

educationpartnerships

CO-TEACHING A BEST PRACTICE

More than 25,000 Central Minnesota students in 17 schools have been touched by an innovative co-teaching model developed by the St. Cloud State College of Education. Now in its fifth year, the program has received the Best Practice Award in Support of Teacher Education Quality and Accountability from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

The co-teaching program pairs classroom teachers with St. Cloud State teacher candidates to collaboratively plan, organize, deliver and assess instruction in the classroom. “The needs of today’s children are so great,” professor and program director Nancy Bacharach has said, “that it doesn’t make sense to have either the classroom teacher or the teacher candidate sitting in the background when both can be helping children.”

Research indicates that the co-teaching model has a statistically significant positive effect on reading and math scores along with significant decreases in unexcused absences and classroom disruptions.

“I taught alongside my cooperating teacher my first day in the classroom and on a daily basis until the day I left,” said St. Cloud State student teacher Laura Schmidt, senior, from Monticello. “The students saw me as a teacher from day one.”

“I’m a convert,” said teacher Janine Bunkowski, Madison Elementary School, St. Cloud. “Co-teaching is the very best way to train student teachers.”

Julia Espe, executive director of curriculum, instruction and assessment for the St. Cloud schools, said of the new model: “Instead of throwing a student teacher into the complexities of teaching, without a lifeline, they’re coached as they practice the art of teaching.”