

EDUCATOR

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

SPRING 2016

College Partnerships in the Community

ALSO

ALUMNI CAREERS
OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM





Amanda Chandler, BSEd '18 (middle) reading to Duckrey students, Genuwine Barfield (left) and Bree Byrd (right).

Federal Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant:

COLLEGE GETTING INVOLVED IN A BIG WAY WITH CLOSEST NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

After most of their classmates have already gone home, several grade schoolers at the Tannery G. Duckrey School, located just northwest of Temple University's main campus, are sharpening their math skills by playing games that require quick calculations. Across the room, another half dozen students are writing computer code.

Meanwhile, down in the school's lower level, a trio of other students are involved in "Game On!": "hacking," or creatively changing the rules of common games such as Tic-Tac-Toe, to see how such changes affect the outcomes. Bridget Warlea, a volunteer and freshman legal studies major in Temple's the Fox School of Business, asks the students: "Do you think there will be fewer ties if we expand the grid to five by five? And what if you only have to get four in a row, instead of all five?"

To answer those questions, the students begin playing multiple games—against each other or against Warlea or Sakira Harris, a science club leader. Afterwards, when prompted, a frequently victorious student named Grace says, "I found out it's easy to win when you pay attention, and it isn't when you don't."

"What else?" Warlea wonders.

"It's easier if you only have to get four in a row instead of five," Grace says.

The after-school science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) program at Duckrey is run by Steppingstone Scholars Inc., a non-profit organization that was recruited by Temple University and the College of Education as part of a \$30 million federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhood Implementation grant.



Bridget Warlea (left), a Temple student who works with Steppingstone, Inc. with a Duckrey student.

Working with families and school partners, Steppingstone provides rigorous educational programming and support for talented underserved students in the Philadelphia region. Warlea, who started off in a Philadelphia public elementary school and graduated from Abington Friends School, is one of the Steppingstone's first graduates.

The program, which enables 4th- to 8th-graders to achieve high school and college success, is just one of many partners the College of Education has enlisted as part of the federal grant. The grant's goal: to revitalize the neighborhood and preserve affordable housing for the residents of the Norris Homes, a Philadelphia Housing Authority property on the eastern edge of the Temple campus.

Supervised by a combination of Steppingstone staff, Duckrey teachers and Temple work-study and/or student volunteers, throughout the week the Duckrey students also: work on homework and individualized Khan Academy online exercises, delve

into science, create art, build K'Nex constructions, engineer robots for competitions and undergo one-on-one or small group math and literacy assessments. A summer camp, and field trips, such as to the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, the Wagner Institute and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, are also offered.

One Steppingstone participant, fourth-grader Jawan McSwiggan, recently earned honorable mention at a multi-school science fair for his poster presentation that compared the corrosive effects of vinegar and bleach. He is also a member of one of Duckrey's two robotics teams. "Science," he says, "is cool."

David Cohen, the second-year principal of the 650-student K-8 school, concurs: "It's a chance for kids to learn away from the kids who don't think it's cool to learn math and science. When you get a kid building a robot and making it move, their passion for learning just grows. Some of these are the kids who are having

trouble learning in school, but all of a sudden they are turning it on after school and getting excited.

"They are driving our kids' passion for learning."

Keisha D. Whatley, Steppingstone's STEAM coordinator at Duckrey, also works with the administration and teaching staff to enhance STEAM education schoolwide, and teaches a 4th-grade honors STEAM class during the day. "Targeting students in that grade who may have looked elsewhere because they weren't being challenged is huge," says Cohen. "They are now working with robots and going above and beyond what students are doing elsewhere in science. The students are excited, and I can't tell you how pleased their parents are."

Steppingstone's similar presence at the nearby 284-student K-8 Paul L. Dunbar Promise Academy is having a similarly profound effect. Dunbar students won a robotics championship and were visited

by Philadelphia Eagles' players, who discussed career options and stressed the importance of completing school.

"A lot of them are now very interested in science and engineering and talking about going to the Engineering and Science High School and going into those fields," says Dawn Moore, Dunbar's principal for the past six years. "They are really looking at their grades and trying to make improvement because they have a career goal or high school in mind—and they are putting plans in place to get there thanks to the Steppingstone Scholars program."

Steppingstone, which annually serves a 1,000 students regionally, is now renting space in the College of Education's Ritter Hall for its headquarters. "The students and faculty at the college have been a tremendous resource for us," says Sean Vereen, EdD, Steppingstone's president. "We're focusing on ways to use their expertise and leadership abilities at the school level to get them involved in our programs. It's a really powerful synergy."

Steppingstone's efforts at the two closest public elementary schools to Temple's main campus are just one prong in a multi-faceted approach that the College of Education has marshalled as the lead education partner for the federal CNI grant. James Earl Davis, the Bernard C. Watson Chair in Urban Education, played a critical role in helping the City of Philadelphia secure the grant.

"Given all the players involved—the School District of Philadelphia and its neighborhood schools, the City of Philadelphia and its Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) and the Philadelphia Housing Authority, the Norris Homes residents and a host of non-profit service organizations—it can be complicated," says Davis. "But the potential for Temple University to work in concert with all of these people and organizations is enormous."

"Considering all those complications, I also think that the early stages of implementation have been impressive, and that's because the commitment of all the people we are working with has been so impressive."

Davis adds that, "The CNI grant has enlivened and actualized the Bernard C. Watson Chair's potential to connect with neighborhood schooling and to build and strengthen the North Philadelphia community."

For example, the endowed chair is funding the position of M. Meghan Raisch, PhD '14, the education engagement specialist who is orchestrating the multi-pronged CNI effort—an effort that represents a significant shift for the College of Education from just a provider of educational services to a convener that is bringing together a host of resources from both within and without the university.

"We're changing our mindset from being a provider that works in the community to one that works with the community," says Raisch. "It's a small shift in language but it's a really big difference in approach."

Davis agrees: "It's not a top-down relationship. We've learned as much as any of our partners about our capacities, resources and roles from them. The residents and children in our community are providing us with lots of lessons to make us better at what we do."

After Duckrey was assigned students from another nearby school that closed, Temple also stepped into the breach by supplying a lot of furniture and equipment, including gym equipment, sleek flat-screen TVs for the hallways and more than 200 refurbished computers—enough to put six to eight in every classroom rather than having to send children to a computer lab. "My goal is to have each student go online at least once a day," says Cohen, "and that wasn't possible until Temple intervened."

"H UD is very clear that there has to be a strong anchor institution for these CNI grants, and, besides being the lead education partner, Temple is a good community partner and a strong anchor," says Melissa Long, the deputy director of the City of Philadelphia's Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD).

Although the five-year federal grant awarded on July 1, 2014 will ultimately be worth \$30 million, Philadelphia has identified another \$130 million in leveraged funding and in-kind services. In that regard, she says, "Temple has been a fantastic partner. We can't say enough great things about the Temple College of Education. They've gone above and beyond in providing in-kind and direct resources to ensure the program's success."

She lauds Temple's creation and funding of Meghan Raisch's education engagement specialist position, and the enthusiasm, commitment and belief that Raisch and Davis have exhibited for the grant's mission to elevate education through a community-based partnership.



Credit: Raisch Studios



Temple student Pedro Ortiz with Anthony DeShields, a fourth grade student at Duckrey.

For example, she touts the collaboration between Temple, the Norris Community Resident Council and its president, Donna Richardson, to create the Norris Community Afterschool Program.

As Long notes, the after-school program, which is currently serving 35 K-8 residents, and its eight-week summer camp, which last year drew 55 students, originally was not part of the grant. “But Donna and the Resident Council, Temple and PHA recognized a way to meet the need for an after-school program,” Long says. College of Education is providing curriculum and professional development for the resident staff members and volunteers, as well as evaluating outcomes. “They’re not just having the kids play with toys,” says Long. “They are tracking progress.”

Richardson, who also serves as the Norris homes after-school program administrator, says, “We approached a few different educational organizations with our idea of an after-school program run by the residents, but nobody wanted to support it—until I met with James Earl Davis and Meghan Raisch. They got it. They believed in our vision.” Both Long and

Erik Soliván, Esq., a senior vice president with the Philadelphia Housing Authority, believe the Norris after-school program will become a best-practice model that will be replicated throughout the city and elsewhere.

“Temple has been a great partner in sharing their expertise with the resident instructors to allow them to build their own capacity and work with the kids to improve their literacy and numeracy,” says Soliván. “The way that Temple is engaging with the community that is right at its doorstep, including having undergraduates and graduate students supporting the program, is helping build bridges within the community.”

It has become such a model that in March Richardson discussed their program at a national conference of CNI grantees in Washington, District of Columbia.

“It’s a great public-private partnership,” adds Soliván—so much so that PHA has already begun to work with some of the same partners to replicate the Norris Homes’ success as part of a community school that is envisioned for another Choice Neighborhood Implementation west of Broad Street in North Philadelphia.

“From the outset of the CNI grant, our president and CEO, Kelvin Jeremiah, has really had an interest in figuring out ways to better partner with our universities and residents, and the Norris Homes CNI is a natural outgrowth of that,” says Soliván.

Back at the two elementary schools, several mornings each week Temple students who have been trained by Kristina Najera, PhD, assistant dean of teacher education, in conducting interactive read alouds, spend time engaging first-graders in storybook reading—an innovation developed by Raisch called The Reading Hour.

One recent morning, both Amanda Chandler, a sophomore secondary education major from San Diego, and Haley Connaughton, a junior journalism major from central Bucks County who is considering pursuing a graduate

education degree, were volunteering at Duckrey Elementary in the first-grade classroom of Eileen Wager. Ensconced comfortably on a beanbag, Chandler was reading Dr. Seuss’ *Green Eggs and Ham* with two boys, Paul and Syncer, by her side.

“Would you like to eat them in a box? Would you like to eat them with a fox?” she reads, then asks, “Where’s the fox?”

“Right there,” points Paul.

“Where’s the box?”

“Right there,” Paul points again.

On the next page, Chandler asks, “Where is he walking, to or from the box?”

“From,” responds Syncer.

“Why?”

“Because,” explains Syncer, “he doesn’t want the eggs and ham.”

“That’s right,” Chandler repeats, “he doesn’t want the eggs and ham.”

No, No!” Syncer corrects, “He doesn’t want the *green* eggs and ham.”

Says Cohen, the school’s principal: “When you have kids in each room learning at all different levels, the more bodies you have the better. Meghan’s volunteers drop the ratios from 1-to-30 to 2-to-15 or 3-to-10, that’s a huge help.

“That’s at least one reason—in addition to more access to online materials and more supplies—that I think our reading scores have risen.”

To support the future of programs like these at the College of Education, please give to the College of Education Annual Fund (see enclosed envelope).

Other Choice Neighborhood Implementation Partners

Y Achievers

The 16-branch Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA offers this national program—an academic achievement/career development initiative that helps teens set and pursue high educational and career goals—to a dozen fifth- to eighth-graders each Monday as part of the Norris Community Afterschool Program. Participation also includes free membership and access to the nearby YMCA at 1400 N. Broad Street.

“We want to expose the students to a world that they might not have known before,” says the Y’s program director, Jennifer Thompson.

The YMCA also hopes to soon begin involving high school students from The U School in its high school program.

After School Activities Partnerships (ASAP)

Founded 14 years ago by Marciene Mattleman, BSEd ’51, MEd’67, EdD ’67, ASAP sponsors after-school activities, including hundreds of chess, debate, Scrabble® and drama clubs and competitions, for 5,000 Philadelphia school children a year—including students from two new public high schools that share a building at 7th and Norris Streets, Building 21 and the U School.

“Our greatest strength is the relationships we can build with educators who understand the impact that after-school programs can have,” says ASAP’s executive director, Justin Ennis. “The hours between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. are the most dangerous for kids, and we promote positive experiences for kids that enhance public safety.”

Building 21, Global Classroom Program

College of Education students once a week volunteer to help 9th- and 10th-graders at this new public high school to learn community engagement, social entrepreneurship and international service skills, which culminated this May in a service-learning trip to Costa Rica.

School & Neighborhood Crime & Safety Committee

An inter-agency committee, led by the College of Education and OHCD, focused on reducing youth-involved crime and increasing the number of students involved in positive youth development activities. The committee, which meets every other month, includes representatives from the university, local schools, nonprofit afterschool activity providers and representatives from five police departments, including the City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Housing Authority, SEPTA, School District of Philadelphia and Temple University.