In accord with DePaul University’s mission, the School of Education Institute for Teacher Development and Research proposes to contribute to an alternative approach to school improvement that is grounded in equity and social justice.
There is an urgent need to transform urban schools. The entrenched failure of schools to educate low-income children of color in particular is well established and parents and communities rightfully demand immediate action. However, current accountability policies are turning schools into testing centers, negating the cultural strengths of students, devaluing the intellectual and ethical goals of education and the role of schooling for democratic participation in society.

Many committed teachers are leaving teaching, disheartened by the deprofessionalization of their work and the narrowing of schooling to limited accountability driven goals. Yet, policy makers pose education accountability policies (high stakes tests, school probation, choice and vouchers) as the only alternative to failed policies of the past.

The Institute's goal is to contribute to teacher development, research, and policy to improve teaching in urban schools.

The Institute focuses on:

- the quality of teacher's work life and professionalism;
- the impact of education accountability policies on teaching and learning; and,
- the exclusion of teachers and communities from policy decisions about urban school improvement.

The Institute develops models of professional development and practice that emphasize collaboration, connection with communities, social-cultural context, and equity. We believe that such an approach is the best way to address the issues of urban school reform.

…grounded in equity and social justice.

Programs

**Professional Development as Critical Dialogue**

Professional development that promotes critical reflection on teaching, urban school practice, and policy and that supports teachers as decision-makers who understand the impact of school policy on students, urban families and communities, and on teacher professionalism – a key component will be dialogue with grassroots community organizations.

**Collaborative Educational Research**

Research on teaching in urban schools in collaboration with teachers and community organizations in order to bring new perspectives to the discussion of urban school improvement;

**Policy Formation From Below**

Policy analyses and proposals that draw on the Institute's professional development and research in collaboration with teachers and community organizations. Unlike other research and policy centers, the Institute will engage in policy formation from below to inject new voices and social justice-oriented agendas into public debates about education reform.