



# Quad Cities

The Quad Cities Consortium was established in 2006, to provide special education teachers to Rock Island, Moline, and several smaller communities in the region around those cities.

The partner organizations are:

**Western Illinois University**  
**Community Caring Conference**  
**Blackhawk Community College**  
**Moline Public Schools**  
**Rock Island/Milan School District #41**

The University is the lead organization and fiscal agent on the grant.

**The Cohort:** The Quad Cities Cohort has 20 active participants, including one man. Six are African-American; their median age is 32. Only five candidates had some college experience before entering the program. All are employed full-time, 15 of them in the schools. Fourteen have dependent children in their households.

All twenty members of the West Central Illinois Grow Your Own cohort have been accepted as students into Black Hawk College (BHC). During the Spring and Summer semesters, candidates enrolled in 31 different courses at BHC. Two weeks ago, the entire cohort also completed Special Education 200, their initial major course at WIU. This course provided them with an overview of the historical foundations of special education, including litigation, legislation, models, theories, and philosophies in addition to addressing professional ethics, conduct, and reflection. As the first class to include all cohort members simultaneously, it provided a critical opportunity for the development of a group identity and the enhancement of skills needed by university students. It also allowed the group to continue to develop support structures like study groups, email list serves, and a telephone list.

After evaluating the first reflective paper assignment, the course professor shared her positive insights about the students. Her comment clearly reflects the respect and hopefulness that have been felt by anyone who comes into contact with this wonderful group of individuals. She said, “One of the joys of reading the reflective papers is that I get to read the parts of students’ personal stories that they’re willing to share. They’ve had remarkably varied and interesting employment and personal histories. Another joy is that I get to read small reflections of their values and snapshots of the things and people that have touched their lives for better or worse. This is a thoughtful and insightful group.”

