



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pittsfield Principal Donna Leep selected as 2009 Nellie Mae Education Foundation Principal Scholar

Pittsfield, MA – Donna Leep, Principal of the Silvio O. Conte Community School in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, has been selected as a 2009 Nellie Mae Education Foundation Principal Scholar. As a Principal Scholar, Leep will be participating in CAYL’s innovative July 2009 National Conference, entitled “*Young Learners in America’s Schools: What’s in Your Toolkit?*” This *Conference* is a result of three years of CAYL’s intense work with elementary school Principals in Massachusetts who have pre-kindergarten programs in their schools, and the demand from other states for this type of training.

Leep will join with other elementary school Principals and early childhood Administrators from across the United States in a hands-on, interactive *Conference* featuring site visits to high quality early childhood programs in Boston and Cambridge, national experts, and interactive workshops. She will join CAYL’s growing Network of elementary school Principals who want to increase their knowledge and skill in early childhood education for the betterment of their school’s prekindergarten program.

“At CAYL, we are delighted to welcome Donna at the *Young Learners Conference* and to work with her,” said Valora Washington, CAYL President. “Donna brings a unique perspective to our *Conference*, and we look forward to integrating her into our existing network of Principals and early childhood professionals from across the nation.”

Donna Leep is currently the Principal at the Silvio O. Conte Community School in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and lives in South Egremont. She advocates for early childhood education as the first step in supporting young students and their families to promote success in school and life-long learning. Her background includes a Master’s Degree in early childhood education, and experience as a teacher of young children as well as in school administration.

As more elementary school Principals incorporate programs for prekindergarten children into their schools and as more of the public begins to recognize the increased value of early childhood education, Principals across the country want to learn more about appropriate ways to lead programs with children younger than kindergarten and how to align the youngest children with standard elementary school practices

CAYL’s *Young Learners Conference*, led by trained and experienced Principals, will offer a pathway to vision, strategy and practice for addressing the current realities that Principals face.

The *Conference* will create the conditions for Principals to empower themselves and create sustainable change for children.

Features of the *National Conference* include:

- Panel Interviews and Interactive Discussions
- National Experts on Early Education and Care in Public Schools
- Boston Children’s Museum Field Trip
- Site Visits to NAEYC Accredited Early Education Schools
- Roundtable Lunches and Discussions
- Each participant will receive a copy of the *CAYL Principals Toolkit*, a universal digital media tool to facilitate the rapid dissemination of high quality best practices for America’s youngest learners.

This year, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation awarded a \$50,000 grant to the Cambridge-based CAYL (*Community Advocates for Young Learners*) Institute to bring 22 elementary school Principals from school districts across Massachusetts to participate in the National Conference.

For more information on the *National Conference*, please visit:

<http://cayl.org/PrincipalConference2009>

About the CAYL Institute:

Community Advocates for Young Learners, or the CAYL Institute, envisions a nation where the right to high quality early education and care is embedded in public policy and professional practice. Our purpose is to organize, equip and empower people to create change on behalf of children. Please visit www.cayl.org for up-to-date information and for early childhood care and education resources.

About The Nellie Mae Education Foundation:

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is the largest philanthropy in New England that focuses exclusively on education. The Foundation provides grants and other support to education programs and intermediary organizations in order to stimulate transformative change in public education systems and ensure that all New England’s learners are prepared for success. The Foundation investigates, promotes and supports a greater variety of high-quality educational opportunities that enable all citizens—*especially and essentially those from underserved populations*—to obtain the skills, knowledge and supports necessary to become civically-engaged, economically self-sufficient, life-long learners. Since it was established in 1998, the Foundation has distributed nearly \$98 million in grants. Currently, it primarily provides funding through five strategic initiatives: *Early Learning*, *Pathways to Higher Learning*, *Time for Learning*, *Adult Learning*, and *Systems Building*. For more information, visit www.nmefdn.org