

News on Innovations, Effectiveness, Collaborations, and Relevance from the College of Education at Minnesota State University, Mankato.



Educate

Fall 2013 | Volume Four | Number One

Middle Management



In a new interactive teaching lab at Minnesota State Mankato, middle school avatars offer questions and comments typically heard in a middle school classroom. The lab is offered in partnership with the University of Central Florida. Turn to page 4 to learn more about how the experience works to prepare College of Education teacher candidates.

PHOTO BY: USA DIEKER

College of Education

Dr. Jean Haar
Dean

Departments

Aviation
Counseling & Student Personnel
Educational Leadership
Elementary & Early Childhood Education
K-12 and Secondary Programs
Military Science and Leadership
Special Education
The Children's House

Centers

Center for Engaged Leadership
Center for Mentoring & Induction
Center for School-University Partnerships

The mission of the Minnesota State University, Mankato's College of Education is to prepare professionals who embrace big ideas and real-world thinking to ensure student success.

The purpose of *Educate* is to inform education stakeholders of the ongoing work of the College of Education and its impact on the education profession. *Educate* is published two times per year by the College of Education and distributed to faculty, staff, students, alumni, and education supporters. The College of Education welcomes ideas for feature stories and other content consistent with the mission of the magazine. Please e-mail story ideas to col-of-education@mnsu.edu.

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Dean's Message



Greetings,

I am continually intrigued by the final version of the stories we share in *Educate*. Shaping each issue begins with a brainstorming session that evolves into a list of potential, exploratory topics. We end with remarkable stories that reflect the power of our profession.

Most evident to me in this issue is how effectively the comments capture the passion and scope of our work. The following resonate strongly with me:

"She could recall vivid stories of teaching."—Donor Chad Tischer about his grandmother Evelyn.

"Why is it important for our teachers to be culturally competent? Because then all children will learn."—Professor Sandell

"AVID students begin to see learning as the goal—rather than just getting the answer."—Principal Peterson

"We develop people who have skills and knowledge and are ready to assume leadership positions as they come up in our district. Even if that doesn't happen, we help build leaders for other districts, which is also part of our responsibility to the state."—Superintendent Olson

"Mankato teacher candidates get great pedagogy and theory in the classroom and they put it into practice right away with the mentor teachers. We visit the Mankato campus and let them know from the beginning about our curriculum, our technology, and what we expect of them. They are teachers when they walk in our door. They are going to affect student learning."—TOSA Lusk

"Most teacher candidates, when they leave the lab for the first time, did not have a positive experience. They come in with a goal of getting through the lesson and most don't, so they feel like they failed. Later, they understand that the real goal is practicing reactions to middle school students' feedback and classroom situations."—Professor Page

While the work may be hard, it is rewarding. Minnesota State Mankato continues to embrace the challenges and to celebrate the successes of meeting the needs of all children. As you read the stories, I encourage you to determine the impact we are having.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Jean M. Haar".

Jean Haar

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Using technology developed at the University of Central Florida, Minnesota State Mankato teacher candidates practice their lesson plans with middle school avatars or virtual students.



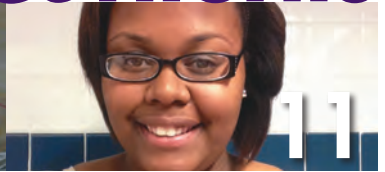
Ensuring Student Success

From college readiness programs to superintendent licensure, the programmatic innovations and collaborations initiated by the College of Education and applied across the education profession help achieve results in the K-12 classrooms. A few staff members from St. Peter Public School shared front-line insights to illustrate some of the ways Minnesota State Mankato's College of Education effects change.



Effecting Change to Ensure That All Children Learn

The demographics of American classrooms are changing. Researchers Elizabeth Sandell and Lori Piowski are working to find and document instructional methods that will ensure teacher candidates are effective in classrooms of diverse learners.



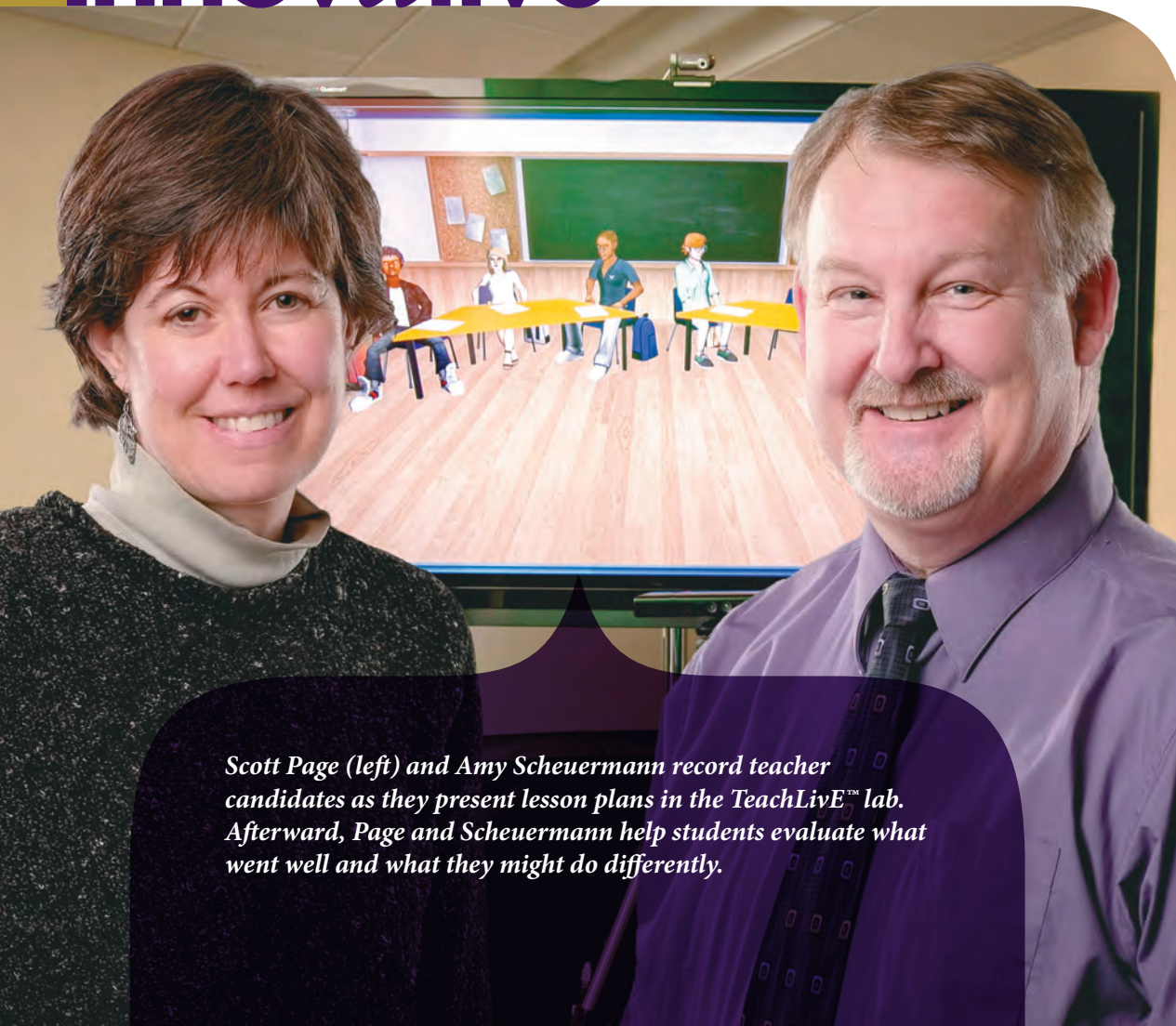
Supporting Dreams Honoring Memories

Almena Baskett dreams of becoming a teacher. Family members of James Tischer and his mother, Evelyn Tischer, were looking for a way to keep the spirit of their late father and grandmother alive. A newly developed Tischer Family Memorial Scholarship developed within the College of Education supports both.

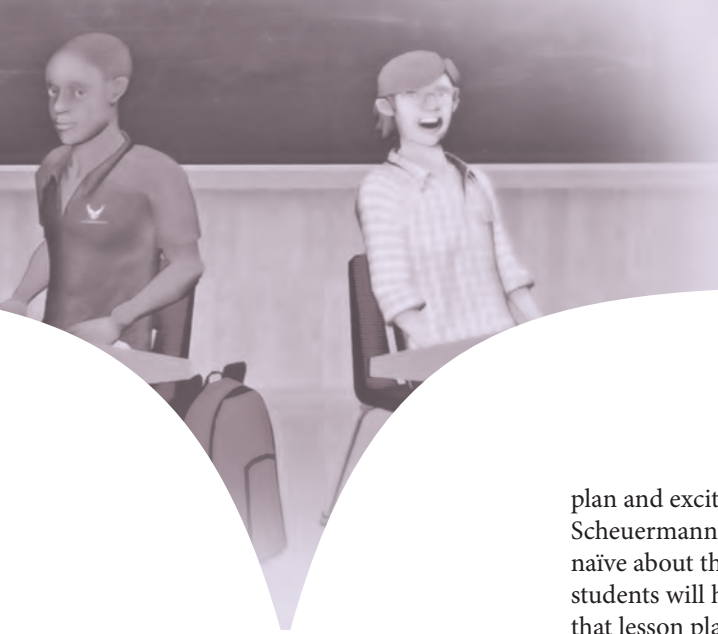


Middle Management

4 Innovative



Scott Page (left) and Amy Scheuermann record teacher candidates as they present lesson plans in the TeachLivE™ lab. Afterward, Page and Scheuermann help students evaluate what went well and what they might do differently.



A new partnership between Minnesota State Mankato and the University of Central Florida helps teacher candidates avoid the risky trial-by-fire practice of classroom management. Instead, teacher candidates practice their lesson plans with middle school avatars or virtual students. The partnership allows Minnesota State Mankato to use technology developed at UCF.

TeachLivE™ is a mixed-reality teaching environment that supports teacher practice in pedagogy and content. It offers a classroom simulation that allows teacher candidates to gain experience teaching and managing classroom dynamics with avatars or virtual students rather than involving real students.

The best way to learn the skills needed to interact and manage a classroom effectively is through practice. “One of the frustrations with our field experiences is that the instructional time in the classroom is so valued that co-teachers struggle with having the teacher candidates use the time to stumble through classroom management to figure out what works,” said Amy Scheuermann, professor K-12 & secondary programs.

“We can talk about classroom management,” said Scott Page, professor K-12 & secondary programs. “We can give them theory and tools. But here, in the TeachLivE™ lab, they actually get to practice.”

“They come into the lab excited about their content, excited about their lesson

plan and excited about teaching,” said Scheuermann. “But they are really kind of naïve about the impact the classroom and students will have on the implementation of that lesson plan.”

Teacher candidates are asked to prepare a 10-minute lesson from their content area—biology, business, physical education, chemistry, math, family consumer science, etc. They are advised to keep the lesson basic, as if it were the first day of school. They are only told that they will be presenting their lesson to a group of middle school students.

In the TeachLivE™ lab, the teacher candidate stands in front of a projection screen that depicts five students sitting at two rows of desks. Each avatar has a distinct personality and the “mood” of the room can vary from calm to chaotic.

“In this lab, we find out more about our teacher candidates in 10 minutes than we can in an entire semester,” said Page. “Sometimes, someone who is quiet and makes you wonder how effective they will be in front of a classroom shines. And others who you might expect to shine struggle.”

The avatars look and act like various middle school students—one might be quiet and hard to draw out, another might be overly talkative, and still another might be abrasive. Teacher candidates practice interaction with the student avatars.

“It was strange. One of the avatars even hit on me,” said Laura Kuisle, a math teacher candidate who is now student teaching. “Originally, I thought the behaviors were a little extreme, but it is very accurate. It helped me to not be so surprised when I encountered similar behaviors in a real classroom.”

“Most teacher candidates, when they leave the lab for the first time, did not have a positive experience,” said Page. “They come in with a goal of getting through the lesson and most don’t, so they feel

like they failed. Later, they understand that the real goal is practicing reactions to middle school students’ feedback and classroom situations.”

Because all the sessions are videotaped, teacher candidates have the opportunity to review and reflect on their interactions with the avatar students. “Some candidates cannot get past the cartoon nature of the avatars, some actually get into arguments with them, and some want to come back again and again,” Page said.

“Teaching is a two-way conversation,” added Scheuermann. “New teacher candidates think about how they are going to share all this information they possess and they forget about the conversation.” The beauty of the TeachLivE™ lab is that when an inexperienced teacher candidate makes mistakes, they won’t negatively affect real kids.

Minnesota State Mankato is one of only 22 campuses nationwide to implement the TeachLivE™ program. The lab was established in 2012 with a University “Big Ideas” grant.

Recently, the lab received a \$10,000 gift from an anonymous donor. “This is an amazing gift that will allow us to expand the state-of-the-art opportunities and reach 100 to 150 teacher candidates per semester,” said Page. Plans are in place to increase lab experiences beyond middle school classroom management.

Initially, the TeachLivE™ program only offered middle school classroom simulation. Now it is expanding to include parent-teacher conferences, high school classrooms and ESL classrooms.

“We want to be able to use it in multiple levels because it provides an opportunity for our teacher candidates to have practice that is real,” said Page. “The opportunity for teacher candidates to practice skills, review the videotape and engage in in-depth reflection on the process is invaluable.” ■

Ensuring Student Success

6 Collaborative



Jeff Olson, superintendent for St. Peter Public Schools, leads the districts' many partnerships with Minnesota State Mankato's College of Education. "We have high stakes achievement that we are working on and we don't have as much time to train new teachers," he said. "We need them ready to go. I am very impressed with Minnesota State Mankato graduates. They have both the art and the science of teaching."

Amidst all the academic language, the state-wide requirements and new-age education theories, the purpose of preparing teachers, administrators and school leaders is quite simple: to ensure student success. And the impact that Minnesota State Mankato's College of Education has on student success is expansive.

From college readiness programs to superintendent licensure, the programmatic innovations and collaborations initiated by the College of Education (COE) and applied across the education profession help achieve results in the K-12 classrooms.

Of course, the College's role is not on the front lines. That important task is the responsibility of the professionals in the K-12 districts.

By asking questions, serving on boards, consulting in the classrooms and working side-by-side with education professionals, the COE has developed a strong grasp of the K-12 needs. Armed with understanding, the COE has been hard at work researching best practices, transforming teacher preparation curriculum, training teachers, developing educational leaders, advising educational policy and more so that educational professionals are equipped and supported to effectively serve all students in the schools.

Nearly 25 years ago the College established the Center for School-University Partnerships. Through the Center, the COE developed strong ties with several area school districts—Bloomington, Faribault, Le Sueur-Henderson, Mankato Area, Owatonna, St. Peter, Sibley East and Waseca—officially known as professional development schools (PDS).

Initiated to improve public school teaching, the PDS model sponsors and facilitates programs that have both created and sustained genuine collaborative partnerships between P-12 and higher education. Innovative and effective programs can be found throughout schools in all of the PDS partners.



Minnesota State Mankato teacher candidate Laura Kuisle (standing left) and master teacher David Kennedy (walking) team up to lead a 9th grade algebra class. All Minnesota State Mankato teacher candidates student teach under the co-teaching model.

To illustrate some of the ways Minnesota State Mankato's College of Education effects change, several staff members shared front-line insights from one district—St. Peter Public Schools.

AVID Certified Site

AVID [Advancement Via Individual Determination] is a widely successful college-readiness system. Established more than 30 years ago, AVID impacts more than 700,000 students in more than 4,900 schools nationwide.

Minnesota State Mankato was the first institution of higher education in the country that partnered with AVID and P-12 districts to bring AVID to its professional development school partners in 2011.

In St. Peter, high school Principal Paul Peterson serves as the district's AVID site coordinator.

"Schools have lots of options for those students who are at the top and comprehensive services for students who struggle. The goal of AVID is to take those students who are in the middle and ensure that their futures are bright," said Peterson. "With a certain degree of structure and intervention, we can take those kids, not just in to college, but to where they can be successful in college."

Structure and intervention requires training, coordination and commitment.

AVID is a voluntary program. "You don't put someone in AVID," said Peterson. "A student signs a year-long contract that says, 'I want to do this.'" The program serves grades 9-12 and students recommit every year.

It is a big commitment for students, but the St. Peter program has been filled to capacity from the beginning. "We tell students they don't need this program to get through high school and graduate," Peterson

said, smiling. "But we ask, 'Do you just want to get through, or do you want the next level of success?' When you put the responsibility on kids to think about their future, even a spring semester 8th grader gets it."

AVID students are ensured access to the most rigorous classes in the system. "But you cannot just dump kids into upper level courses," said Peterson. "There is a lot of preparation that needs to take place."

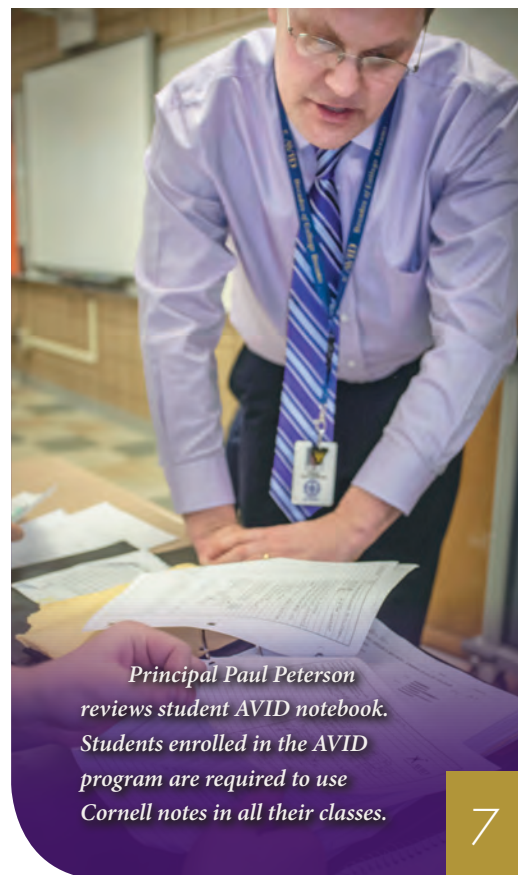
Part of that preparation is the AVID elective course. In it, students learn academic success strategies based on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading. They learn, and are required to use, a very prescriptive note-taking process—Cornell notes—for each class.

The AVID elective also includes two weekly small-group tutoring sessions, led by students from Minnesota State Mankato who are trained as tutors.

The tutors employ a Socratic, inquiry-based model. "For example, a student might bring a chemistry question to the session. He or she writes out the question to a point of confusion—the place they got stuck. The tutor and four or five AVID peers ask leading questions until the student gets to the answer," said Peterson. "That takes a lot of training. Typically, kids would just give the answer. But it is not about the answer. It is about the process of coming to the answer. AVID students begin to see learning as the goal—rather than just getting the answer.

"AVID is not free. Without Minnesota State Mankato's support, implementing an AVID system in a district the size of St. Peter would be very difficult," said Peterson.

Paul Primesburger, the assistant director of the Center for School-University Partnerships and the AVID district director for PDS partners, agreed, "Start-up costs can limit a smaller district's ability to participate," he said.



Principal Paul Peterson reviews student AVID notebook. Students enrolled in the AVID program are required to use Cornell notes in all their classes.

In addition to recruiting, training, and supplying most all of the tutors, Primesburger maintains certification paperwork, provides ongoing training and ensures partner schools continue to adhere to AVID standards.

"Paul's leadership is invaluable," said Peterson. "And the ongoing professional development from Minnesota State Mankato is key to our success."

After three years of hard work and lots of progress, St. Peter High School officially became an AVID Certified Site February 24, 2014.

Emerging leaders

St. Peter Schools recognizes the importance of strong, innovative, effective leadership. One of its organizational goals is to build district capacity from within.

Superintendent Jeff Olson said, "We want to develop our leadership capacity; we want to expand our administrative capacity and we have individuals who are interested in leadership growth—either as building principals or superintendents."

A long-time area of concern for Olson has been the lack of relevant administrator licensure experience. “One of the reasons for that is that it is really hard for someone who is a teacher to give up their income for six months while they serve as an intern and learn what it is like to be a principal,” he said.

Traditional licensure programs accommodate a teacher’s schedule and allow them to meet their requirements through supervision of summer programs, after school projects, nighttime activities, etc. “They meet their requirements, but it is not like really being in the trenches,” said Olson.

A pilot collaborative with Minnesota State Mankato’s Department of Educational Leadership offers St. Peter Schools an alternative. “Candace Raskin and Barb Wilson were great to work with,” said Olson. “They developed a combination of

At the beginning of the year, Olson and the building principal designed a variety of projects and initiatives for Jennissen and Schroeder. “We worked with St. Peter to ensure the projects meet licensure competency requirements,” said Raskin, professor of educational leadership and chair of the department.

“Basically, we assumed responsibility of several projects that would help us meet principal licensure competencies such as leadership, safety and security, political governance, etc.,” said Jennissen. “Instead of just sitting in the classroom and learning theory of school administration, we put it into practice with onsite mentoring and supervision.”

“The program works because St. Peter has strong leadership mentors,” said Raskin. “And the internship is supplemented with coursework.”

In addition to the day-to-day building supervision, Jennissen has a list of other special projects that she is also working on..

Building positive culture and climate in the building: “We took strengths tests to identify and recognize people’s strengths and build trust,” she said. “The goal is to make sure everyone is happy and staying positive.”

Teacher evaluation process: “Each teacher is evaluated annually, with every third year being more in depth. We created a process for electronic portfolios where teachers can collect evaluation materials.”

Equity study: “We initiated a process of looking at school data and looking for ways to best meet the needs of our students of color.”

Jennissen and Schroeder receive onsite mentoring from licensed principals, but they also meet regularly with Barb Wilson, assistant professor of educational leadership. “Barb comes to St. Peter to meet with Sam and me at 6:30 a.m. on our meeting days. She wants to hear what we have been doing,” said Jennissen. “She asks if we have questions. She is very reflective with us and often asks, ‘What would you have done in this situation?’” Schroeder

and Jennissen also take coursework to learn theory, strategies and policies not easily replicated on the job, such as education law.

Jennissen said the process has expanded her view of leadership. “Not everyone leads the same way, and that is awesome to see.” She continued, “There is way more to this job than what you might think from the outside—administrators wear a lot of hats and I knew that, but until you actually do it, you don’t know.”

A strong advocate of Minnesota State Mankato’s work in developing and supporting emerging educational leaders, Olson sees building leadership capacity as every district’s responsibility. “We develop people who have skills and knowledge and are ready to assume leadership positions as they come up in our district,” he said. “Even if that doesn’t happen, we help build leaders for other districts, which is also part of our responsibility to the state. It is a win, win, win approach.”

Co-Teaching

“The co-teaching model is probably where I have seen the greatest gain in the last four to five years,” Olson said. “It is an amazing partnership with Minnesota State Mankato.”

Dave Kennedy, St. Peter High School math teacher and first-time co-teacher, had a tough time comprehending how the co-teaching model would function. “I’ve had a number of traditional student teachers over the years and I didn’t know how the co-teaching model would work,” he said. “I couldn’t get my head around it.”

Fortunately, Minnesota State Mankato provides pairs training for co-teachers—professional teachers and teacher candidates—prior to placement. “I attended in January with my teacher candidate,” said Kennedy. “The training helped a lot.”

The pairs training includes exercises that help co-teachers get to know each other better and understand one another’s teaching styles. There is time to talk with co-teachers from other districts, learn about the process in general and explore what it might look like in different classrooms.

“In the old model, the teacher would demonstrate, the student would observe, then the teacher would turn it over to the student teacher and maybe say, ‘If you need me, I am down the hall somewhere,’” said Olson. “In the co-teaching model, they teach together



Margot Jennissen (left) meets with 6th grade teachers as part of a pilot program between St. Peter Schools and Minnesota State Mankato. The program combines education administration coursework and internship opportunities designed to meet principal licensing competencies.

coursework and internship that provides rigorous and relevant training for people pursuing K-12 licensure.” Raskin and Wilson serve as faculty members in the Department of Educational Leadership.

“We currently have two staff enrolled in the program: Margot Jennissen and Sam Schroeder,” said Olson. “The time they spend acting and interacting as a principal frees up the building principal to work on district-wide leadership programs, which in turn helps them develop a district-wide view and gain skills more reflective of a superintendent or central office administrator.”

As part of his duties as a teacher on special assignment, Scott Lusk (right) mentors teacher candidates working in the St. Peter Schools. So far in 2014, the district has hosted 110 field experiences for Minnesota State Mankato students.



and work off one another's strengths."

"The co-teaching model has been great. We do a lot of team teaching," said Kennedy. "For example, today, we did something where our teaching crossed over—I would do a bit, then she would do a bit."

Kennedy's co-teacher, Laura Kuisle, completed a long-term placement in his room prior to her co-teaching placement. "Maybe because of her being in my room last semester, the co-teaching transition seemed to be easier for my students to adapt to," said Kennedy. "They have already seen us working together. She had presented a concept or helped them individually. She knew their names and they accepted her as a teacher right away."

"I think Minnesota State Mankato's co-teaching model is an easier transition for the teacher candidate as well. A lot of the preliminary stuff, like getting comfortable with students and planning a lesson, has been done. It is already a habit," Kennedy added. "They can concentrate on helping the kids learn rather than still learning to be comfortable interacting with kids."

"I like it because if I am leading a lesson and one student needs extra help, Mr. Kennedy can keep the lesson going for students who are ready to move on," said Kuisle.

"It was different to get used to but the starting point in this model feels like the midpoint of the old model," Kennedy explained. "These teacher candidates seem to be two months ahead of the old student teaching model, in terms of the responsibility they take on, their experience level, their confidence."

In addition to the benefits to the teacher candidate and the K-12 students, the co-teaching model offers benefits to the

veteran teacher as well. "It has been great for our teachers. It has rejuvenated them in many ways," said Olson. "Student teachers introduce new ideas and techniques and the digital literacy of the tech savvy young teacher candidates ties in with our district, with our technology initiatives."

Teachers on Special Assignment

Scott Lusk loves his job as a Teacher of Special Assignment (TOSA). This year, he is working as one of St. Peter's teachers on special assignment.

As the hallmark program of the Center for School-University Partnerships at Minnesota State Mankato, the TOSA program releases P-12 master teachers from their classroom duties to work directly between the University and the partnering school district. The TOSA program's sustained 24 year success garners regional and national recognition as an exemplar in P-20 resource sharing and innovation.

In place of the master teacher, a newly licensed teacher assumes full classroom responsibilities while receiving a premier Fellowship at the University to pursue a graduate program. TOSAs serve a minimum of three years. Lusk divides his time between special projects in St. Peter Public Schools and as a supervisor for the Center for School-University Partnerships.

"We have hired 42 new teachers in the last two years," said Lusk. "So my role within the district is to serve as a mentor to new teachers."

In addition, St. Peter expanded its district mentoring program. Specially trained master teachers at each St. Peter school site serve as mentors. Lusk, along with the mentor teachers, participates

in quarterly training at Minnesota State Mankato's Center for Mentoring and Induction.

As a supervisor for the Center for School-University Partnerships (CSUP), Lusk coordinates all Mankato student field placement experiences for the St. Peter district. "I place all the teacher candidates in all the different levels that come through our doors," said Lusk. "Last year, 50 teachers in the St. Peter district took on 110 experiences for Mankato students. This year, 65 different teachers took on 160 experiences."

When asked if the influx of all those university students is disruptive, Lusk chuckled and said, "It is so funny, we get the question all the time. Minnesota State Mankato has such a strong program that our teachers want the Mankato teacher candidates in their classrooms. It makes my job a lot easier."

"Mankato teacher candidates get great pedagogy and theory in the classroom and they put it into practice right away with the mentor teachers," explained Lusk. "They learn both the science and the art of teaching."

St. Peter doesn't sit back and wait for teacher candidates to come to them. The district takes an active role in preparing teacher candidates for field placement. "We visit the Mankato campus and let them know from the beginning about our curriculum, our technology and what we expect from them," said Lusk. "They are teachers when they walk in our door. They are going to affect student learning."

"Minnesota State Mankato does a great job training and supporting their teacher candidates, who in turn do a great job of engaging our students," Lusk added. "The partnership is incredible." ■

Effecting Change To Ensure That All Children Learn

In every dynamic profession, standards evolve. Teaching standards change regularly to reflect best practices. Within the last two years, those changes have been increasingly tied to cultural competency. In Minnesota, more than half of the standards now require teacher candidates to be able to meet the needs of diverse learners—to be culturally competent.

Two Minnesota State Mankato College of Education faculty members, Lori Piowlski and Elizabeth Sandell, wondered how those standards are measured.

competency using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), Sandell in her general education human relations course and Piowlski in her literacy course for elementary education majors. Mankato may be the only university using the IDI, which was developed primarily for businesses, on a regular basis.

“The IDI is based on the theory of six levels on a continuum of growth of cultural competency, which is basically adapting and being graceful at relating to other cultures,” said

Sandell, associate professor of early childhood education. “We may think we are pretty good, but according to the IDI, we can all improve.”

When Sandell inherited the human relations course four years ago, it came with a full complement of teaching materials—course syllabus, textbook, lesson plans, assignments, etc. And the first semester, she used them.

She also used the IDI as a pre- and post-test to measure whether the course made a difference in students’ cultural

competency. In that first semester, there was no significant difference in her students’ cultural competency as defined by the IDI.

“I realized that whatever I was teaching wasn’t making a difference, so the next semester I decided to introduce a new assignment,” she said. “Students were required to find someone from a different culture, hang out with him or her for nine hours, conduct an interview and write a paper.

“There is knowledge, and there is experience; I ask my students to reflect

on both,” said Sandell. “They were getting knowledge and experience the first semester for sure, but they weren’t necessarily reflecting on it in depth.

“With the addition of in-depth reflection,” she added, “the IDI scores showed significant improvement—positive movement on the continuum toward cultural competency—that second semester and every semester since.”

“Guided reflection has made a big difference for both groups of students,” said Piowlski. “I always ask my students, ‘What is it about you that is going to invite someone in?’ It’s getting our students and teacher candidates to take responsibility for the interaction.”

“We become more intentional every year—tweaking our research and our teaching methods, from encouraging our students to attend cultural events to leading a focus group about where we are on the continuum to developing an individualized plans to help everyone move toward the right side of the continuum,” Sandell said.

The research that Piowlski and Sandell are doing is bringing about change outside of their classes—and outside of the University—as well. They have presented their research, which they conduct with teams of undergraduate students, locally, nationally and internationally—from campus committees to Portugal. Debate continues on the best way to document cultural competency that meets changing teaching standards.

“Teaching standards are changing because the demographics of our classrooms are changing. However, the demographics of our teacher pools have not changed as dramatically as the classrooms,” said Piowlski. “Teachers are still predominately white, female and middle class. To ensure that our teacher candidates are effective in classrooms of diverse learners, we have to change the way we prepare them.”

“And why is it important for our teachers to be culturally competent? Why is it important that they understand cultural differences and teach in a way that is responsive to those differences?” asked Sandell. “Because then all children will learn.” ■

10 Effective



Elizabeth Sandell (left) and Lori Piowlski are conducting and presenting research that helps prepare teacher candidates to be more culturally sensitive and effective at teaching students with diverse backgrounds.

PAINTING IN BACKGROUND IS “THE SPELL OF THE NORTH SHORE” AN ORIGINAL ACRYLIC AND PASTEL ON CANVAS BY AMANDA CRARY

“We are not the only ones,” said Piowlski, assistant professor of elementary education. “Across the country, teacher prep programs at universities are having a tough time. They are wondering how to measure whether or not teacher candidates are really coming out more culturally responsive and whether they are prepared to effectively teach in a classroom of students who have diverse cultural and economic backgrounds.”

Sandell and Piowlski began monitoring the growth of their students’ cultural



James Tischer

Evelyn Tischer

Evelyn Tischer attended Mankato Teachers College in the 1940s, and James Tischer attended Mankato State College in the 1970s on the GI Bill. In their memory, family members created a College of Education scholarship to support students pursuing the dream of becoming a teacher.

Back Row (Left to Right): Chris Tischer (Jim's Son), Kristen Tischer (Jim's Daughter in Law), Jim Tischer (Evelyn's Son), Heidi Tischer (Daughter in Law), Chad Tischer (Jim's Son)

Front Row (Left to Right): Kaitlyn Tischer (Jim's Grand Daughter), Allie Lechner (Jim's Sister / Evelyn's Daughter), Evelyn Tischer, Cyndy Tischer (Jim's Wife)



Almena Basket, elementary education, is a two-time recipient of the Tischer Family Memorial Scholarship.

Supporting Dreams Honoring Memories

Support comes to the College of Education in many ways, from many people and for many reasons. During the University's recent Big Ideas Campaign, nearly 40,000 people contributed toward faculty research, capital improvements and scholarships.

For family members of both James Tischer and his mother, Evelyn Tischer, developing a scholarship memorial fund was a way to keep the spirit of their father and grandmother alive.

"2012 was a tough year for our family," said Chad Tischer. "Both my grandmother and father passed away. We were looking for a way to keep their memory alive beyond the traditional things."

Evelyn Tischer attended Mankato Teachers College in the 1940s, and James Tischer attended Mankato State College in the 1970s on the GI Bill.

"We looked for some commonality and a way to remember them," said Chad Tischer. "Minnesota State Mankato came to the top of the list. It was an important place to both my father and grandmother."

The Tischer family established the James and Evelyn Tischer Memorial Scholarship Fund in 2013.

One goal for the Tischers is to support students from underprivileged and often underrepresented groups. Minnesota State Mankato already had the Maverick Recruitment program in place. So Robbie Burnett, Maverick recruitment coordinator, worked to set up scholarship parameters. Students must be fulltime, have at least a 3.0 grade point average and be from traditionally underrepresented groups pursuing education licensure.

Stefanie Kelly, development director for the College of Education, helped take care of the details. "The process was easy," said Tischer. "Stef learned what was important to us and came back with a handful of options. The process was accommodating and collaborative."

Six students have received awards from the James and Evelyn Tischer Memorial Scholarship Fund since it began. Recently, the Tischers attended the scholarship luncheon and met the students. "We have

had great contact with the students," said Tischer. "We were able to meet them and they shared letters of thanks."

"Becoming successful in my future as a teacher has been a goal of mine for a while and the Tischer scholarship has helped me with that dream," said Almena Basket. "I was ecstatic to be awarded this scholarship twice. I am determined to show how much it means to me by remaining focused in school, staying on task, and reaching my dream of becoming a teacher."

Long after his grandmother Evelyn had forgotten other things, Chad Tischer said that she could vividly recall stories about teaching. Now, recipients of the James and Evelyn Tischer Memorial Scholarship Fund, who are on their own journey to become teachers, will remember Evelyn, her son James, and their family's generosity.

"Education has always been extraordinarily important to our family," said Tischer. "We are thrilled to be a part of the next generation at Minnesota State Mankato." ■

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Power of One

Accelerating the effectiveness of new teachers is a critical link to student success and relies on the availability of a comprehensive teacher induction program. The College of Education's Center for Mentoring & Induction (CMI) focuses on the development of highly skilled mentors and coaches of Minnesota State Mankato pre-service teacher candidates and beginning teachers in our partner district schools.

A recent \$15,000 gift from Dick and Barbara '59 Gunderson and an anonymous donor have made it possible for CMI to provide professional training to five (5) mentors and coaches, which will allow us to provide support and training to teachers and mentors across Minnesota.

To learn how you can help transform the way new teachers are prepared, contact Stefanie Kelly at stefanie.kelly@mnsu.edu or 507-317-1264.

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