

As children, **Andrew '04 and Peter '06 Ippel** spent many hours “playing school.”

“I think I usually made Peter be the student,” says Andrew. The brothers come from a family of educators; their father, Bob Ippel, is a teacher, and both of their grandfathers were professors at Calvin.

Both studied elementary education at Calvin, Andrew receiving an endorsement to teach students with cognitive impairments and Peter training to work in bilingual education. Andrew now works at Creston High

School in a “MODCI” classroom (for students with moderate cognitive impairments), and Peter teaches a first grade bilingual transition class at Buchanan Elementary School. “I just love it—I’m learning so much,” says Peter.

Although Peter and Andrew grew up with a passion for education, experiences at Calvin focused their interests. Andrew lived in a Project Neighborhood house, an off-campus community where students live their Christian faith together in specific and tangible ways. “Living in Project Neighborhood really opened my eyes to urban Grand Rapids ... to seeing disparities in education systems,” says Andrew. Peter participated in Calvin’s Semester in Honduras program, an experience that solidified his ability to communicate in Spanish. Now his fluency enables him to communicate with students and their parents.

As teachers, Andrew and Peter want to impart dignity to their students. “One of the most influential classes I had at Calvin was Philosophy of Education,” says Peter. “It really motivated me to think about why I’m doing this ... to ask myself ‘How can I see God in this child?’”

“I want to teach the students that their native language has value *and* I want to equip them to participate in a society that is English dominated,” continues Peter.

Andrew’s work echoes these themes. People with disabilities also reflect the image of God, says Andrew. “Often the fact that they have disabilities comes before the fact that they’re people ... I want to focus on what they’re *able* to do... figure out how they can live as independently as possible, see themselves as contributing members of society.”

One way this is accomplished is through the *322 Room Café*, a program Andrew started with a small grant from the Grand Rapids Public Schools. One Friday each month Andrew’s students purchase, plan and prepare lunchtime meals for Creston High School employees. In the process, the students gain social skills, practice shopping, cooking food and handling money. And, says Andrew, they take pride in providing a real service to their high school community.

Andrew is continuing his education at Calvin by pursuing an MEd in literacy. “I love Calvin,” he says. “It’s not just learning how to teach ... Calvin realizes that education is complex, and it’s not a perfect system.” Adds Peter: “Calvin really encouraged me to think about issues of justice in education.”

