



## KEVIN HENSON

A New Jersey science teacher drives change at the district level without leaving the classroom.

Chosen as part of the second cohort of Knowles Science Teaching Foundation (KSTF) Teaching Fellows, Kevin Henson has remained at the same New Jersey high school since he started teaching a decade ago. "What I like is that I have the ability to provoke change," he says. "Things are not stagnant, and I can see the culture beginning to turn."

Henson plays a key role in Lenape Regional High School's teacher induction program, a required three-year course for all new teachers at the school focused on research-based pedagogy. The course, he says, is helping "establish a culture where teachers see a meaning in what we're doing."

The common language and expectations raised in the course now drive the development of the district's teacher evaluation model, which Henson helped create. He now leads teacher workshops on ways to align instruction with the model. "We wanted to make sure we weren't doing something just for the sake of doing it, but to get teachers thinking about how it can impact students," he says. "My role as a leader is to have that conversation, whether formal or informal." As a result of the alternate model the district developed, he says, "teachers are finding value in the [system] as opposed to seeing a mandate."

With a background in oceanography, Henson ultimately decided that he wanted to teach across the broad spectrum of sciences. In a fast-track master's education program, he found himself with little time to reflect and less time to focus on the specifics of science instruction. "Being able to teach science is something different," says Henson, who joined the KSTF community in 2003. "It was a good opportunity to bridge pedagogy and science education, and it allowed me to be more reflective. That was an essential piece to help me grow as a teacher." The Fellowship

### Kevin Henson

Science Teacher, Lenape Regional High School, Medford, New Jersey

- Instructor, school induction program
- Member, district committee developing alternate teacher evaluation plan; leads teacher workshops on the plan and its criteria
- Presenter, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education's 35th Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum and the 2014 National Conference of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA)
- Participant, Practitioner Inquiry for the Next Generation (PING), a KSTF-initiated practitioner inquiry group
- Presenter, 2009 and 2010 Teacher Researcher Days, sponsored by the NSTA
- Facilitator, Research for Better Teaching

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## TEACHER PROFILE

experience was also critical as Henson began teaching. Even with an assigned school-based mentor who was a good fit, the "Fellowship was a support structure that gave me opportunities to explore different pedagogy," he says.

The Knowles Fellowship's emphasis on teacher leadership played a key role as Henson shaped his career—and ultimately stayed in the classroom. "The Fellowship helped establish for me what it means to be a leader," he says. "If I didn't have the Fellowship, I would have felt like I couldn't have a voice without 10 or 15 years of experience. It also doesn't mean you have to take a position with a title or leave teaching."

David C. Maier, who taught chemistry with Henson before becoming an assistant principal and math/science supervisor, calls his colleague "a clear leader in both curriculum and instruction."

"This has come about from his involvement in the Foundation and his passion for excellent science instruction," Maier says. "He has developed into a great teacher."

KSTF has also helped Henson focus on ensuring that teachers take advantage of what students bring to the classroom. He is part of a group of Fellows who collaborate on equity issues addressing student identity in the classroom. "That's at the heart of the Fellowship, and as a teacher, my role is to try and be the voice of the students and make sure their interests are at the forefront of decisions," he says.

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### Knowles Science Teaching Foundation

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