



NEWS RELEASE

MICHELLE OBAMA ANNOUNCED AS FOUNDING CEO OF EMPOWERHER PUBLIC LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

*National all-girls public charter network to open flagship campus in Washington,
D.C., fall 2027*

For Immediate Release
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Contact: Emma Daffner
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WASHINGTON, February 18, 2026 — Today EmpowerHer Public Leadership Academy announced that former first lady Michelle Obama will serve as its founding CEO, launching an all-girls public charter school network dedicated to leadership, civic engagement and career readiness. The flagship campus will open in D.C.'s Ward 8 in fall 2027, serving grades 6-12 with tuition-free enrollment for D.C. residents.

“When girls are given the tools, resources and support to lead, there is no limit to what they can achieve,” Obama said. “EmpowerHer is about building confidence, strengthening communities and ensuring every young woman can envision herself as a future leader.” EmpowerHer Public Leadership Academy will combine a college-preparatory curriculum with hands-on leadership training, financial literacy, educational technology and public service internships. The school will partner with local universities, nonprofit organizations and federal agencies to provide mentorship and real-world learning opportunities. The Ward 8 location was selected to expand access to high-quality educational opportunities in a historically under-resourced community. Admission will be determined through “My School DC,” the application and lottery process for D.C.’s public schools.

EmpowerHer Public Leadership Academy was founded in 2026 by a coalition of educators, community leaders and business partners committed to expanding leadership pathways for young women. The organization’s mission is to equip students with the academic excellence, civic knowledge and professional skills necessary to thrive in college and in the workforce. Initial funding includes private philanthropic investments and public charter allocations. Expansions in three additional U.S. cities are planned by 2030.

About EmpowerHer Public Leadership Academy

EmpowerHer Public Leadership Academy is a D.C.-based nonprofit public charter network. The organization is focused on developing the next generation of women leaders through rigorous academics, civic engagement and career-driven learning. For more information, visit www.empowerheracademy.org.

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To: sarah.mervosh@nytimes.com

Subject: Michelle Obama to Launch Tuition-Free Girls' Leadership Charter School in D.C.'s Ward 8

Hi Sarah,

I am reaching out with the news that former first lady Michelle Obama will serve as founding CEO of EmpowerHer Public Leadership Academy, a tuition-free charter network.

Serving grades 6-12, the school will combine a college-preparatory curriculum with leadership training and public service internships. The organization aims to expand access to high-quality education and leadership pathways for young women in historically under-resourced communities. The flagship campus is set to open in Washington D.C.'s Ward 8 in fall 2027.

Given your reporting on public schools, education policy and why certain models succeed, this announcement may be of interest to your readers — particularly as debates continue nationwide around charters.

I am happy to share additional details or coordinate interviews upon request.

Best,

Emma Daffner
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