

Faculty Engage in Challenging Discussions at Second Annual St. Andrew's Summer Institute

Liz Torrey, Jul 1 2016

The second annual St. Andrew's Summer Institute (SASI), a weeklong, in-house professional development experience for St. Andrew's employees, took place from Monday, June 13 through Friday, June 17. Eleven members of the School's faculty and staff gathered in the central study room of the Irene duPont Library each day and dove into intensive discussion and exercises on a issues relating to both their peer and professional relationships, and their work with children in a variety of capacities (as teachers, advisors, coaches, and dorm parents). This year's Institute was led by Dean of Studies Gretchen Hurtt, Associate Director of Counseling Lindsay Roznowski, and math teacher Bowman Dickson.

Each day's work centered around a particular theme or topic of discussion; topics included the art of giving and receiving feedback; opportunities and challenges of adolescent brain development; equity and inclusion practices within our School community; and working with student learning differences. Extensive reading and self-reflection were required of SASI participants, and texts included Thanks for the Feedback by Sheila Heen; A White Teacher Talks About Race by Julie Landsman; Age of Opportunity: Lessons from the New Science of Adolescence by Dr. Laurence Steinberg; Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom by Lisa Delpit; and James Baldwin's "[A Talk to Teachers](#)."

This is the second iteration of SASI, which was held for the first time last year. Former Trustee and alumna Cristina Stenbeck Fitzgibbons '95 created an endowed Headmaster's Chair in 2010, in honor of the memory of her mother, Merrill M. Stenbeck, who by her friendship and wisdom, supported the work of Headmaster Tad Roach at St. Andrew's. The Merrill M. Stenbeck Headmaster's Chair gives the Headmaster the resources to support faculty development and excellence through programs such as the St. Andrew's Summer Institute.

"I am proud of the emergence of the Summer Institute as an annual faculty commitment to collaboration, study, and professional development," Roach said. "The success of the Institute is yet another sign of the spirit, energy, and ambition of the St. Andrew's faculty. We thank Cristina for making this work possible."

Through both roundtable discussions and collaborative exercises, faculty and staff analyzed personal strengths and weaknesses, and devised new classroom and professional practices for themselves and each other, including techniques for minimizing stereotype threat for students in the classroom; methods for approaching conflict and understanding personal conflict styles; and ways to utilize "scaffolding" and assess whether a student is learning within or outside of his "[zone of proximal development](#)"—to name just a few. Each participant was also asked to give a five-minute presentation on a personal or professional practice that the rest of the cohort might find useful. One faculty member, for example, presented on the ways he encourages students to overcome their natural resistance to asking for outside help; while a staff member gave her presentation on the tactics she uses to hold efficient and productive meetings.

"This year's SASI cohort had an amazing week together focused on professional development with a focus on current research on teaching and learning and effective communication," said SASI leader Lindsay Roznowski. "SASI is fulfilling a critical need for the kind of professional development that creates collaboration between colleagues, pushes faculty members to build competency in key areas, and asks them to explore actionable ways to contribute to their SAS community."

"We were all able to step into both teacher and student roles throughout the week," she concluded. "We learned so much from our readings and from each other, and we're excited to share our experiences and insights with the rest of the School community in the coming year."