

# Case Study: Embedding Colorado’s Legislative Initiatives into Educator Preparation Programs

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## Introduction

The Colorado Department of Higher Education and Colorado Department of Education (CDHE/CDE), with support from Rose Community Foundation, implemented an Educator Preparation Project (EPP) to support the integration of Colorado’s strategic education initiatives into traditional and alternative educator preparation programs. Colorado’s Educator Preparation Project selected two preparation programs, one alternative and one traditional program, to participate in Colorado’s Educator Preparation Project. These programs worked to identify a strategic and effective process for embedding Colorado’s education initiatives into educator preparation programs and supported the state of Colorado in disseminating lessons learned to support the success of educator preparation programs across the state and nation. Specifically, the Project focused on Colorado Academic Standards, including the embedded 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in all ten content areas (Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids, or CAP4K, S.B. 08-212) and educator quality standards and measures of student learning (Great Teachers and Leaders Act, S.B. 10-191).

The following case study provides an overview of the “moving trains” strategy employed during this study, an introduction to the selected traditional and alternative preparation programs, an overview of the key activities of Colorado’s Educator Preparation Project, and a description of the strategic moves each program enacted to strategically embed Colorado’s education initiatives into educator preparation programs.

## Overview of Colorado’s “Moving Trains”

University of Colorado Denver’s Urban Community Teacher Education program and Stanley Teacher Preparation program were selected to participate in Colorado’s Educator Preparation Program based on a “moving trains” strategy.



**Moving Trains:** An individual or organization who is highly motivated to lead, inspire, and elevate our profession by doing good work: work that is good in quality, good for the soul, and good for the world.

These “moving trains” possessed a high degree of knowledge of Colorado’s education initiatives; willingness to collaboratively communicate learning and disseminate lessons learned; and possessed a high degree of intellectual curiosity, motivation, and passion for nurturing the development of future educators.

## **Stanley Teacher Preparation (STP)**

The Stanley Teacher Prep Program was founded in 1972 by former First Lady Bea Romer and founding head Carolyn Hambidge. Together, they had a vision for a school that would not only teach children but would also serve as a model for teaching teachers as well. They saw a vital need for a school with a non-traditional framework where teachers could inspire a love of learning and one that embraces the belief that all children can succeed when they are taught well.

Their vision was based on the learning principles of Friedrich Froebel, whose principles were embedded in the British Primary approach to education. Froebel believed that education should be like a garden where children can grow, rather than be molded. His principles included the ideas that children should be actively involved in their learning, that learning is a cumulative process rather than one consisting of fragmented elements, and that education should be focused on personal growth, fulfillment, and caring for others.

Carolyn and Bea sought funding to support their new educational concept, the British Primary approach, with hope to influence public education and partner with public entities. The first lab classroom was started in 1972, where interns, as apprentice teachers, learned alongside master teachers.

Stanley Teacher Prep became the first designated agency to offer alternative teacher licensure in the state of Colorado in 1991. In 1992, the British Primary approach and residency model were integrated into two Denver public elementary schools. The schools, Crofton Ebert, in Denver's Five Points area and Steele Elementary in Washington Park, were representative of the diverse socio-economic environments where this approach thrived.

In 1996, the Intern Program, with partnership with the University of Colorado was awarded a five-year Program of Excellence grant from the Colorado Commission of Higher Education. The program was recognized as an innovative teacher preparation model, delivering quality instruction to a diverse population of learners.

The Stanley Teacher Prep program received 7 years of consecutive Johnson Foundation grants that funded interns placed in schools in urban environments, specifically Tollgate School of Expeditionary Learning in Aurora and Eagleton Elementary School in Denver Public Schools. At the time of this report, 40% of staff at Eagleton and Tollgate are graduates of the Stanley Teacher Preparation Program.

## **University of Colorado Denver's Urban Community Teacher Education (UCTE)**

The Urban Community Teacher Education program uniquely prepares undergraduate and graduate students to learn and lead in the dynamic world of urban education as they impact educational outcomes among children and adolescents from culturally and economically diverse urban backgrounds.

Community focus. The Urban Community Teacher Education program views teacher education as inseparable from community engagement. UCTE prepares teachers who are not just caring, competent, and committed, but who understand the importance of engaging with their school's

community. Research shows that children learn more effectively if their teachers are aware of, respect, and use the community's cultural and intellectual resources.

Meaningful, long-standing collaborations give graduates a real advantage. Our Professional Development School (PDS) Network is a result of over 20 years of close partnership with six Denver Metro Area school districts. In PDS classrooms, teachers live the life of a teacher every week, immersed in real-world experiences while being mentored by practicing teachers and CU Denver faculty. The schools and their districts often provide job offers to many of UCTE's graduates.

Learning in personalized, closely-connected cohorts. Teacher candidates experience a variety of face-to-face and innovative online learning with peers and expert faculty. This structure provides support, flexibility, and relevant networking that supports teachers in preparation and throughout their professional careers.

A world-renowned university with a nationally-recognized model of teacher education. The University of Colorado Denver is a vibrant, intellectual research community situated in the heart of downtown Denver. The excellence of this program is recognized by national organizations and peers and reflected in multimillion dollar grants that are awarded to the faculty of this program.

The Urban Community Teacher Education program has undergraduate and graduate licensure pathways in elementary, secondary and special education. For graduate students, completion of the licensure program supports teacher candidates in transitioning seamlessly into an abbreviated master's degree with various options to advance their career pathways.

## Overview of Key Activities

The Urban Community Teacher Education (UCTE) program at the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver was selected to represent traditional educator preparation programs. The Stanley Teacher Preparation (STP) program at Stanley British Primary School was selected to represent alternative educator preparation programs.

These "moving trains" worked to achieve the following five outcomes:

### Examining Current Practices and Crafting an Action Plan

The first outcome is to examine the scope and sequence of the current program, specifically identifying reference to the Colorado Academic Standards and Common Core State Standards, as well as Educator Quality Standards and Measures of Student Learning. Additionally, UCTE and STP worked collaboratively with DHE to define a common mission, vision, goals and actions for the Educator Preparation Project coordinated with educator preparation efforts, policies, and programs around the state and nation.

*Guiding Question(s): Where do the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) and Educator Quality Standards (EQS) exist within our current program? What changes do we envision as a result of collaboration with E-12 partners? How do we spiral curriculum throughout the program to provide multiple opportunities for teacher candidates to learn about the CAS and EQS? What performance tasks are required of teacher candidates to demonstrate their understanding of these education reform initiatives?*

## Establishing and Documenting the Process for Embedding Colorado's Education Initiatives into Educator Preparation Programs

The second outcome is to create a scope and sequence for educator preparation that leverages the emerging best practices and strategies generated by the state's integration districts that are implementing the Colorado Academic Standards and State Model Evaluation System.

*Guiding Question(s): How do we strategically and effectively embed Colorado's education initiatives into educator preparation programs to best prepare effective teachers to support student achievement?*

## Communications and Outreach

The third outcome is to disseminate lessons learned throughout the state and nation. STP and UCTE will work with DHE's Educator Preparation Project Manager, CDE, and with each other (when appropriate) to disseminate lessons learned at regional and state convenings and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Annual Meeting (2015).

*Guiding Question(s): How do we leverage our collective knowledge and expertise to inform the continuous improvement of educator preparation programs across the state? How do we reframe the challenge? Advancing educator preparation is a talent and equity agenda for Colorado.*

## Championing for Educator Preparation: Collecting Evidence of Impact

The fourth outcome is to collect data, including demographic diversity indicators, regarding the recruitment and selection of teacher candidates, field placement, relationship between educator preparation programs and partner schools, relationship between mentor teachers and teacher candidates, performance of teacher candidates in clinical practice settings, emerging best practices in mentor teacher professional development, credentials earned by teacher candidates (certificates, endorsements, degrees), hiring and career placement, educator effectiveness ratings, and teacher candidate satisfaction.

*Guiding Question(s): What quantitative and qualitative data best supports UCTE/STP in continuous improvement efforts to respond to changes in the landscape of E-12 education and support candidates' success in the field?*

## Evaluation and Recommendations

The fifth outcome is to provide a detailed and robust evaluation of the Educator Preparation Project. Rose Community Foundation (RCF) has provided funding for an evaluation of the Educator Preparation Project.

## **Strategic Moves: A Process for Embedding Colorado's Education Initiatives into Educator Preparation Programs**

Case studies were utilized to describe the work these “moving trains” engaged in during the Project. Owing to the newness of S.B. 10-191 and participants’ seeming comfort and familiarity with state and national academic standards, both programs expressed greater focus on the Teacher Quality Standards and Student Learning Objectives in their work. It is important to question, however, the extent to which participants’ self-reported high degree of familiarity with the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) might reflect a more generalized familiarity with standards, and/or cognizance of Colorado schools’ twenty-plus-year-history with standards-based education, rather than a deep understanding of the ten new content area standards authorized by S.B. 08-212. The possible fragility of this familiarity with the CAS is underscored by the experiences of the program candidates who participated in Colorado District Sample Curriculum Project (CDSCP) workshops. These candidates consistently reported greater knowledge of the standards and their concept and skill foci. A candidate’s quote, expressed after only one day of a CDSCP curriculum workshop, captures the power of deep, standards-based work to truly strengthen understanding of the CAS, “I feel like I’ve learned more today than I have in years” (Lauren, teacher candidate). Teacher candidates, faculty, directors, and deans could benefit from similar forms of engagement with the standards in order to explore CAS priorities and their inseparability from the professional practices of S.B. 10-191’s Teacher Quality Standards.

### **Assessing the Context of Your Work: Program and Course Alignment**

As a result of the newness of S.B. 10-191 and the Teacher Quality Standards, each program began by assessing the context of their work and aligning their program to the Teacher Quality Standards. UCD’s Urban Community Teacher Education program added two additional standards to reflect the values of the program. In addition to the five Teacher Quality Standards reflected in Colorado’s State Model Evaluation System, UCTE added “partner, collaborate and engage with families and communities” and “actively advocate for students, families, and schools to support equity and social justice.” This program alignment led to the development of four program level essential questions to help operationalize the Standards. Wiggins & McTighe refer to essential questions as a way to “open doors to student understanding.” Essential questions help focus learners on what’s core, or essential, in terms of big ideas of a subject. They inspire and engage students to inquire more deeply about their learning and make sense of the connections among important and complex ideas and knowledge. Essential questions should be ever-present in a student’s study and quest for understanding acting as guideposts to continually return to, reflect upon, make connections, and pose new questions. Teacher candidates are provided with multiple opportunities to take pause, reflect, make connections and deepen their personal questions related to teaching and learning throughout the program. These essential questions were used to frame the program and inform the development of six anchor experiences that are grounded in the authentic work of teachers. These anchor experiences are facilitated through courses and internships throughout the program, are intentionally aligned to the essential questions, and prepare teacher candidates for program level assessments that occur at three points in the program.

Similarly, Stanley Teacher Prep facilitated a Seminar Speaker Summit to provide an opportunity for shared learning and collaboration among program instructors (Appendix A). This event provided an opportunity for all instructors to come together to develop a shared understanding of the Teacher Quality Standards, make connections to the individual courses they teach, examine the program's scope and sequence, and establish a common set of program expectations.



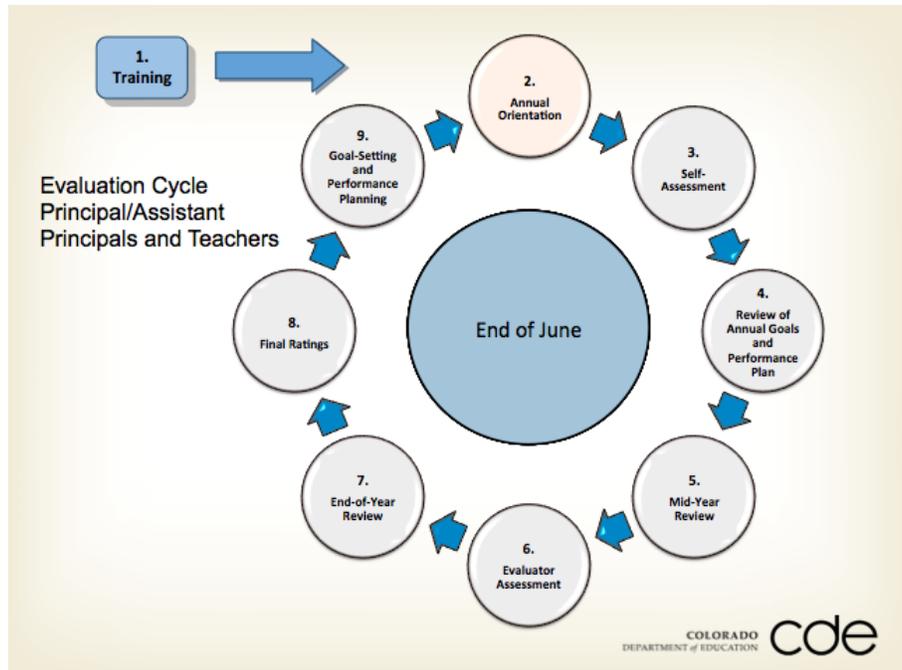
Program staff posted the program scope and sequence on walls around the room capturing the entirety of the program. Instructors unpacked their envelopes containing each of the elements color-coded by standard and began aligning their instructional objectives to the Teacher Quality Standards and Elements. Then, they worked collaboratively to compose learning objectives related to the courses they teach and posted the Teacher Quality Standards and Elements addressed in their course(s) to the posters on the walls. Instructors then walked the walls, examining the program scope and sequence to identify celebrations and areas for improvement.

In both programs, leadership and instructors worked collaboratively to think strategically about the scope and sequence program and the intentional experiences utilized to nurture the development of educators.

### **Aligning Evaluation of Teacher Candidates with Teacher Quality Standards**

As mentioned above, UCD's Urban Community Teacher Education program created four essential questions to operationalize the Teacher Quality Standards. These essential questions informed the development of anchor experiences and aligned program level assessments administered at three points in the program. The program level assessments include a meta-analysis reflection in response to the essential questions citing evidence from the aligned anchor experiences and other program experiences. Additionally, teacher candidates participate in a performance demonstration and oral defense in small groups with faculty, K-12 partners, and peers to demonstrate proficiency of Colorado's Teacher Quality Standards. Teacher candidates are also required to establish a web-based presence showcasing their work, reflection, and learning networks that inspire their ongoing development as educators.

At Stanley Teacher Prep, teacher candidates participate in a self-assessment of their effectiveness three times per year modeled after the process being utilized in partner districts. Teacher candidates are given the rubric for evaluating Colorado’s teachers (State Model Evaluation System) and are provided with opportunities for reflection and analysis. After assessing themselves using the rubric, teacher candidates identify 2-3 strengths they bring to the teaching profession and 1-2 professional growth goals related to each Standard (Appendix B). Teacher candidates then participate in a mock evaluation and goal setting conference with their principals modeled after the evaluation cycle below.



Both programs created opportunities to support teacher candidates’ understanding of the Teacher Quality Standards within the context of their programs and supported candidates in navigating multiple evaluation systems (e.g., Teacher Quality Standards/State Model Evaluation Standards, Denver Public Schools’ LEAP Framework, Danielson, and other tools designed by partner districts).

### Providing Professional Learning Opportunities

In addition to supporting teacher candidates’ understanding of the Teacher Quality Standards, each program provided faculty and instructors with opportunities for shared learning and aligning course content with the Teacher Quality Standards and Colorado Academic Standards within the structures of the organization. Allocating time to support individuals’ professional learning is a cornerstone to embedding the knowledge of the new expectations of Colorado Academic Standards and Teacher Quality Standards into curriculum, effectively preparing future educators, and modeling lifelong learning for future educators. UCD’s Urban Community Teacher Education program utilized the Center for Transforming Learning and Teaching housed within the CU School of Education and Human Development to expand upon their understanding of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and examine opportunities to increase teacher candidates’ assessment literacy. Similarly, Stanley Teacher Prep provided differentiated professional development opportunities for

program staff, including school site coordinators and mentor teachers. Stanley Teacher Prep is also focused on the development of mentor teachers to ensure teacher candidates are placed with effective educators. They created professional learning labs to support and elevate the professional practices of mentor teachers. Mentor teachers' observational documentation and feedback to teacher candidates is also aligned to Colorado's Teacher Quality Standards to provide multiple opportunities for teacher candidates to understand and demonstrate proficiency of the Teacher Quality Standards.

### **Consider How to Have Teacher Candidates Demonstrate Proficiency of the Standards**

As teacher candidates deepen their understanding of the Teacher Quality Standards, educator preparation programs participating in Colorado's Educator Preparation Project provided multiple opportunities for teacher candidates to demonstrate their proficiency of the standards. At Stanley Teacher Prep teacher mentors and school site coordinators utilize observational tools aligned to the Teacher Quality Standards to capture teacher candidates' demonstration of the standards. They also provide specific feedback aligned with teacher candidates' professional goals articulated in their self-assessments. Additionally, teacher candidates are required to collect artifacts throughout the program demonstrating their effectiveness aligned with the Teacher Quality Standards. These are then compiled into a digital portfolio reflecting teacher candidates' effectiveness. UCD's Urban Community Teacher Education program is utilizing video coaching and support in face-to-face Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to promote teacher candidates' exhibition of the Teacher Quality Standards. These practices increase teacher candidates' understanding of the standards and build their confidence while diminishing their fear of the evaluation systems being utilized in partner districts. Teacher candidates report being informed and knowledgeable regarding expectations and felt better prepared as a result of the intentional efforts being utilized by faculty and instructors in each program.

### **Ensure Internal Accountability Among Faculty and Instructors**

In each preparation program, the depth of knowledge possessed by individuals directly working with teacher candidates varies. Additionally, as professional learning opportunities evolved, the depth of understanding increased over time and greater connections were made between individuals' understanding and their intentional alignment to Colorado's education initiatives across programs, courses, experiences, and assignments. As a result, intentional professional learning opportunities were offered to support faculty and instructors at all levels of the system in developing a shared understanding of the Teacher Quality Standards, Student Learning Objectives, and Colorado Academic Standards. Both Stanley Teacher Prep and the Urban Community Teacher Education program continue to explore where responsibility lies for assessing specific standards and elements. The Urban Community Teacher Education program has addressed this by ensuring that the six program level anchor experiences grounded in the authentic work of teachers are assigned to specific courses and experiences throughout the program. Faculty teaching these courses and facilitating these experiences are responsible for assessing teacher candidates' demonstration of the standards. Additionally, faculty from across the program participate in the assessment of program level assessments to ensure cohesion among faculty.

## Explore How You Will Utilize Local and Statewide Data to Continuously Improve Your Program

Educator preparation programs across the state are considering how to utilize local data to ensure the effectiveness of their graduates. Additionally, educator preparation programs would benefit from considering how educator effectiveness data can be incorporated into existing program evaluation systems and structures to support teacher candidates' success in the field and continuous improvement efforts.

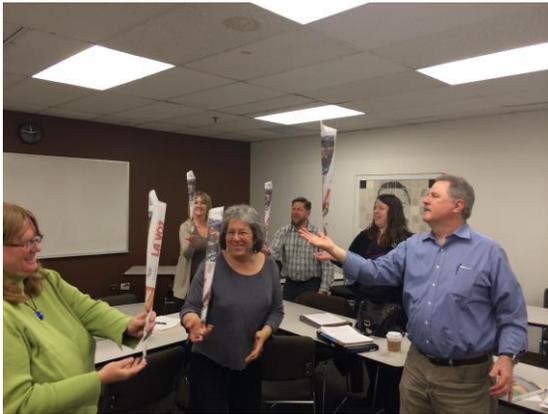
## Conclusion

In conclusion, to systemically integrate Colorado's education initiatives into educator preparation programs, individuals should first ask what has been done to align programs, courses, experiences, and assignments to the reforms. Faculty possess varying depths of knowledge regarding the reforms which are reflected in their courses and assignments. Additionally, adopting a growth mindset, recognizing that we're "building planes in the sky" (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7XW-mewUm8> for inspiration), and celebrating achievement are critical in achieving long term success. This case study showcases the variety of ways educator preparation programs can embed Colorado's legislative initiatives into their programs.

By building relationships among all members of the educator preparation community (deans, directors, faculty, and instructors from preparation programs and district leadership, principals, instructional coaches, and teacher mentors from partner schools), educator preparation programs can be successful in aligning their work with the needs of our educational system. The image below captures school site coordinators, site professors, faculty, and director Cindy Gutierrez inquiring around issues at the cross section of supporting English Language Learners & Students with Disabilities.



In addition to focusing on relationships, promoting active engagement and creating joy is critical to supporting individuals' learning and motivation to support professional learning at all levels of the system. The images below captures directors, faculty, and instructors attempting to balance tubes using various vantage points, and realizing that to successfully balance the tube (and prepare future teachers for career success), you must understand the greater legislative landscape of the E-12 schools and districts you serve.



Adopting a growth mindset, celebrating achievement, developing relationships, and promoting a culture of active engagement and joy provide the foundation for engaging in the following process to support preparation programs in strategically and systemically embedding Colorado's education initiatives into educator preparation programs to nurture the development of the next generation of educators.

The process described in detail above can be utilized by educator preparation programs across the state and nation to align their work to the needs of the field ensuring graduates' career success. This includes:

- Assessing the Context of Your Work: Program and Course Alignment
- Aligning Evaluation of Teacher Candidates with Teacher Quality Standards
- Providing Professional Learning Opportunities
- Consider How to Have Teacher Candidates Demonstrate Proficiency of the Standards
- Ensure Internal Accountability Among Faculty and Instructors
- Explore How You Will Utilize Local and Statewide Data to Continuously Improve Your Program

Collectively, these actions may support educator preparation programs in expanding their impact and supporting future teachers in being prepared for success in the classroom to ensure a lifetime of opportunity for every citizen allowing communities to thrive.

Additional resources are available at:

Colorado Department of Education, Educator Effectiveness:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatoreffectiveness>

Colorado Department of Education, Standards and Instructional Support:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction>

Colorado Department of Higher Education, Educator Preparation:

<http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/academics/TeacherEd/EdPrepProject.html>

## Appendix A



### Seminar Speaker Summit

August 19, 2014 | 4:00 PM –6:00 PM | Stanley Teacher Prep  
Refreshments Served @ 3:30 PM

#### **Objectives:**

- ***Provide an opportunity for shared learning and collaboration to support team synergy/achieve STP's vision.***
- ***Gain motivation and inspiration for the year ahead.***
- \_\_\_\_\_

*(Today is your day! Insert your personal objective above.)*

3:30-4:00	<b>Optional: Meet and Greet</b>  Purpose: Share food and drinks and build relationships.  <b>Activity: Balancing Tubes</b>
4:00-4:15	Purpose: Increase our ability to look at things from a point of view other than our own to achieve synergistic thinking.
4:15-5:15	<b>Connecting Your Seminar to the Teacher Quality Standards</b>  Purpose: To collaboratively construct an extraordinary educator preparation program aligned to the Teacher Quality Standards.  Resources: STP Playbook
5:15-5:50	<b>Planning for Your Seminar</b>  Purpose: Create joy-filled, personally meaningful experiences for our interns aligned with our vision.
5:50-6:00	<b>Celebration Circle</b>  What are you currently working on that you'd like to celebrate?  Purpose: To gain understanding of each other's work, identify areas for collaboration, and celebrate our accomplishments.

Appendix B



**Confidential**

**INTERN SELF-ASSESSMENT**

End of Year

Record 2-3 strengths you bring to the teaching profession and 1-2 professional growth goals related to each Standard.

<b>Standard I: Pedagogical Expertise and Content Knowledge</b>	
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	
Strengths (as evidenced in my Portfolio)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	
Goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	
<b>Standard II: Establish Learning Environment</b>	
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	
Strengths (as evidenced in my Portfolio)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	
Goals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	
<b>Standard III: Facilitate Learning</b>	
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	
Strengths (as evidenced in my Portfolio)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	
Goals	

**Standard IV: Reflect on Practice**

**Overall Rating:**

Strengths (as evidenced in my Portfolio)

- 

Goals

- 

**Standard V: Demonstrate Leadership**

**Overall Rating:**

Strengths (as evidenced in my Portfolio)

- 

Goals

-