence and equity in the Newton Public Schools by making grants in 3 strategic areas: New Approaches in the Classroom, Professional Development, and Programs Addressing Inequities Associated with Race, Income Level and Social Identity.