



### Top stories in this newsletter



Implementing Bilingual Education



Center on Deafness LIFE Project



Partner Schools "Power Hour"



Leadership Center Adds New Leadership Series

## A Message from the Director



The Nina B. Hollis Institute for Educational Reform and its many projects have been extremely busy implementing and presenting on services and research they have been working on these past 2-3 years. We entered 2023 with a record twelve Impact Grants providing funds in excess of \$118,000. Collaboration with Volusia County Superintendent Dr. Carmen Balgobin along with other organizations near and far has gained momentum beyond our

expectations. It has always been a vision of mine to provide our services beyond Central Florida into the southeast. I couldn't be prouder of the work that is being accomplished through the Hollis Institute. This includes the efforts of those working in the Leadership Center, Voices of Reform Journal and the PIs of our Impact Awards and other projects.

This newsletter will highlight several of our projects and the faculty behind them. I hope you enjoy reading about these projects and the wonderful team of colleagues and partners with whom I've had the pleasure of working.

## VIBE - Volusia Implements Bilingual Education

Project VIBE exists in collaboration with the ESOL Department of Volusia County Schools, who sought to implement a pilot run of a two-way immersion dual language program in the district's elementary schools. Now in its 7<sup>th</sup> month, the pilot has been approved by the Superintendent, Dr. Carmen Balgobin, for implementation in the following grade level at the current schools; in addition, two other elementary schools will implement a VPK and a Kindergarten classroom. Neither the school district nor the Florida Department of Education have allocated additional funding for this programming efforts. Rather, schools are utilizing its existing resources. Understanding the intricate components of planning, implementing and sustaining a language program, Gianna Acevedo, Volusia County Schools' ESOL Coordinator, partnered with the project's Principal Investigator, Raisa Ankeny. As such, Project VIBE's purpose was to address specific portions of the dual-language program implementation, namely, professional learning and parent engagement events.



*Holly Hill School parents enjoyed a "peek into the classroom" presentation from the VPK students and their two teachers.*

## Garden Based Learning Planting More Seeds



Several teachers from Blue Lake Elementary and Citrus Grove Elementary received \$100 mini grants this year from Stetson's Hollis Institute for Educational Reform to implement garden-based learning projects with their students. Projects at these schools ranged from creating a fruit and vegetable garden to teach health and nutrition to planting seeds to study plant needs and plant parts to expanding a butterfly garden by adding Florida native pollinator plants. Garden-based learning can create fun, hands-on learning experiences that integrate gardening with all academic areas. These projects allowed students to get their hands dirty while learning important academic content.

## 2022-23 IMPACT GRANTS

Dr. Raisa Ankeny – Volusia Implements Bilingual Education (VIBE)

Drs. Sarah Cramer and Mercedes Tichenor – Stetson Garden Based Learning Project

Dr. Hala ElAarag – Igniting the Spark: AAUW Florida Tech Trek STEM Camp for Girls

Dr. Nicole Denner – High Achieving and Talented Students (H.A.T.S.)

Drs. Sarah Garcia and Leila Roach – Brain Fitness Academy

Drs. Luca Molnar, Chaz Underriner – Collaboration with African American Museum

Dr. Kathy Piechura-Couture and Anthony Verdeja – Learning Incredible skills For Everyday Life Activities (L.I.F.E.)

Professor Judith Scully from the College of Law – Know Your Rights for Teens

Dr. Rajni Shankar-Brown – SEEDs for Justice! A Human and Civil Rights Documentary Project

Dr. Amy Smith – Volusia County Schools Early Elementary Math Professional Development

Dr. Sven Smith J.D. – Mock Trial Summer Camp

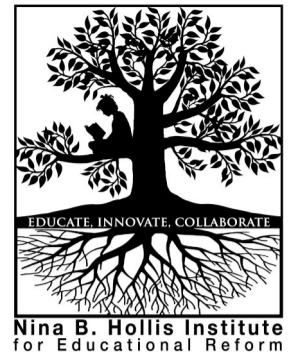
Dr. Nathan Wolek – Young Sound Seekers

## 2022-23 PLANNING GRANTS

Dr. Anthony Abbott – Recognizing & Cultivating Volusia County's Local Legends

Dr. Steven Smallpage – Stetson Political Polling Pre-College Summer Camp





### Partners Power Hour

The Hollis Foundation for Educational Reform was the proud sponsor of a leadership and development program for the administrative teams of our Professional Development Partner Schools (PDS) throughout the 2022-2023 school year. Principal’s Power Hour was a direct result of the expressed need of the PDS principals to increase student learning in mathematics at their schools. This focus was identified due to the success of one of the PDS principals, Eilene Ahr, Starke Elementary School. Ms. Ahr’s expertise as principal at a high poverty school whose math achievement data was outstanding, was asked to lead our professional learning community (PLC) designed to support PDS principals and assistant principals to engage in collaborative discussions with university faculty and their peers about best practices that impact student learning in Mathematics. What started as a meeting between two principals and a Stetson faculty partner quickly grew to a monthly meeting of the administrations of all the partner schools! We realized the power we had is our community of “sister schools near the university.

Ms. Ahr, as the peer leader of the group, shared her commitment to implementing the concepts from the book, Power Standards, Identifying the Standards that Matter the Most, by Larry Ainsworth. She shared powerful practices she engaged in at her school with her leadership team and school faculty in identifying the “power standards” in mathematics. Best practices in using the identified power standards to guide instruction and monitoring the student’s success using assessment data on each power standard were shared as essential practices! Ms. Ahr created agendas and planned her presentations for each monthly meeting with input from the group. PDS administrative teams explored their student achievement data, asked great questions, identified barriers to implementation, and with Stetson University partners, brainstormed real strategies and solutions for each of their schools.

Through our development of Power Hour this school year we feel like we were able to truly harness the strengths of our PDS partnership to support our partner schools’ administrative teams as learners and problem solvers. Power Hour provided support to these school administrators as instructional leaders! Ms. Ahr shared “working with Stetson University as part of the PDS partnership program has been enlightening for me. To know that I have experts willing to guide and be thought partners has created self confidence in the work we are doing.” Participants shared that they valued the time spent with each other and university partners, “it’s lonely at the top”, Power Hour reduced isolation and replaced it with collaboration. Principal Ryser, Woodward Elementary shared that she values her participation in Power Hour because she wanted to engage in every available opportunity to grow her skills as an elementary school principal, Power Hour gave me a “sense of community...I feel like I am not alone...I can ask questions... we are all sharing ideas...shaping and changing the way we do business at our schools.” Assistant Principal, Ericka Harris, Citrus Grove Elementary School shared that she wanted to be able to talk with other schools and to deep dive into the standards to increase her knowledge and to be able to lead that conversation at her school. Power Hour planning for the 2023-2024 school year is currently underway! The partnership is looking forward to continuing what we have begun as we grow together as lead learners!

### Teaching Incredible Skills for Everyday Life Activities



The LIFE Impact Grant was showcased at the 2023 Council for Exceptional Children International Conference. The LIFE project is a partnership between Stetson University and the Family Center on Deafness in Largo, Florida that has just completed its second year. The purpose of the grant is to provide adolescents with real-life experiences to strengthen their communication and self-advocacy skills. To reach this goal, adolescents are paired with adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. The mentor-mentee teams work together on personal, academic, and vocational skills that are then practiced in a variety of settings. Over the past two years, the mentor-mentee teams participated in team building activities such as completing a ziplining obstacle course. Further, they participated in vocational exploration by shadowing a sea turtle biologist who is also deaf. Throughout the grant period, students participated in monthly meetings and field trips that were originally planned by the staff. However, as the project progressed, the planning and communication with the field venues was handed over to the students. Feedback from the students suggests they are now more comfortable advocating for themselves. When talking about her daughter, one mother stated, “She thinks she can order anything off the menu now—I have to give her a budget!” Prior to the grant, this 13-year-old had never ordered her own meal or picked out what she wanted to eat.

#### Power Hour participants include:



Eilene Ahr  
Principal

Jamie Robinson  
Assistant Principal



Holly Bailey  
Principal

Stinette Benton  
Assistant Principal



Tracy Ryser  
Principal

Michelle McFall  
Assistant Principal



Jennifer Williams  
Principal

Erica Harris  
Assistant Principal.



### Leadership Center Adds New Leadership Series

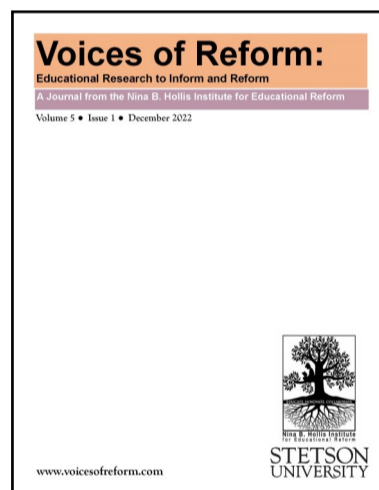


Under the Institutes Leadership Center, the Restorative Practices training and consulting contract with Seminole County Public Schools is winding down as the district is taking over the training of their own faculty/staff since being trained. A new leadership series (Building Cultures to Support Teacher Agency and Retention) geared toward teacher retention has begun and is in its first year. Cohort 1 consists of 20 first and second year principals in Volusia County. Cohort 2 will begin in the summer of 2023 and includes 20 Assistant Principals who have been accepted into Volusia County’s Principal Preparation Program. Discussions are under way with Seminole and Leon County to provide training to leadership teams in those districts as well. It has been the institutes and center’s goal to provide leadership training throughout Florida and hopefully the southeast in years to come.

The Leadership Center Restorative Schools Project is well under way with Phase 1 training provided to twenty-two educators in Seminole County in the areas of Restorative Practice, Trauma and Resilience, and Coaching. A training manual is under development with completion targeted for the fall of 2023.

### Voices of Reform Journal

As scheduled, two journals were published in 2022. The Journal was promoted at several conferences generating more article submissions for our next volume. This past fall we will publish an entire issue strictly of “Voices From the Field” papers with action research projects in a unique partnership with Florida Atlantic University and the University of Florida. In terms of traction for the journal, this should offer a much larger audience as the journal continues to grow into one of the premier education journals in our field.



### Nina B. Hollis Institute for Educational Reform

#### Mission

It is the mission of the Nina B. Hollis Institute at Stetson University to stimulate innovations for the advancement of all learners, particularly birth through grade 12 and non-traditional students relating to creating educational opportunities for all students through research and applied partnerships. The Institute focuses on outreach and dissemination to address ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situations and other factors contribute to or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement and attainment for affected groups of students.

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