

Contact: Joseph Walsh  
646.640.6724

[Joseph.Walsh@teachforamerica.org](mailto:Joseph.Walsh@teachforamerica.org)

## TWO TFA ALUMNI CELEBRATED AS 2019 STATE TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

*CCSSO National Teacher of the Year Washington Week Honors Alumni in Hawaii and DC Among State Teachers of the Year*

**NEW YORK, May 3, 2019**—Teach For America alumni and state teachers of the year Kelly Harper and Mathieu Williams were honored this week by the Council of Chief State School Officers' Washington Week. Williams is the 2019 Hawai'i State Teacher of the Year, while Harper is the 2019 D.C. State Teacher of the Year and was one of four finalists for the National Teacher of the Year Award. Both began their education careers as Teach For America corps members in 2012.

"Mathieu Williams and Kelly Harper are incredible educators and great advocates for their students, and so deserving of recognition as two of the country's best teachers," said Teach For America CEO Elisa Villanueva Beard. "As State Teachers of the Year, both have shown their passion, talent and love for their students, and demonstrate what it means to have an unwavering commitment to excellence and equity for all students."

Williams is currently a teacher at Kealakehe Intermediate School, where he's worked since joining staff as a TFA corps member. He teaches technology and digital media and is credited with greatly expanding the school's technology program; he previously served as a special education instructor.

"Mathieu's passion and dedication has accelerated Kealakehe Intermediate's technology and digital media program into a very popular focus among his students and has developed them into a nationally competitive team in two short years," said shared Hawai'i Superintendent Dr. Christina Kishimoto at Williams' October award ceremony. "His collaborative work to improve education through the sharing of best practices among his fellow Hawaii District teachers and community-based education programs has been truly inspiring."

Harper is a third-grade teacher at Amidon-Bowen Elementary School in Washington, D.C. She began her education career as a TFA corps member in Houston, where she taught elementary school and led her students to significant gains in the classroom. After her time in the corps, she relocated to her hometown region of D.C. to continue teaching. Her career is marked by a distinct focus on social-emotional learning and culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom, as well as a deep belief that education is a powerful tool for combatting injustice and dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline.

"As a D.C. area native," Harper wrote in her application statement, "I teach to empower my students to become the next leaders and change agents of their generation. Ultimately, I envision my students becoming voices for marginalized communities, voices that reverberate throughout the city and the world."

### **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](http://www.teachforamerica.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).