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TEACH FOR AMERICA WELCOMES MORE THAN 30 NEW TEACHERS TO TWIN CITIES THIS FALL AS ORGANIZATION'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP FORCE TOPS 50,000

Incoming Corps Attracts Diverse, Local Educators Committed to Expanding Educational Opportunity

MINNEAPOLIS, August 12, 2015—Teach For America–Twin Cities announced today that it will welcome more than 30 new teachers to schools in the Minneapolis–St. Paul region this fall, as the national organization celebrates its 25th anniversary. The teachers, known as corps members, will commit to teaching for at least two years in under-resourced schools and become lifelong leaders in the pursuit of educational equity.

This is the seventh Teach For America cohort to lead classrooms in the Twin Cities and is one that is as accomplished as ever while being among the most diverse and connected to the state. More than 55 percent of the incoming corps members identify as people of color or come from low-income backgrounds, 27 percent were the first in their family to graduate college, and more than one-third were raised or attended college in the region. Known for its high admissions standards, Teach For America admitted 15 percent of national applicants this year, and the incoming national corps earned an average GPA of 3.4.

The incoming Twin Cities corps also features a record percentage of professionals and teachers with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) backgrounds. STEM teaching positions are among the hardest for Minnesota schools to fill, as the state is facing a teacher shortage due to teachers leaving the area and retirements. Also evidenced by this year's corps, Teach For America–Twin Cities is committed to addressing the diversity gap that leaves many children of color without role models who share their backgrounds. In Minneapolis, just 16 percent of teachers identify as people of color, as opposed to 66 percent of students.

“All teachers are important role models, but those who share their students’ background can have a profound impact on their lives,” said Anil Hurkadli, executive director of Teach For America–Twin Cities. “That is why we enlist the country’s top talent—whether they share the backgrounds of students or come from backgrounds of privilege—to fill the need for teachers in under-resourced schools and to advocate for systemic change.”

Corps member Peter Simonse brings over 30 years of experience in engineering and finance to his role as a physical sciences teacher at Roosevelt High School in southern Minneapolis. After traveling the world as a finance manager with Amoco Corporation, Simonse worked the last 15 years as the vice president and treasurer at Land O’Lakes. He retired upon acceptance into the Teach For America corps.

“I feel it’s important for people to think about how they can give back to the community,” Simonse said. “In Minnesota, specifically, we have one of the worst educational opportunity gaps in the country and are at a pivotal moment for community members to come together to create change. Clearly, we need to focus additional attention on students of color and students with lower socioeconomic backgrounds to provide them the best education possible and as much opportunity to succeed as we can.”

The incoming teachers will join more than 30 returning second-year corps members and more than 600 Teach For America alumni from across the country who now call Minnesota home. Education is the most popular career sector among alumni in the region, with roughly 30 percent still teaching K-12 or working in a school, and another 30 percent in broader education-related roles such as higher education, nonprofit advocacy programs, or policy roles.

Ann Johnson has mentored Teach For America corps members in Atlanta, Charlotte, and Minneapolis for the past 10 years, and will be the charter school director at Bright Water Elementary this fall. In teaching for 30 years, Johnson was drawn to mentoring corps members due to their drive to become excellent teachers, work ethic, and commitment to social justice.

“In Minnesota, many of our students are hurting, and we don’t have a lot of time to help them,” Johnson said. “When I observe a corps member and I share with them how to do better, the next day I see the work and I see the kids responding. The corps members always ask how they can do more, how they can continue to get better. They understand that you can’t blame families or income or special needs or anxiety or trauma for performance. Kids with those issues still do amazing things with the right support. That’s why we work so hard to make exceptional teachers.”

Teach For America–Twin Cities 2015 corps members are a part of the Alternative Pathway to Teaching Program: University of Minnesota–Teach For America Partnership, the state’s first alternative teacher certification program. Prior to this school year, corps members attended a nine-week residency at the university and co-taught for six weeks at schools in the Northside Achievement Zone. They will continue to pursue university coursework and receive mentoring and professional development for the next two years.

National Overview

Teach For America has become an important partner in the national effort to ensure that every child has access to an excellent and equitable education. The organization recruits top college graduates and professionals; prepares them to teach in urban and rural public schools, where they work for at least two years alongside other faculty to make a meaningful difference for their students; and develops them as leaders in education and other fields who are committed to ensuring that our country lives up to its highest ideals for every child.

Teach For America corps members go through the same hiring process and are paid in the same way as other new teachers. Most corps members also receive an AmeriCorps education award, which can be used to repay student loans or certification costs, or to pay for further education costs. Additionally, through AmeriCorps, corps members can put qualified loans into forbearance while teaching.

Nationwide, Teach For America will mark its first quarter-century this fall with a diverse community of 50,000 leaders committed to expanding opportunities for students and addressing the systemic barriers to educational equity. A total of 8,800 Teach For America corps members will be teaching in 52 urban

and rural regions while more than 42,000 alumni of the program are working from an array of sectors to ensure that all children have an equal chance in life.

Among new Teach For America corps members, nearly half identify as people of color (compared with less than 20 percent of teachers nationwide); 47 percent come from low-income backgrounds; 34 percent are the first in their family to graduate from college; one-third applied as professionals or graduate students; more than 20 percent have backgrounds in science, technology, engineering, or math; and almost 20 percent will be teaching in the region where they grew up. The national corps includes graduates of nearly 830 colleges and universities across the country.

About Teach For America

Teach For America works in partnership with communities to expand educational opportunity for children facing the challenges of poverty. Founded in 1990, Teach For America recruits and develops a diverse corps of outstanding college graduates and professionals to make an initial two-year commitment to teach in high-need schools and become lifelong leaders in the effort to end educational inequity. This fall, 8,800 corps members will be teaching in 52 urban and rural regions across the country while more than 42,000 alumni work across sectors to ensure that all children have access to an excellent education. Teach For America is a proud member of the AmeriCorps national service network.

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