

Women in Leadership Corner

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Growing Beyond Borders: My Journey Building a Global Learning Network

Looking back on my 28 years in public education, I am deeply grateful for the professional learning opportunities that shaped who I am as an educator and leader. Some experiences felt small at the time—creating my first email account (and contact group) as a new teacher in the Newark Public Schools in 1997, participating in my first PLC in Middletown Township Public Schools in the early 2000s, or attending my first Techspo in 2017. Yet each of these moments helped me understand the power and necessity of building a strong professional network.

As technology advanced and our world became more interconnected, I felt compelled to seek opportunities beyond my district—and even beyond my state. During the 2015-16 school year, while scrolling through social media. I stumbled across two programs that immediately caught my attention. The odds of being accepted into even one seemed slim. But as Dr. Morillo stated in her 2024 [OnTarget article](#), I understood the importance of “**stepping out**,” so I applied.

To my surprise and excitement, I was accepted into both programs.

The [TED-Ed Innovative Educator Program](#) united 30 educators from across the globe to engage in a year-long learning year-long journey focused on amplifying student voice. The experience culminated in a transformative week at the TED Summit in Banff, Canada—a moment that sparked my passion for global citizenship education.



The Second Cohort of TED-Ed Innovative Educators, representing 12 countries.

The second milestone was becoming a fellow in the [Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Program](#). Alongside 11 exceptional U.S. educators, I spent two unforgettable weeks in the Republic of Georgia, immersed in its culture, history, and educational landscape. After visiting schools in and near the capital city of Tbilisi, we travelled in pairs to our assigned regions. I had the privilege of spending time in schools in Akhaltsikhe, where both students and staff welcomed me with warmth and curiosity.

These two experiences were life-changing. Together, they ignited a desire to continuously expand my professional network—not just nationally, but internationally.



Reading to students in Akhaltsikhe, Georgia

Now, as a fourth-year assistant superintendent, that journey continues. At the state level, serving on the NJASA Women in Leadership and Government Relations Committees has introduced me to incredible colleagues who are leading positive change in New Jersey. In addition to the numerous other professional growth opportunities in the state, I am fortunate to have joined two out-of-state programs this year that are already broadening my connections. I remain grateful to my Superintendent and Board of Directors for their unwavering support of my ongoing learning and leadership development.

This fall, my cohort of [AASA's Aspiring Superintendents Academy® for Women Leaders](#) began our year together in Florida. From the very first session, it was clear how much we would gain from one another. Sitting beside a principal serving a Native American reservation and a deputy superintendent from rural Kentucky, I was reminded that—despite our varied contexts—we face many of the same challenges in our schools. I am eager to reunite with this incredible group of women during the AASA National Conference in Nashville this February.



AASA's Aspiring Superintendents Academy® for Women Leaders 2025-26 Cohort

Before that gathering, though, I'll be heading to Finland! As a fellow in the [Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools Program](#), I will join 19 fellow U.S. administrators this January to explore one of the world's most admired education systems. I expect to learn so much from Finland's innovative practices, but I know I will learn just as much from the leaders traveling alongside me. I look forward to bringing new ideas and perspectives back to my New Jersey network.

So why does this global network matter so much? Because our field is facing unprecedented challenges—budget cuts, teacher shortages, the effects of increasingly politicized environments, just to name a few. We cannot solve these issues in isolation. Many answers already exist, whether piloted in another state or practiced routinely in another country. We simply need access to the people doing the work.

Every educational leader should aspire to build a global learning network. The broader our network, the greater the opportunity to discover solutions, spark inspiration, and bring meaningful improvements to the students and communities we serve. As my own journey shows, the opportunities are out there!

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