

Duke  
PROGRAM *in*  
EDUCATION



**DUKE TEACHHOUSE  
UNCONFERENCE:  
2020-2024**





# FIVE YEARS OF THE UNCONFERENCE

The Duke TeachHouse Virtual UnConference is celebrating 5 years of virtual community building, teacher empowerment, and teacher voice through an annual gathering of pre-service, beginning and veteran educators.



# COMMUNITY BUILDING

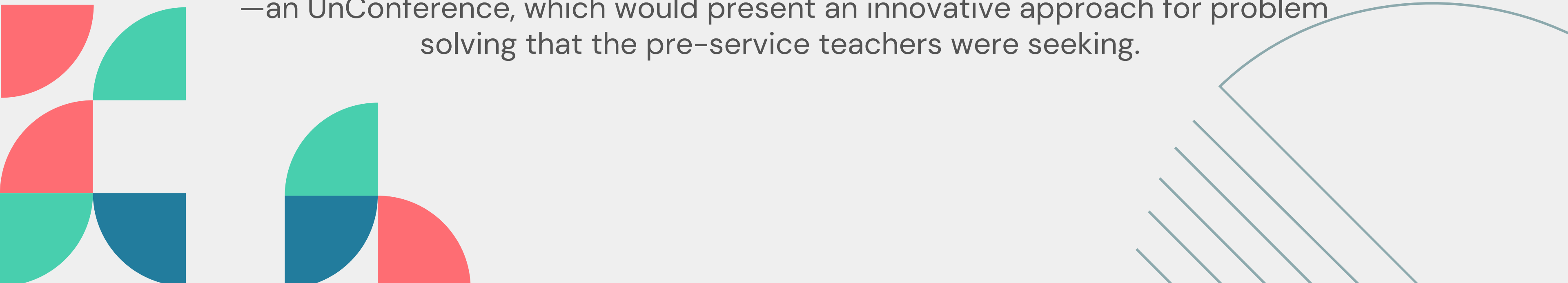
The COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 immediately and fundamentally altered education. TeachHouse wondered: how can we continue to safely bring educators together to discuss and problem-solve the urgent education issues of today?



# TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

At the start of the 2020–2021 school year, two undergraduate pre–service teachers in Duke’s Program in Education, Alejandra Gómez and David Conlin, asked the same question. As future educators they wanted to know how classroom teachers were thinking and feeling about the changes brought on by the pandemic.

They met with TeachHouse co–founder and Duke professor Jan Riggsbee, a teacher educator and advocate committed to empowering teacher voice. Alejandra and David left energized and excited by an idea Dr. Riggsbee had planted—an UnConference, which would present an innovative approach for problem solving that the pre–service teachers were seeking.





# TEACHER VOICE

The growing team met with TeachHouse alumna and experience designer Savannah Windham and Langley Ellmann, a Duke alumna and TeachHouse community liaison. A virtual event was scheduled for the following month. David and Alejandra reached out to their pre-service teacher cohorts and realized other future teachers wanted to get involved as activist-educators and engage in dialogues around the expectations and realities of COVID and its impact on schools, teachers, students, and families.



**"THIS GLOBAL PANDEMIC HAS DEEPLY ALTERED  
WHAT SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY WILL LOOK LIKE,  
BUT THIS EVENT HAS GIVEN ME A STRONG SENSE OF  
CONNECTION IN A TIME WHEN I REALLY NEEDED IT."**

**-ALEJANDRA GOMEZ**



**FREE AND OPEN TO ALL**

Keeping in line with the founding principles of the original unconference model, the TeachHouse UnConference is a completely free event.

**GRANT FUNDED**

Thanks to a grant from The Kenan Charitable Trust, all session facilitators receive honorariums, and each participant receives a TeachHouse “Red for Ed” t-shirt and UnConference book selection.

**EMPOWERING TEACHERS**

The Duke TeachHouse UnConference model aims at empowering the voices of early career teachers to propose and select topics and facilitate session dialogues around timely and critical issues impacting K-12 schools.

# UNCONFERENCE TIMELINE

## Expansion

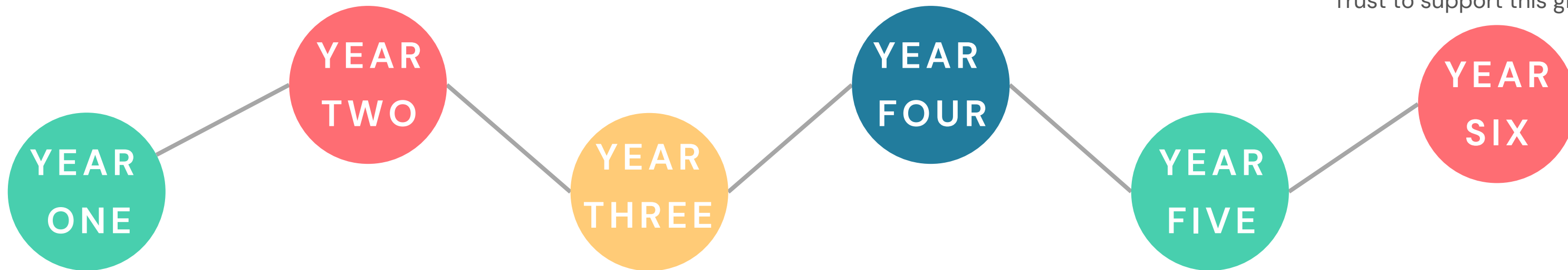
The Second TeachHouse UnConference took place in May 2021. After a successful pilot, the project expanded its reach to include 50 educators from Durham Public Schools, Vance County Schools and DC Public Schools.

## Global Reach

In April 2023, the Fourth TeachHouse UnConference welcomed 75 educators, including teachers from an international audience.

## In Person

Co-sponsored by the Hill Learning Center in Durham, NC, the 2024 Spring UnConference will be the first in-person gathering, Building upon successful growth of the past five years, Duke TeachHouse secured funding from the Kenan Charitable Trust to support this growth.



## Concept

In October 2020 a mix of 15 Duke Program in Education students and Duke TeachHouse fellows and alumni attended the first UnConference. The pilot event included two breakout periods offering three sessions each with all sessions led by practicing teachers.

## Partnerships

The Third TeachHouse UnConference took place in April 2022, and again expanded its reach to include over 50 educators from the Durham area as well as faculty and students from NCCU, UNC and Harvard University.

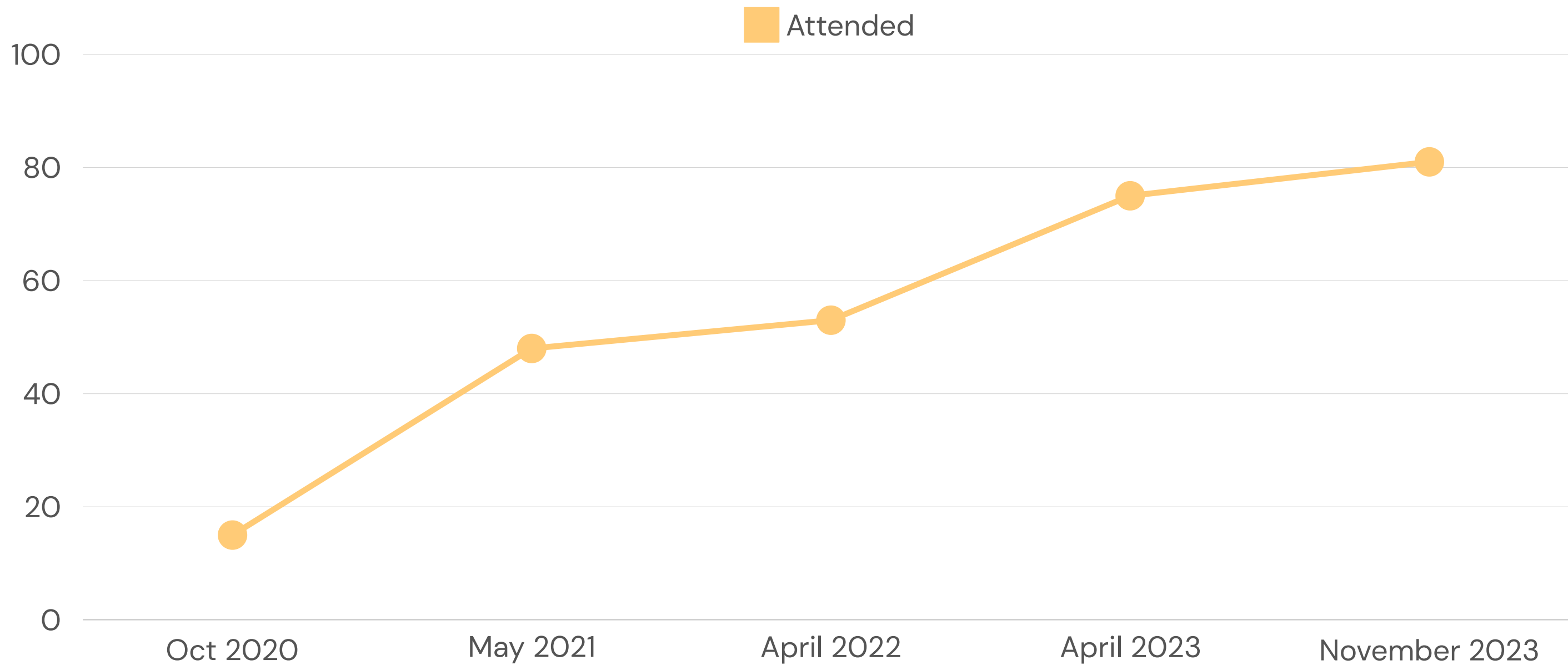
## Local Focus

In November 2023, the Fifth TeachHouse UnConference strategically partnered with local districts to increase early career teacher attendance.



# UNCONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

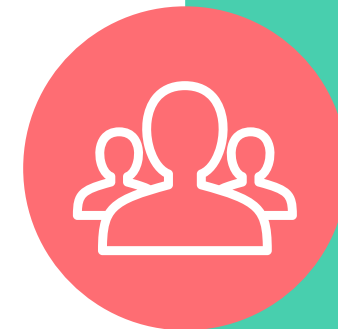
Attendance at the UnConference has grown significantly over the 5 years since its inception. From 15 Duke pre-service teachers and TeachHouse Fellows in the first year to over 80 educators from NC and beyond in the fifth, we continue to grow our audience year over year.



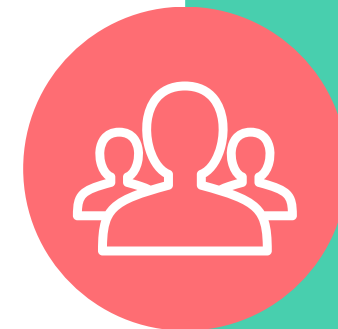


## 4.6 OUT OF 5 SAY

**I came away from the UnConference with new strategies, ideas, and/or action plans that support my personal and/or professional growth.**



*I enjoyed the keynote speakers and being able to break out and speak within our breakout groups. The opportunity to digest and discuss the topics in small groups was helpful.*



*I enjoyed hearing ideas from other educators about ways they wanted to tweak their practice as a result of the conversations taking place.*

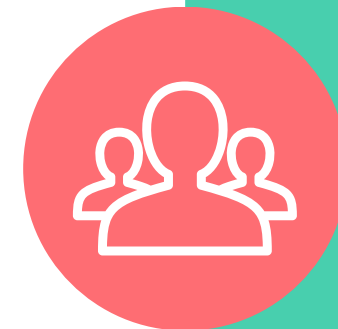


## 4.8 OUT OF 5 SAY

The UnConference provided a space to meet and talk with new and beginning teachers about topics that are important to me.



*I enjoyed engaging in conversation with teachers during breakout sessions.*



*The breakout sessions were refreshing. Hearing teachers' voices was an important element for this unconference and conversation.*