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TEACHFORAMERICA

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HEATHER ANICHINI (CORPS '02) IS 2018 RECIPIENT OF TEACH FOR AMERICA'S PETER JENNINGS AWARD FOR CIVIC LEADERSHIP

President and CEO of The Chicago Public Education Fund Recognized for Impact and Focus on Importance of Principals and School Leaders in Student Success

NEW YORK, N.Y., September 5, 2018—Teach For America announced Heather Anichini (Chicago-Northwest Indiana Corps '02) is the recipient of the prestigious Peter Jennings Award for Civic Leadership in recognition of the impact her leadership has had on the education landscape in the city of Chicago. Anichini is president and CEO of the nonprofit The Chicago Public Education Fund (The Fund).

Established in 2007, the award—named in honor of the late ABC News anchor and longtime supporter of Teach For America (TFA)—is presented annually to TFA alumni who embody the organization's core values and whose work led to significant change for excellence and equity in education in the last year.

This year's finalists included two other leaders for educational equity: Nancy Hanks (Atlanta Corps '04), chief of elementary schools for Madison School District; and Daniel Sellers (Eastern North Carolina Corps '06), founding executive director of EdAllies, Minnesota's leading education policy advocacy organization. Last year's recipient, Jeff Riley (Baltimore Corps '93), has since been named Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education.

"Peter believed in Teach For America, in its powerful message of education equity and in the long-term impact it has through the work of its alumni, so many of whom continue to work for a more just education system and better America," said Kayce Freed Jennings, who presented the award to Anichini at an event in New York City. "Heather's career has been dedicated to realizing that vision, and her leadership has had a tremendous impact on the Chicago school system."

The award recognizes Anichini for her leadership of The Fund, which raises capital from individuals and foundations to support Chicago public schools and partners closely with traditional public and charter schools to support educator success. Under her leadership, The Fund has focused on the development and support of school principals.

"Each year this award helps us anchor our efforts in optimism, because the Teach For America alumni we honor demonstrate what is possible when we center our work on the aspirations of our students and their families—and when we lead with courage, humility, and an unshakable commitment to excellence and equity," said Teach For America CEO Elisa Villanueva Beard (Phoenix Corps '98). "What Heather has done to build, sustain and strengthen the leadership of partners and principals across Chicago to drive that type of collective change is just extraordinary, and represents Teach For America at its very best."

When Anichini took over The Fund, the district faced numerous public challenges. Behind the headlines however, there was a much brighter story. "Educators were doing really remarkable work in schools, we had a mature nonprofit sector, and the philanthropic community was deeply engaged," Anichini said. Anichini spent months partnering with educators and other city leaders to gather opinions on where private funds

could best support Chicago schools. “A lot of people pointed to school leadership as a place where relatively small dollars could make a big impact,” she said. Anichini centered the organization’s efforts on helping school leaders do better in jobs that are more sustainable.

Since 2013, The Fund has raised about \$40 million for programs that include professional development, fellowships, and professional learning communities for school leaders, and seventy percent of the district’s principals have participated. From 2013 to 2018, the number of high-performing principals in the city nearly doubled, and the city’s principal retention rates stabilized. Anichini points out that the school system is now led by a former principal, and that many of the city’s top leaders participated in Fund-supported programming during their careers.

Chicago Public Schools has recently seen a period of accelerated academic growth for students. In a Stanford University study published last fall, Chicago’s students were shown to learn and grow at a faster rate than 96 percent of school districts in the country.

Anichini underscored the importance of collective leadership, inside and outside the classroom, in solving the most pressing problems in our schools. “None of the incredible progress we made happened in a silo. We are lucky enough to have a mayor who believes deeply in the power of strong school leaders and a district CEO who has experience both as a principal and as a parent of a Chicago Public Schools student. These key partnerships made student growth possible.”

Today, Anichini is focused on The Fund’s next five-year goal: making principal quality a permanent aspect of Chicago’s school improvement strategy. In addition to leading The Fund, Anichini also serves on the Advisory Council for the Urban Education Institute at the University of Chicago and as a board member for ThriveChicago and Teach For America—Chicago-Northwest Indiana. Anichini began her education career with Umoja at Manley Career Academy High School and then taught social studies as a 2002 corps member in Chicago. After her time in the classroom, she went on to work for Chicago Public Schools and Teach For America before joining The Fund in 2012.

This year’s Peter Jennings Award for Civic Leadership ceremony recognized award finalists Nancy Hanks (Atlanta Corps ’04), chief of elementary schools for Madison School District; and Daniel Sellers (Eastern North Carolina Corps ’06), founding executive director of EdAllies, Minnesota’s leading education policy advocacy organization. Both finalists have had a major impact in their education communities. Over the course of Hanks’ tenure, Madison elementary students have made notable, continuous academic gains, and her leadership has started to be recognized on a national level. Sellers has led the charge to simplify the Minnesota teacher certification process, as well as advocated for increased disaggregation of student data, school choice, and pushed for more transparency in school assessments, all in support of great teaching and great schools.

Previous Peter Jennings Award for Civic Leadership recipients include:

- **2017:** Jeffrey Riley (Baltimore ’93), Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
- **2016:** Sophia Pappas (New Jersey ’03), Former CEO, Division of ECE, New York City Department of Education
- **2015:** DeRay Mckesson (New York ’07) and Brittany Packnett (D.C. Region ’07), Activists
- **2014:** Kaya Henderson (New York ’92), Former Chancellor, D.C. Public Schools; Kevin Huffman (Houston ’92), Former Tennessee Commissioner of Education
- **2013:** Julie Jackson (New Jersey ’94), Chief of Schools Officer, K-8, Uncommon Schools
- **2012:** Rhonda Kalifey-Aluise (Houston ’92), Executive Director, KIPP New Orleans; Sarah Newell Usdin (South Louisiana ’92), Board Member, Orleans Parish School Board; Kira Orange Jones (South Louisiana ’00), Former Executive Director, Teach For America—Greater New Orleans

- **2011:** Mike Johnston (Greater Delta '97), Former State Senator, Colorado
- **2010:** Tim Daly (Baltimore '99), Founding Partner, EdNavigator
- **2009:** Jeremy Beard (Los Angeles '95), Head of Schools, YES Prep Public Schools; JoAnn Gama (Rio Grande Valley '97), Co-Founder, President, and Superintendent, IDEA Public Schools; Tom Torkelson (Rio Grande Valley '97), Co-Founder and CEO, IDEA Public Schools
- **2008:** Cami Anderson (Los Angeles '93), Former Superintendent, Newark Public Schools
- **2007:** Michelle Rhee (Baltimore '92), Former Chancellor, D.C. Public Schools

More information about the Peter Jennings Award for Civic Leadership, winners, and finalists can be found [here](#).

About Teach For America

Teach For America works in partnership with urban and rural communities in more than 50 regions across the country to expand educational opportunity for children. Founded in 1990, Teach For America recruits and develops a diverse corps of outstanding leaders to make an initial two-year commitment to teach in high-need schools and become lifelong leaders in the effort to end educational inequity. Today Teach For America is a force of nearly 60,000 alumni and corps members committed to profound systemic change. From classrooms to districts to state houses across America, they're reimagining education to realize the day when every child has an equal opportunity to learn, to grow, to influence, and to lead. For more information, visit www.teachforamerica.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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