



UNC

**Center for
Urban Education**

Leadership Council Chronicle

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Our speaker, Dr. Adeyemi Stenbridge, with former educator and Ms. Colorado Senior America 2021, Dr. Marilyn Chipman (left), and CUE professor Sandy Mason

What Makes a Brilliant Teacher?

With the generous support of the [Reisher Scholars Program](#), [Aurora Public Schools](#), and [Scholars Unlimited](#), the UNC Center for Urban Education hosted a conference on April 22, 2023, at the [Aurora Public Schools Professional Learning and Conference Center](#). Dr. Adeyemi Stenbridge spoke on the topic of "Brilliant Teaching: Using Culture and Artful Thinking to Close Equity Gaps," which is also the title of his new book (coming July 2023).

Brilliant teachers create learning environments that are rigorous, engaging, and meaningful for all learners.

For the audience of 100+ Denver-area educators and community members, Stenbridge referenced the six themes of culturally responsive education that he discussed in his first book, published in 2020, titled "[Culturally Responsive Education in the Classroom](#)." He then defined the concept of brilliant teaching.

Defining Brilliant Teaching

Fundamentally, brilliant teachers create learning environments that are rigorous, engaging, and meaningful for all learners. They also empower students to use all of their talents, build their cultural sensitivity, and increase their knowledge base.

"Brilliant teaching is also profoundly human," said Stenbridge. "Brilliant teachers make instructional decisions based on their deep and constantly evolving relationships with students."



Speaker Dr. Adeyemi Stenbridge with CUE Director Dr. Rosanne Fulton and CUE Assistant Director Joanna Ross

Incorporating Cultural Identity

In the context of creating equity in the classroom, Stenbridge noted, "Differences in cultural, racial, ethnic, and language backgrounds do not equate to deficits in ability. Culture should be used as a descriptor and not a predictor of student outcomes and success."

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Brilliant teachers who use artful thinking and follow their curiosity unseat themselves from the self-appointed role of "ultimate knower." They use their social and cultural fluency to facilitate the process of students learning who they are and how their cultural identity is useful to them as learners.

We cannot push students into identity corners.

"We cannot push students into identity corners," said Stenbridge. "We have to look at the forces that influence context: cultural, political, contemporary, historical, social, and pedagogical."



Conference attendees from Scholars Unlimited

Planning Questions for Educators

Here are some planning questions educators should think about when creating equitable classrooms:

- What opportunities can you give students to think about their cultural identity?
- What are the indicators for student engagement?
- What are the opportunities within this lesson for you to be responsive to students' social and cultural identities?
- How can you differentiate this lesson for highly engaged, moderately engaged, and minimally engaged students?
- How can you leverage your relationships with your students to maximize learning?



CUE teacher candidates on a field trip to Denver Botanic Gardens

CUE Students Venture to Denver Botanic Gardens

On April 13, 2023, 25 CUE teacher candidates joined CUE Professor Jessica Feld for a field trip to [Denver Botanic Gardens](#) (DBG). The DBG School and Camp Coordinator, Heather Schwarz, explained options for educators to bring elementary and early childhood education students to the Gardens on field trips.

The group took a walking tour around the Gardens and discussed ways they could engage their students, including various plant research projects that older elementary students could participate in and, for the younger learners, scavenger hunts that use the five senses. The group also discussed science activities for the classroom that involve the growth of plants, flowers, and vegetables.



CUE Professor Jessica Feld (seated, center) with CUE teacher candidates at Denver Botanic Gardens

Four of the Colorado science teaching standards Feld addressed on the DBG field trip were:

1. Utilize technology resources to enhance science teaching.
2. Explain the importance of assessment and how to implement. Discuss alternative strategies to assess student learning.
3. Use teaching strategies for "hands-on, minds-on" classroom activities that interweave science, technology, and society.
4. Using a thematic approach, discuss how the integration of cross-curriculum material is an effective instructional and time management tool.

While at the DBG, the group worked on a citizen science project called [Project Budburst](#). Citizens collect valuable information about seasonal plant cycles in a consistent way across the country. Scientists use the data to learn more about the responsiveness of individual plant species to changes in climate locally, regionally, and nationally.

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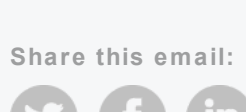
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