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HUMANITIES
COUNCIL
Summer Teacher
Institute: Wallace
Stegner and the
Consciousness
of Place

Teaching, Training, and Thanking: Humanities Support for Educators

To see how the state councils
support teachers in your state,
visit statehumanities.org.

HUMANITIES TEXAS
Teacher Institute with Gordon Wood

A great teacher can change a student's life, but what does it take to make a great teacher?

In a word: support. Most teachers in America come to their profession with enthusiasm, rich subject knowledge, and a desire to help their students succeed. But many teachers must also confront numerous professional challenges, such as a lack of resources, few professional development opportunities, and scant recognition for their work. In these areas and more, the state humanities councils have stepped up to fill the gap and provide robust assistance to teachers across the nation.

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Supporting teachers is more than a nice thing to do—it’s also an intelligent strategy for maximizing the impact of limited resources. Teachers are force multipliers who exert an incredible reach. One teacher can have as many as 100-150 students each year, which means time, energy, and resources spent in support of a teacher can echo through the lives of their students and pay dividends for decades to come. That’s one of the reasons the state humanities councils have spent years developing some of the nation’s most well-respected teacher workshops and institutes. Take, for example, the **Idaho Humanities Council’s** annual *Summer Teacher Institute*, a week-long program that brings teachers from across the state together for lectures, discussions, and intensive study focused on a custom theme, like Idaho’s political history since World War II. The institute furnishes teachers with the latest scholarship and writings, offers new insights into familiar lessons, and gives teachers the chance to delve deeply into their field with leading scholars.



Case in Point





For many years, the state humanities councils have offered institutes and summer seminars for teachers around the country. The **Alabama Humanities Foundation's** *SUPER Teacher Program* has a 25-year history of providing 4th-12th grade teachers, librarians, and administrators with high-quality experiential instruction, all free of charge. These programs stand in contrast to more traditional professional development opportunities, which more commonly focus on subjects like pedagogy or classroom management. Giving teachers the chance to encounter new and exciting ideas is invigorating, helping to recharge their commitment to the classroom and reduce costly teacher turnover.

In addition to intensive training, state councils provide direct support to teachers in the form of grants, like the *Educator Enrichment Grants* offered by **Ohio Humanities**. These grants fuel innovative programs for teachers that enhance their understanding and appreciation of the humanities and help them translate that knowledge into success in the classroom. Grant programs enable state councils to be responsive to the unique needs and interests of teachers in their state, and they ensure that the teachers most directly affected are able to shape the programs that benefit them.

Grassroots support for teachers is a defining feature of the work of the state councils and includes the creation of curriculum guides and crowd-sourced teaching resources, like those established by **Connecticut Humanities**,

whose *Teach It* program collects lessons and activities into a free online resource for teachers. Sometimes, the state councils' support for teachers comes to the classroom in dramatic fashion, as is certainly the case with **Kentucky Humanities'** *Chautauqua in Schools* program, which features lively performers who take on the guise of historical figures to breathe life into Kentucky and U.S. history. Programs like these help teachers plan and prepare compelling lessons, use the latest scholarship and teaching methods, and bolster student engagement.



Training programs recharge teachers' commitment to the classroom and reduce costly teacher turnover.

The state humanities councils have also been eager to celebrate teachers in a more public way. For the past 27 years, **South Carolina Humanities** has hosted the *Governor's Awards*, which recognize exemplary humanities teaching and scholarship across the state, along with outstanding institutions. State councils from **Mississippi** to the **Northern Mariana Islands** give awards and public recognition for exceptional teaching, because the state humanities councils recognize that the best way to make great students and schools is to support great teaching.