CU Denver School of Education & Human Development

PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL MASTER'S DEGREE"



THIS ISSUE



PERSONALIZED PROFESSIONAL $\pmb{MASTERSDEGREE}^{^{m}}$

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FRONT AND BACK COVER

Photos of CU Denver early childhood education students and faculty member Cristina Gillanders at Clayton Early Learning, partner school with CU Denver

PHOTOGRAPHY

Edge is published annually by the University of Colorado Denver School of Education & Human Development for college alumni and friends. Send correspondence to Julia Cummings, CU Denver School of Education & Human Development, Campus Box 106, P.O. Box 173364, Denver, CO 80217-3364.

A LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dear alumni, colleagues and friends of the School of Education & Human Development,

THIS ISSUE OF EDGE features some of our many talented doctoral students who, along with their faculty mentors, are addressing some of the most pressing challenges in our Colorado educational landscape. We are pleased to share with you that our EdD doctoral program has grown in size and scope of offerings. This year's cohort is a record number—79 students! With a continuing focus on equity and leadership in education, our doctoral students can choose among contemporary areas of focus such as opportunities to achieve for Latino/a students, executive leadership or urban communities and families, as well as disciplinary foci such as STEM education and early childhood education.

We have also featured the many strategic ways we continue to work toward a more diverse educator workforce by addressing the most persistent issues of equity that constrain the opportunities to achieve in all of our communities. For example, Dr. Luis Poza's newly approved Bilingual Education Specialist endorsement is described in this issue. Dual language learning is a valuable asset—if students have teachers prepared to support them.

Another place to report great momentum is in the area of early care and education (ECE), my own professional field. We have designed a set of highly responsive pathways for ECE professionals as the state and the nation work to advance the preparation of the ECE workforce:

- » A bachelor's in ECE leading to licensure prepares teachers for pre-K to grade three classrooms. This program, like all of our teacher prep programs, emphasizes and supports deep clinical experiences.
- » A bachelor's in birth-to-five teaching (without license) is offered to those who know they want to teach in the earliest years of children's lives in community-based preschools and childcare centers.
- » A bachelor's in birth-to-five leadership and administration prepares those who would like to direct or manage ECE programs.
- » An alternative birth-to-grade-three licensure pathway in our ASPIRE to Teach program which allows a candidate to secure a position of record and enter into our highly supported alternative licensure pathway.
- » A bachelor's in Human Development and Family Relations (HDFR) prepares our undergraduates to work in community-based social service, governmental and nonprofit settings related to diverse communities and families. We also have a HDFR minor for students in other fields (e.g., pre-medicine and business) who want to shape their career plans around families and communities.
- » For those who already hold a bachelor's degree and wish to advance their knowledge, SEHD offers a master's in Early Childhood Education (with an online option offered every two years) and a Personalized Professional Master's Degree. We also offer certificates, endorsements, PhD, EdD and principal licensure concentrations that focus on early childhood education.



The field of ECE has been working on elevating the preparation of the workforce for many years. It is a commonly held belief that the best-prepared teachers correlate strongly with the best outcomes for children. I have spent my whole professional career in roles that support these professionalism goals; since moving to Colorado four years ago, I have been co-chairing Colorado's Early Childhood Professional Development Task Force of the Race to the Top Initiative. Colorado has a vibrant and dedicated community of leaders working to reach national and local goals for the field. It has been a privilege to work inside this community of colleagues.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of Edge and will share my excitement and pride around all of our school's accomplishments and growth!

Take care,

Rebecca Kantor Dean

Replan Koust



ayla Baca, ECE student, and Cristina Gillanders, associate professor in ECE, with children



HANNON HAGERMAN, PHD, was the type of principal you would hope to have at your children's school.

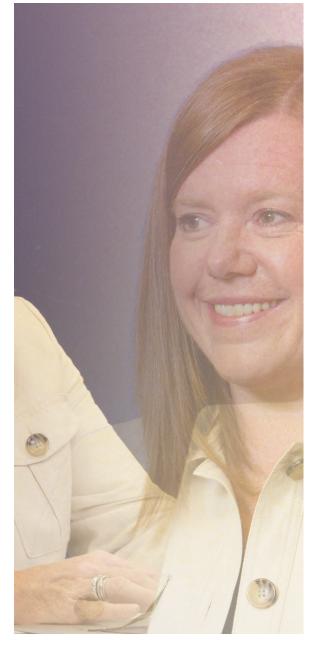
In 2004, she took a failing Denver elementary school and turned it around, taking it from the brink of closure and transforming it into a neighborhood success story. During her seven-year tenure at the school, she also finished her PhD and had two children.

Now she has brought her deep experience as a teacher, principal and administrator to CU Denver's School of Education & Human Development (SEHD), where she will serve as the executive director of professional development and continuing education.

"CU Denver is uniquely positioned within the community to be very responsive to the needs of schools, districts and learners in Colorado," Hagerman said. "One of the main factors behind my decision to come to CU Denver was Dean Rebecca Kantor. She's inspiring and a visionary, and that's exciting for me."

"I Cared More About Kids"

A self-described "big skier," Hagerman moved to Colorado 22 years ago, lured by the mountains and a CU Boulder program that offered a master's degree in education and teaching licensure.



In 2004, when she took over Montclair Elementary School, the school had many challenges including dwindling enrollment, poor student achievement, discipline problems, racial tensions and a disenfranchised community.

"It was clear to us in the neighborhood what was at stake," Hagerman said. "We went through an exhaustive turnaround and righted the ship."

Under her leadership, the school more than doubled student enrollment, posted double-digit gains in student achievement and became the first school in the state to earn innovation status.

"It was really powerful, a very special time," Hagerman said. "We had a group of great teachers and parents."

With 32 credits already under her belt after earning her principal's license, Hagerman figured it would be smart to continue her graduate education and finish her PhD. Completing the degree also provided her with the first name on her list of professional references—U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet, whom she worked with when he was serving as DPS superintendent.

"I would be hard pressed to think of someone



Christopher Garcia, Shannon Hagerman and Jenna Ronnebaum collaborating on Office of Continuing Education projects.

myself in a university position."

In her position overseeing partnership preparation programs for DPS, Hagerman learned more about the faculty and administration at SEHD. She was struck by the depth of knowledge and experience of the faculty. She also noted the willingness of the faculty to consider multiple perspectives in an effort to respond to the needs of students and to forge far-reaching relationships with people in the field of education.

Her respect for SEHD and Dean Kantor led to discussions of more ways to collaborate. "I would bring the dean an idea," Hagerman said. "Her response was always immediately, 'That's interesting. Let's think more about this."

The partnership led to NxtGEN, an \$8.5 million five-year teacher preparation grant from the U.S. Department of Education Teacher Quality Partnership Grant program, which is being used to

CU DENVER IS UNIQUELY POSITIONED WITHIN THE COMMUNITY TO BE VERY RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF SCHOOLS, DISTRICTS AND LEARNERS

Her first teaching job was in the first- and secondgrade classes of Adams County School District 50. Through an acquaintance, she was recruited by Apple during the company's push to dominate the education PC market. She represented Apple's education products in the five-state Mountain West region, but ultimately she decided to return to her roots in education.

"I cared more about kids and their outcomes than about how many computers got sold," she said. "I wanted to get back to the kids."

"A Very Special Time"

In 1999, Hagerman got "back to the kids" by joining Denver Public Schools (DPS) as an educational technology specialist. Colleagues encouraged her to get her principal's license, and with some reluctance, she did. She applied for just one principal's job. Even today, she sounds surprised that she was hired.

who has a more balanced, sincere perspective," Hagerman said. "He cares about people; he cares about students. I learned so much from him."

"Dare To Do Things Differently"

IN COLORADO.

In 2011, Hagerman followed a path carved out by many high-performing principals—she transitioned into an administrative position with DPS. After time as an instructional superintendent, she eventually landed as the executive director of talent preparation at DPS, where she oversaw all teacher and principal preparation pipeline programs.

She also taught as an adjunct instructor at the University of Denver. "I worked hard to finish my PhD, and my long-term goal was to pursue work in higher ed," she said. "I'm a thinker and I love to teach, and I had practical experience that could bring theory to life, so I'm not surprised to find

recruit, prepare and retain 340 teachers for urban and rural schools in Colorado.

In her new SEHD position, Hagerman will oversee a wide array of courses, workshops, certificates, professional-development trainings and degree-bearing programs with more than 3,000 students each year.

"We, as an institution, need to prepare teachers and principals for the students they are going to serve," Hagerman said. "CU Denver is incredibly willing to be focused and dare to do things differently. I want to be part of a group that can turn out the best teachers, principals and administrations for students today."

For more information about SEHD's Office of Continuing and Professional Education, visit ucdenver.edu/education/cpe.



S A RECENTLY IMMIGRATED HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA, Luis Poza, PhD, wrote a paper about Nathaniel Hawthorne's use of juxtaposition in "The Scarlet Letter." His teacher and classmates expressed surprise at his ability to produce such a well-written paper—because he's Latino and multilingual.

As assistant professor of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education (CLDE) program, Poza studies educational situations like this coupling of ethnicity and achievement, as well as larger issues of marginalization related to race, ethnicity and language. He came to CU Denver's School of Education & Human Development (SEHD) in 2014 with the goal of developing the school's Bilingual Education Specialist (BES) endorsement—and this fall, he can check that off his list.

The 10-credit-hour program can be added to the CLDE endorsement with curricula centered on supporting multilingual students across schooling environments. Poza said the program is highly needed in Denver, as the proportion of bilingual students and English learners in Denver Public Schools (DPS) grows and the majority of DPS teachers in bilingual placements lack certification as bilingual specialists.

"The BES endorsement is a very direct response to a community need," he said. "We heard from metro-area schools that they want more bilingual educators with training around bilingual pedagogies."

THE BES ENDORSEMENT IS A VERY DIRECT RESPONSE TO A COMMUNITY NEED.

CU Denver is the only university in the Denver metro area to offer a BES certification. SEHD students in the new BES program will study various areas of pedagogy and linguistics, including second language acquisition theories, social perspectives on education and bilingual student assessment. With all of the required credit hours taught in Spanish, the BES program operates in partnership with CU Denver's Department of Modern Languages.

"We want every teacher who is delivering instruction in both English and Spanish to be trained in the effective strategies that our BES endorsement supports," Poza said. "And we want every student with Spanish as a home language to have access to that language at school."

Instead of promoting a single "pure" Spanish, he said CU Denver's BES program recognizes Spanish as it is currently spoken in the United States and in Colorado, incorporating local context and the authenticity of the language as it occurs in students' lives.

"For many students, their bilingual reality involves hybrid language practices," Poza said, citing his own family's holiday gatherings, which he calls a "culinary and linguistic feast." "They are living both Spanish and English all the time, and our BES program has that in mind."

For information, visit ucdenver.edu/education/BES



TARGETING THE ISSUE

New cohort will cultivate Latino/a leadership in education

When Denver Latino/a community leaders Ron Cabrera and Frank Dávila, who are also alums of CU Denver's School of Education & Human Development (SEHD), approached Dean Rebecca Kantor about creating a program focused on developing Latino/a leadership in education, she asked the faculty to start thinking

Now, two years later, the Latin@ Learners and Community cohort is available as an area of concentration in the Doctorate of Education (EdD) program, for principals, superintendents and instructional leaders. Kantor and her SEHD team moved quickly on the Latino/a EdD cohort initiative in order to address the scarcity of Latino/a leaders in education in Colorado.

We have an underrepresentation of people of Latino/a/x heritage in education, period," said Carlos P. Hipolito-Delgado, PhD, associate professor in the SEHD Counseling program. "But when you look at principal and district administrator positions, that number is even less, and that's concerning. There's also a huge education achievement and potential gap for Latino/a/x students. With this cohort, we are training a new batch of leaders keenly attuned to the needs of Latino/a/x communities."

One of those aspiring leaders enrolled in the new program is Jose Silva, who grew up across the street from the present-day CU Denver campus, went to Denver Public Schools and graduated from West High School. When Silva was a child, his family was living in a poor community, his mother was addicted to drugs and he witnessed the murder of a friend.

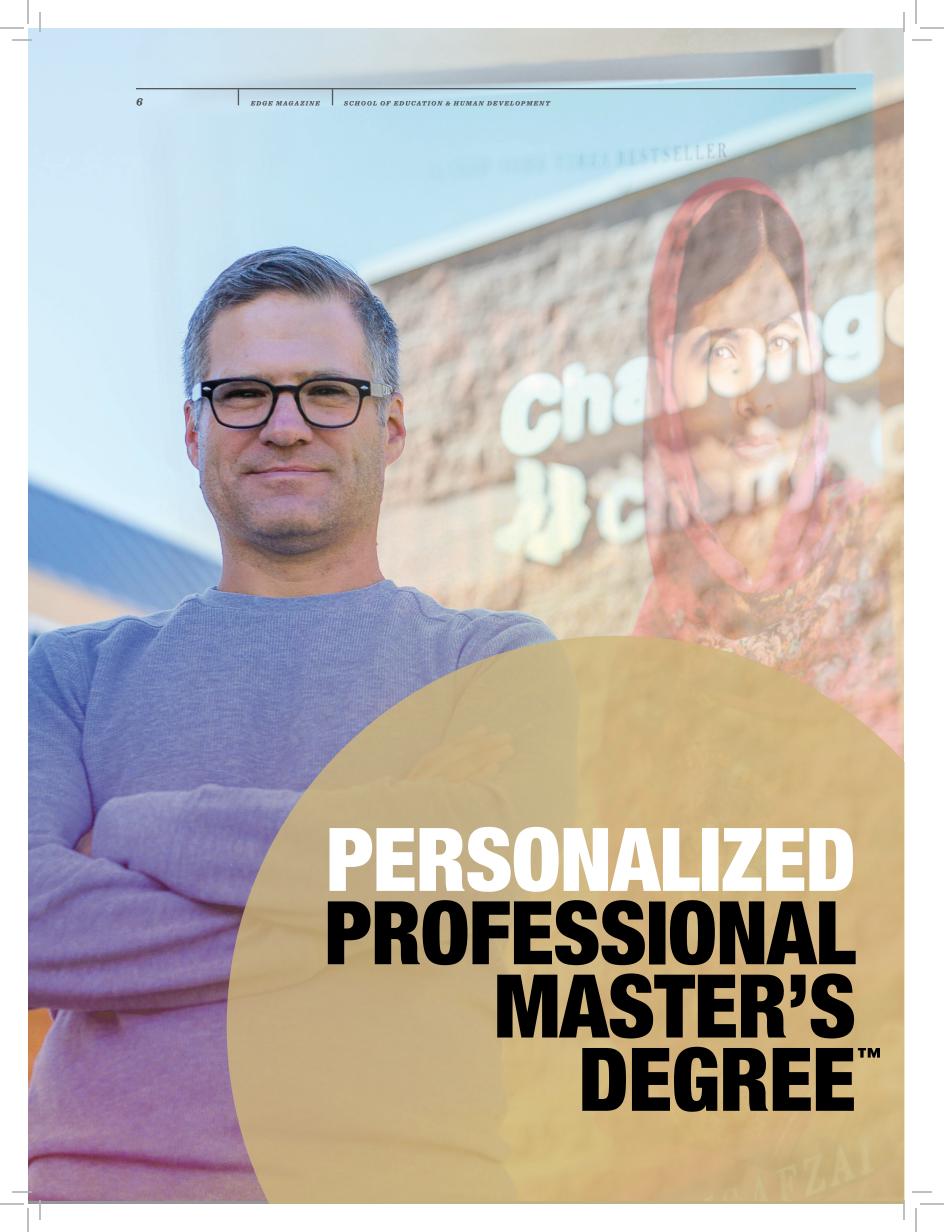
Everything was stacked against me," said Silva, who is now Principal at Renewal Academy in Thornton, CO. "As a black and Latino Denver native, I feel a great sense of responsibility to rise up and get the education and life experience to be able to create a stronger voice for action for our communities. This degree will afford me the skills and credibility I need to make that happen."

Silva is one of 25 students enrolled in the inaugural Latin@ EdD cohort class, which also includes an Aurora Central High School administrator, an ESL teacher in Lafayette and a VP from the Community College of Denver.

"This is going to be an exciting group to work with," Hipolito-Delgado said. "I want these students to be change agents, to eliminate barriers and create opportunities for education and community success."

WHAT DOES "LATIN@" MEAN?

"Latino" refers to the male gender, and "Latina" refers to the female gender. "Latin@" uses the @ sign—which looks like the letters "o" and "a" put together—in an effort to include all people, no matter their gender.



CHALLENGE SCHOOL, a magnet school in Cherry Creek School District for students who are academically advanced or gifted. Every day, he inspires his students with personalized opportunities to read, comprehend, think critically and hone their expository writing skills.

"I'm at a point where I want to deepen my knowledge and take my career to the next level," he said. "I want to gain leadership insights and secondary reading and writing credentials. I also want a well-rounded master's degree curriculum that encompasses the latest learning and motivation strategies and the most current innovations in technology. In the education field, where new ideas are emerging almost constantly, I want to have the opportunity to explore, understand and apply the ideas and information that are on the horizon."

And so, Erixon is modeling for his students the act of being a constant learner. He started this fall in CU Denver's new Personalized Professional Master's Degree for educators. This degree allows him to take half of his classes in his areas of concentration, in this case, reading and writing. The other half of his curriculum is more personalized. He may choose from more than 150 graduate courses from throughout the School of Education & Human Development.

"For my reading and writing courses, I'm concentrating mainly on courses that

relate to writing, such as the Denver Writing Project," he said. "I'm not positive which courses I'm going to take for the interdisciplinary portion of my curriculum, but I'm leaning toward courses that will teach me more about technology, equity and teaching gifted and talented students." The course titles he gravitates toward include:

- » Using Technology to Promote Reading and Writing in the 21st Century
- » Leadership for Technology Innovation in Schools
- » Social Media and Digital Cultures
- » Language, Culture and Education Equity
- » Psychology of Gifted, Talented and Creative Children
- » Social Psychology of Learning

"I'm in this to help the children in my classroom, and these courses fit those needs," said Erixon.

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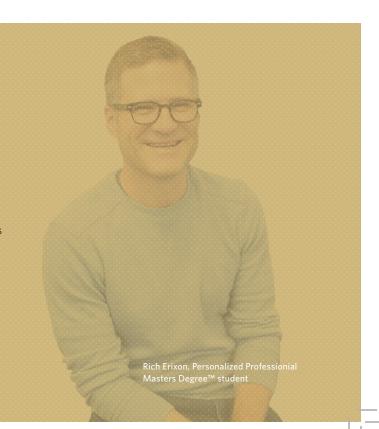
"My initial experience at CU Denver has been a very strong one," he said. "I have connected with very talented professors and peers on a professional level. It's a very collaborative community where everyone is fully invested in learning, participating, sharing ideas and helping each other."

HOWIT WORKS

CU Denver's Personalized Professional Master's Degree is customized to serve your unique goals as an education or human development professional. Choose from areas of concentration including mathematics education, science education, special education, early childhood education, reading and writing, English education, culturally and linguistically diverse education and learning. Then optimize your master's degree curriculum to fit your specific needs and goals

by choosing 15 credit hours from a robust selection of interdisciplinary courses from across the School of Education & Human Development. More customization means a master's degree that creates more possibilities for you. You can choose from interdisciplinary courses on a variety of themes, from better understanding of bilingual learners to developing your assessment literacy.

Learn more at education.ucdenver.edu/personalize





HE PROPORTION OF TEACHERS WHO ARE RACIALLY DIVERSE HAS NOT KEPT UP WITH COLORADO'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS: 90 percent of Colorado teachers are white and 10 percent are teachers of color according to the report "Keeping Up with the Kids: Increasing Minority Teacher Representation in Colorado." The race gap among Colorado's students and educators is likely to take time and CU Denver's School of Education & Human Development (SEHD) has been taking mission-driven action to reverse this statistic.

"Our graduates are recognized to be among the most prepared in the nation to support diverse languages, cultures and abilities in the classroom," said Rebecca Kantor, Dean of SEHD. "Our reputation for quality, our focused mission on diversity and social justice, our location in the heart of Denver, and our unique grant programs and recruiting strategies are helping to increase the teacher diversity in Colorado. We are truly making a difference. Our important work is paying off."

Growing, diverse undergraduate program From fall 2013 to fall 2014 SE

From fall 2013 to fall 2014, SEHD saw year-over-year growth of 182 percent in the number of students of color who were enrolled in the undergraduate Education and Human Development BA program. During that time the undergraduate program grew as a whole by 112 percent. From fall 2014 to fall 2015, the undergraduate program experienced 9.6 percent year-over-year growth of diverse students and overall year-over-year growth of 5.6 percent.



BA in Education and Human Development graduates Martha Chavez and Asawer Alhilo

Grant from U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Quality Partnership Grant program making a difference



Joseline Resendez, NxtGEN student

SEHD's NxtGEN grant project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, accounted for 11 percent of the overall growth of SEHD's undergraduate

program in 2015 and added to the increase in students of color in the undergraduate program. The NxtGEN paraeducator intern path is specifically adding to the diversity of SEHD's undergraduate students. Fortyeight percent of the paraeducator interns who obtained NxtGEN funding in the first two years of the program are students of color. And, an impressive 62 percent of these students are bilingual. NxtGEN is an innovative partnership between CU Denver and Denver Public Schools. The project recruits, prepares and supports the next generation of diverse and talented teachers. Participants receive up to four years of paid classroom field experience and priority hiring in DPS upon graduation.

Alternative licensure program includes 25 percent future teachers of color

SEHD has been growing a new statewide alternative teacher licensure program called ASPIRE to Teach, the largest alternative teacher licensure program in the state. The program provides supportive, high-quality individualized learning options for adults pursuing a teaching career. This option allows career changers to start their new career without having to take an employment break for one to two years. It includes candidates spanning 28 school districts, six charter networks, two innovation school systems and three private schools in Colorado. In 2015-16, 25 percent of the students in the program were of Latino/a descent. The program also has excellent gender diversity for a teacher education program, with 35.5 percent male students.

Teacher pipeline program receiving national recognition is 98.7 percent students of color

SEHD is very proud to support
Pathway2Teaching, a concurrent enrollment
program designed to engage high school
students of color in exploring the teaching
profession. The program, founded by SEHD
associate professor Margarita Bianco,
has been receiving positive nationwide
recognition from the U.S. Department of

Education and Colorado education reporters for several years. Pathways2Teaching has a sustainable funding model: It is funded by stakeholders in Adams 14 School District. Boulder Valley School District, Denver Public Schools and Mapleton Public Schools, as well as five schools in eastern Oregon, In the last six years, it has served 316 potential future teachers, and 98.7 percent of the current and former students are people of color. The program also boasts an impressive gender ratio for a teaching program: 39 percent male/61 percent female. A member of the first cohort of Pathways2Teaching is now a teacher in North Carolina. Other participants are working their way through teacher education programs at CU Denver, Colorado State University, Metropolitan State University of Denver and University of Northern Colorado. Bianco and her students have spread the good word about Pathways2Teaching at national and international conferences. This fall, they will be presenting at the iAdelante! U.S. Education Leadership Fund in San Antonio. Texas, as well as the Minnesota Educator Academy (MEA) in St. Paul, Minn.

New doctoral program will cultivate Latino/a leadership in education



The state's growing Latino/a population requires a pipeline of school leaders who reflect the changing demographics and who understand and can build relationships

with students and their families. SEHD's Latin@ Learners and Community EdD cohort launched this fall with a student body that is 78 percent students of color. Many of these individuals will become principals, superintendents and instructional leaders. All will be keenly attuned to the needs of Latino/a communities as a result of their studies at SEHD.

Superb outreach team

SEHD's Office of Outreach and Recruitment, led by Marlinda Hines-Sloan, has made an outstanding contribution to SEHD's diversity landscape and the diversity statistics mentioned above. This office recruits and welcomes students from Colorado, across the country and all over the world, with diverse backgrounds and far-ranging talents and interests. Within their mission is a special focus on nurturing positive experiences with first-generation and ethnically diverse students. Some of the most successful ways that they have attracted diverse students to apply to SEHD programs include:



- » Outreach activities in 25 local urban schools
- » Regular presentations to CU Denver's Pre-Collegiate Development Program
- » Online information sessions for prospective master's degree students
- » Exhibit tables at a variety of college and professional fairs and conferences
- » Individualized and timely support from inquiry through application and admission.

"I believe the attainment of advanced education is a way to improve and grow society," said Hines-Sloan. "Our school's commitment to diversity and social justice speaks directly to my beliefs. My team and I engage prospective and diverse students with the desire to advocate and work for social change within their own communities."



CHANGING LIVES ONE 5 READER AT A TIME

RANDI GARCIA AND ROBERT THELEN, two of the many dedicated teachers in CU Denver's Reading and Writing master's program, share a singularly vital goal: to bolster students' reading and writing outcomes.

Garcia fuels the fires of intelligence in kindergarten. Thelen inspires the confidence and imagination of middle school students. Both know that reading and writing skills can be the difference between wasted potential and a world of possibilities.

They chose the supportive, research-based environment of CU Denver to expand their knowledge of literacy because they wanted to learn from top faculty and to positively impact the lives of all learners in their classrooms.

"Students in this program are passionate about propelling their careers forward," said Nancy Shanklin, associate professor emeritus and recipient of the School of Education & Human Development's 2016 Lynn K. Rhodes Faculty Service Award. "They are intellectually curious and eager to learn practical ways to connect with students from diverse backgrounds, including English language learners. They want to broaden their perspectives and instructional strategies to help the students in their classrooms move forward. As well as becoming better classroom teachers of reading and writing, many hope to become Title I or intervention teachers, literacy/instructional coaches or literacy leaders in their schools and districts."

Brandi Garcia, Adams 12 Five Star Schools Joy and excitement to learn is what reading is all about



Brandi Garcia relished the thought of becoming a teacher before she could even spell the word. Teaching reading and writing, she says, is the perfect opportunity to forge meaningful bonds with energetic kindergartners. It is also her way of trying to reduce the racial disparities in education.

Her students come from diverse backgrounds and languages, and also include native English speakers. "When the light bulb comes on and they get it, it makes me feel super excited and proud," said Garcia.

Garcia received her undergraduate degree and

teacher licensure through CU Denver. When the time came to go back for her master's degree, she chose CU Denver again because she knew the Reading and Writing program faculty would help her understand the intricacies and the bigger picture of teaching literacy to her students who most needed help.

Many things have changed in Garcia's classroom since she started her MA program at CU Denver.

"I've been more meaningful and targeted with my lessons," she said. "I understand where students come in, how they bring funds of knowledge with them and how I can bring that into the classroom to help them succeed in reading and writing.

Garcia wants her students to see themselves as learners, believe in themselves and see all the assets that they bring.

"At the end of the year," said Garcia, "I hope that my students leave full of joy and excitement to learn. And, I hope that they feel successful for all they've accomplished for the one year of schooling that they've had."

Robert Thelen Littleton Public Schools*

Targeting reading disparities and changing the odds for middle school students



Robert Thelen admits that he had a fault in his teaching before he started his master's degree at CU Denver. He wasn't able to dig deeper when a student in his middle school classroom was struggling with reading and writing.

"I could collaborate with my peers," said Thelen.
"I could ask questions. But I didn't know where to
go with that information."

Thelen did extensive research about potential

THEY WANT TO BROADEN THEIR PERSPECTIVES AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES TO HELP THE STUDENTS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS MOVE FORWARD.

MA programs in the area. He was searching for a program that would allow him to explore, understand and impact the ways children learn language in all its forms. He wanted a program that would take him the extra mile and treat him like a professional. And he wanted to make connections, personally and professionally, that would last a lifetime.

Since he started the reading and writing program, his teaching perspectives and approaches have changed and he has seen himself grow professionally.

"Now, I do a lot of qualitative analysis," said Thelen. "I want to know who my students are. I want to know what languages they speak. I want to know what cultures they celebrate. I want to know what ethnicities they identify with. I want to analyze and assess the different phonemes in each student's language. When I walk into my classroom, I don't just see a group of kids anymore. I see individual students, and each student has unique needs.

They just need a goal. They need a starting point. And I want to give them that confidence. It doesn't feel like work. It feels like I'm making a difference."

*Since this article was written, Thelen has graduated from the Reading and Writing master's degree program. As a result, he has received a promotion. He is now a literacy instructional coach at East Elementary, a Title 1 school in Littleton Public Schools. He is also furthering his education in SEHD's EdD doctoral program.

CU DENVER OFFERS NEW FULLY ONLINE READING AND WRITING MA

This fall, the School of Education & Human Development launched an online 30-credit-hour master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in reading and writing. It provides educators with advanced knowledge and training to work with diverse student populations as they develop reading, writing and oral language skills. Adding the online offering allows teachers across the state and the Rocky Mountain region the opportunity to obtain a quality master's degree and endorsement as a K-12 reading teacher from the reading and writing program at CU Denver.

"Our students' time feels exceptionally precious, which is why we decided to create this fully online MA," said Nancy Shanklin, associate professor emeritus. "The new online format, in addition to our on-campus hybrid program, allows teachers more flexibility to achieve a

work/life balance. Both designs offer them academically rigorous content, thoughtful faculty engagement and an invaluable personal and professional network that they can depend on long after graduation."

The online reading and writing program at CU Denver is unique in that it is not a self-guided program," said Isabelle Smith, course instructor and developer. "When I create online modules, I'm thinking about a variety of things. How am I going to get the students to interact with each other and the content at the same time? What can I present to them in the form of a prompt to get them to think about their own experiences, their own beliefs and connect with each other around those beliefs in a way that they can take it forward and apply to their teaching?"

For more information and to apply, visit cudenverliteracy.com.



HEN STUDENTS THINK ABOUT PAYING THEIR PROFESSIONAL DUES, they might conjure images of the movie "Office Space," where the boss strolls up to an employee's cubicle and says, "I need you to work this weekend, mmm-kay?"

For Chris Voth, a doctoral student in CU Denver's School of Education & Human Development, the early days of being a stand-up comedian were more like "The Road Warrior." "I did a lot of eight-, nine-hour drives to make \$100 at one-nighters," he explained. "It's a lot like getting a pilot's license. You need a certain amount of hours performing on stage, getting into bad situations and figuring out ... what do I need to do to make my act work?"

Voth has taken some sudden turns — one being leaving his home state of California on a whim 17 years ago to launch a comedy career in Colorado, a place he'd visited while working his previous gig as a public relations representative for the National Hot Rod Association. The love of writing jokes began in first grade, he said, "so it's been a lifelong thing."

Now, besides being a part-time comedian and a doctoral student, Voth is a full-time English teacher at Pomona High School in Arvada. He said he's discovered the point of coffee: There are many days that Voth teaches a full schedule at Pomona, goes to class at CU Denver and caps off his evening by doing stand-up at a comedy club.

Voth so much enjoyed earning his master's degree at CU Denver that choosing the leading public urban research university for his doctoral studies was an easy choice. At age 42, he clearly knows what he likes: making people laugh, adventuring through life (authors and raconteurs Hemingway and Twain are favorites) and learning — always learning. If you see his stand-up show you might hear odd bits about his frenetic schedule or anecdotes about enlightening high school kids for a living.

"Changed everything"

At age 35, after 10 years of scraping by as a

comedian, Voth decided to give teaching a try. He didn't yet have a teaching license, but a charter school in Denver Public Schools saw his comic background as a plus — if he could handle hecklers, surely he could deal with high schoolers.

"Almost immediately, I loved it," Voth said. "I got called names and all the things that happen in high school teaching, but I loved the kids. It changed the way I saw the world, the way I saw what I should be doing. It changed everything for me."

He considered acquiring more education, because "when you're teaching you begin to realize all the things you don't know." So, as he honed his sideline career as a comic — he started getting betterpaying gigs such as Comedy Works-Larimer Square as well as private functions — Voth fortified his skills as an educator. In spring 2014, he earned his master's in English, rhetorical studies and teaching composition track. CU Denver's program "directly affected how much I could impact my students," he said, because many were English-as-a-second-language learners.

Voth still loves being a comedian as much as ever — his TV credits include "The Late Late Show," "Last Comic Standing" and "Comics Unleashed" — but teaching has added a layer of fulfillment and given life more meaning. "I do all the things that go with teaching (grading, bureaucracy, etc.) because I just want to serve the students," he said. "What do they need and how can I provide that?"

His master's and doctoral programs — particularly classes taught by Antwan Jefferson, clinical assistant professor in urban community teacher education, and Michelle Comstock, associate professor in English — have been "awesome," Voth

said. "CU Denver offers a high-quality education, and it's so practical to what I need." Considering Voth's hectic schedule, the university's many online classes have been convenient as well.

"Made me a better teacher"

"It's made me a better teacher, a better professional, and that's what I'm here for," he said. In every class I'm learning something I can use in my classroom."

And Voth — who at age 25 wrote a list of 25 goals he wanted to accomplish by age 50 — has his eyes set on ambitions beyond the classroom. He wants to use his growing expertise in education, to become a strong voice in local, state and national education circles.

Voth has hit most of the 25 marks he set almost 20 years ago. He wrote "doctorate" on the list, thinking back then that his best chance would be an honorary doctorate via entertainment fame. But in spring 2018, he expects to add an earned doctorate (EdD) to his name.

"Either way, my friends have to call me 'doctor,' so it doesn't matter too much on the logistics of how I got to it," Voth said with a smile as he takes another swig of coffee.

DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

WE OFFER THREE DISTINCT DOCTORAL PROGRAMS:

The PhD, which is designed as research training and preparation for academic positions at universities; the EdD, an education doctorate, which is designed as a cohort leadership program with a focus on solving problems of practice in school districts; and a PsyD in School Psychology, the first in the region. For more information, visit ucdenver.edu/education.

EVALUATING ONLINE LEARNING METHODS AND RESULTS

ANICE THORPE is the kind of person who is always aiming to deepen and reinforce her understanding of the world around her. She is a senior instructor in the Department of Communication at University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS), where she teaches courses that range from business and professional communication to digital communication to undergraduate research methods and statistics.

Additionally, she is the assessment coordinator for the undergraduate and graduate programs in communication at UCCS. And, in her free time, she is a PhD student at CU Denver's School of Education & Human Development (SEHD), where she is pursuing a concentration in research and evaluation methods. Across these roles, she consistently asks why, whether she is designing research projects, analyzing data, developing assessment instruments or assessing student learning outcomes.

If you are interested in talking about highimpact evaluations and measurement techniques, Thorpe will enthusiastically speak with you about sample size; demographics; quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods modes of inquiry; statistical modeling; and the importance of wording survey questions correctly. But these days, she may steer the conversation to focus on a topic that is of primary interest and focus in her doctoral studies: factors that foster or impede student learning in online environments. Her interest in assessing learning outcomes of online courses is fueled by her desire to meet the learning goals of her undergraduate students at UCCS. It is also central to a new project. She is one of nine co-principal investigators from throughout the CU campuses collaborating on a University of Colorado Connect online initiative to create a multi-campus, fully online bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies.

hybrid and fully online — to identify specific areas of the digital learning environment which might benefit from further academic or technical support. My job is to develop and deliver excellent course content using sound instructional principles and help my students learn to be patient with themselves as well. This is no small challenge, but oh so rewarding! In light of the expanding CU Connect online initiatives, it is important to ensure that our online courses are of the same quality and rigor as traditional in-seat courses."

Thorpe decided to pursue her PhD at CU Denver because she realized that she had finely tuned and elaborate questions that required more tools, and that the leading-edge faculty at the SEHD could help her progress.

'I want to know how best to assess what students learn, what helps them learn it, and what keeps them from learning it," said Thorpe. "To do this, I need further instruction and practice with more advanced strategies. I'm excited to be in a learning environment and a program that is still emerging. The faculty members are encouraging, and the atmosphere is very collaborative. I will be able to expand my influence and impact for my students and my program at UCCS with the knowledge gained from CU Denver coursework and experience."

REMEMBER, IF IT DOESN'T CHALLENGE YOU, IT DOESN'T CHANGE YOU.

"In my doctoral studies, I am currently investigating how technical access and use issues might impact student frustration, which has been demonstrated to affect student learning outcomes," said Thorpe. "This fall semester, I will be comparing academic outcomes for three sections of the same course — face-to-face,

"Janice comes to our PhD concentration with broad experiences, foundational skills to build on and a zest for learning," said Nancy Leech, professor of research and evaluation methods at SEHD. "She is the type of student that will excel in our program! Janice is on a trajectory for her work to flourish and impact positively research and measurement in educational settings."

As for words of wisdom for others considering going back for a PhD, Thorpe has a few recommendations.

"First, be patient with yourself. Realize that some skills may be rusty. This is the time to welcome feedback from others. Remember, if it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you.

"Secondly, make sure you have the support of those around you so that you can truly challenge yourself. You'll need it! Several years ago, I took a two-year journey with my family to sail around the world. It was an amazing adventure that really pushed me beyond my comfort zone and one that I will cherish forever. The PhD endeavor is a very similar step into the unknown and a challenge that will stretch my competencies and abilities."





Ashleigh Adams, Counseling MA student pursuing a career in higher education and student affairs

SHLEIGH ADAMS ENVISIONS HER BRAIN as a series of folders that she has to open and close in order to access information and memories. Sometimes she has to check a lot of folders before she finds what she's looking for, and that can take a long time.

That's how she describes her learning disability. Because of it, the CU Denver graduate student never thought she was college material, yet she is now well on her way to a master's degree as part of the first group of students pursuing a degree in counseling with a concentration in higher education and student affairs (HESA) from the School of Education & Human Development (SEHD). The program trains students to serve culturally diverse and underrepresented students in higher education.

Thriving in the new HESA program

"I'm excited to be part of the first student affairs cohort," said Adams, who grew up in Golden, Colo., and got her bachelor's degree at Colorado State University. "I'm taking classes right as they're first offered. The classes are challenging on a personal, reflective level and also motivating because of how impactful it is to have both diversity and inclusivity on campus."

Adams is chipping away at the HESA degree while working full time and interning 15–25 hours a week in CU Denver's Experiential Learning Center.

"Ashleigh is a superstar," said Carlos P. Hipolito-Delgado, PhD, associate professor in the SEHD Counseling program. "Her research projects focus on issues of diversity and inclusion and are performed to the highest standard."

But Ashleigh wasn't always a thriving student.

Finding support

"My learning disability was diagnosed when I was five years old, and I've received special education assistance all through my life," Adams said. "There has always been a little voice in my head that told me that because I have a learning disability, I'm stupid and don't have anything to contribute."

She said her family support got her through high school and into college, but during her undergraduate years, she struggled with the notion that she didn't belong in higher education. She often felt alone and isolated, different from the other students and unsure of how or where she could get support.



be preaching and get involved on campus. She started reaching out to professors for help, joined the cross-country team, seized networking opportunities that led to her internship and learned to silence the negative voice in her head.

"Being involved on campus makes a huge difference," she said. "Being more connected to my school makes me feel more connected to my schoolwork and the meaning behind that work. Everything just clicked for me."

"I have really seen Ashleigh blossom as a student and future student affairs practitioner," Hipolito-Delgado said: "She has gone from a student who was reserved and hesitant to participate to an active participant in classes, asking important are meant for them, for everyone.

"The student affairs program is all about making higher education an inclusive environment for all, and that really speaks to me," she said. "I don't only want underrepresented students to know they can get an education. Once they get to college, I want them to have opportunities to thrive. That's my goal, plain and simple."

She has also recognized that just because her learning disability may give her some weaknesses doesn't mean she doesn't have many strengths as well.

"My learning disability is a strength in itself, in that I see the world in a different way," she said. "I have to do many things in a different way, so I'm constantly problem solving in daily life. That connection in my brain is always flowing, so when something comes up at work, I'm ready to problem solve."

Fighting for diversity

Adams hopes to finish her HESA program in December 2017 and is looking forward to starting a career in higher education student affairs. Because she knows that she can get overwhelmed, though, she's focusing on one thing at a time. For now, she's loving what she's learning.

"I'm learning why it's so important to fight for diversity and inclusion on campuses, because it enriches the learning experience for everyone involved," she said. "One of my favorite things about CU Denver is how diverse my fellow students and professors are. They're really what makes the HESA program amazing for me."

CU DENVER HAS THE ONLY HESA PROGRAM WITH AN EMPHASIS ON

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT, STUDENT SUCCESS AND DIVERSITY AMONG STUDENTS.

"I didn't know I could get help from professors and from the amazing offices at the university," she said. "I was scared to approach them. I thought they weren't meant for me."

Making connections

But when she came to CU Denver and decided to study student affairs, she thought she'd better at least try to practice what she would

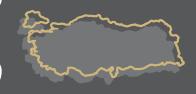
questions, providing critical insights and pushing her classmates to think more deeply."

Creating an inclusive campus

Through dealing with her own challenges, Adams recognized that she is passionate about equity in education. She is excited to use her HESA degree to show other students that all those campus offices and programs

YEAR IN REVIEW

TOP 3%



SHRUTI POULSEN, associate professor and researcher in CU Denver's Counseling program, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to teach family and marriage counseling at Özyeğin University in Istanbul, Turkey, over the 2016-17 academic year. The prestigious grant is awarded to fewer than 3 percent of applicants each year. Poulsen will use the grant to develop cross-cultural training opportunities to better prepare counselors to work with multicultural families.

COMMUNITY
SCREENINGS

OUR SCHOOL was an integral supporter of Rocky Mountain PBS's education phase of an initiative called Race in Colorado. The regional Emmy award-winning documentary "Standing in the Gap," a pivotal element of the initiative, was broadcast on Rocky Mountain PBS and at five hosted community screenings around Denver. Our faculty and staff members were also consulted on the topics at hand and attended the community screenings. The four-part documentary takes a bold look at segregation in Colorado schools and how schools stand now, 20 years after the end of forced busing. It tackles the achievement gap between white students and students of color and shares new data on graduation rates, growth in student performance and other critical factors in the top 20 school districts in Colorado. In addition to the documentary screenings, the School of Education & Human Development (SEHD) was also tagged on a series of vignettes aired on Rocky Mountain PBS that showed diverse families and how they view race in Colorado. We were also mentioned as a sponsor in the widely distributed booklets that accompanied the documentary screenings, which are available online for other community groups to download.





SEHD'S STUDENT AWARDS SPRING BANQUET, presented by our Office of Diversity and Inclusion, is a celebratory occasion that highlights student achievement in academics, leadership and community service. In addition, select recipients have an opportunity to present their research to the audience. As we enter into the third year of this event, we anticipate exceeding our 130 average attendees. We welcome your involvement and support!

AND GUESTS

SEHD'S BLACK EDUCATION IMPACT (BE!) CONFERENCE has been held each spring for the past three years. Organized by a variety of community volunteers and leaders and SEHD's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the inspirational keynotes, workshops and college fair provide forward-thinking content to keep local black youth at the forefront of their educational and personal aspirations. The experience also offers a focus on strengthening relationship networks between youth, educators and community members. Major sponsors are CU Denver, the City and County of Denver and Green-Higley Multimedia Communications. Community partners include Marine Nunn Education Fund, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado Black Roundtable and Brother Jeff's Cultural Center.

900 COUNSELORS **DIANE ESTRADA** was elected president of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) for 2017–18. The association provides global leadership, research, training and development for more than 900 multicultural counseling professionals with a focus on racial and ethnic issues. AMCD is charged with the responsibility of defending human and civil rights as prescribed by law. It encourages changing attitudes and enhancing understanding of cultural diversity.



WHAT CAN A PERSON SAY ABOUT RACE IN ONLY SIX WORDS?

Quite a bit, according to Michele Norris, NPR host and founder of The Race Card Project, who led a discussion on race, culture and identity at SEHD's second annual alumni event last spring. The project asks individuals to share six words encompassing their thoughts, experiences and feelings on race and identity. More than 50,000 submissions have been archived on theracecardproject.com, which provides a forum for discussion. Prior to Norris' presentation, CU Denver Chancellor Dorothy Horrell spoke on the university's commitment to diversity and about CU Denver's unique position, as a public urban research university, to examine issues of diversity and inclusion. "One of the great discoveries I've made since arriving at CU Denver is the remarkable commitment to addressing issues of great significance within our community and within our larger society," said Horrell.

ANTWAN JEFFERSON, clinical assistant professor in SEHD's Human Development and Family Relations and teacher education programs, was invited to join the 43rd class of the Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation's Leadership Denver program. As a participant in the program, he will take part in monthly programs that focus on critical issues that challenge our region and the collaborative efforts underway to bring about meaningful and lasting change. This networking is augmenting the community-based partnership work that he accomplishes for SEHD's Office of Partnerships in support of children, families and communities.



• HOURS OF

VOLUN- TEERING



AS PART OF THE FAMILIA Y JUSTICIA

community, five students in the Human Development and Family Relations (HDFR) program traveled to a family ranch in San Luis, Colo., with professor Ruben Viramontez-Anguiano, associate professor René Galindo, lecturer Jenn Greiving and graduate assistant Larissa Kelly. As they logged over 60 collective hours of volunteer work, students also heard stories and experiences from artists and elders in the San Luis community. The HDFR program is committed to providing service learning opportunities for students to engage in community work.



THE XQ SUPER SCHOOL BUS made a stop on a multi-city bus tour last summer to interview luminary Margarita Bianco, associate professor of special education at CU Denver, about the power of great teachers and her role as founder and executive director of Pathways2Teaching, a concurrent-enrollment program designed to encourage high school students of color to become teachers. Now in its seventh year, Pathways2Teaching has served several hundred potential future teachers. The XQ project invites students, parents, teachers and community members to explore innovative and effective solutions to improve high schools.





2016 CHAMPION for CHILDREN

THE SEWALL CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER honored Dean Rebecca Kantor as its 2016 Champion for Children for her support of inclusionary education and advocacy to serve children with all learning styles. Sewall CEO Heidi Heissenbuttel said that Kantor has "deeply inspired so many of us at Sewall with the Reggio Emilia educational approach of dignity, creativity and community for children and families of all backgrounds." Kantor serves on the REACH Charter Elementary School Board and has made an indelible mark in Sewall's historic development and educational outreach.

4 8 7 5 MILES AWAY

GEETA VERMA, associate professor of science education, is spending part of her sabbatical in Stockholm, Sweden. She is leading a project with colleagues at Stockholm University focusing on newly arrived students (also known as refugee students) to create equitable science learning opportunities.

NEW FACULTY



Erin Bache serves as an alternative licensure instructor in the ASPIRE to Teach program. She earned her MA in education from the University of Colorado Boulder and most recently worked.

as a special education teacher at Highline Community School in Aurora.



Chris Carson serves as an instructor for the Student Teacher Residency program. He most recently worked as a site professor and lecturer for CU Denver's teacher licensure program. He earned an MA in

linguistics from the University of Utah and an MA in education from the University of Mississippi while teaching high school and middle school science.



Dennis DeBay works as a senior instructor in STEM education. He earned his PhD from Boston College in mathematics education. Most recently, his research interests include using technological

learning environments as a mediating factor between the teaching and learning of mathematics in formal and informal settings.



Lisa Forbes is a clinical assistant professor who teaches for the Counseling program as well as the Human Development and Family Relations program. She earned both her MA and PhD from the University of Northern

Colorado. Prior to teaching at CU Denver, she worked as a clinical assistant professor at Northern Arizona University at the Phoenix campus.



Christopher Garcia serves as an alternative licensure instructor in the ASPIRE to Teach program. He earned his MA from the University of Colorado Denver. Prior to this position, he worked as a

secondary science teacher for Prairie View High. School in Henderson, Colo.



Kevin Glavin works as a clinical associate professor in the Counseling program. He earned his PhD from Kent State University with a concentration in counselor education and supervision.

Prior to this position, he served as the research program manager for Career Services at the University of Colorado Boulder.



Tania Hogan serves as an instructor and undergraduate residency coordinator for the NxtGEN grant program. Tania earned her MA and teacher licensure from the University of Colorado Denver, where

she is currently pursuing her EdD. Prior to her faculty appointment, she served as a lecturer in the School of Education & Human Development and worked as an elementary reading interventionist and literacy, language and cultural studies facilitator in Denver Public Schools.



Jaclyn D. Joseph is a senior instructor in the Early Childhood Education program. She earned her PhD from the University of Colorado Denver with a concentration in early childhood special

education and early childhood education. Prior to her PhD studies, she was primarily involved with supporting families of young children with disabilities.



Britnie Kane is a senior instructor in the Literacy, Language and Culturally Responsive Teaching program. She earned her PhD from Vanderbilt University and most recently worked as an

instructor at the University of Colorado Boulder.



Scott McLeod serves as an associate professor in the Administrative Leadership and Policy Studies program. He is widely recognized as one of the nation's leading experts on K-12 school technology

leadership issues. He received his JD and PhD from the University of Iowa and most recently served as the director of learning, teaching and innovation for Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency and an associate professor at the University of Kentucky.



Nicole Sager is a senior instructor in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education program. She received her PhD from the University of Colorado Boulder with a concentration in educational equity and

cultural diversity. Her previous university teaching experience includes dual language instruction at Regis University, TESL instruction at Front Range Community College and EFL instruction at Kanda University of International Studies.



Dane Stickney works as an alternative licensure instructor for the ASPIRE to Teach program. He earned his MA from the University of Colorado Denver. Most recently, he worked for

STRIVE Prep-Sunnyside in Denver in a variety of roles as a teacher and ELL specialist.



Nicole Winowiecki serves as an instructor in the Special Education program. She earned her MA from the University of Colorado Boulder. In addition to building a special education transition program at a local high school, she previously served as a SSI/SSDI advocate at Colorado Disability Benefits Support Program. She has been active in the world of education startups providing post-secondary transition and employment services to youth with disabilities. She was the director of employment at SeedPaths and is the owner of Colorado H.U.B. Solutions LLC.



ETER ZOLA'S FOURTH-GRADE CLASSROOM at Laredo Elementary School in Aurora Public Schools couldn't be more pumped to learn fractions on a warm September morning. They just finished a pre-math jog, and classmates seem eager to learn from University of Colorado Denver mathematics education researchers Ron Tzur and Nicola Hodkowski, who have developed many engaging ways to foster children's understanding of fractions, including today's problem-based "french fry" game.

This lesson is part of the work funded by the National Science Foundation's (NSF) \$3 million grant to researchers at the University of Colorado Denver School of Education & Human Development to develop and study ways to better prepare elementary teachers to teach multiplication, division and fractions. In addition to Tzur, the principal investigator, and Hodkowski, the project manager, the project team includes five more CU Denver faculty members and eight graduate research assistants (seven of whom are PhD students). Zola says his classroom is fortunate to serve as one of several case studies for this grant. Four other schools are also partnering on the grant: Kenton, Montview and Sable elementary schools in Aurora Public Schools and Ft. Logan Northgate (grades 3-8) in Sheridan School District No. 2. Partner schools receive grant-supported professional development opportunities and curriculum adaptations to help students learn core math concepts.

"Making fractions fascinating for children matters," said Tzur, professor of mathematics education at CU Denver. "Learning fractions is high stakes in and of itself. And, if children can grasp the foundational concepts early in life, they are much more likely to succeed in upper grades (particularly in algebra) and in life."

Tzur and Hodkowski are infectiously excited as they hand out yellow and white strips of paper to teams of students. The yellow strips are referred to as "french fries," and the white strips can be used by the students to help partition the french fries among a given number of people.

The assignment is a tricky one, designed to test

students' understanding of the concept of unit fractions—not in the prevalent way ("part of whole") but rather as a quantity that acquires its meaning through a multiplicative relation to a given whole. For example, students learn that 1/3 need not be a part of a whole, nor is there a requirement that all three parts are equal. Rather, if the whole (here, one french fry strip) is three times as large as another piece, that smaller piece is 1/3.

First, Tzur asks the student teams to problem-solve how to share one paper strip (or french fry) equally between two people. After completing this rather trivial task, Tzur, Hodkowski and Zola purposely make things more challenging. Students share the same french fry equally among three people without folding or using pre-made rulers of any kind.

As student pairs embark on this new challenge, the coteachers move around the room to work with each of them. It soon becomes clear that Tzur and Hodkowski took the effort to learn and always call students by their first name. It becomes just as clear that all three co-teachers are not just after the "right answer." Rather, they strive to understand each child's mathematics. when trying to solve this task. They compliment the teamwork they are observing. They praise the creative thinking. Most important, this co-teaching team is adapting teaching goals and activities in real time based on students' conceptions and experiences. This lesson is part of Tzur and his team's effort to model a teaching approach called student-adaptive pedagogy. Promoting this approach is a major reason CU Denver received the NSF grant.

To further students' learning of unit fractions as

multiplicative quantities, the researchers kindly probe with open-ended questions. Teams of students laugh, brainstorm and encourage one another while they reveal patterns and discover relationships between a whole object and their actions on and with other pieces related to it. Tzur, Hodkowski and Zola weave throughout the classroom, kneeling beside students to check in. Clearly, they are in their teaching element.

After approximately 30 minutes, a whole-class discussion of student solutions begins. Multiple teams of students eagerly volunteer to share in front of the class how they solved the problem. Tzur repeats in his own words what students shared. Often, he redirects the students' solution to all other teams to discuss further: "I think I understand what you are saying. By using just a single piece again and again we know every person's share must be equal. Talk with your partners to see if you agree." The students respectfully enjoy listening to how their classmates tried to solve the problem.

"There is so much fun involved in the problem-solving aspect of these math activities that my students grasp the concepts and retain the information so much better," said Zola, a current graduate student who is on the path to receive a master's degree in Mathematics Education from CU Denver. Zola received his teaching license and a master's in Education and Human Development with an emphasis in teaching in diverse contexts from CU Denver. "I have seen how fractions can be a huge stumbling block for students who do not develop sound conceptual understandings. I want my students to realize that each one of us can be a mathematical thinker. We just have to be engaged in the right ways to put our mind to it."

Looking forward, Tzur said: "This grant allows us to develop a teacher training model that emphasizes teaching tailored to how kids think. By promoting and studying substantial growth in the elementary teachers' own knowledge of mathematics, and through co-teaching opportunities with math education experts from CU Denver, we can promote their professional practice so that it emphasizes core concepts and problem solving while improving student outcomes."



HE OFFICE OF TONY LEWIS, executive director of the Donnell-Kay Foundation, is adorned with vintage mountaineering equipment befitting an educational leader whose formative experiences have included work on behalf of the experiential learning program Outward Bound. Climbing axes lean against office walls, and his meeting table is accented by a gnarled piton — a metal spike hammered into solid rock to create a crack, allowing a climber the foothold needed to pursue new routes upward.

Lewis, his associate director Kim Knous-Dolan and their colleagues often serve as human pitons in a public educational system that sometimes resembles a rock wall. Based in Denver and active since 2000, the foundation studies structural challenges in public education and advocates for systemic policy and organizational solutions that increase personalized support for students, prepare them better for evolving career paths, and overcome administrative and systemic impediments to serving students in these ways.

Lewis and Knous-Dolan know that one of the toughest and loneliest climbs is that of the leader of a new school with a distinctive vision. "There's no great school without a great school leader," Lewis asserted. These new leaders must bring a new vision to fruition amid a dizzying array of operational details, systemic mandates and individual variables. And these variables are often compounded by the school's desire to accommodate a broad range of student learning styles and life circumstances.

In 2008, the Donnell-Kay Foundation provided founding support for the Denver school leaders' development program now known as Catapult. Then, Lewis and Knous-Dolan's interest was piqued by a 2015 research proposal from postdoctoral researcher and longtime educator Sarah Bridich, PhD, and Kent Seidel, PhD, associate professor and director of the School of Education & Human Development's Center for Practice Engaged Education Research (C-PEER). Seeing that four new charter/innovation high schools would be opening in Denver in 2015-16,

answers to these questions — pursued through monthly school-leader interviews throughout the 2015-16 school year — can guide a broader set of insights and policy recommendations to improve the odds of success for new school leaders pursuing innovative charters.

This led the Donnell-Kay Foundation to provide a lead grant for Bridich and Seidel's study. Such direct academic grant-making is rare for the foundation, Lewis said; most of its resources (the foundation is seeded by a \$28 million endowment) are directed toward independently driven initiatives and policy efforts. But the unusually hands-on approach of the CU Denver study, conducted under the auspices of C-PEER and including the direct input from school leaders in shaping the inquiry, appealed heavily to Donnell-Kay. "Our foundation parallels C-PEER's focus on applied research," Lewis said. "We're very interested in not just sitting in our offices thinking about new ideas or new things but really talking to people and learning from them and applying that. I feel like that's why there's a nice connectivity between C-PEER and Donnell-Kay."

The leadership study, funded through the Donnell-Kay Foundation and a matching grant from Rose Community Foundation, is already yielding informative results. Significant takeaways from an initial overview of findings, presented to partners and school leaders in May, included:

» The more specific and concrete the school's vision, the easier it is to honor in practice. The school that hit the most speed bumps, Bridich and Seidel reported, had many ambitious yet discrete goals that looked nice on paper but did not



particular nuance for schools seeking to serve at-risk kids in a personalized way.

» New school leaders need to receive sufficient operational support; startup schools will inherently swamp a leader in granular detail, raising the risk of burnout and taking away from the cultureand community-building that help a new approach take root.

Bridich and Seidel aim to continue this work at each school for a second year to deepen the body of knowledge about the challenges of new school leadership and lead to a framework that could help new leaders share and learn from common challenges and opportunities.

The study aligns well with other Donnell-Kay Foundation initiatives — including an ambitious blueprint for a new educational system called ReSchool Colorado, designed to parallel existing conventional public school districts. Lewis said this represents a shift for Donnell-Kay in focusing all its efforts within existing systems and trying to reconsider core aspects of public systems from the ground up. Though the initiative is in early phases and has not yet sought to expand its public profile, Lewis said, an ambitious goal has been set of 50,000 Colorado K-12 students being educated in what leaders hope will be a new learner-centered public education

Whether by pursuing ambitious initiatives such as ReSchool Colorado or promising academic research such as Seidel and Bridich's, the Donnell-Kay Foundation sees new-school leadership as a critical part of the equation. "If we can support the pipeline for great school leaders," Knous-Dolan said, "that's going to be a leverage point for improving education."

THERE'S NO GREAT SCHOOL WITHOUT A GREAT SCHOOL LEADER

Bridich and Seidel decided to study the inaugural year for the leaders at these four schools.

How would these school leaders implement their vision? How might they create a distinctive and sustainable school culture? How could they balance myriad operational priorities and desired measurable outcomes with startup considerations directed toward each charter's unique attributes — without going insane? Bridich and Seidel hope the

work in practice; this school also saw major leader and teacher turnover.

» New school missions may warrant new, flexible or adapted evaluation criteria. Bridich used the following anecdote to describe the challenge of fitting new visions to old metrics: "It's as if a kid is asked to start a lemonade stand, and Mom comes outside later and says, 'Where's my coffee?"" Factors such as retention and engagement require



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Early Childhood Education student Ashley Peralta