

College of Education News

November 6, 2017

Georgia Southern University

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Middle grades teacher candidates attend Middle Level Summit

November 6, 2017



Middle grades students are pictured with 2017 Georgia Teacher of the Year, Casey Bethel, (center). Students include (l-r): Skyler Smith, Ann Mitchem, Kalena Black and Hallie Blizzard.

On October 20, middle grades teacher candidates attended the Middle Level Summit at Georgia College in Milledgeville, Georgia. An annual event hosted by the Collegiate Middle Level Association (CMLA), the summit included teacher candidates and teacher educators from institutions including: Augusta University, University of Georgia, Fort Valley State University and Georgia Southern University.

The theme of the summit was “Educating the Whole Child.” Casey Bethel, high school science teacher and 2017 Georgia Teacher of the Year, was the keynote speaker for the event.

Bethel encouraged teacher candidates to put the child at the center of everything they do in education. He shared analogies for the different roles teachers play and encouraged teacher candidates “to be innovative, to be invested and to build relationships with students.”

Before the keynote speech, attendees received a message from John Lounsbury, Ph.D., a respected leader in middle grades education and dean emeritus of the John H. Lounsbury College of Education at Georgia College.

Throughout the summit, participants selected breakout sessions on a variety of topics relevant for middle level education.

Teacher candidates Kalena Black, Hallie Blizzard, Ann Mitchem and Skyler Smith attended the Summit along with Amanda Wall, Ph.D., faculty advisor for Georgia Southern's chapter of the [Collegiate Middle Level Association](#).

The CMLA is a professional education organizations for college students preparing to become middle level teachers. An affiliate of the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), CMLA encourages students to begin their careers with active participation in the national professional organization and interact with professionals in their field.

For more information about Georgia Southern University's B.S.Ed. in Middle Grades Education, visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/mged/bsed/>

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Special education majors present at undergraduate research conference

November 6, 2017



Special education majors (l-r) Tasha Livingood, Rebecca Hinrichs, Claire Waldmann and Megan Fromme

Georgia Southern University College of Education (COE) students presented at the [6th Annual Southeast Regional Georgia Undergraduate Research Conference](#) (GURC) held at Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville, Georgia, on Oct. 27-28.

A student-centered research conference, GURC provides a platform for undergraduates to showcase original scholarship conducted in partnership with a faculty and/or staff mentor.

[Special education](#) majors Megan Fromme, Rebecca Hinrichs, Tasha Livingood and Claire Waldmann participated in the conference.

Fromme, a University Honors student, presented her in-progress thesis research titled “Special Education Teachers’ Response to Consistent Changes in Curriculum Standards.” When completed, Fromme’s research will explore teachers’ efforts to meet state requirements alongside their perception of the standards. COE’s Meca Williams-Johnson, Ph.D., serves as Fromme’s faculty mentor.

Presentations made by Hinrichs, Livingood and Waldmann were based on comparative anecdotal data on behavior and classroom management systems observed in their school placements under the mentorship of COE’s Kymberly Harris, Ph.D.

Hinrichs participated in a paper presentation titled “Differing Methods of Behavior Management in Inclusive Classrooms.” Her paper was co-authored by fellow special education major Kylie Brady. Livingood and Waldman co-authored a poster presentation titled, “Comparing Behavior Management Plans in Two Different Elementary Settings.”

Georgia Southern University provided the only representation at the conference for teacher preparation research. The [bachelor’s in special education](#) degree program includes an Introduction to Research in Education course, taught by Williams-Johnson, that provides students with theory and practice in research designs, methods and applications specific to investigations while working in schools.

“Education is an ‘underrepresented’ discipline in undergraduate research,” Harris said. “The steering committee was very complimentary of our students who have research embedded in their coursework and suggested that we apply and submit to the National Collegiate Research Conference at Harvard in January.”

In the field of special education, gathering data is vital to determine and evaluate the effectiveness of educational practices.

“The research projects submitted by the students were part of a larger research agenda that originates in their junior year with the introductory research course,” explained Harris. “The investigations of our teacher candidates are used to support all students in the special education program in evaluating effective methodologies for various student needs.”

The Georgia Undergraduate Research Conference was designed to bring together undergraduate student researchers, university and college faculty, and scholars from around the Southeast to showcase the excellence in research and scholarship occurring in the region. Undergraduate student researchers from all disciplines are encouraged to participate in the annual event.

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Undergraduate education students present at state conference

November 6, 2017



Pictured l-r: students Katie Mitchell, Veronika Snuggs, Alana Bray; TESOL keynote speaker Gloria Ladson-Billings, Ph.D.; students Abby Slattery, Katy Smith; COE faculty member Alisa Leckie, Ph.D. and student Tyler Brownridge.

Several undergraduate students from Georgia Southern University presented at the 36th Annual [Georgia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages \(GATESOL\)](#) Conference held in Macon on Oct. 19-20.

Participating in the conference were: early childhood education majors Alana Bray, Tyler Brownridge and Abigail Slattery; dual certification majors Kaitlyn Smith and Veronika Snuggs; and middle grades education major Katie Mitchell. Presentations centered on information they developed as a part of the College of Education's English as a Second Language (ESOL) Methods course taught by Alisa Leckie, Ph.D., assistant professor of English learner education.

"Students presented the work they did developing instruction for first and second grade emergent English learners," said Leckie. "From here, their work was given to the first and second grade teachers at Hesse K-8 School in Savannah as a part of our ongoing collaboration with their ESOL program."

Leckie explained that the collaboration with Hesse School began in 2016 with the increasing need of modified materials for emergent English learners.

“Their need coincided with my desire to revamp the portion of my ESOL Methods class that focuses on emergent learners,” she said. “I met with the lead first grade teacher, and she gave me several areas/topics that needed modifications. I then assigned the topics to groups of students who modified materials, located additional online resources and created materials for teachers and students.”

Students collectively presented their projects and received feedback from professionals at the GATESOL conference, allowing them to make improvements on their unit plans. Once completed, students uploaded their work to a shared Google Drive folder where all participants at the conference as well as first and second grade teachers at Hesse K-8 School can access the plans.

“There is such a need for this type of support,” said Leckie, “and it is a skill that ESOL endorsed teachers need, so modifying instruction for emergent English learners based on the needs of our partner school systems will be a continuing part of the ESOL Methods course.”

Leckie also emphasized the importance of students participating in professional organizations and conferences.

“Engaging as professionals is one benefit of presenting at conferences,” she said. “There are a variety of professional networks across the state and helping our students participate in these professional organizations will hopefully ignite a desire for them to continue this engagement after graduation.”

During the GATESOL Conference, the students had the opportunity to meet one of the keynote speakers, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Ph.D. A professor in the School of Education at University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ladson-Billings is known for her work in the field of culturally relevant pedagogy and critical race theory. Her publication, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children*, is significant in the field of education.

The Georgia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (GATESOL) is a nonprofit organization provides development and leadership to the improvement of instruction and understanding of non-native speakers of English. Created in the early 1980s, GATESOL provides nearly \$12,000 in grants and awards each year to advance programs to assist with these diverse learners.

Georgia Southern University offers multiple opportunities prepare educators for diverse learners including a master’s and graduate certificate in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students as well as an ESOL Endorsement. For more information visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/tclid/>

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