MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Janet Barresi

DATE: March 25, 2014

SUBJECT: Teach For America – Oklahoma Annual Report

Teach For America will present the 2013-2014 Oklahoma Annual Review.

JCB/ey

Attachments
I come from a low-income background. Growing up, I never thought that I could become the first-generation college student that I did. Now, I am humbled to stand up for children like me each day. And I am inspired by those standing with me:

Our corps members, who have traveled from across the country to dedicate their time and talents to Oklahoma's children.

Our partner school districts and fellow teachers, who constantly push forward in an important environment that demands more from them each day.

Our alumni, who lead schools, school systems, nonprofits, and—in real majority—classrooms towards change.

Our staff, non-stop problem-solvers devoted in making sure we improve daily so that students continue to learn.

Our board, supporters, and community partners, a tremendous group of people who give their time and resources to help us ensure that all kids in Oklahoma get an excellent education.

But most of all I am awe of the students themselves. The challenges of poverty are tremendous—transportation issues, lack of resources, prevailing ideology that tells them all the things they “can’t do.” Despite the obstacles, our students come to school, ask thought-provoking questions, dive into great literary works, and apply what they learn to real-world situations. They not only engage with rigorous content, they thrive in it and defy every expectation.

In partnership with our students, we continue in light to change entire classrooms, which will in turn transform whole schools—schools that will provide students, without exception, an outstanding education and create healthy, vibrant communities.

The beginning of our fifth school year in Oklahoma inspires me inspired by what we have accomplished, encouraged by what's possible in years to come, and saddled by the work we still have to do. I believe that together and in our lifetimes, we will provide excellent educational opportunities to all of our children. In this annual review you will learn more about our accomplishments, approaches, and future aspirations. Thank you for your partnership, dedication, and inspiration.

In solidarity,

Lance Tuckett
Executive Director
Teach for America—Oklahoma

Teach For America • Oklahoma

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Becoming A Corps Member

CORPS MEMBER TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

100+ Hours

Before corps members ever arrive in Oklahoma, they spend time learning about comfort pedagogy, class, race, and our local communities.

8 Weeks

Of on-theground training begins when nine members settle in Oklahoma, including:

500+ HOURS

Of development aligned to our teaching.

Leadership training includes teaching summer school students in Oklahoma, and engaging with the communities where they will teach.

Ongoing Support

Corps members continue on additional:

100+ HOURS

Of tailored professional development each year during their first and second year of teaching, plus they have:

24/7 ACCESS

To their MLTLs for support and guidance.

24/7 ACCESS

To TFA's online corps-member support system—where members can ask questions, exchange ideas, and connect with specific skill groups.

The Most Promising Leaders

Ahou Ahoou knows what it’s like to lose a loved example. Growing up, her immigrant parents worked seven days a week to provide a better life for her family. And when they moved Ahou to Plains Public School in eighth grade, she quickly realized she was far behind her classmates.

But Ahou also knew how to persevere. Through hard work she caught up, made it out through college, and joined TFA to teach at Clinton Middle School in east Tulsa. Today, she oversees TFA’s recruitment efforts within Oklahoma.

In the seven-month TFA application window, Ahou will hold 120 information sessions for more than 1,000 students, conduct 400 one-on-one prospective meetings, and send more than 3,000 emails. All of Ahou’s intensive recruitment efforts will likely result in at least 60 recruits who meet our selective admissions criteria and are committed to changing things for kids.

“My charge is to find individuals from Oklahoma’s colleges and universities who possess a unique set of leadership attributes that we believe correlate to success in the classroom,” says Ahou.

She will speak to prospective about the challenges facing our education system and our children, and the potential that exists to overcome them—a potential she knows as well. She will look for attributes that include a proven record of achievement, grit in the face of obstacles, and organizational and critical thinking skills.

Ahou will also look for men and women with diverse backgrounds, particularly those who share her upbringing. Her experiences have taught her that firsthand experience make an ideal role model for students and a great champion for Teach For America.

Selecting for Success

In 2013, TFA had 57,000 applicants, 14% admitted to the corps. 180 selected to teach with Teach For America in Oklahoma.

In 2011 and 2012, TFA was ranked as one of the top 10 toughest job interviews (across all sectors) by Glassdoor.com.

Institute: A Veteran’s Viewpoint

“I have been a schoolteacher for 10 years, but this summer was the first time I've had the honor of working so closely with Teach For America at the summer institute in Tulsa. Universally, the corps members I met were passionate, positive, and dedicated. They went out of the way to make a connection with their students' families. Their students told me they had a voice.

This was in part due to the way TFA prepared their corps members. Corps members learned from day one that the more prepared they were, the more successful and productive their day would be. They were very open to new ideas and techniques to improve their lessons, and we always kept the lines of communication open via daily feedback meetings after school.

There is an old saying: It takes a village to raise a child. TFA takes this axiom to heart. They realize teaching is more than their curriculum and classroom. It takes loving each student, reaching out to families, and community involvement to nurture a child’s life, leading to a lifelong love for learning.

I teach at a school that receives no federal funds and has very few students of color. Institute connected me with a desire to do more, wherever necessary, to reach students from all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.”

—Michael Skelton is a library media specialist at Carnegie Elementary School in Tulsa. He is one of 500 veteran educators who advise and provide coaching and feedback to incoming corps members and who also receive professional development from TFA during the summer institute.

Perpetual Preparation

After up to nine weeks and more than 300 hours of intensive summer training, teaching, and networking, our corps members find themselves in the full time front of a classroom of their own. But they aren’t alone.

Enter Foluke Okumura, one of our 12 managers of teacher leadership development. It’s a big title, and an equally big job. HTLDs are veteran educators who newer educate mentor, and coach corps members—developing them into schools leaders and preparing them to support their students, the knowledge and skills necessary to access the college or career of their choice.

HTLDs are available morning, noon, and night for the 300+ corps members they each support. The hardest part of their job is trying to balance it in their lives, but for HTLDs—who were also successful at teaching children growing up in poverty—It’s a labor of love.

Every week, the HTLDs come together to identify trends in classrooms and student data. They design training sessions to address those trends. Corps members commit about one evening every week to attend the resulting professional development workshops, which cover subjects such as designing engaging and rigorous lessons, partnering with families, managing student behavior, and diversity and inclusion. Corps members also join monthly content and gradelevel meetings and all-day professional development workshops led by TFA staff. In total, corps members spend more than 100 hours on TFA-led professional development during the school year to further ensure their success as teachers and to deepen their long-term commitment to ending educational inequality.
Teaching As Leadership

Individuals who join TFA receive intensive training and support based on the Teaching As Leadership framework, designed to build mind-sets, knowledge, and skills essential for highly effective teachers in high-need communities. These corps members' reflections demonstrate the key principles of leadership they learn:

Set Big Goals

Before school began, Matthew Craig (Oklahoma ’11) set the following goal for his students:

“At the end of the year, 100 percent of my students will pass the Oklahoma End of Instruction Exam for Algebra I with a score of proficient or advanced.”

But he soon realized that goal was pretty lofty. Most of his students were academically far behind. Many hadn’t had a math teacher through the entirety of middle school. In spite of these challenges, he was determined. Not only was passing the exam a requirement for graduation, but succeeding in algebra would open the door to more challenging math courses in high school and broader college and career options after graduation.

During the 2010-11 school year, before any corps members arrived, the Algebra I school pass rate was 41 percent. At the end of the 2013-14 school year, this increased to 87 percent. And 100 percent of Mr. Craig’s students scored proficient and nearly half scored at the advanced level.

Invest in Students & Their Families

“Students come to the classroom with a history that explains them, perplexes them, and unfortunately sometimes inhibits them from achieving their true potential. Success is not held only by the teacher. Success comes from a broad coalition of people understanding and investing in our students, their lives, and their communities.

TFA instilled in me the ideology of working alongside families and communities. By the end of the year, thanks to them, my students changed dramatically. My students grew more than 65 percent in mastery of both reading and math content. These were huge gains for a single year and couldn’t have been accomplished without the dedication of the students and their families.”

— Wendy Zavala (Oklahoma ’12), Stand Watie Elementary School, Oklahoma City

Plan Purposefully

“My four-year-old students were academically behind, particularly in language and vocabulary. Rather than words, my students relied on gestures and physical outbreaks to communicate. In response, I planned a series of intensive lessons that taught my students to conceptualize their classmates as family members and connect their thoughts into productive communication. Now at closing circle each day, students nominate peers whose actions embody family values and use their increasingly sophisticated vocabulary to communicate.

The level of intensity of planning inside a pre-K classroom is far beyond what most would expect. I thought strategically about how to infuse carefully selected and increasingly sophisticated words into planned interactions that would engage students and provoke their thinking. Each element of the classroom is a connection to the world, and how I make those connections in every moment of the day requires immense preparation.”

— Ashley Roper (Oklahoma ’12), Martin Luther King Elementary, Oklahoma City

Continually Increase Effectiveness

“When we began, only one of my 25 second graders tested on grade level and behavior seemed to be a tremendous obstacle to overcome. However, in a single quarter, my students achieved 9 years of growth. Four of my students made half of a year’s worth of reading growth in a single month.

One of the keys to this growth was continually—tally—reflecting on my practice and identifying specific actions I could take to drive measurable student achievement. When I needed support identifying the change I needed to make, I videotaped myself teaching and sought feedback from fellow teachers and my coach. I assessed my students weekly and dove into the data to determine what each individual student needed. Our goals were so big and the stakes so high we couldn’t afford to waste a single minute. My students and I challenged each other to work harder, longer, and more efficiently every day.”

— Angeline Molina (Oklahoma ’12), Bixby Elementary School, Oklahoma City

Work Relentlessly

“Each day after athletics practice, I arrived students from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. For the first semester, we focused mostly on doing schoolwork and studying for end-of-year exams. In the spring, we transitioned to applications for college and scholarships. Twenty-three of my students went directly to college after high school. Of them, 21 are now in their second year of college. Statistically, if they make it through this year they will most likely finish college. While I care about end-of-year exam scores, I also care about life-changing events. Working relentlessly means doing whatever it takes to convince students they are worth their dreams.”

— Sarah Peterson (Oklahoma ’11), currently teaching at Nathan Hale High School, Tulsa

DURING THE 2012-13 SCHOOL YEAR, ON AVERAGE, STUDENTS IN OUR CORPS MEMBERS’ CLASSROOMS GREW 14 YEARS IN ONE ACADEMIC YEAR.
Lighting the Path to College

In 2012, Lighthouse Academies (LHA)—already a successful charter network serving low-income communities in other states—partnered with our community to start a school in the heart of north Tulsa. They opened their doors on day one to kids from pre-K through fifth grade, but will ultimately grow to accommodate middle and high school students as well.

To find a principal for their new school, LHA called home Jammia McArthur. Jammia grew up in Catoosa and Norman and earned her B.A. from the University of Oklahoma. In 2005, she joined TFA and moved to Los Angeles where she taught elementary school for four years in south Los Angeles before joining the Mayor's Partnership of Los Angeles to mentor teachers in curriculum and classroom management. After, Jammia worked as a math intervention specialist, instructional support director, and later as an assistant principal with KIPP LA. When LHA presented her with the opportunity, she was excited to come home.

A fellow alum, Mary Jean O'Keeffe (Oklahoma Corps '01) helped ready the way, leading a team of TFA alumni to develop the original charter for the school, recruit students, and establish partnerships with organizations including the Arts & Humanities Council and the Dream Center. “It was such an exciting time to come back to Oklahoma,” says Jammia. “As a Constantinos scholarship for second-year Fulbright education, for all students, opening the school to any Tulsa student was an opportunity to show what TFA students are made of — how resilient they are.”

As excited and optimistic as she was, Jammia says she was shocked at how far behind her Tulsa students were. Jammia and her team of 15 inaugural teachers—more than half of whom were TFA alumni—created individualized instruction focused on college readiness, encouraged parental involvement, and instituted extended school days. In their first year, LHA's fourth graders nearly 2.5 years in reading. Some children grew 11 reading levels in one year. On end-of-year exams, 70 to 80 percent of LHA students scored proficient or advanced on their state tests—results on par with Tulsa's top elementary schools.

Jammia says the many TFA connections at the school help make it so successful. “Being a part of Teach For America brings a dedication and understanding that children can and will succeed,” says Jammia. “We don’t see students as failures. We don’t see students as failures. We’re seeing opportunities.”

And the team is constantly working to improve. Every week, LHA's director of instruction sits down with every teacher to look at each individual student’s progress, scores, and personal and academic growth. They use that information to better instruction for each student. Parents are kept informed weekly as part of the school's “home partnership” approach to teaching. There are no shortcuts or magic. It’s a tremendous amount of hard work, transparency, and a “whatever it takes” attitude within every staff member that makes the model work.

LHA now has a waiting list of nearly 300 kids. If the success they’ve achieved thus far is any indication, many years of LHA students will be on an excellent path to a college and career of their choice.

Financial Year-In-Review (October 1, 2012 – May 31, 2013)*

**REVENUE**

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**EXPENSES**

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Rolled over towards FY14 Development Goal: $145,201

*Teach For America changed its fiscal year from September 30 to May 31 in response to student performance. This is a shortened fiscal year for FY13.
A group of local leaders worked to bring TFA to Tulsa. We launch with nearly 80 corps members and five staff members. Lauren Tackett, a TFA alum, is named executive director of the region. Our corps members teach nearly 6,000 students in 22 Tulsa Public Schools and Community Action Project pilot sites in our first year. 16 alumni from other regions are already living in Oklahoma.

We nearly double in size to 150 corps members who teach nearly 10,000 students. 39 alumni now live in the region.

With the arrival of nearly 50 corps members in Oklahoma City, Teach For America · Tulsa becomes Teach For America · Oklahoma. We now have 208 corps members teaching more than 19,000 students.

TFA receives The Recruiters’ Reboot Award from the Tulsa Regional Chamber, which recognizes an organization that positively represents Tulsa to college and university students. The Metropolitan Tulsa Urban League honors TFA with the Philanthropic (Giving) Award for Educational Impact, awarded to an individual or organization whose activities have helped reduce the opportunity gap in education. 70 alumni are working in the region.

We have 208 corps members teaching more than 19,000 students. 116 alumni live in the region.

Executive Director Lane Tackett is named one of "Oklahoma's 40 Under 40" by the Tulsa Business Journal. Our first national summer institute is conducted, bringing more than 100 corps and staff members from across the country to Tulsa to provide, for the first time, free and comprehensive summer school to more than 3,000 students in pre-K through 12th grade.

Nearly 340 corps members teach more than 22,000 students. 185 alumni live in the region.

Tulsa hosts TFA's 2013 National Growth, Development, and Partnerships conference, upholding Tulsa as a model of strong community participation.

Our second annual summer institute reaches 4,000 students, an increase of more than 1,000 students from the previous year. We are excited to announce the launch of an expansion effort that will take us into new communities in Oklahoma and, in just three years, allow us to grow from a corps of 340 to 500. At that size, we will reach 54,000 students annually.

Looking Forward

34,000 in 3

2014

2015

2016

34,000

32,825

34,320

Over the past two years, we have partnered with Tulsa Public Schools, the Community Action Project, and the University of Tulsa to counter this trend by providing free summer school to between 5,000 and 4,000 Tulsa students. Beginning next summer, we will expand our summer program to Oklahoma City and teach more than 6,000 students. Local non-TFA veteran teachers and new corps members will have even more opportunity for meaningful professional development to carry into their schools in the fall. Nearly 200 veteran teachers statewide will be hired to serve as coaches and mentors over the summer program. Even more will take on roles as school directors and curriculum specialists, accelerating their development as educational leaders.

Who understand the complexities of providing an exceptional education to students on a larger scale.

Corp Members Outside of Tulsa & Oklahoma City

2014-15

50

2015-16

116

2014-17

134

Coral Pink

Coral Pink

Coral Pink
Corporate Donors

Thank you to Teach For America’s FY13 Oklahoma Corporate Donors

Benefactor $70,000 – $24,999
Boeing
JCPenny Company
McFay Manufacturing

Sponsor $5,000 – $9,999
First Creek Bank
Upstairs Resources

Friend $1,000 – $4,999
Accel Financial Staffing Solutions
American Residential Group
WRX Energy, Inc.

Champion $50,000 – $49,999
AT&T
Walton Family Foundation
Williams Foundation

Leader $25,000 – $49,999
Bank of Oklahoma
FW Murphy
JPMorgan Chase Foundation

Stakeholder $10,000 – $24,999
Cobb Energy
Devon Energy
E. O. & Helen George Foundation
Oklahoma Gas & Electric

What strikes me about Teach For America is the sense of urgency they place on solving critical challenges in our education system. They constantly evaluate where and how they can make the greatest impact and move quickly and with great intent to make it happen. Just look at their growth in Oklahoma in four short years. Lance Tackett has brought tremendous leadership to the Oklahoma region and is bringing together a coalition of community leaders, policymakers, and educators who have the will and the ability to enact change, and our children are better for it.

– Robert J. Ross, CEO, Inasmuch Foundation

Foundation Donors

Thank you to Teach For America’s FY13 Oklahoma Foundation Donors

Benefactor $10,000 – $24,999
Benjamin Franklin Family Foundation
Ford Family Foundation
John Stewne Zink Foundation
Kerr Foundation
Kirkpatrick Family Foundation
Mervin Bovard Foundation

Sponsor $5,000 – $9,999
American Fidelity Foundation
Ethics & Excellence in Journalism Foundation
Fred Jones Family Foundation
McLaughlin Family Foundation

Champion $50,000 – $99,999
Annie & Henry Zarrow Foundation
Anschutz Foundation
Ruth & David Levine Charitable Fund

Leader $25,000 – $49,999
Judith & Jean Pope Adams Foundation
Sharie & Irvin Frank Foundation

Lead Growth Investor $1 Million and Above
Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation
George Kaiser Family Foundation
Kaiser Foundation
Kirkpatrick Family Foundation
Inasmuch Foundation
Individual, District, and Partner Donors

Thank You to Teach For America's FY13 Individual, District, and Partner Donors

Stakeholder $100,000 - $499,999
Oklahoma Community Service Commission

Champion $50,000 - $99,999
David Hudiburg

Benefactor $10,000 - $24,999
Nancy Payne Ellis
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce
Sanjay & Julie Mashi
John & Jenny Meyer

Sponsor A Teacher $5,000 - $9,999
James & Natasha Bennett
Pete & Karen Delaney
Smart & Mary Kay Diselma
David & Donna Epton
Jim & Christy Everest
Chip & Shannon Fudge
Ken & Janet Lunt

Scott & Janis Lewis
A.H. (Chip) & Sharon McElroy
Parick & Marianne Rooney
Dane & Peggy Tenner
Lyndon & Pam Taylor
Jon & Theda Wetten
Friend $1,000 - $4,999
Ron & Kathy Culley
Derrico & Nicole Del'Osso
Ira Schlesinger

2013-14 District Partners
Community Action Project
KIPP Reach

Oklahoma City Public Schools
Tulsa Lighthouse Charter School
Tulsa Public Schools

Sponsor A Teacher
Sponsor A Teacher donors give $5,000 or more to help TFA recruit, select, train, and support one of our outstanding corps members. These results-oriented philanthropists are matched with an Oklahoma corps member and get a first-hand look at the work their investment facilitates through classroom visits and interactions. To participate, contact Elizabeth McChary at Elizabeth.McChary@teachforamerica.org or 918-836-1141.

Pioneering Pathways
Teach For America-Oklahoma's Pioneering Pathways campaign connects Oklahoma's many influential women with our female teachers and students. Pioneering Pathways sponsors are matched with an Oklahoma corps member and have the opportunity to participate in events that build the leadership and networks of the next generation of Oklahoma's female education leaders and entrepreneurs. To get involved, contact Vellita Cooper at Vellita.Coop@teachforamerica.org or 918-678-2178.

Step Up to STEM
Teach For America is one of the nation's largest suppliers of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) teachers for low-income schools. Step Up to STEM allows STEM-related companies to support the future of the STEM workforce through the recruitment, selection, and development of outstanding STEM teachers in Oklahoma's highest-need schools. To get your company connected, contact Beth Schmidt at Beth.Schmidt@teachforamerica.org or 918-405-3632, x50102.

Donate

Via check
Mail a check payable to "Teach For America" and a letter including the donation amount and region (Oklahoma) to:
Teach For America-Oklahoma
1012 W. Easton St.
Tulsa, OK 74117

Via credit card
Visit www.teachforamerica.org/donate and complete the online donation form, selecting "Regional Operations" and "Oklahoma" as your gift designation.

Where there was once indifference, there is now a small spark of hope at the opportunity that lies before them. This is the ultimate goal of teaching, isn’t it? It isn’t just the test scores, the grades, or the rigor of tasks completed—it is the ability for each student to look beyond his or her individual circumstances and see a future taking shape that is bright and limitless.

- Nate Morris, 2012 Corps Member, Tulsa