

Early Childhood Urban Cohort

The Early Childhood Education certification program is a Bachelor of Arts program leading to certification in pre-K – 3 classrooms in South Carolina. Within the program resides a cohort focused on urban school environments.

Introduction

The Urban Cohort is a group of 24 early childhood students. These students have classes, field placements, and out-of-class experiences to support them in becoming teachers and teacher leaders in issues of diversity in education. This cohort experience provides two years of courses that focus on the need for the curriculum, instruction, materials, and discipline practices to align with students' cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds.

School Partners

In addition to university classroom experiences these teacher candidates complete their internships in one of four schools in urban areas of Columbia: Bradley Elementary, Burton-Pack Elementary, Carver-Lyon Elementary, and Lewis-Greenview Elementary. The Free/Reduced Lunch rate in all schools is well above 75%, with three schools serving above 96% students on Free/Reduced Lunch. Each school has an African American student population of over 90%. In each of these schools a professor from the University of South Carolina provides professional development for the teachers in whose classrooms the students will be placed. Furthermore, these students participate in out-of-classroom activities including dinner with professors, viewing films on issues of equity, and presenting at conferences.

This past year a highlight was the students presenting their work at the National Conference of Teachers of English. In the words of one student, "I want to thank you for exposing me to the hard realities of the world. You have taught me many extraordinary life lessons, and I have been able to really implement these teachings into my conversations." The

Urban Cohort is a model that is academically rigorous and exemplifies the Carolina Creed's call for respecting the dignity of all persons, rights of others, discouraging bigotry and demonstrating concern.

Capacity for the Residency Model

In order to leverage the residency model, the program is exploring a redesign of the senior year courses to support a year-long placement in an urban setting. This may include evening, weekend, integrated, and/or online coursework. With the anticipated interest in the revised program, the residency project would allow the program faculty to develop an admissions screening for entry into the Urban Cohort, allowing the faculty to be highly selective and grow the program over time.

