



How Do We Improve Teacher Prep? Ask The Teachers.

“The quality of our children’s education should never depend on their zip code,” according to Stephanie Johnson, a 3rd Grade Teacher in Columbia, South Carolina. “We need to examine and address impacts outside of the classroom. We must take a holistic, systemic approach to education inequity to include currently available resources across state agencies.”

This year, Johnson joins 17 other teachers as a [Hope Street Group](#) National Teacher Fellow to address a crucial factor of education equity: the quality of teacher preparation programs, both in South Carolina and across the country.

With their National Teacher Fellows Program, Hope Street Group, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization, provides a group of public school teachers, who are chosen through a rigorous selection process, with skills around peer and community engagement, data collection, and communication strategies while giving them opportunities to amplify positive teacher voice to inform policy decisions. This year, the National Teacher Fellows will be engaged in conversations and data collection about how to improve teacher preparation programs and will share their findings and recommendations directly with the U.S. Department of Education (USED) and other national organizations, including the [Data Quality Campaign](#), the [American Institutes for Research Education Policy Center](#), and [the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education](#), as well as state leaders.

“We know how important strong teaching is to students’ education and life outcomes – especially for our most vulnerable kids,” U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan, said. “If we are going to improve teaching and learning in America, we have to improve the training and support that we give our teachers.” This supports the notion that the preparation of the next generation of teachers is the responsibility of the entire education profession.

Last year, Hope Street Group National Teacher Fellows (NTFs) worked with their peers and policymakers to provide recommendations on topics including college and career-ready standards, educator evaluation, and professional development, as outlined in their report, [Leaders of Change](#). The singular focus on teacher preparation will allow NTFs to reach thousands of teachers across the country to capture the opinions of these practitioners, many who often feel disconnected from the policymaking process.

“Decisions are constantly made regarding education policy without input from individuals who experience it firsthand: teachers,” Johnson reflected. “I applied for the Hope Street Group National Teacher Fellows Program to serve as a leader amongst teachers, the education profession, and my community.”

Johnson’s efforts to affect public policy while remaining in the classroom are becoming more welcome as an emphasis on teacher leadership grows across the country. South Carolina’s largest school district, Greenville County Schools, recently announced a professional development program supported by [Discovery Education’s Digital Leader Corps](#) to empower teacher leaders to become change agents within their schools. At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education has emphasized empowering teachers to improve the education process through its [Teach to Lead](#) program, a partnership with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, in addition to their [Teaching Ambassador Fellowship Program](#).



“With critical decision leaders like USED working with us, our National Teacher Fellows are now leading with thousands of their peers across the country to identify real-time solutions to improve educator preparation,” remarked Dan Cruce, Vice President of Education for Hope Street Group.

A full list of 2015 Hope Street Group National Teacher Fellows can be found [here](#).

Hope Street Group is a national organization that works to ensure every American will have access to tools and options leading to economic opportunity and prosperity. For more information, visit: www.hopestreetgroup.org

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