

Additional information about 12 educators to be added to National Memorial to Fallen Educators

Annie Louise Keller (1901–1927)

Annie Louise Keller was a devoted 25-year-old teacher at the one-room Centerville Country School in Greene County, Illinois. On April 19, 1927, when a massive tornado struck the schoolhouse, Keller's quick thinking saved the lives of all 18 students present by instructing them to take cover under their desks. While the students survived with only minor injuries, the building collapsed, and Keller was killed by flying debris. Her heroism is memorialized by a bronze sculpture by Lorado Taft in White Hall and the naming of the Annie Keller Regional Gifted Center in Chicago, standing as a testament to the "greater love" she showed in laying down her life for her pupils.

Diane Peterson (1951–1978)

Diane Peterson was a vibrant 26-year-old English teacher at Branham High School in San Jose, California, known for her dedication to her students. On June 16, 1978, the day after the school year ended, she was fatally stabbed in a hallway while cleaning her classroom for the summer break. The case remained a tragic mystery for nearly 47 years until June 2025, when authorities finally identified her killer through a deathbed confession from a relative of the suspect, a former student. Peterson, who left behind a husband and an infant son, is remembered by her family as a wonderful person whose life was cut short just as her journey in education was beginning.

Christopher J. Trakimas (1954–2016)

Christopher J. Trakimas was a highly respected 61-year-old boiler mechanic for the Philadelphia School District with over 25 years of service. A devoted family man and "Philadelphia guy" through and through, he was critically injured on January 13, 2016, during a boiler explosion at Franklin S. Edmonds Elementary School while attempting to bring the unit back online. He fought bravely for five months in the hospital, undergoing numerous surgeries for severe burns, before passing away on May 18, 2016. Trakimas is remembered by colleagues as a "mechanic's mechanic" who was deeply committed to the safety and well-being of the city's students.

Nohema Graber (1955–2021)

Nohema Graber was a beloved 66-year-old Spanish teacher at Fairfield High School in Iowa, originally from Mexico, who was known for her deep faith and infectious kindness. Tragically, she was killed on November 2, 2021, while taking her daily walk in a local park, an attack carried out by two of her students over a dispute regarding a grade. Her death

devastated the Fairfield community, where she was seen as a bridge between cultures and a mentor who treated every person she met as a friend. Graber's legacy lives on through her children and the countless students she inspired to embrace language and compassion.

Dan Marburger (1967–2024)

Dan Marburger served as the principal of Perry High School in Iowa for nearly 30 years, becoming a pillar of the community known for his "big heart" and steady leadership. During a school shooting on January 4, 2024, Marburger heroically put himself in harm's way to distract the shooter, an act credited with allowing many students to escape to safety. He succumbed to his injuries ten days later on January 14, 2024. A native of Sabula and a former college football player, Marburger is remembered as a selfless protector who treated every student like his own, leaving a profound void in the "Bluejay" family he helped build.

Ryan Lantz (1971–2024)

Ryan Lantz was a dedicated journalism teacher and assistant football coach at his alma mater, Liberty High School in Clarksburg, West Virginia. A man of deep Christian faith and a fixture in Harrison County athletics, Lantz was tragically struck and killed by a vehicle in the school parking lot on February 20, 2024, as students and staff were arriving for the day. Described by colleagues as someone who did everything "with all his heart," he was a mentor who balanced a passion for storytelling with a love for the game. His loss was felt throughout the region, marked by a massive candlelight vigil on the very football field where he spent so many Friday nights.

Kevin Garrison (1967–2024)

Kevin Garrison was the maintenance supervisor for Elkhorn Public Schools in Nebraska, a "problem solver" who had served the district since 2005. Known as the man everyone called when something was broken, Garrison was a licensed arborist and an avid Denver Broncos fan who found his greatest joy in his family and grandchildren. He died on September 4, 2024, following a tragic construction-related incident near Elkhorn North High School. His legacy is one of quiet, behind-the-scenes service, and his daughters have followed in his footsteps by pursuing careers in education and service.

Richard Aspinwall (1984–2024) & Cristina Irimie (1971–2024)

Richard Aspinwall and Cristina Irimie were cherished math teachers at Apalachee High School in Winder, Georgia, who lost their lives during a school shooting on September 4, 2024. Aspinwall, 39, was also the school's defensive football coordinator, described as a man who cared deeply about his players' character as much as their performance on the

field. Irimie, 52, was a Romanian immigrant who brought a vibrant energy to her classroom and was known for her "patience and wonderful sense of humor." Together, they represent the heart of a school community that remembers them as educators who went above and beyond to support their students both academically and personally.

Leah Seneng (1964–2024)

Leah Seneng was a passionate 60-year-old art teacher at Bryant Middle School in Dos Palos, California, remembered as an "explorer" and a lover of nature. In a tragic and rare turn of events, she contracted rabies after being bitten by a bat she was trying to humanely remove from her classroom floor in October 2024. Despite initial hopes that the scratch was minor, she fell ill and passed away on November 22, 2024. Seneng's death shocked the community, but those who knew her remember her as a kind soul whose final act—trying to protect a small animal while ensuring her students' safety—was a reflection of her gentle spirit.

Erin M. West (1982–2024)

Erin M. West was a 42-year-old teacher at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison, Wisconsin, known for her radiant smile and deep commitment to her faith. A mother of three daughters, she had transitioned from a long-term substitute to a full-time staff member, where she was praised for serving students with "grace, humor, and wisdom." She was killed during a school shooting on December 16, 2024. Friends and family remember her as a "hero" and a "disciple" who lived her life with an infectious enthusiasm, always ready with a hug for anyone in need.

Carol Mendiola Mooers (1976–2025)

Carol Mendiola Mooers was a dedicated school counselor for the Bering Strait School District in Unalakleet, Alaska, and a proud Army veteran. Originally from San Antonio, Texas, she moved to the Arctic to serve rural students, often traveling by small plane to reach remote villages. On February 6, 2025, she was one of ten people killed in a commuter plane crash while traveling to Nome to assist students with college tours. Known as the "pillar of her family" and a fierce advocate for her students' futures, Mooers is remembered for her adventurous spirit and her unwavering belief in the potential of every child she counseled.