



UW College  
of Education

A Network  
of High-need  
Schools

Ackerley Partner Schools Network  
working to improve student performance

Ackerley Foundation



Together, we work to share our best practices and refine our work in ways that will benefit the K-12 school population by better bridging the gap between universities and public schools.

## Overview

Based on mutual benefit and respect, the Ackerley Partnership brings together expertise from the local school system and teacher education to benefit the educational system and, most importantly, positively impact today's young students.

### **This partnership:**

- Serves K-12 pupils who face the greatest challenges.
- Prepares educators to be successful with K-12 pupils in the most challenging circumstances.
- Is shaped by K-12 school realities.
- Is designed, delivered, and evaluated by a collaborative team of university faculty & K-12 educators.
- Is informed by data from program graduates' experiences and impact in K-12 classrooms.

## Mission

To create and support the collaboration of K-12 and university educators to improve teaching and learning in public schools & universities in ways that respond to the needs of students who face the greatest challenges.

# What Makes This Unique?

“The Ackerley Partner schools collaborate with the University of Washington on preparing teachers and providing new teacher support and induction.”

Morva McDonald, Ackerley Partnership Director

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## Better Preparation for Prospective School Leaders and K-12 Teachers

The UW College of Education Teacher Education Program places teacher candidates in Ackerley partner schools for their year-long practicum. Partner schools are not simply locations for Teacher Education Program candidates to try out teaching practices; rather they offer systematic mentoring and modeling of best practices. The partnership combines on-site teacher education with access to cutting-edge, school-based research. For example, half of the elementary Teacher Education Program courses are taught in the schools utilizing classrooms for practice and demonstrations while UW faculty and practicing teachers negotiate curriculum that will best serve the K-12 students. The experience gives UW teacher candidates on-site practice as they learn concepts; helps the UW faculty stay informed about the current work in our schools; gives the K-6 faculty access to UW current methods; and gives K-6 students greater access to individualized academic attention.

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## Connecting Partner Schools to Increase Opportunities

‘High-need’ partner schools have a significant number of students speaking English as a second language and are at or near the poverty level (as defined by the free and reduced price lunch figures) with several between the 70-95% range. The partnership works to have an impact on recruiting, educating and supporting teacher candidates for service with these school populations. Simultaneously schools are given resources to engage in research and improved K-12 learning.

The University of Washington is a resource for the Ackerley Partner Schools, providing support for youth learning such as undergraduate tutors, teacher candidates, graduate assistants, and University faculty mentors. This relationship also provides opportunities for K-12 educators to undertake new roles, from co-teaching alongside teacher candidates, to collaborating with teachers from other schools, to engaging in inquiry projects focused on addressing particular challenges. Partner school teachers and principals work directly with UW Teacher Education Program faculty and staff to focus on improving the learning opportunities available for K-12 students. University faculty and graduate assistants connect with current teachers, with the goal of enhancing the preparation of future teachers, as well as the learning of K-12 students.



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### Principal Preparation and Professional Development Opportunities for Principals

Principals of Ackerley Partner schools meet monthly to discuss problems of practice and to learn from one another. Sharing real-life examples from their schools, they use problem framing and discussion protocols to find solutions for complex issues. Each month, the principals identify school based dilemmas, discuss the issues, and work together to create solutions to improve access and to ensure a high quality education for each student. Every year, they choose a guiding book as a foundation for these discussions of school renewal. One recent selection was *Dividing Classes: How the Middle Class Negotiates and Rationalizes School Advantage* (E. Brantlinger, 2003).

The UW Danforth Program for principal preparation consists of a cohort of approximately 30 students each year. Students are admitted annually for one intensive year of study and concurrent administrative internship. As one of its core tenets, Danforth is committed to excellence in education. This concept is central to the curriculum and the real world experience offered through the internship provides one of the most important opportunities for students to explore the many facets of equity in the schools. As a result, the Ackerley Partner Schools are ideal locations for Danforth students to engage themselves.

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### Professional Development and Support for Teachers

The Ackerley Partnership offers numerous professional development and collaboration opportunities. Teacher liaisons meet monthly to discuss inquiry projects, dialogue with University faculty about teacher education, and network with each other. Funds are available to improve teaching and learning within the schools, such as requests for curriculum materials or for professional development courses/workshops. Most teachers use the funds to enhance their skills with working with a population of students. Current teachers and school leaders benefit from support and networking, resulting in rich opportunities for improved teaching and learning. For example, as a result of professional development connections, Madison Middle School and Aki Kurose Middle School partnered to improve student learning in classrooms with a co-teaching model of instruction aimed at helping students develop academic and social skills.

# Ackerley Partnership Contributions and Benefits

## Inquiry Projects

Every year, each school in the network submits a proposal for an inquiry project. The projects support ongoing learning and professional development through collaborative activities and allow Network partners to explore ways of working together to improve student learning. The goal of the inquiry projects? To collaborate within and across schools, to learn from one another about challenges, and to share expertise within and across schools and districts.

## Garfield Summer Bridge: Improving the Preparation of Prospective Secondary Teacher Candidates & Eighth Graders Transition to High School

In 2009, Garfield's incoming freshmen were invited to participate in the Summer Bridge program to prepare them for freshman year. The eight-week program with six courses: math, science, language arts, social studies, technology, and advisory skills, e.g. study skills, positive attitude, social networking. As part of this program, the UW College of Education provided teacher candidates to support Garfield teachers with curriculum planning and implementation. These UW students mentored Garfield students, supported the Garfield teachers, and connected this hands-on experience with their own professional development. And, all of this work tied back to the UW student's own curriculum. Teacher candidates had three instructors who taught a joint syllabus — that included multicultural education, literacy across content areas, and working with English Language Learners — on-site at Garfield. This was particularly effective since the UW student's curriculum directly related to their work with Garfield students.

*“The teacher education students get to engage one-on-one with kids prior to student teaching, which will increase their feelings of security and enlarge their repertoire of how to engage kids. This student to teacher ratio will also help them get to know kids as people, not just students, which is also vital because they will bring this humanity with them to their student teacher experience. The more humanity one can bring into the classroom, the better. But this needs practice and that's what they are being offered the chance to do here.”*

**Adam Gish**, Garfield Teacher



## Teacher Candidates Placed in Local High-Need Schools for Learning and Practice

During their academic preparation UW teacher candidates are placed in local partner schools, where they learn lessons on-site and apply them immediately. For example, the elementary literacy project at Bailey-Gatzert Elementary School provides teacher candidates with an opportunity for clinical practice at Bailey-Gatzert, where they learn curriculum, observe teaching in real-time, and apply their methods learning to one-on-one and small group interactions with a particular student.

*"From a student's perspective, the literacy project combines the instruction and methods into a studio learning experience. We attend lectures, observe literacy lessons, and demonstration assessments, and we also work with an elementary student partner to practice our learning. As we bring our work and learning to 'real' students, the course content jumps off the page and comes to life in the classroom."*

**Michaela Koerner**, Teacher Candidate

A Network of High-Need Schools



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Funding provided by the Ginger  
and Barry Ackerley Foundation.  
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