

For Immediate Release

Summer Partnership with University of North Georgia Helps Middle School Students Guard Against ‘Summer Slide’

Athens, Georgia — The second year of a summer educational enrichment program at the University of North Georgia’s Oconee campus in Watkinsville in partnership with the Clarke County School District helped dozens of Athens-Clarke County middle school students guard against the “summer slide.”

Forty-eight students from CCSD enrolled in the second year of the Nighthawks Student Opportunities for Accelerated Readiness (SOAR) program at UNG, which targets economically disadvantaged and English-as-a-second-language youth who are prospective first-generation college students. SOAR was designed to bridge the education gap for rising sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students during a three-week, camp-like summer program in June and is intended for students who would benefit from participating in a summer enrichment and engagement program. It is provided at no cost to participants and was sponsored in part by Georgia Power.

This year’s program included creative, hands-on activities in the areas of science, math, English/language arts, research, and art. It culminated with a juried research symposium, allowing students to practice both written and oral communication skills.

A recent study published in the American Educational Research Journal found that the average student lost 17-34% of the learning gains achieved during the prior year over the summer break. Nighthawks SOAR was specifically designed to address this dip in achievement.

Students at each grade level were given pre- and post-tests in the areas of science, math, research, and language arts to gauge the success of the program. All grade levels saw significant improvements between their pre-and post-test scores. For the 62 students total in the program, the overall average point improvements from pre-test to post-test were:

- 40.05 points in science
- 23.7 points in math
- 19.86 points in research
- 4.58 points in language arts.

“We are very excited about the progress shown by our students who participated in the UNG SOAR program this summer,” said Dr. Xernona Thomas, CCSD Superintendent. “The partnership between the University of North Georgia and the Clarke County School District provides our students and teachers with the opportunity to engage in rigorous instruction in a postsecondary setting.”

Dr. J. Gary Adcox, UNG’s Director of Campus Success and Strategic Initiatives, said these results could not have been possible without the help of the four teachers who worked with the program this year. Three of those four teachers are currently employed by CCSD — Dr. Kwesi



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Yankey (Coile Middle), Dr. Sonia Sharmin (Coile Middle), and Dr. Melanie Marty (Hilsman Middle).

“I would also like to thank the school administration for their incredible work in getting the program information to the students and parents and for all their help in getting the students into the program,” said Dr. Adcox.

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