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## From The Inside Out: Eagle Rock School Producing a New Generation of CES Teachers

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Six years ago, I founded Eagle Rock's Teaching Fellowship Program in collaboration with Public Allies, Inc. and under the auspices of Eagle Rock's Professional Development Center. I knew the power of teacher education that Eagle Rock provided, as I had participated in an internship at the school in 1994. Eagle Rock's Teaching Fellowship has two perspectives: local and global. Locally, Fellows contribute skills, energy, and knowledge to the Eagle Rock School community. As residents, they are involved in student activities and campus life as well as classroom teaching and administration. Like everyone else at Eagle Rock, they serve as role models, take on leadership roles, and live the values expressed through Eagle Rock's commitments. The global perspective relates to the Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center's mission of engaging educators in forging renewal and reform initiatives in schools across the country. We envision Fellows utilizing what they learn at Eagle Rock in their next work environment and serving as emissaries for the kind of education Eagle Rock promotes. No matter what they do or where they go (but most especially if they enter public education) our Fellowship Alumni act as ambassadors for the values that Eagle Rock honors.

Molding tomorrow's educational leaders begins with core training during which Fellows are oriented and begin the community-building process. Throughout the year, Fellows gather together as a cohort once a week for learning seminars facilitated by skilled professionals in the field. Fellows participate in a variety of professional development experiences, including weekly fellow learning seminars that explore the theory and practice of education.

We also host an Alternative Licensure Program through the Colorado Department of Education that enables us to offer teaching certificates to our Teaching Fellows upon completion of their time with us. The *Other Side of Curriculum: Lessons for Learners* and *Engaging the Disengaged: How Schools Can Help Struggling Students Succeed*, both authored by Eagle Rock's Director of Professional Development Lois Brown Easton, anchor the curriculum. Fellows participate as a group in mid-year and year-end retreats, and they join regular critical reflection sessions during which they connect their service to larger social and public issues. Michael Soguero, Director of Professional Development at Eagle Rock School explains, "Job-embedded professional development with follow-up is much more effective than traditional models of professional development where teachers go off to a workshop and there's some hope they will transfer their learning back to their site. Our teacher preparation program uses the context of the current teaching experience as the source of the assignments that candidates must complete to earn their teacher license. We do lesson study using real lessons delivered at Eagle Rock and use many Critical Friends protocols to examine student work."

The Fellows are coached by the local site director of the Public Allies Fellowship Teaching Fellowship Program based here on site in coordination with each Fellow's cooperating mentor teacher using a continuous learning process that includes setting personal and professional goals, creating plans to achieve those goals, and giving and receiving feedback from peers, supervisors, and students. Simultaneously, Fellows document their progress towards specific service and learning outcomes. The program concludes each August with Presentations of Learning, when Fellows demonstrate their mastery to the entire Eagle Rock community, showing they have met their teaching goals and learning outcomes throughout the year.

Throughout the program year, Fellows work in teams of four and side-by-side with community members on Team Service Projects (TSPs). TSPs are based on the idea that in order to improve communities, you must discover and build upon their assets, which are the talents and capacities of the community. Team Service

Projects leave a sustainable contribution to the Eagle Rock Community with direct and measurable impact. The projects are divided into four phases: community exploration; project planning; project implementation; and critical reflection, evaluation and project transition. Their team service projects allow the Fellows to gain an additional community service experience, while developing important skills in teamwork, collaboration, volunteer generation and project management.

What makes the Fellowship program distinct from most other new teacher training programs is our organic emphasis on the 10 Common Principles of the Coalition. Jimmy Frickey, former Math Teaching Fellow who went on to be an Eagle Rock teacher, explains, "As a current student in a traditional teaching program, a main difference I notice between my experiences at Eagle Rock and in school placements is that Eagle Rock's commitment to principles and practices is significantly greater than anywhere else I have seen in public education. Traditional education programs provide classes that teach about the values of inclusion, but mainstream practice in public education still mostly ignores these principles and attempts to create homogeneous learning environments by separating "those" students for a variety of reasons. Eagle Rock's commitment to inclusive learning environments provided me with practical experience teaching in such settings, while my traditional teacher preparation program has provided me mostly with theoretical discussions about inclusive learning environments."

Each year, when our dozen Teaching Fellows arrive for their year-long term of service, I let them know that their most powerful teachers will be the Eagle Rock School students with whom they will spend many of their waking hours. This highlights another key feature of the Fellowship Program, Eagle Rock's emphasis on Asset Based Community Development, an approach to school community development that advocates the use of skills and strengths that are already present within the school community, rather than obtaining help from outside institutions. The phrase "asset-based" refers to a positive, "capacity-driven" approach that encourages community members to make progress for themselves, as opposed to a traditional "needs-driven" approach that makes the community dependent on institutional help. Molly Nichols, former Language Arts and Literature Teaching Fellow at Eagle Rock explains, "Eagle Rock helped me understand the importance of building a safe learning community, which allows students to take risks and grow. One method I applied at a Denver public school was the incorporation of rituals in the classroom. Each week we set aside time to publicly, yet anonymously, acknowledge each other. Students and participants counted on this time, and it was powerful to see how much it contributed to a trusting learning community. "

Amanda Hansen, student at Eagle Rock offers her perspective on the strengths that the Teaching Fellows bring to the Eagle Rock School community. "The diverse backgrounds, beliefs and experiences of the Fellows along with their younger age have made it easier for me to connect on a personal level in both classroom and personal growth learning experiences. Also, we have new Fellows every year, and I really like all of the new ideas and techniques that they bring each year." Michael Soguero says, "As emerging educators and young folks dedicated to leadership and service, our Fellows model the kind of future Eagle Rock students aspire to: graduate and make a difference in the world."

Anna McCause, former Visual Arts Teaching Fellow at Eagle Rock reflects, "The year I spent working and living at Eagle Rock School has had and will continue to have an enormous impact on my life as an educator. Following my time at Eagle Rock, I moved to San Francisco to teach at a new charter school with several other former staff members of Eagle Rock. As we set about to create a culture of hard work, respect, and a love of learning in the students in this new school we always found ourselves drawing from our experiences at Eagle Rock to guide us. Eagle Rock's example of community, service learning, experiential education, student leadership and voice, and student-teacher relationships gave us something to strive for as we created the kind of school that we felt would best support the types of students the school is working with. I can't imagine that any other teacher preparation program could have given me the experiences I needed during my first year at that school and I find Eagle Rock a constant source of inspiration in my educational career."

Scott James, a former Language Arts and Literature Teaching Fellow at Eagle Rock describes the complexity of the Teaching Fellow experience. "Being a Fellow at Eagle Rock allowed me to be both teacher and student at the same time, as is the case in life," said James. "Instead of separating academics from practice, it gave me a chance to live both, to study myself as I interacted with others, and to look at myself through the lens of myself. Most importantly, it prepared me to live education by teaching me that the core of any meaningful experience is in the relationships. In general, I felt like Eagle Rock let me try, fail, and get a lot of feedback.

It was this constant living face-to-face with who I was, which was often very helpful. It felt real and unrehearsed, and in the end, I think everyone there wanted the same thing, for the world to be a better place, but somehow everyone had a different idea of how to make that happen. I suppose I'll be processing what Eagle Rock meant for the rest of my life. It was probably the time in my life so far when all aspects of who I was, how I lived, worked, ate, recreated, were all the most closely related."

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A CES Mentor School, Estes Park, Colorado's Eagle Rock is a year-round, residential, and full-scholarship school that enrolls 96 young people from 15 to 17 years of age from around the United States in an innovative learning program with national recognition. Eagle Rock is also a professional development center focused on national school renewal and reform initiatives, and a CES Affiliate Center. For more about Eagle Rock's Teacher Fellowship Program, visit [www.publicallies.org/eaglerock](http://www.publicallies.org/eaglerock)

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#### **Related Resource**

For a review of Lois Brown Easton's Engaging the Disengaged, see Horace Volume 23, Issue 4, Fall 2007.

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#### **Related Resource**

For more on Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, read "Eagle Rock School: An Ethic of Service" by John Guffey in Horace Volume 22, Issue 3, Fall 2006.

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Public Allies, Inc., headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with local sites in 15 communities around the country, identifies talented young adults from diverse backgrounds and prepares them for careers working for community and social change. Allies serve in 10-month, paid apprenticeships at local nonprofits and participate in a rigorous and rewarding leadership development program with a diverse group of peers who are also of and working within their home community.

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For more on Asset Based Community Development, visit the website of the Asset Based Community Development Institute at [www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abccd](http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/abccd)

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