

Community Cultural Wealth Quilt

University of Denver

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

University of Denver’s Teacher Education Program (TEP) includes a course called Foundations of Education for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Learners. In the class, apprentice teachers (ATs) investigate and synthesize the funds of knowledge and assets of communities for their future teaching placements. In preparation for their placements, ATs compare their personal identities in relation to the communities’ cultural wealth in the neighborhood or community of their future teaching placement.

Apprentice teachers spend 3-5 hours in the community of their host school and document the community cultural wealth through observation notes and informal interviews with 3-5 community members. Specifically, ATs gather information about the history of the neighborhood, challenges within the community, and sources of strength, resiliency, and pride for the community.

Teachers identify cultural wealth including the social, cultural, linguistic, and human capital present in the community. With this information, they create a visual representation of the community in a community cultural wealth that exemplifies the funds of knowledge found in the school’s community. To connect cultural wealth with their future teaching experiences, ATs are asked to write five “I will” statements that reflect their orientations (e.g., beliefs, values, and intentions) for educating CLD Learners. For example, “I will honor the humanity of every child.”

This practice is linked to the Framework for Effective and Equitable (FEET) competencies, the core competencies required for all teachers in our Teacher Education Program and the Colorado Department of Education CLD Endorsement Standards.

DU professors evaluate the community cultural wealth practice each year and seek to provide more opportunities to frame learning experiences critically. Professors also facilitate discussions and class activities that provide opportunities for students to develop critical consciousness or an understanding of their identities and under-served community’s funds of knowledge within inequitable systems of power such as educational and healthcare systems.

For other Institutes of Higher Education wanting to replicate this course assignment, DU professors offer the following advice: “Investigations about community cultural wealth should be revisited in subsequent courses in conjunction with practices and activities that support the development of apprentice teachers’ critical consciousness in relation to the communities they work and serve. Further, an apprentice teacher cannot assume that the school community will be located around the school. For example, some schools are experiencing gentrification, where students and communities are displaced, or students are bussed in to schools from other communities and neighborhoods. In cases where communities are displaced, ATs need to map the communities of the school from other locations.”

Standard 6—Collaborating with the Community