PDSD celebrates 5th anniversary of MOU and shares message broadly

On April 28, the Professional Development School District (PDSD) will celebrate the 5th anniversary of the signing of the first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that created the PDSD partnership between the UGA College of Education and the Clarke County School District. The celebration will include a dinner at Trumps Catering followed by a keynote speech from Dr. Carl Glickman, UGA emeritus professor. All members of the PDSD Coordinating Council have been invited to attend as have many members of the Athens-Clarke County community.

An increasing number of organizations and community groups are requesting presentations to learn about the PDSD partnership now that it has become so well-established. This spring in particular, information about the PDSD has been shared with a broad range of audiences. The PDSD was represented at the annual conference of the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL) held at the Classic Center in Athens in

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CCSD Bullying Prevention Essay Contest recognizes 31 educators for their impact on students’ lives  Guest writer: Dr. Katherine Raczynski

“If you want to have a good week, start off by sending teachers the kind words that students have written about them,” said Dr. Katherine Raczynski, districtwide Professor-in-Residence for school climate in the PDSD. Raczynski spent a March morning doing just that, as she notified 31 Clarke County School District (CCSD) employees that they had been nominated by a student in the first annual Districtwide Bullying Prevention Essay Contest.

Seventy-eight students in grades 6-12 wrote passionate essays about the impact that educators have in creating spaces where bullying doesn’t occur. “It’s important for a teacher to have a strong bond with the students,” wrote Jimena Somilleda, a student at Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School, in her winning essay. “Without that bond I think bullying would be more common.”

The contest was dreamed up by Clarke Central High School senior, Jasia Clark. Jasia was inspired by her middle school principal, Melanie Sigler at Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School, to make a positive difference in her community by helping prevent bullying. Sigler was awarded the Leading By Example award for her role in inspiring the contest.

Jasia worked closely with Raczynski over several months to organize the contest. “It is really amazing to know that there are teachers, counselors, and principals who are making a difference in so many lives. This essay contest has truly been the highlight of my senior year,” said Jasia.

The importance of warm personal relationships was a common theme across essays submitted. Writing about Burney-Harris-Lyons teacher Jamie Hogan, winner of the Making a Difference Award for the most student nominations received, middle schooler Oscar Robles wrote, “She has prevented bullying by making everybody feel comfortable and creating an environment that makes all walks of life fit in without any outcasts.”

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Students currently pursuing masters degrees in Early Childhood Education shared their PDS teacher preparation program experiences with nearly 100 high school students at the Future Georgia Educators Day in February. Pictured L to R: Colin Fite, Caroline Garrett, Dr. Janna Dresden (faculty), Heather Marcus, Marisa Williams, and Betsy Bostick.
February. Principal Selena Blankenship, Professor-in-Residence Kathy Thompson, Instructional Coach Melissa Graham, teacher candidate Megan Ernst and the project manager and director of the Office of School Engagement, Erica Gilbertson and Janna Dresden, gave participants an overview of the structure of the PDSD and explained the processes that sustain the partnership, followed by discussion with participants.

Later that same month, Janna Dresden and five students currently pursuing masters degrees in Early Childhood Education (ECE) presented a session at the Future Georgia Educators Day held at the UGA Tate Center and sponsored by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE). The students had all received their undergraduate degrees from the UGA ECE program and talked with current high school students about the advantages of attending a university that has a strong partnership with the local school system. Because each of the students had been involved in a Model 4 Professional Development School, by taking an on-site class, doing their early field experience and/or student teaching at the school, they had many experiences to share with the attendees.

On April 26, the PDSD will again be featured through a presentation to members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) to be held at River’s Crossing.

Above: Nearly 30 people attended a PDSD group dinner at the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) conference in Washington, D.C. in March. One table included L to R: Ben Campbell (UGA), Melissa Graham (CCSD), Dr. Amy Peacock (CCSD), Josh Podvin (UGA), and Dr. Shannon Wilder (UGA).

PDSD well-received at NAPDS conference in Washington, D.C.

A group of 34 UGA faculty, staff, and students and Clarke County School District teachers and administrators attended the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) annual conference in Washington, D.C. from March 5-8. Participants gave a total of 17 presentations, sharing various programs, initiatives, and research that have developed within the Professional Development School District (PDSD) partnership. Over 950 educators from around the country attended the conference.

The PDSD participants also gathered for a group dinner at McCormick and Schmick’s on Friday evening, sponsored by the Office of School Engagement. Each attendee shared a reflection or something they had learned from the conference, and several new ideas for strengthening the PDSD emerged.

Tad MacMillan, Principal at Clarke Middle School, was a member of three different presentation teams at the conference. According to MacMillan, “Participating in the NAPDS conference was very energizing this year. It was great to hear ideas from universities and school districts around the country. I felt very proud to be part of a partnership (UGA and CCSD) that is on the cutting edge. In the sessions in which I co-presented, people were very interested in HOW we do things, clearly taking our ideas back to their own PDS arrangements. The simple re-confirmation that our PDS partnership is exemplary was inspiring.”

Brittany Anderson, a doctoral student in the College of Education’s educational psychology, gifted and creative education program was enthusiastic about the conference, “I experienced such a strong feeling of solidarity with the other Clarke County-UGA partners at the conference-it was great to hear what other partners are doing in order to make a meaningful impact in our local schools. As a doctoral student, observing university faculty ‘in the trenches’ with K-12 educators to develop and nurture the potential of our youth, is a model I wish to emulate once I become a faculty member.”

A sampling of presentations include:

- “Addressing School Climate within a Professional Development School District: Opportunities and Lessons Learned;” Presenters: Dr. Katherine Raczynski (UGA), Selena Blankenship (CCSD), Tad MacMillan (CCSD), and Todd Graichen (CCSD)
- “Developing Structures that Support and Sustain Professional Development Schools;” Presenters: Mary Guay (UGA), Janna Dresden (UGA), Bob Capuozzo (UGA), Erica Gilbertson (UGA), Tad MacMillan (CCSD)
- “Genius Hour as Teacher Inquiry: Investigating Problems of Practice with Teacher Candidates and Practitioners;” Presenters: Kathy Thompson (UGA), Gayle Andrews (UGA), Selena Blankenship (CCSD), Conor Naughton(CCSD), Morgan Waters (UGA)
- “Extending our Reach: An Innovative Field Trip Program;” Presenters: Janna Dresden (UGA), Shannon Wilder (UGA), Josh Podvin (UGA), Amy Peacock (CCSD), Pat Waldrip (UGA), Cindy Blair, (UGA), Megan Ernst (UGA), Bob Capuozzo (UGA), Elizabeth Saylor (UGA), Lin Chen (UGA)
- “Using Frasier’s Traits, Aptitudes and Behaviors to Identify Underrepresented, Culturally Different Students for Gifted and Advanced Programs;” Presenters: Meg Hines (UGA), Brittany Anderson (UGA), Tarek Grantham (UGA), Heather Carlson (CCSD)
One of the primary goals of the PDSD relationship between the College of Education and the Clarke County School District is to increase collaborative professional learning. In September, Hwa Young Lee, a doctoral student in the mathematics education program, began leading professional learning sessions for 10th grade analytic geometry teachers in collaboration with Glenda Huff, Secondary Math Coach, and Summer Smith, Math Coach at Clarke Central High School.

The group of 15 teachers from Clarke Central High School, Cedar Shoals High School, and Classic City High School met monthly for 1.5 hours from September through March. At each session Lee shared teacher and student resources that previewed the upcoming unit teachers would be teaching. She typically engaged teachers in two or three 30 minute activities where she demonstrated resources she had developed that give students hands-on experiences with new concepts. For example, Lee introduced the teachers to a paper folding activity from Korea that helps students find the incenter and circumcenter of triangles. After trying the activities, the teachers discussed the conceptual understandings that supported the activities. Lee took note of teacher suggestions and then revised materials for teachers to use in their classrooms.

Lee described the group as a learning community where everyone learned from each other. “We collaboratively aimed our focus on developing learning opportunities in which students could give meaning to the mathematical topics conceptually. It’s been fun to explore mathematical tasks geared toward conceptual understanding. I learn as much from the teachers as they do from me,” she explained.

Lee is an advocate for teachers developing their own curricula. In CCSD, teachers don’t use a textbook for analytic geometry so resources like those that she co-developed with the teachers are especially useful. Cedar Shoals teacher Amit Bharucha was positive with teachers, Lee had established relationships with CCSD schools through supervising student teachers and teaching a mathematics pedagogy course on-site at Clarke Central. Together with Huff, she had also observed math classrooms at Cedar Shoals to better understand the context and different experience levels of the teachers.

Lee entered COE’s mathematics education program in 2011 and is now in her 5th year as a graduate student. Her dissertation topic is focused on students’ construction of coordinate systems—how students reason using coordinate systems and their spatial organization using coordinate systems. She has conducted a teaching experiment with four ninth-grade students over a two-year time period and is currently writing her dissertation. After Lee graduates, she will be looking for a teaching and research position at a university.

Lee moved to Athens from Seoul, South Korea, where she grew up, went to college, and taught middle and high school math for 7.5 years. “I wanted to become a better teacher so I applied to graduate school. I also like traveling and wanted independence. Since I lived in California when I was young, I had always wondered what it would be like to go back to school here. I am glad that I chose to come to UGA since I met amazing people and gained invaluable experience, as I did in this professional learning community,” she said.
It’s not every day that university professors are found singing and dancing with Pre-K students, but if you happen to be at J. J. Harris Elementary School on a weekday morning, you will find Dr. Bob Capuozzo doing just that. “Dr. Bob,” as he is known at the school, is both a Professor-in-Residence (PIR) and a clinical assistant professor in the department of educational theory and practice Early Childhood Program.

Since he began working as a PIR in 2014, leading Pre-K children in singing circles is one of the activities Capuozzo most enjoys at J. J. Harris. “Singing offers huge benefits to kids, especially for social and emotional development. Many children at J. J. Harris are English Language Learners and singing helps them develop their language skills. I also incorporate Spanish songs to value their home language and encourage non-Spanish speakers to learn it,” he explained.

Capuozzo is a former Pre-K teacher—he taught in Eugene, OR and at a Child Development Center on the Ohio University campus, where he earned both his B.A. and M.A. degrees. After earning his Ph.D. at Arizona State University, he was on the faculty at the University of Alaska for six years before joining the COE faculty in 2013.

During his first year at UGA, Capuozzo supervised teacher candidates at J. J. Harris and got to know Dr. Lew Allen, the PIR at the time. He got a great feeling about the school and enjoyed working on-site. When Allen retired in May 2014, Capuozzo felt ready to take on the role of PIR and is now finishing his second year.

“His involvement with our Pre-K children and teachers is particularly inspiring.”
-Principal Xernona Thomas

Capuozzo wears many hats in the PIR role. In addition to leading Pre-K singing circles three days a week, he supervises a group of student teachers and Block 2 students on-site each semester, serves on the school’s School Improvement Leadership Team, brings...
Dr. Bob Capuozzo leads a singing circle with Ms. Sarah Bowan’s Pre-K class at J. J. Harris Elementary. Photo credit: Chad Osburn

in UGA resources to support professional learning, and facilitates communication and planning between mentor teachers and teacher candidates, including leading co-teaching “pairs” workshops and assisting with pre-planning activities. One semester he also taught an integrated curriculum course on-site.

“Principal Thomas welcomes me into everything going on in the school, so there are many opportunities for me to play different roles,” Capuozzo said.

Capuozzo is particularly pleased that the UGA early childhood majors he introduced to J. J. Harris in their first semester (Block 1) in fall 2014 are now completing their student teaching at the school, having spent two years involved with J. J. Harris.

“Dr. Bob’s students are truly a part of our school family. Having the same UGA students here for two years has been a huge asset to J. J. Harris. I also appreciate all that Dr. Bob does as a PIR—his involvement with our Pre-K children and teachers is particularly inspiring,” explained Principal Xernona Thomas.

Another of Capuozzo’s passions is encouraging fathers to become more involved with their children’s learning. “Kids do better in school when their fathers are involved,” he said. At J.J. Harris last September, Capuozzo organized a “Reading is a Kick” night for dads and students at the school. At the pasta dinner he organized with his UGA students, Capuozzo spoke with fathers about the importance of literacy, and then the UGA women’s soccer team led a lively soccer clinic for the families. He also organized free transportation for families to a UGA women’s soccer game.

Capuozzo is also actively involved with Professional Development Schools at the national level. This March, Capuozzo was a member of four presentation teams at the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) conference in Washington, D.C.

Looking ahead, Capuozzo said he looks forward to continuing as a PIR because he really enjoys getting to know the children and preparing UGA students for teaching in the school context. He has developed very good relationships with mentor teachers, and in the future hopes to expand PDS support for mentor teachers. He’s excited that Principal Thomas is focusing her dissertation on mentoring and looks forward to working with her on developing mentor teacher support and resources that could be used across the PDSD.

Dr. Bob Capuozzo regularly meets with J.J. Harris Elementary Instructional Coach Melissa Graham (left) and Principal Xernona Thomas (right). Photo credit: Chad Osburn

NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT
Megan Ernst has worked for the Office of School Engagement since spring semester, 2015. She graduates this summer with an MAT in Secondary Social Studies Education, so we asked her to reflect on her experience working with the PDSD.

In the spring of 2015, Megan, a UGA Foundation Fellow, graduated from UGA with a BA in political science, an ABJ in Public Affairs Journalism, and a Master’s of Public Administration. She participated in the Honors program, and was also a Roosevelt Fellow. Her passion for education was ignited, however, during her freshman year when she began to volunteer with a program called Whatever It Takes (WIT) at UGA. This organization, along with Whatever It Takes Athens, sought to bring all the relevant organizations to the table to create a community support network focused on getting all students ready for post-secondary education and careers.

She loved tutoring kids and collaborating with dedicated people who were developing ways for all children to be successful, but she was shocked to learn that not everyone had the seamless support system from which she had benefited. This realization, that not all school experiences are equitable, influenced her studies, and continues to drive her today.

As a senior, she researched the topics of “summer slide,” education equity, and university-school partnerships through the Roosevelt Scholars’ policy analysis class. The resulting white paper was published through the Roosevelt Institute, and eventually informed Camp DIVE (Discover, Inquire, Voice, and Explore), a partnership among the Clarke County School District (CCSD), the UGA College of Education, and the Athens-Clarke County community. The purpose of Camp DIVE, which will be piloted in June, is to provide an engaging and enriching summer experience for CCSD students in grades K-8.

This semester, Megan has been student teaching at Cedar Shoals High School as part of her MAT program in Secondary Social Studies Education. This experience has given her the opportunity to see the PDSD partnership from both sides. She said, “I am constantly amazed by the support offered through the PDS model. It is one of the many reasons I hope to work in Clarke County schools. The ‘public administrator’ in me enjoys seeing the PDS from the back end – understanding how the partnership functions and all the near-miraculous ways people and resources come together to support our schools and our students. And as a student teacher at Cedar Shoals, it’s been incredibly helpful to have professors and mentors and administrators who work together to support my development as a teacher.”

In addition to assisting with Camp DIVE this summer, Megan will participate in a month-long Summer Institute at Georgetown University to intensively study the foundations of the Constitution. She would love to return to Athens to teach high school social studies. Wherever she goes, she will help her students develop their sense of self and place in the world and in history and prepare them to lead fulfilled lives.

EllaRose Millsap, a student at Classic City High School, wrote about her math teacher Tiffany Knight in her winning essay. Ms. Knight “goes out of her way to remind us of how much she believes in us… We relate to her on a personal level because she listens when we speak and helps us solve problems.”

PDSD Professor-in-Residence, Dr. Sara Kajder, also provided support and expertise for the contest. Her English Education graduate students served as judges, with each essay being read by five students. “The students were so engaged in doing this work,” Kajder said.

Although the contest is over, Jasia is not finished with her bullying prevention activities for the year. She is currently helping facilitate a student-led bullying prevention group, the Gladiator Bully Stoppers, at Clarke Central High School, along with Raczyński.

In the meantime, Jasia hopes that the publicity surrounding the contest will inspire teachers and students alike. Shawn Hinger, a Clarke Middle School Media Specialist who was nominated in the contest, said of the essays, “I think these would be good for all teachers to read. You don’t even realize what you do as part of your normal work can make such an impression.”

Essay Contest Award Winners

Middle School Level
Nominating Student: Jimena Somilleda; Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School
Nominated Adult: Laura Porter; Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary School

High School Level
Nominating Student: EllaRose Millsap; Classic City High School
Nominated Adult: Tiffany Knight; Classic City High School

Special Recognition Award Winners
Leading By Example Award: Melanie Sigler, Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School
Making a Difference Award: Jamie Hogan, Burney-Harris-Lyons Middle School
Student Compassion Award: Rosevin Nimely, Classic City High School

www.coe.uga.edu/ose
According to the Dream School Initiative, Hilsman Middle School desired students who were, “excited about learning” and were, “inquisitive, goal-oriented, and take responsibility for their learning and their actions.” Additionally, a goal was for students to be “so excited about what they are learning in their classrooms that they rarely ask to leave class for fear they will miss something great.” With a background in gifted education, I decided to find a way to connect the International Baccalaureate (IB) program that was already being implemented in all CCSD Middle Schools with the work of Dr. Joseph Renzulli’s School-wide Enrichment Model (SEM) Enrichment Clusters to address these initiatives.

As a gifted teacher at Fowler Drive Elementary School, I had already facilitated the implementation of Enrichment Clusters with the support of Dr. Katherine Brown at J.J. Harris Elementary School. Enrichment Clusters, in which students spend one hour a week paired with peers who share similar interests and solve a real world problem related to their interest, is a way to provide all students with learning opportunities that promote choice, ownership, collaboration, mentorship, and the production of a product or service that impacted a real-world problem. I thought that Enrichment Clusters, renamed “IB Enrichment Academies” for Hilsman, had the potential to create student-driven learning environments.

I met with the principal of Hilsman, Dr. Selena Blankenship, the IB Program Coordinator, Cyndi Clark, and a gifted teacher, Teresa Johns, to gain a better understanding of the vision for the school. Dr. Kathy Thompson and Dr. Gayle Andrews. Classes were held on-site at Hilsman Middle School, and our coursework was designed to make sense of the school’s Dream School Initiative, which included the school’s goals developed by the administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community partners. My responsibility was to design a service-learning project, which included social equity, high student engagement, democratic learning, and building strong relationships between all stakeholders.

The result of my project was that this year Hilsman Middle School included IB Enrichment Academies as a creativity initiative in their School Improvement Plan. Teachers participated in professional learning, which encouraged them to select academy topics that were related to their own interests. Every student then had the opportunity to choose an academy based on their interests and was paired with a teacher that shared the same interest. A few of the academy topics included woodworking, yoga, cooking, Humane Society, Harry Potter, coding, survival skills, karaoke, crochet, reading rooms, guitar, and wealth and management.

As the newsletter goes to press, the school is currently finishing up their first eight-week cycle of Enrichment Academies and is planning an end of academy celebration in which all of the students will be able to share their work with each other. IB Coordinator Cyndi Clark, is enthusiastic, saying, “The learning experiences the students are having in Enrichment Academies are translating into their academic and personal lives. Today alone, one student showed the book she had started writing in her reading academy, another showed me what she had completed through her crocheting academy. Plus, they are able to utilize and connect their academic studies to their enrichment academies. This is our first year—but we plan to continue!”
Our Purpose:
The Office of School Engagement at the University of Georgia serves as a bridge between the worlds of theory and practice in P–16 public education to improve the educational experiences of students and the professional lives of educators.

New PDSD Website: http://pdsdpartnership.com
The Professional Development School District (PDSD) has launched a new website! Please visit http://pdsdpartnership.com. You’ll find information about our PDS Workshop, Professors-in-Residence, School-based PDS activities, links to PDSD publications, and much more!

Professional Development Schools Workshop 2016
Forming Sustainable School District & University Partnerships

Workshop Information
Tues, October 25, 2016
Time: 8 a.m.–4 p.m.
Location: Georgia Museum of Art
Athens, GA
Price: $150 on or before September 16, 2016
$175 after September 16, 2016
For more information, please visit www.coe.edu/events to register or contact Melanie Baer, Program Coordinator, University of Georgia College of Education, mbaer@uga.edu.

In this one-day workshop, faculty and administrators from the University of Georgia College of Education and Clarke County School District will lead participant teams through Professional Development School (PDS) visits (pre-K through 12th grade) and working sessions on how to build sustainable partnerships, create a model that serves both institutions, and maximize the benefits of PDSs for all stakeholders. Participant teams are encouraged to include both school district members (principals, teachers, administrators) and university teacher educators.

Please share with your colleagues ~ we hope you will join us!