

Dear friends of UP,

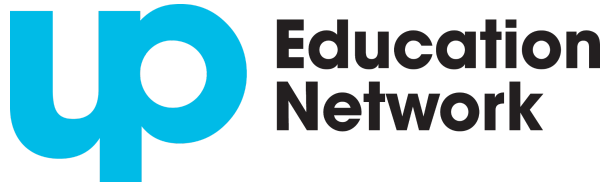
I am writing to share a leadership update with you. After six years as the CEO of UP Education Network, I am transitioning from the CEO role. It has been a great privilege to lead this organization, and to be of service to the incredible community that makes UP schools so special - our students, families, educators, staff, and champions in the community. Beyond this school year, I will remain deeply engaged and invested as a member of the UP Education Network Board of Trustees. At the same time, I'm excited about my new chapter being able to spend more time with my family and leading cohorts of leaders across the country who want to become charter CEOs or who have recently taken on those roles.

I am also excited to announce that Hillary Casson, our current Chief Schools Officer, will become UP's next CEO beginning on July 1st. This change marks a compelling moment of opportunity for UP, but it is rooted in continuity and stability. Hillary brings tremendous knowledge of UP and a proven record of transformative results. After nearly 9 years at UP, first as a Dean of Curriculum and Instruction, then a Principal at UP Academy Holland, Managing Director of Schools, and now as our Chief Schools Officer, Hillary deeply understands our organization and sees where we can continue to improve and how.

During her tenure as Principal of UP Academy Holland, Hillary and her team achieved drastically improved academic results, while uniting the staff around a common mission and vision and building a strong team culture. Under Hillary's leadership, the school's state percentile ranking improved by 27 points in one year, English Language learning growth was some of the highest in the state and the school met 95% of state-set targets. More recently as Chief Schools Officer, Hillary partnered with all of our school leaders to set and execute a multi-year academic priority that has transformed how our teachers teach.

When I first came to UP, I assembled stakeholders from across the organization to develop a vision that put students at the center of everything we do. We united around the statement: *Students in our schools cultivate sharp minds, share their kind hearts, and explore their path and potential.* This student-centered vision has guided us through extraordinary times, and in spite of the curve balls of the last few years, namely COVID, I'm so proud of where we are today:

- We have experienced leaders across our schools,
- The highest staff retention we've had in 5 years,
- High quality curriculum across most subjects,
- A research-backed approach to literacy,
- Strong social emotional learning programming and supports,
- Targeted & measurable annual priorities that improve outcomes for our students.



Moving forward, we are thinking in a deeper way about what it means for our students to have an equitable school experience that sets them up for long term success. In this next chapter, the learning experience for UP students will feature more immersive & experiential learning in core classes while also embedding more opportunities for students to explore passions and gain sightlines into valuable STEM industry areas.

Hillary recently shared why reshaping our focus for students matters so much right now:

“Over the next three years we seek to create schools that are truly equitable. We will ensure UP’s schools have objectively strong academic results, but also, we will reshape our schools to provide students with sightlines into opportunity, as well as the skills, mindsets and beliefs to succeed in any spaces they choose to pursue. Our students will be exposed to and get to explore passion areas and immerse themselves in learning in a truly meaningful way... All of this will set students up for success in their next chapter and beyond.”

I look forward to serving UP in a new capacity come July, and bringing our commitments to equity and academic success to my work as a board member.

Thank you for being an UP champion.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Veronica Conforme', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Veronica Conforme