

THE URBAN VOICE

TCNJ Urban Education Newsletter

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Issue 4 | April 2024



TEACHING WITH HEART: FROM PASSION TO PURPOSE

The Urban Voice is brought to you by the School of Education at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) to centralize urban-focused programming. Under the leadership of Drs. Salika Lawrence, Tabitha Dell'Angelo, Jonathan Davis, Shamaine Bertrand, Geeer Burroughs, and Marissa Bellino, the Urban Education programs at TCNJ aim to enhance outreach, teacher education and professional development, as well as research with partners in the communities we serve and beyond. We provide a space for TCNJ students, faculty and staff, and community partners to add their voice, perspective and expertise to urban-related issues.

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Spring 2024 Editorial Team:
Dr. Salika Lawrence, Janelyn Rodriquez, Evangelina Santos, Aureni Espinal

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TEACH WITH HEART?

by Janelyn R.

TO TEACH WITH HEART

In the realm of education, whether urban, suburban or rural, a central question arises that transcends traditional methodologies and curriculum structures: *What does it truly mean to teach with heart?* This question serves as the focal point of our exploration in this edition of the Urban Education newsletter.

Our goal in curating this newsletter is to shed light on innovative practices and significant achievements within the field of education while delving into the underlying principles that drive educators towards excellence in urban settings. By posing the question, *What does it truly mean to teach with heart?*, we seek to spark introspection, foster dialogue, and deepen our understanding of the profound impact educators have on their students' lives.

To offer a comprehensive perspective on this theme, we have enlisted the insights of seasoned educators like Amanda, alongside the experiences of preservice teachers, Kiara and Aurení.

For Kiara and Aurení, both preservice teachers at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), teaching with heart means more than just imparting knowledge; it's about creating inclusive environments where students feel valued and empowered. Drawing from their coursework and field experiences, they emphasize the importance of individualized instruction, community-building, and forging meaningful connections with students.

As we explore this theme further, we also hear from educators across various settings, who share their insights on teaching with heart. From nurturing a culture of respect and understanding to advocating for equity and inclusion, their perspectives underscore the diverse ways in which educators infuse their practice with compassion and dedication.

Moreover, we hear from alumni who reflect on their educational journeys and highlight the transformative power of teaching with heart. Their stories serve as reminders of the lasting impact educators can have on their students' lives, regardless of the educational context.

In conclusion, teaching with heart is a universal concept that transcends geographical boundaries and educational settings. It serves as the guiding principle that unites educators in their mission to nurture, inspire, and empower the next generation of learners.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

We had the privilege of consulting with Amanda Ely, a dedicated 3rd grade teacher at Cadwalader Elementary in Trenton, NJ, and the 2022-23 Educator of the Year. Ms. Ely believes teaching with heart means creating an inclusive environment where every student feels valued. For Ms. Ely, teaching with heart is about forging meaningful connections, showing empathy, and inspiring students to love learning both inside and outside the classroom.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TEACH WITH HEART?

By Amanda Ely

I feel like this is what my whole teaching philosophy revolves around and I want to get my words right but it feels impossible! Teaching with heart to me means prioritizing relationships with my students first before academics. As a child, I did not have a good home life. School was always the place I loved to be. I have always wanted to be a safe place for students no matter what they were going through.

Teaching with heart to me means meeting all of my students with compassion-loving and appreciating them for all their strengths and challenges. It means supporting them on their great days and their hard days. Even at 8 and 9 years old, I want my kids to know that I always have their back. It means genuinely caring about each individual child in my class and earning their trust and respect. Teaching from the heart means that even after the roughest day for a student that I will welcome them back with love and care. With genuine relationships and a safe classroom, students can learn in all ways-socially, emotionally, and academically.

I tell each class I have that once you're in my class, you're my kid for life. No matter how old they get, I'll always be there for them. They'll always have someone to turn to.



“With genuine relationships and a safe classroom, students can learn in all ways-socially, emotionally, and academically.”

INSIGHTS FROM COLLEAGUES

“Ms. Ely teaches with heart because not only does she care about their education but also where they come from, what they need, and she's very supportive and always have a great relationship with the families. She's very passionate about seeing them through the next year and preparing them as much as possible. An example is that she always supports her students even when they leave the classroom. It's a family mentality. This year, we went to see her student play at TCHS for girls' basketball from her first year teaching (9 years ago). The student after the game told her how thankful she was for going and that she was still the best teacher she ever had. That speaks volumes to the impact of her heart when it comes to her students.”

-- Ms. Sarni

“Ms Ely is one of the most dedicated and loving teachers I have ever worked with. She develops individual relationships with every single student she meets- not even just her own but every student in the school. She makes sure everyone knows how loved and appreciated they are through her warm, welcoming, and accepting personality. Every single child feels safe enough to take risks and grow which is the ultimate goal of every teacher. She's an inspiration!”

-- Ms. Rue



10 TIPS FOR URBAN ED. MAJORS

- 1. Get to Know Your Community:** Spend time exploring the area around your college campus to understand its culture and diversity.
- 2. Build Relationships:** Form connections with classmates, professors, and campus organizations to create a supportive network.
- 3. Value Diversity:** Embrace the differences among your peers and engage in activities that promote inclusivity on campus.
- 4. Strong Classroom Management:** Develop foundational skills in managing classrooms and working with diverse learners.
- 5. Stay Flexible:** Keep an open mind to different teaching methods and opportunities for growth as you continue your education journey.
- 6. Keep Learning:** Attend advanced education seminars or workshops to further refine your teaching techniques and stay updated on current trends in education.
- 7. Support Equality:** Advocate for inclusive policies and practices within your college community and seek opportunities to address equity issues.
- 8. Work Together:** Collaborate with peers on education-related projects or research to expand your professional network and gain valuable experience.
- 9. Take Care of Yourself:** Prioritize self-care activities and maintain a healthy work-life balance as you prepare to enter the workforce.
- 10. Prepare for Transition:** Get ready for the transition from college to the workforce by refining your resume, practicing interview skills, and researching job opportunities in urban education.

PRESERVICE TEACHER PERSPECTIVE

By Kiara F, 4th Yr Urban Ed. Secondary

What have you noticed in the field during student teaching?

I have noticed that teachers care so much about student success. Teachers may be underappreciated at times but the amount of unwavering support they provide their students should not go unnoticed. Teachers are parents, therapists, nurses, and more. They are the backbone of our society.

What are some grows & glows in the education field?

Glows: The kindness and compassion that staff shares with children can impact a kids attitude. Grows: All students are not at reading/ writing level and teachers are sometimes not meeting students where they need to be, so students get passed along until someone breaks the cycle.

What are some changes you can implement in your future classroom/ school?

I hope to prioritize social and emotional learning in my everyday teaching practices. I would like to cultivate a classroom where students question the norms and make an effort to take action.

EDUCATORS 4 EQUITY



A club focused on educating equity is crucial at the college level as it provides a platform for students to deepen their understanding of social justice issues and actively engage in creating a more equitable society. By fostering dialogue, organizing events, and advocating for inclusive policies both on and off-campus, such a club empowers students to become agents of change in their communities. Additionally, it serves as a support network for marginalized students, offering a space where their voices are heard and their experiences validated. Through collaborative efforts within the club, students can develop leadership skills, cultivate empathy, and work towards building a more just and inclusive future for all.

Fall & Spring 2023-2024 Events

Educators 4 Equity (E4E) kicked off the academic year with an engaging 'Ice Cream and Introductions' event, prompting participants to reflect on the question, 'How would you define inclusion in the classroom?' Following this, they hosted 'Churros and Conversations,' featuring a guest speaker who delved into the significance of English Language Learner (ELL) teachings. Their most recent event, 'Safe Spaces, Inclusive Places,' featured guest panelists discussing strategies to cultivate schools as safe and inclusive environments for all students, particularly those within the LGBTQ+ community.



Photo from "Churros & Conversations" Event



**FOLLOW E4E ON
INSTAGRAM**

@TCNJEDUCATORS4EQUITY

Who is E4E?

E4E provides a structured platform for students to delve into critical discussions on combatting racism and embracing anti-racist pedagogies. E4E facilitates meaningful dialogue and hosts paraprofessional events aimed at promoting equity within classrooms, fostering inclusive teaching practices, and dismantling systemic barriers to learning. Moreover, E4E offers invaluable mentoring opportunities, connecting college students with schools spanning elementary to high school levels. Through these mentorship initiatives, students gain firsthand experience in addressing educational inequities and advocating for marginalized communities. E4E empowers students to not only understand the importance of equity in education but also to actively contribute to creating more equitable learning environments both within their college community and beyond.



PASSION & PURPOSE: FACULTY PERSPECTIVE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO TEACH WITH HEART?



WHAT FUELS YOUR PURPOSE AND PASSION FOR EDUCATION?

I am coming up on my 20th year as an educator and the fuel that ignites my passion and commitment for teaching, particularly in urban contexts, is my strong belief that education has the power to transform the hearts and minds of individuals, communities, and society. Lately I have been reflecting a lot on learning, what it looks and feels like to be truly engaged in learning, the ways that schools, as institutions, have either afforded or minimized opportunities for true learning, and what even is worth learning today. I have always believed in education as an act of resistance, a form of activism, and a way to bring about collective change. But space for this seems harder and harder to find in public schools today. My work is centered on EcoJustice Education, work that teaches across content disciplines, at the intersection of environmental and social justice issues most impacting people today. This ranges from income inequality and poverty to food production and access to healthy, culturally relevant food.

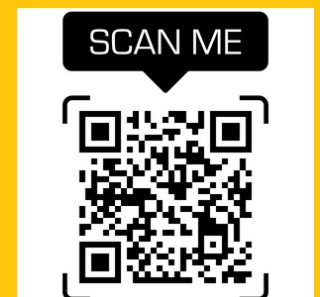
And we know, these issues are most pronounced in urban communities where disinvestment from state and local governments and the exploitation of resources and labor by powerful corporations has gutted employment opportunities and access to basic needs, including a well-funded education. But we often do not talk about or teach about these issues in schools and I think this needs to change. We can truly empower young people by centering their experiences and voices but first we need to hear about them and help them connect their experiences to the larger structural forces and institutional policies that are shaping their lives. However, we cannot forget that injustice leaves a mark and so there is a deep need for more trauma-informed and mindfulness practices to be infused into our classrooms. My hope is that a commitment to healing can make us feel more connected and in solidarity we can combat the collective suffering we are all feeling as a result of the cruel and invisible injustices we are being forced to accept as normal.

THE URBAN VOICE PODCAST

CHECK OUT THE PODCAST!



In this episode, Dr. Bellino and some 5th year Urban Ed majors gathered to discuss an article titled, "Centering Diverse Parents in the CRT Debate". They first discuss what CRT really means to future educators, and how we can use it as lens to be more culturally relevant teachers. They mention the rates at which Whites vs. Black parents feel about important topics in classrooms, privilege in the US, and many more.



TCNJ'S MIDDLE SCHOOL DAY

By Dr. Bellino



TCNJ hosted 230 8th graders from Martin Luther King Jr. Community Middle School in Trenton on Wednesday, March 27 for our 6th annual TCNJ Middle School Day and it was a huge success! We had over 100 TCNJ student mentors and over 30 academic departments and student organizations represented at our college and student org fair. The excitement when the buses arrived was contagious and despite the cold and gray day, the middle schoolers and TCNJ participants brought so much light to the day. Performances at Kendall were fun, playful, and powerful and we were so lucky to have the talented.

Chi Upsilon Sigma National Latin Sorority Inc., Ritmo Latino, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., and Jiva perform and answer questions from the students in the audience. The 8th graders moved through the rest of the day, guided and in conversation with TCNJ student mentors who brought them to eat at Eik, tour the campus and visit a college dorm, and learn about the diverse ways to engage as a college student at our interactive college and student org fair. The middle schoolers got to make vision boards, look through microscopes, play games, and make trail mix! Raffle prizes were a huge hit and a big thank you to all the faculty and departments in School of Education and across campus who donated prizes including TCNJ towels, flip flops, YA books, and more! This day is so important to the 8th graders and the principal, Victor Farnath, has shared that the students left feeling more excited about college and with a sense of hope and possibility about their futures. A huge thank you to all of the students, faculty, and staff who contributed in big and small ways to the success of the day and we look forward to hosting this event again next year!

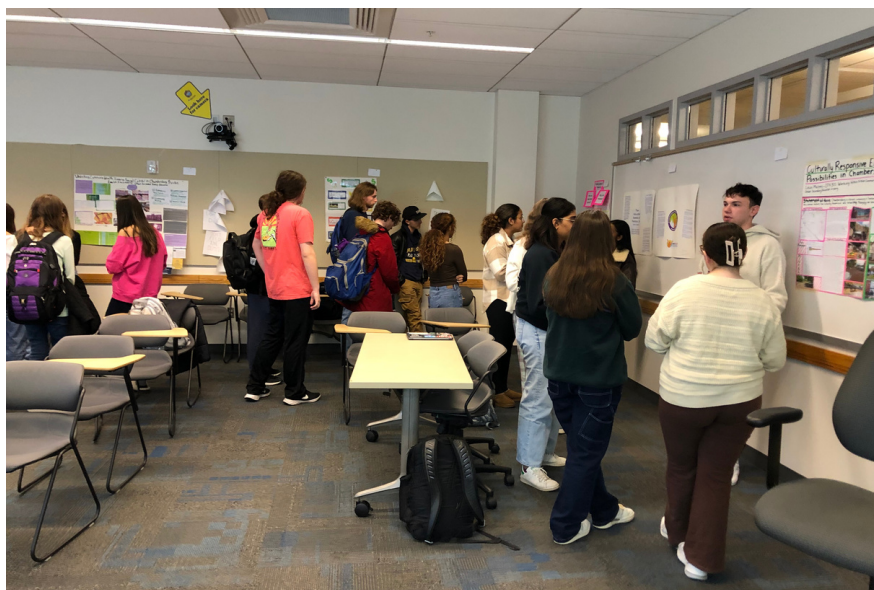


OUTREACH WITH HEART

EXPLORING THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



Dr. Salika Lawrence, embodies a passion for fostering partnerships and empowering students to engage meaningfully with urban communities. As the coordinator of urban programs such as the R.I.S.E. and the Urban Roundtable, Dr. Lawrence seeks to create collaborative learning and sharing experiences where preservice and inservice teachers cultivate communities that help to expand our collective understanding of best practices in urban education.



At TCNJ, Dr. Lawrence seeks to provide preservice teacher candidates with immersive learning experiences that bridge theory with practice. In December of 2023, upperclassmen enrolled in Dr. Lawrence's course, Working within Urban Communities, had the opportunity to showcase their research findings to first and second-year students. The presentations highlighted the benefits of community partnerships while facilitating a collaborative learning environment for preservice teachers to exchange ideas and insights about community-based assets. Through her leadership and mentorship, Dr. Lawrence continues to inspire students to explore the complexities of urban communities and identify innovative solutions to address pressing social issues.

PRESERVICE TEACHER PERSPECTIVE

By Aureni, 5th Yr Urban Ed. Elem.

What have you noticed in the field during student teaching?

Student teaching has opened my eyes to many of the great things in the field of education as well as the many hurdles we are yet to pass. I have witnessed how much teachers actually pour into what they do and the tremendous effect it has on students.

What are some grows & glows in the education field?

Glows: Many students come to school enthusiastic and ready to learn. Teachers are each others support systems!

Grows: Certain curriculums are so rigid that sometimes we lose focus of what the students truly need.

What are some changes you can implement in your future classroom/school?

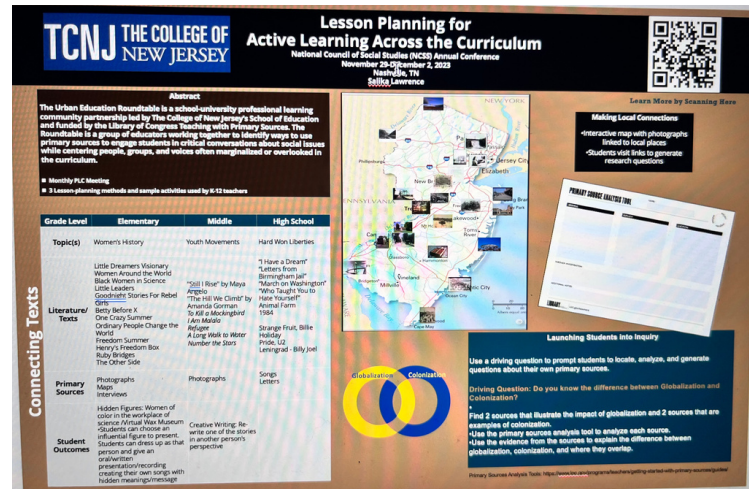
I aim to foster students' curiosity and help them become self sufficient. While the academics are important, it is even more crucial to meet students where they are and work towards meeting their needs whether those relate to academics or not.

OUTREACH WITH HEART

URBAN EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE

Dr. Salika Lawrence participated in the 2023 National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) conference to showcase outcomes from the Urban Education Roundtable. The Roundtable, which is funded by the Library of Congress, is a collaborative initiative where K-12 teachers from Hamilton Township Public Schools, Ewing Public Schools, Palmyra Public Schools, and Burlington City Public Schools can work together to co-create curriculum.

Participating teachers meet monthly during after school professional learning communities identify ways to increase the use of primary sources across content areas and to design ways to engage students in critical conversations about social issues. By centering people, groups, and voices often marginalized or overlooked in the curriculum, the Roundtable seeks to foster a more inclusive and equitable learning environments.



FUTURE EDUCATORS ACADEMY



In July 2023, the Future Educators Academy at TCNJ hosted a week-long residential summer program tailored for rising juniors and seniors from New Jersey public schools who aspire to pursue a career in education. This program is dedicated to exploring the role of social justice in education, aiming to enlighten students about the significance of teaching and the transformative potential educators possess within and beyond traditional classroom settings. The Future Educators Academy at TCNJ is committed to empowering future educators with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives necessary to enact positive change in the field of education.

CHECK OUT THIS YOUTUBE CHANNEL TO SEE FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE
FROM STAFF, STUDENTS, AND OUR FUTURE EDUCATORS!



OUTREACH WITH HEART

R.I.S.E PROGRAM



Residents for Innovation in Urban Schools & Student Empowerment (RISE) <https://rise.tcnj.edu/> exemplifies the essence of teaching with heart by prioritizing outreach and community engagement in its mission. As an urban teacher residency program, RISE not only recruits, prepares, and retains teachers for high-needs urban schools but also serves as a pathway for individuals with bachelor's degrees to earn a master's degree and teaching certification. By equipping educators with the tools and support needed to thrive in diverse urban settings, RISE embodies a commitment to nurturing talent. RISE demonstrates a heartfelt dedication to making a meaningful difference in the lives of both educators and the students they serve.



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START YOUR JOURNEY TO TEACH WITH HEART!

