

Future teachers experience what it's like to have dyslexia, learn specialized reading techniques

Defined as a language-based learning disability, dyslexia can take on many forms. Traditionally, it's thought of as flipping similar letters like b and d. Georgia College junior early childhood majors recently learned it's much more than that.

In small groups, they filtered through stations presenting different challenges associated with dyslexia.

In one scenario, students had to cover their non-dominant hand and use the reflection from a mirror to write certain things. At another station, they were asked to follow verbal directions while background noise and side conversations muffled what was said. Through all six of the 10-minute sessions, the students facilitating—who acted as teachers—hurried the participants and said things like, "If you can't do this, you won't move on to third grade."

"The whole point was that we were supposed to be really mean and create like a worst-case scenario for the students that were taking our auditory spelling test," said junior Grace Pifer, early childhood education major and student facilitator for the training. "So, I basically just recreated classrooms that I had been in as a kid when I was labeled a 'problem' for being disruptive."

After multiple sessions for over an hour, the teacher candidates reported feeling mentally exhausted, frustrated and even embarrassed they couldn't do some of the tasks.

"It was an eye-opening experience because I didn't know how common dyslexia is," said junior Rilie Edenfield. "I did get really frustrated. I understand why kids want to quit, and why they act out in class."

Connecting those dots is exactly why this training is important.

"My number one goal is they would realize that students are not lazy or

incompetent, but instead that they look and dive deeper into the whole child," said Stephanie Starr, '09, who is a structured literacy, dyslexia interventionist.

Starr received her undergraduate degree in early childhood education from Georgia College. After pursuing her master's degree and specialized dyslexia training, she started her own tutoring business.

"Dyslexia does not have anything to do with IQ. In fact, I would argue, the students I work with that have dyslexia are really brilliant and do really amazing things," said Starr. "They just aren't able to express it in written format or at least not without some support."

She worked with Dr. Stacy Schwartz, professor of Early Childhood Education, to secure two rounds of grant funding from the International Dyslexia Association—Georgia Branch to support the simulations and equipment to use in classrooms to help struggling children.

"The first year of the grant we bought materials to help with the tactile nature of learning—tools children can write with and touch, like writing on the bumpy board or in sand," said Schwartz. "We also bought the kit that allows us to do the dyslexia simulation."

The grants also funded REAP (Reading is Essential for All People) training for all early childhood majors over the last three years. A non-profit organization dedicated to improving reading proficiency in Georgia public school students, REAP provides public school teachers with specialized training in reading instruction called structured literacy. Early childhood majors will graduate with approximately 50 hours in structured literacy training.

"This makes our students very marketable because they're going to counties where they may not have had the time yet, especially now with COVID, to get all their teachers trained," said Schwartz. "When applying for jobs, our students are able to talk about the fact that they are trained in structured literacy and have been trained through REAP."

For junior Amelia Herbert, the training especially hits home.



Students conduct dyslexia training.

Diagnosed with dyslexia as a child, she knows first-hand the challenges kids can face at school.

"I think it's a gift, and I have really embraced it," said Herbert. "But people have always said, 'Having dyslexia must be so easy for you because you get accommodations, and you get that extra help from people.' I actually work 10 times harder than the average person. That's been really hard, but I found ways to cope with it."

She brings her experience dealing with dyslexia into her future classroom and hopes to help children who face similar challenges.

"When I was diagnosed with dyslexia, I decided I wanted to help other kids who have issues learning to not hate school like I did," said Herbert. "I want school to be like a safe space for them."

Understanding their future students' needs and the best way to provide help is one of the primary goals for Starr and Schwartz. Through their experience, they also hope the teacher candidates pass along their knowledge to others.

"We hope they take this simulation to their host schools and are able to offer a little mini-training on this," said Starr.

GC Jazz Jam Session: Allen's Market



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Come out and enjoy the GC Jazz Jam Session Tuesday, Nov. 16, 7-9 p.m. at Allen's Market, downtown Milledgeville, presented by Jazz at Georgia College.

Hosted by faculty and student jazz musicians and Allied Arts, the GC Jam Session is open to all members of the community interested in working on their jazz and improvisation skills.

As last year was a bit of a challenge, Jazz at Georgia College is happy to now be able to invite our community back out to play with us.

Bring your instrument if you want to play, and you are also invited to come just to enjoy the live music at Allen's Market.

'Puffs' opens in Black Box Theatre

The Georgia College Theatre and Dance Department presents "Puffs" at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 10-13 and 2 p.m. on Nov. 13 and 14 in the Campus Black Box Theatre.


The production, directed by Erden Mohl, is about a boy wizard who went to a certain wizard school and conquered evil.

This, however, is not his story. This is the story of the Puffs, who just happened to be there too. It's a tale for anyone never destined to save the world. (Puffs is not authorized, sanctioned, licensed or endorsed by J.K. Rowling, Warner Bros. or any person or company associated with the Harry Potter books, films or play.)

Tickets are available online at gcsutickets.com. Cost is \$15 for general admission; \$10 for seniors; GC faculty, staff and non-GC students; and \$5 for GC students.

For more information, please call 478-445-8290.

THE GEORGIA COLLEGE DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND DANCE PRESENTS



NOVEMBER 10-13, 2021 • 7:30 P.M.
NOVEMBER 13-14, 2021 • 2 P.M.
CAMPUS BLACK BOX THEATRE

Did you know?

Jonathan O'Brien is on top of the news world by winning Best Audio Hard News Reporting at the 2021 National Student Electronic Media Convention with his story "Voting Bill Protest." He and the student radio station WGUR also won third place in the same category with the news about "Covid spike in rural Georgia nursing home."

This is not the first national recognition for the student-run radio station and its news director. O'Brien won second place at the 2020 College Broadcasters Inc. National Student Production Award for Best Newscast Audio.

O'Brien is a student in the Department of Communication and leads the news department at the student-run radio station WGUR. He has been involved in the news department as a news director since the first semester of his freshman year.



What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/calendar

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9	10 7:30 p.m.- "Puffs" in the Campus Black Box Theatre.	11 9 a.m.- Please join President Cathy Cox and the entire Georgia College campus community as we honor Veterans Day. A ceremony will be held at the Baldwin County War Memorial on Hancock Street. 7:30 p.m.- "Puffs" in the Campus Black Box Theatre.	12 Family Weekend- Parents, family members, and supporters of current students are invited to attend a weekend of events and activities exploring campus and Milledgeville. The schedule of events and registration link can be found at gcsu.edu/parent/events-parent-family-programs . 6 p.m.- GC Volleyball vs. Young Harris. 7:30 p.m.- "Puffs" in the Campus Black Box Theatre. 8 p.m.- GC Men's Basketball vs. Coker.	13 Family Weekend- Parents, family members, and supporters of current students are invited to attend a weekend of events and activities exploring campus and Milledgeville. The schedule of events and registration link can be found at gcsu.edu/parent/events-parent-family-programs . 6:30 p.m.- GC Men's Basketball vs. Erskine. 7:30 p.m.- "Puffs" in the Campus Black Box Theatre.