

Prototype 3 – Teacher To Engaged Scholar

TOMAS

For years, I taught in urban city schools. When I decided to return to graduate school and become a faculty member, I could not fathom leaving secondary education all together. In order to keep one foot in the K-12 arena and another in higher education, I learned the benefits of community-based research teams. I now work with community members, local educators, faculty, and students on school reform and enhancing classroom learning.

My name is Tomas. I am a scholar; therefore, I am engaged. I taught high school history in an urban setting for 10 years. I did not have the label of “publicly engaged,” but my teaching centered around the community and helped me engage my students.

When I returned to graduate school, my advisor did not connect his work to the community. I struggled finding myself during this time. It was hard for me to be completely removed from secondary education after ten years. Fortunately, in my second year of studies, a community-based research team formed to look at how schools could foster an accepting and inclusive learning environment for students in the LGBT community. This research grew out of teachers’ concerns and the increased number of high school students frequenting the local LGBT community center. The research team was comprised of LGBT community center leaders, local educators, faculty members, and high school and graduate students. The collaborative work I did with the community-based research team informed my dissertation and the research I do today. I now hold a tenured-track faculty position in the school of education and just like my time as high school history teacher, the “public” informs my teaching and scholarship. I cannot imagine it any other way.