

# College of Education News

April 9, 2019

Georgia Southern University

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# Teens for Literacy students participate in Shadowing Day on Armstrong Campus

April 9, 2019



Each spring, partnering schools in Georgia Southern University's Teens for Literacy program participate in Shadowing Day, exposing students to a college campus and celebrating their literacy achievements.

On March 13, students from Claxton Middle School in Evans County and East Broad Street School in Savannah toured the University's Armstrong Campus, competed in a Jeopardy-style trivia game, participated in a scavenger hunt at the campus library and enjoyed lunch at The Galley Dining Commons.

The Teens for Literacy program encourages students to actively promote literacy in their school and community through a partnership with Georgia Southern. Partnering schools work with faculty advisor and associate professor in the College of Education, Anne Katz, Ph.D., to create and execute a series of activities to support literacy enhancement in their schools. Each school also appoints a student leadership team to meet regularly and generate ideas for promoting literacy within their schools and communities.

The program was founded 1989 by Allen Berger, Ph.D., at Miami University in Ohio. When Berger moved to Georgia in 2012, he brought the program to Armstrong. For more information about Teens for Literacy visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/partnerships/education-teens-for-literacy/>

# Instructional technology faculty bring innovation to local classrooms

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With technology leading today's world, it is only natural that teachers are looking for ways to incorporate new and innovative techniques into their classroom instruction.

Georgia Southern University instructional technology faculty members Charles Hodges, Ph.D., Mete Akcaoglu, Ph.D., and Lucas Jensen, Ph.D., are currently working with regional schools, who act as dedicated partners in advancing instructional technology practices and research.

Hodges is currently working on a semester-long project with Jenkins County Elementary School. Partnering with gifted teacher Bonnie Allen, Hodges is introducing students to coding and robotics utilizing Scratch, a free coding platform and online community designed for children.

"Students are enthusiastic and quick to learn," Hodges said. "It has been a seamless process because the school offers Chromebooks for each student to work on, and Scratch has allowed each student the freedom to be innovative and creative with their problem solving skills."

Utilizing place-based education, the final project will center on a problem in rural agriculture that students will be required to resolve with coding knowledge.

"This will be a harder challenge than they have been working on so far and will have them considering real-world solutions to a real problem they can see in their community," Hodges said. "Their focus will relate to robotics such as agricultural technology found in GPS robotic farm equipment, which is a reality across many farming applications."

Akcaoglu and Jensen recently partnered with Portal Elementary School to complete a 10-week session on game design. Utilizing Microsoft Kodu, a free, kid-friendly programming software tool for games that uses simple visual coding, students played games that required problem-solving skills and created their own games.

"Computer science is now considered a core skill, and in the near future, it will be important for our children's lives and careers to speak the language of computers" explained Akcaoglu. "Getting students interested and active in coding and programming enhances their creative problem-solving skills."

For their research, Akcaoglu and Jensen observe students as they complete the game design and examine the process they use to solve the problems they encounter.

"As they design their games, we talk about their difficulties and ask them to share their thoughts and explain the process of how to resolve that issue," Akcaoglu said.

"Beyond the goal of teaching rudimentary video game design to the students in the class, we also wanted to investigate the kinds of problem-solving strategies they employ in a video game called Lightbot," Jensen said. "Overcoming Lightbot's challenges requires using a syntax akin to basic coding principles, so we wanted to see how they would perform while they were in the midst of writing code of their own in Kodu. We hope to identify strengths and weaknesses to their problem-solving strategies, hopefully leading us to places where more instruction on coding and problem-solving might mitigate their deficiencies."

Notably, Hodges, Akcaoglu and Jensen enjoy partnering with the community schools and encourage educators to integrate technology into their classrooms for hands-on, engaged learning.

"The more students work with coding and various technologies, the quicker they pick up new processes and software presented to them," said Hodges. "And there is a computational thinking aspect that allows them to consider how a

problem can be solved by breaking it down into parts and considering if a machine can do the work to solve the problem for them. That's the beauty of it."

Georgia Southern's College of Education also houses the Innovation Studio on the Statesboro Campus, which includes various technologies including 3D printers, a virtual reality headset, a large screen projection system, a television with video gaming systems, robotics tools and more. This space is open to the University as well as the community as a learning experience with instructional technologies.

Georgia Southern University offers fully online master's and specialist degrees in instructional technology. Accessible for current professionals, this degree program trains candidates to become technology leaders that directly contribute to student learning by focusing on technology-enabled learning, professional development and technology-integration processes.

Options are available for initial certification to those not certified to teach in the state of Georgia as well as certificate upgrades for those that are current classroom educators. For more information about instructional technology graduate programs at Georgia Southern, visit [Coe.georgiasouthern.edu/itec](http://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/itec).

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## School psychology faculty, students participate in national conference

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School psychology graduate students and faculty attended 2019 NASP Conference.

The 2019 National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Convention was held Feb. 26 through March 1 in Atlanta. Courtney Holley, Ed.D., president of the Georgia Association of School Psychologists and a Georgia Southern University alumna, spoke at the convention to welcome attendees to Georgia. Holley earned a bachelor's in psychology as well as master's and specialist degrees in school psychology from the University and currently serves as a school psychologist in Cook County Schools.

School psychology faculty member Terry Diamanduros, Ph.D., current school psychology graduate student Shanice Murphy, and 2018 Ed.S. School Psychology alumna Courtney Smith gave a poster presentation at the convention titled, "Trauma-focused Interventions in Schools: Implications for School Psychologists."

Brittany Fahey and Raven Hamilton, NASP student leaders for Georgia Southern's school psychology program, along with Diamanduros, participated in the NASP Student Leaders and Faculty Sponsor meeting held by the NASP Graduate Student Committee.

Approximately 20 current students in the program attended the NASP convention.