

Preparing Urban Community Teachers

University of Colorado - Denver

Denver, CO



The most successful urban community teachers have developed the skills, knowledge, dispositions, practices, and awareness that allow them to engage with the families of all students in every school regardless of difference in race, class, or family status/structure, as well as the communities within which they teach. At the University of Colorado Denver (UCD), teacher education faculty work in close collaboration with mentor teachers and leaders in over 20 P-12 schools across the metro area, and diverse individuals from the communities those schools serve to prepare the next generation of urban community teachers.

The university graduates nearly 100 teacher candidates per year who have had well over 1000 hours of embedded clinical experience working in diverse schools and communities that serve as our committed partners in this endeavor. Faculty have approached this work over the past decade, not only collaboratively with the school and community partners, but comprehensively thinking about how coursework integrates with clinical experiences across the program to prepare candidates.

University and school-based teacher educators support candidates through weekly feedback and facilitation of mediating seminars. Assignments and learning activities include community-based ecological asset mapping, interviews or partnered dialogues with parents and family members of children they are working with, participation in school-based family engagement events like literacy/math nights or home visits, and early inquiry projects and case studies working with children and families. Then, in

the final professional residency year, an inquiry-based family and community engagement anchor experience is threaded across the year that enables candidates to deeply understand the community context and family engagement practices at their residency school so that they can ultimately be supported in leveraging those experiences to design instruction and partner with their students' families to support their overall success.

As other teacher preparation programs consider how they are preparing their candidates, it's critical to think holistically about the entire program. It can't be a single course, a single field experience, or a single assignment. In the words of one recent graduate, "I teach 32 beautiful 4th grade multilingual learners...I was prepared, I knew how to be a teacher before stepping into my own classroom...Not only was I able to work in schools prior to obtaining my teaching license, I was also able to work with the communities with the intentionality to help our students develop as whole children."

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community

