



Rural Centered
October 2024

A Monthly Newsletter from the
Colorado Center for Rural Education



Miss Sanchez is a graduate of the Teacher Leadership degree program at CU Boulder

Stackable Certificates Lead to Master's Degree in Teacher Leadership

CU Boulder's online [Teacher Leadership](#) program was originally the brainchild of Brett Miles, a former director of the Northeast BOCES, and Kathy Schultz, Professor and Dean Emerita, School of Education at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Miles and Schultz recognized that the needs of rural schools and teachers were not being met by the state's universities and that there was a real need for professional learning opportunities that would support increased teacher retention in rural school districts.

When Emily Gleason, Faculty Director and Teaching Professor, joined the team in 2018, she dedicated time to learning from rural educators about the kind of professional learning that would work best for them. She spent two years listening to what rural teachers said they needed to be the best teachers they could be. "It turns out what they need isn't all that different from what urban teachers need—peer support, high-quality professional development that relates to their everyday lives, and access to affordable education," said Gleason.

The program costs approximately \$15,000 for in-state students, which is a very affordable price for a MA degree. A \$6,000 [Rural Inservice Educator Stipend](#) awarded by the Colorado Center for Rural Education makes the cost even more affordable.

Stackable Certificates

The program is entirely online, which makes it accessible to all—not just rural teachers. Participants can stack any three of seven certificates together, which earns them a master’s degree in Teacher Leadership. Each certificate culminates in a capstone project that enables teachers to address curricular, leadership, and teaching needs in their own classrooms and schools.

Through the Teacher Leadership program, teachers join a network and support community that continues over time, connecting rural and urban educators together around the state. The Teacher Leadership program is comprised of the following stackable certificates:

- [The Teacher and Social and Emotional Learning](#)
- [Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students](#)
- [Leading for Change in Science Assessment](#)
- [Cultivating Compassion and Dignity](#)
- [Inclusive and Special Education](#)
- [Designing for Learning: Inquiry-Based Pedagogy](#)
- [Teachers Leading Change](#)

Students choose what they’re interested in, but all of the programs help teachers build competence in the skills today’s teachers need. “When teachers can address the many needs of today’s students, it helps them want to stay in the profession,” said Gleason. “Teachers have to attend to not only the learning needs of their students, but their social-emotional and behavioral needs. When they have the skills to meet their students with poise and confidence, they feel more joyful, which leads to stronger teacher retention in rural schools.”



A graduate of the Teacher Leadership degree program

Capstone Project

All participants must design a capstone project for their classroom, school, or community. “We often see rural teachers thinking about what they can do for the community as a whole,” said Gleason. One participant designed a bilingual after-school program to help ESL learners. She brought high school students in as mentors for the elementary school kids, which immediately created a positive ripple effect.

“Our vision is to allow teachers to find greater joy, cultivate competencies, and be more connected so they feel more compelled to stay in the classroom,” said Gleason. In that way, the program acts as a retention tool.

Next Steps

Gleason invites you to email her at teacherleadership@colorado.edu to schedule a call to discuss your interest in the program and how their staff can help you find professional development money to assist with the cost of the program. They are also willing to partner with school districts and BOCES to build communities where teachers support each other.

Upcoming Application Timelines

Colorado Rural Student Teaching Stipend applications for spring 2025 accepted: July 1, 2024, through October 31, 2024

Visit TEACH Colorado’s [Financial Aid and Scholarship Information](#) for additional scholarships.

For financial aid available to in-service and aspiring educators, download the [Colorado Department of Education’s Educator Recruitment and District Supports flyer](#).

Featured Partners

Learn more about our [featured partners](#) and how they are helping to solve the teacher shortage in rural Colorado.

colorado school of
public health

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

The Rural Public Health, Education, and Healthcare Initiative develops collaborations and partnerships to meet the health and education needs of rural Colorado communities.

Robert Fulton, PhD | Director

