



P MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO PARTNERSHIP

CENTER FOR EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIPS AND STUDENT SUPPORT

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We Are Better Together

Growing Future Educators,
Sustaining Current Educators



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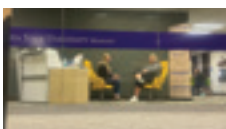


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PARTNERSHIP

CENTER FOR EDUCATOR
PARTNERSHIPS AND
STUDENT SUPPORT

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The Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support (CEPSS), housed in the College of Education at Minnesota State University, Mankato, was established in 1988. The mission of the Center is to interconnect, enrich, and sustain learning communities of students, staff, faculty and citizens from the University and P-12 schools who foster human development, professional growth, and optimal learning opportunities through research, reflection, and practice.

Opening Remarks



Dr. Teri Preisler
Acting Director

Greetings to All!

This past 2021-2022 school year has continued to be one of shifts, flexibility, combined with reflections and gratitude. Reflections on the tremendous growth that has transpired over time, especially during the pandemic. Gratitude for the incredible and inspiring people we get to work with both within the Minnesota State University, Mankato College of Education and throughout our Minnesota Educators Partnership (MEP) school districts and beyond in PreK-12 education. The theme for this Partnership Magazine of, "Better Together" truly fits both aspects and the articles are intended to provide a foundation for the multiple aspects of our unique MEP and the Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support (CEPSS).

Reflections:

The Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support (CEPSS), originally named the Center for School-University Partnerships (CSUP), was established in 1988 through legislative funding to further the integration/interaction of K-12 and universities. The core of this interaction of K-12 and our university was a mentor teacher model (Teachers on Special Assignment - TOSA) to support first-year, new to profession teachers and provide professional development within their own district. A Graduate Teaching Fellow filled the school district's TOSA position, and this was the beginning of the idea to "grow your own" educators throughout our partnership districts.

This TOSA-Grad Fellow structure continues as a core aspect of our MEP while there has been tremendous expansion of our MEP work. Our Partnership work now includes the creation of Education Pathway concurrent enrollment courses with K-12 schools, a Professional Teaching Intern model, Professional Development to enhance coaching models for preservice/in-service educator growth, and intentional recruitment/retention actions to increase future educators – with a focus on increasing future educators of color and Indigenous educators. In essence we have now grown into a mission of the recruitment, preparation, and sustainability of equity minded educators who reflect and support all Minnesota students.



Jill Ryan
*CEPSS and Academic
Advising Administrative
Assistant*

As someone who has been with the Center from the start, I was interviewed as part of the "Then and Now, Looking Back to Move Forward," Spring 2016 issue of the Partnership Magazine. That issue looked back at the people and programs of the past and reflected on how we should continue to evolve. I have seen a lot of changes in both the people and the programs over the years (34 of them!), and throughout one thing remains the same ... we have continued to build on collaborative relationships with our partner districts, our COE Centers (Educator Partnerships,

Educator Support, Office of Field and International Experiences), and our teacher education departments and programs with the overall goal of benefitting students (P-16). With new initiatives (Intervention for College Attendance Program (ICAP), Grow Your Own, Professional Teaching Intern), these relationships are continuously strengthening and expanding. Moving forward, the work will continue to evolve, proving we really are – Better Together!

Jill Ryan
Administrative Assistant
Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support

Gratitude:

On behalf of our Minnesota Educators Partnership, I would like to thank and honor educators who have served in leadership roles within our MEP Districts who will be retiring at the conclusion of this school year.

Congratulations and thank you to:

Mr. Todd Sesker, Superintendent of Faribault Public Schools for eleven years. Todd's focus on lifting up each and every learner – be it early childhood or K-12 students or adults as staff or in their community – has been core to both Faribault and our partnership.

Mr. Lonnie Seifert has served as the Tri-City United Superintendent for the past two years and during the most trying of times with the pandemic. Thanks to his experience as an educational leader and supporting the internal leaders throughout their district, TCU has continued to grow their students and partnered in the development of future educators at a high level through the MEP model.

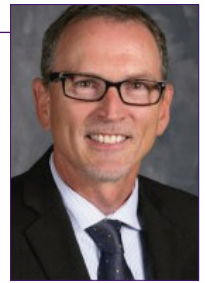
Ms. Jane Sorensen has served as a Teacher on Special Assignment within the Owatonna School District for 10 years. Jane has been a leader within Owatonna and throughout our Partnership with a voice of advocacy for growing educators with a lens of student-centered learning environments, access, and opportunities no matter a child's zip code, and always looking at innovations in education and teacher preparation.

We are truly Better Together.

Take Care and Be Well,

Dr. Teri Preisler

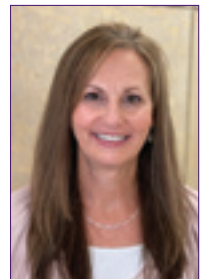
Acting Director, Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support



Todd Sesker
Faribault Superintendent



Lonnie Seifert
TCU Superintendent



Jane Sorensen
TOSA Owatonna



Sherwin Bothello
Editor

Dear Reader,

My name is Sherwin Bothello, and I have been the Graduate Assistant at the Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support (CEPSS) for the past two years. Over the next year I intend on completing my double Professional Science Master's (PSM) in Cybersecurity and Risk Management & in Health Informatics and Analytics. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to work within CEPSS and helping create noteworthy educators that will benefit students' lives.

Through this issue, we hope you gain some insight as to how CEPSS is actively involved in supporting students by acting through the lens of racial equity and social justice. The articles and information presented will help guide you in understanding our vision and mission on how CEPSS seeks to build relationships that connects schools and communities to our students, faculty and staff from the University and P-12 schools. Additionally, you will also experience several testimonials from staff, teacher candidates and educators from our partner districts on a wealth of different topics ranging from professional development and training to creating optimal learning opportunities for students.

Finally, we must bear in mind that like our chosen theme "Better Together" we must continue to unite our efforts to better enrich our society and provide for our future educators.

Pax Et Bonum

Sherwin Bothello

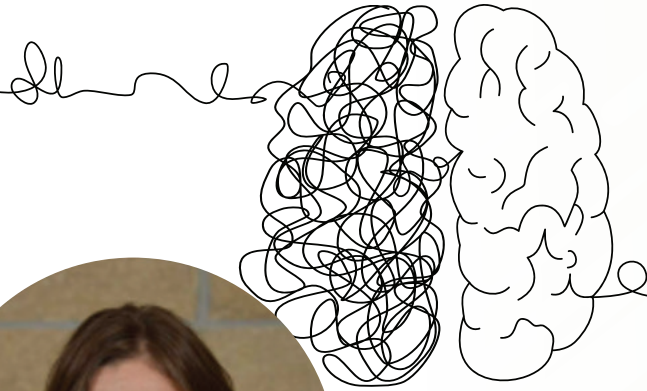
Editor

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for feedback

Cognitive Coaching



Gina Anderson

Our Center for Educator Support provides a valuable professional development opportunity for both Partner Districts and others throughout our region and beyond in Cognitive CoachingSM. Cognitive CoachingSM is an opportunity for participants to assimilate how adult learners think and process their own experiences by understanding each other in a collaborative environment.

According to Thinking CollaborativeTM, the organization behind this offering for teachers, states that its mission is to produce self-directed persons with the cognitive capacity for excellence both independently and as members of a community.

Previously Minnesota State University has offered the Foundation Seminar[®], which includes an eight-day training conducted over an 18–24-month period.

During this eight day seminar participants learn how to:

- develop trust and rapport
- develop an identity as a mediator of thinking
- utilize conversation structures for planning, reflecting and problem resolving
- develop teachers' autonomy and sense of community
- develop higher levels of efficacy, consciousness, craftsmanship, flexibility and interdependence
- apply four support functions: coaching, evaluating, consulting, collaborating
- utilize the coaching tools of pausing, paraphrasing, and posing questions
- distinguish among the five forms of feedback
- use data to mediate thinking

It has been previously offered as in-person training but then paused its efforts during the height of the pandemic. Now returning from its 2-year hiatus, Minnesota State Mankato plans on offering the advanced seminar which builds on the foundational concepts and allows teachers to move into a "deeper level of understanding and skills through rich practice and experiences."

Over the course of the advanced seminar participants will develop:

- Deeper understanding of the missions of Cognitive CoachingSM and the goal of the Foundation Seminar[®]
- Efficacy and Craftsmanship with the maps and tools of Cognitive CoachingSM
- Understanding of coaching for deep structure
- Understanding of how Cognitive CoachingSM aligns with brain research
- Deeper understanding of Support Functions and States of Mind
- Expanded possibilities of and applications for our identities as mediators
- Personal coaching mastery framed as a journey, not a destination

This year the Cognitive CoachingSM seminars are being led by Dr. Carol Brooks Simoneau, the co-director of the Thinking CollaborativeTM. The foundation course is offered to anyone in the realm of education i.e. administration, instructional coaches or anyone in a leadership capacity. Whereas the advanced seminar is geared towards participants from K-12 opportunities who have gone through the foundational seminar.

"Advanced Cognitive CoachingSM brought my understanding of effective coaching processes to a whole new level," says Matthew Flugum, one of the Teachers on Special Assignment at Tri-City United Public Schools who previously attended the advanced seminar. He goes on to state that "The Advanced Cognitive CoachingSM experience uncovered deeper levels of familiar maps...and greatly expanded my capacity to support others."

"This year there have been registered participants from more than 7 states" says Gina Anderson, Director of the Center for Educator Support at Minnesota State University, Mankato. When asked about the rationale behind Minnesota State Mankato's offering of the seminar she details further by stating that there has been a strong movement to impart skills and support to be an effective coach and that "the power of Cognitive CoachingSM is a transformative one where people feel supported and heard when they have someone to help them."

To find out more about Cognitive CoachingSM training at Minnesota State University, Mankato, contact Gina Anderson, Director of the Center for Educator Support, gina.anderson@mnsu.edu



Concurrent Enrollment

Earn college and high school credits, save money, ability to take the college level course in your high school setting, save time and gain flexibility in college by completing credits in high school – these are all descriptors of Minnesota concurrent enrollment. “Concurrent enrollment courses provide students the opportunity to enroll in Minnesota State Mankato courses at their high school. Students gain the same learning outcomes that students on campus are,” says Michael Altomari, current Director for PSEO (Post-Secondary Enrollment Options) at Minnesota State University, Mankato. He further elaborates that the benefit of doing so means that you earn college credit and learning levels just like any other student with a Minnesota State Mankato transcript.

Coupled with Concurrent Enrollment is the Minnesota Department of Education Grow Your Own (GYO) Grant that was awarded to our Minnesota Educators Partnership (MEP) districts and Minnesota State University, Mankato. The GYO grant is intended to focus on growing our numbers of future educators. These funds have provided a means for each of our eight MEP districts to offer the Exploring Careers in Education college course, which was previously offered in only two of the districts.

Anne Leland, the Community Education Director overseeing the grant, details further that the Grow Your Own Grant is split into Pathway 1 and 2. Pathway 1 provides financial and program support for adults who want to gain a degree and licensure to become teachers. This is a grant that will be researched for further possibilities to grow future educators.

Grow Your Own Pathway 2 is focused on secondary (high school) students, which is the grant that MEP applied for and was awarded. Both grants have a particular focus to “encourage secondary school students (and adults), especially students (and adults) of color and American Indian students, to pursue teaching.” (Minnesota Department of Education)

In a couple of instances throughout the partnership, the teacher of record for the Exploring Careers in Education concurrent enrollment course was in one district with students from another district joining in through an online format. “This is truly a unique and progressive approach” says Michael.

Beyond the class content, this course truly explores careers in education with students having firsthand experiences within classrooms throughout their district. Staff members as well as students thoroughly appreciated the opportunity to share what they do and how they both benefit from an authentic educational instruction experience.

Exploring Careers in Education is an exploratory course and an initial steppingstone towards getting into the field. “From a university standpoint,” says Michael, “we would love to expose more students to the field of education and the value and impact teachers can have on people’s lives.”

With the focus on future educators of color and Indigenous educators, the goal is for Minnesota’s teachers’ demographics to reflect our student population. “Students are craving role models who share similar experiences and reflect who they are racially and ethnically. Infusing this concurrent enrollment course offered by Minnesota State University, Mankato is a step in the right direction,” says Anne Leland.



All about the CUGMEC Grant

The Collaborative Urban and Greater Minnesota Educators of Color Grant (CUGMEC) is a grant program funded through state legislation with a goal of recruiting and retaining teacher candidates of color and Indigenous candidates in the teaching field. The CUGMEC grant supports this work by providing funding for the College of Education to provide direct scholarship payments, test vouchers, and textbooks to students who qualify.

Any student of color seeking an initial teaching license is welcome to request a test voucher or to apply for a CUGMEC scholarship. The College of Education was first awarded CUGMEC funds from the Minnesota Department of Education (the Professional Education Licensing and Standards Board has since assumed management of the CUGMEC grant) in 2017 when it secured \$92,000 for the 2018 and 2019 fiscal years. In 2020, the college was awarded \$140,000 for the 2020 and 2021 fiscal years. As competition for grant funds has increased, the College of Education has received smaller awards: \$55,000 for the 2022 fiscal year and most recently \$70,000 for the 2023 fiscal year.

Dr. Laura Maki, Director of Assessment and Research, helped write the grant proposals, which have included extensive data reporting. Other vital members of the grant team include Robbie Burnett, former Director of Recruitment and Retention; Tracy Stokes-Hernandez, Student Relations Coordinator; and Maria-Renee Grigsby, current Director of Recruitment and Retention. Many others have been instrumental in securing CUGMEC funds and distributing scholarships and vouchers to teacher candidates of color and Indigenous teacher candidates.

One sophomore pursuing Elementary Education details how being a recipient helped ease the anxiety of paying the tuition bill for the first time. "Looking at my bill I remember seeing a big number and that number was always on my mind. When I went to class all I could think about was how I was going to pay my bill. The funding helped to get my balance closer to zero and gave me the peace of mind I needed to focus on my classes."

Another senior pursuing the same program expressed gratitude towards receiving the funds to complete their ongoing education. "I did not work last summer because I went home and lived with someone who was in the high-risk category for contracting COVID-19. So I started school fall semester not having the money I usually would for basic living expenses, let alone additional program costs. Getting the scholarship helped a lot. It also felt good to know that there were people outside my friends and family who were rooting for me for me to finish my education and become a teacher. I am really grateful."

Tracy Stokes-Hernandez, Student Relations Coordinator who serves as the professional academic advisor to College of Education students, expounds upon her role further by stating how she works with a committee to select these distinguished scholarship recipients. "Eligibility for this grant is open to all future Indigenous educators and educators of color seeking an initial teaching license" says Stokes-Hernandez.

Contact Tracy Stokes-Hernandez (tracy.hernandez@mnsu.edu) or Dr. Laura Maki (laura.maki@mnsu.edu) for further information on registration deadlines if interested.

The Teachers of Tomorrow



Landis Parham

Teachers of Tomorrow (ToT), aimed at supporting and meeting the needs of teacher candidates of color, is a recognized student led organization with one of its two chapters based in Mankato and the other one based in the Twin Cities area. The organization provides academic, social, and emotional support and financial assistance to student members of color. Additionally, they aim to foster interest in the teaching profession and assist members to prepare for tests such as the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Examination. Members of the organization try to meet on a bi-weekly basis with a total of seven sessions per academic semester.

Due to the pandemic, most of the recent years' meetings have been virtual, yet each group has continued to stay connected. Meetings and connections have been gradually transitioning to an in-person format with activities such as participating in the Fall 21 Ed Fest, volunteering at the Mankato community winter carnival, as well as efforts around Black History month whereby they viewed videos with active education professionals and held discussions of the education profession from the perspectives of educators of color.

Jade Christiansen

the education profession from the perspectives of educators of color.

Recently the Mankato student members attended a school board meeting giving them insight and hands-on experience to what a school board does and its relevance to school districts. Jade Christiansen, a current ToT member has detailed that the organization has provided several opportunities for her future endeavors. "I would highly recommend teacher candidates, especially those who are people

of color, to join ToT. Being involved in the organization has allowed me to engage in conversations with other educators that have helped me to grow as a person and future educator. ToT offers a safe space where important topics can be discussed. As future educators, we must take every opportunity to be reflective and address our biases, and ToT is a group that fosters that essential growth."

When asked about the benefits that the organization provides, another student member Landis Parham states "ToT gives me a higher priority when applying for scholarships." Parham is currently the social media manager of the ToT Mankato chapter as well as a tutor/mentor teacher at the Mankato Public Charter school.

Ashley Flynn, another first year student member chimes in on the list of benefits provided by the organization "I would highly recommend for any prospective teacher to join ToT. It is an excellent organization that allows you to not only meet others who are in your field, but to talk and learn about current issues related to education and our society as a whole."

All students that are considering the teaching profession as well as prospective Minnesota State Mankato students interested in majoring in an education career are welcome to attend meetings. Students of color are strongly encouraged to join. For further details and to learn about upcoming meetings contact Professor Maria-Renée Grigsby (maria-renee.grigsby.2@mnsu.edu).



Professor Maria-Renée Grigsby

Ashley Flynn



ICAP Grant



Intervention for College Attendance Grants Program (ICAP) – is a grant provided to eligible nonprofit organizations, postsecondary institutions, school districts, and professional organizations that actively support youth of color, students from low-income families, and students who will be the first in their family to go to college. The grant was established back in 2001. The Office of Higher Education administers the Intervention for College Attendance Grant Program to foster postsecondary attendance and retention by providing outreach services to historically underserved students in grades six through 12 and historically underrepresented college students.

Maria-Renée Grigsby, Director of Recruitment and Retention, and Deborah Klinnert, ICAP liaison, are determined to help students of color enter the teaching profession. To do so they go to high schools and middle schools, speaking with counselors and meeting with students. They try to recruit students of color to the College of Education in order to increase diversity within the profession.

Experiences going to K-12 schools so far have been stellar, and Maria-Renée Grigsby goes on record stating that her experience “has been phenomenal.” Overall, teaching professionals are becoming even more intentional in encouraging students of color to consider the teaching profession. In doing so, there has been an effort towards establishing areas of support and pathways for students of color to help facilitate their journey towards becoming a teaching professional. Principals, counselors, and teachers have begun to have an emergent understanding of why it is necessary to have teachers of color so as to diversify the field and have our educators more closely reflect the demographics of our students.



Students of color deserve to have instructors who look like them, understand their lived experiences and have the ability to teach within the students’ cultural contexts. This creates positive experiences which will increase their likelihood to enter the teaching profession. However, studies show that all students benefit from having teachers of color. It improves attendance rates, increases college aspirations and all students report feeling cared about when they have teachers of color.

Recruitment events this past spring included the Future Educators event that took place on May 11th, 2022. This event was a time where 9th to 12th graders came to Minnesota State Mankato to tour the campus, were provided with educational information about scholarships and resources, attended a panel of students and faculty, and participated in breakout sessions with diversity and inclusion. Over 200 high school students and advisors were in attendance. Two other spring events were on April 25th and May 16th, 2022. The Director of Recruitment and Retention, ICAP Liaison, and Director of PSEO/Concurrent Enrollment met with students and parents from Dakota Meadows and Prairie Winds Middle Schools to discuss the opportunity of considering education as a career path.

Professional Teaching Internship



Katie Coudron,
Owatonna Public Schools



Rheanna Hendrickson, Professional Teaching Intern at Tri-City United School District.

Currently in its fourth year, the Professional Teaching Internship program is intended for newly licensed teachers who are hired as day-to-day substitute teachers typically in the districts where they previously student taught. The internship allows these newly licensed teachers four days of guest teaching in a variety of classrooms across the district and one day a week of professional learning.

This professional learning is tied to a graduate course which all interns enroll in and is focused on understanding the nuances of the P-12 teaching and learning system. "It was started as a way to really leverage opportunities for teacher candidates to learn and grow and also to give back to the partner districts that host them," says Katie Coudron, a teacher at Owatonna Public Schools as well as Adjunct Faculty Instructor at Minnesota State Mankato.

The Professional Teaching Internship program is for the second semester of the school year and focuses on initial teaching opportunities for fall semester graduates. The valuable aspect of this Internship is that newly graduating/licensed teachers are guaranteed to have paid daily substituting in one district with one day of individualized professional development every week for the complete second semester of the school year. That makes a big difference as compared with sometimes not knowing what district will call for a substitute position until that day's morning. It is also another way of "growing your own" future educators as the districts get to know the early career teacher better and the teachers get to

know the district better. Plus, the three credit masters course tuition is paid for by the district and the content is completely focused on early career education.

Initially the Internship started as a pilot program within the Owatonna District in 2019, and then grew considerably over the years. With the addition of 5 school districts last year, the internship program has expanded to include all of the Minnesota Educator Partnership districts. This spring, fifteen interns were hosted across six different districts.

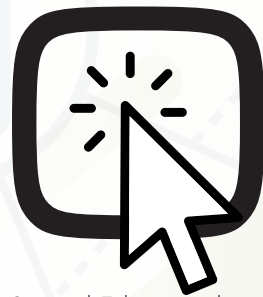
Some of the past and current students have shared their thoughts on why a newly licensed teacher should choose to pursue this internship. "I pursued this internship because it gave me the opportunity to be in a district that I student taught in. It also allowed me to be doing what I love already during the second semester of the school year, which is hard to do when you graduate in December" says a 2020 intern from Waseca.

Another intern from Owatonna states that "This internship has given me more confidence in myself and my teaching. I have discovered more of my teaching "style" and what being a teacher means to me."

If you are a Student Teacher next fall semester 2022 and might be interested in a Professional Teaching Internship, please contact Dr. Teri Preisler, Acting Director of the Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support, teri.preisler.3@mnsu.edu.



Special Education Moving Online



For over ten years the graduate program for Special Education has been a hybrid program that as of late has completely transitioned to going online. The main reason for going to an all-online program offering is that it fits the needs of a majority of the students and teachers. "Online programs have been proven to be more flexible whilst allowing more students to enroll in the program" says Dr. Dana Wagner, a faculty member of the College of Education.

Our Special Education Department is also adding an online format for gaining a Special Education undergraduate degree and licensure as an Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS) teacher. The program employs a cohort model for the preparation of undergraduates, with all students from a given year considered members of the same cohort. Cohort students concurrently enroll in the same block of courses. This type of model creates a strong sense of community and networking among students that carries forward into their careers as teachers.

Minnesota State University, Mankato used to offer a traditional (in-person) course delivery of the Special Education program, but a lot of the students were working part time or even full-time jobs as paraprofessionals. This made it especially challenging for the students to take courses offered in the traditional format. With the additions of the new HyFlex and Online video conferencing solutions throughout classrooms and with university software resources across Minnesota State Mankato, this transition to online has become even more accessible.

So far, feedback from many students has indicated their preference for the online delivery of coursework. Some students who may have missed lecture content also find it beneficial to utilize recordings of certain class lectures which they can watch at their convenience.

Despite the generally positive feedback, there are also a few drawbacks that have been recognized. One of the key concerns is that the online format is best suited for students that are working in the field but not for those that aren't or that don't have any professional experience yet. Another challenge that professors recognize are gaps that may exist between theory and practice. Part of the department's ongoing efforts are focused towards trying to bridge this gap.

The Special Education courses are geared towards preparing students to teach in Minnesota schools by helping them attain the necessary qualifications and teaching licenses. "It's a fun time to be able to figure out what the needs are and what we can do more to meet the needs of our students and our communities." says Dr. Kiersten Hensley, an assistant professor and faculty member of the College of Education.

If you are interested in learning more about these career opportunities in Special Education, contact Dr. Kiersten Hensley, kiersten.hensley@mnsu.edu or Dr. Dana Wagner, dana.wagner@mnsu.edu

MEP Summer Institute

The Summer Institute, which can trace its roots back farther than 2015, started with the focus on technology, but has shifted to equity and access, and for the past two years, the focus has been on equity. The purpose of the summer institute is to provide professional development to staff. In years past, experts in the district have a chance to present and share their best practice strategies. There have been amazing things going on within the partnership districts and the summer institute allowed for the opportunity to showcase those instructional practices and to learn from one another. On average there are approximately three-hundred attendees representing varying partner districts. Some of these partner districts include: Waseca, Owatonna, Faribault, TCU, Mankato, Le Seuer, Centennial, St. Peter, and Minnesota State Mankato.

Last year's MEP Summer Institute was designed to bring together groups of educators interested in exploring equity and access to all. The conference focused on instructional resources and strategies to increase student engagement and achievement. There were interactive sessions that engaged and informed participants. The theme and focus of the MEP Summer Institute 2021 was All Means All. The MEP Summer Institute was devoted to using emerging and innovative instructional resources and strategies that were designed to engage students and improve teaching.

The MEP Summer Institute in Summer 2022 had a very different look and feel to it. The pandemic has impacted students, families, communities, and our educators, so this summer's focus was a Wellness Retreat. The facilitator for the day was Dr. Cindra Kamphoff and she facilitated and led a variety of activities planned to help educators refresh and revitalize.

Dr. Cindra Kamphoff (pronounced Camp-off) is the Director of The Center of Sport and Performance Psychology and Professor in Sport & Performance Psychology at Minnesota State University. She completed her Ph.D. in Sport and Performance Psychology and is a leader in her field, serving 3 years on the Executive Board of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology, the premier organization in her field. She also has roughly 20 years of experience consulting with athletes, teams, and coaches at all levels (youth, high school, university, professional, etc.). She is a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (#297) with the Association for Applied Sport Psychology. In addition, Dr. Kamphoff has recently published her first book, *Beyond Grit: Ten Powerful Practices to Gain the High Performance Edge*, which is an Amazon Bestseller.



Luis Versalles

Dr. Cindra Kamphoff



Minnesota Educators Partnership Governance Council

Visioning for Moving Forward



Eric Hudspeth, Waseca Superintendent engaging in Summer Institute

This year's Partnership Magazine focuses on many aspects of our Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support (CEPSS), which originated in 1988 under the title, "Center for School-University Partnerships" (CSUP). The center included a director and Lab District faculty. The lab district faculty were mentor teachers (Teachers on Special Assignment) to be released from their classrooms and replaced with graduate interns.

Thanks to the leadership of Dr. Ginger Zierdt, Director of CSUP in 2004, a major shift took place from primarily University leadership and coordination to a broader structure. The focus became a partnership with the direction of work and progress guided by

equal voices of university along with school district leaders – a Professional Development Site Governance Council. With the expansion of programs and work across partner districts, the term Professional Development Site changed to Minnesota Educators Partnership (MEP) in 2015.

The MEP Governance Council is comprised of the Superintendent from each Partner School District, the Dean of the College of Education, and the Director of the CEPSS. Governance Council meets at least once a month with a retreat session in the summer.

The role of Governance Council is exactly that – govern. Collectively, the members develop the vision for MEP, determine the action steps needed to make the vision a reality, and continuously connect their district with the overall partnership and partnership with their district. We hold true to the belief, "We are Better Together".

For example, in 2009, MEP was awarded a \$6 million Bush Foundation grant for the purpose of preparation, equity, support and placement of teacher candidates. Close to 2000 teachers throughout the partner districts were trained in co-teaching practices thanks to this grant. The Governance Council also united to explore the AVID program. This led to the creation of AVID Alliance where districts worked in tandem with the College of Education to implement AVID in districts and train university students as tutors.



There have been a number of grant awards that have led to growing initiatives throughout the MEP. Most recently in 2020, the Minnesota Educators Partnership received an MDE Grow Your Own grant for over \$375,000 to create concurrent enrollment courses aimed to help students consider a career in education and encourage young students of color to pursue teaching as a profession.

Creating sustainable education pathway concurrent enrollment courses across our MEP is a key goal area for the immediate and long term future.

“Superintendents attend lots of meetings. The MEP Governance Council was a meeting I always looked forward to. We always focused on how we could work together with a common goal of growing educators and advocating for education. It has never been about individual agendas, it was and always is about common goals,” shares Teri Preisler, former Superintendent of TCU, one of eight partner districts and current Acting Director of CEPSS.

Current MEP Governance Council members include:

Todd Sesker, Superintendent Faribault Schools

Jeff Elstad, Superintendent Owatonna Schools

Paul Peterson, Superintendent Mankato Area Public Schools

Bill Gronseth, Superintendent St. Peter Public Schools

Jim Wagner, Superintendent Le Sueur-Henderson Public Schools

Eric Hudspith, Superintendent Waseca Public Schools

Lonnie Seifert, Superintendent Tri-City United Schools

Jeff Holmberg, Superintendent Centennial Public Schools

Dr. Jean Haar, Dean of Minneosta State University, Mankato College of Education

Dr. Teri Preisler, Acting Director of the Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support



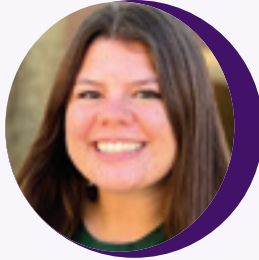
Paul Peterson, Mankato Superintendent

GRADUATE TEACHING FELLOWS:

Serve as full-time teachers in partner school districts with a paid stipend. Gain one-to-One mentoring from district Teacher on Special Assignment. Tuition free graduate credits within a Master's program at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Allison Beyerstedt

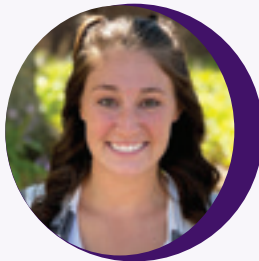
Faribault Public Schools



Allison teaches 3rd grade at Jefferson Elementary School in Faribault. Faribault TOSA shared, "Allison focuses on building strong positive relationships with students. She truly infuses solid planning and instructional strategies to increase student learning, while in a caring student-centered learning environment. So great to work with."

Brandi O'Loughlin

Centennial Public Schools



I decided on yet another year of the Fellowship program based on the experience I had with my first year. I enjoyed telling my students that I'm also a student just like they were, and am able to explain what I'm continuing my education for. It's fun to have something in common with your students, but it also makes them respect you a bit more I feel.

Students are more flexible than what we give them credit for. Changes occurred on the daily, and most often times students were able to adapt to those changes and roll with it. Whether it felt like a rushed or busy day, kids just accepted it for what it was in a positive way.

As I reflect upon last year, I would recommend making connections with your students like crazy. The more you know about your kids, the easier it is for you to understand when they don't understand pieces of academics or are in need to just chat. On the flip side, keeping those relationships close but also having clear classroom expectations so they don't unknowingly take advantage of the shared space.

Catherine Miller

Waseca Public Schools



If you are someone where passion leads you and you want to change the world, teaching is for you! Be proud of wanting to be an educator and truly change the world! Our job is something that not many people can do, be proud that you are someone who can!

Chelsea Voth

Tri-City United Public Schools



Advice I would give an individual considering a teaching career is it is a very rewarding career. Everyday is a new day & it is important to take one day at a time. A piece of advice I would give an undergrad student considering a teacher fellowship is pace yourself & use your time wisely. Divide your time in the classroom as well as your studies.

A piece of advice I would give a undergrad student considering a teacher fellowship is pace yourself & use your time wisely.

Emma Fladager
St. Peter Public Schools



Your students' emotional and social wellbeing is going to be just as much, if not more, of a priority for you than their academic wellbeing. Be diligent about getting to know them and developing that trust within your classroom. Once that trust and caring is established, the teaching is easier!

I am so grateful that I am getting my Masters now rather than later. I have the time and energy (some days) where I feel like I am actually learning from my classes, not just completing assignments. The strategies I learn in my college courses, I am now using in my own classroom!

Emma Noren
Mankato Area Public Schools



One of my deciding factors to continue the Graduate Teaching Fellowship was the opportunity to successfully complete my Master's program and graduate debt free. The other deciding factor for me was that I was able to stay at my position at Mankato East High School as a health and physical education teacher. I wanted to continue to work at this school and in the Mankato community while building off of my relationships with my students from last year and new students to come. I made a difference in the lives of students last year. Students enjoyed being in my classes last year and coming back for another year allowed me to see how much my students valued me as their teacher. Time management is KEY! Juggling graduate school, teaching, and life in general is a lot to handle. Using time management and scheduling for specific tasks will help decrease stress and lead to more effective planning.

Isla Ekstam
Mankato Area Public Schools



My advice is to identify your "why" and stick to it.

Kyle Hawe
Owatonna Public Schools



It will be hard, it will be stressful, there will be days when you feel like you can't do it, but it is the most rewarding, most impactful career you can choose and in the moments you feel overwhelmed, know that you can do it and think about your why, think about the kids that you are giving a constant safe space. You cannot choose a better career than teaching but you need to be prepared to put in the time and effort for your students.

This is a fantastic opportunity. You will be far and away the most supported teacher in your building because you not only have your supporting staff at your school, you also have supporting staff/peers from the college. The people who will be in your corner are there for you and they will be there to help you.

The other advice I would give is you need to be able to find balance in your days. Set up a schedule and find time for you.

Sarah Ganley
Centennial Public Schools



I believe that teaching is a very rewarding career. Not everyone gets the opportunity to influence the lives of many children. There may be days that are much harder than others, but don't let that push you away. The great thing about teaching is that if you have a hard day, the next day will be different and the kids really know how to put a smile on your face.

The fellowship is such a great opportunity to get started on a masters degree while also having the support as you begin your first year of teaching. It is so great to have a mentor who is there for you when you have any questions along the way. With this opportunity, you really get to practice and use your time management skills as you are juggling both school work and teaching.

Megan Reed

Faribault Public Schools

Make sure that you take the time to think about if the career is truly right for you. Having such a strong impact on a child's life is the most incredible thing in the world, so you need to make sure it's something you really want to do.



Jenny Schoenbauer

Tri-City United Public Schools

My biggest piece of advice would be to find awesome mentors. I've been so lucky with both my student teaching placement and my fellowship at TCU I've had amazing mentors who are always willing to listen and give advice.

If you're considering applying for the fellowship do it! My biggest fear going into teaching was jumping into it on my own after having so much support in student teaching. Having the support of a TOSA as I start my career has been so helpful!



Payne Robinson


LeSueur-Henderson Public Schools

I really enjoy the district I teach in and did not have another avenue to pursue teaching in this district without the fellowship opportunity. I also am hoping to complete most of my graduate school course work before the end of this year.

The energy. I expected to be completely exhausted after teaching each day, but somehow I learned to use the momentum of teaching to keep up my energy throughout my days.

Be kind to yourself, and don't be afraid to leave things on the table to give yourself some time to breathe. Sometimes it feels like you can drown in the extreme work load. The work will always be there. Just teach great lessons and make connections with the students. Everything else will fall into place.





Trauma Informed Practices

Danielle Theis LICSW, Ed. S., former graduate of Minnesota State University, Mankato, is the current Director of Special Services for Owatonna Public Schools, and consultant at Teach to Heal. She attended Minnesota State Mankato from 1989-1995 gaining her Bachelor of Science degree in Social Work and continued on acquiring her Clinical Master's in Social Work from the University of St. Thomas. She has worked most of her career in Special Education helping children and families. She then came back to Minnesota State Mankato to gain her advanced degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from 2005-06.

She has hosted an educational forum for student teachers here at Minnesota State Mankato for the last five years called Trauma Responsive Schools. The forums are a part of the student teaching seminars, and she hosts two sessions per year. This forum allows for open discussion regarding the impact of trauma on children and how that manifests in a school environment. Discussions continue with what can be done to mitigate and help the situation and the children involved.

There is at any given time about 25% of children living with trauma. Children experiencing these situations have difficulty interacting and trusting adults due to said trauma which can lead to exasperated issues. These forums, hosted by Theis, were created to teach incoming teachers ways of interacting with children impacted by trauma that would in no way mirror actions similar to or furthering what the children originally believe about adults. Educators, and future educators, should learn how to create situations and environments that are modeled after trauma informed schools and allow for a safe place for children impacted by trauma. These are necessary skills and capabilities that all educators need to incorporate to reach and support students.

In these forums, student teachers watch videos describing how trauma impacts the brain, what happens neurologically, and how that is manifested within children's behaviors. There are multiple stages of psychological development and when trauma occurs at certain times in a child's life it can impact the perception that they have about themselves and the world around them. Educators need to understand what the child perceives to be true and to provide a safe environment so that the child does not feel that they need to protect themselves by being more reactive and defensive.

Student teachers attending these forums can expect to walk away with the knowledge on how to interact with children who have experienced trauma, how to find out what the children perceive to be true, how to connect with children/students on their level, and how to work with other faculty and staff to help elevate the child's/student's strengths and assets. Student teachers will also learn how to help children struggling to regulate themselves by teaching them skills to manage their behavior.

Understanding and working with children affected by trauma will become more prevalent in the future, and these student teachers, through the Theis' forum Trauma Responsive Schools, will be the forerunners in this development. Theis projects that in the future schools will employ skilled individuals, such as behavioral interventionists, that can be responsive in the moment when a child needs attention to help correct their behavior. In the end, schools will need to determine how to support all children suffering from trauma with a variety of needs. And these student teachers will be paving the way towards a more effective and understanding future where all children's needs are met.

TOSAs

Teachers on Special Assignment:

an Innovative Model for School-University Partnership

History of the TOSAs

The role of TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) is part of a longstanding partnership between Minnesota State University, Mankato and eight different school districts. TOSAs do work for both Minnesota State Mankato and their district. Their Minnesota State University, Mankato work looks similar across school districts as they place student teachers, supervise student

teachers and act as liaisons between the school district and Minnesota State University, Mankato. Within the district, their role can vary widely. Many TOSAs coordinate mentor programs within their district, but that's often not all they do.

Different roles and duties are assigned to different TOSAs based on the skills that they already possess and the needs of the partnering districts. Some of these tasks can include working with learning

management systems, leading curriculum work, and providing trainings as is the case for Matt Flugum, a current Teaching and Learning Coordinator at Tri-City United Public School. Some TOSAs also lead staff development within a designated district as is the case for LaRae Ludwig, a current TOSA at Le-Sueur Henderson school.

"Day to day operations for most TOSAs are very fluid" says Matt Flugum. One noteworthy example shared by Ludwig is connecting the dots and communicating information with educators in their districts as well as with connections through Minnesota State Mankato.

Some of the recent additions to the TOSA network include meetings and updates with the Office of Field and International Experience and Dr. Teri Preisler, current acting Director of Center for Educator



Partnerships and Student Support. Flugum also mentions regarding updates that "the TOSAs are looking forward to being back on campus. We have received great support from facilitators who have done a fantastic job on virtual world interactions. But we are looking forward to pushing past restrictions of the past year and collaborating in an in-person environment once again."

When asked how they first got involved with the TOSAs, Ludwig recalled the tap on the shoulder that she received from the educator who was in her role before her. The desire to step into both worlds being a part of the administration and a teacher allowed for "a larger impact that extended much beyond the classroom setting."

Flugum recounted how his love for learning and imparting learning to others gave him the initial push into the TOSA playing field. "Empowering current educators by building and designing future experiences both in and out of the classrooms is a huge part of the TOSA world which really does it for me"

Both share the view that networking and knowledge sharing opportunities have elevated their experience as TOSAs leading to a career that is both fun and exciting. For prospective TOSAs, Ludwig suggests

asking questions and trying to establish connections in the field. Flugum goes on to spark this further by stating that "There is always a pressure to perfect something right away. Lean into the growth and don't judge the process and progress. Learn to step into incremental growth and get better every time and every day. Understand that as a new TOSA, there is a reason you are here and why you were chosen by your district."



LaRae Ludwig



Matt Flugum

CENTENNIAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Nicki Frase



Carolyn Ruhnnow

FARIBAUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Melinda Girtz



Ann Martinez

LE SUEUR-HENDERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



LaRae Ludwig

MANKATO AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Jen Frazee



Toni Hames



Kristin Moore

OWATONNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Jane Sorensen

ST. PETER PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Lori Pierret

TOSAs

TRI-CITY UNITED PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Matt Flugum



Jenny Wallskog

WASECA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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