

## Agent of change

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newwave@tulane.edu

Sydney Morris studied political science at Tulane, never dreaming of becoming a teacher, and she certainly never thought she would be at the helm of Educators 4 Excellence (E4E), an education reform organization. But as we all know, hurricanes have a way of changing things.



Sydney Morris talks with teachers about issues that concern them most. (Photo from Sydney Morris)

After Hurricane Katrina, Morris found herself volunteering in after-school programs through New Orleans Outreach. "I was able to see, perhaps in the most extreme instances, the incredible impact that schools and teachers were having on students' trajectories," says Morris, who graduated from Tulane in 2007.

The impact on Morris was powerful. Following graduation, she joined Teach for America as a second grade teacher in the Bronx, N.Y.

"I absolutely fell in love with it," she says. She thought she had found a career. But, by the third year, Morris started feeling frustrated.

“There was a weird juxtaposition between the autonomy I had inside the classroom and outside, where I had little say in the broader decisions being made, all of which impacted my profession and my students.”

Morris' colleagues shared her frustrations. While teaching full-time, she and another teacher founded E4E, wanting to “shift the dynamic, not to be subjects of change, but agents of change ourselves.”

In addition to the New York chapter, E4E now has a Los Angeles chapter with more sites on the way. Some 7,500 teachers across the country have signed the E4E declaration to become members.

E4E is tackling big issues: quality of teachers, teacher evaluation systems and accountability, among others. In just two years, the organization's recommendations for layoff procedures were incorporated into a New York senate bill, and E4E teachers influenced major litigation in Los Angeles around teacher layoffs and legislation on evaluation.

*Catherine Freshley received a bachelor of arts in economics and English from Tulane in May 2009.*