

**For Immediate Release
November 30, 2011**

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EDUCATORS 4 EXCELLENCE EXPANDS TO LOS ANGELES TO ELEVATE THE VOICES OF THOUSANDS MORE TEACHERS

*Widely recognized teacher-led organization seeks to elevate teacher profession,
advocate for sound education policies on both coasts*

LOS ANGELES, November 30, 2011 – *Educators 4 Excellence (E4E)*, a teacher-led education organization, today announced the opening of its Los Angeles chapter, offering a much-needed new voice to teachers in the country’s second largest public school system. The organization has tapped Ama Nyamekye, an educator and experienced youth advocate, to lead E4E’s efforts on the west coast as the Executive Director for the E4E-Los Angeles chapter.

Founded in 2010 by two New York teachers, E4E is a group of like-minded educators seeking to change the top-down approach to policy-making that has become all too common in large public school systems. In only one year, E4E has grown into a national 3,500+ strong teacher movement that serves to highlight the issues most important to educators and positively impact their classrooms, professional careers and students. The organization also aims to strengthen the collective power of teachers by elevating their voices in the decision-making process to set and implement sound education policy at the school, district, state and federal levels.

“Any teacher in any district around the country can tell you there is a significant gap between those who make policy and those who must implement those policies in the classroom every day,” said Sydney Morris, Co-Founder and Co-CEO of E4E. “E4E helps to bridge that gap by bringing teachers from various backgrounds, schools and classrooms together to learn about the policies that impact them as educators, network with their peers, unions and key policymakers and take action by advocating for the policies that will ultimately make a difference to support effective teaching and improve student achievement.”

The addition of Ms. Nyamekye, one of E4E’s first Los Angeles members, to the organizational staff will help pave the way for a locally driven effort – developed by and for the teachers of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and surrounding areas. Nyamekye brings to the role a unique understanding of the challenges teachers and their students face each day. She began her career working with incarcerated and court-involved youth and went on to become a public school teacher in the Bronx and Brooklyn, New York. Most recently, Ama worked with the Riordan Foundation to launch a library and literacy initiative serving incarcerated youth and adults in California.

“Teachers are powerful advocates. They understand that lifting student achievement is inextricably tied to lifting the teaching profession and they have the ideas, commitment and experience to improve the state of public education, but they often lack a seat at the table where the decisions are being made,” Nyamekye said. “I am excited to be a part of an organization that places the voices of teachers at the forefront of the policy decisions that shape their classrooms and careers.”

With the Los Angeles expansion, E4E is working with teachers to identify the policy issues that are most relevant and impactful through listening sessions and networking events with educators from across the city.

“I am an E4E member because I want to be the voice of my students,” said Xiomara Roman, an LAUSD teacher in her fourth year. “E4E gives me the microphone to project my students’ potential.”

“United Way is part of a coalition of parents and community-based organizations in Los Angeles who come together to advocate for policies focused on the needs of our students. We are excited to see Educators 4 Excellence bring an equally important voice to the table – the voice of teachers,” said Elise Buik, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Los Angeles.

E4E members see issues of teacher quality, evaluations, pay and incentives, pensions and tenure to be top-of-mind among teachers nationwide, with those issues and others including the expired teachers contract taking center stage in the complex Los Angeles education debate.

“Though there are certainly many nuances, we see real similarities between the challenges New York and Los Angeles teachers face every day in the classroom,” said Evan Stone, Co-Founder and Co-CEO of E4E. “We are finding that teachers across the board are becoming more and more interested in the policy decisions being made about their profession and that they are eager to play a more significant role in shaping their classrooms and their career paths.”

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For far too long, education policy has been created without a critical voice at the table – the voice of classroom teachers. **Educators 4 Excellence (E4E)**, a teacher-led organization, is changing this dynamic by placing the voices of teachers at the forefront of the conversations that shape our classrooms and careers. With a quickly growing national network of over 3,500 educators united by the E4E Declaration of Teachers’ Principles and Beliefs, E4E teachers can learn about education policy and research, network at E4E’s event series with like-minded colleagues and important education policymakers, and take action by advocating for teacher-created policy recommendations that lift student achievement and the teaching profession. For more information, please visit www.educators4excellence.org.