Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes
ARTEFFECT

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Announcing the 2025-2026 ARTEFFECT Ambassadors Cohort, a Nationwide Visual Arts Education Initiative of the Lowell Milken Family Foundation

28 esteemed middle and high school educators selected for online professional development focused on Unsung Heroes will develop innovative capstone projects for their classrooms and communities

Santa Monica, Calif. (November 12, 2025) – The Lowell Milken Family Foundation (LMFF) has announced the 2025-2026 cohort of ARTEFFECT Ambassadors, a competitive, award-winning visual arts education online fellowship for educators working directly with students in grades 6-12. The 28 fellows hail from 17 states and include 22 visual art teachers. Members of the cohort represent diverse educational, professional, and geographic backgrounds, including specializations in visual arts, social studies, STEAM, and administration.

This year's ARTEFFECT Ambassadors will participate in a yearlong series of online professional development sessions, learning from other high-level practitioners in a collegial, peer-learning community. These virtual sessions—four of which are also open to all interested educators and free to join—explore varied themes with a focus on Unsung Heroes including character education, visual storytelling, Holocaust education, and STEAM, accompanied by visual arts lesson plans.

"At ARTEFFECT, we believe art is more than expression—it's a catalyst for change," said Dr. Toni Guglielmo, executive director of ARTEFFECT. "By empowering educators and their students through visual arts education focused on the remarkable stories of Unsung Heroes from history, we aim to inspire empathy, spark positive action, and collectively shape a more compassionate world. The impact of this transformative work is both immediate and enduring."

In the online sessions, participants will:

- Explore creative approaches for interpreting the stories of Unsung Heroes as role models through the visual arts.
- Access lesson plans focused on Unsung Heroes that provide step-by-step modeling for young artists to create artworks in varied 2D and 3D mediums with impact statements.
- Engage with other educators nationwide to deepen their own instructional practices.

The Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes (LMC) works with students and educators to discover and develop the stories of Unsung Heroes from history—individuals not commonly known who took extraordinary actions in service to others and society.

LMC and ARTEFFECT Founder Lowell Milken noted, "ARTEFFECT ensures that stories of Unsung Heroes live on as guiding lights for future generations. By offering young people and educators the opportunity to express these stories through art, we inspire them to embrace the power of history and creativity, lead with purpose, and make a lasting difference in the world."

In addition to participating in professional development modules, Ambassadors develop learner-centered visual-arts-based capstone projects. Ambassadors are supported through their capstone projects by four ARTEFFECT Mentors, seasoned visual art educators experienced with ARTEFFECT's teaching and learning. The program runs through June 2026 and culminates with the presentations of the capstone projects—such as developing a new lesson plan, a student art exhibition, a teacher-training program, a publication, or other activities—that have been implemented effectively within their classrooms and communities. The projects create new pathways in visual art education by harnessing the inspiring stories of Unsung Heroes at the core of ARTEFFECT's offerings, including its professional development, student art competition, and online exhibitions. ARTEFFECT Ambassadors receive an unrestricted stipend of $1,250, a $250 materials credit, and a Certificate of Participation upon completion.

Founded by Lowell Milken in 2016, ARTEFFECT extends the Unsung Heroes mission through original visual art and reflection. In addition to the ARTEFFECT Ambassadors Visual Arts Fellowship, offerings include an annual international art competition for middle and high school students. Last year's ARTEFFECT competition awarded over $35,000 in prizes. The current cycle is accepting submissions from October 1, 2025, through April 21, 2026. ARTEFFECT also produces exhibitions including *Visualizing Impact*, featuring over 40 award-winning ARTEFFECT student artworks in a new, permanent gallery at the Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream in Washington, D.C.

To learn more about the ARTEFFECT visual arts education initiative, visit the website at www.arteffectlmc.org. Connect with ARTEFFECT on Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube. Interested educators are welcome to join the ARTEFFECT art educators Facebook group.

Introducing the 2025-2026 ARTEFFECT Ambassadors

Ramona Natasha Abraham Coley
Visual Arts Educator – NYC Museum School – New York, NY

Mary Anderson
Visual Arts Teacher – La Salle High School – Pasadena, CA

Christine Domingue Bagneris
Visual Art Teacher – The Willow Middle School – New Orleans, LA

Amy Melissa Benfer
Art Teacher – Cumberland Regional High School – Bridgeton, NJ

Emily Bittner
Ceramics Teacher – Castro Valley High School – Castro Valley, CA

William A. Black
High School Art Teacher – Omak High School – Omak, WA

Lauren Ashlee Blakely
Art Teacher – White Knoll Middle School – West Columbia, SC

Brandy Boden
Visual Arts Teacher – Northfield Middle High School – Northfield, VT

Cynthia Bowie
Visual Arts Teacher – South Carolina Connections Academy – Columbia, SC

Nakimer A. Foreman, Ed.S.
Visual Art Teacher – Monroe Comprehensive High School – Albany, GA

Angela Guy
Visual Arts Teacher – Cypress Creek High School – Houston, TX

Jennifer Donnelly Harrington
Social Science Teacher and Department Chair – Irvine High School – Irvine, CA

Michelle Hickey
Art Teacher – Scio Middle & High School – Scio, OR

Marci Kivo
Social Studies Teacher, Special Education Teacher – Jericho Middle School – Jericho, NY

Lauren Ann Kulesz
Art and Journalism Teacher – Venture High School – Arlington, TX

Jennifer Langston
Science Teacher – Paragould Junior High – Paragould, AR

Lalitha Murali
STEM/Gifted and Talented Teacher – Glen Hills Middle School – Glendale, WI

David Nemteanu
Principles of Design Teacher – Del Lago Academy of Applied Science – Escondido, CA

Beth Ann Overfield
Visual Art Teacher, Department Head – Hagerstown Jr.-Sr. High School – Hagerstown, IN

Sarah Pascual
Visual Art Teacher & Department Chair – Sol C. Johnson High School – Savannah, GA

Randi Sparks, Ed.S.
Visual Art/Speech/Theater Facilitator, Electives Team Lead, Fine Arts Department Head – Rogers Academy of Leadership & Innovation – Rogers, AR

Patrick Sprinkle
History Teacher – NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies – New York, NY

Jem Cloyd Melendres Tanucan, Ph.D.
Arts Teacher – Colonial Beach High School – Colonial Beach, VA

Gayle Trueblood
Visual Arts Educator – Shawnee High School – Lima, OH

Jessi Vacca
Visual Arts Teacher Pre K-12 – Thomas Jefferson Independent Day School – Joplin, MO

Michelle Vevante
Social Studies Teacher – Jericho Middle School – Jericho, NY

Taneisha Zellous Whatley, Ed. S.
Visual Art Teacher – Westover High School – Albany, GA

Kim Monique Zimmerman
Art Teacher - Kanuikapono Public Charter School – Anahola, HI

2025-2026 ARTEFFECT Mentors

Jennifer Braverman
Art Teacher – Maple Shade High School – Maple Shade, NJ

Renna Georgia Moore-Edwards
Visual Arts Department Chair – Ida B. Wells Academic and Performing Arts Complex – Jackson, MS

Kristen Ponden
Visual Arts Department Chair – The Unquowa School – Fairfield, CT

Matt Shain Young
Visual Art Teacher – Pickerington Central High School – Pickerington, OH

About ARTEFFECT Ambassadors
To learn more about ARTEFFECT Ambassadors and view their profiles, visit ARTEFFECT Ambassadors Cohorts.

About the Lowell Milken Family Foundation
The Lowell Milken Family Foundation (LMFF) creates and supports initiatives that cultivate human capital—the knowledge, skills, and experiences essential to leading productive and satisfying lives. LMFF pursues this mission through education programs that are both groundbreaking and comprehensive. By fostering and inspiring excellence, creativity, and responsibility within the formal education environment and beyond, LMFF equips people to pursue and attain lives that have value to themselves and to others. To learn more about LMFF, visit LowellMilken.com

About the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes
Established in 2007 by Lowell Milken, the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes (LMC) discovers, develops, and celebrates the stories of Unsung Heroes who have made a profound and positive impact on history, yet are largely unrecognized by contemporary generations. LMC has reached over 3,000,000 students in all 50 states, and countries around the world. To learn more about LMC, visit Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes.

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