Culturally Responsive Teaching Fuels Urban Education Elementary Teacher

Hometown | Camp Hill, Pennsylvania
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Education | M.Ed. ‘07, Urban Accelerated Certificate and Master's (UACM), Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA
  | B.A., ‘01 Christian Ministries, Messiah College, Grantham, PA
Job Title | Elementary Teacher, Kindergarten/Physical Education
Employer | Atlanta Public Schools

“As a white male teacher, the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy course taught me to respect, acknowledge and learn to appreciate the diversity of all students.”

Ryan Harry, M.Ed. ‘07

My life’s calling is to work with kids
Prior to moving to Atlanta with my wife, I worked with kids as a youth minister. While this was rewarding, I wanted a career working with young people in a different capacity. After settling into Atlanta’s West End neighborhood, I initially volunteered in a fifth grade classroom for a year in my community. The following year, I became a paraprofessional/teacher’s assistant at a charter school. This experience - coupled with a desire to make a difference in my neighborhood - encouraged me to become a certified teacher, and that’s what led me to the UACM program.

Teaching a full academic year was priceless
With nine years of teaching experience, I’ve observed countless student teachers from universities that don’t require a year of teaching prior to graduating. As a student teacher in the UACM program, I taught a full academic year, which prepared me to be successful my first year in the classroom. Being observed and receiving consistent feedback from my mentor teachers and supervisors, developing and implementing lessons plans and working directly with students helped me reflect on my teaching and grow as an educator.

Prepared to be a change agent and social activist
Culturally responsive pedagogy - a student-centered approach to teaching that nurtures pupils’ culture to promote achievement and a sense of well-being about their cultural place in the world - are tenets of the graduate program. Faculty stress the importance of teachers being change agents in public schools, and we’re taught to take our interests and skills and figure out how they relate to the students. If I hadn’t learned this, I would not have thought about those things and surely would have stumbled as a novice teacher.

THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT GRADUATES ABOUT

800 STUDENTS EACH YEAR

OF THOSE, MORE THAN

400 ARE TEACHERS