

## STRATEGIC EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCES



### SEA STANDOUT

To say Dr. Beverly Hurley understands the education sector is comparable to saying Mozart knew a thing or two about music.

After around 40 years in the education field, holding titles ranging from teacher and board member to principal and superintendent, Dr. Hurley knows full circle the inner workings of the school system. Now serving as the director of Academic Alliances at Grand Canyon University, Dr. Hurley seeks to remain engrained in the sector that she served tirelessly for 37 years, which culminated in being named Arizona Superintendent of the Year.

While recollecting on serving as superintendent, Dr. Hurley remembered the growing pains associated with filling a new role.

"New superintendents interact with media and elected officials, neither of which most new superintendents have previous experience working with, and they are often placed in a school district with which they have little to no experience," said Dr. Hurley, referencing when she began serving the Buckeye High School District as superintendent.

"School leadership is hard work and superintendents can become isolated. We saw a need for a program designed to assist new district leaders in succeeding at their role."

The program that Dr. Hurley eludes to is the GCU-backed Superintendents Collaborative Network that is cosponsored by the Arizona Department of Education and the Arizona School Administrators Association. The program provides materials, five in-person sessions, mentors and a platform referred to as a Professional Learning Network where new superintendents can converse freely about their new roles. GCU contributes organizational support, reading materials, agendas, luncheons and like-minded professionals such as former superintendents to act as mentors.

The goal of the program is to facilitate the transition into the high-ranking position within the school district. Acknowledging that the old motto "it's lonely at the top" does oftentimes ring true. The Professional Learning Network was developed to serve as an open forum for the new superintendents, while the mentors allow for more intimate conversations to take place between an experienced individual and one assigned with filling a similar role to that once held by the mentor. The learning sessions and reading materials further educate the new superintendents by providing unique takes on leadership, planning, principal development and other facets that the job will undoubtedly entail.

With 2016 set to be the program's second year, Dr. Hurley is looking forward to following up on the program's continued first-year success.

"It has been a great opportunity for GCU to sponsor this worthwhile program benefitting school districts throughout the state," says Dr. Hurley. And, if recent trends are any indication of what is to come, this program will become more and more of a necessity.

As funding from the school system continues to be inadequate, similar programs for assisting new superintendents see the effects. These cuts come at a time when current district superintendents are retiring at a staggering rate or relocating to other states.

The program's first year has 33 superintendents from school districts throughout Arizona taking advantage of the learning opportunity. Future programs are expected to serve high numbers in years to come.

When asked about the recent success of the program, Dr. Hurley smiled, "It has afforded GCU the privilege of working alongside the Arizona Department of Education and the Arizona School Administrators Association to network with educational leaders throughout the state. Any way we can assist, we are proud and pleased to do so."

For more information about the Superintendents Collaborative Network, please contact Dr. Beverly Hurley, director of Academic Alliances, at [beverly.hurley@gcu.edu](mailto:beverly.hurley@gcu.edu).

### CANYON COMMUNITY

#### Orangewood School

On a brisk afternoon in early December, teachers at Orangewood School in Washington Elementary School District found themselves being overrun by robots that they themselves created. The cute creations were not the result of an experiment gone bad, rather, a well-thought-out professional development opportunity that was one component of a teacher appreciation event spearheaded by Shannon McBride, pastor at Open Door Fellowship Church.

The idea came about after the recent GCU-sponsored School Connect Summit designed to build relationships among local schools, businesses, faith-based organizations and non-profits. Open Door Fellowship Church's congregation wanted to show their appreciation to teachers working so hard at their

neighborhood elementary school. After scheduling the event to align with an upcoming staff development day, McBride reached out to local businesses to contribute with flowers and a catered lunch. GCU's Strategic Educational Alliances' Director of Educational Development and Support, Kathryn Scott, was quick to jump on board by sponsoring one of her most popular professional development workshops, "Robots are Misunderstood."

Using simple materials like double-sided tape, a watch battery, a pager motor, a toothbrush and some aesthetic pieces such as little plastic eyes, teachers were tasked with designing a tiny robot (endearingly referred to as a BristleBot) that could move in a relatively straight line. The teachers worked swiftly and diligently—some preferring to go lone wolf and others forming groups to combine materials in hopes of producing winning bots. Results varied, but the entire room was abuzz. The teachers were excited and the lesson was learned.

On a scheduled early-release day, teachers were told they were to attend staff meetings. The teachers instead arrived to flowers, confections, a great learning experience and a community that came together to show their appreciation.

You can learn more about School Connect at [schoolconnectaz.com](http://schoolconnectaz.com)

SEA offers a wide range of Professional Development opportunities that are customized to address specific needs. For more information, please contact Kathryn Scott, director of Educational Development and Support, at [kathryn.scott@gcu.edu](mailto:kathryn.scott@gcu.edu).

## HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT

*Have you thought about...*

"Math."

A word often muttered with an accompanied sigh. A subject that for many students is avoided like the plague and still for many adults is hated more than sitting in traffic on a Friday after work. But, it is with high hopes and eager eyes that the Strategic Educational Alliances Department at GCU, two renowned Arizona mathematicians and a group of willing local mathematics educators seek to change the stigma associated with this all-important subject by altering the way that math is taught.

As Arizona high schools strive to improve test scores and prepare students for college and careers, many focus on math. Algebra, particularly at the freshman level, is said to be the gatekeeper subject that transitions students from basic math into more complex subjects that depend on its teachings. To that end, teachers can no longer rely on skill demonstration and memorization strategies to meet today's needs.

Kathryn Scott, the director of Educational Development and Support in GCU's Strategic Educational Alliances asserts, "Knowing the importance of mathematics for our students, school administrators consistently identify math as one of their greatest Professional Development needs. Students need to problem solve and reason to improve test scores and prepare for careers, especially in the STEM field."

But just as learning math can sometimes be tedious and taxing, so too is coming up with a curriculum that challenges students while inspiring them. So how can teachers develop students' skills to meet today's needs? They can Think Big!

The **Think Big High School Summer Math Institute** is a five-day program, hosted by GCU, for high school mathematics educators and school teams. Taking place June 13-17 and conducted by Dr. Scott Adamson and Dr. Trey Cox, the event uses the Standards for Mathematical Practice as a framework for showing teachers how they can promote the conceptual development of important mathematical ideas, develop teacher mathematical content knowledge and learn strategies to facilitate professional development that they can share with staff or colleagues.

"We are so pleased to be able to tap into the expertise of these two leading Arizona mathematicians," says Scott, "The ultimate goal is to produce students that are better prepared for careers, especially in the STEM field."

For more information or questions, contact Kathryn Scott, director of Educational Development and Support, at [kathryn.scott@gcu.edu](mailto:kathryn.scott@gcu.edu).

## LOPES LATEST

STEM is a hot topic in the K-12 world and here at GCU. The same holds true in the working world—where science, technology, engineering and math-related jobs are in high demand throughout the country.

But if you ask Amanda Hughens, past science teacher and technology director, current Strategic Educational Alliances' STEM outreach program manager and president of the Arizona Science Teachers Association (ASTA), she'll tell you that STEM is just downright cool.

Hughens is passionate about helping students find that "cool factor," whether through STEM events for students, teacher professional development or by spearheading grants that support schools' STEM programs.

At heart, Hughens is a science teacher who has developed a series of opportunities for students to learn about STEM. STEM Saturdays at GCU give middle and high school students the opportunity to engage in interactive workshops through creative expression, investigation, construction and fun, all culminating in the Family Christmas Makers Style. Participants made everything from LED light projects and 3D designs to custom holiday cards, fused-fabric sewing crafts and jewelry.

"When you provide students with hands-on experiences that require critical thinking skills, they recognize that STEM can be a cool thing and it might be something they want to do as a career," says Hughens. There have been several opportunities for teachers to receive hands-on professional development at the Saturday events as well.

Hughens will be even more involved in STEM professional development as she takes over the reins of the ASTA. ASTA has long been known as an organization that supports science teachers by providing them with resources and professional development opportunities.

Looking forward to her new role, Hughens asserts, "This will be a great opportunity to help inspire, engage and support teachers who are crucial in

developing the STEM learners of today who will fill the increasing demand for the STEM workforce."

Hughens also oversees SEA's STEM sponsorship program and recently announced 20 winners of \$500 grants. She is very excited to see the creative ideas teachers bring to their schools. Grant winners included robotics clubs of all ages, school gardens (including aeroponic, hydroponic and some with chickens), and school and community STEM fairs or Science Nights. Now that's cool!

More information about STEM mini-grants and summer camps will be sent to schools in the near future. You can contact Amanda Hughens, K-12 STEM outreach manager, at [amanda.hughens@gcu.edu](mailto:amanda.hughens@gcu.edu).

## SEA/GCU UPCOMING EVENTS

STEM Innovations Administrator Breakfast

**Date:** Jan. 26, 2016

**Time:** 8:30 - 10:30 am

**Location:** GCU

**No cost**

This is an opportunity to hear from the most popular STEM organizations in the Valley, all in one place on GCU's campus. Learn how each group is creating unique student engagement, mentorships and rewarding experiences preparing innovative and creative critical thinkers for today and tomorrow.

STEM organizations include:

- Mathematics, Engineering, Science Association (MESA) Competition
- Arizona Department of Education Professional Development Workshops
- First Robotics
- Vex Robotics
- Science Foundation Arizona
- Arizona Science Center
- Arizona Science Teachers Association
- Arizona Sci-Tech Festival - Chief Science Officers
- Project Lead the Way

For more information or to RSVP, contact Amanda Hughens at [amanda.hughens@gcu.edu](mailto:amanda.hughens@gcu.edu).

## Gifted and Talented Series

**Dates:**

Feb. 16, 2016

March 8, 2016

March 29, 2016

**Time:** 5:30 - 7:30 pm

**Location:** Madison School District Office

**No Cost**

### **Feb. 16: *My Child is Gifted, What Now?***

Raising a gifted and high-ability learner comes with a unique set of challenges. Gifted identification is just the beginning. Understanding characteristics of gifted learners is a great way to start the conversation.

### **March 8: *Social and Emotional Challenges of Gifted Learners***

Gifted and high-ability learners may struggle to find ways to connect with peers and establish lasting friendships. Perfectionism, anxiety and other social struggles may impact the academic and social development of these learners. Understanding the challenges starts with identification and then the development of strategies to guide gifted learners on their social and emotional journey.

### **March 29: *Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking***

Critical and creative thinking strategies enhance the learning environment of the gifted and high-ability learner. How do we ensure that both avenues are developed? What does critical thinking look like? Does creativity have a place in today's classroom? Come and share in the discussion.

For more information, contact Kathryn Scott at [kathryn.scott@gcu.edu](mailto:kathryn.scott@gcu.edu).

## STEM Teacher Make-It Take-It "Flight of the Ping Pong Ball" Workshop

**Date:** March 1, 2016

**Time:** 5:30 - 7:30 pm

**Location:** TBD

**Cost:** \$15 Participant Schools/\$25 Non Participant Schools

For more information, contact Kathryn Scott at [kathryn.scott@gcu.edu](mailto:kathryn.scott@gcu.edu).

## **STEM Teacher Make-It Take-It “Robot are Misunderstood” Workshop**

**Date:** April 12, 2016

**Time:** 5:30 - 7:30 pm

**Location:** TBD

**Cost:** \$15 Participant Schools/\$25 Non Participant Schools

For more information, contact Kathryn Scott at [kathryn.scott@gcu.edu](mailto:kathryn.scott@gcu.edu).

## **Think Big Summer Math Institute for High School Teachers**

**Dates:** June 13 - 17, 2016

**Time:** 8 am - 4 pm

**Location:** Grand Canyon University

**Cost:** \$450 Participant Schools/\$500 Non Participant Schools

### **Think Big Topics:**

**June 13:** Linear Modeling emphasizing covariation and rate of change

**June 14:** Quadratics and Higher Order Polynomials Modeling emphasizing covariation and rate of change

**June 15:** Statistical Modeling emphasizing univariate and bivariate data

**June 16 - 17:** Train-the-Trainer Tips and Strategies to create an effective staff development

For more information, contact Kathryn Scott at [kathryn.scott@gcu.edu](mailto:kathryn.scott@gcu.edu).

## **SEA RECENT EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Nov. 19, 2015: Building STEM, Developing Character Women’s Basketball Game**

In celebration of the growing STEM culture at GCU, over 1,100 students attended a Division 1 women’s basketball game. Students watched teamwork, resiliency and attitude in action and heard a STEM presentation following the game.

### **Nov. 21, 2015: Code.org Workshop**

GCU hosted a Code.org workshop for teachers that was designed to prepare them to conduct computer programming courses for grades K-5. Code.org affiliate and experienced computer science educator Janice Mak offered this free workshop on GCU’s campus.

### **Dec. 3, 2015: Muttigrees**

School administrators and community organizations from across the Valley attended a Muttigrees workshop at Echo Mountain Primary School. They were exposed to research-based, standards-aligned Muttigrees K12 Curriculum, along with implementation options, service learning and youth development programs.

The event showcased schools in the area that are using Muttigrees and observing reduced incidences of bullying and classroom conflict. SEA is proud to support Muttigrees Curriculum, a Yale University program that teaches social and emotional learning through the context of humane education and shelter animals.

### **Nov. 14 and Dec. 12, 2015: STEM Saturdays**

Middle and high school students attended a Games and Gaming workshop on campus as part of SEA’s STEM Saturdays program. Students selected from Mindcraft, Coding and Programming, Video Production and Electrical Circuitry sessions.

STEM Saturdays culminated in a Family Christmas Makers Style workshop for children from preschool through fifth grade and their parents. They made items such as light-up jewelry, catapults for Christmas ornaments and self-designed picture frames.

## **PARTICIPANT CORNER**

On Thursday, Nov. 5, the PureFlix North by Northwest Christian High School Film Festival drew over 1,000 attendees to the AMC Deer Valley 30 theater in north Phoenix. The event, sponsored by PureFlix entertainment and hosted by Association of Christian Schools International’s Rocky Mountain regional office, featured student-made digital short films by eight different finalists from Northwest Christian School, Scottsdale Christian Academy, Pusch Ridge Christian Academy and Paradise Valley Christian Prep.

The festival included appearances by professionals involved in the growing Christian movie industry, including David White (star and producer of “God’s Not Dead”), Stephen Kendrick (“War Room,” “Facing the Giants”) and Brian Gerber (one of Grand Canyon University’s film instructors).

The student films competed for cash prizes in two categories. The Audience Favorite was chosen in real time by attendees who voted using their mobile phones after watching the selections. The Jury Award was selected by a panel of film industry experts, including three different Christian movie production companies and the program director for the GCU Department of Digital Film, Lisa Tervo. Details regarding the fall 2016 event will be released on Jan. 1 at [NXWFFilmFestival.com](http://NXWFFilmFestival.com).