Voices of Change Writing Fellowship FAQ

What is the EdSurge Voices of Change Writing Fellowship?

The field of education has experienced a host of long-standing challenges, many of which have been exacerbated over the past few years by the pandemic, political polarization, social unrest and economic hardship. The educators living through these experiences each day understand the issues most deeply. Elevating their voices and perspectives is critical for making change.

The EdSurge Voices of Change Writing Fellowship brings together a diverse group of educator fellows interested in sharing their experiences through narrative storytelling. Fellows will be partnered with an editor to support brainstorming, drafting, editing and publishing personal narrative essays that explore how they’re navigating challenges and adapting to meet the needs of all learners.

The goal of the fellowship is to elevate authentic voices from the field and give educators the opportunity to explore the intersections of identity, teaching and learning through their writing. EdSurge seeks to amplify the voices of educators who identify as members of marginalized communities and/or who serve them in their school communities.

The fellowship provides a professional growth opportunity for educators to learn with and from EdSurge editors and other fellows. Fellows will have their work published on EdSurge and shared through newsletters and social media, contributing to a body of work that brings fresh perspectives and unique expertise to a wide audience of readers including educators, school and district administrators and other educational stakeholders.

Still need a reason to take part? Here are 5 reasons to apply for this fellowship.

1. What is the commitment that fellows make?

Over 10 months (May 2024 - February 2025), fellows commit to:

- Collaborating with an editor to brainstorm, write, edit and publish four stories on EdSurge
- Engaging regular check-ins with an editor to pitch, discuss and finalize stories
- Participating in monthly group Zoom calls with the other fellows for professional development and community building
- Partnering with peers to hone story ideas

On average, we expect that fellows will devote about 15 hours a month to the fellowship.

2. What support do fellows receive?

Each fellow will have access to:
• Hands-on, professional guidance from an experienced editor on the EdSurge team
• A community of inspiring educators and school leaders to engage with and learn alongside
• A growing alumni network to offer perspective, mentorship, advice and resources
• Professional development opportunities to improve writing and editing skills
• An education media platform to share stories, even after the fellowship year

3. How long does the fellowship last?

The fellowship is a 10-month commitment, from May 2024 through February 2025.

4. Am I eligible for the fellowship? Is this opportunity only open to published writers?

This fellowship is open to individuals who are currently full-time, school-based K-12 educators (e.g., classroom teachers, instructional coaches, counselors, librarians, etc.) or school leaders (e.g., principals) in the United States. (including U.S. territories). Fellows should plan to continue working in a school or educational setting during the next academic year and should have an interest in sharing their stories through writing, but fellows don’t have to be published authors or professional writers. We’re looking for all types of writers — from first-timers to those who are more experienced.

5. What does the application entail? How long will it take me to complete the application?

After submitting answers to our eligibility questions, the application consists of a questionnaire (38 questions). As part of the application, you will be asked to share a PDF copy of your resume or link to your LinkedIn profile. The questionnaire asks basic information about your role, your educational setting and the learners you serve, your background and identity, and your writing experience and story ideas. You are not required to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and your application materials will only be shared with EdSurge staff. We expect that the application should not take more than two hours of your time. Google account owners who are signed in while completing their application have the option to save their responses and return to complete them at a later time during the application period. If you are selected to move to the final round of review in mid-April, you will be asked to provide a letter of support from a peer or colleague who can speak to your passion for teaching and learning.

The questionnaire includes six open-response questions:

1. We want to learn more about your experience with the writing process. How often do you write? What challenges you about writing? What do you write about?

   *In 75 words or less, briefly describe your experience with writing and the writing process (e.g., generating story ideas, outlining, drafting, engaging with feedback, editing and revisions to strengthen a written work).* [long answer]

2. We want to learn more about your experience with feedback.

   *In 75 words or less, briefly describe a time when you received feedback, how you processed it and what you did to adjust and make improvements.* [long answer]

3. The fellowship is a cohort-based experience that offers fellows opportunities to share their journey as an educator through writing and publishing stories and to grow as an
educator, writer and change agent among peers. It involves collaborating regularly with an editor, peers and alumni.

*In 125 words or less, briefly describe why you are interested in becoming a Voices of Change fellow. What is your unique perspective that you would like to share through published essays? What do you think you will contribute to and gain from the writing experience? What do you think you will contribute to and gain from the cohort experience (which offers peer editing, virtual workshops and community gatherings, a dedicated Slack channel, access to mentoring, and more)? Please be as specific as you can.* [long answer]

4. We are looking for a diverse group of educators. For the purpose of this fellowship, we are defining diversity as the existence of variations of identities, experiences, backgrounds and perspectives in working K-12 educators.

*In 125 words or less, what salient identities shape your experiences as an educator, community member and prospective fellow, and how?* [long answer]

5. What are two big questions you’re asking about teaching and learning this year? Please keep your questions to a sentence or two.

*As a reminder, we’re most interested in exploring themes related to identity development, student success, mental health, technology and how societal factors exacerbate inequities in education. In case it’s helpful as you brainstorm, you can explore some of the issues and questions our past fellows have written about by browsing their stories here.* [long answer]

6. We’d love to get a sense of your writing style and voice! Below, please find six essential questions related to the themes above.

*In 300 words or less, please respond to one of the questions in the style of a first-person narrative, meaning using your personal and professional lived experiences and perspective to share your thoughts. We’re interested in learning about your writing voice and your ability to respond to a question with thoughtful insights from your experiences.*

   a. How have the pandemic, economic hardship and racial unrest exacerbated inequities in education, and how are educators and school communities addressing them?

   b. How are educators and school communities addressing mental health and well-being for learners and educators?

   c. How are the needs and experiences of educators and students changing during what appears to be an inflection point in the history of American education — and how are school communities responding?

   d. How are schools supporting students and educators in identity exploration and development and/or relationship-building?
e. How are school models, instructional practices and other aspects of teaching and learning changing to meet educators and students where they are?

f. How are educators and school communities supporting the whole child by looking at what all children have in common and need to succeed, and addressing what children of different backgrounds, experiences and resources uniquely need to succeed?

g. How are educators and school communities leveraging technology to support student well-being and develop pathways for student success?

6. Why does the application ask me to provide details on my background, identity and experiences?

This fellowship aims to highlight the voices of a group of educators who represent the diversity we see across schools in the U.S. For the purpose of this fellowship, we are defining diversity as the existence of variations of identities, experiences, backgrounds and perspectives in working K-12 educators. Details about your background, identity and experience will help us to develop a cohort that responds to the mission of this project. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

7. If I am selected as a finalist, who should I ask to write my letter of support?

Your letter of support can come from anyone who can attest to your passion for teaching and learning. You could ask a colleague, a current or former student, an administrator, or anyone else. Feel free to be creative! We’re interested in hearing from someone that is familiar with your leadership and education experience (e.g. friend, mentor, former student or colleague) who can clearly articulate what you can bring to the fellowship.

8. What is the honorarium for participating in the fellowship? Are there restrictions on how fellows can use the money?

The fellowship honorarium is $5,000 and will be paid in two installments of $2,500 throughout the fellowship term (once at the midpoint and once at the end of the program). There are no restrictions on how fellows can use this money.

9. How will fellows be selected?

A number of factors will be considered during application review, including:
- The freshness of your responses to the application questions;
- Your ability to commit approximately 15 hours per month to the fellowship, based on your current professional commitments and ability to balance competing priorities;
- The ways in which you can contribute to the fellowship’s goal of highlighting underrepresented thinkers and authentic voices from the field about issues that really matter.

10. How many fellows will be selected?
Up to 8 fellows will be selected.

11. What is the deadline for applying to the fellowship?

The deadline for applying to the fellowship is Monday, April 1 at 11:59 p.m. PT.

12. When will I be notified if I have been accepted for the fellowship?

You will be notified in late April 2024, if you have been accepted for the fellowship. Please note that we may reach out to you for further information after the application deadline and that any outreach should not be read as a sign of acceptance or rejection.

13. How is this fellowship funded?

This fellowship is funded by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. It is part of the EdSurge Voices of Change project to chronicle diverse educator experiences. EdSurge maintains editorial control over all content produced as part of this project. All stories will feature a disclosure at the bottom. EdSurge will be running the fellowship independent of the influence of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative.

14. Where do I apply?

You can find more information about the fellowship and the application on the EdSurge Voices of Change Fellowship website. Here is a direct link to our eligibility form, which will lead you to the application.

Still have questions? Email us at fellowship@edsurge.com.