

**P**  MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO  
**PARTNERSHIP**  
CENTER FOR EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIPS AND STUDENT SUPPORT

SPRING 2020  
VOLUME 11 ISSUE 1

**2020**

**VISION:**

**Vision Builders**



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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.

# Letters From the Director and Editor

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Peace and Greetings!

My name is Dr. Robbie Burnett and I am currently serving as Acting Director of the Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support (CEPSS). I've been in the role of the Director for Recruitment and Retention since 2010; this included a sabbatical leave during the 2018-2019 school year teaching Special Education at the secondary level. While teaching I was able to gain a better understanding of the everchanging contexts of P-12 education. This experience is continuing to help me explore and discover the many ways we can collaborate with our school partners in more sustainable ways. My work in higher education, coupled with recent, relevant classroom experience has prepared and poised me to serve in this exciting new role.



*Dr. Robbie Burnett  
Acting Director*

This spring brought on the historic and unprecedented global pandemic, COVID-19. In these uncertain times, while we are learning how to perform distance learning, have graduations without graduates, we are all, adults and students alike, facing many visible and invisible challenges. One way to combat the turbulence we are experiencing is by offering grace, practicing patience and tempering our expectations. Through these experiences we can learn to be vulnerable with each other while humanizing our fellow brethren.

The College of Education at Minnesota State University, Mankato strives in its vision and mission to reflect an intentional and responsive need to address racial consciousness and social justice. The content for this issue of the Partnership magazine was designed to support the College mission and vision. As we continue to strengthen and deepen our partnerships, we chose the theme of 2020 Vision Builders to highlight the work with our school, community and global partners. As vision builders, we are positioned to work in more ways that are innovative, intentional and strategic. As such, this will poise us to come out better together on the other side of the pandemic. As we enter into the summer months, I invite you to take this time to reflect on our past and prepare for the future in order to open up the door to something greater.

Please continue to take good care of yourselves and the people you love.

Dr. Robbie Burnett  
Acting Director, Center for Educator Partnerships  
and Student Support

Dear Reader,

My name is William Blanzeisky, and I am the current Graduate Assistant with the Center for Educator Partnerships and Student Support (CEPSS). I am originally from Indonesia, currently residing in Minnesota pursuing my master's degree in data science. I am extremely grateful to be given the opportunity to work with bright individuals whose focus is to support students' needs.



*William Blanzeisky  
Editor*

With this magazine, we hope to share how CEPSS acts to support students by acting through the lens of racial equity and social justice. This magazine will highlight our vision and mission on how CEPSS enrich learning communities of students, 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. Moreover, you will also see several testimonials from our teacher candidates, educators from our partner districts, as they share how their journey with CEPSS helps them shape their future career goals.

"Be the change you wish to see in the world - Mahatma Gandhi"

William Blanzeisky  
Editor  
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# MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO & OWATONNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## A RACIAL EQUITY PARTNERSHIP

### The Partnership

The Center for Engaged Leadership, which runs parallel to the Department of Educational Leadership, partners with several P-12 school district leaders and teachers in the work of racial equity and social justice. It is because of this existing relationship that the district leadership from Owatonna Public Schools contacted Minnesota State University, Mankato's Department of Educational Leadership in the spring of 2018 asking if we, Natalie Rasmussen, Assistant Professor, and Jinger Gustafson, Assistant Professor and Department Chair, might partner with them in order to provide professional development to their district around racial equity. Their request was very much aligned with our department's mission and vision:

The Department of Educational Leadership is dedicated to the study of the intersectionalities among race, cultural responsiveness, and social justice. We prepare racially and ethically conscious leaders who are resolute in serving ALL learners in a broad spectrum of educational settings.

The department is committed to developing educators with strong skills in racial equity leadership, instructional leadership, and experiential learning. We seek to advance the capacity of leaders who will eliminate predictable racial disparities through project-based learning and learner-centered programming in Master of Science, Specialist, and Doctorate graduate degree programs.

At our initial meeting, Owatonna Superintendent, Jeff Elstad, shared his vision for what he wanted for the district in order to increase racial awareness, address issues of bias and racism, and to provide the best educational experience for all of his students. Superintendent Elstad and his leadership team of Michelle Krell, Director of Teaching and Learning, and Chris Picha, Director of Human Resources, sat down with us to

envision what this partnership might look like. We explained that usually, the single-session professional development workshop where consultants "blow in, blow up, and blow out" were not nearly as effective as those that cultivated a relationship over time and catered to the particular learning needs of the community. They agreed and as a result, we devised a plan for the next school year to take Owatonna's building and district leadership through a year-long partnership in which we created curriculum and learning activities crafted uniquely for them.

### The Work

We researched the change in the district's racial demographics over the last several decades. The Owatonna Public Schools student population, which had been 98% White in the 1980s was now at about 72% White students. We saw that there had been an increase in its Latinx students which now made up about 15%, and Black students, comprised of East Africans as well as African Americans, constituted about 8%. Other students of color made up the remaining 5% of the total population of approximately 5000 K-12 students. Even though there has been a substantial influx of students of color to the district in recent years, Owatonna's leadership and teaching staff remain overwhelmingly White. With this change in student demographics, the district began to see racial disparities in several areas.

Thus began that first year. We started with a four-hour workshop in August and then approximately every month for the remainder of the school year, we engaged in a 90-minute professional development session in which building principals, assistant principals, and district directors and department heads were introduced to and grappled with topics such as those outlined in Figure 1:

Figure 1. A partial outline of topics covered during SY 2018-2019



Topics included Implicit Bias; It's Race, Not Poverty; Microaggressions; The Role and Presence of Whiteness; Stereotype Threat; Non-Racist vs. Anti-Racist; and The History and Use of the N-Word. These topics, as well as others, were presented as a web of underlying and interconnected forces that, if left unacknowledged, can express themselves in very negative ways in the daily operation and functioning of a typical school district. Our goals were to bring awareness and knowledge about race and racism to the district leadership and to equip leaders with the tools necessary to address these issues.

## Courageous Conversations

We, along with building and district leaders, agreed to employ the tools outlined in Glenn Singleton's (2014) *Courageous Conversations About Race*. In each of our sessions, we used The Protocol and The Compass in order to establish a structure for the deep and at times uncomfortable conversations necessary to engage in the important work of racial equity. We used several tools to present information and foster deep and authentic dialogue such as icebreakers, surveys, instant and anonymous electronic polls, podcasts, readings, video clips, and other activities. Time was always built into every session to allow participants to engage in small group discussions to process new information or to brainstorm how to apply the knowledge to their work.

## The "Incident"

In February of 2019, Owatonna High School experienced a racially motivated incident that made national news and was reported in the *New York Times*. Because of the actions of a few White students who posted racial slurs on social media, Black students responded, called them out, and wanted an explanation. This escalated to the point of locking down the high school and summoning police. This incident brought to light the fact that Owatonna Public Schools had a race problem. Superintendent Jeff Elstad realized that racial equity work cannot be solely the school district's responsibility. Last year's incident highlighted the fact that even though a racially charged issue was made public because of the actions of a few students, the genesis of and response to this issue came from school, families, and community. Superintendent Elstad's response was that all stakeholders of Owatonna needed to be made aware of the root cause and join in the heavy lifting of racial equity rather than place the work at the feet of the district and then perhaps have it discounted, or worse, counteracted by the greater community.

## New Partnerships

As a result, we were invited once again to partner with the district during the 2019-2020 school year in order to include separate and ongoing sessions for Owatonna Courageous Educators where a wide range of classified and unclassified staff from the district came to a three-hour professional development session – a morning group and an afternoon group – four times per year, with the hope of eventually taking all the district’s staff through the racial equity training over the course of a few years. This training was geared to anyone having contact with students. Additionally, we were asked to work concurrently with several leaders of Owatonna and Steele County in a similar format called Owatonna Courageous Community – equity work that is

focused more on issues of racial awareness as they pertain to social justice. Finally, this year we were invited to do a deep dive with the Owatonna School Board. The purpose of this four-hour session was to give them an overview of the work being done in their district and also give them an opportunity to start or continue their own racial equity journeys. The Board members were engaged and welcoming of the work and plan to schedule another session later this summer. Our vision is that through partnerships with the various stakeholders of the Owatonna community, that people will begin to have a shared vision, language, and perceived course of action for how best to confront issues of race and systemic racism. We are proud to be a part of the Owatonna School District and Community's racial equity journey and look forward to continuing this urgent work.

## BRINGING RACIAL EQUITY TO TEACHER EDUCATION: EMERGING EFFORTS TO LAUNCH A NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY

“In Africa there is a concept known as Ubuntu: the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others, that if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievements of others.” -Nelson Mandela

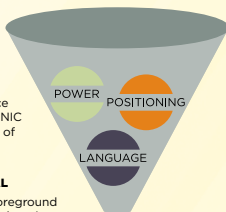
### BACKGROUND AND GOALS

CSUN, Mankato, and MSU have partnered with FHI 360 to launch a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) to strengthen university-based teacher education through a shared commitment to racial equity. The partners seek to improve the quality of university-based teacher education and the delivery of public education—initially on their own campuses and within their partner districts and then expand their NIC to other universities that share their vision and commitment to racial equity.

#### GOAL 1: INDIVIDUAL

Increase the percentages of teacher education candidates, graduates, faculty and administrators, and partner district teachers and administrators who are:

- Exposed to critical race perspectives necessary to disrupt hierarchies of oppression.
- Prepared to establish racially just learning environments to expand marginalized students’ access to education opportunities.
- Prepared to use improvement science methods within the NIC to resolve problems of racial injustice.



#### GOAL 2: INSTITUTIONAL

- Acknowledge and foreground across the teacher education curriculum how race differentiates students’ equitable access to educational opportunities.
- Support the ongoing professional learning of faculty and others (e.g., P-12 partners and university administrators and staff) around issues of racial justice.

### NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY



### OUTCOMES

Uproot whiteness to establish systems and structures in teacher education that promote racial equity. For Example:

- Changes in mission, vision and core principles to incorporate explicit focus on racial equity
- New positions and hiring decisions focused on racial equity and representation
- Increased capacity to do racial equity work at individual, department, college, and community levels

### EVIDENCE OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

#### CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

New scholarships for 15-20 teacher education candidates of color  
Sixth Annual Research Colloquium on Critical Race Theory in Service and Academic Spaces attended by 200 faculty and students  
Four new faculty of color hired this academic year  
Future Minority Male Teachers of California project received funding from W.K. Kellogg Foundation to increase access and success for males of color in CSU teacher preparation programs in Los Angeles County and other urban areas

#### MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

Racial consciousness and social justice mentioned specifically in College of Education’s vision  
New scholarships for 16 teacher education candidates of color  
New campus-wide general education course in critical race theory  
Explicit references to racial consciousness and social justice in job postings

- Led to increase in applicants of color (25 out of 70 in one search and 4 out of 10 in another)
- Three new faculty of color hired this academic year

#### MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Establishment of Department of Teacher Education Core Principles statement  
New Assistant Dean of Equity Outreach Initiatives position for the College of Education  
Public lectures and summits targeting pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, administrators, teacher educators and community partners.

- Three Urban Educator Speaker Series events featuring Bettina Love, Jeff Duncan-Andrade, and David Kirkland with 100+ attendees
- Three racial justice focused professional development summits

# LEARNINGS

## WHERE HAVE WE BEEN?

### MANKATO/CSUN PARTNERSHIP

- Initial focus on commonalities as members of state university systems and foundation-funded teacher education networks
- Site visits plus virtual meetings to share strategies, learnings, and data
- Facilitation and technical support from FHI 360

### ADDITION OF MSU AND CREATION OF NIC

- Two cross-campus meetings
- Explicit focus on racial equity/justice
- Identification of common goals and development of logic model

## WHERE ARE WE IN THE JOURNEY?

### IMPLEMENTATION

- Professional development design and delivery (students, faculty, administrators, district partners)
- Race/equity curricula and programmatic initiatives

### CROSS-CAMPUS DISCUSSIONS

- Curriculum/program/professional development initiatives
- Results of outcomes data currently available

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

- Focus groups
- Digital storytelling
- Professional development evaluations
- Organizational/systems assessment
- Quantitative analyses of race/equity indicators

## WHERE ARE WE GOING?

### USE OF IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE

- Changes and adaptations to different contexts

### DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON ASSESSMENTS

- Identification of predictable failures related to race/equity practices in teacher preparation
- Assessment of growth toward racially just practices in teacher preparation through measures including:
  - Common assessment of racial equity climate at systems level
  - Common assessments of impact of professional development (students, faculty, administrators, district partners)
  - Common assessments of teacher candidates' readiness to practice racial equity
- Sharing of analytics and collaborative planning of curriculum/program/professional development improvement strategies
- Collaborative evaluation of the efficacy of new assessments

### FUNDING

- Support for continued NIC operations



# TEACHERS *of* TOMORROW

Diversifying Minnesota's teacher workforce begins with attracting, recruiting and retaining teacher candidates who are of Color or who are American Indigenous. However, simply emphasizing efforts to recruit without engaging in a systemic transformation of teacher education programs is harmful and dehumanizing. As the College of Education (COE) continues working to identify successful practices for recruiting, retaining, and preparing candidates of Color or who are American Indigenous, we recognize that an intentional focus must be on building systems to uproot systemic, inequitable structures that operate as barriers for candidates who are of color or who are American Indigenous.

Since retention and graduation are the success of recruitment, we strive to build systems that enable candidates of Color to complete teacher preparation. As a result, the Teachers of Tomorrow (ToT) program was created. ToT is an innovative system that operates as a GPS helping teacher candidates who are of Color or who are American Indigenous navigate the terrain of teacher preparation program that includes, admission requirements, coursework at the University, field experiences, successful completion of student teaching and state licensure requirements.





Teachers of Tomorrow participant's engage in fellowship on a weekly basis over a meal. Teacher candidates' who are of color or who are American Indigenous often describe these sessions as a space and time that is their safe haven. They share stories of both success and challenges while garnering strategies on how to address such experiences which is a part of retention that influences graduation. Candidates who participated in ToT were offered scholarship opportunities and priority scheduling to promote retention as well as weekly study tables and other activities designed to promote a sense of mattering, affirmation and camaraderie among cohort members. With the intent to expose ToT participants to the layered aspects of the profession; recent graduates, education professionals of Color such as principals, counselors, representatives from union, legislative and community-based organizations often frequent ToT gatherings as guest speakers.

The ToT program continues to help candidates of color navigate successfully through teacher education pathways. This is in collaboration with teacher education program faculty, the Office of Field & International Experience as well as University Supervisors and Mentor Teachers. As a result, the College of Education graduated its largest cohort of candidates of Color in December 2019. This spring, every graduate began teaching in a classroom whether it was in the capacity of Professional Teaching Intern, Graduate Teaching Fellow or as teacher of record.



Good Practice  
Skill  
Ethics  
Knowledge  
Potential

## Network Improvement Community (NIC) Focused on Racial Equity in Teacher Education

Michigan State University (MSU), Minnesota State University, Mankato (Mankato), and California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) have partnered with FHI 360 to launch a networked improvement community (NIC) to strengthen university-based teacher education through a shared commitment to racial equity.

The partners seek to improve the quality of university-based teacher education and the delivery of public education—initially on their own campuses and within their P-12 partner districts but ultimately with other universities that share their vision and commitment to racial equity.

NIC members developed and piloted test survey items and measurements to assess the level to which teacher candidates are exposed to concepts of racial equity and social justice and their sense of feeling prepared to apply them to establish racially just learning environments. A separate survey was also designed and piloted to assess faculty commitment to and capacity for racial equity instruction and engagement within their respective teacher education programs. Results from both surveys will be used to design and implement professional learning opportunities and curricula that embed a lens of racial equity into all components of teacher education.

NIC Happenings:

- Awarded \$450,000 from Hewlett Foundation
- Launched NIC Survey to faculty and staff across all three institutions

# TOSAs

## Teachers on Special Assignment:

### an Innovative Model for School-University Partnership

The role of a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) is vital to school, university partnerships with Minnesota State University, Mankato. The TOSA program aims to meet the needs of partner districts and the University by releasing P-12 master teachers from their classroom duties for a minimum of three years to work directly between the University and the partnering school district.

#### **CENTENNIAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Lisa Cisewski  
Amy Gerst

#### **FARIBAULT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Melinda Girtz  
Ann Martinez

#### **LE SUEUR-HENDERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

LaRae Ludwig

#### **MANKATO AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Mari Considine  
Jennifer Frazee  
Kirsten Prunty  
Kari Welter

#### **OWATONNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Katie Coudron  
Jane Sorensen

#### **ST. PETER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Lori Pierret  
Paulette Topel

#### **TRI-CITY UNITED PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Jenny Wallskog

#### **WASECA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Kristin Guse  
Sue McKay



# TEACHING FELLOWS

## Get to know this year's Grad Fellows

Graduate Teaching Fellows serve as full-time teachers in partner school districts. They are mentored by teachers in the district serving as Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA). In addition to their own classroom responsibilities, each teaching fellow is enrolled in a Master's program at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

### **CENTENNIAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Michelle Fetter  
Kendra Hall

### **FARIBAULT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Yuseina Brito Lino  
Hana Palmer

### **LESUEUR-HENDERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Amanda Zakrewski

### **MANKATO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Emily Hintz  
Logan Schock

### **OWATONNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Alex Arndt  
Makayla Kunkel

### **ST. PETER PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Andrew Coyle  
Carolyn Fox

### **TRI-CITY UNITED PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

McKayla Aubrey  
Madeline Jones

### **WASECA PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Elizabeth Niedermayer  
Alexandra Arellano

## School Partners' Response to COVID-19

This spring, COVID-19 rocked our world. It has affected every part of what we called "normal" life. This global, novel virus has caused us to reorient our relationships to society—government, healthcare, the economy, our schools and even each other. A crisis of this magnitude changed our society in dramatic ways, for better or worse. Crisis moments such as these also present opportunities: more sophisticated and flexible technology, a revived appreciation for the outdoors, spending time with family, and life's other simple pleasures.

Below are a few examples of how our school partners have responded to COVID-19 in rapid, innovative and phenomenal ways:

- Within two weeks schools launched distance learning using platforms such as google classrooms, Seesaw, ABCmouse, etc.
- Collaborated with our Office of Field & International Experience (OFIE), to ensure that teacher candidates could complete their student teaching experience.
- Planned parade celebrations for the class of 2020 graduates.
- Secured and delivered WiFi hot spots along with electronic devices to student's homes.
- Converted school buses into mobile hotspots for student use.

# Minnesota Educators Partnership Offers Professional Teaching Internship

Katie Coudron, Owatonna Teacher-on-Special Assignment  
Minnesota State University, Mankato Adjunct Instructor



"We're short a sub! Can you cover?" This is an all-too-common phrase heard in schools across the state. Teachers are in short supply and high demand, especially guest teachers, because we all know life happens and occasionally an educator needs to be out of their classroom... sickness, professional development, or personal needs sometimes

require a teacher to be away. The next best thing is to make sure there are highly qualified and consistent guest teachers to step in to limit the interruption to quality instruction. In an effort to respond to this continual substitute shortage, Owatonna Superintendent Jeff Elstad proposed the idea of a "Professional Teaching Internship"... an opportunity for young teachers to get experience in many classrooms and build a deep understanding of one district. The proposal was this: A December graduate from the College of Education commits to sub four days a week in the district where they completed their student teaching; in turn, the district commits to provide one day a week of professional development and pay for a 3-credit graduate-level course; the University commits to provide a graduate level course designed to deepen the intern's understanding and analysis of the P-12 public education systems.

With much work behind the scenes by all stakeholders (the work of the Partnership), Owatonna Schools piloted the program in Spring 2019. Because of its initial success, the program expanded to more partner districts in the spring of 2020. Currently, there are eleven interns across five partner districts, and the first impressions are positive. Catherine Miller, an intern in St. Peter shares, "This internship provides me with experience to teach in all grade levels that my license covers. It gives me a chance to try out all grade levels to see what is the best fit for me." Another intern in Mankato Area Public Schools, Cinthia Sotelo Garcia, appreciates the opportunity to meet principals, staff and students. One of the best things for her has

been "making connections with important people in the district. It is beneficial to make yourself known." Many interns love that they get to see so many different classrooms and grade levels, they are developing a deeper vision for what they will do in their own classrooms (hopefully next fall!). Lindsay Fonner, in Waseca, loves that the internship has allowed her to continue to "grow as an educator," teaching new subjects and new grade levels has helped her learn a lot.

The opportunity to earn graduate credit and get into classrooms right away in the spring was a draw for most participants. "Graduating in December makes it difficult to find a full-time teaching job right after graduation. My plan after graduation was to sub in the MAPS, also getting my master's in education leadership has been my goal. Knowing that MAPS would offer me a subbing job 4 days a week and a paid grad course was a deal I was not willing to pass," said Ms. Sotelo Garcia. The professional development days are tied directly to the course work interns do and have also been a highlight. Madeline Vatland, an intern in Owatonna says, "The professional development opportunities have allowed me to see a variety of roles within a school district. We all know it takes more than a teacher to influence the lives of students and it was really amazing to see the different influences. I have learned a lot through this experience and have greatly appreciated it." As part of their coursework, interns reflect weekly on their teaching experiences and their personalized professional learning, they also engage in analysis of case studies around issues of equity in schools, and spend time researching trends and areas of interest in education. Each builds a digital portfolio of their research, learning, and beliefs about teaching that helps to build their professional presence online.

The Professional Teaching Internship is another example of the power of the partnership between the University and area P-12 school districts. Not only does it allow our highly qualified graduates to fill a need for our area districts, but the districts support continued learning through our University, in accordance with the College of Education vision "To inspire lifelong learning and professional engagement through racial consciousness, social justice, and inclusion within a global context."

# Teacher Candidates Reflect on Their Field Experiences in

# Kenya

Our first group of Minnesota State University students successfully completed their international student teaching experience in Kisii, Kenya. Partnering with Kisii University, Minnesota State University's office of field and international experience working in collaboration with Global Education established this faculty-led program. Two students; Samantha Stoelk (ELE -elementary education) and Ana Leyva (KSP- music education) participated in the 5 week experience.

forget the teachers and students welcomed me with open arms." In terms of her professional and personal growth Samantha says, "I was challenged in ways that made me become a better educator and person. And all along the way I felt so supported and cared for, it is so amazing to me that I can now say that I have a new community of people that I know and care for across the globe."

For the students, it was a learning experience that started right from when they landed in Nairobi, Kenya and traveled to Kisii where they were destined to do their field experience. Traveling through the Great Rift Valley, interacting with people, admiring the sceneries of mountainous vegetation the students had a great experience. Samantha Stoelk one of the two students that participated in the five-week experience described it as an experience she will never forget. She says, "my student teaching in Kisii, Kenya was an experience I will never





**Samantha with students and mentor teachers**

Alongside the students, Minnesota State Mankato faculty members also traveled to Kenya. Dr. David Kimori, a faculty member from ELE department and a Kenyan native describes this experience as “an opportunity for future teachers and faculty to understand, talk with, relate to, and work with persons who differ from them racially, politically and socioeconomically.”

Dr. Elizabeth Finsness joined Samantha and Ana for the final week of their experience to meet with university and K-12 faculty and observe the teacher candidates in their classrooms. Each candidate had a unique and life changing experience. Samantha’s student teaching experience was in a 3rd grade public school. She utilized her acquired talents to manufacture manipulatives using clothes pins and her students to teach fractions.

Ana’s experienced student teaching at a boarding school, the Kereri Girls High School. She found that the curriculum held a greater emphasis on theory than performance and found that her students were dedicated and serious about their learning and future education goals.



In addition to arranging the educational opportunities for our Minnesota State Mankato candidates, Kisii University arranged weekend excursions to local sites of interest. One highlight included Maasai Mara National Reserve, a preserved savannah wilderness in southwestern Kenya along the Tanzanian border.

At the conclusion of this initial successful experience all parties agreed to continue and expand our groundbreaking partnership. Future expansion plans include bringing Kisii faculty and teacher candidates to Minnesota State University, Mankato and partnering Kisii teacher candidates with Minnesota State Mankato students during the Kisii K-12 school experiences.

Dr. Natalie Rasmussen was invited as a guest lecturer to Kisii University where she presented a professional development session to some of the Kisii University faculty on The Effects of Stereotype Threat on Faculty and Student Performance.

She was also invited to speak to students at both Kereri Girls High School and St. Mathias Girls High School on the topic of Girls in STEM Fields.

"It was an amazing opportunity to not only experience a beautiful country and culture but also to meet University faculty, secondary school administrators, teachers, and students and to realize how many things we as educators have in common in terms of providing the best possible outcomes for our students." Presenting to Kereri students.

Culminating this field experience the students and faculty had a one-day safari at the Maasai Mara game reserve where they had an opportunity to see wild animals including the 'big five' that included lions and elephants. Kenya is located in East Africa. The Kenyan people use two official languages; English and Swahili that are used in varying degrees of fluency for communication with other populations. The education system



Some of Kisii University faculty.



Presenting to Kereri students.

consists of eight years in primary school (elementary and middle school), four years in high school or secondary school and four years in university for qualifying students.

International field experiences such as the Kenyan experience recognizes students can have experiences that open their minds, hearts, and behaviors to different perspectives and allows them to experience such difference firsthand.

Additionally, these experiences can move students toward living effectively with difference and greatly expand their perspectives on diversity and life experiences. For more information on international field experience opportunities please visit:

<https://mankato.mnsu.edu/academics/global-education/>

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*Happy Retirement, Dr. John Seymour!*