

College of Education News

January 8, 2018

College of Education, Georgia Southern University

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Georgia Southern College of Education collaborates with Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program

January 8, 2018



Special education and dual certification majors participated in a Tools For Life presentation to learn about assistive technology in the classroom.

On Nov. 17, junior and senior special education and dual certification (early childhood and special education) majors at Georgia Southern University participated in an assistive technology workshop hosted by Tools for Life, Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program.

Housed on the Georgia Institute of Technology's campus, Tools for Life provides access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and services in the state of Georgia for all ages and disabilities to have greater access and opportunity to learn. Assistive technology includes any item or piece of equipment that increases, maintains or improves the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life including school.

College of Education (COE) students participating in the Tools for Life workshop were introduced to various assistive technology (AT) ranging from 'low tech AT' such as specialized writing utensils and grips to furniture that creates healthier learning environments. Additionally, students had the opportunity to work with 'high tech AT' including smart cameras, video magnifiers and hands free, voice activated devices.

The workshop is the start of a collaboration between Tools for Life and the University's College of Education in efforts to provide special education and dual certification majors education and experience with various technologies they can use in the classroom while working with students with disabilities.

"The goal is to get assistive technology in the hands of our juniors and seniors, and not to just have knowledge of these technologies but to have application of their use in the classroom," said special education instructor Shelley Woodward.

As a part of the collaboration with Tools for Life, Georgia Southern received several new assistive technology items that will be housed in the College's [Innovation Studio](#). Some of the new items include: hands-free magnifier, personal reading assistant with touchscreen, speech generating device, alternative keyboards and joystick

devices, geometric board game, transcribing device and a sound amplifier compatible with hearing aid devices. The Studio also now includes an Amazon Echo, demonstrating the multipurpose of the device as a smart speaker than can interact with students based on voice commands.

Over time, Woodward hopes to see additional assistive technology added to the Innovation Studio for student and public use.

“The broad impact of this collaboration also expands to community training and partnerships,” she explained. “In the future we hope to see special education groups in the Innovation Studio testing and trying out this technology to see if their school could benefit from some of these items.”



Students using the ZooMax magnifier

For more information about the Tools for Life program, visit http://www.gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=Main_Page

To learn more about the special education and dual certification programs at Georgia Southern, visit <http://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/sped/>

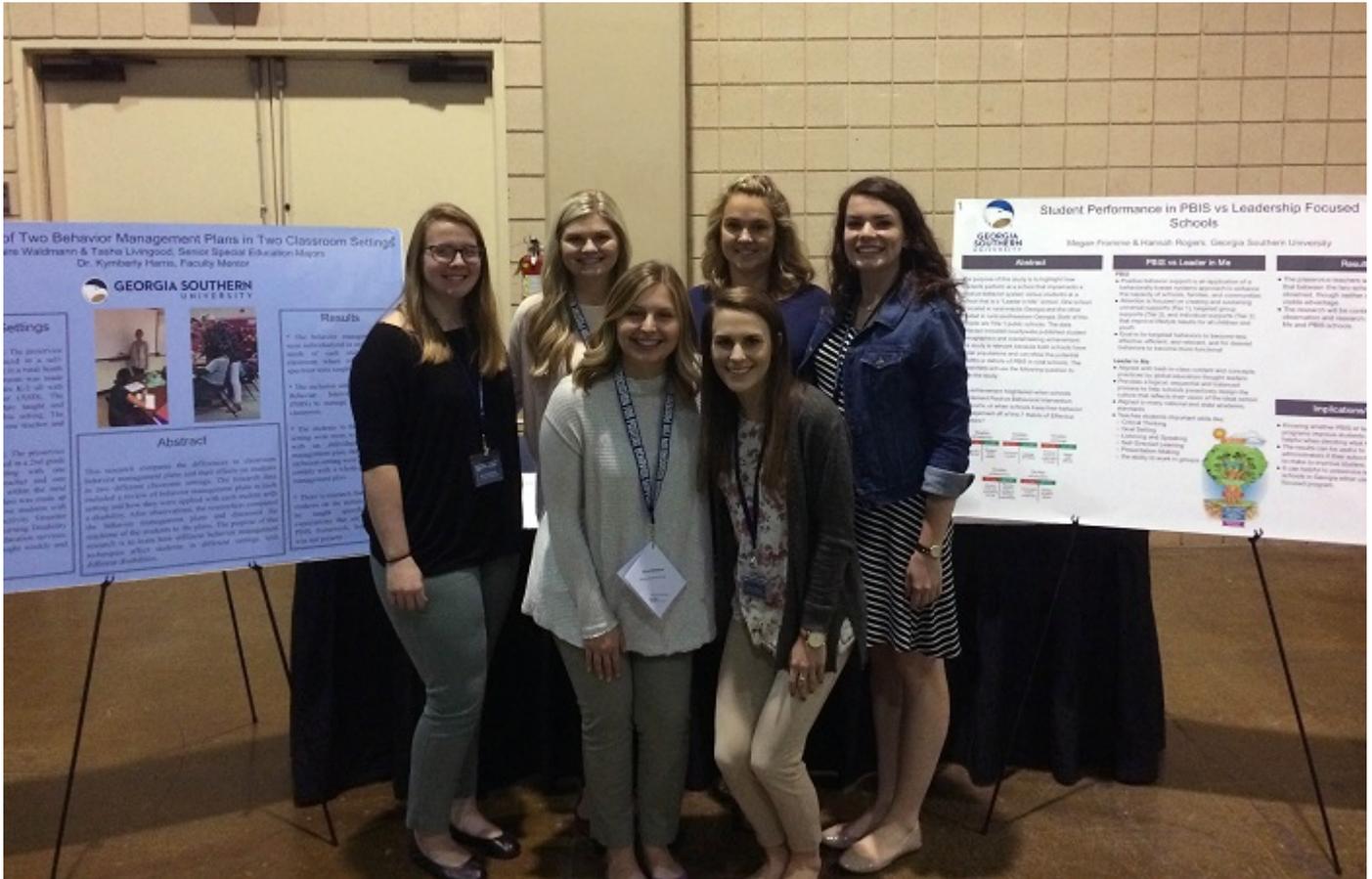
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Special education majors present with COE faculty at state conference

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Pictured back row, l-r: Rebecca Hinrichs, Tasha Livingood, Kylie Brady, Megan Fromme; front row, l-r: Claire Waldmann and Shannon Rainey.

Georgia Southern University special education faculty Kymberly Harris, Ph.D. presented with six undergraduate students at the Georgia Positive Behavior Supports (GAPBS) conference held Nov. 28-29, in Duluth, Georgia.

The conference brings together educators, interventionists, family members, clinicians and community partners to share research, information and resources regarding positive behavior supports (PBS) and the lasting impact they have on homes, schools and community. PBS is a behavior management system used to establish behavioral supports and social culture needed for students to achieve success. Often, the management system is used to understand what maintains an individual's challenging behavior.

Harris presented with special education majors Rebecca Hinrichs, Tasha Livingood, Kylie Brady, Megan Fromme, Claire Waldmann and Shannon Rainey. Their presentation, titled "Using Best Practice to Teach Best Behavior," focused on one of the major components of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), the design and instructional delivery of behavioral expectations to middle and high school students.

"This conference provided an opportunity for me to model for teachers across the state the importance of teaching behaviors from evidence-based lesson plan formats, and the students had the opportunity to really be the experts," said Harris.

Special education majors at Georgia Southern complete SPED 3231: Classroom Management, a course that emphasizes the understanding and development of skills in data-based behavioral management, research-based effective instructional management, and applied behavior analysis techniques. Combined with the research skills they acquire from their program curriculum, students crafted presentations during the fall semester in their classroom management course to present to the schools they are training in.

“Schools in the state of Georgia that utilize PBIS are constantly inquiring how to design lesson plans and strategies to teach behaviors to their students,” explained Harris. “Our students in the special education program at Georgia Southern get experience with designing these types of lesson plans within their coursework. I felt it was important to allow them to showcase their ideas as well as support them in a presentation that many educators in the state are asking for.”

In addition to the group presentation, Fromme, Waldmann and Livingood also participated in poster presentations. Fromme’s research, completed with co-author Hannah Rogers, featured a comparison of PBIS versus leadership-focused schools. Waldmann and Livingood presented a poster titled “Comparison of Two Behavior Management Plans in Two Classroom Settings” using their classroom placements to analyze different systems in place for teaching behavior.

The GAPBS is a network of the national Association for Positive Behavior Support (APBS). The purpose of the network is to increase the visibility of positive behavior support in the state. Members aim to provide a collaborative statewide effort to disseminate positive behavior support practices. The network supports a range of persons interested in promoting positive behavior support capacity building initiatives, promoting the use of positive practices, and promoting membership in the national APBS organization.

Positive behavior supports are effective in a variety of settings, from schools to mental health and counseling practices. As an affiliate of the national APBS, GAPBS works toward increasing the visibility and success of positive behavior supports in Georgia.

This year’s conference theme was “Connecting School, Community and Home Through Positive Behavior Support.”

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