

A Great Teacher, Every Time

URBAN
TEACHER
CENTER



A Bold Guarantee

Friends,

Four years ago we set out with a big vision: We'd design a teacher preparation program from the ground up that would provide a great teacher, every time, for our nation's hardest-to-staff schools. We understood the importance of preparing talented, diverse teachers who are equipped to meet the learning needs of every child and committed to staying in the profession long enough to have a real impact. We'd learned from pioneering programs in urban teacher preparation and felt ready to push the limit. We founded the Urban Teacher Center with two driving beliefs: 1) Schools must have a guarantee that every teacher they hire will significantly improve student outcomes. 2) The responsibility for making that guarantee should be on us, teacher educators.

Achieving this guarantee has meant thinking differently about everything—from how we shape curriculum, to how we measure success, to how we support new teachers over time. It also means that not every aspiring teacher we train gets certified. Not every promising candidate develops the qualities of a great urban teacher, and we believe it's better that we incur the cost of that discovery than our children.

Our ideas are paying off. We've added new partner schools in Baltimore and D.C. every year, with demand continuing to grow and more cities on the horizon. Program satisfaction remains high, particularly among the principals who dedicate precious resources to bringing UTC residents and fellows into their schools.

In these pages, you'll have an opportunity to hear from those who know our work best: the teachers, coaches, and students who work in UTC-supported classrooms every day. We hope you'll be as inspired as we are by their passion and their commitment.

Working toward a great teacher every time,

Jennifer Green *Christina Hall*
Jennifer Green Christina Hall

Urban Teacher Center Co-founders and Co-directors

How We Deliver



Four-Year Commitment

We recruit diverse, high-achieving, results-oriented individuals who are ready to commit four years to teaching in UTC partner schools.

Full-Year Immersion

Through a thirteen-month residency, residents spend over 1400 hours with real students in real classrooms, developing a solid practice before they become teachers of record.

Real-Time Curriculum

Experiential coursework, designed with our partners at Lesley University, immerses participants in the best practices of the field and lets them immediately try new skills in the classroom.

Multiple Measures of Success

To continue with UTC, participants must pass masters-level courses in their subject area and special education and meet increasing expectations in classroom observations. We also expect our fellows to produce significant growth in student learning as measured by nationally normed assessments.

Intensive, Ongoing Support

UTC provides every teacher with regular, on-site coaching for three years, mentoring from an experienced peer, and the support of our professional learning community.

A High Bar at Every Stage

Only 25% of applicants are accepted into UTC, and only 77% of our residents become teachers of record. We certify teachers only after they have met our high expectations for student learning and observable classroom practice.

Hard Work Pays Off



Jennifer McCatharn
First Grade Teacher
Friendship Southeast Elementary Academy
Washington, D.C.

At the end of college, Jennifer McCatharn received an offer to teach right away in a charter school in Texas. Choosing UTC meant doing things the hard way, but Jennifer understood that learning to teach was a serious endeavor.

JENNIFER One thing that's hard (but great!) about UTC is that they showed us so many practices and really frontloaded a lot of expectations about what good teachers do. Knowing all of that coming in, it sets a much higher bar. If you really know all of the good things that could be happening in a classroom and you realize you're not doing them, it's hard.

But I tell my students all the time, "If you work hard at something, you can get better at it." That was a big lesson for me.

In her fourth year with UTC, Jennifer continues to push herself. She's worked with the same coach over multiple years, building the classroom routines she needed to implement the best practices she learned in her residency year.

JENNIFER Once the routines were there, I felt really confident in what UTC had shown me about how to do guided reading and how to teach phonics. There are just so many times when I knew how it should be presented because I had that in-depth practice for a year.

This year, I've come in and I think: Wow, we started guided reading week two this year! And I see every group every day. Every kid is getting phonics. Every kid is getting reading time with me in a small group. It's still very hard, but the work is paying off. I am more efficient. I'm more effective than I was.

Last year, nearly every student in Jennifer's classroom met the school's reading level goal—for some students who began far behind that represented two years worth of growth. One student made her especially proud.

JENNIFER "Kelvin" was having a tough time at home and came in with a different sort of attitude from the other students. He came in as a Level B [kindergarten]. I thought: I don't know where he's going to be in a few years. I don't know if he's going to be in this community anymore. I wanted him to make even more growth than necessary so that he'd be safe even if he ended up somewhere not so great.

We both talked about it, and we were like "We're going to get you to a Level M [2nd grade]." Kelvin was competitive; he responded really well to goals. Sometimes when he was having difficulty with behavior, I would point to that goal and say, "Is this getting you to level M?" and he would just be like, "No, it's not."

By the end of the year, he was reading on a Level M. I see him in second grade, and his behavior is really good, and I know he's really successful, and it makes me so happy to see him succeeding behaviorally and as a reader.

In one year, Jennifer's students grew more as readers than students in 90% of comparable urban classrooms.

Patricia Crain de Galarce
Lead Clinical Faculty
Elementary Literacy
Washington, D.C.

Patricia Crain de Galarce was a principal for 13 years before joining UTC’s clinical faculty. She is impressed by the passion of UTC’s prospective teachers, as well as their open-eyed recognition of the hard work ahead.

PATRICIA **The first year, it’s really hard work. You’re in schools all day, and then you’re taking coursework in the evening, and you’re new to the classroom. It’s very stressful. You’re learning great theory, and then you try to put it to practice. That first year, there’s tremendous growth. You really see it in the spring of the first year.**

By their second year, they’re just super stars.

Patricia believes that one of the most important aspects of the UTC program is its rich, practical curriculum.

PATRICIA **They walk away with really sound understanding of how to teach students to read and write and speak and listen. The coursework is really solid. It’s given while the residents are able to immediately put to practice what they’ve just learned. Right now, I’m teaching about how to do a running record, and on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, they will be applying what they’ve just learned with students and then bringing back those assessments and having conversations: “What does this mean? What do I do with this information as a teacher?” It’s real-time work.**

The work isn’t always easy, but UTC fellows and coaches make no excuses. Patricia often recalls her time as a principal and asks, “Would I hire this teacher?”

PATRICIA **It takes a lot of resilience to keep going and to remember why you chose to do the work that you’re doing. Even though the environment might be not as conducive as we’d want it to be, that’s not an excuse for the students not to be learning. If a student isn’t learning, the resident teachers or the fellows or the coach will say, “Well, what can we do better? I need to tweak what I’m doing because it’s me that can make the difference so that this student will learn.”**

Patricia loves to hear the stories of success from the residents and fellows she supports.

PATRICIA **One of my residents last year, working with a small group of students in her practicum, totally improved their scores—they made great leaps. But more than that, she was able to get them to read their first novel, from cover to cover. She was able to get them to talk about why the author would write this and have these fabulous conversations around something that they’ve read. Now they’re hiding books under their desks whenever they’re bored!**

If a student isn’t learning, the resident teachers... will say, “Well, what can we do better?”

I Can Make a Difference

Call Me and I'm There



I love the fact that they're not afraid to try things... They always want to improve.

Labonnie Wise came to the Urban Teacher Center with 20 years experience as a teacher and teacher educator. When she first heard about UTC, the approach seemed to have the best of everything she knew.

LABONNIE We don't just throw you out there and say, "Sink or swim." We put supports in place that are going to help you be successful. You have a coach through out your whole commitment with us and a professional learning community that you build with other residents and fellows.

I know how hard it is being a teacher, and the first couple of years make a real difference. If you don't have those supports in place, it makes it harder for you to stay in the game. It's hard work! And it doesn't happen over night.

Labonnie has been impressed with the way UTC residents and fellows use feedback to improve their practice... sometimes, by the time of her next visit.

LABONNIE I admire their commitment, their love for teaching. I love the fact that they're not afraid to try things, and when that doesn't work, they go into their toolbox to try something else. They want to always improve on their practice.

She's seen tremendous growth among the teachers—and their students—as a result.

LABONNIE I've seen people come into the program who say, "I don't know if I have it," who stayed through it, who cried through it, and now they are making a difference in the lives of children. I think it makes a difference in their lives when they know they have that support, when they know they can call us and we're there.

Labonnie Wise
Lead Clinical Faculty
Secondary Mathematics
Washington, D.C.

Adria Johnson chose a career in urban education because she believes every child deserves a quality education. After three years with UTC, she says, “It’s still something that challenges me every day, and it’s something that I know has a purpose.” She is especially grateful for her residency year.

ADRIA Without UTC, I’m not sure that I would’ve remained a teacher. The fact that they give us that whole year, working with the host teacher and the graduate courses as well, you’re really able to see the things that you would do, the things that you could try, the things that don’t work, the things that do work. You’re given a lot of opportunity for trial and error before you’re the one in the spotlight.

One of the big lessons she’s taken from UTC is the importance of building relationships in the classroom.

ADRIA As teachers, we always feel like, “My job is to educate.” Yes, that’s true, but it’s also to build a relationship so that the children can trust you. UTC has helped me by building in a lot of discussion. I love to hear the kids talk about what they’re thinking and how they’re thinking. Those different strategies helped me to build more engaging lessons. It has helped my students to feel like school can be fun.

Ms. Johnson has used the trust she’s built and engaging lessons to push her students to do work they never thought was possible.

ADRIA When I taught my kids in sixth grade, they were not used to reading whole novels. At first they met me with a ton of resistance—it was unreal! However, the difference was, the first year they read two novels. The second year they read six novels and wrote two essays.

They felt that I supported them, and they were able to come up with a product that they knew was decent. They completely owned it. At the end, they were like, “Oh my goodness, I’ve written an essay!”

Adria Johnson
Middle School Teacher
Calverton Elementary/Middle School
Baltimore, MD

Eighth grader Jamonya Scott already has her sights set on college—UCLA, she hopes. Jamonya’s sixth and seventh grade English language arts teacher, Adria Johnson, inspired her to work hard and hold tight to her goals.

JAMONYA Ms. Johnson always seemed really excited. She would always say, “Don’t stop! “You can do it!” She would try to make a bad day into a good one. Whether it was a song or a rap—she redid the lesson in ways everyone could understand. She would have bad days sometimes too, but she would put a smile on to help us, and then we’d laugh together.

Jamonya was impressed by how Ms. Johnson never gave up—on herself or her students. She noticed that where other teachers have taken frustrations out on students, Ms. Johnson always kept trying.

JAMONYA She was always teaching. Instead of just ignoring the bad kids that were making noise and not paying attention, she would come to school with her A game and try to reach out to everyone. She did not take the easy road. She would actually talk to them and try to understand why they are acting like that so she could try and make the students better.

There were a lot of challenges, but she made it easier to understand. There was one lesson – characterization—this was a hard skill for me. But then Ms. Johnson asked me to come to after-school Coach Class to learn it. Ms. Johnson did not give up on me until I learned it. And now I’m good at it.

Though no longer in Ms. Johnson’s classroom, Jamonya remains close with her teacher. She’s taken some big lessons from their relationship.

JAMONYA Be yourself. Don’t let anyone stop your learning. Ms. Johnson helped me stay focused and taught me to tell other kids to leave me alone so I could keep learning. Even if they don’t care about their learning, I care about mine. Ms. Johnson pushes herself harder and harder. And I’m now doing the same thing.

Because Ms. Johnson never gave up on me, I never gave up on myself.

Jamonya Scott
Eighth Grade Student



Never Give Up

“To me, the model is a no-brainer. If you’re going to go into something that has such high stakes, to not have that training and that background? I can’t imagine. Or to not realize what great teaching is? I think you can sell teaching short and sell it short for the kids. It’s because of UTC that I did make it.”

Jennifer McCatharn



“UTC is real with us. You can change things, but it won’t be magical. It won’t happen because you swung your magic wand—and voilà. It happens with time, it happens with effort, it happens with consistency. Teachers that go with UTC are really in it to make a career out of it. They really want to do it for more than two or three or four years. They want to do it for a lifetime.”

Adria Johnson

We Help Schools Be Strategic

“UTC alumni have become a pivotal part of improving student achievement at Chamberlain. Our UTC residents who have become full-time teachers are now campus leaders. They have become a resource for best practices across all aspects of teaching and learning.”

Morrise Harbour
Principal
Friendship Chamberlain Elementary
Washington, D.C.

Nikki Ayanna Stewart
Chief Academic Officer
Excel Academy Public Charter School
Washington, D.C.

Excel Academy Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., has been an Urban Teacher Center partner for two years. The school's Chief Academic Officer, Nikki Ayanna Stewart, has hired five UTC-prepared teachers as fellows, with another five working in classrooms as residents. Investing in UTC teachers is a core part of Nikki's strategy.

NIKKI Because of the preparation and evaluation they receive, UTC teachers are not like other first-year teachers. With UTC, I have a pipeline of effective teachers into my school who immediately add more value.

“UTC teachers come with a wealth of knowledge. They are prepared, energetic about teaching, and have support. I've told our human resources department that I prefer UTC teachers.”

Masi Preston
Academy Leader
Dorothy I. Height Community Academy
Amos 1 Humanities Campus
Washington, D.C.

Inspired by These Stories?

Help the Urban Teacher Center ensure a great teacher every time.

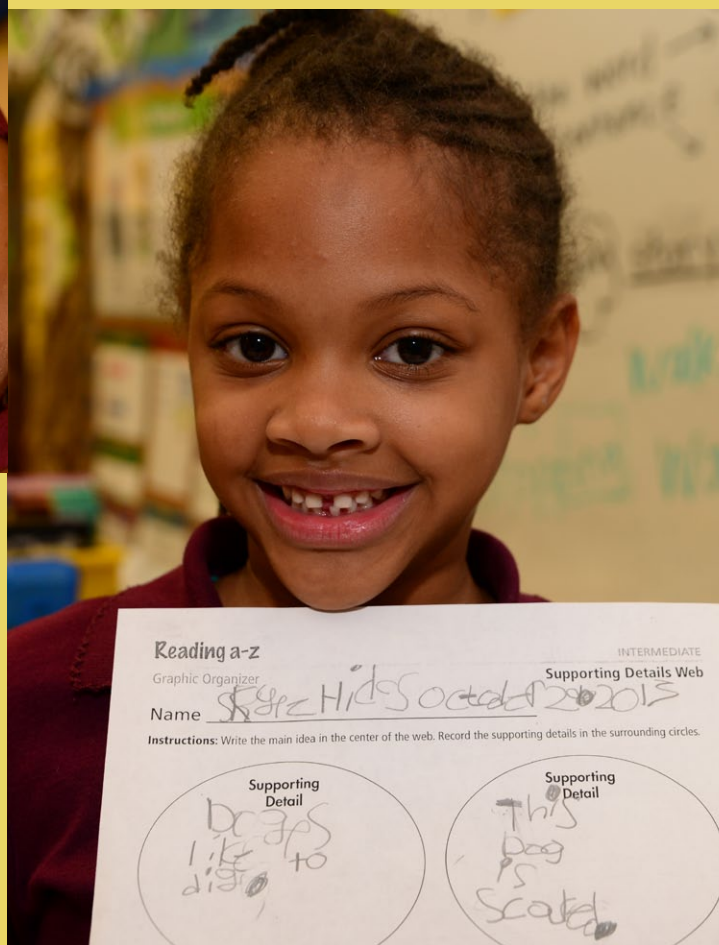


Learn More

Visit urbanteachercenter.org for more details about our program and life with UTC.

Spread the Word

Pass this booklet on to an aspiring teacher!
Or send them to our website for application details.



Advocate

UTC is working to change how teachers are prepared, hired, credentialed, and evaluated. Contact your local school system, state licensing agency, teacher's union, and elected officials to advocate for policies that include student learning data as a measure of teacher effectiveness.



Support Our Work

We rely on philanthropy to provide our residents and fellows with intensive, multi-year support. To learn how you can give to UTC and support a great teacher every time, visit urbanteachercenter.org/give.



Become a Partner

Urban Teacher Center continues to grow in Baltimore/D.C. and will expand to additional cities over the next few years. If you work in a school or summer program that needs great teachers, or if you share our goal of identifying and preparing excellent teacher candidates, consider becoming a partner.



Urban Teacher Center believes that schools need a guarantee—that before teachers are certified, they are evaluated for quality instruction and student achievement gains. UTC’s innovative model ensures that districts only get teachers who have demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom.

1500 Union Avenue
Suite 2200
Baltimore, MD 21211
410.662.6600
www.urbanteachercenter.org

U R B A N
T E A C H E R
C E N T E R