

PROJECT ZERO

HARVARD GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



Troup County School System



PROJECT ZERO



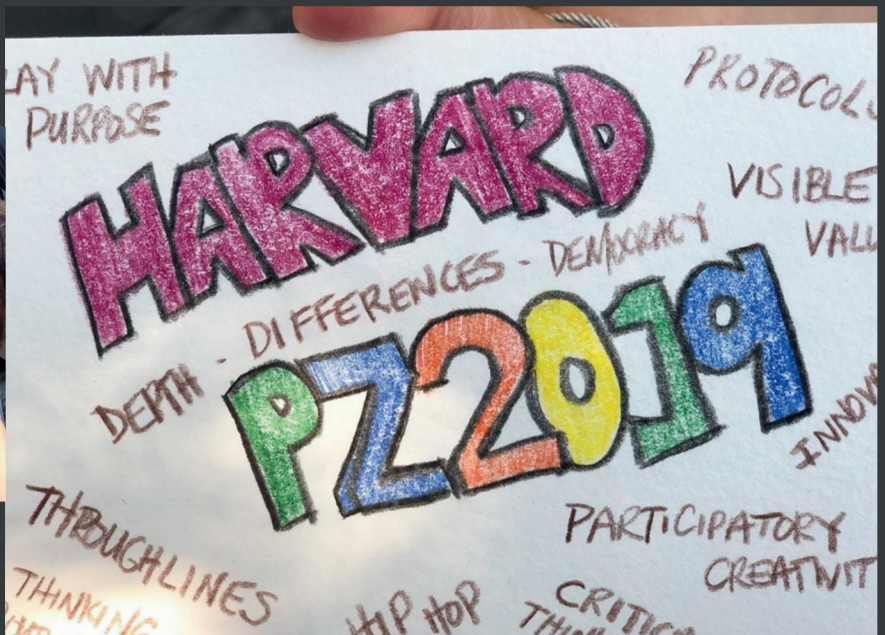
2023-2024

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• PROJECT ZERO •



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What is Project Zero?

Project Zero was founded at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 1967, initially focusing on learning in and through the arts. Now in its sixth decade, PZ has extended well beyond the arts into all facets, ages, and institutions of learning around the world - ever striving to meld educational theory and practice toward a more enlightened, holistic approach to learning. PZ research focuses on building educational processes that support learners - in diverse contexts - in ways that equip them to think deeply, reflectively, and responsibly so that they can make valuable contributions to their world.

Today, Project Zero is an intellectual wellspring seeking to understand and nurture human potentials - such as learning, thinking, ethics, intelligence, and creativity - in all human beings. PZ's educational research is far-reaching and transformative - carried out through almost 50 ongoing research projects that span the globe. Some of the more well-known projects include Cultures of Thinking, Justice by Design, Pedagogy of Play, Making Learning Visible, Multiple Intelligences, Teaching for Understanding, and Visible Thinking.

For the last 25 years, PZ has hosted the Project Zero Classroom on campus in Cambridge, a week-long global learning institute featuring research-based tools, frameworks, and approaches to instruction and assessment that deepen learning and understanding for all students. Each year, the PZC summer institute connects and inspires educators from over 30 countries! Our community has been privileged to send a select number of teachers to PZC each year since 2016, and we hope to continue this tradition in the years to come.

Historical Perspective

In 2015, after hearing about Project Zero's rich history and ongoing educational research, local community leaders approached TCSS about the possibility of sending someone from our district to the Project Zero Classroom summer institute. Our community raised funds to send the district teacher of the year - Michelle Ashmore - to the Project Zero Classroom in 2016. The experience greatly inspired Ashmore, but she felt that being able to experience it with colleagues would take the utility of the concepts to a whole new level. Our very generous community then agreed to raise funds to send Ashmore back in 2017 with five additional colleagues selected by principals and school district leaders. Since then, TCSS has continued to send teams to PZC each year with continued community support. Each year, the team is a mix of one-year PZC veterans and new participants. Additionally, the growing cohort of TCSS-PZC alums have continued to collaborate with each other - strengthening ties between schools - as well as sharing their expertise at district professional development events. There are 21 Project Zero Classroom alumni currently employed by TCSS.

TCSS Project Zero Alumni

- Laura Banks - Callaway High
- Aidan Blackwell - LaGrange High
- Yashica Brooks - Callaway High
- Kerri Burckbuchler - Admin. Services Center
- Debbie Cox - Gardner Newman Middle
- Jase Crenshaw - Long Cane Elementary
- David Diehl - Troup High
- Desa Fuller - Gardner Newman Middle
- Tiffany Graham - Troup High
- Randy Hardigree - LaGrange High
- Hailey Monterella - Callaway Elementary
- Sara Proctor - Ethel W. Kight Elementary
- Rebekah Ralph - Admin. Services Center
- Mesha Riley - Berta Weathersbee Elementary
- Leah Selbie - LaGrange High
- Traviera Sewell - Long Cane Middle
- Lori Slay - LaGrange High
- Lisa Skinner - LaGrange High
- Lindsay Trinrud - LaGrange High
- Courtney Warner - Rosemont Elementary
- Justin Williams - Callaway High



Yashica Brooks, Project Zero Team Leader - 2023

Yashica Brooks earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech and Theatre from Albany State University, followed by a Master of Science in Elementary Education and an Educational Specialist degree in Elementary Education from Troy University. Brooks also holds Tier I Certification in Education Leadership from LaGrange College.

Ms. Brooks has a wide range of experiences within the Troup County School System. She began her career as a paraprofessional at West Point Elementary. In 2004, she became a certified teacher for 4th and 5th grades at West Point Elementary, where she worked for 16 years. In 2009, Brooks was recognized as Teacher of the Year at West Point Elementary and co-elementary Teacher of the Year for the Troup County School System. In 2009, Ms. Brooks embraced the challenges of the virtual classroom as a 3rd-5th-grade virtual teacher, demonstrating adaptability and innovation in her teaching methods. Brooks furthered her experience in 2021 as a science teacher at CMS. Now, she serves as a member of the science faculty at Callaway High School.

Brooks believes that her pursuit of professional development and her commitment to enhancing the learning experience led her to the Project Zero Classroom (PZC) program. This transformative experience has allowed her to “explore the depths of visible thinking and build a culture of critical thinking in my classroom. Meeting and learning from distinguished educators like Ron Ritchhart and Mark Church has been a game-changer in my teaching approach.” Brooks enjoys using visible thinking techniques, such as Gallery Walks, to engage and empower students.



Kerri Burckbuchler

Over the last two decades, Kerri Burckbuchler has served in many capacities in both public and independent schools in Virginia and Georgia. With seventeen years of teaching experience in Virginia, Burckbuchler taught English and Civics to students in grades 8-12. She has worked with students of varying levels, including Advanced Placement and remedial reading courses. She began her career in the Troup County School System in 2020, first as an ELA teacher at Callaway High School and then as a Secondary Literacy Facilitator under the L4GA grant. Mrs. Burckbuchler has a B.A. in English from the University of Connecticut and an M.Ed. in Reading Instruction from the University of West Georgia, where she earned recognition as the top student in the graduate program.

Burckbuchler believes that Project Zero's strategies for thinking and learning allow students to think critically and creatively. The PZ experience allowed her to connect with teachers from around the globe who believe that inquiry, collaboration, and autonomy can be the keys to deeper learning. As literacy facilitator, Burckbuchler has brought back PZ strategies to share with district teachers. She particularly loves the slow thinking strategy that allows students to “engage in conversations about art and literature through different cultural lenses and lived experiences. When students and teachers are able to learn through this type of discourse, they gain a deeper understanding of the subject and the connections between ideas.” Burckbuchler states, “Project Zero pushed me outside my comfort zone. I was asked to think about subjects through artistic and cultural lenses that challenged my understanding of teaching and learning. Meeting colleagues from around the world has also enhanced my practice. I am now able to look at the way other school districts, teachers, and educational organizations approach teaching and learning. By collaborating with some of these colleagues, I have been able to give meaningful guidance to teachers and students here in Troup County.”

Tiffany Graham

Tiffany Graham teaches Biology at Troup High School. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Middle Grades Education from LaGrange College. Graham also holds a gifted endorsement and an Educational Specialist degree in Teacher Leadership, which she earned from Troy University. In 2019, Graham received the SAE International Award for Teaching Excellence Honoring Gary Dickinson. This award honors an outstanding middle school teacher or a team of teachers who have made creative and exemplary use of the A World In Motion® (AWIM ®) program to develop students' understanding of math, science, and engineering.

Mrs. Graham began her career in 2008 teaching science at Gardner Newman Middle School. She also taught science at Long Cane Middle for seven years prior to joining the science department at Troup High School in 2022.

Graham found the entire PZC program to be a positive experience. However, the most impactful part of the program was meeting teachers from all over the world. She became particularly close to a group of educators from Australia and India. Having the opportunity to collaborate with amazing teachers from all parts of the globe led Mrs. Graham to state, "Although we are thousands of miles apart, our challenges in education are very similar." The most exciting strategies she learned from Project Zero were teaching routines that can be applied quickly and easily in every lesson to assess student learning. By embedding these strategies into her daily lesson plans, she is able to help students make meaning of what they are learning.



Rebekah Ralph

Rebekah Ralph serves as a Specialist for Teacher Effectiveness for Troup County Schools. Dr. Ralph earned her undergraduate degree from Wingate University in Elementary Education. She holds an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction and an Educational Specialist degree in Teaching Leadership from LaGrange College. She earned her Doctorate in Educational Innovation from Augusta University.

Dr. Ralph began her teaching career at Rosemont Elementary, where she taught 4th grade for six years. In 2014, she joined the faculty of LaGrange College in the Education Department. She rejoined the Troup County School System in her current role in 2022. Dr. Ralph was a recipient of the NCAA Postgraduate Scholarship and was named Teacher of the Year for Rosemont Elementary in 2014.



"The week we spent at PZC was one of the best professional development experiences I have ever received. I left with actionable strategies and a plan for implementation," stated Dr. Ralph. The experience equipped Dr. Ralph to support teachers in establishing an environment where thinking and learning occur at high levels.



Lori Slay

Lori Slay has been teaching English at LaGrange High School since 2006. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Mississippi State University. She has an endorsement in gifted education and holds an M.Ed. from LaGrange College. In 2011, she was named the Troup County School System's Teacher of the Year.

Mrs. Slay moved from Mississippi to LaGrange in 1992. She is the proud parent of three sons, all of whom graduated from LaGrange High School. Her oldest son, Kirk, currently teaches at Franklin Forest Elementary School.

Slay particularly enjoyed a PZ session conducted by Mark Church, the co-author of *Making Thinking Visible: How to Promote Engagement, Understanding, and Independence for All Learners* and *The Power of Making Thinking Visible: Practices to Engage and Empower All Learners*. Mrs. Slay stated, "By equipping students with these skills, educators empower future

generations to tackle not only immediate challenges but challenges faced beyond the classroom."

Mrs. Slay has found that implementing the strategies she learned enhances students' critical thinking abilities, fosters a positive and engaging learning environment, and has a profound impact on students' problem-solving skills.



Lindsay Trinrud, Project Zero Team Leader - 2024

Lindsay Trinrud teaches Math and IB Theory of Knowledge at LaGrange High School. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Mathematics from the University of Georgia. Mrs. Trinrud holds both an M.Ed. and an Educational Specialist degree in Curriculum and Instruction from LaGrange College. She has been teaching for 18 years and has been with LaGrange High for the past 12 years. In 2021, she was named Teacher of the Year.

Mrs. Trinrud reflected that a crucial part of the PZ experience is small study groups with people from all around the world. "During this time, I was able to reflect on how learning is a consequence of thinking. It was exciting to work together on the ways we can help students to wonder, to reason with evidence, to be curious, or to make connections."

In a recent Geometry unit focused on transformations, Mrs. Trinrud utilized a PZ thinking routine called Zoom In to have students explore Escher's "Day and Night." Slowly revealing more of the picture, students made observations that led to claims about transformations and congruence. After attending PZ, Trinrud states that during planning, she asks herself, "What do I want my students to understand? Not what do I want them to know!"

Courtney Warner

Courtney Warner teaches 3rd grade at Rosemont Elementary. She began teaching nine years ago at Franklin Forest Elementary, where she was named Teacher of the Year in 2019. Mrs. Warner earned her Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education and M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from LaGrange College.

Mrs. Warner exclaimed, “The time spent at PZC was simply incredible! The thinking routines and strategies that I learned during my time there have proven to be invaluable. The professional development provided at PZC has allowed me to cultivate a culture of thinking within my own classroom.”

Project Zero was a transformational experience for Mrs. Warner, which has changed the way she sees her students and shaped the way she plans for learning. She points to her study group, which allowed her the opportunity to gain insight and perspectives from educators from around the world. She was able to make connections and hone in on the idea of language and critical thinking. Her biggest takeaway from Project Zero was strategies for “shaping the language we use in the classroom in order to promote critical thinking.”



Justin Williams

Justin Williams teaches history at Callaway High School. He is a proud native of LaGrange and a product of the Troup County School System where he graduated from Troup High School. He cherishes the opportunity to give back to his community by teaching in the school system where he was educated. He has been teaching at Callaway for the past seven years and was named Teacher of the Year in 2022. Mr. Williams has a Bachelor's in History from Miles College and a Master of Arts in Teaching from LaGrange College.

Mr. Williams asserts that “one exceptional highlight from my time at Project Zero was the incredible diversity of the perspectives and backgrounds within the community. It was truly inspiring to interact with people from various walks of life, each bringing unique insights and experiences to the table. This diversity not only enriched the learning experience but also fostered a sense of inclusivity that made every moment at Project Zero engaging and thought-provoking.”

Mr. Williams utilizes visible thinking routines developed by Project Zero to encourage students to think critically about historical content. These routines provide structured frameworks for discussing and analyzing historical events, primary sources, and complex ideas.



Project Zero Providing Leadership in the District

After Project Zero has ended, each summer, teachers and leaders are tasked with bringing the ideas about learning from Harvard University to the Troup County School System. This task is accomplished through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), the Summer Learning Institute, the Teacher Connection Newsletter, and ongoing research.

Professional Learning Communities

Teachers in TCSS are involved in PLCs within their school. These PLCs work together to interpret standards, develop lesson plans and pacing guides, create common assessments, analyze assessment data, and study best teaching practices. A PLC may be composed of teachers within a common course, subject area, or program. For example, a PLC might consist of just Economics teachers, the entire literature department, or the IB diploma program teachers.

When teachers return from PZ, they bring back a wealth of knowledge to the PLCs. Together, they can explore thinking routines, research, professional books, or other ideas that were presented. For example, one of our past participants introduced the thinking routine called “See, Think, Wonder” to her department. As a department, the PLC teachers discussed their goals for student thinking, and then they determined how and where this strategy could be implemented.

Summer Learning Institute

Before the 2023-2024 school year began, TCSS held a Summer Learning Institute for all teachers. Teachers were invited to plan and present mini-sessions to showcase their best practices in education. Project Zero participants offered mini-sessions showcasing strategies about learning inspired by the PZ Classroom. Three of these well-attended workshops were “Creating Cultures of Language and Thinking”, “Behind their Screams”, and “PZ Ideas in the Science Classroom”. The first session focused on creating classrooms where “thinking is valued, visible, and actively promoted” in everyday practices. The second session focused on research-based approaches to help students understand technological designs and strategies to support teachers in developing student agency with technology use. The last session partnered research-based thinking routines with high school science standards to promote deeper thinking in the science classroom.

Teacher Connection Newsletter

At the end of every month, our Specialist for Teacher Effectiveness for TCSS, Rebekah Ralph, sends out a newsletter highlighting top-notch teaching. For the 2023-2024 school year, this newsletter will also include the "8 cultural forces" from Creating Cultures of Thinking and the ten mindsets from Cultures of Thinking in Action - all of which are concepts stemming from Project Zero research. This newsletter will help to share these mindsets and practices with all teachers and school employees within Troup County. In addition, the newsletter will include examples of Project Zero's thinking routines in practice within classrooms across the county that other teachers and schools could study, replicate, or adapt.

Harvard Connection

Two Troup County PZ group members have had the honor and privilege of working directly with Harvard University while providing leadership for Troup County Schools. Randy Hardigree of LaGrange High School and Yashica Brooks from Callaway High School are invaluable members of the TCSS team who continue to learn and grow in their profession as a result of this project.

Randy Hardigree

After attending the PZC summer institute as a participant in 2017 and 2018, Randy Hardigree made numerous connections with PZ faculty based on the degree to which PZ frameworks had impacted his approach to teaching. The PZ faculty chose to offer Hardigree two rare opportunities: an invitation to apply for a PZC 2019 Fellow for the summer institute and an invitation to facilitate a workshop at the 2019 PZ Perspectives Conference in Atlanta.

Mr. Hardigree was one of only twenty 2019 PZC Fellows chosen from around the globe. As a fellow, Hardigree acted as a PZ Faculty assistant in exchange for his PZC tuition being covered. TCSS covered Hardigree's travel expenses associated with the Fellow opportunity. Hardigree also presented a "PZ Ideas in the Science Classroom" workshop at the Atlanta PZ Perspectives conference. Following the PZC 2019 Fellow role, he was hired to be a part of the tentative PZC 2020 faculty and a coach/facilitator for PZ's online offerings. Hardigree later converted his previous workshop into a virtual platform - and he facilitated this live workshop in November 2020 to participants from around the world. Hardigree continued to work as a PZ online coach and workshop facilitator from 2020-2023.

In June of 2023, PZ held the first Project Zero Classroom summer institute since the beginning of the pandemic. Hardigree was on the PZC Faculty, serving as a study group leader and workshop facilitator. Hardigree continues to work as an online coach for multiple PZ class offerings and most recently facilitated a workshop for PZ at the Learning & Thinking that Make a Difference conference in Pittsburgh, PA.

Yashica Brooks

Yashica Brooks attended Project Zero in 2019. In 2023, she returned to Harvard as the Troup County cohort leader. She was recently selected to participate in a research project with Harvard called The Good Work Project. As a part of this project, Ms. Brooks will present lessons to her students and collect data for the Project Zero Classroom research project.

Founded by psychologists Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, William Damon, and Howard Gardner in 1996, The Good Work Project has two decades of experience carrying out qualitative research and developing practical materials with an emphasis on topics including the meaning of good work, effective collaboration, digital citizenship, and civic participation. Presently, through research-based concepts, frameworks, and resources, The Good Work Project strives to equip individuals to reflect upon the ethical dilemmas that arise in everyday life by providing them with the tools to make thoughtful decisions.

While completing her research for The Good Work Project, Ms. Brooks will be enrolled in courses offered by the Harvard Graduate School of Education in order to complete a certificate in Instructional Leadership.



Selection Process

Founded at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the Project Zero Classroom Summer Institute is a unique learning opportunity for educators to explore thinking and human potential in creative, collaborative, and innovative environments. TCSS is excited to offer teachers and administrators the opportunity to participate in Project Zero. Certified staff with three or more years of experience who wish to participate are encouraged to complete the online application, which will open in early November. The selection process is rigorous; staff will respond to several writing prompts that gauge their leadership capabilities, current classroom practices, and future goals.

Because the PZC experience is intensive, TCSS believes that a combination of new and experienced participants will provide the most significant impact on our students and the system as a whole. Applications will be reviewed by a committee of district administrators and Project Zero alumni; six new participants and four alumni participants will be selected to attend this summer learning experience. TCSS will announce the new PZ class in December.



Fundraising

Based on the testimonials of the Troup County School System teachers who have had the opportunity to attend the Harvard Graduate School of Education Project Zero Classroom experience, participation in this powerfully robust professional development can be transformative. TCSS wishes to continue to offer this phenomenal opportunity to educators each summer. This opportunity could not be possible without the generosity of our community. We greatly appreciate the following donors for their ongoing support of the PZC program:

Community Foundation of Troup County: The Troup Permanent Fund

Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley: West Point Fund

Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley: EHH Fund

Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley: Beason Fund

The Charter Foundation

Rotary Club of LaGrange

Lions Club of LaGrange

Kiwanis Club of LaGrange

The Schaufler Family

In 2024, the Troup County School System would like to provide ten dedicated educators the opportunity to participate in this extraordinary experience. The total cost for registration and travel is approximately \$60,000. We have set a fundraising goal of \$30,000 to help offset the cost of this professional learning. We truly appreciate the support of our community partners.



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