



# Bank Street Graduate School of Education Early Childhood Urban Education Initiative

Early childhood is the time when infants, toddlers, and preschoolers develop the cognitive and social-emotional skills essential to lifelong success. In fact, research shows that receiving high-quality care at a young age is associated with positive outcomes later in life, particularly in families with multiple risk factors.

The Bank Street Graduate School of Education's Early Childhood Urban Education Initiative supports preschool teachers serving young children in New York City's historically underserved neighborhoods by providing them with convenient and affordable access to a master's degree in early childhood education. The program aims to advance Bank Street's broader mission to support the teaching and learning of educators and children while creating positive change in schools and communities. In 2018, the first Bronx cohort graduated and, in 2020, the second Bronx cohort will graduate. In addition, the first combined cohort of Harlem, Washington Heights, and Bronx graduate students will graduate in 2022.

## Building Bridges for Aspiring Teachers

The program is designed to expand Bank Street's impact at the local level. Through a cohort-based model of adult education designed to build group identity and provide greater support for individual success, practitioners in early childhood programs gain insight into the Bank Street approach to teaching and learning while earning their master's degree. As part of the three-year, 45-credit program, students learn to build links between educational theory and practice and develop the hands-on techniques and strategies that help all young children learn.

To support the graduate students, Bank Street faculty hold classes within the communities where participants live and work and tailor their courses to meet the work schedules and learning strengths of enrolled students. This structure promotes a deeper connection between the communities and the College and provides learning opportunities for both graduate students and faculty. In addition to providing a reduced tuition rate, required graduate work is designed to create a positive impact within their preschool classrooms. Students have access to Bank Street's resources, library, student support systems, conferences, and alumni network. Upon graduation, students are eligible for New York State certification as early childhood teachers.

Once certified, graduates can work as head teachers in early childhood classrooms in community-based or public school programs and qualify for higher compensation.

## Strengthening Local Neighborhoods

Community representatives, school directors, Bank Street leadership and faculty, and a graduate from the program meet regularly at Advisory Board meetings to discuss the structure and direction of the program. To further increase the program's impact at the local level, Bank Street's Center on Culture, Race & Equity provides support to the communities and schools in which graduate students work. Through on-site community colloquiums, teachers, leaders, families, and community members meet to reflect on and discuss the aspirations and challenges surrounding early childhood education within their local neighborhoods. Students also receive professional development in Emotionally Responsive Practice offered through Bank Street to better support the children within their classrooms, including those with traumatic histories.



## Partnering for Success

Bank Street works with community partners to recruit program participants, secure Graduate School classroom sites, and provide complimentary community services. Current partners include BronxWorks, a settlement house serving the South and Central Bronx with education, housing, recreational, and social services, and Highbridge Advisory Council Family Services, a Bronx-based community service organization providing a range of early care, education, and after school programs to 1,400 children annually. Community partnerships are expanding to include organizations in Harlem and Washington Heights.