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CONTACT:

Jeffrey Travers

202-222-8382 or 202-772-0436

jeff.travers@fightforchildren.org

**Seven DCPS School Leaders Selected for First-of-its-Kind
Early Childhood Leadership Program**

Fight for Children and DCPS Join Forces to Support New and Veteran Principals

February 19, 2015—Fight for Children and DCPS announced today that school leaders from seven DCPS schools are participating in the District of Columbia Public Schools Early Childhood Leadership Program, an innovative professional development program designed specifically to meet the needs of early childhood students in the District. The new program began in January.

“Our early childhood programs continue to grow, and we want all of our schools to feel prepared to meet the very specific needs of these children,” said DCPS Chancellor Kaya Henderson. “Fight for Children has been a great partner in our work, and I know this is going to be a game changer for our staff, and our students.”

Each school will send two staff, including a school administrator and a teacher leader. Schools selected to participate for the first year represent veteran DCPS principals and staff, as well as principals new to DCPS. They include HD Cooke, CW Harris, Hearst, Langley, Orr, Savoy and Tubman Elementary Schools.

“Early learning and early childhood programs are different from what happens at other grade levels. With this new program, Fight for Children is helping us meet a need that principals have expressed over and over again—they need targeted support on how best to create an effective learning environment their three and four year olds,” said Monica Liang-Aguirre, Deputy Chief for Early Childhood Education at DCPS. “Strong early childhood is critical to our schools’ long-term success and principals recognize this.”

The Early Childhood Leadership Program is modeled closely on Fight For Children’s Joe’s Champs program and designed to increase the capacity of elementary school leaders to provide supervision, evaluation, and instructional support of their early childhood teaching staff. As a result of the leaders’ improved capacity, the staff will be more effective and productive teachers, resulting in higher academic and social and emotional outcomes for students in early learning programs. Fight For Children launched Joe’s Champs in 2013 and is working in 12 schools, in addition to the seven new DCPS schools. DCPS worked closely with Fight for Children to modify the program to support the first cohort of DCPS schools and school leaders.

Over the course of 18 months, school leaders will attend monthly classes on topics including child development, play-based learning, social and emotional development, parent engagement, language development and effective classroom environments, among other topics. In addition, Fight for Children will assign a mentor to each

participating staff. Mentors will provide one-on-one coaching over the summer and during the 2015-2016 school year to help school leaders to develop and execute early childhood programming and schedules.

“We have long respected and supported the important work that DCPS is doing to accelerate academic achievement and close the achievement gap,” commented Michela English, Fight For Children’s President & CEO. “The beauty of the Early Childhood Leadership Program is that it will make both an immediate and a lasting impact on thousands of DC’s youngest learners.”

The District of Columbia enrolls the highest percentage of three and four year olds than any other state, according to the *Education Week* Research Center. (DCPS currently enrolls over 6,000 three and four year olds in the city.) Since 2010, DCPS has implemented an innovative Head Start School Wide model in all Title 1 schools, combining federal Head Start funds with local funds in all 58 Title 1 schools to allow for more uniform programming. Early Childhood Education programming in these schools provides robust instructional coaching for teachers to ensure high quality instruction and families receive support services to help them navigate their children’s first years of school successfully.

The Early Childhood Education Leadership Program is one of several leadership opportunities available for DCPS staff, including the Mary Jane Patterson Fellowship, Georgetown’s Executive Masters in Leadership for DC Public Schools and other leadership pilot programs.

Information on Pre-Kindergarten in DCPS

The lottery for PK is currently open and will close on March 2. Interested parents should apply at myschooldc.org. There are 8 schools (Brookland, Burroughs, Amidon-Bowen, Van Ness (opening 15-16), Martin Luther King Jr., and Stanton) that are participating in the Guaranteed PK initiative, where in-boundary parents are guaranteed a PK seat if they apply to the lottery by March 2

About Fight For Children

For almost 25 years, Fight For Children has been dedicated to ensuring low-income children in DC receive a great education and stay healthy so they can learn. The late Joseph E. Robert, Jr., created Fight For Children as a way to marshal resources to help low-income kids in the nation's capital secure a brighter future. Since 2012, Raul Fernandez, Vice Chairman of Monumental Sports and Entertainment, has served as Chairman of Fight For Children. Fight For Children’s programs, including Joe’s Champs and the Quality Schools Initiative, focus on improving the quality of early childhood and K-12 education in DC.

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