

## Successful student teacher program earns national award



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Faculty and staff involved in the co-teaching initiative include, from left: Beth Mann, Teacher Development Dept. faculty; Kathy Ofstedal '96, Child and Family Studies Dept. faculty; Nancy Bacharach, director, Teacher Quality Enhancement Center (TQEC) and Teacher Development faculty; Teresa Heck, coordinator of co-teaching and Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Sport Science Dept. faculty, TQEC; Kate Steffens, dean, College of Education; and Kathy Dahlberg, TQEC research analyst. Mann and Ofstedal are co-teaching specialists. Jerry Wellik, co-teaching specialist from the Special Education Dept., is not pictured.

St. Cloud State University's co-teaching initiative – an idea so innovative it garnered a \$5 million U.S. Department of Education grant in October of 2003 for its launch – has earned one of three coveted Christa McAuliffe Awards for Excellence in Teacher Education.

The national honor from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities annually recognizes the best teacher education programs and identifies promising practices in teacher preparation. The St. Cloud State model “changes the paradigm of student teaching,” according to Professor Nancy Bacharach, director of the university's Teacher Quality Enhancement Center. By having the classroom teacher and the student teacher collaborate on every aspect of the learning experience, from planning to delivery, the co-teachers and students in the classroom all benefit, she said. “These shared learning experiences are the heart of the program's success.”

While the student teacher in the co-teaching experience eventually has the opportunity to fully take charge of the classroom, it's a more seamless approach since the cooperating teacher remains an active part of the classroom throughout the experience, Bacharach said.

In its first three years the co-teaching program, implemented in the fall of 2004, has brought together 583 pairs of student teachers and cooperating teachers in pre-school, elementary and secondary settings in 17 Central Minnesota school districts. St. Cloud State's College of Education trains about 500 teachers and other education professionals annually.