

THE URBAN VOICE

TCNJ Urban Education Newsletter

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Issue 3 | May 2023



TAKING ACTION

The Urban Voice Newsletter 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 2023 Editorial Team:
Dr. Salika Lawrence, Janelyn Rodriquez, Evangelina Santos, Caitlin Viggiano

INTERVIEW WITH INTERIM DEAN

"Everyone says equity, inclusion, diversity, justice. Everybody wants that. They say they want it, but I want us really looking at our programs, our syllabi, our courses to say, are we walking the talk?"



When first entering TCNJ, did you ever see yourself becoming the dean? How do you feel as the new Dean of Education?

I'm still figuring some stuff out. I'm going to give myself more time to figure out what I'm good at. Where I can use some support and then when they post it decide whether or not I'm going to do that or go back to being faculty, which I also love. I'm learning a lot which is cool. I'm getting to learn about a lot of people and programs and initiatives that were happening across the entire School of Education that I didn't always know about because I was sort of in that Urban Ed bubble. So, it's given me a new appreciation for, all the faculty and staff and students across the School of Ed. I also have gotten to know people at the state level; people from the New Jersey Department of Ed, people from other colleges who are also faculty and staff. I'm getting to see what Rowan is doing, what Rutgers is doing, and getting to see how we can help each other out. It is a lot. I think Dean McCotter made things look easy. I mean she had it down. I certainly did not fully appreciate how many plates she was spinning until I got in the seat.

What impact are you hoping to make?

What I really would like in the next year or so while I have this, I would like to get the whole School of Ed on the same page in terms of what it means to be equity literate. So that across the board we [are] not only saying the things but are we doing the things. Everyone says equity inclusion, diversity, justice, everybody wants that. They say they want it, but I want us really looking at our programs, our syllabi, our courses to say are we walking the talk, so if a year from now I felt like everyone did that real reflective work and maybe made some revisions to courses, syllabi, sought out support or workshops, training where they need it. Things like that so we are really walking the talk. That is what I really want the impact to be. I think that if we are doing that and students feel it and then they talk to other people, and be like "yeah this is the place to come". If they say they believe this, we know it because we feel it. That's where I would like to encourage, and I think that I said before that I think there are people across the School that want and believe the same thing. I don't think it's a heavy lift. I actually think it's more about helping everybody see how we can easily connect the dots.



THE URBAN VOICE PODCAST



TCNJ'S 1ST-GEN PROGRAM

Interview with Stacy Muema

The TCNJ First Generation Program was established in the Fall of 2021. From Fall 2021 through Spring 2022, they worked with Julia Melito as the first graduate assistant to lay the groundwork for this program. Stacy Muema will be the second first-generation graduate student from Fall 2022 through Spring 2023.

How is this program "taking action" for its students?

This initiative is "taking action" by developing programs to bring together the college's first-generation population. It is also collaborating with other on-campus organizations and partners to create a network for first-generation students at TCNJ. This program creates spaces that so rarely exist for the first generation to come together, create friendships, and mentorships, and grow personally and professionally. Some recent events include the First-Gen Coffee Hour Kicker, FAFSA Renewal, and First Gen T-Shirt Giveaway. The biggest takeaway from these events was that every First-Gen student's experience is different; while there tend to be some common themes in experiences, it is so important to ask instead of assuming. Also, it is clear from these events that it is incredibly important to continue building this connected community of First-Gen students, staff, and faculty.

What are some future plans students can look forward to in the future? Is there anything else you would like to add or mention about the program efforts in the school?

Students can look forward to building a stronger First-Gen community while having fun and meeting new friends. They can also look forward to being inducted into Alpha Alpha Alpha (Tri Alpha) First Generation Honor Society. Increased resources and academic programming, social events, and celebrating more First-Gen contributions on campus. This program hopes to increase access to available campus resources for its students. You can help by serving as a connection and referral source, or celebrating First Gen by hosting programs/initiatives that cater to specific needs.

MALE PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHING

By Matt L. 5th yr., Special Ed & English

What encouraged you to pursue a career as an educator?

I think there were a few things that helped lead me to pursuing a career as an educator. I had a bunch of great teachers in my life that have shown me how much you can change someone's life. They made such a difference in mine, and I wanted to follow in their footsteps and have the opportunity to do that for someone else. I think that the idea of also helping others has been a huge goal in my life for the future, and I found that teaching would be the best way to do that for me. I also have a passion for working with individuals with disabilities.

What are you most passionate about in education?

Besides creating genuine connections with my students, I think that I am most passionate about helping my students grow to where they want to be and beyond where they think they can grow. I would like to instill the mindset that any student can do anything they set their mind to. Too many people forget this mindset as we grow older. By getting them to their next level and helping them become the best they can be, I would feel that I am succeeding and that is what I'm passionate about doing as I further myself in my career.

TCNJ'S LIONESS LEADERS LUNCH

By. Evangelina S.

TCNJ's Lioness Leaders Lunch was a marvelous opportunity to highlight the leaders of our College during Women's History Month in 2023. All of the academic deans, including interims, were women this AY 2022-2023, and eager to share their experiences of entering higher education. Present and engaging in powerful conversations was the School of Education's very own Interim Dean Dr. Tabitha Dell'Angelo. In a round-robin-like discussion with juices and pastries, Dr. Dell'Angelo described various avenues of her career, showing students that she has not only been in the classroom leading instruction, but also engaged in her local Board of Education, advocating for rights of students in a space where many are not ready to hear their voices. Dr. Dell'Angelo is very passionate about her work, and shared a reminder to students, especially towards future educators, to remember what we do it all for. As educators, we are tasked with the responsibility of not just teaching the future, but also nourishing students' passions and motivating them to be the best they can be. When the days feel long and sight of the goal is lost, remembering that there are so many children who need us is something that inspires Dr. Dell'Angelo, and surely countless other passionate educators around the world.

MALE PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHING

By Cesar G., 4th Yr Elem. Music Major

What are you most passionate about in education?

I am passionate about being around students, helping them prosper and find opportunities. A teacher not only teaches their respective subjects but also teaches life and how to be a human being. Teachers have immense power and I want to use it to help build the next generation. That is my passion in education.

What type of teacher do you hope to be?

One whose lessons live on even after my time is done. A teacher that inspires students and the community to be better.

What advice would you give to someone who is entering the teaching profession?

One of my mentors told me that, "The minute you lose sight of the kids, your time is done. Hand in your license." If someone is entering into education for money, or personal gain; choose something else. Education is for the people that are ready to get their hands dirty, be underappreciated and have to fight for what they believe in. The feeling of having successful students is something different though, and to me it is worth going through all that.

URBAN ED MEET & GREET

CO-COORDINATORS OF URBAN ED

Dr. Burroughs



Dr. Bertrand



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Dr. Burroughs and Dr. Bertrand, the new co-coordinators of the Urban Elementary and Early Childhood Education (EECE) programs, joined us in their new positions early in the semester. The new coordinators organized a meet and greet in the Education building. The event kicked off with a number of icebreakers to get the Urban Ed students acquainted with their new coordinators. The coordinators of EECE Urban Ed provided a welcoming environment in which students could express their views and opinions on the program. Innovative suggestions were made to strengthen the connection within the program. We are excited for what this dynamic duo can bring to this new chapter of the EECE Urban Education programs.

-/

SOE: STUDENTS OF COLOR EVENT



What are some initiatives that you are hoping to set in place?

A few initiatives that we are hoping to set in place in the future are a student and faculty mixer, where students will be able to connect with faculty and staff of color and learn from their experiences in the field, network, and get some good advice. Additionally, we plan to host more events to help form connections within this community with their peers of color in the education department, for example movie nights, craft nights, karaoke and more.



What impact are you hoping to have?

We want to leave a long lasting legacy on the School of Education and for Students of Color studying to be educators. We want to ensure that through the creation of this space and events that students have a space to share experiences, feel seen and heard, and appreciated.



Interview w/ Cielo Salgado Cowan & Meera Bhatt

What motivated you to host an event for Students of Color in the SOE?

While there were many reasons that motivated us to create this event for Students of Color in the SOE, the main reason was to help our fellow students find community, something we so desperately were searching for. We wanted a space to come together and share our experiences of being Students of Color at a predominantly white institution specifically in a program with few people of color.

Why is this important for students in the School of Education to have?

The creation of this space in the School of Education is extremely important because it allows for us to find community with our peers and feel less isolated at a school and within a profession where we are a minority. By coming together, sharing experiences and finding solace and comfort with each other, we can work together to educate our peers about the importance of people of color in education and how they can better support us.

ROSCOE EDUCATORS PROGRAM

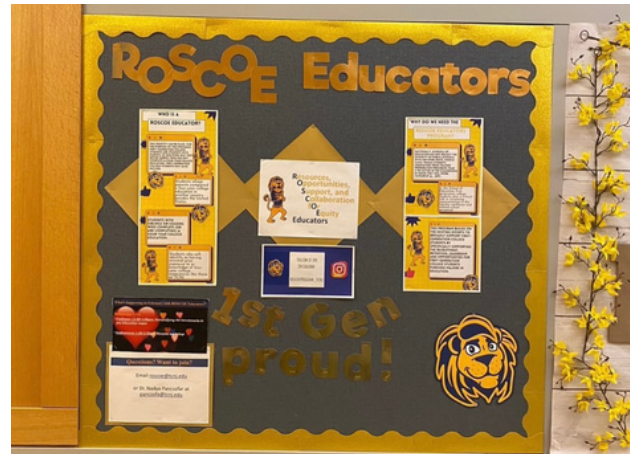
"How could we make the School of Education a more positive and equitable space for our first-generation college students who wanted to be educators?"



Why was the Roscoe Educators program created?

In 2021, with support from then-Dean Suzanne McCotter, I worked with two student researchers to learn more. My student researchers interviewed 20 first-generation college students majoring in Education and I learned so much! I knew I wanted to create a program for first-generation college students within the School of Education that allowed us to expand on the great work being done by our colleagues across campus and to focus this work on academic and professional areas in Education. It was important though that this group be rooted in the actual lived experiences of first-gen SOE students, and so we took everything we learned from our research study and put it into the ROSCOE Educators program.

I think the ROSCOE Educators program is "taking action" to center the experiences of first-generation college students in the School of Education. It is creating community, but also centralizing conversations and resources that can sometimes be difficult to find for first-generation college students. We hope these actions help to smooth the adjustment to college for students in their first two years and to support students to dream big and to seek out research and leadership opportunities in academic and professional settings while they are here at TCNJ and after they graduate as well.



What are some events that the program hosted? What impact did it have?

The ROSCOE Educators meet in a variety of ways. We meet as a full community three times in a semester: at a Kickoff, a Study break, and an End of the Semester party. These events help to build students' networks and connections with other first-generation college students at all stages in completing their major, as well as with faculty and staff from inside and outside of the SOE. We also meet in small cohorts by year and have more structured (but still relaxed) conversations around topics like workshopping resumes, study abroad opportunities, getting to know the Financial Aid Office, pursuing leadership opportunities and advanced degrees in Education, and on and on. These topics are guided by feedback from the ROSCOE Educators and peer leaders and we try to tailor these sessions to the needs of our groups.

ROSCOE EDUCATORS PROGRAM

BEING A ROSCOE PEER LEADER

By: Aureni E. 4th Yr Urban Elem Spanish

Throughout these past few years at TCNJ, I have created great relationships and found a home away from home. When I am asked about these close relationships, I can't help but think of the family I have found through ROSCOE's Educators program. I was introduced to it by Dr. Dell'Angelo, who believed I would be a great peer leader to first-generation college students like myself. Through this program, education students are offered the support they need to become their best and most powerful selves at TCNJ. As a peer leader, I have been exposed to so many opportunities to grow as an individual and use my knowledge to help positively impact others. I have guided my mentees through goal-setting activities, introducing them to new clubs and being another layer of support and encouragement.



Being a peer leader has allowed me to step out of my comfort zone and take leadership positions in programs that are close to my heart. Our amazing ROSCOE coordinator, Dr. Pancsofar, has created a safe space for all first-generation college students to ask questions and connect with others who share similar experiences. I can truly say that I have found a loving family who understands me and where I come from. I am excited to keep sharing my knowledge through my role as a peer-leader and gaining more experience as I go.



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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: MARISSA LOGIUDICE

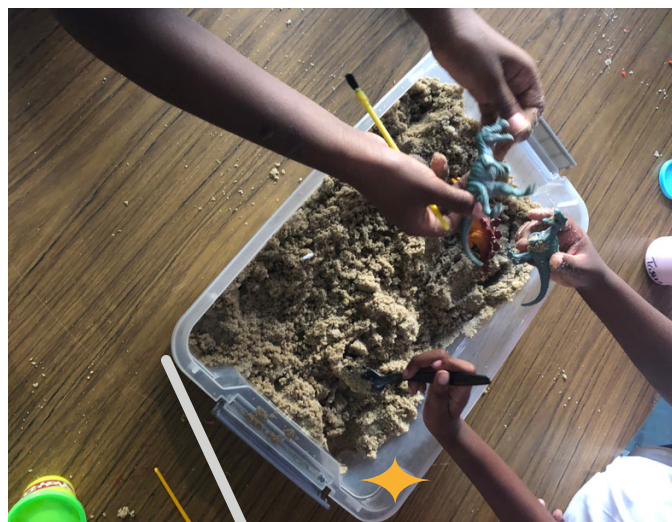


On October 25th, Dr. Dell'Angelo and her class hosted an outdoor playday event and the students from Sprout were able to come! I knew I had to stop by to see the kids there. They had the best time with the children's musical artist, outdoor games, and indoor craft play. I wish I could have them on campus more because not only is it fun, it is a way to encourage them to further their education by exposing them to what college is like. Not to mention TCNJ is only an 8 minute drive from Sprout, so very local!

One of my biggest goals was to have our organization provide mentoring/tutoring/volunteer more with Sprout. However, as everyone knows college life is busy so it was a challenge trying to coordinate with group members a good time to go there. Instead, as a group we implemented Pen Pals with the upper grades at Sprout. Writing letters back and forth was a way to provide mentoring by asking questions, sharing our interests and goals, and simply being a positive influence for them as well as a way for them to practice their writing skills.

Since the summer I have been volunteering at a nearby small private school, Sprout U School of Arts. Dr. Dell'Angelo had given me the connection and recommendation to collaborate with them as TCNJ Educators4Equity's community partner! I have been having the best time working with their students and teachers as well as doing some of my own lessons with their elementary students. The school's director, Ms. Danielle is the most kindhearted person and I truly admire her dedication to the school. She welcomed me with open arms to her "Sprout family". They are always looking for more volunteers so please reach out to me if interested. I have been planning all sorts of activities for the kids with a focus on fun science experiments. See the pictures! The biggest joy for me is seeing the kids getting hands on and happy about learning.

To begin the semester with our new partnership between TCNJ's student-led organization Educators4Equity and Sprout, we hosted a back to school supplies drive. I was so happy so many people donated things and we were able to support their students.



BUILD YOUR TEACHING TOOLBOX

MALE PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHING

By Brady K. 5th Yr. Secondary History

What encouraged you to pursue a career as an educator?

I always had it in the back of my mind, maybe that can be fun. I originally wanted to do graphic design, something artistic and creative. Sat down in the classes and couldn't do it. So I tried education. I got into the Urban Ed program and thought this was awesome. I can still use the creative side of everything I like and bring it to the classroom and foster that in the classroom and hopefully make little creative beings.

What are you most passionate about in education?

I feel like empowering the students. I can help students by giving them the tools to do something with the content they receive. Growing up school was, whatever, middle of nowhere, teachers and students don't care. I feel like I got here and started to do the endless readings and what changed it all was the book *The Racial Contract* when I started Urban Ed and it opened my eyes that there is more to this.



"We saw that there's this gap in this need, and we had the drive and the motivation to fill it; and we wanted to do it right."

What inspired your research interest in preparing new teachers?

I think it was just that I'm a teacher at heart. When I left the classroom, it was the hardest decision I ever made; when I left teaching high school. I was like, if I'm going to go and get my Phd., and do teacher education, I wanted to do practical work for practicing teachers. I think I had to get my feet wet at TCNJ. I think it was my second year at TCNJ where we're like, let's do this. It wasn't like the seed had been planted even before I got there and then Dr. Connolly [was] a willing collaborator in this. We're like we're just gonna make this happen because we saw the need, and we wanted to. I mean Dr. Connolly talks about this quote a lot: "If you don't see the book that you want, you write it."

What impact do you hope these books have?

Our dream was to sort of have this Teaching Toolbox community and within this community we would have teachers all over who are trying out these strategies, and then talking about how they use them, different ways that they adapted them, and ways that they felt like it could work for them: "I need to actually do this," or "I love elements of it, but I want to do it differently." We wanted to create in some ways kind of a starting place for teachers who are more novice and more veteran, who were, just able to sort of try new things or get reintroduced to things they've done in the past, and then create that dialogue to just figure out what you know. How can we continue to make this grow and improve? We're not saying publishing books like this is the only way to do something. We hope that people read it. It's more like, here's an idea of how you can do it, and here are ways other people have done it, and hopefully, this will spark. This will provide a foundation that will provide a spark for you to make it your own in some way.



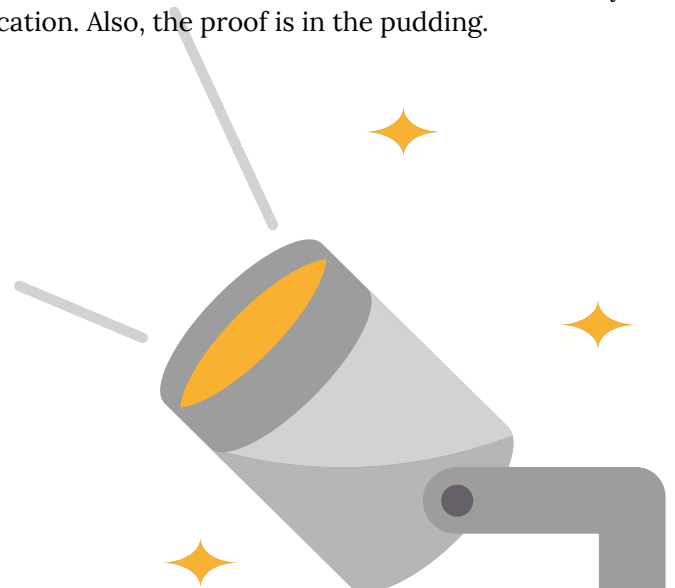
Check out more at

<https://buildyourteachingtoolbox.com/>

STUDENT TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: CESAR GONZALEZ



I had the honor to serve 7th-8th graders at Holland Middle school in Trenton, New Jersey. I remember waking up every morning happy to go to class and teach. I taught general music and instrumental band during my experience. The students impacted me on a philosophical, educational, and personal level, there was never a dull moment at Holland. A wise teacher told me that “the proof is in the pudding”, and what he meant by that is anyone can talk a big game but it does not mean anything if you can not prove it in the classroom. I believe that a lot of the lessons I taught were impactful and will stay with my students for the rest of their lives. This is because I have a firm belief that every lesson taught by an educator should help shape the character of the students. Through music, I would ask questions that would question the morality of my students, bring something new to light or just constantly make sure that they uphold the expectations my cooperating teacher and I set. My co-op and I went from 12 instrumentalists in the band to 60 by the end of October. I remember constantly having students come up to me every day, “Gonzalez, let me stay in your classroom” or “Gonzalez, what are you doing today?”. I would find students that were not even interested in music in my classroom. I would ask them why they’re here and they would say, “because it’s fun in here”. No matter what subject a teacher is teaching; as long as they are relatable and “cool” the students will sit down and listen/learn anything. I say all this to bring it full circle to say, I hope my story inspires future educators interested in inner-city education. Also, the proof is in the pudding.



TAKING ACTION WITH E4E

“What is something that you wish you knew about classroom equity before getting into education? What can be done about it?”



**Janelyn - 4th yr Urban
Elem & Sociology**

As an ambitious urban educator entering the profession, I wish I understood how rich a learning environment can be as a result of an equitable classroom. Personally, as a kid growing up in an urban area, my K-12 education was not the finest. It appeared that if you did not match the mold, you would be excluded from the learning process. Classroom equality addresses curriculum, personal prejudice, classroom instruction, resources, and a variety of other issues. What are the possibilities? The teacher is crucial in establishing a fair classroom. To take things a step further, the school has actual authority to guarantee that instructors promote an equitable atmosphere. Teachers can only do so much if they are not given the necessary resources to guarantee that every kid, regardless of background, has a positive learning experience. Teachers participating in Project Citizen, which teaches students how to fight for social justice in a real-world setting, jumping through real-world hoops to see real results., can help teach students to fight for their education. Project Citizen encourages students to enact change through public policy and legislation in order to see actual, long-term change. Ensuring an equitable classroom may be accomplished through the educational system and the removal of obstacles that prevent it.

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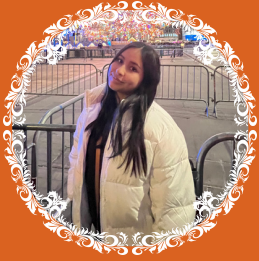
Coming into the educational field, I wish I knew how there is a communication barrier between ESL students and staff/admin. Being an ELL learner myself, I always felt like my issues were dismissed and I wasn't really understood. But now being a future educator myself working part-time at a school I have realized just how big this gap between staff and ELL students is. I have seen students struggle to fit in the schools because schools do not accommodate to the needs of English Language Learners. Schools fail to realize that levels 1-2 are constantly left out of conversations when they are not provided a translator for assemblies and their family members are not emailed or called in their native language. It is the schools responsibility to ensure that students feel advocated for and more often than not they are left out of the conversation.

I think that ELL concerns should be advocated for by teachers within their own classrooms and that admin should follow through with working with said teachers to better serve the ELL population. ELL educators working closely with staff should aim not only to bridge the communication gap but also to celebrate student achievement and celebrate culture and heritage would help ELL students feel welcomed. Often times only the struggles are talked about in ELL, what about all the successes that ELL produce? Lastly, I think parent involvement should be one of the most important parts, ensuring that parents are aware of their childs strengths and or weaknesses so grades do not come as a surprise. To better the educational field for English Language Learners would create a better environment for all because the accommodations and strategies created for them could also be applied to general ed students.



**Kiara - 3rd yr Urban
Secondary & English**

TAKING ACTION WITH E4E



**Melany - 2nd yr
Urban Ed Elem &
ISTEM**

“ I wish I had realized, when I initially decided to pursue a career in teaching, that only you can establish the most equitable classroom for your students since you are their advocate and you know them best. When I decided to pursue a degree in teaching, I was oblivious to the inequality and unfairness students face in the classroom. As an aspiring urban educator, when I became aware of these disparities through a variety of channels, I was determined that obtain the greatest education possible so that I could provide my future students with the equal classroom they deserve. To provide students with the equitable classroom they deserve, it is crucial to recognize that no two classrooms will resemble one another. A teacher once informed me, “What my \colleagues might teach in one day, I may have to teach in three, and that’s alright as long as my goal is clear and I am fulfilling my students’ needs,” which I frequently consider and implement as an aspiring educator. In order to give the most effective support to your students, a teacher must also take the effort to do what is best as an educator, such as reading individualized education plans (IEPs), learning their students preferred learning methods, likes, dislikes, etc. In addition to making your classroom more inclusive, it is crucial to be confident and knowledgeable about why you are modifying or differentiating lessons and assessing how this will impact your students in order for them to reach their goals. ”

“ I wish that I had known that although a lot about classroom equity is contextual and teacher-based, there are still things people in any community can and should do in order to promote a more equitable classroom environment, even as a student. When I was a student on an undecided career path, I never connected social justice issues to my educational reality and therefore missed out on the chance to improve my school experience by becoming a more active participant in the hidden workings of my district, from avenues like student government to board meetings pertinent to my daily life. My previous hesitance to learn more about learning equitably not only hindered me as an aspiring teacher, but almost assuredly silently promoted a status quo where many others were silenced without solidarity. I believe this issue is more relevant in 2023 than ever, given recent waves of book bannings and “anti-CRT” pushes across the nation that marginalize many people from truly believing they can change their educational systems of power by themselves.

I think that this dilemma can be improved by spreading awareness of why student advocacy is useful for anyone (rather than solely those interested in teaching or padding out their resume), initiating mandatory transparency of important school decisions while widening accessibility to providing input, and by giving students and locals greater agency in affecting policy and educational research on all levels of government. However, this movement would have to be an organized push from adults and students alike and must persist until everyone’s voice is heard and valued in making pedagogical decisions. This form of advocacy at any scale (micro or macro) might have also allowed my past self to empathize with my teachers more and fostered nuance and critical thinking on the universal significance of the ongoing multidimensional education process. ”



**Anish - 2nd yr Urban
Secondary & Math**

EDUCATORS 4 EQUITY



Educators 4 Equity goal is to offer college students opportunities to discuss ways to combat racism and engage in anti-racist pedagogies. They host paraprofessional events geared towards reaching equity in the classroom as well as offer students mentoring opportunities with schools varying from elementary to high schools.



Educators 4 Equity has hosted several interesting events throughout the 2022-2023 academic year such as a school drive, tutoring opportunities for various schools in the Trenton and Ewing areas, and hosting the Cookies & Critiques discussions to facilitate inclusive conversations on the meaning of an equitable classroom.



Educators for Equity's latest event was a partnership with the Roscoe Educator's program where they had a panel with faculty and students. In this event they talked about professionalism and unpacking its standards in society.



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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.

SCAN ME



ATOM STEAM CAMP

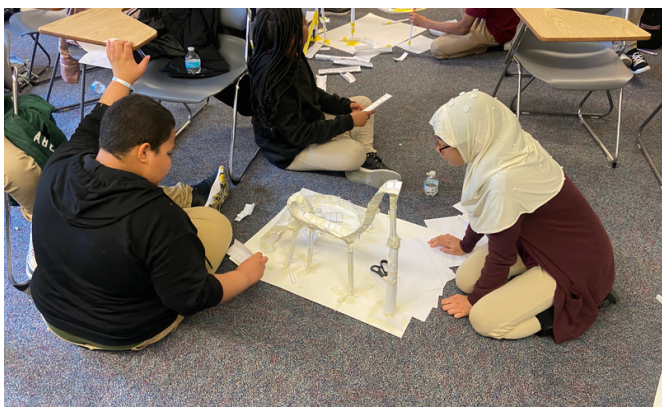
Arts and Technology for Optimizing Academic Motivation Science Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics

By. Caitlin V. 5th yr, Urban Secondary & History



On March 31, 2023, under Dr. Lawrence's guidance and with several other talented pre-service teachers (Melany Gallo, Isabella Pappano, Janelyn Rodriguez, Carmelina Sanchez, and Angela Surace), I participated in TCNJ Urban Education's 2nd annual ATOM* STEAM** Camp. We had the pleasure of hosting 40 middle and high school students from Paterson, NJ. This camp was an amazing opportunity to get students involved in an interactive, hands-on, scientific project.

Students were engaged with designing and building roller coasters out of paper, in which they had to run a "cart" (marble) through. Students were challenged in engineering practices where they had to come up with plans, collaborate with others, and implement their designs into a real-life prototype! It was amazing to see students excited to "do" science. As we continue to reflect on this opportunity, we hope to improve the camp and host more in the future.



At the end of the camp, we took students around for a tour of the campus. One of the most rewarding moments of this experience was when one 8th grade student expressed, "I know where I want to end up in 4 years!" referring to TCNJ. It truly felt amazing to know that we were able to inspire someone to be excited about their academic future.

To Tell The Truth : The Power of Children's Literature

"It was so wonderful to see our students so inspired by Tami Charles life and work. Her message about the importance of filling our classrooms with diverse stories connected with our future teachers!"

- Dr. Peel



FOLLOW @LITERACYADVANCEMENTPROJECT

"The event provided me with a social justice mindset that will inspire my future teaching. I am thankful that I could attend."

-Jess Lazar, Secondary Special Ed English, Junior.

"I was so inspired to listen to author Tami Charles and learn about how it's so important to have diverse and inclusive books for children's literature. Representation is so important in the classroom, so it was great to listen to Tami and her experiences as an educator and author."

-Matthew Yuro, Sophomore, Special Education, Elementary Education, and History

The Literacy Advancement Project held an event called To Tell the Truth: The Power of Children's Literature. The literacy justice initiative event took place on April 27th, 2023. Tami Charles, bestselling novelist, spoke and signed books. Directed by Dr. Anne Peel, the LAP assists children, families, and educators in improving literacy development and achievement for all kids.



"It was inspiring to hear author Tami Charles talk about how her background shaped the person and author she is today. As a future educator, it was also amazing to hear the role her students played in her journey to getting published. "

- Madee Russomanno, Junior, Urban Secondary English Ed

"The presentation and luncheon with author Tami Charles was insightful and very interesting. I loved hearing about how her background led her to becoming an author"
- Meera Bhatt freshman ECE/psych/sped



CHECK THIS OUT!



OUR MISSION

Reach a Child Raise a Leader Restore Community

We equip Trenton's children and young adults with the skills necessary for academic achievement, life management, spiritual growth and Christian leadership in the context of a caring and supportive community.



STREETLEADERS & COLLEGEBOUND

Teen employment program with a focus on academics

We hire teens to serve as mentors and leaders to the younger students, so UPT is often their first employer.

In addition we provide academic support and help prepare teens to go on to college or a trade.



AFTERSCHOOL & SUMMERCAMP PROGRAMS

Our core programs for kids grades 1-8

UPT provides FREE school year and summer programs for children. With a philosophy of education that begins with a love of reading, we provide academic and social supports in a safe, caring environment.



EAST TRENTON COLLABORATIVE

A partnership in a vital neighborhood

The East Trenton Collaborative is a community organizing initiative in the East Trenton neighborhood of Trenton's North Ward. UPT serves as a fiduciary partner & run programs that benefit the neighborhood.



THE NUMBERS

Program Statistics

Camp Truth & Camp Grace are our two sites
135 students grades 1-8 served throughout the year

40 teens participate as StreetLeaders

32,000 meals served

1344 hours of tutoring

378 hours of reading groups

UrbanPromise Trenton 801 West State Street Trenton NJ 08618 urbanpromisetrenton.org