



Co-teachers Michelle Hauser, foreground, and Caitlin Halsey, right, worked with first-graders on a unit about Earth materials. "We are completely equal in this room," says Hauser.

IN A FIRST-GRADE CLASSROOM at Earle Brown Elementary School in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, Michelle Hauser and Caitlin Halsey have finished up an early-morning prep. Their 23 students begin to wander in, stowing little backpacks, scanning an assortment of rocks spread over the countertop, and checking the leprechaun traps in the back of the room.

With St. Patrick's Day coming up, the class is on a campaign to catch the culprit sure to mess up the room over the holiday. Four students have finished and brought their homemade traps. One contains a lure of enticing green paper. "Free money!" says another. But so far none has captured the leprechaun.

Hauser and Halsey have reviewed the day's lesson plan: after breakfast, they will resume work on the Earth materials unit, which started yesterday. Then writing. Then reading before lunch. They know who will do what for the next few hours, and they know how to adapt when things don't go as planned.

Hauser walks around the room, checking in with the kids

The power

as they get organized. Halsey sits at a table where kids come to her with questions.

While Hauser leads the unit on properties of rocks, tallying sizes, colors, shapes, and textures in lists on the board, Halsey keeps working on the periphery of the classroom with individual students.

A half hour later, Halsey takes the lead with the group, reviewing the writing assignment. Each student is making a simple instruction book to tell someone else how to make a leprechaun trap like theirs. Hauser puts away rock-unit materials and gets ready for reading.

The morning proceeds seamlessly as the students group and regroup, with Hauser and Halsey teaching side by side, moving through subjects, exercises, and activities uninterrupted. They advance at a clip that still never seems rushed.

Upstairs, in a fifth-grade classroom, the scene is similar. Teachers Mike Zwick and Liz Kurkowski have assigned their 29 students into four groups to read through four different plays.

"Objective: Read your part with expression," are the instructions on the board.

Each student holds a black and yellow booklet. Their voices rise and fall dramatically.

“Use a voice level 1 or a soft 2!” Zwick reminds them.

Zwick is sitting with one group, Kurkowski with another, while the other two groups read on their own. The teachers offer tips and feedback, ask and answer questions. After 10 minutes, they switch to the groups reading on their own.

In 20 minutes, every student has received individual attention.

A dynamic shift

A visitor to either classroom would not readily guess which of the two teachers in each pair is a resident Earle Brown staff member and which is a University of Minnesota student. Five days a week, all day, they are co-teachers.

“If you asked any kid in here, we are completely equal in this room,” says Michelle Hauser, a 13-year veteran teacher in her third year at Earle Brown. “And that’s the way it should be. Sometimes in the beginning they tried to do the mom-dad

you change as a teacher based on what your students need. I’m a lot quicker to adapt now. I make plans but I don’t feel as tied down to a plan or ideas because I can react to what the students need. I know them because I’ve been working with them a whole year.”

Teacher candidates are also supervised by a faculty member. During the first half of the year, every two weeks of co-teaching alternated with two weeks in U classrooms learning methods of teaching specific content areas.

Halsey and Kurkowski agree the year has been hard but are glad they didn’t have to do it alone.

“That’s a nice part about it,” Hauser observes, reflecting on her own start 13 years ago. “It’s not just sink or swim.”

Decision to redesign

Teacher preparation and licensure have been part of the University’s curriculum for more than a century. Since 1990, U students have prepared for K–12 teaching careers with a baccalaureate plus 15- to 18-month post-bacc program leading

of two

The first group of teacher candidates to spend a year co-teaching in classrooms is transforming teacher education

thing, ask her and then me to see if they could get a different answer, but we communicate, we’re on the same page.”

Co-teaching is one of the most dynamic shifts in how the University is preparing new teachers to work in schools. This year for the first time, ten weeks of slowly phasing into solo student teaching has been replaced by an entire year of co-teaching with an experienced teacher.

“I could not imagine being ready after that first semester, when a normal student-teaching semester would end,” says Halsey. “And I’m not just an assistant. I’m actually in front of the kids every day, doing some kind of teaching and management. Michelle is constantly giving me feedback, or we’re working off of each other.”

Liz Kurkowski is excited to be learning all the little things that could throw a first-year teacher for a loop, from classroom routines to picture day and fire drills. She’s also getting to see the students develop over the course of a year.

“This allows me to understand my philosophy of teaching a lot better,” says Kurkowski. “You can see how

to licensure and a master’s degree. But in 2008, the College of Education and Human Development began conversations to address grave challenges facing educators nationwide.

Demographics, families, and schools had changed. Problems in education, including teacher retention, were part of the national conversation. Minnesota’s achievement gap between white and non-white students was among the largest in the nation.

In 2009, after months of careful consultation, the University of Minnesota became one of 14 institutions in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota to begin a collaborative transformation of teacher preparation with funding from the Bush Foundation. The University’s Teacher Education Redesign Initiative (TERI) identified seven essentials: a focus on student learning, adaptive teaching, diversifying the teaching workforce, enhanced clinical experiences, stronger curriculum, improved teacher support, and measuring effectiveness.

TERI immediately began to identify partner school districts. The 2010-11 academic year was one of detailed



Above: Halsey and Hauser's students got quick feedback on their work. Below: Fifth-grade co-teachers Liz Kurkowski and Mike Zwick worked out their lesson plan during prep time.

planning, engaging teachers and leadership from all the partners. K–6 preparation would be developed first.

In fall 2011, co-teaching began. This year, the University's 90 students preparing for K–6 licensure co-taught at a total of 25 schools in nine districts.

To track TERI's success, the program is collecting a lot of data from the teacher candidates: an exit survey, another survey at the end of their first year of teaching, a survey from their first-year employer, and—three years out—value-added data based on student achievement scores on tests.

"This is part of the beauty of a ten-year investment in this work," says TERI director Misty Sato, associate professor of curriculum and instruction. "We can track these candidates from preparation into their early career of teaching."

Seeking to close the achievement gap

As important as TERI results will prove to be for future teachers, student achievement gains are what everyone is working for. Many participating schools are engaged in more than one intervention, and TERI participants are happy to contribute. Data from test scores and other assessments won't be available for months, but the co-teachers are hopeful.

For grades K–3, Earle Brown recently received a literacy

Aligning partnerships

The McKnight Foundation awarded Earle Brown a \$3 million grant to focus on preK–6 literacy, based on a collaborative proposal process led by principal Randy Koch. The initiative will draw on the strengths and expertise of three CEHD centers (MCRR, EDRC, and CEED) and the U of Chicago's Urban Education Institute. By integrating co-teaching, literacy research, early childhood research, and focused assessments, working side by side with Earle Brown faculty, all will contribute to meeting the school's literacy goals.

grant from the McKnight Foundation to increase the percentage of students reading by third grade. Hauser, whose passion is teaching kids not only to read but to love it, is excited. After spring break, she and Halsey would have three months to make an even bigger difference with their first-graders.

"This is a huge benefit of co-teaching," says Hauser. "One of us will do the core reading instruction while the other pulls students to work in small groups. There's no way I could manage this entire class and get struggling kids where they need to be."

"It's the best part of the program—not only the benefits for me but for the kids," Halsey says. "We have students reading at levels from kindergarten to third grade. They need that attention, that differentiation."

"We're seeing a difference in the kids," says Hauser. "I can't imagine preparing teachers the old way anymore."

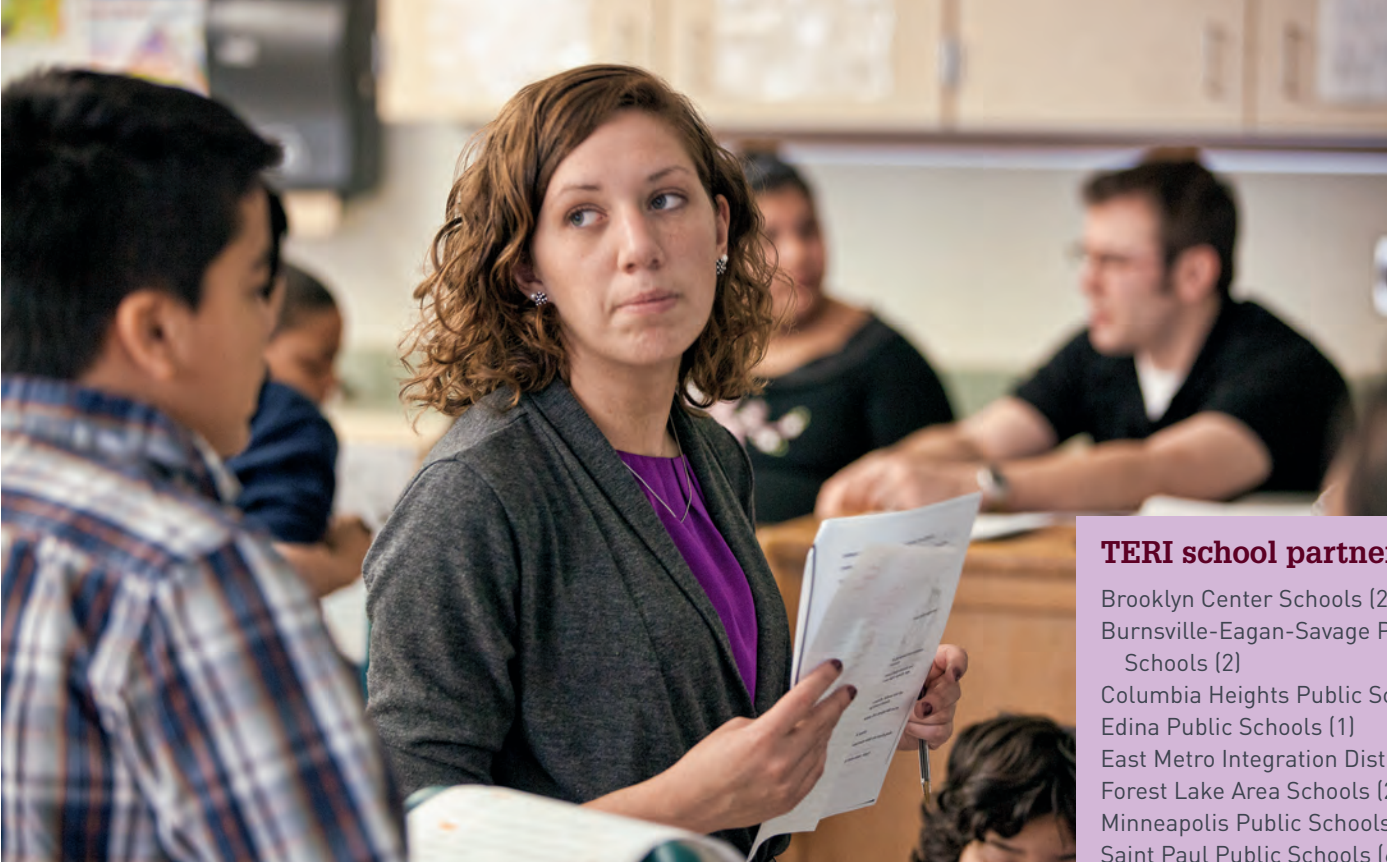
In Zwick and Kurkowski's fifth-grade classroom, one of them often leads while the other works at the back table with students who have questions.

"Students get more interaction with the teacher," says Zwick. "As the lesson is going on, the kids feel comfortable enough where, if they're having trouble with a concept, they'll just slide their chair back and work with whoever is here. When they get it, they're free to slide back and join the rest of the lesson."

Co-teaching allows the teachers to be more creative and flexible, he and Kurkowski agree.

"And you can go faster," Kurkowski adds. "You're able to move on when you need to because you're addressing students' needs more individually."





Kurkowski and Zwick listened to students in small groups practicing for a play.

TERI school partnerships

- Brooklyn Center Schools (2)
- Burnsville-Eagan-Savage Public Schools (2)
- Columbia Heights Public Schools (4)
- Edina Public Schools (1)
- East Metro Integration District (2)
- Forest Lake Area Schools (2)
- Minneapolis Public Schools (10)
- Saint Paul Public Schools (6)
- White Bear Lake Area Schools (4)

Partners at the forefront

To participate in TERI, official partner schools agree to reserve their co-teaching spots for University of Minnesota students. At Earle Brown Elementary, the commitment grew out of a literacy effort.

“Through the research during our time as a Reading First School, we found the impact that small-group instruction had on student performance,” says principal Randy Koch, M.Ed. ’89. To incorporate quality small-group instruction in the classroom, Earle Brown first partnered with the U to bring fifth-year education students into classrooms during literacy blocks three times a week.

This year, in addition to 15 TERI co-teachers, more than 30 University students—undergraduates in practicum and others working on specialist licensures—have spent time at Earle Brown.

“When you walk down the halls here, you see a lot of maroon and gold,” Koch says, referring to the lanyards and IDs. “That’s because our teachers have had great success working with students from the University of Minnesota.”

Other TERI partner-school leaders echo Koch’s observations.

“The biggest motivation for our school’s involvement was our teachers,” says Stacey Kadrmas, principal at Frost Lake

Magnet School in St. Paul, where several teachers expressed interest. Kadrmas believes the best possible people to inform universities and colleges about how to prepare teachers are those currently working in classrooms with students. TERI is informing and empowering current teachers about expectations and program requirements for pre-service teachers.

Columbia Heights was motivated to provide teaching candidates the chance to work with students from diverse backgrounds and exceptionalities, according to Highland Elementary principal Michele DeWitt. Vadnais Heights Elementary principal Sara Svir reports that her staff was excited about working with the U to access professors with expertise on specific topics, including literacy and science. And Peter Hodne of Edina praises the high quality of preparedness the U students bring.

At Pillsbury Elementary School in Minneapolis, principal Laura Cavender praises U students for their expertise and engagement.

“The students from the U are top-notch,” says Cavender. “I’d like to hire all of them!”

—GAYLA MARTY

Learn more about the Teacher Education Redesign Initiative at www.cehd.umn.edu/teri.