



UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO FUTURE TEACHER CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 6, 2026



UNC

UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN
COLORADO

FUTURE TEACHER CONFERENCE 2026 AGENDA

7:00–8:00	REGISTRATION Campus Commons
7:30–8:30	BREAKFAST Outside the UC Ballroom
8:30–9:45	OPENING AND WELCOME University Center Ballrooms Opening Remarks: Suzette Youngs, <i>Future Teacher Conference Organizer, University of Northern Colorado</i> Keynote Speaker: Steve Spangler
10:00–10:30	WORKSHOP #1 McKee Hall
10:35–11:05	WORKSHOP #2 McKee Hall
11:10–11:40	WORKSHOP #3 McKee Hall
11:50–12:30	GROUP 1 — LUNCH: Holmes Dining Hall GROUP 2 — INFORMATIONAL FAIR: Campus Commons
12:30–1:10	GROUP 1 — INFORMATIONAL FAIR: Campus Commons GROUP 2 — LUNCH: Holmes Dining Hall
12:45–1:05	Students enter Performance Hall in Campus Commons
1:15–1:30	Scholarship Raffle
1:30–2:00	Ask A Bear Student Panel
1:30–2:00	Closing: #Dayinthelife Winners
2:10	CAMPUS TOUR For those participants registered for the campus tour, it will begin immediately following the Informational Fair. Students will meet UNC student ambassadors in the Multipurpose Room in the Campus Commons.

SESSIONS

TEACHER CADET TEACHERS AND HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS

Moving Beyond Belonging: Creating a Culture of Mattering

Amie Cieminski and Jonathan Cooney, *Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, UNC*

This interactive workshop explores how to move beyond belonging—feeling accepted and included—to creating a culture of mattering, where individuals feel noticed, valued, and essential to the community. Participants will learn research-based strategies to foster environments where students and adults not only fit in but know they make a difference. Educators will discover ideas and practical tools to strengthen relationships, enhance motivation, and improve engagement.

McKee room 282

Interested in Becoming a Teacher Cadet Teacher?

Christine McConnell, *Colorado Teacher Cadet Executive Director*

Teachers and Counselors! Participate in this session if you are interested in becoming a Teacher Cadet Teacher or want more information on how to get a Teacher Cadet program at your school.

McKee Room 282

PARENT SEMINAR

Help Your Student Start Their Teaching Career Faster with Less Debt: Unique Opportunities in Rural Colorado

Jim Erikson, *Literacy Education, UNC*; Kevin Pugh, *Educational Psychology, UNC*; Aldo Romero, *CUMBRES*; Robert Fulton, *Colorado Center for Rural Education*

In this session, parents/guardians/support networks will learn and have the opportunity to ask questions about various topics, including the path to becoming a teacher, the admissions process, available financial aid, UNC housing and residential education, basic/core/general ed classes, and more. Additionally, you will learn about all the pathways and programs that are available to make college affordable. Dr. Fulton provides information on financial support and opportunities for those who would like to teach in one of Colorado's 147 rural schools

Columbine Room A & B, University Center

STUDENT SESSIONS

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

SESSION 1: From Crayons to Connections

Jean Kirshner, *Early Childhood Education, UNC*

Connecting young learners to their global partners in Early Childhood Education classrooms across the world!

McKee Room 425

SESSION 2: Creating the Spark of Wonder

Sue Davisdon, *Early Childhood Education, UNC*

In this session, we will apply play-based learning principles and activities to create joyful, meaningful, and inclusive early childhood environments.

McKee Room 219

SESSION 3: Welcome to the Land of Kindie-building/establishing relationships for a strong foundation

Twyla Morton, *Kindergarten Teacher Douglas County School District, Mammoth Heights Elementary School,*

Kindergarten for many families is their first introduction to a school community and learning experience. Come and grow, learn, and enhance ideas about the importance of relationships with students and families as they enter into the Land of Kindie!

McKee Room 424

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

SESSION 4: Games, Literacy, and Social and Emotional Learning

Matthew Farber, *Educational Technology, UNC*, William Merchant, *Applied Statistics and Research Methods, UNC*

In this immersive workshop, explore innovative strategies for integrating games into the classroom to enhance reading skills and foster social and emotional learning. You will engage in hands-on activities and discussions to discover effective approaches that make learning both enjoyable and emotionally enriching for students.

McKee Room 333

SESSION 5: Leveraging Students' Cultural Strengths in the Elementary Classroom

Brian Rose, *Elementary Education, UNC*

We will explore the teacher's maxim "You've just got to know your students." We don't critique the maxim as knowing your students is the name of the game. Instead, we unpack what this means by identifying the aspects of culture more generally, and the visiting students discuss their own lived experiences along these lines.

McKee Room 252

SESSION 6: Making Social Studies Come Alive in the Elementary Classroom

Jenny Pettit, *Elementary Education, UNC*

How can we harness young students' curiosity about the world to deepen their understanding of the world? Social studies is the perfect vehicle! Come join us for this hands-on session to learn about how we can help the next generation become problem-solvers and engaged citizens in our world.

McKee Room 147

SESSION 7: Why Teachers Make a Difference

Jenni Harding Middleton, *Elementary Education, UNC*

Teachers motivate and inspire students to learn. Come explore how high-quality teachers make a difference. Do you have what it takes to become an effective and efficient teacher?

McKee Room 221

SESSION 8: “Listen Up! The Secret Skill of Great Teachers”

Jody Lawrence, *Elementary Education, UNC*

Everyone's talking, but who's listening? Great teaching starts with hearing your students and choosing words that connect, not correct. Learn how listening shapes what we say and how students learn.

McKee Room 338

SESSION 9: Bubble Bonanza: Pop into Science!

Jennifer Parrish, Teresa Higgins, *Science Education, UNC*

Discover creative ways to spark curiosity and inquiry in the elementary classroom—one pop at a time! Join this interactive session to learn how to use bubble investigations to build inquiry skills and excitement for science learning.

McKee Room 223

SESSION 10: Math is Fun!

Hannah Kang, *Elementary Education at UNC*

Math is fun! Do you agree with it? Let's explore some fun and engaging hands-on activities to learn how to teach math in an elementary classroom. In this session, students will experience hands-on manipulatives that promote conceptual understanding of math content.

McKee Room 141

SECONDARY EDUCATION

SESSION 11: From Neurons to Knowledge: Leveraging Brain Science in Learning

Matt Seymour, *English Language Arts Education, UNC*

In this session, participants will explore how the brain functions at a neurological level and learn strategies to leverage this knowledge to improve memory, and enhance skill development.

McKee Room 253

SESSION 12: Science is Phenomenal: Engaging Students Using Science Phenomena

Amy Bekins and Byron Straw, *Science Education, UNC*

In this session, participants will explore science phenomena that can be used in classrooms to engage students to develop a conceptual understanding of science content in biology, chemistry, physics, and earth science.

McKee Room 19

SESSION 13: Equipping Future Teachers: Mental Health Skills for the Classroom and Beyond

Stacy Bailey, *English Language Arts Education, UNC*

Recognizing and responding to adolescent students in distress takes practice. In this session, learn about strategies to keep yourself grounded while also helping others.

McKee Room 135

SESSION 14: Thriving Over Surviving

Danielle Bell, *UNC Educational Studies, High School English teacher and doctoral student*

When you're a new teacher, everyone has advice for your first year. You'll get your badge and keys and maybe even a district tote bag with a copy of whatever book is trending in education. (In 2002, I got Harry Wong's *The First Days of School*). But no one tells you what's really about to happen, or how to navigate it all. In this session, students will learn tips & tricks from a veteran teacher on how to thrive in their first years in the classroom.

McKee Room 254

SESSION 15: From a College Degree to a Teaching Career — More Rewarding than you Might have Heard!

Carson Fry, *Social Studies Education, graduate student, UNC*

Are there practical reasons to get a college degree? Absolutely! With your degree in humanities, you can open up career possibilities in fields that are well-paid, dynamic, and in need of immediate employees... like teaching! Join this session to do some myth-busting about education and explore how humanities content, such as History, has many real-world, job-gaining applications. Get ready for a fast-paced quiz game at the end of our session, where you can win prizes!

McKee Room 138

SESSION 16: I Never Learned That in History Class!

Kurt Knierim, *Lecturer and CU Succeed Liaison, CU Denver*

Using primary sources and storytelling to make history interesting, interactive, and relevant. History can be really boring or unforgettable. This session will give prospective social studies teachers a peek behind the curtain of making lessons that students cannot ignore using primary sources, discussion and thoughtful lecture. If you are interested in teaching secondary social studies, do not miss this session.

McKee Room 144



If you need assistance at any time, you may call the School of Teacher Education office at 970-351-1890 or stop by the Dean's office in McKee Hall, room 126.

K-12 EDUCATION: ART, MUSIC, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND THEATRE

SESSION 17: Teaching Theatre: Do you have What it Takes?

Mary Schuttler, *Head of Theatre Education, UNC*

Are you passionate about theatre and eager to inspire that passion in others? If so, this workshop will assist you in discovering if theatre education is the right path for you. We will discuss the challenges and rewards of entering this fulfilling profession, and explore the essential skills and insights needed to inspire and educate the next generation of theatre enthusiasts.

McKee Room 204

SESSION 18: Teaching in Motion: Energize Learning with Movement

Brian Dauenhauer, *Physical Education and Physical Activity Leadership, UNC*

Discover how movement can transform the classroom! In this hands-on workshop, you'll learn simple, engaging strategies to integrate physical activity into everyday lessons. Experience how adding movement boosts focus, attention, and academic success—while giving you a glimpse into the powerful role teachers play in shaping active, engaged learners.

McKee Room 336

SESSION 19: Move to Learn and Learn to Move: Discover Teaching Physical Education

Jennifer Krause, *Physical Education and Physical Activity Leadership, UNC*

Step into the role of a physical education teacher! In this interactive session, you'll explore how physical education goes beyond sports to build teamwork, leadership, and lifelong wellness. Engage in fun, hands-on activities and get a taste of what it's like to guide and inspire students through movement for a lifetime of physical activity!

McKee Room 140

SESSION 20: So You Want to Be an Art Teacher? Real Talk from Future Educators UNC Art Education Club Leaders, Art Education UNC

Ever wonder what it is really like to major in Art Education? Join UNC's Art Education students for an honest, interactive conversation about what they wish they had known before starting their journey to become teachers. From balancing studio classes with lesson planning to finding your voice in the classroom, this session offers practical insights, funny stories, and creative advice from future art educators who are walking the path right now. Come ready to ask questions, make art, and imagine your own future as a teacher.

McKee Room 8

SESSION 21: Art Journals in Conversation: Teaching Through Creative Dialogue

Abi Paytoe Gbayee, *UNC Art Education Club Leaders, Art Education UNC*

What if art could be a conversation instead of a single voice? In this hands-on workshop, UNC Art Education students will guide participants through a collaborative art journaling exchange inspired by Journal Fodder Junkies and TetRAD Project artists David Modler and Sam Peck. You will create side-by-side journal pages that respond visually to prompts about creativity, identity, and teaching. As you trade ideas and layers back and forth, you will experience how art journaling can spark connection, reflection, and dialogue—skills every great teacher needs. No experience required—just curiosity and a willingness to create!

McKee Room 20

SESSION 22: Music for All, All for Music

Krissie Weimer, *Music Education, UNC*; Noah Osuna, Sarah Rich, Micah Healy, Madi Holshouser, and Emi Brooker, *UNC Music Club students*

Everyone is musical! You are and your future students are too. Join us for a session of strategies and activities to promote creativity and music making for all students, no matter skill or ability!

McKee Room 137

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE EDUCATION

SESSION 23: Becoming a Teacher of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students

José García-Paine, *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education, UNC*

In this session, Dr. Garcia-Paine will present what it means to be a teacher of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students, and the many intersectionalities that are shared with the General Education and Special Education interfaces.

McKee Room 139

SESSION 24: ¿Habras español? We need bilingual teachers!

James Gambrell, *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education, UNC*

This presentation discusses the need for Spanish-speaking educators in the state of Colorado.

McKee Room 428

SESSION 25: Discovering the Joy of Teaching Multilingual Learners

Oakley Schilling, *Secondary ELD and Seal of Biliteracy Coordinator*; Janette Rivera Gonzalez, *Elementary and Biliteracy Coordinator, St. Vrain Valley Schools*

Step into the vibrant and rewarding world of teaching multilingual learners (MLs) and uncover the incredible potential of students who are building bridges between languages and cultures. We'll explore why ML students are some of the most dynamic and resilient learners in any classroom and share the unique joy and professional fulfillment that comes with becoming an English language development teacher. Prepare to be inspired by a field that's all about celebrating diversity, building genuine connections, and shaping the future, one brilliant multilingual mind at a time!

McKee Room 145

SPECIAL EDUCATION

SESSION 26: A Positive Classroom is a Productive Classroom

Corey Pierce, *Special Education, UNC*

This interactive session will introduce students and parents to the benefits of a positive culture in a classroom. Attendees will participate in fun activities as they learn to build a positive culture in a group setting.

McKee Room 142

SESSION 27: Feel It, Name It, Tame It: Fun Pathways to Emotional Regulation for Life Success

Tracy Gershwin, *Special Education, UNC*

Emotional regulation isn't just a skill for classrooms—it's a life skill for success, relationships, and resilience. In this interactive session, we'll explore playful, creative, and practical strategies for teaching students (and adults!) how to identify emotions, manage big feelings, and bounce back from challenges. Through stories, quick activities, and research-based tools, you'll walk away with easy-to-implement ideas that make emotional regulation both accessible and fun.

McKee Room 230

SESSION 28: Tips for Teaching Students with Dyslexia

Jennifer Urbach, *Special Education, UNC*

Did you know that approximately one in five students has dyslexia? Come learn more about dyslexia and what teachers can do to support those students.

McKee Room 229



K-12 TEACHING AND ENGAGEMENT

SESSION 29: Plan for Success: Differentiate Your Teaching to Support Each Learner

Doug Alexander, *Gifted Education Instructional Specialist, Boulder Valley School District, UNC Educational Studies, doctoral student*

Classroom teachers are often encouraged to plan for grade-level standards. However, what do you do when students begin the lesson at or quickly demonstrate grade-level standards? You set the bar higher! Learn why and how to support each learner, including advanced learners and those with learning disabilities. Keep each student on a continuum of learning everyday.

McKee Room 228

SESSION 30: Use It or Lose It! Hands-On Practices to Remember All the Things

Shane Saeed, *Elementary ELA Coordinator*; Adam Wellington, *K-12 Social Studies Coordinator, St. Vrain Valley Schools*

This session introduces future K-12 teachers to evidence-based Science of Learning practices, moving beyond passive study habits to focus on what truly drives long-term retention. Participants will gain a foundational understanding of how our brains learn and get to know the four Power Tools: Retrieval Practice, Spacing, Interleaving, and Feedback-Driven Metacognition. We will embed high-yield strategies future teachers can apply immediately to enhance their own learning and design more effective, memory-boosting instruction in their future classrooms.

McKee Room 146





Wifi Information

Connecting to our UNC-Guest network

1. Identify and click on the **“UNC-GUEST”** network and choose connect
2. Open your web browser and accept the University of Northern Colorado Acceptable Use Agreement

By logging on to the network, you are agreeing to the UNC Computer, Internet and Electronic Communications Procedure:

<https://www.unco.edu/information-management-technology/network-connectivity/wireless-parents-guests.aspx>

FUTURE Teacher CONFERENCE UNC

TEACHING IS IN OUR DNA

Since our founding in 1889, the University of Northern Colorado has been at the heart of education, producing more than 50% of education professionals in the state and 30% of the Colorado Teacher of the Year recipients. Education isn't just what we do — it's who we are.

Today, we celebrate a decade of the Future Teacher Conference, a milestone that honors the passion, purpose and potential of future educators. This event is more than a conference, it's a day of dynamic day of inspiration, learning and connection. You'll engage with UNC's passionate students and faculty from the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, connect with early career teachers, gain insights from seasoned educators and hear from school leaders who are shaping the future of education.

Whether you are just beginning to imagine a career in teaching or already see yourself standing at the front of a classroom, this day is a celebration of the incredible impact you can have on the next generation of learners.

Here's to 10 more years and beyond of empowering future educators.

Welcome to the wonderful world of teaching!



DREAM



TEACH



INSPIRE





KEYNOTE SPEAKER: STEVE SPANGLER

Steve Spangler is a teacher, author, and business leader who loves science. TIME Magazine once named him one of the “most influential people of the year” because he works hard to inspire kids to become future scientists and engineers. He has been on TV more than 2,100 times and has won several Emmy awards. Steve was also a regular guest on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, where Ellen called him “America’s Science Teacher.”



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:
2027 Future Teachers Conference, February 5, 2027



A NOTE FROM THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS



The committee would like to thank you for joining us at the 2026 UNC Future Teacher Conference. Your presence reflects a deep commitment to shaping the next generation of learners. We hope you leave inspired and energized. Together, we are building the future of education. With passionate educators like you, there are no limits to what we can achieve.

Thank you for being a vital part of this journey! **#BearToInspire**

Thank you to our sponsors for their generous support!

OTTERCARES



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