



# LAURA MEILI NAMED AS LEADING EDUCATORS' FIRST CHIEF IMPACT OFFICER

*6-year leader of organization's design for systemic equity will drive human-centered evolution for a changing reality*

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As school systems across the country face daunting uncertainty and calls to action for racial equity, Leading Educators will bolster program innovation and evaluation efforts with Laura Meili at the helm as the education nonprofit's first Chief Impact Officer. CEO Chong-Hao Fu announced Meili's new role today.

A nationally-recognized leader in the professional learning sector, Leading Educators uniquely specializes in designing scalable support for educators to deepen content knowledge, access collaborative planning and practice, and make equitable instructional choices. The Chief Impact Officer role will strengthen key connections across design, research and development, and multi-faceted evaluation to support lasting improvement in a rapidly changing world. Previously, Meili led six years of groundbreaking, curriculum-based professional learning and distributed leadership design for districts including DC Public Schools and Tulsa Public Schools as the Managing Director of Program Strategy.

Fu shared, "Laura is a tenacious innovator who leads with her heart. Right now, our schools need strong champions, and Laura's lifelong passion for working through ambiguity and complex challenges will push us to provide the support they need to reach new heights. We hold ourselves accountable for impact, and I'm excited about this opportunity, with Laura's leadership, to give partners best-in-class tools and resources to adjust to data in a timely way. Laura has been central to our most important shifts, continually listening with attention to equity to make the work better. She personifies what Leading Educators is about."

Leading Educators' support is evolving to meet the present moment. Reaching racially equitable outcomes requires targeting root conditions, addressing educators' mindsets as well as knowledge, and deeply understanding the complexities of quality instruction. Recognizing this need, Meili guided teammates this spring to form diverse groups that totaled more than 30 designers, instructional leadership coaches, and program strategists to explore and refine high-impact virtual professional learning. As schools plan for re-entry, Leading Educators will offer expanded support for centering racial equity, accelerating student learning in math and ELA with virtual and hybrid learning environments, and addressing the needs of whole children and whole adults due to these efforts.

Meili shares, "Teachers and leaders in systems around the country are getting up and working so, so hard. We need to make sure that we're learning consistently and driving toward work that really changes kids' lives. Impact is not just quantitative data. Quantitative data matters. But so does qualitative data that helps us see what students are experiencing. It's stories, it's evidence. It's looking at artifacts. That's all of the different ways that we can learn about and reflect on the work that we're doing and understand how it's helping serve people."

Meili began her career teaching reading and writing to middle school students on Chicago's South Side. Her early experiences before that—teaching writing and drama workshops in juvenile detention centers, prisons, and mental health facilities—ignited a passion for addressing systemic inequity that was later magnified by structural challenges she saw within the school system. While at Chicago Public Schools, Meili had a unique opportunity to reshape teacher evaluation, later helping to build the teacher leadership infrastructure and learning culture teachers needed to continuously grow in their calling.

She shares, "I was first drawn to Leading Educators because I really struggled as a new teacher leader. I craved the systemic conditions and learning spaces that our work creates to grow in adult leadership. Teachers today have even more to contend with than I did as they navigate both the pandemic and their responsibility to confront and transform racial inequities. They shouldn't have to face this difficult work alone. I believe in the work that we do to connect teachers to learn together, and I know it will continue to make our teachers more supported, our teams more effective, and our schools better for all kids."

In her six years at Leading Educators, Meili has shaped much of the Leading Educators approach. Too often, professional learning is disconnected from the everyday realities of teaching. With Meili's guidance, Leading Educators has developed a niche for working with partners to define a path for systemic change and design meaningful support around teachers, so every student has strong opportunities to learn. Under this framework, a nationally network of visionary school systems has seen sustained growth in student learning, teacher knowledge and practice, and their conditions for instructional improvement. Since joining Leading Educators, Meili's leadership has impacted educational opportunities in more than 20 cities.

Meili reflects, "Our world is experiencing profound change that I hope offers us the opportunity to disrupt and transform inequitable schools. However, there is no blueprint for what's ahead and so we'll need to imagine what transformation looks like together. At Leading Educators, human-centered design is at the core of what we do: we ask questions, listen closely to people, and analyze evidence and research to inform our design. We then translate what we learn from theory into practice so that our work directly meets teachers' real needs. Ultimately, I believe that working toward a vision of equity powered by this cycle of listening, learning, design, and analysis can lead to transformation for all kids."

Meili earned a master of education degree in literacy, language, and culture from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Michigan.

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#### **ABOUT LEADING EDUCATORS**

Leading Educators is reinventing professional development for teachers, igniting the potential for exponential impact in schools and across systems. We exist to ensure school systems have the strategy and tools to become the just and fair environments that every student deserves.

We guide partners to strengthen the conditions for adult learning, such as collaboration time and quality curriculum; build enduring instructional leadership; and establish effective and engaging teaching practice. With better support and by working together, teachers can transform opportunity across schools and communities. [www.leadingeducators.org](http://www.leadingeducators.org)