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Office of University
Communications

November 3, 2015

Sarah Haywood ('18) Writes Compelling Argument for Elementary Social Studies

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – “We have to start teaching social studies in the younger years, as this is a time in the children’s lives when they begin to develop social, problem-solving, and certain societal attitudes and views that will influence the rest of their lives.”

Sarah Haywood poses with Fay Gore from N.C. Department of Public Instruction.

These words written in a blog by Sarah Haywood, a student in the Gardner-Webb School of Education, recently gained the attention of Fay Gore, Section Chief for K-12 Social Studies at N.C. Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

“It was my second post of the social studies methods class, about why the subject of social studies was such a crucial subject to teach in elementary schools,” Haywood shared. “At the time, I did not think much about the post, but my professor, Dr. Jason Parker, had tweeted a link to the post to Fay Gore.”

Gore read Haywood’s post and wrote this complimentary response, “... After such a thoughtful, well-written, compelling argument, I’m hopeful that you, Sarah, can make that happen for your future students! If I were a principal anywhere in the world, I would hire you in a minute! You really do get it. You are already a ‘meaningful and powerful teacher.’”

Soon after making the comment, Gore and Haywood set up a time to talk further using video chat during Parker’s methods class.

“She told me that my blog post had been an inspiration and a helpful insight for those at DPI,” Haywood said.

Gore’s interest in Haywood didn’t end with the conversation. She and her team at DPI invited Haywood to be a part of a panel at the annual K-12 Social Studies Leaders’ Institute held in October. The event was attended by social studies district-level curriculum coordinators, teacher leaders, department chairs, and instructional coaches. Joining Haywood on the panel were other pre-service teachers, a former high school student, and professors who supervise pre-service teachers who are completing their student teaching.

“I was completely blown away by Sarah’s compelling argument for why elementary social studies needed to be taught,” Gore observed. “It is passionate pre-service teachers like Sarah that will sustain and advance public education. She deserves to have the opportunity to use her talents and training in an area that she loves.”

As a member of the panel, Haywood talked about her blog post and challenged teachers and professors to ensure that social studies is being taught effectively at the elementary level.

“It was a great experience and I was able to sit in on a professional development conference that discussed the current strands of social studies and what the corresponding standards for these strands should be for teachers statewide,” Haywood said. “I have a pretty strong connection with DPI after this opportunity and hopefully it will lead to more and even stronger connections.”

Parker attended the conference with Haywood and said she did a wonderful job representing the teacher education program at GWU.

Dr. Jason Parker

“The discussion helped the audience to further their understanding of the positive impact social studies instruction can have on elementary school students,” Parker observed. “During the discussion, Sarah articulated the importance of elementary students having the ability to grow as productive citizens who can think critically and be prepared to live a productive life. I look forward to seeing Sarah continue to demonstrate her leadership skills in her coursework, during student teaching, and in her future career.”

Haywood, an elementary education major, is a member of the Student North Carolina Association of Educators (SNCAE), participates in the Heart of Fire Dance Ministry, leads a small group women’s ministry and regularly attends The Gathering, a GWU’s student-led worship service.

Her passion for teaching elementary school comes from a desire to see children learn concepts and build on them.

“I love kids, but I also love seeing the spark in a child’s eye when they understand something that you’ve taught them,” she offered. “I think education is so important to a person’s success in life, and I think that it needs to be highly emphasized in elementary school as it creates a strong foundation for a student to have that they can grow and add to as they progress in their education.”

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for professional success and for productive citizenship.

