



# ANNUAL REPORT | 2024

39 YEARS CONNECTING CLASSROOMS TO CAREERS



# A Letter From Ignited

Dear Friends of Ignited,

As I sat down to write this letter, I found myself grappling with how best to frame it. Often, these letters serve as introductions to the annual report or provide an overview of the year's work. I instead decided to incorporate all of the staff's voices—because Ignited is about our *team* and our collaborative work to make a meaningful impact on our community of teachers.

I asked my teammates to share the one thing they are proudest of from this year or what brought them the most joy. I hope this approach brings you closer to the heart of Ignited, giving you a glimpse into the collective spirit that fuels our work.

For me, this year has been about personal growth. When I first stepped into the role of CEO after four years at Ignited, I felt uncertain. But gradually, almost without realizing it, I discovered that I truly enjoy this job—and I'm starting to feel confident that it's a role I'm well suited for. Most importantly, I'm excited about the work ahead. I know there are still challenges—and I also know that I am facing them with an incredible team beside me. They make coming to work each day a joy; their support helps me tackle any task, and their insights make our work better than I ever could have imagined. I feel so honored to be called their leader.

And now, a few words from each:

**ALFREDO** | This year has been incredibly challenging for me, but one of the highlights was our staff field trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium in December. It was a meaningful opportunity to step away from work, recharge, and connect with each other on a deeper level. Taking that time and space allowed us to return refreshed and ready to continue delivering the impactful work that drives us forward.

**CLARA** | I've loved expanding our grants capacity this year by onboarding our amazing new team member, Sophie! Another highlight has been diving into the development side of Ignited, especially building out [\*Spark Stories\*](#) about our alumni teachers' students to better illustrate Ignited's impact. I've had such a great time chatting with former students who now work in various fields, and it's been inspiring to hear how their paths were influenced by a high school teacher who incorporated industry content in their classroom.



**FRANCES** | After a year and a half at Ignited, I've really settled into my role and feel like I understand the ins and outs. Collaboration with the team has become second nature, and I'm excited to take on the new challenges and opportunities as I transition from Education Coordinator to Operations Manager. I'm eager to keep learning and growing in this new chapter.

**MEGHAN** | After 20 years in the classroom and about a year into my role at Ignited, I'm finding myself better able to zoom out and see the bigger picture. What drives me now is focusing on teachers and helping them reignite their passion for STEM. While it's bittersweet to see a beloved staff member [*Syreeta Watkins, Director of Finance and Technology*] leave, I'm excited about the changes and growth Ignited is making—our team is rock solid.

**SOPHIE** | In my first year with Ignited, it's been incredibly rewarding to see our programs in action and get to know so many inspiring members of the Ignited community—teachers, coaches, students, partners, funders, board members, and staff. I have no doubt that I will continue to learn from and be inspired by all that Ignited has to offer.

**SYREETA** | Training Frances as our new Operations Manager has been an amazing experience, especially because it's given me the chance to share my excitement for our technological solutions. It was super fun getting our nerd on together!

[Read more about Syreeta's 18-year tenure with Ignited.](#)

These reflections capture the spirit of Ignited—a group of passionate individuals committed to our mission of empowering educators to transform their students' career trajectories.

Thank you for being part of our journey.

Warmly,



Emily Dilger, PhD  
Chief Executive Officer



# What We Do

## Our Mission

Empower educators to transform their students' career trajectories

## Summer Fellowship Program

Ignited's flagship Summer Fellowship Program has been in operation since 1985. These paid 8-week fellowships place teachers at leading companies and universities to complete meaningful, hands-on projects. Fellows create lesson plans that transform classrooms with practical skills and knowledge needed for the future workforce.

## Industry Experience Weeks

The Industry Experience Week, introduced in 2016, is a 5-day paid program where cohorts of 15 teachers tour job sites and learn directly from industry professionals about their work, current trends and career pathways. Teachers are coached to integrate real-world applications into their lesson plans.

## Learning Community

The Learning Community offers monthly, hour-long virtual seminars during the school year for teachers to meet with industry experts and learn about the skills for today's workplace, while exploring educational strategies to bring this information to the classroom.

## Impact at Scale

By empowering teachers, we harness their incredible power of scale.  
Each teacher reaches 150 students per year and up to 4,000 over their career.

$$\left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{Teacher Icon} \\ 1 \text{ Teacher} \end{array} \times \begin{array}{c} \text{Teacher with Students Icon} \\ 150 \text{ Students/yr} \end{array} \right] \times \begin{array}{c} \text{Group of Teachers Icon} \\ 100 \text{ Teachers/yr} \end{array} = 15,000 \text{ STUDENTS annually impacted by Ignited teachers}$$

# Empowering Educators: This Year's Impact

Thanks to **21** funders  
and **69** hosts & speakers,  
**143** teachers  
from **99** schools  
across **63+** districts  
in **16** counties  
put in **7,580+** hours of work  
that will impact **20,610+** students



## School Year 2023-2024

Teachers reported that their  
Ignited lessons...

**94%** helped students  
understand real world  
practices

**90%** increased student  
learning

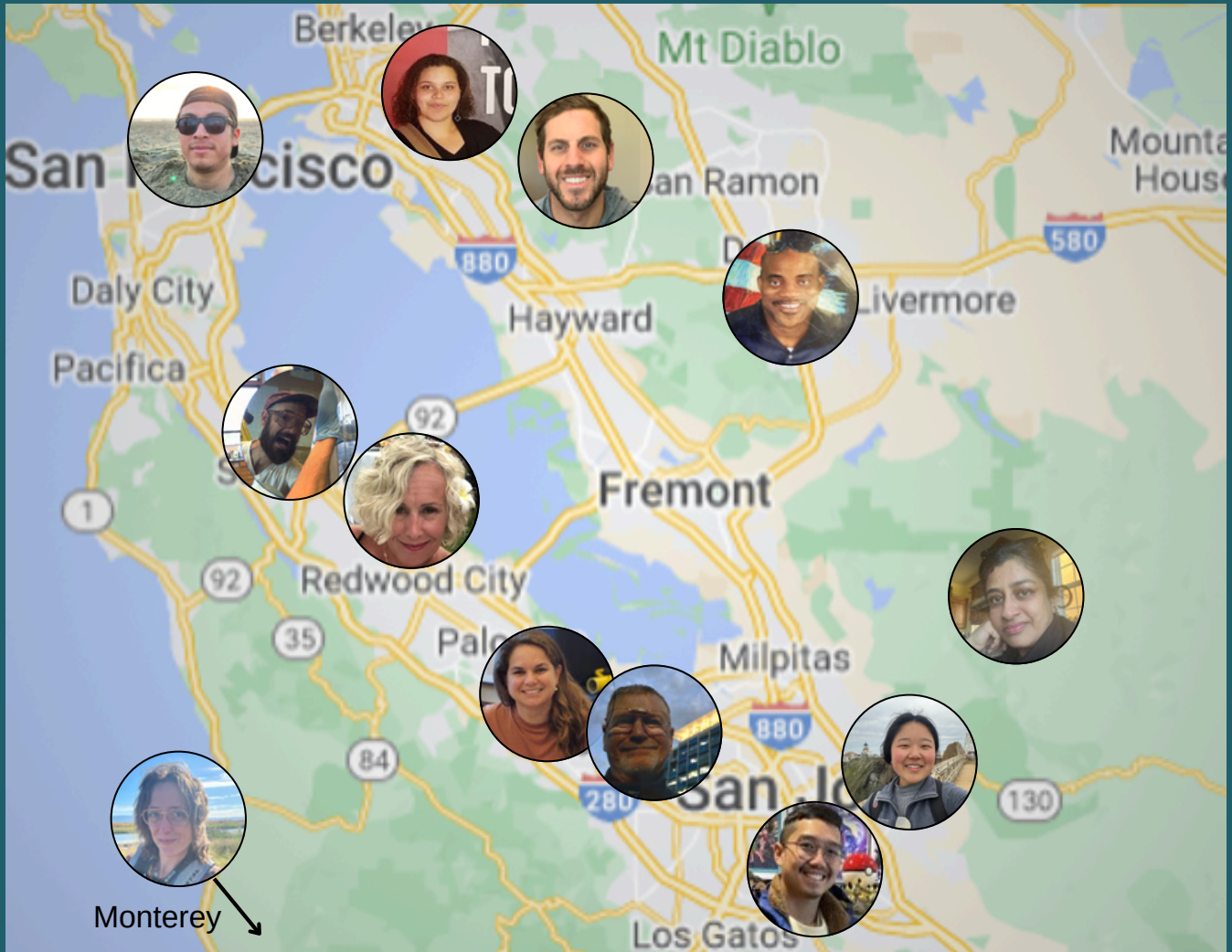
## Summer 2024

Teachers reported that  
Ignited programs...

**89%** increased their teaching  
efficacy

**90%** increased their  
enthusiasm for teaching

# 2024 Summer Fellowship Program



## 2024 Ignited Fellows

**Shelli Murphy**

*Arroyo Upper Elementary*

**Johnson Huynh**

*Leland High*

**Victoria Deng**

*Independence High*

**Paul Okoye**

*Milpitas High*

**Mark Loundy**

*De Vargas Elementary*

**Greg Fenner**

*Design Tech High*

**Lauren Smith**

*Saint Frances High*

**Eleanor Strong**

*N. Monterey County Middle*

**Christina McGhee-Esquivel**

*Skyline High*

**Billy Hilton**

*Village High*

**Basudha Mukherjee**

*Castro Valley High*

**Nick Canastuj Velasco**

*Mission High*



# 2024 Summer Fellowship Program

Teachers in Ignited's Fellowship Program worked alongside employees at organizations such as Amazon, Stanford, UCSF, the Innovative Genomics Institute and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab, gaining industry experience and bringing innovative ideas back to their classrooms to help students become career-ready professionals.

Teachers contributed their expertise to projects ranging from improving the on-site employee experience to developing outreach materials for farmers about emerging agricultural technologies.

Lesson plans developed this summer include students simulating how AI is integrated into the workday and acting as chemical engineers to develop new semiconductor technologies.



**"This summer confirmed that I enjoy being a teacher!"**

**Greg Fenner**

Materials Researcher at Stanford University's Bent Lab  
Chemistry teacher at Design Tech High School

**"Teaching is often a one-man role; you as the singular person behind planning, execution, review, and everything in between. At UCSF this summer, I experienced the delegation of tasks throughout the roles on a team and had others to collaborate with throughout every project."**

**Victoria Deng**

IT Content Developer at UCSF  
Chemistry teacher at Independence High School

**"The highlight of my Fellowship was presenting my project to leadership and receive supportive feedback! It really cemented that my work was valuable and can be used by the company moving forward."**

**Shelli Murphy**

Work-Life Harmony Lead at Amazon  
5th Grade Teacher at Arroyo School

**Explore the Fellowship Program**

# 2024 Industry Experience Weeks

5 WEEKS | 72 TEACHERS | 32 INDUSTRY PARTNERS

72 teachers participated in a series of immersive learning experiences across several key industry areas, exploring water management, sustainability, cybersecurity, and semiconductor technology. From touring water treatment plants and environmental conservation sites to visiting cutting-edge semiconductor facilities, these experiences provided valuable insights into real-world applications of science, technology, and environmental stewardship. Each day concluded with lesson planning sessions, equipping teachers with fresh ideas and knowledge to bring back to their classrooms.



## Science in the City Week

**Highlights:** Exploring science in San Francisco through art tours, water and wastewater treatment centers, and urban planning at key sites like the Southeast Community Center, Presidio, and Treasure Island

**Featured Lessons:** Attending field trips about housing and environmental justice, building a miniature green infrastructure model using public green infrastructure data

## Water Week: East Bay Municipal Utility District and Santa Clara Valley Water

**Highlights:** Touring water management and conservation sites such as San Pablo Reservoir, Alviso Marsh and Wildlife Refuge, Oakland Wastewater Treatment Plant, and Silicon Valley Advanced Water Purification Center

**Featured Lessons:** Designing a procedure to filter water from a mixture of iron and salt, researching how water and race are related through current and historical contexts





## Sustainable Solutions & Alternative Futures Week

**Highlights:** Exploring monarch conservation and indigenous agricultural practices at CSU East Bay, energy efficiency and cybersecurity at Samsung and Google, and drought-resistant plants at the Innovative Genomics Institute

**Featured Lessons:** Bioengineering a synthetic leaf to demonstrate the effect of innovation on the environment, exploring the feasibility of powering California solely with clean energy



## Semiconductor Week

**Highlights:** Touring nanotechnology and semiconductor chip manufacturing facilities at Stanford University, Western Digital, and EMD, learning about cybersecurity and semiconductors at Applied Materials, Samsung, and the SEMI Foundation

**Featured Lessons:** Learning semiconductor chip manufacturing through circuit design, exploring engineered microscopic structures through model building



## Water Week: Eastern Municipal Water District

**Highlights:** Touring Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) and various water treatment facilities, and taking a boat tour of Diamond Valley Reservoir. This marked the expansion of our Experience Week program to Southern California!

**Featured Lessons:** Examining water consumption in everyday imports and exports, recreating sewage treatment processes



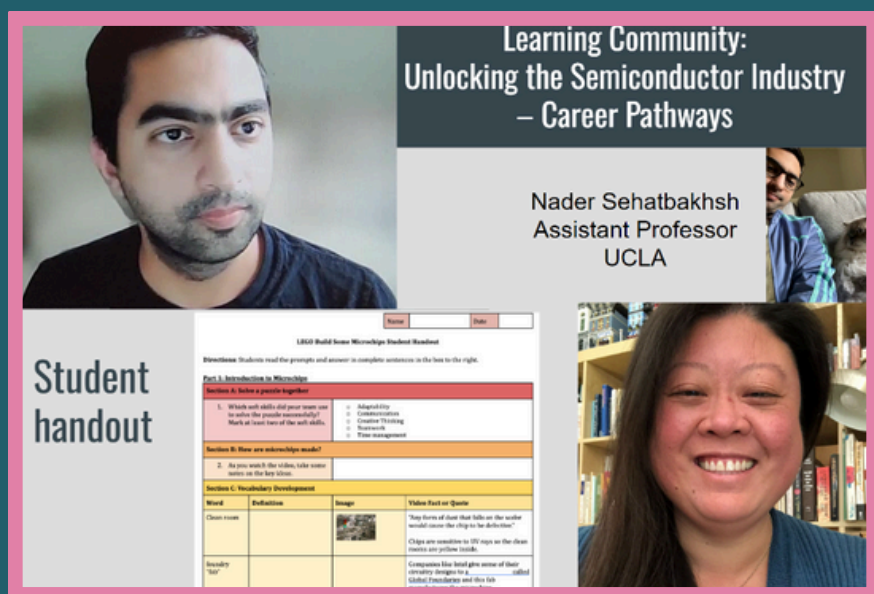
Explore Industry Experience Weeks

# 2023-2024 Learning Community

10 SEMINARS | 24 SPEAKERS | 7 INDUSTRIES

This year, Ignited's Learning Community hosted seminars connecting educators with industry leaders from companies like Google, Raytheon, EMD, Tesla, Lucid, and The Aerospace Corporation. Teachers explored topics such as satellite propulsion, CRISPR technology, electric vehicles, and sustainable dyes, gaining practical strategies to bring these concepts into their classrooms.

The sessions also highlighted career pathways in emerging industries, covering hiring trends, essential skills, and mentorship opportunities. By bridging classroom learning with real-world applications, the seminars empowered teachers to inspire their students toward careers in these dynamic fields.



## SEMINARS

- Demystifying Careers in Industry: Bioinformatics
- Realities of Electric Vehicles with Miss GoElectric
- Unlocking the Semiconductor Industry
- New Frontiers in Genome Engineering
- Hiring Now! Panel Discussion
- Electric Vehicles and Career Mentorship
- Climate, CRISPR, and CROPS
- Electric Propulsion of Satellites in Space
- Biotech's Colorful Revolution: Sustainable Dyes
- Breaking into the Circuit: Semiconductor Careers

Explore the Learning Community

# Fund for Innovation Awards

Ignited proudly recognizes the efforts of educators seeking creative ways to enhance instruction. Fund for Innovation grants support new and exciting classroom ideas that break the mold and significantly improve instruction and student achievement. For the 2023-2024 school year, 7 teachers were selected to receive awards for up to \$1,000 in service of their classroom.



Pictured above (left to right, top to bottom): Ardsher Ahmed, Temy Taylor, Savannah Gardner, Joonsung Oh, Angela Johnson, Johnson Huynh, Jayme Vanderwege

## AWARDED CLASSROOM PROJECTS INCLUDE

- Conducting energy audits of students' homes and analyzing energy production/consumption trends to compare implications of renewable and non-renewable energy sources
- Enhancing a lesson on artificial intelligence and machine learning
- Attending a field trip to the California Academy of Sciences to foster an appreciation for STEM
- Using Sphero's Robot kit to build, design, and program small electric cars





# Sparkling the Future With Stories

Stories breathe life into numbers. They take statistics and turn them into human experiences, demonstrating not just the number of lives that have been touched, but how they've been transformed.

While our numbers tell you that Ignited teachers have collectively impacted over 4 million students throughout our history, our stories tell you about the teacher who helped a student refine their resume to land their first internship as a Biomedical Engineering Intern at UCSF, or the student who saw her teacher's work as a Hispanic woman in STEM and began to envision herself in a scientific career as well.

## Ignited programs impact the teacher

Johnson Huynh spent summer 2023 working in a Stanford University nonlinear optics lab with postdoc Noah Flemings. His experience helped him rediscover what it was like to be on the other side of the desk. "This experience made me more empathetic and more energized to my own students' struggles when they found things challenging," Johnson said. As a result, Johnson created a student challenge involving flutes and sound waves—an incredible project that taught students how to work through trial and error, with an outcome that is [hilarious to watch](#) (be warned—these are students of physics, not music!).

## Then the teacher impacts the student

Christina McGhee-Esquivel just completed her second fellowship at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and brought nine students to our annual Spark the Future event to talk about the impact of her teaching. "Christina has taught us a lot of things. Usually you don't see a lot of women in STEM, so Christina allowed me to believe in myself and know my worth. She taught me how to never diminish my own accomplishments and that I belong in that room," said rising senior Syndel Gonzalez.

## And the impact persists throughout the student's career journey

[Devon Tompane](#), a Clinical Account Specialist at Johnson & Johnson, realized she had found her career path after learning about CRISPR gene editing in her freshman high school biology class. Her teacher, Meghan Straz, had completed several Ignited fellowships studying this technology. "As she was doing these opportunities at Stanford, I was seeing a teacher pursue their passions and professional journeys outside of the classroom. It really connected how many options there were going to be in life, that there are always ways to seek information, grow ourselves professionally."

These stories are invaluable because they capture the nuance and depth of what our success truly means. They go beyond outputs and outcomes to reveal personal and professional growth, shifts in mindset, and long-lasting change.

Numbers show us what has happened; stories show us why it matters.

# Student Spark Story

## Dan Truong

Senior Software Engineer, Zendesk

Ignited Teacher: Jonathan Ho, AP Physics



Now a software developer at Zendesk, Dan Truong traces his career path back to occasional after-school hangouts with his AP physics teacher, Ignited alum Jonathan Ho. While their industries of focus were somewhat different—Jonathan’s background was in economics, and Dan was pursuing tech—the insights Jonathan shared about his own college and industry experiences were formative for Dan’s career journey.

As a high school senior with first-generation immigrant parents, Dan faced a lot of unknowns and few connections when he started gravitating towards a career in tech.

**“Jonathan was a source of inspiration for me as someone who also came from an immigrant family but was able to build many connections in various industries.”**

The skills Dan built with Jonathan’s guidance ultimately paid off as he pursued a major in computer science. Now at Zendesk, Dan works remotely as a back-end engineer on the permissions and authorizations team, writing code to handle the logic that dictates access for various types of users in Zendesk’s business-to-business software.

While much of his work involves hard-skills required for trouble-shooting code and developing decision logs and flow diagrams, the durable soft skills Dan gained as Jonathan’s student remain integral to his day-to-day as he is in constant communication with team members across multiple time zones. “The big takeaway I’ve gotten from my experiences with Jonathan is how important it is in a STEM field to not only be voracious for knowledge but also to know how to interact with folks and work together. Soft skills are just as valuable as the hard skills,” Dan says.

**Read the full story.**

**Explore More Spark Stories**

# Creating Pathways

## Best Practices for Career Awareness in Schools

This excerpt from our recent article shares findings from a federally funded project on cybersecurity, highlighting best practices for career awareness across industries.

These adaptable strategies can guide school and district leaders to cultivate career awareness and are also transferable to other nonprofits and educational initiatives, serving as a roadmap for achieving similar success.

### Align With Nonprofits

Partnering with nonprofits enhances our effectiveness by leveraging diverse expertise. Ignited's collaborations with Science from Scientists (SciSci) and the Krause Center for Innovation (KCI) allowed each to focus on different aspects, maximizing impact. The addition of Resource Area for Teachers (RAFT) in the final year showcased our adaptability to evolving needs. These partnerships highlight the value of tapping into each organization's strengths, allowing teachers to engage meaningfully and amplifying impact.

### Engage With Professionals

Direct engagement with industry professionals is essential for effective education. Such interactions provide teachers and students with invaluable insights into real-world applications and career opportunities. The flexibility to incorporate different viewpoints and expertise enriches the learning experience and helps students visualize various career trajectories.

### Listen to Teachers

Meeting teachers where they are and showing how industries that may seem unapproachable in middle or high school connect to core subjects is key to effective education. Ignited's collaborative approach to curriculum design helped to develop accessible lessons that can be implemented across disciplines. The project's flexibility also allows it to leverage existing programs that teachers are already drawn to, such as those focused on sustainability or semiconductors.

[Read the full article.](#)

### Explore our Cyber Curriculum

Cyber Ethics:  
The Moral Quarrel  
High School

Code for Change  
High School

Can you Hack the  
Cyber Attack?  
Middle School

### Meet our Project Partners





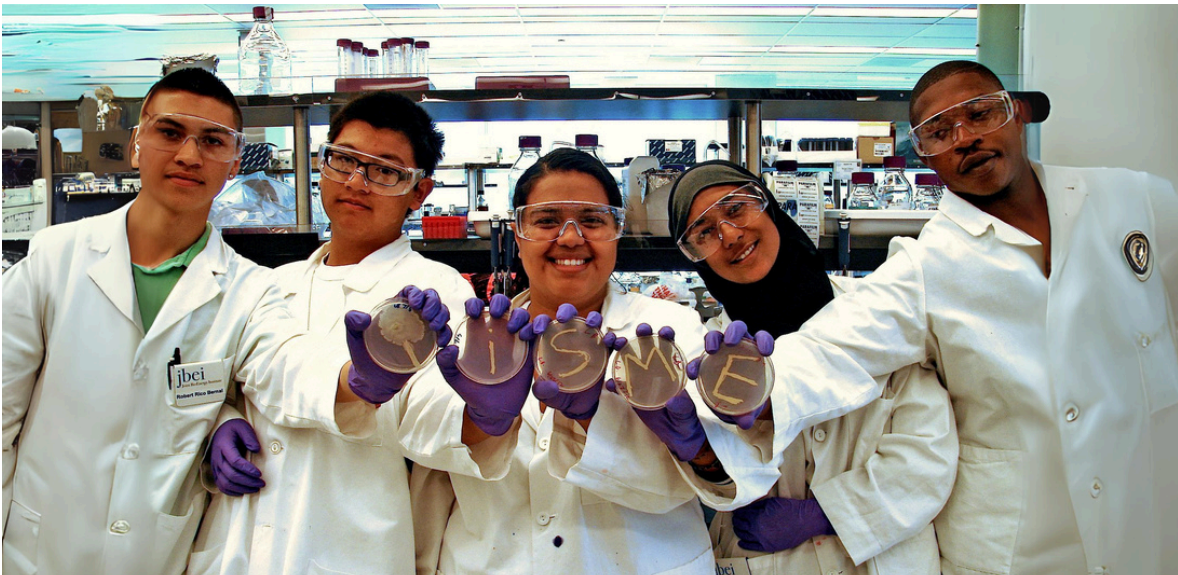
# Celebrating 40 Years



## 2025 MARKS FOUR DECADES OF TRANSFORMATION

Founded in 1985 as Industry Initiatives for Science and Math Education (IISME) by 13 visionary Silicon Valley CEOs and UC Berkeley, Ignited has been a pioneer in bridging the gap between industry and education. Ignited's programs equip teachers with practical industry experience that inspires cutting-edge curricula, transforming students' career trajectories and preparing them for success in the future workforce.

**40 years later, Ignited has empowered 4,000 teachers, who in turn have influenced 4 million students by bringing innovative thinking and practical skills into K-14 classrooms.**



We honor the dedication of our educators, industry partners, and community, all of whom have supported Ignited's mission. This 40th anniversary reaffirms the continued relevance of our mission and underscores the vital role of collaboration between education and industry.

**Join us as we continue to build a future-ready workforce.**

**Give \$40 for 40 years!**



**Your support empowers teachers to shape the future workforce.  
Every contribution makes an impact.**

**\$100**  
Amplifies  
success via  
Spark Stories

**\$250**  
Creates  
community  
through summer  
fellowship  
orientation

**\$500**  
Supports a  
teacher leader to  
share their  
expertise with the  
community

**\$1,000**  
Provides  
classroom materials  
to enrich a teacher's  
curriculum

**\$5,000**  
Sponsors our  
annual  
Spark the Future  
celebration

**\$10,000**  
Provides a  
Curriculum Coach  
for a cohort of  
10-15 teachers

Platinum  
Transparency  
2024

**Candid.**

## **Donate Today**

Ignited is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit  
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## **Contact Us**

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