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University of South Florida St. Petersburg. Office of University Advancement.

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Over the summer, students enrolled in a College of Education course at USF St. Petersburg have been gaining hands-on experience while making a difference at a local elementary school.

Approximately 10 students enrolled in the Differentiated Reading Instruction course at USFSP worked with 15 elementary school students at Campbell Park Elementary School. The collaboration allowed the students—many of whom are working on undergraduate degrees in other fields and are education minors—to obtain firsthand experiences with applying literacy strategies and assessments with the fourth grade class.

“As future teachers, there is only so much we can learn from textbooks,” said Annika Kretschmer, a junior history major who is minoring in education. “We really need to go out into the world and practice those teaching techniques, and that is exactly what Dr. Gunn’s collaboration with Campbell Park Elementary gave us.”

Dr. Ann Marie Gunn, assistant professor of Education, said USF St. Petersburg College of Education has enjoyed a longstanding relationship with Pinellas County Schools and that the partnership between the university and the elementary school benefits students on both sides.

“I think it’s a pivotal change any time students can have authentic, real-world experiences about what they are learning in the classroom,” said Gunn, who has been a faculty member at USFSP for four years. “It enables them to be able to bridge the theory and application by working with real K-12 students.”

Gunn said USFSP students worked with the children both at the elementary school and on the university campus. Both group of students along with Gunn and Justine Becker the fourth grade teacher walked to campus to tour the College of Education, work with authentic reading assessments in the library, and to have lunch and ice cream in the University Student Center. In the classrooms at Campbell Park Elementary School, the education minors assisted the students with some of their coursework from the Summer Bridge curriculum.

The education minor is an approved alternative teacher certification program that leads to temporary certification. A Temporary Teaching Certificate enables educators to complete the Professional Certificate requirements while teaching full time. It is designed for students who are interested in teaching English, social science, or science at the secondary level in Florida.
USF St. Petersburg education minors and students from Campbell Park Elementary School pose for a photograph after a tour of the university’s waterfront campus.

Campbell Park Elementary students interact and work with USF St. Petersburg education minors.