For much of the 2019 fall semester, I had the privilege of listening to you, our stakeholders, regarding your strengths and areas for growth. From meeting with leadership teams, conversations with teachers, and connecting with community stakeholders like the Boys and Girls Club of Statesboro and First District RESA, we were able to identify three areas to expand and enhance the College of Education’s partnership work. Those three areas are: Literacy, Teacher Recruitment and Retention, and Supporting Social-Emotional Needs of Students.

In addition to providing information related to these three areas, this update will share some of the other outreach work in the College and culminates with a list of Georgia Southern faculty and areas of expertise to offer as you begin planning your professional development needs for the 2020-21 academic year.

Also, we know your needs may have shifted due to our “new normal” as we move through the COVID pandemic. Please don’t hesitate to reach out!

Dr. Alisa Leckie
Assistant Dean for Partnerships and Outreach
aleckie@georgiasouthern.edu
One of the new features in our Partnership and Outreach website is a brief article highlighting the work faculty are doing with our school and community partners. We have titled this Voices from the Field, and our first featured faculty member is Dr. Sally Brown, our Reading Program Director.

Voices from the Field

Dr. Sally Brown has been conducting research at an elementary school in Savannah-Chatham School System for the last ten years. Currently, she is working with three amazing first grade teachers and their brilliant students. Dr. Brown spends two days each week at the school teaching reading and writing lessons in three classrooms. The students are listening to stories and utilizing tablet technologies to craft multimodal reader responses. Each student has the opportunity to increase their reading comprehension through rich literature discussions in small groups as well as to become young composers. The digital writing samples that students produce are being used to develop a multimodal writing assessment for young children. This new assessment values the strengths of each child as opposed to starting from a deficit perspective where one notes everything the child cannot do. In addition, Dr. Brown is partnering with another elementary school in Savannah-Chatham to implement a service-learning grant, Understanding Myself, Others, and My World. The second-grade students are taking home book bags filled with rich, multicultural texts to read with their families. The books are specifically selected to help students see the value in their own culture and family practices while learning to value others’ ways of seeing the world. Students receive paper and markers to create personal responses to the literature. Their work is featured in school hallways for everyone to see. The students are very excited about their home experiences with these books and look forward to having their work celebrated. Parents will join the second graders for a literacy celebration connecting the worlds of home and school.

TEENS FOR LITERACY™ Expansion

TEENS FOR LITERACY™ Expansion: TEENS FOR LITERACY™ was originally developed by former Armstrong faculty member Dr. Alan Berger and has three goals: (1) allow students to take ownership of improving the reading and writing skills of themselves and others; (2) encourage students to pursue education and growing professionally after high school; and (3) to have students consider teaching as a profession by working with younger students in the school. For several years now, Armstrong Campus faculty members Drs. Anne Katz and Linda Ann McCall have worked with teachers and students at East Broad, Hubert Middle and Isle of Hope K-8 school to engage in a variety of literacy activities. We will be offering professional development sessions in the fall that will give teachers some ideas and resources to help them begin a TEENS FOR LITERACY™ framework at their schools.
Literacy Bus Donations

Dr. Ansley Rogers coordinated the donation of close to 100 books for the Evans County Literacy bus. She worked with Parent Mentor, Amanda Locke, to make sure books got to the bus and in the hands of students across Evans County. Dr. Rogers has another set of books ready for the Bulloch County Literacy bus that she plans to bring to them when classes resume in the fall.

Literacy Grant for Mill Creek Elementary in Bulloch County

Dr. Elizabeth Prosser, in collaboration with Bulloch County Schools, was awarded a $10,000 Summer Literacy Mini-Grant from the Georgia Department of Education. Grant funds will be used to order books that will be gifted to rising third grade students at Mill Creek Elementary who are reading below grade level – approximately 40 students. These books will also support the Step Forward with Reading summer program designed by Dr. Prosser.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

New Teacher Survive and Thrive Summit

We recognize that the first few years of teaching can be challenging for teachers, so in collaboration with our school partners, Drs. Michelle Reidel, Kitty Crawford and Catherine Howarter along with faculty members Heather Huling and April Newkirk are leading efforts to put together a one-day summit for both teachers new to the classroom as well as our College’s teacher candidates in the final year of their program. Experienced educators from across the region have developed sessions focusing on building relationships, classroom management, using data to grow learners, and personal well-being. We are looking forward to the exchange of expertise and enthusiasm that will support our new teachers. More details to come in the fall.

“All Hands on Deck” at DeRenne Middle School

DeRenne Middle School, like many high-needs schools in our region and across the country, has a large number of new and inexperienced teachers in a challenging teaching context. In order to support these teachers, Drs. Calvin Walton, Kymberly Harris and Allison Jackson spent extra time at DeRenne throughout the spring semester. They helped with lesson pacing, student engagement and positive behavior supports. Further, through funds generated by the National Youth-at-Risk conference, the College of Education was able to partially support an additional Chromebook lab and Chromebooks for several teachers. Dr. Mete Akcaoglu provided professional development on ways to meaningfully integrate technology into instruction. Teachers developed and shared technology-infused lesson plans. This additional support will continue at DeRenne Middle throughout the upcoming academic year as well. It is our belief that if we support new and inexperienced teachers in high-needs schools, we can keep them in those schools.

Edcamp 2020

Georgia Southern’s participant-driven collaborative professional develop day for educators in the region will be back this fall! We have a tentative date of August 29th and will share registration information soon.
Support for Teachers in High Needs Schools

With the support of a College of Education National Youth-at-Risk grant, Drs. Ellen Whitford and Regina Rahimi are coordinating a series of professional development sessions for teachers at Hodge Elementary School. Sessions will include: trauma-informed practices in elementary schools, having high expectations for students in high poverty schools, teacher wellness, co-teaching and writing across the curriculum. Drs. Rahimi, Walker-DeVose, Walton, Wells, Cleveland, and Howerton will each provide sessions and follow up activities with teachers throughout the school year. Drs. Whitford and Rahimi will be analyzing the impact of the professional development on teacher actions and student achievement to possibly replicate at other high-needs schools.

Expansion of our Professional Development Schools (PDS)

Georgia Southern currently has two PDS sites, Hesse K-8 School in Chatham County and Richmond Hill High School in Bryan County. A PDS approach goes beyond our traditional partnership structure of placing students at schools to include providing professional development for teachers at the site as well as engaging in research related to program effectiveness and school initiatives. Under the direction of Dr. Ellen Whitford, we are excited to announce three new PDS sites beginning in the 2020-21 academic year: Hodge Elementary in Chatham County, as well as Langston Chapel Elementary and Langston Chapel Middle in Bulloch County.

SUPPORTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS

Trauma-informed Education Symposium

On August 4, we will be hosting a symposium bringing together regional experts and community resources to provide educators information about working with and supporting students who have experienced trauma. In collaboration with Lizann Roberts from the Coastal Georgia Indicators Coalition and under the direction of Drs. Regina Rahimi, Delores Liston, and Amee Adkins from Georgia Southern and Dr. Vanessa Veneer from SCCPSS, approximately 100 teachers and counselors will participate in professional development and also create plans for engaging in trauma-informed educational practices in their school settings.
Restorative Discipline in Rural Schools

There is increasing support for a holistic discipline approach that can enhance social and emotional learning in students and staff as well as address misbehavior when it occurs. Restorative Discipline Practices offers such an approach by placing value on personal change rather than compliance. RD is a differentiated approach that builds a cohesive community and positive school climate, acknowledges the importance of relationship building and value systems in community, promotes healthy decision-making, promotes healing, and fills the wellness gap in current discipline systems. Dr. Juli McBrayer and nationally certified Restorative Discipline expert, Dr. Summer Pannell with the help of the College of Education Research SEED grant, will be working with principals from our region in several counties (Bryan, Bulloch, Candler, Effingham, Evans) provide professional learning as well as to examine the impact of Restorative Discipline Practices in rural school settings.

Behavior Intervention Support in Bulloch County

Drs. Dawn and Jeff Tysinger are collaborating with Bulloch County leaders to develop a screening tool that can help educators identify students with behaviors that are negatively impacting their success in school and in their personal lives that will aide in developing targeted behavior interventions. They will also provide professional development to support use of the screener and design interventions. This work is part of a larger effort to assist Bulloch County leadership as they work to support the social and emotional needs of students most impacted by the pandemic.

THE INSTITUTE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STEM EDUCATION

Under the direction of Dr. Kania Greer, the Institute for Interdisciplinary STEM Education (i²STEM®) at Georgia Southern University has had an exciting year. In addition to attending the Dahlonega Science Festival, Effingham County Family Fall Festival, and CoastFest in Brunswick, GA with the Science-to-Go mobile unit, i²STEM® attended STEM nights in Chatham, Liberty, Effingham, Bryan and Bulloch Counties where they brought STEM to life with hands-on activities to engage students.

The Institute hosted STEMFest on the Statesboro Campus in 2019 and enjoyed seeing students interact with faculty and staff from across the Georgia Southern.
Lastly, the STEM School Outreach lending warehouse has taken off across Bulloch, Liberty, Bryan, Effingham, and Toombs County. Teachers have been utilizing materials such as Van der Graff generators, LEGO Robotics, Arduinos, rocks and minerals, and many other items for use in their classrooms to promote hands-on STEM learning.

i2STEM’s mission is to provide outreach, and they are always looking for new and exciting ways to partner with schools. Please reach out with ideas of how to help serve your students. Stay tuned for exciting events planned for 2020-21 including STEMFest to be held at the Armstrong Campus in Savannah. Visit the Institute’s website for information about the lending warehouse, STEM nights and other STEM activities.

**INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

With our switch to virtual teaching and learning this spring, we all needed to find new ways of engaging our students and collaborating with our colleagues. Our own local experts, Dr. Chuck Hodges, and Dr. Mete Akcaoglu were essential in our success, and as instructors in our instructional technology programs can assist your teachers and administrators in developing their own skills. Additional program information including how to apply for Fall 2020 is available online.

Instructional technologists study how people learn and design instruction using appropriate available technology. Our Georgia Southern University Instructional Technology program provides teachers, media specialists, instructional supervisors, and postsecondary personnel the skills and competence necessary to select and use technology in all its forms. The Instructional Technology program is offered asynchronously, 100% online for maximum flexibility. Our faculty are full-time members of the Georgia Southern University community and national leaders in the field of Instructional Technology.

**We offer:**

- M.Ed. degrees leading to Instructional Technology and/or School Library Media certifications
- Ed.S. degree leading to Instructional Technology certification with possible Online Teaching and Learning Endorsement
- An Online Teaching and Learning Endorsement designed to prepare K-12 teachers to teach in a virtual school environment.

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERTISE**

We have experts from the College of Education and other colleges across the University that are interested in working with K-12 teachers and their students. Below is a list of a few of those faculty members and their areas of expertise. We encourage you to keep us in mind as you consider your professional development needs throughout the upcoming academic year.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Kara Bridgman Sweeney</td>
<td><strong>Learn about Savannah’s Archeological History</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dr. Kara Bridgman Sweeney is an expert on Savannah’s rich archaeological heritage. Teachers will enhance their content knowledge about our region’s history and develop standards-based lessons that engage students and help them think and work like archaeologists and anthropologists. (Grades 3-12)</td>
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<td>Dr. Dan Larkin</td>
<td><strong>Develop Students’ Critical Thinking and Argumentation Skills</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dr. Dan Larkin is an expert in helping teachers develop classroom practices that engage students in rich discussions that challenge students to construct valid arguments. (Grades 6-12)</td>
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<td>Dr. Jason Beck</td>
<td><strong>Economics Education</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dr. Jason Beck is the Center Director for the Georgia Council for Economic Education (GCEE). The GCEE provides free professional development for K-12 teachers on personal finance and economics education. All professional development sessions include materials so teachers can implement new learning in their classroom immediately. (Grades K-12)&lt;br&gt;<a href="https://www.gcee.org/">https://www.gcee.org/</a></td>
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<td>Dr. Kymberly Harris</td>
<td><strong>Positive Behavior Intervention Support (P.B.I.S)</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dr. Kymberly Harris has worked with schools across the state of Georgia to help them develop and implement their own systems of positive behavior intervention and support. She is skilled at supporting school-wide approaches and working with individual educators.</td>
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<td>Dr. Karin Fisher</td>
<td><strong>Support ALL Students in STEM</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dr. Karin Fisher is an Assistant Professor of Special Education. She is an expert on accommodating students with disabilities in STEM content areas and special education law. (Grades K-12)</td>
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<td>Dr. Shelli Casler-Failing</td>
<td><strong>LEGO Robotics</strong>&lt;br&gt;Dr. Shelli Casler-Failing is an expert on incorporating LEGO Robotics in mathematics classes to support engagement and develop understanding as well as implementing weekly &quot;challenge&quot; problems to engage learners in productive struggle, mathematical reasoning, discourse, and writing (Grades 4-12).</td>
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| Dr. Barbara Serianni | **Co-teaching and Supporting Students with Disabilities**
Dr. Barbara Serianni is an Associate Professor of Special Education. She is an expert in supporting standards-based instruction for students with disabilities and on fostering productive co-teaching environments. Her expertise in online instruction for students with disabilities is being utilized by school systems across the region. (Grades K-12) |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Dr. Alma Stevenson | **Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction**
Dr. Alma Stevenson is a Professor of Literacy. Her teaching and research focus upon incorporating culturally responsive literacy pedagogy into content area instruction. She has expertise in advancing reading, writing, and discursive skills using culturally relevant, enabling literature - literature that sustains diverse students' home languages and cultures. This approach enables academic achievement, affective support, and positive identity formation. |