

Community Impact Case Study FY20

Teach First, London, UK



I. Case Overview

London is a city of about 9m people, with a 14m metro population), and a multicultural center. There are over 3,000 schools serving 1.4m students across the city. In London, education outcomes have improved consistently in the past two decades, with thousands of Teach First alumni playing significant roles in the city's educational progress, particularly in areas such as school leadership, policy, social enterprises, and thought leadership.

Launch Year 2003**Participants** 650**Alumni** 2,000+

6,500 ambassadors have taught in London. Over 1,000 ambassadors are currently working in middle or senior leadership positions in London schools. Other alumni lead influential social enterprises and work at the highest levels of government and education policy.

Student progress

- London's schools have improved dramatically since 2000 and at a faster rate than anywhere else in the country.
- Students from all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds are academically improving in London's schools, and low-income students in the city outperform low-income students outside of the city. Pupils living in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in London are more likely to achieve solid to high marks on the GCSE exam, including English and Maths, than their peers in the nearby southeast region.
- Schools serving low-income pupils in London are more likely to have teachers and school leaders rated 'Outstanding' than elsewhere in the country.

II. Community Story



Historically, England's schools were highly stratified by socioeconomic status. Schools sorted society's low and high-income families. Through the 20th century, less well-off and disadvantaged children in London in particular experienced a lack of resources in their schools and endured corresponding poor outcomes.

More recently, however, stakeholders across government and communities sought to improve London's education system. By 2000, the government made improving education for all children a priority, catalyzing parents, the business community, and others across the city. At the same time, London's immigrant population grew and multiculturalism became a defining characteristic of the city. London made achievement for all students, regardless of socioeconomic or ethnic background, a priority.

One of the drivers of this ongoing effort is the changing economy and world, and the need for students to be competitive, creative, and caring in it. London's fastest-growing industries include the science, construction, engineering, digital, and creative sectors, according to a 2017 report from the Mayor. Social, political, and environmental changes also pose profound uncertainty. The demands on London's youth to develop skills and mindsets to thrive in life are high.

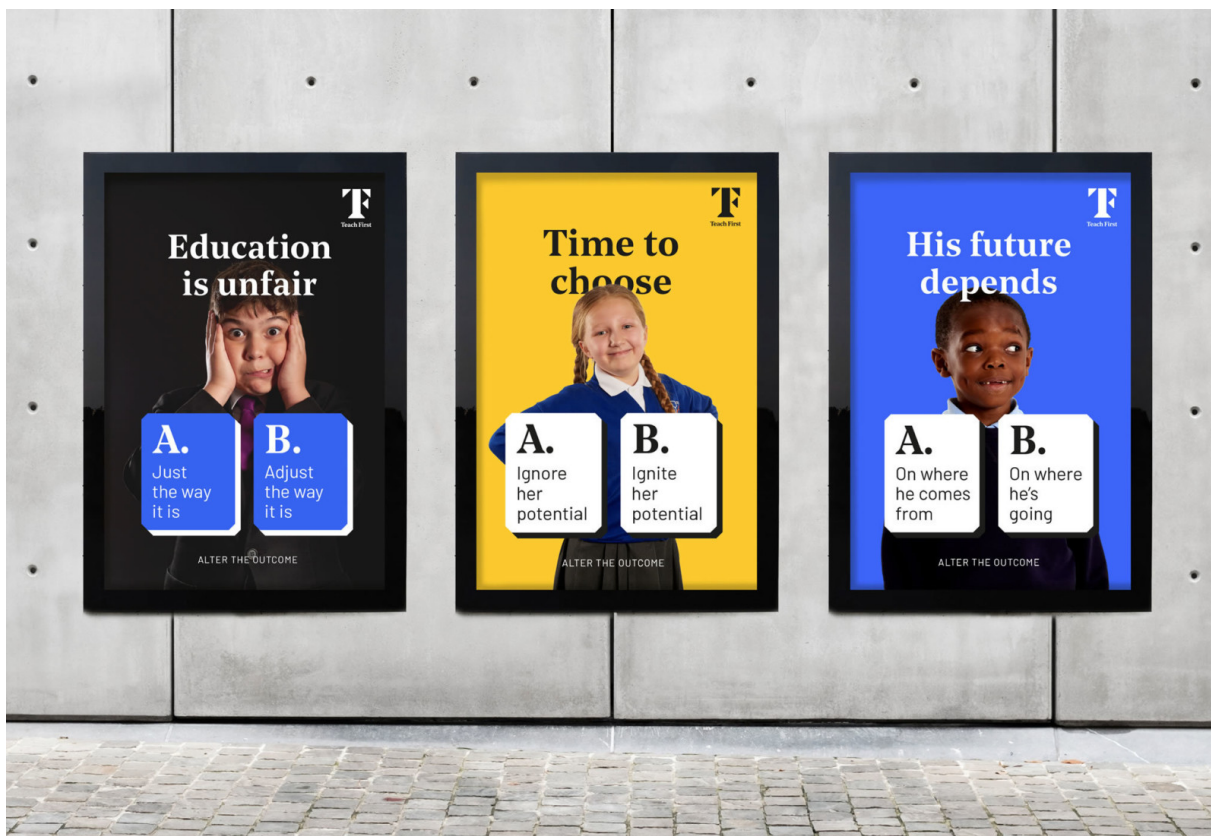
Ndidi Okezie, the head of UK Youth - a social enterprise that connects youth to services to help them flourish - and a Teach First ambassador, knows London's children and youth are up for the challenge. "There is an absolutely innate capacity of young people in terms of resilience," she says. "I don't think they get enough credit for that."



III. Growth of Collective Leadership

London’s story of educational progress begins around the turn of the century with a galvanizing policy. In 2003, the London Challenge put forward a set of ambitious policies aimed to raise standards in the poorest-performing schools, narrow gaps between students, and create more highly-rated schools. The policy had the support of families, the business community, and many other stakeholders. Also around the same time, failing schools were replaced by ‘academies.’ Performance data became better utilized across the system. Following a teacher shortage, Teach First launched, infusing the ecosystem with fresh, energetic talent.

Teach First ambassadors went on to launch innovative, excellent schools such as King Solomon Academy, School21, REACH Academy, East London Arts and Music, Kensington Aldridge Academy, One Degree, and Oasis Southbank to name a few. Others took over turnaround schools such as Wembley High, Harris Greenwich, and Totteridge Academy. The ambassadors continue to work closely together to support each other as well as learning from other heads of schools.



Teach First ambassadors have also helped make strides in how teachers continuously develop and improve. The Institute for Teaching, set up by ambassador Matt Hood and sponsored by several of the innovative schools listed above, brought new thinking and rigorous program design to this field. The merger with Ambition School Leadership to create Ambition Institute has grown its scale further, now working with 6,000 educators each year. Their learning design team is led by ambassador Marie Hamer, who previously led one of the highest quality teacher training programs in the UK, Ark Initial Teacher Training.

At a time of significant education reform there have been a number of positive policy developments in education that the more than 50 Teach First ambassadors who are working in education policy and research have played a role in. Developed by a team of five, including three ambassadors, the Early Careers Framework for teacher development has enjoyed universally positive reception. Ambassador Rory Gribbell advises the Minister for Schools, and until recently Mike Crowhurst was the Special Adviser on Education in 10 Downing Street and currently advises the Minister responsible for The Constitution. Ambassador Steph Peacock was elected as the Labour Member of Parliament for Barnsley East in 2017. Ambassadors Emma Hubball and Will Bickford Smith were instrumental in designing the Government's recent teacher recruitment and retention strategy and ambassador Ali Jaffer advises Government and businesses from his policy position at the independent Social Mobility Commission. There are many other ambassadors in middle and senior positions, and in these roles they are able to accelerate the impact of other ambassador-led and partner initiatives.

There are an increasing number of ambassadors with a substantial public profile. Laura McNerney edited our second education weekly newspaper, Schools Week, has a column in The Guardian, and has set up an app called Teacher Tapp, researching all aspects of education. Lucy Crehan's best selling book *Cleverlands* explored the world's best education system, and Iesha Small has written about moral purpose in education in *The Unexpected Leader*. Harry Fletcher Wood has published a number of influential books about improving teaching, whilst Jon Hutchinson is writing and talking about curriculum with influence.

Social enterprises have also played a significant role in change across the ecosystem. Schools do a fantastic job but can't be expected to tackle all the issues that cause educational inequality alone. Over 400 ambassadors currently work for enterprises that address educational inequity, and nearly 40 social enterprises have been launched by Teach First ambassadors themselves. These organizations include Unlocked (founded by ambassador Natasha Porter) and Frontline (founded by ambassador Josh MacAlister) which have adapted Teach First's approach to tackle inequity from different perspectives - i.e., social work and criminal justice. The Difference, founded by ambassador Kiran Gill, works to reduce school exclusion by developing the expertise of leaders who work with vulnerable children. Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang has worked with three other ambassadors to develop Lighthouse, a new type of children's home to tackle the low educational attainment of looked after children. And Jamie's Farm, founded by ambassador Jamie Fielden, has been supporting the academic, social, and emotional well-being of disadvantaged children through a therapeutic farming program for a decade.



A momentum of improvement and innovation flourished over the last two decades. While always political, education has been somewhat less polarizing relative to other issues. When the government turned over in 2010, new high-level leaders continued to prioritize similar education policies and create the conditions for education entrepreneurship. The momentum of the previous years continued, allowing practitioners, communities, and students to build on their success improving their system.

Ambassador Okezie observed this growing collective responsibility citizens have to its children: “The aim is to foster a paradigm shift in society... one where every person, regardless of where you work, plays a role in supporting local schools and plays a role in ensuring all kids, regardless of their background, have access to opportunities to be what they want to be.”

IV. Teach First's Approach

The energy and leadership of the Teach First alumni has been a powerful force for change in London, working alongside so many talented existing school teachers and leaders:

Cultivating a strong and steady talent pipeline

TF teachers and ambassadors account for 7% of all teachers working in schools serving low-income communities in London. TF teachers are seven times more likely to be in senior school leadership positions early in their career compared to other teachers. Over 1,000 ambassadors are currently working in middle or senior leadership positions in London schools. TF alumni are infused throughout the ecosystem of London and working with each other and others to drive collective impact.

Achieving significant scale in a single city

The UK's largest city, London has been a consistent placement since 2003 and many alumni are committed to living there long-term. In 2003 there was a teacher shortage in London, and Teach First is partially credited with bringing energetic, fresh talent to the sector of the last generation. Teach First's alumni team periodically brings people together to learn from one another, deepening relationships and driving progress. There are now thriving networks of TF ambassadors for school leaders, teachers, and teacher trainers in London.

Embracing innovation and entrepreneurship

Teach First's training program and alumni teams emphasize entrepreneurial and innovative leadership in their approaches. The work of TF's Leadership Development team and Innovation Unit have contributed significantly to the growth in entrepreneurial leadership within schools and education nonprofits across the city.

Leveraging local and national partnerships to strengthen the education ecosystem

From the moment of its launch, Teach First has sought to be a good partner to national and local organizations that are equally committed to ending educational disadvantage in the country. This means institutional partnerships with universities such as University College London's Institute of Education to deliver Initial Teacher Training and Newly Qualified Teacher support, as well as building very strong ties with each of the schools where TF places participants. Core to this approach is the assignment of in-school mentors, who are responsible for a portion of the subject and professional development of participants.

V. Looking Ahead

Today, Teach First trainees and alumni are helping to change the reality in London schools. They are increasingly working together in networks to amplify and accelerate their impact. Given the progress in London, Teach First now places over two-thirds of its participants outside London, where outcomes for children from low-income communities are significantly lower.

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Special thanks to the Teach First community as well as the Education Development Trust whose paper, [Lessons from London schools: investigating the success](#), informed this case study.

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