

2019 William Friday Teacher Retreats

With the current state of education and its impact on lowering teacher morale in North Carolina, the North Caroliniana Society's support of teachers is invaluable. Shawna Penland, 4th grade teacher & 2019 Friday Retreat participant

Since 2016, [Carolina K-12](#), a program of UNC-Chapel Hill's [Carolina Public Humanities](#), has been honored to partner with the North Caroliniana Society to offer annual William Friday Teacher Retreats: "*Carolina Voices - Exploring the Diverse History & Heritage of the Tar Heel State*." These Retreats offer K-12 teachers around the state an opportunity to spend three dynamic days learning about North Carolina's captivating history, literature, and culture in an academic and professional retreat atmosphere, where teachers are celebrated for the important work they do.

In addition to [summer 2019's Retreat in Asheville](#), held in honor of Marie Colton, a second Retreat was hosted at UNC-Chapel Hill's Wilson Library on November 10 – 12, 2019. This event, held in honor of H.G. Jones, featured the compelling mix of historical content presentations and interactive exploration of innovative teaching strategies for which the Friday Retreats have become known. The agenda also included exploration of primary sources and online resources from UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries, with a particular focus on Wilson Library's North Carolina Collection. Featured presentations included North Caroliniana Society members such as Dr. Karl Campbell, who presented "Notable North Carolinians: Using the Stories of Individual Lives to Engage Students," and Bland Simpson, who treated attendees to readings from several of his books in "A Sound Country Serenade."

In addition to the 28 attending teachers representing 22 counties from each region of the state, over 100 members of the community joined us for an evening performance of "The Color of Courage," a show in which local performers Mitch Capel and Sonny Kelly bring to life the untold stories of the African American soldiers who fought for freedom during the Civil War.

Time for discussion and collaboration among attending teachers, a rarity in the hectic schedules of educators, but crucial for forging a network of teacher support around the state, was also provided. Perhaps most important, however, was the Retreat's priority of providing constant affirmation and appreciation for the work of teachers and the challenges they face, including a Teacher Appreciation Dinner hosted at the Chapel Hill staple, 411 West. Addresses from Dr. Jim Clark, North Caroliniana Society president, and Dr. Lloyd Kramer, director of Carolina Public Humanities, served to inspire attending teachers regarding the importance of their role in our society, the value we place in their profession, and the genuine appreciation the Society feels towards those making their profession one of such great importance.

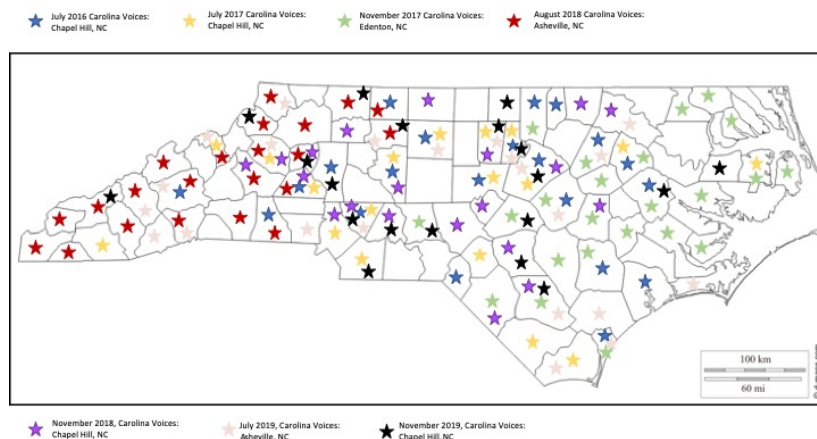
As middle school teacher Bethany Wilcox noted, "Beginning the conference with appreciation and the repeated sentiments of respect and support went such a long way. I genuinely felt that everyone who spoke to us was an ally in our fight."



2019 Friday Retreat participants at Wilson Library, with President Jim

To date, seven Friday Retreats have served **219 teachers** representing **74 counties**. These teachers will reach a minimum of **30,660 students** across the state each school year due to the support of the North Caroliniana Society.

Two retreats are being planned for 2020, one to be held at the historic Carolina Theatre in Durham with a special focus on arts integration; the other will be held at UNC-Chapel Hill. A third special event will be held in Wilmington, in partnership with the Watson School of Education, with a specific focus on the 1898 Wilmington Coup. Each event will be open to any teacher statewide.



Additional collaborations between Carolina K-12 and the North Caroliniana Society that are underway include work on the [ANCHOR](#) project, online resources for K-12 teachers and students that covers all of North Carolina history. As the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources works on the website's historical content, Carolina K-12 is creating and aligning lesson plans and activities to be linked to each historical period.

As UNC-Chapel Hill Libraries works to complete and make available an inventory of Jim Crow laws in North Carolina in its project [On the Books: Jim Crow and Algorithms of Resistance](#), the North Caroliniana Society is also supporting the project by engaging Carolina K-12 to work with the project team and tailor a section of the website specifically for middle and high school teachers. Educators will be empowered to utilize *On the Books* responsibly as they teach their students an accurate history of Jim Crow laws via lesson plans and pedagogical resources for teaching about difficult history in effective ways.

These online curricular projects and resources, in addition to the ability of any teacher in the state to participate in an annual Friday Teachers Retreat, ensure that the North Caroliniana Society is making a deeply positive and widespread impact on public education across the state. As high school teacher Omega Butia noted on her 2019 Friday Retreat evaluation:

I have spent the last year contemplating leaving the profession and have gone as far as paying for services to revamp my resume to make it appropriate for work outside of the field. I had lost my passion for teaching and making sure I was reaching my students in new and engaging ways. After just the first day I had a renewed feeling of purpose and drive to make the classes more engaging. At the end I walked away with the confidence that if I show more interest and passion so will my students. History will be a class we all love, especially if I use the resources provided.