



UNC

Center for Urban Education

Leadership Council Chronicle

February 2022

The Third Space: Where All Knowledge Is Valuable

The Traditional Way: Academia Rules

Teacher-preparation programs typically go heavy on classroom learning—at the university, not in the school where the student will eventually teach. It's the traditional model: The professor and the university are the only sources of knowledge.

In that model, novice teachers go into the real world to practice their craft for a semester under the supervision of an already harried public-school teacher. Then they graduate and are left to fend for themselves in their very first classroom. It's filled with 20 or 40 students who all bring their own cultures, values, history, and experiences with them.

The traditional model doesn't prepare teacher candidates for the complexities of today's classrooms. They don't see how things are "really done" until it's too late. In their first year of teaching, they must figure out how to bridge the gaps between what they've learned in the university classroom and how to apply it.

Thinking about Becoming a Teacher?

We are enrolling new students for the fall 2022 semester.

Call Dr. Rosanne Fulton, Director, UNC Center for Urban Education, at 303-637-4334 or [email](#) for more information.

Watch our [short video](#) to learn more about the CUE teacher-preparation program.

[Watch Video](#)



A New Way: Alignment

There is a better way—a model that assumes people make sense of the world by analyzing it through multiple lenses. It's called alignment, a third space, or a hybrid space, where three elements come together:

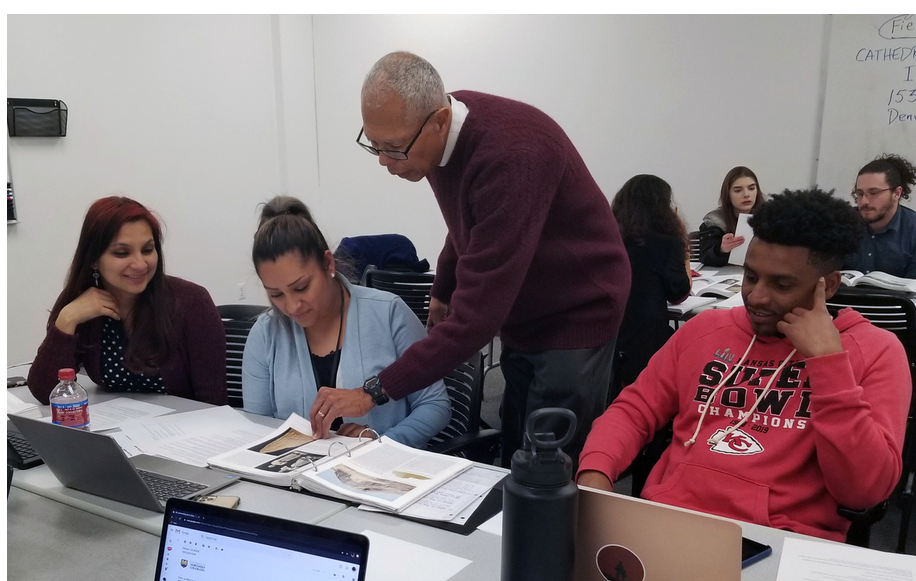
1. Academic knowledge (what the professor and the university teach);
2. Practitioner knowledge (what teachers are doing in the field); and
3. Community expertise (mentorship by experienced community members).

University Classroom, Meet Urban Classroom

We've created such a third space at the [UNC Center for Urban Education](#) (CUE). It's what allows us to produce teachers who are ready to teach in modern urban classrooms. (Also, our curriculum focuses on cultural responsiveness, and we have diverse faculty and mentors; we'll address those topics in future newsletters.)

Here's how we've created alignment: Our teacher candidates work in public-school classrooms in the mornings and attend university classes in the afternoon. They practice what they learn the very next day. They observe how the cooperating teacher interacts with the pupils. They debrief and reflect with their cooperating teacher.

They see an idea through three lenses: their own, the university professor's, and the cooperating teacher's. This process also allows the teacher candidates the opportunity to practice, make mistakes, get feedback, try again, and experience success.



Community Expertise by Way of Mentors

To tie in community expertise, we hire experienced teachers, principals, and administrators as mentors. The mentors observe our teacher candidates at work in the classroom and provide specific, real-time, actionable feedback.

The most effective mentorship is continuous, so that a deep trust can build between mentor and mentee. In some traditional programs, one graduate student works with a group of teacher candidates for a semester. A different doctoral student is assigned to those same students the next semester. Our approach is to assign a mentor to the same teacher candidates during the length of their degree program. There is no bouncing around between mentors.

Effective mentors must be familiar with what's being taught in the university classroom, so they can help teacher candidates apply theory to the real world. Many of our mentors teach one or more of the university courses their mentees attend.

Mentors should be locally based and understand how local teachers are reaching students. Our mentors teach in or are retired from Denver-area schools. They know exactly what's happening in the classroom. They've taught in those same classrooms.



Uniquely Local Alignment

By aligning academic, practitioner, and community knowledge, the Center for Urban Education creates a successful third space. It integrates what have traditionally been competing ideas and power bases. We moved from an either/or perspective to a both/and perspective, where all points of view are valid. We are by no means the only institution that has created a hybrid model, but we believe ours is uniquely aligned because of its hyperfocus on the local community.

At the end of their degree program, our teacher candidates are enamored of children and teaching. They know how to create inclusive classrooms. They are prepared to create their own hybrid space where they align their knowledge with their students' knowledge and tie in community expertise by way of family and community members. In short, our model produces novice teachers who are confident and prepared for the realities of our urban classrooms.

Sources

"Building Blocks." Deans for Impact, <https://deansforimpact.org/building-blocks/>. Accessed February 7, 2022.

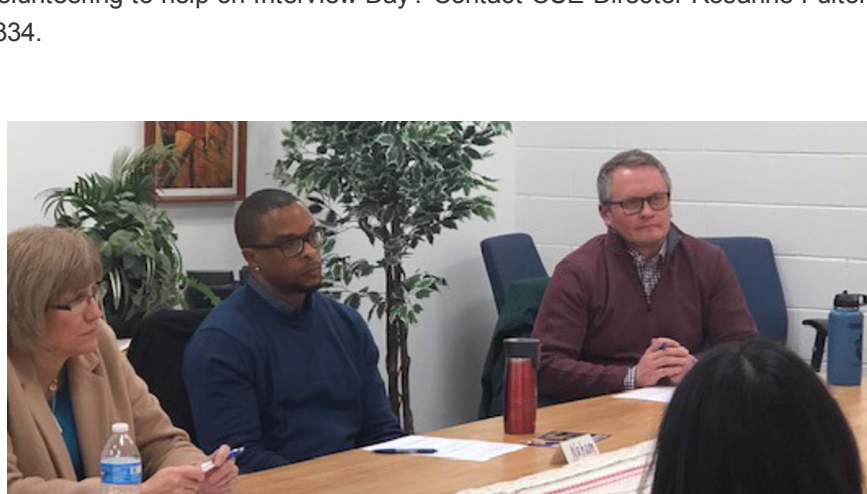
Riley, R., & Sakimura, V. (May 2018). Alignment: stronger coordination between teacher-educator programs and school districts can solidify the knowledge and skills that novice teachers need. *Educational Leadership*.

Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61, 1-2.

Teacher Candidates Prepare for Job Interviews

The UNC Center for Urban Education is hosting Interview Day for its students on March 10, 2022. School principals will conduct practice interviews to prepare teacher candidates for their job search. In addition, CUE mentors and faculty will help teacher candidates write cover letters and edit their resumes.

Interested in volunteering to help on Interview Day? Contact CUE Director Rosanne Fulton by [email](#) or call 303-637-4334.



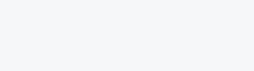
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