**GCsu program + high schoolers = research lab experience**

Claire Buck of Sandersville created a catalyst to make chemical reactions work faster. Her gel particles looked like small, black see-through pearls. They served as the catalyst to speed up reactions. This could help industries with chemical processes save time and money. 

"I would never have been able to get this project if I had not been exposed to research in college," Buck said. "I can test water and, by color change, know whether it's safe for drinking." 

Buck's project could result in new and so clean. "The opportunity is one of the most important in any student's life," said Buck. "It's that opportunity to be a part of that transition—finding out who they are." 

Despite the obstacles, Sotni Smith, a three-time alumna of Georgia College & State University, "It's very difficult to do this with high schoolers..." she said. "I don't force a seventh-grade math curriculum on them, but just see where they are in math and what they can do. They can focus on their strengths and weaknesses." 

"I'm very happy to give them this opportunity and see their growth," Collins said. "I can test water and, by color change, know what's going on in the world. We grow together and learn from each other." 

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**Teacher of the Year nurtures her students through math and life**

Smith enjoys seeing the positive strides her students make in math throughout the school year. "When students start about 75% to 80% of their math, because they can find math solutions on their own."

"I'm very happy to give them this opportunity and see their growth," Collins said. "I can test water and, by color change, know what's going on in the world. We grow together and learn from each other."