ABOUT TEACHING AS LEADERSHIP

At Teach For America, we have trained and supported almost twenty thousand teachers working with nearly 3 million children living at or near the poverty line. The vast majority of our students are African American or Latino students who are performing well below their peers in higher-income neighborhoods.

Our mission is to end educational inequity, to end the travesty that, in our country, *where* a child is born determines his or her educational outcomes and life prospects. We therefore seek success on the same terms—measurable academic achievement— that define the disparities between children in low-income communities and their counterparts in higher-income communities. We have seen that significant academic achievement is uniquely powerful in expanding life opportunities for our students.

By gathering and evaluating data on student achievement from thousands of classrooms, we are able to learn about the distinguishing methods of teachers whose students are demonstrating dramatic academic achievement.

When we put all this information about what teachers do, know, and believe alongside what we know about how much their students are learning, we see common patterns in the approach of the most effective teachers. We see highly effective teachers embodying the same principles employed by successful leaders in any challenging context—principles we call Teaching As Leadership.

Distilled to their essence, our findings indicate that six general principles distinguish the actions of highly effective teachers from those who are merely solid or struggling— principles one would find embodied by any successful leader in any challenging context. These are teachers who:

- **Set big goals** that are ambitious, measurable, and meaningful for their students
- **Invest students and their families** through a variety of strategies to work hard to reach those ambitious goals
- **Plan purposefully** by focusing on where students are headed, how success will be defined, and what path to students' growth is most efficient
- **Execute effectively** by monitoring progress and adjusting course to ensure that every action contributes to student learning
- **Continually increase effectiveness** by reflecting critically on their progress, identifying root causes of problems, and implementing solutions
- **Work relentlessly** in light of their conviction that they have the power to work past obstacles for student learning