

Influential Women Showcases Teresa A. Winters-Strong: Building Trust-Centered School Leadership Through Relationships

ELGIN, IL, UNITED STATES, October 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Executive Director of Elementary Schools for School District U-46 Brings Approximately 28 Years in Education to Principal Coaching, Data-Driven Instruction, and Equity-Focused School Improvement

Elgin, Illinois – Teresa A. Winters-Strong serves as Executive Director of Elementary Schools for School District U-46 in Elgin, where she provides instructional leadership and coaching support to principals across seven elementary schools. Her work focuses on strengthening school leadership through data-driven practices, professional learning communities, and reflective coaching cycles. With nearly 28 years of education experience, she is known for instructional coaching, community outreach, equity-focused school improvement, staff development, and a steady commitment to student success across diverse learning environments. Her specialties include instructional leadership development, principal coaching and professional learning communities, and data-driven instruction and school improvement.



Teresa's leadership centers on a philosophy she calls No Relationship, No Impact. She believes trust-based relationships are essential to student achievement, equity, and school improvement, and that meaningful school change begins with the connections among the people in it. She brings this belief into her daily work with principals, supporting them through coaching, school visits, and instructional leadership. She is also developing this framework further as a keynote speaker and author, with an upcoming book titled No Relationship, No Impact.

Teresa's path into education leadership has been anything but narrow. She began in surgical nursing at the University of Illinois at Chicago before moving into early childhood education at Loyola University, a shift she says strengthened her resilience and sense of purpose. Her early career in early childhood education led her into K-12 public education leadership, where she served as a teacher, differentiated instruction specialist, assistant principal, and principal. She also worked as a career services advisor at Northern Illinois University. Along the way, she served diverse communities, learned Spanish while working in School District U-46, and attended the La Cosecha Conference in Albuquerque to better support a predominantly Hispanic and Latino district. Today she speaks both Spanish and English.

Her education supports that broad experience. Teresa earned a master's degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from Loyola University Chicago and completed additional early childhood training at the Erikson Institute. Her leadership earned her the YWCA Leadership in Education Award in 2022 and recognition as Top Principal in Plainfield in 2020. She has also been invited to deliver a keynote address in Atlanta for the third time, reflecting the growing reach of her message about relationships and leadership.

Teresa's varied experience gives her a perspective few school leaders share. Her time in nursing taught her to stay calm and attentive in demanding settings. Her early childhood training gave her a deep appreciation for how young children learn and how much the earliest school years shape what follows. Her years as a classroom teacher, specialist, and building leader showed her the daily realities of schools at every level. Her work in career services at a university deepened her understanding of where students go after school. Together, these experiences allow her to coach principals with both empathy and practical insight, because she has stood where they stand and understands the pressures they carry.

Teresa attributes her success to starting in the trenches. That hands-on experience gave her a deep understanding of the work and of the people who do it every day. Her sustained passion for serving young people has kept her focused and motivated, and her growth through multiple roles has shaped her into the leader she is today. She also credits mentors who opened doors and helped develop her leadership capacity, including Dr. Barbara Bonner and Superintendent Suzanne Johnson. Their belief in her potential and willingness to give her opportunities to grow showed her the difference one invested leader can make in another person's career. She now tries to offer that same support to the principals she coaches.

The best career advice she has received is to inspire others and give back by investing in future leaders. That advice has guided her toward roles in which she supports principals and builds leadership capacity across schools. It has also shaped her commitment to service beyond the district. She is involved with the Obama Foundation, serves on the Boys & Girls Club North Central Board, and serves as Vice President of the United Negro Scholarship Fund. She is a member of the National Association of Elementary School Principals and NAEYC-related networks, and she has served as an Equity Committee member and PBIS Lead.

Her advice to young women entering education is grounded in that same sense of purpose. She wants them to know that their voices matter and that they can make a real difference in shaping future leaders. She encourages them to stay confident in their purpose even when the path is difficult and to use every opportunity to serve and uplift others. She leads by example. Teresa supports St. Jude, World Vision, and Feeding Starving Children, and she has helped lead district efforts to prepare and send food to communities around the world, showing students and staff what service can look like in practice.

Teresa sees education as a field that is changing quickly. In her view, schools must hear and value every voice as they adapt to new demands. She is committed to showing up ready to help and believes a strong voice can drive change for students, families, and communities. She also sees a clear opportunity for educators to lead with empathy, advocate for equity, and use collaboration and innovation to support the next generation of learners and leaders. These priorities shape how she works with principals, encouraging them to use data thoughtfully while keeping relationships at the heart of their decisions. In her view, numbers can show where students need support, but trust among teachers, families, and school leaders helps that support take hold.

Her core values are relationships, integrity, service, and impact. She describes influential womanhood as confidence rooted in preparation and purpose, and she leads with conviction in conversations, projects, and opportunities. She aims to inspire, influence, and move others to act. Authenticity is central to how she connects with young people. She is transparent and genuine, shares her experiences openly, and builds connections quickly through honesty and empathy. She has said that being an influential woman has changed her life and career direction, and she intentionally builds authentic relationships because she has seen the impact they create.

For younger women, Teresa offers guidance drawn from her own journey. She encourages them to stay true to themselves, to know who they belong to, and to never forget where they come from. She urges them to be courageous, take risks, and commit to lifting others up, starting with themselves. She also recommends a practical habit she values: creating a written vision board and revisiting it daily as a reminder of where they are going and why it matters. In her experience, a clear vision and a strong sense of identity give women the steadiness they need to lead through uncertainty.

Teresa's work with principals reflects the same principles she shares with young women. She believes that leaders grow best when they feel supported, trusted, and challenged in equal measure. Through coaching cycles, professional learning communities, and honest reflection on data, she helps principals strengthen their schools while building cultures in which teachers and students feel known. Her experience as a teacher, specialist, assistant principal, and principal helps her understand the pressures school leaders face and offer support that is both practical and encouraging.

As she continues to lead elementary schools in School District U-46, speak to audiences across the country, and prepare her upcoming book, Teresa remains focused on the belief that guides all of her work. Through her leadership, mentorship, and service, Teresa A. Winters-Strong shows that when educators invest in relationships first, they create the conditions for lasting impact on students, schools, and communities.

Learn More about Teresa A. Winters-Strong:

Through her Influential Women profile: <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/teresa-winters-strong>

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