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High school students visit Georgia Southern University to learn writing through local history

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Georgia Southern University recently hosted Claxton High School students for "Bringing Southeast Georgia History and Culture Alive." The project, organized through the Department of Writing and Linguistics, aims to bring local history and culture into area public schools through writing instruction.

"Bringing Southeast Georgia History and Culture Alive" runs through the spring, summer and fall semesters of 2008. The project links Georgia Southern University to local public schools through faculty outreach and high school visits. Five university professors, Annette Laing, Patrick Novotny, David Dudley, Theresa Welford, and Jeffery Kozee, all specializing in local history and writing for children and adolescents, developed the project curriculum.

"This project integrates local history and culture into writing. Students use their connection to their community to enhance their writing skills," said Dr. Martha Pennington, project director and professor of Writing and Linguistics.

Activities for the program include writing family histories, researching local history and events, and interviewing local figures to produce short stories, children's books and 10-minute plays. At the end of each semester a public reading will display the best of the student works.

During their visit, students from Claxton High School toured the campus and met with professors in the department of Writing and Linguistics whose writing employs local themes. Some of these students have already been accepted to Georgia Southern University while others are involved in the "Seniors to Sophomores" college prep program.

"I've realized [working with this project] how tight knit the South is and how closely related we are to one another [and the community]," said Claxton High School student Sarah Eldred.

While talking about southeastern language and culture, Claxton High School student Lauren Daniel said, "The local dialect is really interesting. When you're from here you hear and speak it all the time but [until] you research and write it I don't think you realize how Southern you are."

"Bringing Southeast Georgia History and Culture Alive" project receives funding from the Georgia Humanities Council through the National Endowments for Humanities and the Georgia General Assembly.