Teach For America Honored with 2010 ECS Chair’s Award

As the 2008-10 Chair of the Education Commission of the States (ECS), Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty recognizes Teach For America for outstanding service to education with the 2010 ECS Chair’s Award. The award will be presented to Teach For America at the ECS National Forum on Education Policy in Portland, Oregon on August 18.

“As we face the challenges of a hypercompetitive global economy, educational institutions need comprehensive and flexible strategies to recruit the best talent possible for the classroom,” Governor Pawlenty said. “Teach for America corps members have a proven record of success and they bring new energy and leadership to the challenge of improving academic achievement for students in low-income communities.”

Teach For America’s (TFA) mission is to eliminate educational inequity — that where a child is born determines the quality of his or her education and life prospects. Each year, TFA recruits outstanding recent college graduates from all backgrounds and career interests to commit to teach for two years in one of 39 urban and rural public schools across the country. TFA provides the intensive training and ongoing support necessary to ensure their teachers’ success in low-income communities. In several states, including Minnesota this year, TFA has campaigned for strong alternative pathways to teacher licensure.

The teachers, called corps members, are placed in regions with the most profound gaps in educational outcomes. Roughly 80% of their students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and more than 90% are African-American or Latino.

During their time with TFA, teachers develop a deeper understanding of their students’ challenges and the experience compels them to take personal responsibility for solving inequities in education. TFA’s 20,000 alumni assume leadership roles in all levels of the school system and every professional sector, addressing the challenges facing children growing up in low-income communities, building the capacity of schools and districts, and changing the
prevailing ideology through their examples and advocacy.

Corps members are having a positive impact on student achievement across subject areas and grade levels, from pre-Kindergarten to high school. In the 2010-11 school year, more than 8,200 teachers will impact the lives of nearly a half million children around the country.

Roger Sampson, ECS President, states, “ECS is proud to join Governor Tim Pawlenty in honoring Teach For America’s longstanding commitment to ensuring every student has a quality teacher.”

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ECS is the only nationwide, nonpartisan interstate compact devoted to education. ECS helps governors, legislators, state education officials and others identify, develop and implement public policies to improve student learning at all levels. A nonprofit organization, ECS was formed in 1965 and is located in Denver, Colorado.

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