**Communities as Critical Partners in Teacher Education: The Impact of Community Immersion on Teacher Candidates’ Understanding of Self and Teaching in Urban Schools**

**Abstract**

Communities play a critical role in helping teacher candidates understand the social and historical aspects of community and their impact on schools, students and families, particularly in urban communities. Communities should be integral and equal partners in preparing teachers for today’s diverse schools. This paper focuses on utilizing the community as a space for preparing urban teachers. It describes a study of an urban community immersion experience in teacher education at a predominantly white institution. Findings suggest that carefully designed community experiences can have significant impact on teacher candidates’ understanding of self and their identity as teachers in urban schools.

*Keywords:* teacher education, urban education, community immersion, field experiences, elementary teacher education, diversity, teacher identity