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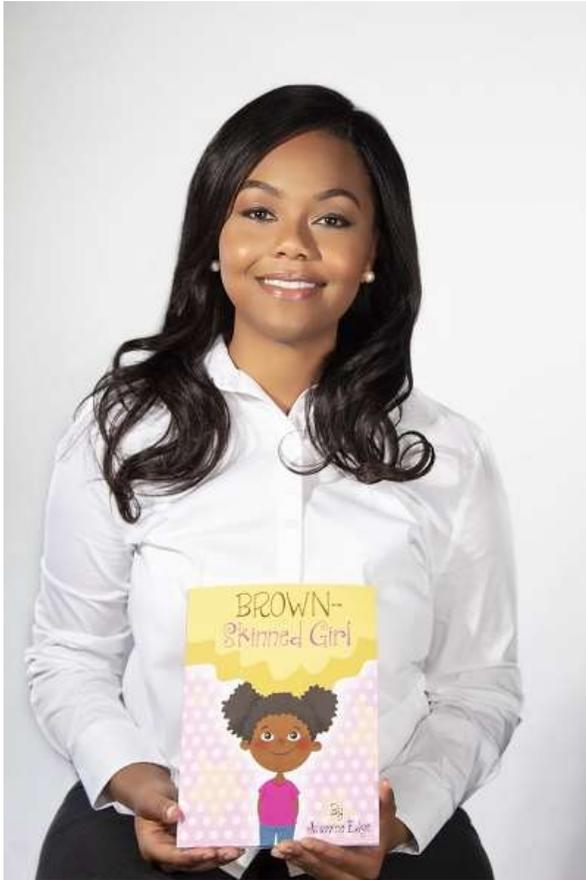
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Georgia Southern school psychology student pursues children's literature dream

December 15, 2020



As many sheltered in place this year to stop the spread of COVID-19, Georgia Southern University graduate student Jasmine Edge saw an opportunity to achieve a goal she set out to do years before.

A graduate of Spelman College and former pre-K and kindergarten teacher, Edge loved the classroom and her students.

"I really enjoyed spending time with students in the classroom setting, especially inspiring an interest for reading in my students," she said. "The read-alouds were my favorite thing to do with my students. I was the teacher who got into it. I would change the intonation and the volume of my voice to match what was happening in the story. That is where my interest in children's books was cultivated."

Children's literature has been proven to be a powerful tool in early learning. Edge felt inspired by the innovation of the books she read to her students.

"I was impressed by the way that authors and illustrators convey a range of meaningful and informative messages as well as fun and silly content that are both creative and developmentally appropriate in children's literature," she said. "I said to myself, 'I want to do that.'"

Edge decided to leave the classroom after five years to pursue a specialist degree in [school psychology from the College of Education](#) to combine her interest in mental health and working with children.

It was during the spring 2020 semester that Edge found herself at home, unable to travel or continue typical social engagements that she decided she would complete her first children's book. She began in May, and by October, Edge's book, *Brown-Skinned Girl*, the story of a young, black girl Imani, who realizes her skin is different from many others in her classroom, was published.

"Kids have misconceptions about the world that can be cute," said Edge. "In the book, Imani's classmate tells her that her skin is brown because she has eaten too much chocolate. So Imani has a conversation with her parents about why her skin is brown."

The book encourages healthy conversations about diversity and self-acceptance and also includes vocabulary at the end of the book to review with early elementary school children.

[Brown-Skinned Girl](#) was inspired by Spelman's former president and racial socialization researcher Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D.

“I would like to follow up with more books in the future that continue to be uplifting and focus on self-esteem,” Edge said. “My hope would be for my future books to continue to honor and promote the work that Dr. Tatum has done.”

Edge is scheduled to complete the [Ed.S. in School Psychology](#) degree program at Georgia Southern in spring 2021 and looks forward to entering a career field that is a perfect fit for her.

“School psychology allows me to focus on the whole child — their academic, mental and physical wellbeing,” said Edge. “I am looking forward to my career as a school psychologist, and I know I am prepared thanks to the rigorous program at Georgia Southern.”

Posted in [Student Highlights](#)

Tags: [Jasmine Edge](#), [School Psychology](#)

[Energy grant provides Effingham school opportunity to study smart home technology](#)

December 15, 2020

What does a teenager know about energy usage and costs in their homes?

That is one of the questions that Georgia Southern University’s Kania Greer, Ed.D., will ask local students with a new grant-funded program in Effingham County. Greer, coordinator of the College of Education’s Institute for Interdisciplinary STEM Education (i²STEM^e) was recently awarded a \$30,000 grant from energy company Constellation, an Exelon company, for a partnership with the Effingham College and Career Academy and the Effingham County Schools STEM Program.

The project, called Engaging Students in Engineering Education (E-SEE), will bring the curriculum to over 200 students in Effingham County through the lens of smart home devices.

“Smart devices are all around us,” said Greer. “More and more students are utilizing this technology daily to access different aspects of their lives. However, not many students realize how many smart devices are in their home. From simple to complex, these devices can have an impact on energy usage — from regulating temperature to turning off lights.”

For the next few months, Greer and co-principal investigator Rami Haddad, Ph.D., associate professor of electrical engineering at Georgia Southern, in partnership with Effingham County teachers, will develop a curriculum for high school students to experiment with varying smart home technology. They will examine four critical areas including energy, electricity, engineering and environment.

“Small groups of freshmen, sophomore and junior students will be given a Smart Home Learning Kit, which will allow them to develop and explore a variety of applications and hardware,” said Greer. “We want all students

participating in this project to discover how this technology works, if it is effective, how much energy is it saving and what impact it has on the environment.”

Effingham County seniors will select a smart home device, ranging from smart plugs, automatic bowl flushers and smart switches, and install one in their home to monitor and determine its real-world impact.

“How many times have you heard your parents say to turn off the lights or not to touch the thermostat because of their power bills?” asked Greer. “Beyond the educational implications and hands-on learning this program will provide, we are asking students to become familiar with financial considerations of energy efficiency as well.”

Two Effingham County teachers, Michelle Thompson, Ed.D., director of scientific research, and Aaron Specht, director of engineering, have been selected to implement E-SEE in fall 2021. They will collaborate with Georgia Southern faculty and staff to implement the 16-week smart home technology program.

“I am excited to expand our partnership with Effingham County Schools and offer students an opportunity to design research projects they are interested in and can become invested to continue on their own,” said Greer.

Posted in [Community Outreach & Partnership](#)

Tags: [Kania Greer](#), [Rami Haddad](#)

[From the Bronx to Statesboro, a graduate’s dream to teach children turned into a reality](#)

December 15, 2020



Jaisha Nivens, '20

Born in the Bronx, New York, Jaisha Nivens was in high school when she and her three brothers relocated to Hinesville, Georgia, for her oldest brother's military assignment at Fort Stewart and a fresh start.

"My older brother took us in because we were living in a bad situation," she explained. "He was only 22 at the time, but he was a good role model. The experience humbled and shaped me."

While a student at Liberty County High School, Nivens participated in an Early Education Career Pathway, which provided experiences at local daycare centers and elementary schools.

"I realized I was really interested in working with kids, but I just wasn't sure in what capacity," said Nivens. "Once the career pathway program placed me in a third grade classroom, I loved it."

Known for producing quality teachers in the region, Georgia Southern University was Niven's top choice for college.

"I always wanted to come to Georgia Southern," she said. "I saw that the University had strong education programs, and I knew I would be better prepared for my job."

Nivens worked hard to reach her goals. She attended East Georgia State College for a year before transferring to Georgia Southern to complete her education courses and took on two day care assistant jobs to support herself.

Now at the end of her journey at the University, she plans to move closer to her brothers, who resettled in Tampa. She has already lined up a position as a third grade teacher in the area and is studying to complete her Florida exams for teaching certification.

"I've always worked well with children," she said, "and I am grateful for Georgia Southern giving me the other pieces to the puzzle to become a good teacher."

Posted in [Student Highlights](#)

Tags: [Elementary Education](#), [Jaisha Nivens](#)

'65 years old and not done yet,' former marketing professional earns master's in special education to work with children

December 15, 2020



Darlene Williams, '20

When Darlene Williams began pursuing her master's degree in special education at Georgia Southern University, she had not attended college in more than 37 years.

Following a 30-year career in sales and marketing, Williams decided to chase a new dream.

"I started substitute teaching in October 2013, and one of my first assignments was in a high school special education classroom," she said. "That is all it took. I thought to myself, 'this is where I am supposed to be.'"

After earning a bachelor's in business administration from the University of Buffalo in 1981, Williams initially thought she would one day make the transition from her business career to become a math teacher.

"I never thought I'd teach special education at all," she said. "Divine intervention is all I can say."

By 2015, Williams was teaching in a special education classroom in an elementary school in metro Atlanta.

Darlene Williams, '20

Working with students who have moderate to severe disabilities, Williams wanted to pursue further

opportunities to grow as a teacher.

"I never wanted to invest in a master's degree before because I didn't have a reason to," said Williams. "I found my reason. My students were my reason."

The Georgia Southern College of Education offers a fully online advanced teaching program in special education that allowed Williams to continue to work while also enriching her practice and knowledge of students with disabilities.

"It was a challenge at times," she said. "I had to catch up with this new generation. I am tech savvy, but so much has changed since I was last in college."

Williams completed her course work in July and will walk across the stage at Paulson Stadium on the Statesboro Campus on December 17.

"My granddaughter, Ariana, who is currently living in New York, encouraged me to walk at graduation so I decided to do it," said Williams. "Though Ariana cannot attend, I will have the support of my daughter, son, two grandsons, brother and brother-in-law and my sweetie."

"I am 65 years old, and I am not done yet," she added. "If that inspires others to know they can do it, then I am happy to be that inspiration for them."

Williams says the plans for the future are to keep working and possibly pursue a doctorate.

“I don’t want to retire,” she said. “I may eventually have to move out of the classroom, but I will still work. I want to help students with disabilities get ready for life, and I will put all my energy into doing that the best that I can.”

Posted in [Alumni Highlights](#), [Student Highlights](#)

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