



## Meet Adrienne Williams UTC Fellow, Cohort 2010



**Undergraduate Institution:** George Washington University

**Undergraduate Major:** International Affairs

**Hometown:** Syracuse, NY

**Prior Experience:** N/A – I joined UTC right out of college.

**UTC Placement:** 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, Brightwood Campus, Center City Public Charter Schools, Washington, DC

**Why Did You Apply to UTC?** I applied to UTC because I wanted to go into education and felt as though the program offered more training and coursework preparation than other programs out there. Not having a background in education, I knew that I would need classes and training to become effective in the classroom. UTC offered a combination of coursework and clinical experience that would prepare me for being a lead teacher. I felt as though the four year process, which included a year of residency to “learn the ropes” would be the best way for me to enter the education field and eventually prepare me for work in education policy, something I hope to one day go into.

**How is UTC helping you become an effective urban teacher?** UTC is helping me become an effective teacher by providing coursework and training that is relevant and applicable in my classroom. The classes I’ve had in special education, literacy, math, and additional content areas, have given me a framework for thinking about what I should be teaching and how I should be teaching it. The strategies I’ve learned in my special education classes have allowed me to provide targeted instruction and

management in a classroom with a variety of learners. The literacy modules have been particularly instructive around the teaching of reading and writing, teaching me strategies that I later saw again in my district professional development. In addition to the academic benefits of UTC, the program does offer coaching and feedback that allows me to reflect on my teaching. I can then use feedback and change my practice in order to make sure I am being effective.

**"The failure I've learned the most from is . . ."** I've learned the most from my failure to set up a clear system of consequences for behavior that does not meet classroom expectations. I had to revise my system when some measures (losing recess time, receiving a color change) stopped influencing student behavior. I am learning to read my students and figure out what consequences will influence their behavior choices so that the classroom can maintain the feeling of a positive, safe environment.

**What has been your biggest triumph?** My biggest triumph has been to make it through the first six weeks of school as a teacher of record with my own classroom. I have been able to develop relationships with my students and their parents in order to maintain communication about student behavior and academics. I have been able to collect valuable data on the skills that each student has and plan instruction to target weaknesses. I have been able to meet the expectations of my administration and district, while being open to feedback and improvement. I have established classroom routines and procedures that allow my students to participate throughout the school day in lessons, activities, and enrichment specials. Being able to say that I started the school year and have made it through the first six weeks without major problems or occurrences is my biggest triumph.

**What is your advice to someone deciding whether to become a teacher and how to do it?**

If you are thinking about becoming a teacher, there are a lot of things to consider. How much work-life balance do you need because teaching is a profession in which, when you first start, work is going to need the majority of your time. You need to consider how you work with children of varying academic, social, emotion, and economic backgrounds. Question your assumptions about those things. You need to consider your personal strengths and weaknesses and your ability to multitask, organize, be flexible, and communicate. Most importantly, you need to consider your motivation or your drive. Why do you want to teach? Is it a passion that will drive you through all the challenges that teaching brings?

Once you have decided you want to teach, think about how you want to make it a reality. If you don't have a background in education, you need to think about what classes you need to take. UTC, in conjunction with Lesley University in Cambridge, MA, provides coursework that will earn you a dual-degree in Special and General Education-- including work in literacy, math, social studies, science, and special education (Starting in the 2013-2014 school year, UTC will also offer concentrations in 6-12 literacy and 6-12 math). If you need experience in a classroom, the UTC model includes a residency year that puts you in a classroom with assignments and lessons to complete to help you build your skills in classroom management and instruction. If you already have the education background or the experience, UTC may not be the best fit for you and you should consider alternative options to teaching.

**How do you lead a fun/full life while managing the rigors of UTC?**

Balancing the work from UTC and your school with the rest of your life takes practice and a lot of time. It takes a few months to figure out how to manage your time between readings for class, completing assignments, lesson planning, and creating activities for your students with hanging out with friends, going out and having a social life. You have to carve out time for yourself to do something fun at least every other week and take at least an hour each day to relax. Use a planner, get a calendar, keep your syllabus handy. It's important to record due dates, check your email regularly, and maintain communication with professors, host teachers, and administrators. Only you can decide how to manage your time, but if you can create a schedule or set up a routine for all your responsibilities while making sure there is also time for you, then you'll be on your way to finding balance.