



College of Education
Office of the Dean

Report on Diversity in the Teacher Preparation Curriculum

The University of Northern Colorado (UNC) is committed to the inclusion of topics on diversity into teacher preparation programs. We believe that it is critical for teacher candidates to have knowledge and understanding of issues pertinent to diversity. We also strive to provide our teacher candidates with experiences working with diverse students in P-12 schools.

The College of Education has a standing committee on diversity. The charge to this committee is to encourage and assist in the recruitment and retention of diverse faculty and students; to facilitate discussions around the topic of diversity; and to provide professional development in diversity to faculty, staff, students, and the community. This committee holds regular meetings, brown bag lunches, and each semester brings guest speakers to campus. The committee is currently commenting on a College statement on diversity.

In preparation for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) and National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) authorization visit in December 2002, the Professional Education Unit (all teacher education programs) developed an extensive report. Part of this report addressed the NCATE standard on diversity. This response to the diversity standard contains information on curriculum and experiences provided to teacher candidates along with experiences working with diverse faculty, diverse teacher candidates, and diverse P-12 students. An examination of the NCATE report reveals not only our commitment to diversity, but also how that commitment is implemented.

One important component of that implementation is the fact that the UNC faculty chose to add a diversity standard to the Performance-Based Standards for Colorado Teachers.

This standard and its elements reads as follows:

“The teacher candidate creates an inclusive environment for all students by drawing upon representations from students’ experiences, knowledge, and beliefs.

9.1 Candidates recognize and understand how students differ from one another

9.2 Candidates create a classroom setting that supports diversity by providing learning opportunities for individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, abilities, values, and perspectives

9.3 Candidates develop and select curriculum and resources which enhance learning to meet the needs of all learners.”

This diversity standard is met through coursework and through field experiences. Faculty members in elementary, secondary, and K-12 teacher preparation programs have developed matrices and rubrics that assess student progress toward and attainment of the elements of this standard.

The following sections describe and provide examples of courses related to diversity and how diversity is embedded in the curriculum and field experiences.

Coursework:

All teacher candidates at UNC must complete a general education program. This program requires students to take two courses from a category titled: Interdisciplinary and International Studies (one course) and Multicultural Studies (one course). These courses cover a variety of topics including Latin American, Mexican, Hispanic, African, Africana, Asian, and Native American culture, history, and literature.

Other general education coursework popular with teacher candidates incorporates topics and issues pertinent to diversity. For example, several History courses cover topics dealing with interactions between ethnic groups, slavery and its consequences, social class, and understanding the diversity of peoples. The Psychology course Human Growth and Development covers material including the influences of culture and poverty on physical, cognitive, and social development. Similarly, courses from many other disciplines including, but not limited to, Anthropology, Biology, Geography, and Sociology have embedded in them topics on diversity. The selection of courses currently offered in general education is attached.

Many of the approved majors for teacher candidates include coursework that focuses specifically on diversity. English, Geography, History, Interdisciplinary Studies Liberal Arts (IDLA), and Social Science, for example, include coursework that focuses on ethnic and cultural diversity. The IDLA degree permits elementary teacher candidates to select from 18 concentration areas, three of which focus on diversity: Bilingual/Bicultural, ESL, and Ethnic and Gender Studies.

In the Professional Teacher Education Programs (PTEP) the topic of diversity is threaded through the following courses that are required for teacher candidates (syllabi are available on request):

EDF 366 Conceptions of Schooling—coverage of school and society and teaching in a multicultural/diverse context.

EDSE 430 Exceptional Student in the Elementary Classroom; EDSE 360 Adaptation, Modification, and Integration of Curriculum for the Secondary Exceptional Learner; and EDSE 433 Exceptional Students in the Regular Classroom—courses focus on working with students with special needs.

EDRD 460 Integrated Methods I: Reading, Language Arts, Science and Health and EDRD 340 Developing Language and Literacy in the Content Areas—topics include

stages of second language acquisition as well as learning and implementing strategies for assisting English Language Learners (ELL) in the development of background knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension.

EPSY 347 Educational Psychology for Elementary Teachers and EPSY 349 Educational Psychology for Secondary Teachers—coverage of individual differences in learning; group differences by ethnicity and SES; diversity and equity issues in testing.

The secondary program affords teacher candidates the opportunity to attend a series of specialty seminars. These seminars address topics relevant to diversity (e.g., ESL, differential instruction, teaching at-risk students, and special education).

Field Experiences:

UNC PTEP candidates are provided with opportunities to engage students and families who represent considerable ethnic diversity across our partner schools. Given the demographics of these schools, candidates' field experiences often take place in schools with over 40% of the students classified as non-White. The largest minority population in Weld County is Hispanic (approximately 38%) with 14% classified as ELL. Special education students total nearly 11% of the student population. Almost 70% of the students in the county are in the free and reduced lunch program. Also, the rural nature of the county gives candidates the experience of working with rural populations, with their unique needs and culture.

All candidates in the program for elementary school teachers must participate in an early field-based service learning project (EDEL 360) that takes place in a richly diverse partner school. During this project, candidates are required to provide approximately 40 hours of literacy tutoring to an elementary student experiencing difficulty with reading and writing. Working under the guidance of a partner school Teacher on Special Assignment, the candidates gain valuable experience assisting the individual literacy and learning needs of children from linguistically, culturally, and economically diverse families.

In the secondary program, teacher candidates demonstrate their ability to address the diversity standard in the classroom via the teacher work sample and portfolio. Rubrics that assess student teaching include measurements of progress toward attainment of the diversity standard.

The UNC Rural Education Access Program (REAP) in eastern Colorado and The Center for Urban Education in Denver create opportunities for candidates to be involved in licensure programs in remote communities in Colorado and in or near the inner city neighborhoods of Denver respectively. Not only does The Center for Urban Education provide opportunities for diverse field experiences, but the program recruits a diverse candidate population: among the candidates in the first two cohorts, for example, 47.5% were ethnic minorities.

Summary:

This report demonstrates the commitment of UNC and its teacher preparation programs to the meaningful infusion of topics pertinent to diversity both across the curriculum and across the student teaching experience. Teacher candidates are required to take a multicultural course as part of the general education program. Other components of the general education program include anthropological, historical, psychological, and sociological perspectives on diversity. In the PTEP, diversity is systematically incorporated into both coursework and experiences with students in P-12 schools. The performance of teacher candidates is measured against a diversity standard.