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COE alumna uses Google to connect students, teachers globally

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Educational technology has become a passion for Georgia Southern University College of Education (COE) alumna Hollie Sisk ('01,'05).

A media specialist in the Bulloch County School system, Sisk desired to train not only students but also her fellow educators on how to utilize Google for Education, an online resource of applications for educators to connect, discover new educational products and news, and participate in training on a global perspective.

"Seventeen of the 18 districts in First District RESA are implementing Google for Education with a goal of eventually becoming one-to-one with devices like the Chromebook; however many teachers do not know how

to use Chromebooks and Google for Education core suite of services," said Sisk.

The 1:1 Chromebook Initiative provides each student with access to a laptop equipped with Google for Education applications, some of which can be used without internet access.

These laptops can be used in the classroom or taken home to complete assignments.

"Google has provided a level playing field for students," said Sisk. "Access is vital in education, and the opportunities are unlimited when you are aware of the storage and offline options for students using the Google applications.

"It's more than just using the internet to complete a research paper," she continued. "You can expose your students to so much more—take them on a virtual field trip or play 20 questions with students in Spain."

Sisk graduated from Georgia Southern with a bachelor's in special education. She worked in the classroom for several years, primarily serving as a resource and collaborative English and language arts teacher in Glynn, Effingham and Fayette counties.

"My philosophy was important," she said. "It was my goal to teach my students never to use their disability as an excuse. My priority was to educate them on how to use available resources so they could accomplish classwork just like their peers."

In 2005, Sisk completed her master's in instructional technology from COE and transitioned into her career as a media specialist. For the past 10 years, she has worked in Fayette, Houston and Bulloch Counties. Sisk says that while her job may have changed, her teaching philosophy has remained the same.

"I realized I was still teaching students how to use available resources that the media center had to offer, but I discovered I was also teaching various professional learning topics to colleagues as well," she said. "If I can educate teachers how to integrate technology in an effective and engaging way in their classroom, then they are also modeling how to take advantage of those available resources as well."

Now with 15 years of public education experience under her belt, Sisk has a new goal.

"My mission is to encourage and empower the users of information and technology with the latest digital resources," said Sisk.

In fall 2016, Sisk completed and passed the exams to become a Google Certified Educator Level 1 and 2. She attended her first EdTechTeam Summit in January, and in March learned that she was accepted to the Google for Education Certified Trainer program.

"I am among 2,008 trainers worldwide and only 20 in the state of Georgia," she said. "In southeast Georgia, there are only two trainers—myself and [the Director of the COE Instructional Resources Center] Daniel Rivera. That speaks volumes, and it is an opportunity to encourage others to become Google certified, at least starting with the basics of the Level 1 certification."

Also in March, Sisk entered a national video response contest hosted by Flipgrid, a video discussion community for classrooms. She was surprised to recently be told that her video, detailing the reasons why she wanted to attend the California EdTechTeam Summit, was selected as the winning entry. The EdTechTeam will pay for the registration and conference fees for Sisk to attend the July summit featuring Google for Education in Mountain View, California.

"I am thrilled at the opportunity to experience Google in California this summer," said Sisk.

Since winning the Flipgrid contest, Sisk has also been featured on the [EdTechTeam's blog](#) for a resource she created using Google Keep, a note-taking service.

Sisk recently served as an ambassador for Edcamp at Georgia Southern, hosting several of the event's sessions. She is also currently serving on the planning committee for First District Regional Educational Service Agency's first ever Summer Institute featuring Google for Education which is set to take place June 6.

"My focus is trying to provide training or professional development opportunities for our teachers so they will know how to best implement these digital resources when their classroom is equipped with one-to-one devices," said Sisk.

With all that is happening, Sisk says she is already thinking about her next goal.

"There is one more level for Google certification, and that is the 'Certified Innovator,'" she explained. "At this level, Google trains and utilizes educators to design creative solutions to challenges seen in education. That is my next goal."

To contact Hollie Sisk or to read more about her recommended digital resources, visit www.stacheandstacks.com.

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