

For Immediate Release

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Learning Forward and NCTAF Name 12 Finalist Teams in Agents for Learning Challenge

Twelve states represented; finalists to convene in Chicago to present plans detailing ESSA-ready professional learning strategies to panel of educators and experts

WASHINGTON – June 23, 2016 – Learning Forward and the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) today announced 12 finalists in its [Agents for Learning](#) challenge, a nationwide call to action designed to engage educator teams in advocating for the best use of federal funding for professional learning under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The 12 teams — representing 56 teachers, administrators, and learning leaders from 12 different states — proposed plans that described a comprehensive vision for effective professional learning for their states, identified needs that exist and strategies to address them, and outlined roles and responsibilities for states, districts, and individual educators to achieve their visions. In addition, the plans discussed how educators would advise states and districts to use Title II funding to address critical needs of teachers and directly impact student learning outcomes.

The finalists will travel to Chicago July 21-22, where each team will present its plan to a panel of judges and a moderator:

- **Virginia Edwards**, Editor-in-Chief and CEO of *Education Week* (moderator);
- **Stephanie Banchemo**, Program Director for the Education Program, Joyce Foundation;
- **Jahana Hayes**, 2016 National Teacher of the Year;
- **Chris Minnich**, Executive Director, CCSSO;
- **Rachel Wise**, Chair, Nebraska Board of Education, NASBE.

“We’re so grateful to all of the educators who participated in the challenge. We were proud to offer an opportunity to amplify teachers’ voices in advocating for the professional learning that will make a difference for educators and students,” said Stephanie Hirsh, executive director of Learning Forward. “States tell us they are looking for ways to capture stakeholder input, and the creative and bold ideas in the applications show how much these engaged educators have to offer as we enter the implementation phase of ESSA. I can’t wait to learn more from them during our time in Chicago,” continued Hirsh.

Before presenting their plans, teams will have time to engage in learning and coaching to refine their plans and build skills in advocating with policymakers. Learning Forward and NCTAF will webcast the presentations and disseminate the finalists’ plans on the Learning Forward website to serve as models for educators around the country. Prizes and recognitions will be awarded to finalists by [sponsors](#) of the challenge.

As states and districts work to develop comprehensive plans to implement ESSA, Learning Forward and NCTAF believe it is critical that teachers' expertise, experiences, and input are heard. "As one of our finalist teams noted, 'teachers are an untapped resource to reform professional development,' and through this challenge we are incorporating the expertise of our nation's educators into the broader policy conversation," said Melinda George, president of NCTAF. "The plans submitted by these teachers make it crystal clear that great teaching for all students will only happen when teacher voice is included at every level – school, district, state and national. Including their insight into what works for students, themselves and their colleagues makes the difference in successfully transforming teaching and learning."

Visit [Agents for Learning](#) for more information on the challenge. For additional information or questions, or to request interviews or credentials to cover the event in Chicago, please reach out to the media contacts listed or send an email to teacheragencycompetition@learningforward.org.

For team member names, school affiliations, and city/state of school, see chart beginning next page.

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About Learning Forward

Learning Forward is a nonprofit, international membership association of learning educators committed to one vision in K–12 education: Excellent teaching and learning every day. To realize that vision Learning Forward pursues its mission to build the capacity of leaders to establish and sustain highly effective professional learning. Learning Forward supports its members and the field through services, learning opportunities, networks, and publications focused exclusively on what it takes to meaningfully build the capacity of K-12 educators to meet the needs of all students. Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning, adopted in more than 35 states, define the essential elements of professional learning that leads to changed educator practices and improved outcomes for students. Information about membership, services, and products is available from <http://learningforward.org>.

About The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF)

The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1994 as a bipartisan effort to engage education policymakers and practitioners to address the entrenched national challenge of recruiting, developing, and retaining great teachers in order to ensure that all students have access to quality teaching in schools organized for success. For 20 years, NCTAF has worked to drive and inform the national dialogue about the importance of great teaching, especially in hard-to-staff schools. NCTAF's research and recommendations inform innovations and improvements in teaching quality nationwide, focus attention on the importance of equitable distribution and retention of teachers, and promote promising practices for the development of teachers' skills and career pathways. For more information, visit www.nctaf.org. Follow NCTAF on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and subscribe to NCTAF's [News Digest](#).

<u>TEAM MEMBERS</u>	<u>SCHOOL/AFFILIATION</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>
Trey Ferguson Cassie Reding Carly Baldwin Natalie Coleman Debbie Hickerson	Leesville Road High School Stevenson Elementary Boyd County High School Shafer Middle School Cason Lane Academy	Raleigh, NC Russellville, KY Ashland, KY Gallatin, TN Murfreesboro, TN
Kelley Cusmano Sarah Giddings Heather Gauck Matt McCullough	Rochester High School Washtenaw Alliance for Virtual Education Grand Rapids Public Schools Schoolcraft Community Schools	Rochester, MI Ypsilanti, MI Grand Rapids, MI Schoolcraft, MI
Clara Carroll Nancy Fancyboy Lori Martin Leslie Sharp Deb Walter	Harding University Beebe School District Otter Creek Elementary Carnall Elementary School Rogers New Tech High School	Searcy, AR Beebe, AR Little Rock, AR Fort Smith, AR Rogers, AR
Rebecca Wattleworth Jennifer Smith Jacob Carlson Virginia Valdez Joseph Fatheree	Warrensburg-Latham High School Monticello Middle School Civic Memorial High School Minnie Mars Jamieson Elementary School Effingham High School	Warrensburg, IL Monticello, IL Bethalto, IL Chicago, IL Effingham, IL
Christina Jusino Jennifer Langdon Desiree Darling Emily Banta Tuyet Dinh Michael Macchi Alicia Serafin	Spark Academy Hurley K-8 School Spark Academy Lawrence Family Development Charter School Mather Elementary Phineas Bates Elementary Whittier Elementary School	Lawrence, MA Boston, MA Lawrence, MA Lawrence, MA Dorchester, MA Roslindale, MA Everett, MA
Cheryl Corpus Gina Wilson Tina Harma Carrie Mattern	Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning Early College Alliance @ EMU Kent Lake Elementary Carman-Ainsworth High School	Mount Pleasant, MI Ypsilanti, MI South Lyon, MI Flint, MI
Steven Fouts Lani Luo Gabrielle Pike Lynn Osborne-Simmons DeJernet Farder	Douglass Academy Howe School of Excellence Burr Elementary Curie Metropolitan High School Morton School of Excellence	Chicago, IL Chicago, IL Chicago, IL Chicago, IL Chicago, IL

<p>Ashley Karlsson Amy Fettig Susan Boen</p>	<p>Washburn High School Ubah Medical Academy Washburn High School</p>	<p>Minneapolis, MN Hopkins, MN Minneapolis, MN</p>
<p>Maureen Torrez Laura Burns Kimberly Chavkin Moreno Andrea Quintana</p>	<p>La Mesa Elementary School Kirtland Elementary School George I Sánchez Collaborative Community School George I Sánchez Collaborative Community School</p>	<p>Albuquerque, NM Albuquerque, NM Albuquerque, NM Albuquerque, NM</p>
<p>Stephen Rountree Sonia Matthew Kisha Dorch Rodney Lewis II Julie Hughey</p>	<p>Frederick Douglas High School High Bridge Elementary School Frederick Douglas High School Barack Obama Elementary School Prince George's County Public Schools</p>	<p>Upper Marlboro, MD Bowie, MD Upper Marlboro, MD Upper Marlboro, MD Upper Marlboro, MD</p>
<p>Daniel Chu Christopher Nielsen Michael Lubing Miyilyn Parra-Innocent</p>	<p>Murray Hill Academy Murray Hill Academy Murray Hill Academy Murray Hill Academy</p>	<p>New York, NY New York, NY New York, NY New York, NY</p>
<p>Shelly Moore Krajacic Amy Mizialko Ingrid Walker-Henry Chauna Perry Finch Heather Sattler</p>	<p>National Education Association Milwaukee Teachers Education Association Milwaukee Teachers Education Association Milwaukee Teachers Education Association Milwaukee Teachers Education Association</p>	<p>Madison, WI Milwaukee, WI Milwaukee, WI Milwaukee, WI Milwaukee, WI</p>