Earlier this fall, the Professional Development School District hosted its second annual workshop, welcoming educators from around the state for site visits and the chance to learn about the challenges and successes of collaborative Professional Development School partnerships.

The Oct. 22-23 event gave 36 teachers, administrators and university faculty the chance to ask questions and see first-hand how the partnership works. The event included a dinner at the Georgia Center with remarks from College of Education Dean Craig H. Kennedy and CCSD Superintendent Philip Lanoue.

Bruce Field, professor

Sharing a partnership’s success
Professional Development Schools workshop draws educators from across Georgia

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New roles in partnership
Clarke County welcomes associate superintendent, 3 COE faculty become Professors-In-Residence

The Professional Development School District partnership kicked off another school year with a new associate superintendent, three new Professors-in-Residence and other new partnership activities.

In September, the Clarke County School District appointed Mark Tavernier as the new associate superintendent for instructional services and school performance, replacing Noris Price, who became superintendent of Baldwin County School District in July. One of Tavernier’s responsibilities will be overseeing the work of the Professional Development School District, along with Janna Dresden, director of the office of school engagement at the College of Education. Prior to this appointment, Tavernier served as CCSD’s director of teaching and learning for nine years.

“Our PDSD partnership is the perfect blend of research/theory and practice where both university and school district faculty and students benefit,” Tavernier said. “Our model, integrating UGA teacher candidates, university professors, and on-site courses with the actual day-to-day work of the schools, provides a real-world context to the work of our profession.”

Allison Nealy, clinical associate professor in the department of communication sciences and special education, became a new district-wide Professor-in-Residence with a focus on special education. She provides on site professional learning to schools in the areas of co-teaching, differentiation, supporting students with disabilities in collaborative settings, and behavior management. Her work entails classroom observations, staff development sessions with faculties, and strategic planning with administrators.

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Top of Page: Sonia Janis (standing) works on site as the Professor-in-Residence at Cedar Shoals High School. Photo credit: Andrew Tucker
2014-2015 school year
—continued from front

“Job-embedded professional learning is the most effective way to support teachers on-site, in real time,” said Nealy. “My work with the district through our partnership affords me the opportunity to provide such support in a way that is responsive to the individual needs of each school. I am confident that we are making a difference.”

Sonia Janis, clinical assistant professor in the department of educational theory and practice, became the first Professor-in-Residence at the high school level.

She co-teaches a ninth-grade government class at Cedar Shoals High School with teacher Jesse Evans (a recent UGA social studies education M.A.T. graduate), supervises teacher candidates, collaborates with social studies teachers and teaches a social studies methods course on-site with UGA colleagues Mardi Schmeichel and Jim Garrett.

Principal Tony Price and Janis say the professional development of educators, whether in a college of education or at a school, should be reciprocal, and this classroom is one attempt at creating that space, bringing together high school students, teacher candidates, practicing teachers, school leaders and university faculty.

Becoming a Professor-in-Residence has also strengthened Janis’ experience, she said.

“I anticipated a professional learning experience that would enhance my understandings and capacities as a teacher educator. I did not anticipate the extent to which I would learn from and with the freshman government students I teach at CSHS,” Janis said. “My continual orientation to the high school students heightens my awareness of the importance of being responsive to the needs of the teacher candidates, as they encounter critical lessons on their paths from history and political science students to social studies teachers.”

At J. J. Harris Elementary Charter School, Bob Capuozzo, clinical assistant professor in the department of educational theory and practice, became the new Professor-in-Residence, replacing Lew Allen who retired last May. He supervises six teacher candidates and works with the instructional coach to align the supervision of student teachers with coaching efforts. Capuozzo also participates in instructional leadership team meetings.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the administrators and teachers, and I am better able to support the dozens of UGA students in the building,” said Capuozzo. “I have also appreciated opportunities to interact with children to help further their social and academic growth. I look forward to engaging in collaborative action research projects with the UGA students, teachers, and administrators.”

Other new activities and honors:

Meg Easom Hines, lecturer in the department of educational psychology, became a Professor on Special Assignment and works with elementary schools on developing Schoolwide Enrichment Model activities. She also works on-site at H.B. Stroud Elementary teaching a Freshmen Odyssey course. (See story on page 4.)

At Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary School, Mary Guay, clinical assistant professor in the department of language and literacy, and Denise Oen, clinical assistant professor in the department of educational theory and practice, are working with the kindergarten, first-, and second-grade teams to develop support for writing workshops and have joined the Striving Readers Community Team. They also teach on-site courses at Oglethorpe.

Jennifer James, associate professor in the department of educational theory and practice, teaches her elementary social studies methods course on-site at Alps Road Elementary School. Her UGA students primarily work in kindergarten and second-grade classrooms.

This fall, Fowler Drive Elementary School was honored by the Georgia Department of Education as a “Reward School” – a school with the highest performance or the biggest academic gains by students in the last three years. Beth Tolley, clinical associate professor in the department of educational theory and practice, is now in her fourth year as the Professor-in-Residence. The principal is Anissa Johnson.

Nicole Siffron, a doctoral student in the department of language and literacy, became the new Professional Development School District Fellow at W.R. Coile Middle School. One day per week, Siffron teaches five ESOL classes, while the school’s Teacher on Special Assignment, Kelli Bivins, teaches a course called Cultural Identity in the Classroom to early childhood majors on UGA’s campus.
and chair of the department of teaching and learning at Georgia Southern University’s College of Education, gave the keynote address.

Field, one of the founders and first president of the National Association for Professional Development Schools, gave an overview of the history of Professional Development School work in the United States and provided a “big picture” look at the partnerships, including trends that have remained constant and ones that emerged from educational policy. He expressed concern about the “potentially disruptive impact of externally generated mandates” on the work, but said he is encouraged by the increasing amount of partnerships not funded through grants, making the work more sustainable.

Field praised the UGA and Clarke County School District partnership. “I’ve seen a lot of places start PDS partnerships...I’m not seeing anyone who has done it this well.” Georgia is included in the top 10 states with the most Professional Development School activity, and he encouraged statewide collaboration among programs.

The workshop included visits to seven schools, where participants experienced different aspects of the partnership including:

- Observing on-site courses
- Observing UGA teacher candidates working with CCSD students in classrooms
- Conversations with on-site instructors, Professors-in-Residence and principals
- Conversations with mentor teachers and teacher candidates
- School tours

The workshop concluded at Clarke Middle School with a panel discussion featuring College of Education faculty who teach on-site courses. Janna Dresden, Sonia Janis, Bridget Ratajczak and Pat Wilson shared examples of clinically rich practices in teacher education that have developed as a result of working in the Professional Development School District. Visiting Scholar Beth Dickson from the University of Glasgow School of Education in Scotland also provided an international perspective on teacher education. She described their Shared Observation and Reflection method of teacher candidate supervision, where teacher candidates observe each other’s teaching and debrief with the university supervisor and classroom teacher afterwards.

Workshop participant Karen Wyler of the Office of School Improvement in the Georgia Department of Education said she was impressed by what she saw. “It was evident through conversations and observations inside the schoolhouse that an effective PDS model is implemented in Clarke County Schools, and this partnership is committed to ensure that every student has a highly effective teacher and that every teacher graduate is ‘learner ready’ on day one.”

Workshop attendees came from Georgia College and Baldwin County School District, Columbus State University and Muscogee County School District, Middle Georgia State College, Armstrong State University, Clayton State and Henry County School District, Lowndes County Schools, Brenau University, the Board of Regents and the Georgia Department of Education.

The dates for the third annual Professional Development Schools Workshop will be announced in the spring Office of School Engagement newsletter.
On a Thursday morning in October, 12 fourth-grade students at H.B. Stroud Elementary School are on the floor of a classroom playing “cotton ball hockey”—each attempting to blow the cotton ball across a goal line before the partner facing them does. They huff and puff and encounter both frustration and excitement as they play the game. Leading this activity is Meg Easom Hines, a lecturer in the department of educational psychology and Professional Development School District Professor on Special Assignment. She and three College of Education graduate students are facilitating the newly formed Community Problem Solving team. After the game, Hines leads the Stroud students in a lively discussion about “perseverance”—a trait they will need to hone and use as they decide on a problem to solve in their community this year.

Hines began working on-site at Stroud Elementary last spring, collaborating with gifted teacher Stephanie Franks and principal Ingrid Gilbert to develop a Community Problem Solving Team, one leg of Dr. E. Paul Torrance’s Future Problem Solving Program. Beginning last year, she also worked with Tarek Grantham, professor in the department of educational psychology, who was teaching a class on-site, to begin building relationships with the faculty at the school. As a result, in addition to launching the Community Problem Solving team this fall, Hines, Grantham and doctoral student Brittany Anderson are co-teaching a Freshman Year Odyssey Service-Learning seminar on-site at Stroud called University-Community Engagement in Minority Student Talent Development. The goal is to put UGA undergraduates in touch with elementary students from diverse populations to build mentor-like relationships that help to develop talent and creativity. The course is grounded in the research of Dr. Torrance, a native Georgian and a pioneer in research related to slavery and America’s division during this time period.

Gilbert says she is excited about Hines’ engagement with Stroud. “Dr. Hines has been a great support to our school. She has been instrumental in helping our students to think critically. Dr. Hines has such a unique and interesting approach to content that is focused on gaining student involvement. She also has the phenomenal ability to identify struggling students and to re-direct their approach by having them think differently for their benefit.”

Hines has a personal connection to the school, too. She is the daughter of well-known CCSD teacher and principal Maxine Easom, who retired in 2008.

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In her role as a Professor on Special Assignment, Hines has also assisted eight CCSD elementary schools with developing Schoolwide Enrichment Model activities. Each school is at a different stage of development, requiring varying levels of support. One of the components of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) is Enrichment Clusters, which involves students taking an interest-based class once a week from a teacher at their school. The multi-age cluster classes are on topics such as space exploration, recycling, juggling, dance or quilting—typically, topics that might not be covered in the regular curriculum.

Hines assists teachers with developing their clusters, including helping them to incorporate creative activities. For example, at Barrow Elementary Hines leads several professional learning sessions with teachers at each grade level to help them brainstorm topics for
clusters and develop “Type 1” exploratory activities, such as bringing in speakers and providing demonstrations. Later, she works with them on developing “Type 2” activities where students develop the skills necessary for developing a product, performance or service related to the topic they are studying. Another aspect of Hines’ work with the School Enrichment Model has been to establish a support network for all the enrichment cluster lead teachers across the district so they can share ideas.

Hines has had a lifelong interest in creativity. As a child, she found fulfillment in creative activities and wished schools offered her more creative outlets; as an educator she became interested in learning more about creative children and how teachers can encourage creativity. Hines taught first grade for three years in Atlanta, then worked as a gifted teacher while earning her master’s and gifted endorsement from Kennesaw State University. She taught in Columbia County (Augusta) at a center-based gifted program for four years while pursuing her doctorate at UGA. Her dissertation centered on the underachievement of creative students and how to help creative kids find their place in schools. From 2004-08, she taught gifted endorsement courses at the College of Charleston in Charleston, SC.

In 2009, Hines was hired as an academic professional at the UGA College of Education, and began teaching and coordinating three online programs. While at UGA, she has taught gifted endorsement courses, practicum courses, a course on social and emotional learning, and a differentiation course.

Eventually, her UGA students gained field experience by working in Barrow’s Enrichment Clusters, after she began working with CCSD’s Karen Higginbotham, director of the Office of ESOL, Gifted and Migrant Education Program Services, and Chris Pendley, gifted specialist. Through her relationship with Higginbotham and Pendley, she began providing her students field experience opportunities working in Barrow’s enrichment clusters.

In her special role in the PDSO partnership, Hines’ passion and expertise in gifted and creative education inspires increasing numbers of UGA undergraduate and graduate students, as well as many CCSD teachers and students.
I have just completed seven years in a variety of senior leadership roles at the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. These roles have focused on the strategic reform of teacher education. Around the beginning of the millennium, all Scotland’s monotechnic Colleges of Education were merged with universities. As a result, colleagues quickly became familiar with international research on teacher education and as part of that process, I met UGA College of Education Dean Andy Horne, Tracy Elder (COE director of assessment and accreditation) and Janna Dresden (director of the Office of School Engagement), and subsequently Dean Craig Kennedy and CCSD Superintendent Phil Lanoue, with whom we have discussed the work of Professional Development Schools. This relationship was cemented when the universities of Glasgow and Georgia signed a Memorandum of Understanding. I have attended the AACTE conference for the last three years now, and have visited some PDSs here in Athens, which I find fascinating. We are trying to do similar things in Glasgow, and it has always been professionally useful to discuss implementation with experienced colleagues.

I was fortunate to be granted a period of study leave for the first semester of the 2014-15 session, and I thought that Georgia was far enough away from Glasgow that absolutely nobody (including myself) could expect me to do anything in Scotland! So here I am – trying to write up the work we’ve been doing, trying to work out what teacher educators do here and whether it is different from what we do across the Atlantic, and also to immerse myself in a different educational culture with the great opportunity to understand it from the inside. Distance gives a perspective on work that I could not have achieved at home, as well as the sheer amount of protected time I have to read, write and think. I’m very grateful to Dean Kennedy and all the staff who made this opportunity possible.

Beth Dickson
University of Glasgow, Scotland

Harman leads poetry workshop for W.R. Coile Middle School students

Building upon a semester-long endeavor with W.R. Coile Middle School students as creators of narratives, Ruth Harman, associate professor in the department of language and literacy and Professor on Special Assignment at Coile, extended the work by hosting a Saturday poetry workshop last spring. Fifteen students transformed their narratives into poetry with the help of Harman and poet Paul Ayo, who is also the director of Art as an Agent for Change, Inc. This workshop, “My Story, My World,” was funded through an AthFest Educates grant. According to Ayo, the workshop helped students “discover the power of their words and the importance of their personal stories.” Harman and Ayo believe sharing the lessons of our past are the keys to unlocking a bright future for our youth.

W.R. Coile Middle School students pose for a photo at a poetry writing workshop where they turned personal narratives into poetry, assisted by Professor on Special Assignment Ruth Harman and poet Paul Ayo.
This fall, COE faculty member Theodore J (T.J.) Kopcha was awarded a Public Service and Outreach fellowship with the UGA Archway Partnership. Kopcha is an assistant professor of learning, design and technology in the department of career and information studies. A former secondary school mathematics teacher, he has spent his career examining the ways in which systems theory can improve the ways technology is integrated into K-12 settings and how technology can improve student-centered approaches to teaching, particularly in the area of mathematics. Kopcha is using his fellowship to extend his work with technology-enhanced learning. In his role as a fellow with Archway, he is travelling to schools across Georgia that are part of the partnership, which brings higher-education resources to select communities in Georgia. The nature of his work varies from community to community—projects are identified through close collaboration with the teachers, students and the larger community. As part of his fellowship, he has travelled to five of the Archway communities to help with conceptualizing the process of integrating technology or exploring strategies for negotiating the changes that technology may bring.

Kopcha’s fellowship has also provided an opportunity to work closely with two Archway communities, Candler County and Hart County, to provide ongoing, site-based professional development to integrate technology into STEM education. With the help of learning, design and technology graduate students Lenie George and Kalianne Neumann, he offers training and classroom-level support to middle school teachers in Candler County School District. He and his graduate students will work closely with teachers as they develop a place-based interdisciplinary STEM curriculum that uses mobile technology to support data collection and analysis (for details, see t.uga.edu/142).

In Hart County, Kopcha and his graduate students are working with the elementary, middle and high schools as they integrate Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) into the Hart County School District’s STEM and general education curriculum. Kopcha helps plan for BYOT as well as offer training and classroom-level support as teachers learn to integrate technology into math, science and language arts. Both George and Neumann are former teachers with experience conducting interdisciplinary activities in secondary mathematics and language arts (respectively). (For details, visit t.uga.edu/143.)

The Public Service and Outreach fellowship has provided Kopcha with the time and resources to fully immerse himself in the mission of Archway. With support from both the Office of Public Service and Outreach and Archway, he plans to work with his graduate students in the spring to continue their ongoing efforts to improve education in rural communities across Georgia.

Archway fellowship allows professor to bring technology to rural Georgia communities

In his new role as a Public Service and Outreach (PSO) fellow with the UGA Archway Partnership, Theodore J (T.J.) Kopcha (left) meets with COE doctoral student Lenie George (middle), and Tiffany West (right), Teacher of the Year in the Candler County School District. Photo credit: Betsy McGriff

Middle Grades Education students create photo booth for Hilsman Middle School celebration

UGA Middle Grades Education teacher candidates pose in the photo booth they created for Hilsman Middle School students, families, and faculty as part of HilFest, Hilsman’s back-to-school open house with a festival-like atmosphere. In the photo booth, teacher candidates took photographs of HilFest participants, who donned a variety of props, and posted the pictures on the school’s HilFest website, http://bit.ly/hilfest

Pictured from left to right: Halie Hunter, Harlie Aldridge, Brittany Byrd, Erin Wedereit
On September 18, 2014, a team of eight representatives from the PDSD gave two presentations about the partnership at the annual State of Education in Georgia Conference sponsored by the UGA College of Education. Representatives from CCSD included: Philip Lanoue, Superintendent; Anissa Johnson, Principal of Fowler Drive Elementary School; Marcquez Haley, Mentor Teacher at Fowler Drive; and Jessica Howard, teacher at J. J. Harris Elementary Charter School. Representatives from UGA College of Education included: Janna Dresden, Director of the Office of School Engagement; Beth Tolley, Professor-in-Residence at Fowler Drive; Erica Gilbertson, Project Manager in the Office of School Engagement; and Amanda Massengale, Teacher Candidate at Fowler Drive.