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Math Hall and Ball: Math Enrichment and Acceleration Through a University-School Partnership

Guest Authors: Jessa Luckey, Doctoral Student, and Tarek Grantham, Ph.D, Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Gifted & Creative Education

Origins of Math Hall and Ball

Math Hall and Ball was conceptualized by **Dr. Tarek Grantham**, professor in the department of educational psychology, when he worked as a middle school teacher and mentor program sponsor. His concern about the under-representation of African American students in advanced programs, particularly males in advanced foreign language and math classes, inspired him to create a *Study Hall and Ball* activity as part of the Kappa League mentoring program he directed.

A primary goal of the *Study Hall and Ball* activity was to promote high levels of achievement and academic engagement in culturally relevant ways. Dr. Grantham recruited African American male college students to provide academic tutoring for middle school African American males for one hour (study hall) and for the second hour, they played basketball. The success of *Study Hall and Ball* inspired the creation and piloting of *Math Hall and Ball* (MHB) program at H.B. Stroud Elementary School in the Clarke County School District.

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Study of 2 elementary schools identifies “key practices” that advance PDS work

Dr. Jori Hall, associate professor in the qualitative research program in the department of lifelong education, administration, and policy, recently completed a study entitled “A Tale of Two Professional Development Schools: Judia Jackson Elementary School and Fowler Drive Elementary School.”

The purpose of Hall’s research was to examine the practices and procedures used to implement the Professional Development School (PDS) model, the challenges and sources of support for PDSD collaboration, stakeholders’ perceptions of the PDS, the PDS’s influence on organizational culture and recommendations for improvement.



Dr. Jori Hall, associate professor in the department of lifelong education, administration, and policy.

“Schools are often portrayed quantitatively rather than qualitatively. The goal of this research was to tell our own story our own way as a ‘counter narrative’. It tells schools’ stories in a respectful way that shares peoples’ voices,” Hall explained.

At Fowler Drive Elementary, the study found the key practices that advance PDS goals include:

- Co-teaching between mentor and UGA pre-service teachers
- Positive interactions among Fowler students and teachers (pre-service and mentor)
- Pre-service teachers embraced by mentors as educators

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Masthead photo caption: **Dr. Tarek Grantham** leads H.B. Stroud Elementary School students in math enrichment activities during the Math Hall and Ball program. Photo credit: Kristen Morales

Study of 2 elementary schools identifies “key practices” that advance PDS work

At J. J. Harris Elementary, key practices that advance PDS goals include:

- Multiple adults in classrooms to enhance student learning
- Inclusive professional learning (mentors and pre-service teachers learning together)

The study found that both schools shared the same three important sources of support for PDS goals at the school. These include the vital role of Professors-in-Residence (PIRs) to strengthen partnership work, professional learning for all educators, and strong peer-initiated support among UGA pre-service teachers.

One important insight that emerged from the study, according to Hall, is that the UGA and CCSD partnership is composed of sub-partnerships, such as the principal and PIR partnership and the partnership between the teacher candidates doing their practicum and the teacher candidates doing student teaching. “The sub-partnerships within the larger partnership are how all the work gets done,” she said.

Recommendations for improvement from the study include maintaining strong communication among mentor teacher, pre-service teacher, and COE faculty; aligning pre-service teacher experiences and the school curriculum; and supporting mentor teachers. J. J. Harris Elementary began the process of providing additional support for mentor teachers during the later phases of the study.

Hall’s qualitative study used a multiple case study design. With support from the Office of School Engagement, she collected data in spring 2015 through interviews with key stakeholders (principals, PIRs), focus groups with pre-service and mentor teachers, and document analysis, including written responses from fifth grade students from both case study schools.

Hall expressed gratitude for the schools’ collaboration throughout the research process. Principals **Xernona Thomas** (J. J. Harris) and **Anissa Johnson** (Fowler Drive), as well as Professors-in-Residence **Bob Capuozzo** (J. J. Harris) and **Beth Tolley** (Fowler Drive) were supportive partners and trusted her approach. The principals and PIRs co-presented with Hall about the research at two National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) conferences.

Hall shared the study findings with both schools in February and plans to submit an article for publication in early summer. “I will continue to push to bring visibility to partnership work—I am committed to it. I encourage people to make use



Fowler Drive Elementary School was one of the two PDS schools in Clarke County that was involved in the research study.

of the findings,” she emphasized.

According to PIR Bob Capuozzo, “The Tale of Two Schools study confirms our commitment to partnership work in the education of children, teacher candidates, and in the professional development of certified teachers while also reminding us of the work still needed to improve our school.”

In conducting the study, Hall said she learned that the peer to peer support that UGA teacher candidates give each other during their field experiences and student teaching emerged as an interesting theme that she would like to explore further.

“The sub-partnerships within the larger partnership are how all the work gets done.”
-Dr. Jori Hall

This study follows other PDS-related research that Hall conducted between 2009-2011. Soon after she joined the UGA faculty in August 2008, she and **Dr. Melissa Freeman** became involved with J. J. Harris Elementary when the school opened as the the first PDS school in the partnership. They studied the idea of “collective capacity” and “internal accountability,” and conducted focus groups with J. J. Harris students and community members. They also examined the role of the PIR, **Dr. Lew Allen**, and discovered that the PIR is the “central link” in a PDS school. Two articles related to this research were published in *The American Journal of Evaluation* (articles are posted on: pdsdpartnership.com).

PDS Updates

The Professional Development School District (PDS) has a new logo!



**Professional
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New videos highlight the different aspects of the PDS partnership.

Please visit: pdsdpartnership.com/news-and-events/videos

Action Research: Examining Mentor Teacher Needs

Guest writer: Xernona Thomas, Principal, J. J. Harris Elementary School



As principal of Judia Jackson Harris Elementary, I began the process of exploring the needs of our mentor teachers as part of my doctoral research. I had engaged in many conversations with **Dr. Bob Capuzzo**, our Professor-in-Residence, and others about how to address concerns expressed by mentor teachers. Throughout the course of our PDS relationship with the University of Georgia, teachers have talked about the

benefits as well as the frustrations of hosting pre-service candidates. As an administrative team, we had made many assumptions regarding ways to improve our structure in order to better support mentors. However, we had not engaged in a formalized process to capture the voices of mentors and to work collaboratively to identify ways to improve our work. The opportunity to initiate an action research project aimed at improving mentor commitment and efficacy was an exciting option for our administrative team.

Judia Jackson Harris teachers and administrators and UGA faculty chose to collaborate on an action research case study designed to improve mentoring experiences of teachers by examining correlations between mentor teacher efficacy and mentor preparation and engagement. Despite the many benefits of hosting pre-service candidates, classroom teachers are sometimes apprehensive regarding student placements due to challenges that they face. School and university leaders are cognizant of this potential reluctance to mentor and recognize that it can negatively impact teachers' commitment to the PDS partnership.

Sixteen mentor teachers participated in focus groups to identify benefits and barriers to mentoring and to explore effective supports for their role. The action research planning team examined mentor teacher responses in order to ascertain what professional learning was needed to increase efficacy for mentoring. Based on our findings, the team decided on a blended model of support which combined a day-long seminar and additional monthly community of practice sessions during 2016-17.

The summer 2016 seminar, led by UGA professors **Drs. Ronald Cervero, Janna Dresden** and **Kathy Thompson**, addressed the roles and responsibilities of mentors, instructional supervision and principles of adult learning. The subsequent four monthly sessions were facilitated by **Dr. Jim Garrett** and were designed to increase teacher comfort with courageous conversations.

Teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with the professional learning that they received. A significant learning expressed by all participants related to an understanding of the continuum of

professional growth. Drs. Cervero and Dresden presented literature on the novice to expert continuum and encouraged participants to frame pre-service candidates as "adults in waiting". This new knowledge was not only enlightening for participants, but also served as the impetus for future conversations focused on how to establish reasonable expectations for performance.

One of the participants captured the importance of the adult learning session by saying, "Essentially you think, oh, the teacher candidates have been through these classes. They know something...I failed to realize at times, wait, no, they're just at the beginning stages of their career, which I knew, but it's like that was more apparent. So then you craft your constructive feedback to meet them where they are."

The community of practice model of professional learning provided teachers with a safe space to share best practices and challenges in the area of mentoring. Participants referred to the sessions as "therapeutic" and welcomed the opportunity to learn vicariously from each other. Dr. Garrett's direct, yet supportive prompts challenged teachers to be reflective about their roles and responsibilities as mentors.

As members of the action research team, teachers and administrators were able to engage in the collective process of inquiry as a tool to improve practice and to strengthen the PDS partnership.

Other study findings from the research were that mentoring instills a sense of professional accountability to exemplary practice and reflection; a mentor's lack of confidence with having critical conversations can hinder mentoring relationships; mentors need a foundational understanding of principles of teaching adults in order to effectively enact their roles; and the communities of practice model supports the collective sharing of needs, experiences, and resources.

Xernona Thomas speaks about her experience as the principal of a PDS school (J. J. Harris Elementary) at the PDS Workshop in October 2015. Photo credit: Justin Evans



PDSD Clarke County Administrator Profile

Dr. Mark Tavernier

Associate Superintendent for Instructional Services and School Performance

This article is the first in a series of profiles of Clarke County School District educators who play a role in the Professional Development School District. This follows 10 profiles of UGA College of Education Professors-in-Residence (see previous OSE newsletters).

Growing up near Kalamazoo, Michigan, **Dr. Mark Tavernier** “always knew” he would become an educator. He became the first person in his family to graduate from college (Olivet College) and then went on to earn three advanced degrees. His varied career in education brought him to the Clarke County School District (CCSD) 11 years ago where he is currently in his third year as Associate Superintendent for Instructional Services and School Performance. In this role, he serves as the primary administrator who supports and leads the Professional Development School District (PDS) partnership for the school district, while **Dr. Janna Dresden**, Director of the Office of the School Engagement, serves as his counterpart for the UGA College of Education.

Dr. Denise Spangler, UGA College of Education Senior Associate Dean, and **Dr. Mark Tavernier** enjoy the PDS’s 5 Year Anniversary Celebration Dinner last April at Trumps restaurant. Photo credit: Justin Evans



“I like the fact that the PDS work is always changing and evolving—nothing is static. We’re always trying to move the work to the next level. At the end of the day, it’s about the kids and providing experiences for kids.”

-Dr. Mark Tavernier

Tavernier has been involved in the PDS work from the beginning of the UGA-CCSD partnership. In 2008, he served on the planning team for J. J. Harris Elementary, CCSD’s first Professional Development School. At the time he was serving as Director of Teaching and Learning, which he did for 8 years.

“I like the fact that the PDS work is always changing and evolving—nothing is static. We’re always trying to move the work to the next level. At the end of the day, it’s about the kids and providing experiences for kids,” he explained.

From 2009 to 2017, Tavernier along with other PDS leaders, supported the growth of the partnership from one school to a district-wide partnership with all 21 schools involved at varying levels. Tavernier attributes this growth to relationships and trust. “Each partner

values the other’s expertise, and there is trust on both sides so that despite all the personnel changes, we have created a structure that can be sustained,” he said.

One of the most powerful parts of the partnership is the opportunity that CCSD students have to interact with UGA students on a daily basis, according to Tavernier. He is also excited about the job-embedded professional learning offered by UGA Professors-in-Residence, such **Dr. Lou Tolosa-Casadont’s** support in Dual Language Immersion classrooms at Oglethorpe Avenue Elementary.

Tavernier has been a member of the PDS Executive Committee since the group was created in 2011. The committee meets monthly to guide and inform the PDS. Tavernier believes that the work of the Executive Committee has deepened over time. “We now strengthen and broaden the work of the PDS,” he said. “We spend time looking at qualitative data and identify trends and areas where we need to ask additional questions.” Committee members include three CCSD representatives (Superintendent and two Associate Superintendents) and three College of Education representatives (Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Director of the Office of School Engagement, and Director of PreK-12 Educator Preparation).

He is appreciative of **Interim Superintendent Jack Parish**, who is currently serving on the Executive Committee. Since Parish was formerly an Associate Dean at the College of Education, he has “seen both sides of the work,” according to Tavernier, which helps inform the direction for the PDS.



Tavernier believes the biggest challenge for the PDS partnership is the time needed to meet and plan, because when work is done between two large institutions, it requires additional coordination.

Tavernier supports teachers and administrators' involvement in the PDS by providing funding for them to present at National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) conferences and encouraging them to participate in annual PDS Co-Teaching Workshops and other PDS professional learning opportunities. He has also been instrumental in developing and supporting Experience UGA (a PreK-12th grade field trip program to UGA's campus) and Camp DIVE (a program to prevent summer learning loss), two initiatives which grew out of the PDS partnership.

A new CCSD superintendent was named in early April, so the PDS is in a time of transition. Tavernier is hopeful that the new superintendent will not only value the work, but also help to expand it. "Though our partnership with UGA began with the College of Education, it has grown to include other units at UGA, such as the College of Public Health. There is potential for us to continue to evolve to address targeted needs that we have," he said.

In addition to supporting the PDS, Tavernier oversees the work of eight CCSD offices and departments, including special education, assessment, federal programs, and early learning, among others.

Dr. Mark Tavernier is a member of the PDS Executive Committee, which meets monthly to guide the direction of the PDS. Current members of the Executive Committee include (left to right): **Dr. Janna Dresden**, **Dr. Jack Parish**, **Dr. Mark Tavernier**, **Dr. Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett**, and **Dr. Paige Tompkins** (not pictured: **Dr. Sherri Freeman**).



Dr. Mark Tavernier shares stories from his own experience as a student teacher at the UGA reception honoring Clarke County School District mentor teachers last May.

Prior to coming to CCSD, Tavernier held many different roles as an educator in Virginia, including Director of English Language Arts and teacher of English at all levels--elementary, middle, and high school. He earned his Master's degree from Old Dominion, his Ed.S. degree at George Washington University, and his Ed.D. degree from Virginia Tech.



Thirty-five educators from PDS and PDSD present at annual NAPDS conference in Washington, D.C.

The 2017 National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) conference was held March 9-11 in Washington, DC. The Professional Development School District Partnership (PDSD) was once again well represented, with thirty-five participants from UGA and the Clarke County School District. The group ranged from undergraduate teacher candidates in the middle grades program, to teachers at J.J. Harris and Howard B. Stroud Elementary Schools and Hilsman Middle School, to principals, UGA faculty members and graduate students. In all, members of the PDSD gave twenty-one presentations.

It has become an annual tradition to gather for a meal to collectively share impressions and 'takeaways' from the conference. This year's conference in particular made a significant impact on those who attended and shared reflections at the group dinner. For some, the conference served as a re-affirmation that they are moving in the right direction and having a real impact on children. **Dr. Beth Tolley**, Professor-in-Residence at Fowler Drive Elementary School, was reminded "that we are doing the right thing for our kids. It's all organic and it's not always the same from school to school."

Others were inspired by the passion and dedication of their colleagues, both from our own PDSD and from those around the country. Many were reminded that PDS work is not easy and requires continual learning. Doctoral student **Sarah Marie Catalana** pointed out that "everyone here does what they love," and **Dr. Gayle Andrews**, co-Professor-in-Residence at Hilsman Middle School, said, "I'm full of gratitude for the work I get to do."



A group of eleven UGA faculty, graduate students, undergraduate teacher candidates (middle grades program), and Hilsman Middle School teachers were among those who presented at the 2017 NAPDS annual conference in Washington, D.C. Pictured front row (L to R); **Lyric Maze, Alayna Hoag, Emily Smith**; 2nd Row: **Gayle Andrews, Meganne Skinner, Kathy Thompson, Heather Skelton, Darby Smith, Brooke Madsen**; 3rd row: **Conor Naughton, Matt Moulton**.

For many of the undergraduate teacher candidates who attended, presenting at a national conference was a new experience. They now have a deeper understanding of partnership work, and also an appreciation for the opportunity to complete their student teaching at a PDS school. They were thrilled to be taken seriously by other professionals as they shared their experiences about Genius Hour at Hilsman Middle School.

For the graduate students and professors who had worked with them throughout their program, it was a proud moment to see them growing into confident educators. **Dr. Tarek Grantham** (featured on p.7) realized how far the work at H.B. Stroud Elementary had progressed when he proudly watched his graduate students present their research and move from being mentored to mentoring each other.

Dr. Janna Dresden, Office of School Engagement Director, summed up everyone's feelings when she shared a comment from the NAPDS membership meeting: "We are one of the only professions that hold democracy in our hands. We educate the future and are most successful when we lift each other up."

OSE GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Melissa Baker

Congratulations, **Melissa Baker**, the 2016-17 Office of School Engagement (OSE) graduate assistant, will graduate from the UGA College of Education this May with a Ph.D. in Middle Grades Education, and we asked her to reflect on her time working with the PDSD.

Melissa has a bachelor's degree in English from Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, PA, and an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Tampa. She taught middle grades English in Tampa and came to UGA specifically to enter the Ph.D. program in Middle Grades Education. This brought her in contact with **Dr. Gayle Andrews** and **Dr. Kathy Thompson**, co-Professors-in-Residence at Hilsman Middle School. As part of her graduate program, she assisted them on a project describing middle grades teacher candidate experiences at PDS and non-PDS middle schools. Later, her

work in Andrews' and Thompson's graduate level on-site service-learning course led to her dissertation research, which examines the supports and barriers to family engagement across the transition from elementary school to middle school.

After graduation, Melissa is excited to join the middle level education faculty at the University of South Carolina, where she will be a clinical





Math Hall and Ball: Math Enrichment and Acceleration Through a University-School Partnership

—continued from front

Photo Caption: During the basketball portion of the Math Hall and Ball program, H. B. Stroud Elementary School students gain team building and basketball skills with coaching from **Dr. Tarek Grantham**. Photo credit: Kristen Morales

MHB Partnership and Goals

MHB was formed as a component of University-School Partnerships for Achievement, Rigor, and Creativity Project (U-SPARC), a partnership with Stroud Elementary School that is co-directed by Dr. Grantham and **Dr. Meg Hines**, faculty in the department of educational psychology. Dr. Grantham collaborated with administrators, teachers and parents to support school improvement goals at Stroud and to create a space where university faculty and students can work together and serve as math coaches to promote math talent development. MHB began in Spring 2015 with the goals to: 1. increase students' motivation to learn and achieve in math, 2. cultivate positive bonds among students who can support each other's positive math scholar identity, and 3. increase students' self-awareness of math abilities and their desire to engage in rigorous math experiences.

Math Hall and Ball in Action

MHB began with 5th grade boys, and has now expanded to 4th and 5th grade boys and girls. Stroud classroom teachers use a Math Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors (TABs) referral tool (Grantham, 2016) to help MHB coaches identify students for the program who demonstrate high potential in mathematics. In addition, students' grades are taken into account along with their ability to work independently and to receive constructive feedback.

MHB involves a variety of curricular resources to enrich and accelerate students in math. MHB participants meet during extended learning time and after school, and they use online tools--such as IXL, Khan Academy, and the Georgia Virtual School, to practice on-grade level skills, to participate in mini-math lessons, and to engage in math competitions focusing on mastery, speed and accuracy. They also engage in enrichment lessons and practice with above grade level math concepts, which constitute the acceleration portion of the program.

After 45-60 minutes of math enrichment and acceleration in the computer lab, MHB participants transition to the gymnasium where they engage in basketball drills and hone their team building skills through scrimmages and other fun basketball activities.

References:

Grantham, T.C. (2016). Stroud Pilot Math Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors (TABs) Descriptions for Math Enrichment & Acceleration Student Referral Form (Abbreviated). Torrance Center for Creativity and Talent Development. University of Georgia, Athens, GA.

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assistant professor. USC has had a long-standing PDS network, so Melissa will be able to continue partnership work. She will be teaching an undergraduate integrated curriculum class on-site and will begin a PDS partnership with Fulmer Middle School in West Columbia, SC. Melissa believes that her background in PDS work, especially the

depth and immersion she was afforded in the UGA-Clarke County PDS, led directly to her faculty position. "So many universities are now looking for faculty to work with PDS schools, and I was leaps and bounds ahead of any other candidate because of my experience," she said. And it all started with an on-site class!



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Office of School Engagement
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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.

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www.coe.uga.edu/ose

Professional Development Schools Workshop **2017**

Forming Sustainable School District & University Partnerships

Workshop Information

Tuesday, October 24, 2017

Time: 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

Location: Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA

Price: \$150 on or before September 15, 2017
\$175 after September 15, 2017

For more information, please visit www.coe.uga.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 educators. Please share with your colleagues. We hope you will join us!



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