



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 Early Childhood Urban Education Initiative supports educators serving young children in New York City's historically underserved neighborhoods by providing aspiring teachers 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. The first cohort of students in the Bronx graduated in 2018.

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 Bronx-based 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. In addition to providing a reduced tuition rate, required graduate work is aligned with each student's daily classroom practice. Students have access to Bank Street's resources, libraries, student support systems, conferences, and alumni network and, upon graduation, are eligible for New York State certification as early childhood teachers. Many of the program participants are the first in their families to pursue graduate degrees.

In the words of one program participant, "This program has changed me because I look at the classroom and learning differently. I look at kids differently. I now have a growth mindset and I know that I am a lifelong learner... This institution has helped me as a whole person and I am forever changed by this experience."

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

To further increase the program's impact at the local level, Bank Street's Center on Culture, Race & Equity provides additional 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 neighborhood. Together, they work to develop strength-based, culturally-responsive practices through regular meetings and ongoing support structures.

Partnering for Success

Bank Street currently works with community partners in the Bronx to recruit program participants, secure Bronx-based classroom sites for supervised fieldwork and graduate school classes, and offer complimentary community services for children, families, and program participants. 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.

