

# Distinctive Schools Announces Updates in Leadership and Unveils Core Priorities in Preparation for 2021-2022 School Year

*Distinctive Schools announces updates in leadership and unveils core priorities to guide the upcoming school year.*

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, USA, June 10, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In preparation for welcoming over 400 new students in the fall, Distinctive Schools announces updates in leadership and unveils [core priorities](#) to guide the upcoming school year. In the 2021-2022 school year, Distinctive Schools will prioritize Mental Health & Wellness, Learning Acceleration and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.



The leaders moving into new roles are Katie O'Connor (Chief Education Officer), Jeff Donoghue (President and Chief Financial Officer), Cassie Williams (Deputy Chief of Education-Michigan), and Jenn Harth (Executive Director of Schools-Chicago).

"As a network committed to culture, we will continue to foster a strong Distinctive culture that provides pathways to roles and opportunities aligned to network needs, and interests and skill sets," shared Scott Frauenheim, Chief Executive Officer at Distinctive Schools. "We look back at where we were before the pandemic, and know that we are coming out of this better together. We are committed to moving forward with and investing in our leaders and staff into the future."

Distinctive Schools is dedicated to educating the whole child through addressing both academic and social-emotional needs, practices embedded into all organizational work. In the 2021-2022 school year, Distinctive Schools will prioritize Mental Health & Wellness, Learning Acceleration and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion across all areas of the organization. We are committed to growth from this global pandemic and being intentional about changing our approaches based on what we have learned during the last 18 months.

“We set these priorities with equity at the forefront of everything we’re doing” shared Frauenheim, “We’re not going back to ‘the way things were’ before the pandemic. This is an opportunity for us to create lasting change, to invest in what we believe in, and to create community hubs, placing schools at the center of communities, to provide services for families to rebuild. We know that our families deserve more than just recovery, we don’t want to just recover or respond, we want to offer opportunities and remove all barriers to learning.”

To support the mental health and wellness of Distinctive Schools staff, students, and families, Distinctive Schools will leverage partnerships to support trauma informed practice and provide training and resources to support equity and response to national and local tragedies and events. Distinctive Schools programming will allow students and families to develop a concrete sense of belonging and community. Distinctive Schools will engage a Director of Clinical Services to support campuses, continue to promote and support restorative justice and social-emotional development, and provide professional development in trauma informed practice.

In partnership with [INTP](#) (formerly The New Teacher Project), Distinctive Schools will focus on learning acceleration. Distinctive Schools teachers and leaders will ready students for new learning rather than focus on items students have failed to master. This innovative learning model, learning acceleration, strengthens practices in backwards planning, addressing learning gaps, providing authentic assessments as well as small group instruction and extra support for students disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Distinctive Schools is committed to creating a culture of action, and actively building anti-racist schools, designing structures to identify, oppose and dismantle racism. Distinctive Schools provides professional learning and support across all areas of the organization and continues to interrogate and dismantle structures, systems and practices. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Design Team will continue to grow and push Distinctive Schools forward with campus and community representation and support. We will continue to hire, recruit and retain staff with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion at all levels of the organization.

For additional information, and partnership opportunities, please visit <https://www.distinctiveschools.org/>.

#### About the Team

Joining our current leadership team across our regions and network, we are excited to celebrate these leaders shifting into new roles and helping us to lead our prioritized efforts this summer and into the future.

#### Katie O'Connor Chief Education Officer

Katie has been named Chief Education Officer, overseeing the strategy, oversight and accountability for our educational work leading alongside and in partnership with our Chief and Senior Leaders. O'Connor has been with Distinctive Schools since 2002 and has held various

roles as a teacher, instructional coach, literacy director and recently our Chief Schools Officer. Katie bring passion, energy and dedication to this work and believes that relationships drive the work. In this newly defined role, O'Connor will oversee all academic, educational and school based leadership along with regional and network leaders.

Jenn Harth Executive Director of Schools-Chicago

Jenn Harth will assume the role of Executive Director of Schools - Chicago. Harth will work alongside Katie O'Connor to lead IL Principals and Schools. After 3 ½ years working to transform our CICS Prairie campus, she has aspirations to continue leading school performance and working specifically with Principals in our IL schools to focus on teaching and learning, school leadership and campus growth plan work. She is also eager to continue focusing on our DEI and innovation goals across Distinctive Schools.

Cassie Williams Deputy Chief of Education-Michigan

After almost two years as Executive Director of Schools-MI Region, Williams has been named the Deputy Chief of Education – MI Region, expanding her leadership from schools and Principals to supporting Distinctive Schools in Michigan and leading the entire MI regional team in partnership with regional and operational leaders. Williams will be responsible for teaching and learning, school performance, Principal leadership and coordination of regional oversight in all areas of our work in partnership with regional and network teams.

Jeff Donoghue President and Chief Financial Officer

Jeff Donoghue has brought incredible perspective and expertise to the growing team and organization, and has already made an impact on Distinctive Schools, strengthening the sustainability of the organization amidst a pandemic. He brings 20 years of public education experience as a strong advocate for ensuring our schools continue to be at the center of healthy communities as hubs of support and excellence. In addition to his financial role, Donoghue's work as President will be focused on prioritizing leadership development within Distinctive Schools, especially investing in Distinctive Schools' ability to respond to the needs of children and communities.

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