

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

5/1/2024



Dr. Bette Heins

It has been another year of continued growth and success for the Nina B. Hollis Institute for Educational Reform. Professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their mathematical content and pedagogical knowledge have grown and visits to the Ron Clark Academy have been lauded by our Volusia Teacher of the Year. The Garden

Based Learning project has expanded the gardening mini-grant program through additional outside funding. Further, the Brain Fitness Acad., a collaborate program serving adults living with dementia, has had another thriving year. The Leadership Series from the Leadership Center is being conducted not only in Volusia, but also Seminole and Leon counties. We're excited about two new impact grants applications; one focusing on Political Polling Pre-College Summer Camp featured below.

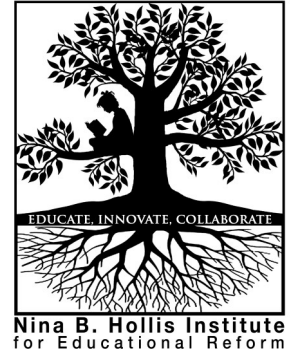
The efforts from the Hollis Institute has been spread far and wide as the work is being disseminated in academic journals and through professional conference presentations throughout the country. More on our projects can be found on the following pages.

What's New?

The Stetson Center for Public Opinion Research (CPOR) has launched a new partnership with the DeLand Youth Council to conduct a survey of young people to gauge their views on local political issues.

Funded by a Hollis Grant, this project sees a dedicated sub-committee of the DeLand Youth Council—born from a collaboration between the DeLand city government and DeLand High School—working hand-in-hand with Stetson's CPOR. This team of about a dozen high school students is not merely participating; they are immersing themselves in the intricacies of survey research. They're engaging in everything from conceptualizing the survey to investigating prior research and strategizing on distribution methods, gaining invaluable real-world experience in the process.

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2023-24 IMPACT GRANTS

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

Drs. Sarah Garcia and
Leila Roach – Brain
Fitness Academy

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

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

Dr. Rajni Shankar-
Brown – Sustainable
Educational Equity
Development (SEED)
Certification and
Symposium

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

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Garden Based Learning Blossoms

The Stetson Garden-Based Learning (GBL) project continues to grow in Volusia County. This year 49 teachers from ten Volusia County Schools received \$150.00 mini-grants to implement garden-based learning projects with their students. Our four PDS partner schools, Blue Lake, Citrus Grove, Woodward, and Starke Elementary Schools, were among the ten schools and received funding for 26 teachers. Projects ranged from expanding after school gardening clubs to creating a permaculture garden area on campus to studying plant functions, reproduction, and response to stimuli.



We planned new activities this year for our mini-grant teachers. In September, we hosted a virtual mini-grant kickoff where teachers received a Florida vegetable growing guide as well as a tip sheet we created for teachers and school gardening volunteers. Further, we shared a spreadsheet that includes names and contact information so teachers could reach out independently to other teachers for support and collaboration. In

October, we facilitated a professional development session at Citrus Grove Elementary where we toured their gardens and shared a few GBL activities. This year, we also distributed seed packets to all teachers; in November, teachers received carrot seeds and in December they received snap pea seeds. Teachers have shared fun stories about their students planting and harvesting carrots. We look forward to hearing more stories about the planting of lettuce and cucumber seeds that were delivered to teachers in March.

We are especially excited and grateful to have received additional funding from an anonymous source allowing us to expand the number of schools, fund more garden-based learning projects, and increase the grant amount for each project. We are documenting the success of the mini-grant projects and based on focus group interviews, teachers discussed how the gardening projects provide experiential learning opportunities, encourage personal accountability, support problem-solving, and strengthen academic and social skills. Further, based on the mini-grant applications, approximately 1,900 students are impacted by these projects. Finally, as a culminating event at the end of the school year, we will host a “virtual poster” session allowing teachers to share their projects and get feedback from their peers.

2023-24

IMPACT GRANTS CONTINUED

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

Kevin Winchell– Recognizing & Cultivating Volusia County’s Local Legends

2023-24

PLANNING GRANTS

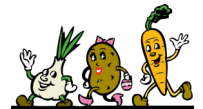
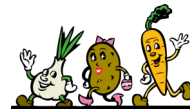
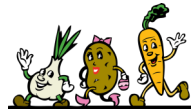
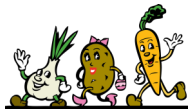
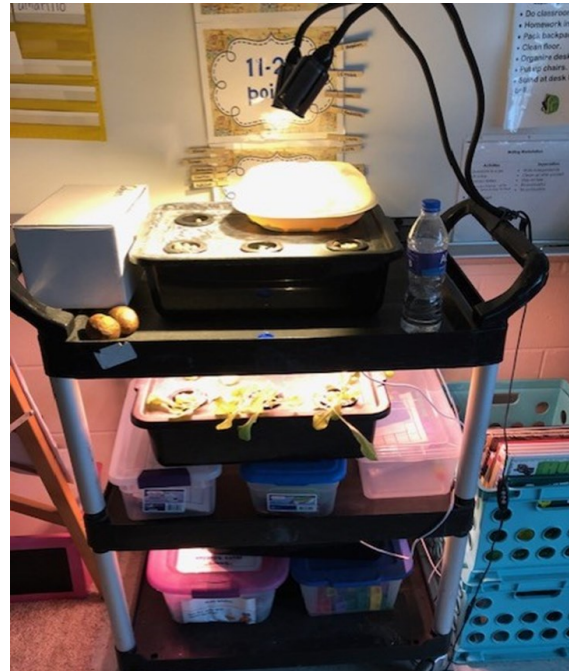
Professor Judith Scully— Mindfulness & the Law: A Youth Centered Approach

Professor Christine Cerniglia—Pathways to Justice Advocacy Academy

Garden Based Learning - Hands On Experience

Petrea Gebo at Citrus Grove Elementary

When it was too cold to work in our outdoor raised beds, our Garden Club planted some lettuce seeds in a hydroponic system. Ours is a very simple system made of black bus tubs with lids. First, we planted the seeds in rock wool cubes. Once the seeds germinated, we cared for them until the roots were well established and could be seen throughout the rockwool. Then we transplanted the sprouts in the rockwool cubes into net cups. The net cups suspend from holes in the lids of the bus tubs, allowing the roots of the plants to contact the hydroponic nutrient solution in the tub below. Our tubs fit on a 3-tiered cart which has LED grow lights installed on the underside of the tiers. One important benefit of doing hydroponic gardening with students is that it helps them understand that soil is not necessary for plants to grow.



A Test in Confidence, Patience and Commitment

Cooper Shelly and Tehmina Flowers at Blue Lake Elementary School



For year two of our Blue Lake P.E. Garden, we have added a second garden bed! We have been sharing this garden with every student on campus, which helps incorporate health and nutrition into our lessons. We have shown them that food can be grown from seeds, starter plants, and kitchen scraps of food bought at the grocery store. Currently, the new garden is boasting some snap pea and carrot seeds sent to us as well as some cooler season vegetables. Our original garden isn't currently looking pretty, but we are hoping to prove to our students that these crops can survive out of season and come back flourishing when temperatures are right

again. This has been a great project so far and we hope for continued success showing our students the accessibility of growing healthy and nutritious foods at home.

Spreading the Dual Language Word



Dual Spanish-English Language Program Expands

Project VIBE has had a great 2023-2024 school year. Our goal to implement dual language programming with quality, effective teachers is ongoing. Through collaborative planning, Gianna Acevedo and Dr. Raisa Ankeny coordinated a 7-hour professional development training for 12 teachers in August 2023 at Stetson's Brown Hall for Innovation. Two new schools, Freedom Elementary and Discovery Elementary joined the project and held ribbon cutting ceremonies in October 2023 with Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Carmen Balgobin supporting both events.

In November 2023, we furthered our leadership development by traveling with a team of 7 dual language educators and administrators to La Cosecha Dual Language Conference in Albuquerque, NM. We explored our challenges and motivations through the lens of *La Brega*, a uniquely Puerto Rican concept of resilience and overcoming obstacles through community building.

We are grateful for the matching grant awarded by FUTURES this year. It was a result of the final report's recommendations to seek additional outside funding.



Gianna Acevedo, Ines Ramos Feliciano & Dr. Raisa Ankeny at La Cosecha Dual Language Conference

PDS Partnership - Mental Health Concerns Among Teachers

Blue Lake Elementary principal, Holly Bailey, with the support of the Stetson PDS team took the lead role in developing the staff development components and shared them with Starke Elementary. The staff at both schools engaged in the reading of the book, *Two Backpacks: Learning Their Story and Building Relationships with a Trauma Informed Perspective* by Adolph Brown. Follow-up discussions and activities were designed to build foundational knowledge in teachers' understanding of trauma and its impact on students' learning and behavior.

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Supporting Primary Teachers' Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching

For the past two years, kindergarten and first-grade teachers from three schools around the district have participated in math professional development to build their conceptual understanding of the developmental progression of number for the benefit of their students. Teachers from Blue Lake, Woodward, and Ivy Hawn have re-learned foundational math concepts in base 4, beginning with verbal counting and 1-1 correspondence and into early addition and subtraction. This process has put the teachers in their students' shoes, as they struggle to count and solve "basic" math problems. This experience highlights the essential mathematical concepts that develop during early number learning and provide the teachers with tasks and supports to facilitate more developmentally appropriate math learning.



The Stetson Brain Fitness Academy (BFA)

The BFA is a cognitive rehabilitation program for older adults living with dementia or cognitive deficits. Participants take part in twice weekly cognitive exercises, memory compensation techniques, and light physical activity in a group format. Now in its third semester, the program has served over 18 older adults and their families, many of whom return for subsequent semesters. Community and campus collaborations have strengthened the program, as regular features of the program include talks from faculty, physical activity sessions from staff and community members, the Alzheimer's Association's Brain Bus, and tours of the STEM gardens, Gillespie Center, and Hand Art Center. Further, the BFA program also offers resources and a weekly support program for care partners facilitated through the Counselor Education graduate program. While these programs provide hands-on training for both undergraduate and graduate students, they also incorporate faculty and student collaborative research.



Planning Grant Timeline

Applications Due:
November 12, 2024
Planning Grant Selection
Notification:
December 1, 2024

Successful applicants (whose grant applications are accepted) will at this time, be awarded \$250 and are expected to submit a full Impact Award application.

The remainder of the planning grant award (\$750) will be awarded if their completed Impact Award is successfully approved for funding.

Research Impact Award Application Timeline Hollis Institute 2025-2026 Funding Cycle Up to \$10,000

Calls for Proposals:
October 2024
Application Due:
March 14, 2025
Award Notification:
May 2, 2025
Funding Cycle:
July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026



MATH AND SCIENCE DAY

NINA B. HOLLIS INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM SPONSORS

VONDA H. MORRIS

2024 VOLUSIA COUNTY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Ron Clark Academy was established in 2007 by Ron Clark and Kim Bearden. Located in Southeast Atlanta, Georgia, the academy is a nonprofit middle school (Grades 4-8) which promotes academic excellence and leadership surrounding students in a loving and dynamic learning environment.

MY VISIT TO RCA

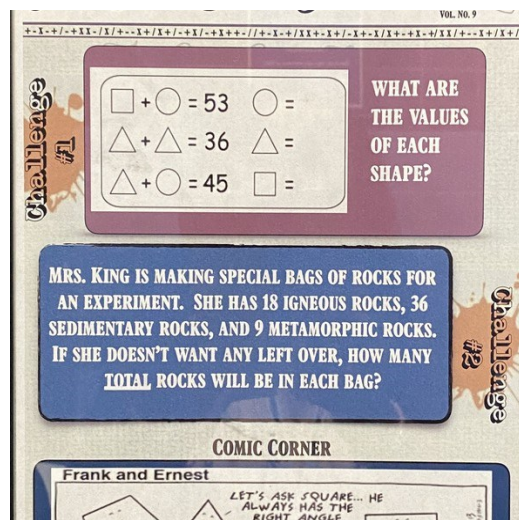
WRITTEN BY VONDA H. MORRIS

Excitement permeated the air as approximately 300 teachers descended upon RCA on a cool, rainy Friday morning on November 17, 2023. I felt the energy radiating from students, faculty, parents, and staff members. Students greeted each passerby with a smile and asked if they could be of assistance while Mr. Ron Clark diligently greeted each educator and posed for pictures like a proud Papa of this impressive academy. We all wanted a glimpse into the 55 Essentials undergirding this institution of learning.

As a secondary math teacher, I was impressed with the level and depth of knowledge a 5th grade class engaged in. The students stood to answer and ask questions of the teacher and one another. I was mesmerized by the multiplication and power facts these young people knew to compute math mentally (Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra 2).

I appreciate how Mr. Clark advised us to observe each class with a reflective eye and not a judgmental eye. My three take-aways include: 1) To set the educational bar high for our students and then build bridges to help them reach those high expectations; 2) If we are going to be here (in teaching), then be HERE (present and engaged to challenge the students and prepare them for tomorrow); and 3) Teaching is a calling and the BEST profession in the world; therefore, be passionate about educating our youth because they will rise to high expectations.

Thank you Stetson University's Nina B. Hollis Institute for Educational Reform for this awesome professional development opportunity. I brought back teaching nuggets to share with my fellow educators in Volusia County Schools and a copy of the book, *The Essential 55*, by Ron Clark. I would recommend the RCA Experience to all educators.



Leadership Center Growth Continues



The 2023-24 academic year has seen expanded growth for the Hollis Institute Leadership Center. Following last year's roll out of our new leadership training series on Building Cultures to Support Teacher Agency and Retention, which was provided in Volusia County to all new principals and assistant principals named to the district's aspiring leaders program, the series expanded to include new cohorts in both Seminole and Leon counties. The program, which provides 20 hours of leadership training focused on building positive school cultures, supported more than 50 schools this year. Each school, in collaboration with the Hollis Leadership Center and their school district, are developing culture and climate action plans for implementation in the fall of 2024.

Our Restorative Practices training program continues to provide services and support to 30 schools in Seminole County. We have revised and strengthened our training materials to include a greater focus on building collaborative cultures and on dealing with students and staff who are experiencing trauma. Finally, a new manual on building trauma informed school environments is nearing completion and will be ready for implementation in the fall of 2024.

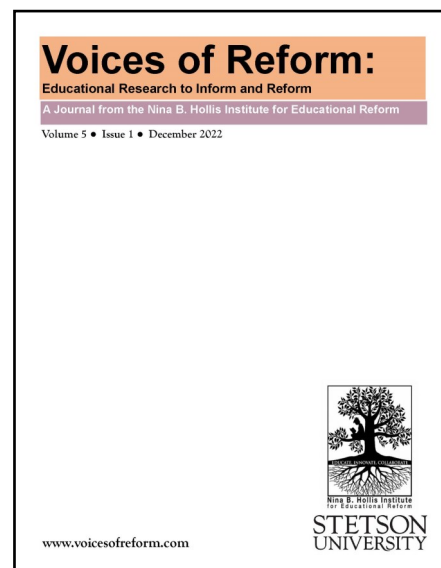
In all, the center is contracted to provide more than 75 training sessions this academic year, our busiest and most impactful year to date.



Voices of Reform

The 2023-2024 academic year has been an extremely productive year for Voices of Reform. Two issues of the journal, one in October and one in December, were uploaded to the Voices of Reform website at www.voicesofreform.com. The December issue, Issue 6, Volume 2, is of particular importance because it marks the first time that Stetson University partnered with another institution, in this case, Florida Southern College, for a jointly edited journal issue. In it, graduate students at Florida Southern College shared action research projects representing work they've done toward their advanced degrees.

The journal has doubled in scope and sequence, with submissions, readership, and the number of accepted articles. Readership has increased by 140% since the prior academic year, and the number of articles submitted has increased by 125%. This is in part to past articles receiving academic and scholarly recognition, which has caused the journal to increase in reputation.



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A key aspect of this venture is the close collaboration between these high school students and Stetson University's faculty and staff within CPOR. This year, CPOR and the Youth Council are meticulously designing, implementing, and will eventually analyze a survey on youth opinion of the parks and recreation facilities in DeLand. Their collective work is anticipated to culminate in a presentation of their findings by the Youth Council to DeLand's Mayor and City Manager. This project is not just about enhancing local recreation facilities based on youth feedback; it's a pivotal bridge connecting Stetson University with local DeLand students. These students, who might not otherwise have access to such resources, are being equipped to conduct a bona fide social scientific poll, laying the groundwork for a potential future in research and civic engagement.

Through the Hollis Grant's support, this endeavor not only seeks to enrich DeLand's public spaces but also nurtures the next generation of leaders by providing them with a platform for significant learning and impact through Stetson's CPOR.

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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PDS Partnership - Mental Health Concerns Among Teachers

It was extremely exciting to listen to teachers discuss and develop their understanding of trauma-informed practices. By investing in professional development that prioritizes resilience and trauma-informed teaching strategies, schools can create inclusive, supportive, and empowering learning environments where every student feels valued, respected, and capable of reaching their full potential. Through the collaborative efforts of the PDS partnership, administrators and teachers are building the knowledge necessary to cultivate resilience, foster academic success, and promote the holistic well-being of all students. The principals at Blue Lake Elementary and Edith I Starke agree that the goals of the collaboration for this school year, to “reach and teach all” were met!