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## Uniting Theater and Medicine in Education

By Kirsten Sundell, SREB

Healthcare students at DeKalb County Technology Center in Rainsville, Alabama, are learning firsthand that being a good practitioner takes more than technical know-how. It's also about knowing how to communicate and empathize with patients and how to recognize and de-escalate challenging situations.

Such valuable lessons were learned when Paula Carroll's students in the Healthcare Science Technology program teamed up with Sara Argiro's students in the DeKalb Fine Arts Academy. This interdisciplinary experience also helped theater students hone their craft and interpersonal skills.

In Argiro's theater classes, students work to create believable characters and scripts through intensive research, vocal and movement units of study, and improvisation exercises. Carroll's healthcare students research and practice how to identify and treat different injuries, diseases and conditions in patients from diverse backgrounds.

"We realized that what might be missing for our healthcare science students is empathy and the human connection," said Argiro. "And that's what we do every day in the theater arts."

### Real-Life Scenarios

The two teachers decided to bring the human element to healthcare by creating realistic simulations of real-life illnesses and medical scenarios, scripted and acted by Argiro's students and diagnosed and treated by Carroll's.

In Argiro and Carroll's TAMIE project (Theater and Medicine in Education), theater students prepare and play the roles of individuals with different health conditions and complications.

"We have them dive deep into human diseases and ailments and how they affect you as a person," explained Argiro. Supporting actors, staging that simulates a hospital or clinical setting, and special effects makeup — such as fake blood, realistic frostbite or bullet wounds, and suturable prosthetics — add to the realism of these scenarios.

Confronted with a scene, Carroll's healthcare students have to diagnose and treat their patients despite challenging conditions,



*DCTC medical and theater students*

which might include having to communicate with a non-English speaking person, manage upset parents or deal with an elderly patient's sudden fall.

In one scenario, a child with autism visited the emergency room with a burned hand. The child, who was also nonverbal, was upset by the ER's bright lights and many strangers. The child's parents tried to micromanage staff. Then another patient arrived — a woman who had contracted tuberculosis on vacation and was coughing up blood.

"It was very interesting the first time we did it!" laughed Carroll.

Presented with this complex scene, Carroll's students initially froze and didn't know what to do. Would Argiro's students break character before Carroll's students could successfully assess the two patients, dim the lights for the anxious child, calm the child's parents and treat both the burn and the cough?

### The Power of Reflection

"Afterwards, it was about sitting down and reflecting. What went well; what didn't go so well? My students got to reflect on that," stated Argiro. "But her students got to reflect on, 'What did I miss?' Obviously, the nurse missed the TB. So, Paula was like, 'To be honest, everybody's dead,'" she laughed.



*In this video clip, Sara Argiro and Paula Carroll explain how proud their students are of their work and how much effort it takes to research, get into character and prepare believable and accurate healthcare scenarios.*

“She calls it a reflection because that’s drama, but we call it a ‘hotwash’ in healthcare,” explained Carroll. “We wanted them to know, if you’d have done this versus this, what would have been the outcome? That is real, real important. We don’t want a near miss. We want to get it right every time.”

As Carroll explained, a near miss is an unplanned event that did not result in any injury — but could have. Carroll’s students learn valuable information from near misses — like look-alike, sound-alike medications — that can improve safety procedures and protect patients.

### Lessons Learned

Argiro and Carroll quickly learned not to overwhelm their students.

“It’s better to give it to them in small nuggets,” confirmed Argiro. “We’re constantly going back to figure out how to make it better, how to help the kids... We don’t want them to leave the medical profession. We want them to stay in. Finding how to do it in a way that uplifts them, but also give them a taste of what the real world is like.”

“Her kids really gave such a boost to my students,” agreed Carroll. “Because my students, they knew how to do blood pressure — or they thought they did. They do all these things — like ok, today’s blood pressure day, we’re in a very quiet, controlled environment — but when you’re throwing in family members who are off the rails or all of these different scenarios that we come up with... It really made my students realize, ‘Oh my goodness! Wait a minute! Not only do I need to constantly make sure that my patient is safe, and I’m safe, you’ve got to make sure that infection control is being taken care of, you’ve got to make sure the patient is comfortable, you’ve got to give the right medicine, you’ve got to make sure it’s the right doctor’s orders.’”

“It really brought a lot to [us] how we’ve got to start the first of the year preparing these kids for that first patient interaction or that first scenario of showing empathy and the humanity side of it,” said Carroll.

### Taking Simulated Workplace to the Next Level

Argiro’s intermediate and advanced students were excited to take part in the project and receive feedback.

“This was an end-of-the-year project,” stated Argiro. “We had finished our musical, so this was a really great way for my kids to explore their creativity and to do research, but to do it in a fun way for them so they didn’t have the pressure of a ‘show production’ to do.”

The opposite was true for Carroll’s students. “My kids needed the pressure,” she said. “They need to know how to act in an emergency and how to think on their feet, and critically think.”

“DCTC is a simulated workplace center, but we’ve taken it to another level by making it more realistic,” said Jonathan Phillips, DCTC’s director. “We’re having our students think critically, on their feet, in real time — getting them ready for what they are going to encounter when they leave us... Students are able to experience this while they’re still in school, which is going to make them better medical professionals and better actors.”

### The Future

The TAMIE project has already generated extraordinary results: DCTC healthcare students recently achieved a 100% pass rate on the state’s Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) exam.

DCTC, a [two-time Pacesetter School Award winner](#), plans to present on TAMIE and other projects at the [2021 Making Schools Work Conference](#) in Nashville, July 6-9, 2021.



*From left to right, DCTC Assistant Career Tech Director Joey Haymon, Paula Carroll, Sara Argiro and Jonathan Phillips*

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## Does the Teacher Really Matter?

By Diane James, SREB



*Suzanne Bangert, Eufaula Primary School, Eufaula, Alabama*

Teachers, perhaps more than anyone in the school building, have more of an impact on student achievement than anything else. They can leverage that influence and become very effective teachers by building strong relationships with students.

[Education Week](#) cited a [systematic review](#) of more than four dozen studies that found that strong teacher-student relationships were

linked to improvements in student engagement, attendance and achievement, reduced behavioral problems and suspensions, and lower school dropout rates.

The [Rand Corporation](#) found that teachers may have two to three times the effect of any other school factor on students' performance on reading and math tests.

Suzanne Bangert, a second grade teacher at Eufaula Primary School in Eufaula, Alabama, is a believer in the power of teachers. She says, "The main reason for student success in a classroom is the teacher."

Bangert has taught first through eighth grades and served as a reading coach. That afforded her the opportunity to visit many classrooms and observe instruction. "It made me realize that the different ways we teach and the different ways we handle our students make a huge difference," says Bangert.

She maintains that the first steps to being an effective teacher are "building relationships with students and finding each child's why."

"I tell my babies, I can be the best teacher in the world, but if you don't want to learn what I'm teaching, you won't learn it," stated Bangert.

To unearth that "why," Bangert says teachers must have conversations with each student, get to know them and show caring and empathy. Exhibiting these qualities can be so powerful that Bangert believes it can help students succeed academically despite their personal struggles — struggles such as homelessness, having to take care of younger siblings when a parent works multiple jobs, or just taking on adult responsibilities.

### Connecting with Students Virtually

In the era of COVID-19, it's more difficult to establish relationships with students, but not impossible. Bangert says teachers can show students they care even during online learning. Greet students individually each day, take time to find out about their days and pay attention to their facial expressions to glean clues as to how they are feeling, she maintains.

Bangert is emphatic that a blossoming online learning classroom is possible. "I would not have believed it, if I did not experience it!" she exclaims.

### Effective Teachers

Effective teachers are often identified by their students' test scores, but Bangert is adamant that successful teachers prepare students for the world. "When we're out in the world, we are not dealing with test scores. ... We want [students] to know what hard work is, to know what passion is and that they can strive and reach for their goals. It's all about teaching them those kinds of things in the midst of teaching them the academics they need."

She believes teachers can have the most "amazing lessons, but kids won't pay attention and won't engage if they don't think the teacher cares about them and believes in them." When students have that connection with students, "they are happier; they smile; and they try harder at everything," says Bangert.

[According to clinical psychologist Robert Brooks](#), "Whether teachers believe they have an impact on the lives of their students is linked to their own self-esteem and their own sense of competence. When people believe that what they are doing is of little consequence, their motivation and energy will be minimal, and they cannot help but convey this to others."

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## Building Relationships

Like Bangert, Fred Yeakey believes building relationships is the most important thing for educators to accomplish. Yeakey is the founder and CEO of The Barbershop Male Mentoring Initiative and vice president of Providence Cristo Rey High School, a school for underprivileged youth in Indianapolis. In this video, he shares three strategies for building relationships with students.



*Fred Yeakey shares three strategies for building relationships with students.*

## Congratulations to the NASSP 2021 Principal of the Year

By Diane James, SREB



*Richard Gordon, 2021 NASSP National Principal of the Year*

Principal Richard Gordon of Paul Robeson High School for Human Services in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has been named the 2021 National Principal of the Year by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Gordon, who has led the school since 2013, is credited with successfully turning it around. Robeson High School was among the district's 30 lowest-performing schools and in danger of permanent closure.

Under Gordon's leadership, truancy and suspensions are down, college-admission rates are up, and the school has achieved a 95% graduation rate.

The centerpiece of Gordon's leadership model has been building relationships with students and the community. He also established partnerships with businesses, mental health experts and law enforcement.

The NASSP Principal of the Year program recognizes outstanding middle grades and high school principals who have succeeded in providing high-quality learning opportunities for students and who demonstrate exemplary contributions to the profession.

## Inspiring a Love of Science and Exploration

### *It's possible with SREB's Powerful Science Instructional Practices*

Empower students to understand and use science in their daily lives and careers with SREB's new Powerful Science Instructional Practices.

In this video, SREB's president Stephen L. Pruitt explains how teachers who adopt these practices can encourage students to develop a love of science and a desire to explore natural or human-designed phenomena in or out of the classroom.

As lead developers of the Next Generation Science Standards, Pruitt partnered with [Brett Moulding](#), a member of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Science Education, to write and refine the practices over several months this spring. The practices are based on NGSS' model of [three-dimensional learning](#): science and engineering practices, crosscutting concepts and disciplinary core ideas.

Look for SREB to produce exemplar practices and professional development on the PSIPs soon. In the meantime, explore these powerful practices and download the rubric and model shared by Pruitt at <https://www.sreb.org/powerful-instructional-practices-science>.



*Stephen L. Pruitt explains how to spark a lifelong love of scientific exploration with SREB's Powerful Science Instructional Practices.*

## Explore Our Powerful Literacy and Math Practices Videos!



*Watch SREB's Powerful Literacy Practices video series.*

SREB's new videos — produced in partnership with the Teaching Channel — visit classrooms across the U.S. in which teachers are using SREB's [Powerful Instructional Practices](#) to design lessons, assignments and assessments that encourage students to own their learning and achieve in every content area.

Our [Powerful Literacy Practices playlist](#) explores how teachers in any discipline can embed essential reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in their instruction. Videos show how meaningful literacy-based lessons and assignments engage students in deeper learning as they increase their literacy skills and content knowledge.

SREB's Powerful Mathematics Practices empower students to view math as an essential tool for solving real-world problems. The videos in our [Powerful Math Practices playlist](#) walk viewers through six instructional practices that encourage students to solve challenging problems and engage in critical thinking and reasoning.



*Watch SREB's Powerful Mathematics Practices video series.*

## 2020 Pacesetter Award Winner in the Spotlight

By Jahana Martin, SREB

### Springboro High School

Springboro High School in Springboro, Ohio, is the winner of a 2020 Gene Bottoms Pacesetter School Award from SREB. The school will be honored on July 6, 2021, at SREB's Making Schools Work Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, due to the cancellation of the 2020 conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Pacesetter School Awards recognize schools that are implementing one of SREB's Making Schools Work school improvement frameworks and are achieving success in meeting bold goals related to increases in student graduation rates, readiness for college and careers, and credential attainment.

Springboro High School implements [High Schools That Work](#), SREB's school improvement design for high schools. Springboro develops partnerships with local colleges and career centers to provide programs of study through which students can take courses and earn college credit.

From 2013 to 2019, Springboro High School not only doubled its Advanced Placement course offerings, it also doubled AP enrollments. The percentage of students who passed their AP exams with a 3 or higher also increased, from 77% in 2013 to 82% in 2019.



*Springboro High School, Springboro, Ohio*

In 2018, Springboro became one of 50 high schools in Ohio approved by the College Board to teach the AP Capstone program, a diploma program based on two AP courses — AP Seminar and AP Research — that take an interdisciplinary approach to cultivating critical thinking, research, collaboration, time management and presentation skills. Students who successfully complete the program earn an advanced diploma.

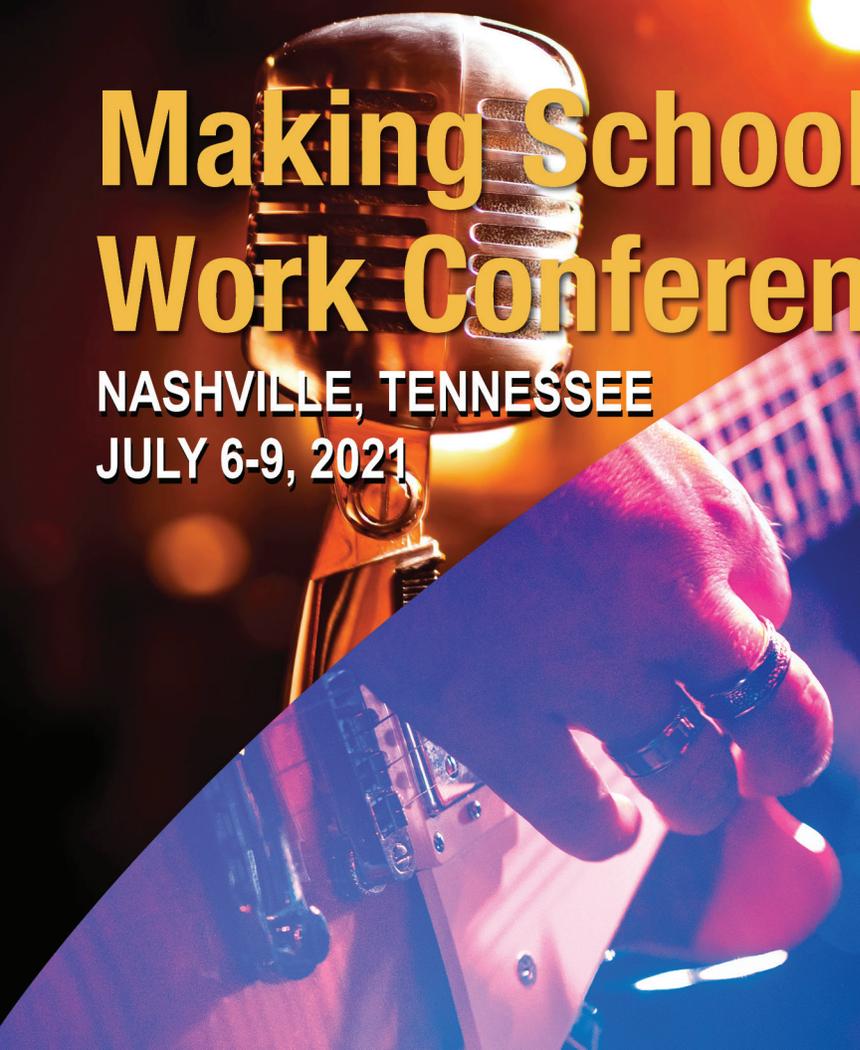


*Phyllis Donatto, founder and CEO of FTH Dimensions Solutions*

### Featured Speaker Spotlight — Phyllis Donatto: You Are the Difference-Makers!

Meet one of SREB's Making Schools Work featured speakers, Phyllis Donatto, founder and CEO of FTH Dimension Solutions. In this video, Donatto asks educators like you to remember that *you* are the difference-makers in your students' lives. Despite many challenges, you have the power to get things done and have not lost sight of your "why." Meet Donatto and celebrate your year and your accomplishments at the 2021 Making Schools Work Conference in Nashville, July 6-9 at the Gaylord Opryland.

<http://www.sreb.org/summerconference>

A vintage microphone is positioned in the upper left corner, with a hand in a suit jacket resting on it. The background is a warm, orange-toned gradient with bokeh light effects.

# Making Schools Work Conference

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