

Community Analysis: Athens-Clarke County and Barnett Shoals Elementary School

MLIS 7422 Programming for Children and Young Teens

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Background Information

To analyze the community of Athens-Clarke County and understand its needs in the area of information services, it is important to look at its origins. Athens was founded by committee in 1785 to be the site of the first chartered state university in the entire United States, although the University of Georgia would not be built until 1801 (Griffith). Being a city founded to give home to a university has made a significant impact. Athens-Clarke County is also home to Piedmont College, Gainesville State College Oconee Campus, and Athens Technical College. Athens unified with Clarke County in 1990 (Thomas). Industry is also an important part of Athens-Clarke County history as the rivers, creeks, and plantations attracted textile mills (Thomas). This dichotomy of the college/university segment and the economically disadvantaged that traditionally worked in industry still exists today. Now the Athens-Clarke County municipality is home to 110, 311 people making it the sixth largest metropolitan area in Georgia (U.S. Census Bureau). Within this metropolitan area, I have selected the Barnett Shoals Elementary School library/media center as my library of interest as it representative of the demographics of the area and focuses on the population that I plan to serve.

The first statistic that stood out to me when I began to analyze the community of Athens-Clarke County was the median income. At \$40,115, Athens-Clarke County has a median income comparable to the state average of \$40,760 (Anderson). However, there are a high number of children living in households with only one parent and the high number being headed by females only. There are 5,317 children under eighteen years of age growing up in households with married couples, 563 with single males, and 3,899 with single females (U.S. Census Bureau).

The numbers from the U.S. Census Bureau show that nearly as many children under eighteen years of age are growing up in households with only one parent/guardian instead of the traditional two. However, a more recent study available through School Matters shows that Athens-Clarke County single-family households number 84% which is above the state average. This must be taken into account when planning services for the population served.

The next statistic I was able to access in regards to enrollment in special education and Early Intervention Programs (EIP) at Barnett Shoals Elementary School (BSES) specifically surprised me in that between the 16.9% receiving special education services, most of which are served in the area of autism as BSES is an autism magnet school, and the 23.6% receiving EIP services, the BSES population enrolled in some form of remedial education/support is 40.5% -- nearly half the school population (Gaertig; The Governor's Office of Student Achievement). To further explore the student profile of BSES, 54.76% are identified as economically disadvantaged (The Governor's Office of Student Achievement).

The next statistic that I found important was the list of ancestral heritage of the population. Twenty-seven nations are represented, but there was no trace of Hispanic/Mexican/Cuban/etc. heritage in the U.S. Census Bureau list. Our area has experienced an influx of Hispanic immigrants/migrant workers which has affected the services that our schools and public library system offer. The schools now employ nearly double the ESOL teachers we did a decade ago and our Family Engagement Specialists are required to read, speak, and write in both English and Spanish (Muia). The public library system that serves our area, Athens Regional Library System, opened the Pinewoods Community Center branch to serve the Hispanic population dominant in the extreme northeast section of the county near the industrial county (Athens Regional Library System). Even their website is only available in Spanish. That

being said, the U.S. Census Bureau shows that only 6,462 of those that participated in the census state that they do not speak English very well. That is a number that I believe will probably increase in the next census due to the increase in migrant workers to our area. For now, the information that we have to base decisions on shows that only six percent of our total population of 110, 311 are non-English speakers. The area I am focusing on with Barnett Shoals Elementary School Media Center is in the extreme southeast section of the county and does not have a high concentration of Hispanic families or students (Muia), but it does represent the overall demographics of the county (Clarke County School District) in that it does serve families and their children with varied national, ethnic, economic, and educational backgrounds (Webber; School Matters; Clarke County School District). Taking into account the diversity of the student population, it is also important to note that a little over half the population is of African-American decent (Department of Education).

State-wide, Athens-Clarke County is average in the number of students that it graduates, but has nearly a 15% higher average of residents with bachelor degrees or higher (School Matters). This is obviously due to the fact that Athens-Clarke County is home to a major state university and three other colleges. The resources available to the library system and local schools are vast in that all the local colleges and university have students that must fulfill community service, pre-internships, and internships. Barnett Shoals Elementary School is host to a great number of these students, but has not had even one college or university student serve in the media center in any of these capacities since my association as a parent with the school in the beginning of the 2008-2009 school-year.

It is important to take into consideration all that has been discovered in regards to the population and how it influences the library and information service needs of the students that

live in Athens-Clarke County and attend Barnett Shoals Elementary School (BSES). BSES is in the Clarke County School District (CCSD) that includes twenty-three public schools. Each public school has its own school media center except for the two alternative schools and the one Right Start Pre-Kindergarten program. As noted above, BSES has a large number of students with single parent/guardian households, a majority of students from economically disadvantaged households, nearly half the population in need of special education or remedial services, a concentrated autistic population, a fair percentage from highly educated households, over half the population of African-American decent, students with very diverse backgrounds, and growing ESOL population. I felt it was important to not reach conclusions of what programs would best serve the population and were of greatest need on my own, so I interviewed several key leaders within BSES. I interviewed George Webber, Media Specialist; Susan Cardin, Instructional Coach; Barbara Gaertig, Autism Specialist; Bonnie Muia, ESOL Instructor; Ramona Camp, SPECTRUM/Gifted Instructor; Reginald Willis, After School Program Director.

Community Resources

The resources available to the children at BSES in Athens-Clarke County are numerous. Athens-Clarke County boasts an award winning Leisure Services department that goes to great lengths to offer a wide array of culturally diverse programs, clubs, athletics, and lessons at very inexpensive rates to anyone able to participate. Non-residents may even participate at a nominal fee. Scholarships are also available for children and adults that cannot afford the normal fees. The University of Georgia brings to Athens-Clarke County a wealth of academic libraries, art galleries, a symphony orchestra – including a children’s symphony, choirs, plays, student films, various musical venues, and volunteers. The city has developed a love of the visual and musical

arts and has numerous theater organizations and musical venues available to the public of all ages. The public library system has branches across the region and offers programs for all ages and after-school tutoring in the local community centers. The YMCA offers year-round programming for children in the area of athletics. The Boys and Girls Club is available to children for recreational activities, free counseling and social support, and homework support. They even provide transportation. The community boasts two Montessori schools, a highly respected private K-12 academy, a private Christian K-12 school, and two private K-12 Catholic schools. The local art museums offer regular exhibitions at nominal cost and host regular art classes to the public, including children. There are nine public parks in Athens-Clarke County and each one serves a niche. One houses our educational Science-Nature Center, a large lake, and campgrounds, a couple have community pools, one houses the gymnasiums and fields for the Leisure Services sports offerings, another houses a zoo that is free of charge to the public. All the parks have large green spaces and playgrounds.

BSES School Media Center History

With the numerous resources available to the children of Athens-Clarke County, it is important to understand that there is still a great need for improved programming within the BSES media center. The BSES media center is over forty years old and has not had consistent stewardship since 1999. The media specialist that took over in 1999 spent the first three years of her tenure fighting breast cancer, had a couple years to focus on programming, and then had to give up her position when her breast cancer returned (Cardin). The next media specialist became pregnant shortly after being hired and left half-way through her second year (Cardin). The newest media specialist, George Webber, has spent the last year trying to rebuild collections as

nothing had been catalogued since 1999 and the median age of the collection was 1995 (Webber). The only media center programs remaining are Accelerated Reader, Beary Special Reader (parents log reading and twenty-five books to their child in a set time), and Book Fair.

BSES School Media Center Program Recommendations

I had a pretty good idea of some of the programs that BSES students needed from their media center, but I believed it was important to further analyze the needs through personal interviews. The first program that I would recommend was first suggested by Susan Cardin, the Instructional Coach. She expressed a need for the media center to generate excitement for reading amongst the general population of students. She felt that Battle of the Books should be brought back and promoted by the media specialist. Susan noted that it is important for the media center to take the lead with any program that promotes reading. Battle of the Books is a national program and training is available for implementation at <http://www.battleofthebooks.org/>. It is a practical way to set up a nationally recognized reading program out of a local media center.

The second program need was one that I have a personal connection to as it reflects work I have done in the past and will be part of my Capstone. Reginald Willis, After School Program (ASP) Director, expressed a real need for a reading program that targets the ASP student participants that are predominantly economically disadvantaged. The reading program should not focus on reading literacy as its primary goal, but on cultural and humanities education since the target population lives a very cloistered life devoid of activities beyond what they are exposed to at school. Reginald talked of a similar program that his church sponsors and felt that BSES ASP students could greatly benefit from one also. The core of the program would be housed in the school media center and would have the structure of a book club. The students would meet in the

school media center twice a week to read both fiction and non-fiction books covering topics that enrich students' knowledge of geography, various national and international cultures, music humanities, art humanities, botany, anthropology, zoology, oceanography, etc. The students would have access to the media center computer lab for Internet usage to enhance book study and the media specialist would be instrumental in securing speakers from local colleges and the university to enrich the book club studies. The ASP Director has mentioned that he would like to sponsor a local field trip or presentation as a culminating activity to the program. This could be done easily with a little planning. There are plenty of local galleries, museums, theaters, musical venues and local volunteers for real-life experiences as a final activity to program. The program would work best if it were offered in three-week segments. Each segment would have a different focus and a different final field trip and/or presentation. A total of eight segments offered during the school year would be ideal. ASP requires that at least one certified person be present each evening from 2:30-6:00 and that person receives their certified pay at scale. It seems that would make it easy to secure the personnel necessary to staff such a program since extra money would not need to be raised to pay for a sponsor to run/teach the program. Neither would a staff member be required to volunteer their time for free. I'm seriously considering drafting a proposal for this program and presenting it to the BSES administration once I am finished with my graduate school program.

Barbara Gaertig, Autism Specialist, highlighted a specific need for a media center program that offers recreational and educational materials and a forum for the BSES children with autism and their parents. BSES is an autism magnet school and it only makes sense that the school media center plays a role in serving this population in a specific way. The foundation of the program would offer at least monthly workshops for parents to attend afterschool in the

media center where they could be introduced to the latest research in autism and become familiar with the materials that the school media center offers them and their children for recreation and education. Building off the workshops would be in-school opportunities for the children with autism to work with local experts and/or their parents using specialized materials available in the media center, including technology.

The gifted population at BSES is significant. Even though BSES has over 54% economically disadvantaged, nearly 12% of the population is identified as gifted (Camp). Ramona Camp, SPECTRUM/Gifted Instructor, has talked for over a year about the need for a Science Fair Program to be established and run by the BSES media center. Right now the only BSES students that participate in the annual Science Fair are SPECTRUM students and recent changes in the SPECTRUM program and requirements have made it more difficult to devote the time necessary to Science Fair. Furthermore, Ramona believes that a Science Fair Program run out of the media center would afford the opportunity to participate to students outside of SPECTRUM, making the process much more democratic. I must concur. With the wealth of volunteers, both students and professor, that our community has through the local university and colleges, a media sponsored Science Fair Program could have the manpower and support it needed to be successful. A centrally run Science Fair Program would provide the most democratic method to the BSES student population. The collections in the area of science would need to be developed and a partnership with the Athens Regional Library System would be necessary to keep down costs, but the program would be worthy of the planning, management, and effort required to make it a success.

The last program I would like to recommend is one that provides books, teaches business skills and storytelling, and builds community. The program targets mostly the economically

disadvantaged children at BSES, but is beneficial to all students. About four years ago, a Bear Book Store was disbanded when the media specialist left due to illness. The book store program has not been revived to this date although it proved to be very successful when it was running from 2000-2005. The concept of the program was to provide brand new books to students for one dollar each. Gift certificates were also available to use in the student book store. These certificates were a favorite for parents to give teachers and teachers to give students on special occasions or for reward. Local businesses and foundations supported the program through small grants available throughout the school year. The book store was run by students that applied and interviewed for the “jobs.” The book store was open in the mornings and afternoons. All bookkeeping and storefront responsibilities were managed by the student employees with supervision from the media specialist and media clerk. Student employees were paid with two new books per month. The student run book store also offered storytelling programs for BSES students in the mornings on the big rug. The media specialist trained fourth and fifth graders in the art of storytelling and helped them practice the books they would read. Younger students would enjoy the storytelling first thing in the morning instead of just sitting in the hallway waiting for homeroom to begin. There are a significant number of students that arrive at 7:15 and 7:20 AM each morning even though homeroom does not begin until 7:40. Currently, they sit along the walls in the hallway until time to enter the classroom. With this program, students could purchase books in the bookstore, sit and read in the media center, and/or enjoy a story as told by a fourth or fifth grader. I would love to see this program revived for the student population of BSES. Not only would it help students become owners of their own books at a reduced price, but it would promote reading and storytelling, teach business skills, and would help to build community through the media center.

Conclusion

I'm excited to one day put into practice much of what was discussed in this community analysis. I am committed to this community and look forward to working diligently to build a strong children's library and/or media center program. Athens-Clarke County and the Clarke County School District face many challenges as the dichotomy of the economically disadvantaged versus the college/university segment try to find harmony and balance in the programs that are offered and the effectiveness in which they are implemented and managed.

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Table 1: Athens-Clarke County, GA U.S. Census Bureau Information

| Selected Social Characteristics in the United States | Estimate | Margin of Error | Percent | Margin of Error |
|--|----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| HOUSEHOLDS BY TYPE | | | | |
| Total households | 42,033 | +/-822 | 100% | (X) |
| Family households (families) | 20,888 | +/-920 | 49.7% | +/-2.1 |
| With own children under 18 years | 9,779 | +/-740 | 23.3% | +/-1.7 |
| Married-couple family | 13,120 | +/-764 | 31.2% | +/-1.7 |
| With own children under 18 years | 5,317 | +/-511 | 12.6% | +/-1.2 |
| Male householder, no wife present, family | 1,977 | +/-393 | 4.7% | +/-0.9 |
| With own children under 18 years | 563 | +/-228 | 1.3% | +/-0.5 |
| Female householder, no husband present, family | 5,791 | +/-678 | 13.8% | +/-1.6 |
| With own children under 18 years | 3,899 | +/-591 | 9.3% | +/-1.4 |
| Nonfamily households | 21,145 | +/-997 | 50.3% | +/-2.1 |
| Householder living alone | 14,122 | +/-1,005 | 33.6% | +/-2.2 |
| 65 years and over | 2,563 | +/-330 | 6.1% | +/-0.8 |
| Households with one or more people under 18 years | 11,001 | +/-778 | 26.2% | +/-1.8 |
| Households with one or more people 65 years and over | 6,450 | +/-234 | 15.3% | +/-0.6 |
| Average household size | 2.41 | +/-0.05 | (X) | (X) |
| Average family size | 3.06 | +/-0.09 | (X) | (X) |
| RELATIONSHIP | | | | |
| Population in households | 101,509 | +/-360 | 100% | (X) |
| Householder | 42,033 | +/-822 | 41.4% | +/-0.8 |
| Spouse | 13,091 | +/-768 | 12.9% | +/-0.7 |
| Child | 23,017 | +/-869 | 22.7% | +/-0.8 |
| Other relatives | 6,861 | +/-938 | 6.8% | +/-0.9 |
| Nonrelatives | 16,507 | +/-1,090 | 16.3% | +/-1.1 |
| Unmarried partner | 2,263 | +/-468 | 2.2% | +/-0.5 |
| LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME | | | | |
| Population 5 years and over | 103,185 | +/-165 | 100% | (X) |
| English only | 89,654 | +/-682 | 86.9% | +/-0.7 |
| Language other than English | 13,531 | +/-702 | 13.1% | +/-0.7 |
| Speak English less than "very well" | 6,462 | +/-706 | 6.3% | +/-0.7 |
| ANCESTRY | | | | |
| Total population | 110,311 | +/-183 | 100% | (X) |
| American | 4,439 | +/-707 | 4.0% | +/-0.6 |
| Arab | 525 | +/-283 | 0.5% | +/-0.3 |
| Czech | 236 | +/-124 | 0.2% | +/-0.1 |
| Danish | 305 | +/-121 | 0.3% | +/-0.1 |
| Dutch | 1,172 | +/-304 | 1.1% | +/-0.3 |
| English | 14,228 | +/-1,271 | 12.9% | +/-1.2 |
| French (except Basque) | 2,527 | +/-445 | 2.3% | +/-0.4 |
| French Canadian | 374 | +/-175 | 0.3% | +/-0.2 |
| German | 12,545 | +/-1,336 | 11.4% | +/-1.2 |
| Greek | 271 | +/-208 | 0.2% | +/-0.2 |
| Hungarian | 368 | +/-166 | 0.3% | +/-0.2 |
| Irish | 10,957 | +/-1,080 | 9.9% | +/-1.0 |
| Italian | 2,962 | +/-549 | 2.7% | +/-0.5 |
| Lithuanian | 184 | +/-133 | 0.2% | +/-0.1 |

| | | | | |
|--|-------|--------|------|--------|
| Norwegian | 711 | +/-262 | 0.6% | +/-0.2 |
| Polish | 1,624 | +/-497 | 1.5% | +/-0.5 |
| Portuguese | 161 | +/-125 | 0.1% | +/-0.1 |
| Russian | 1,116 | +/-401 | 1.0% | +/-0.4 |
| Scotch-Irish | 3,372 | +/-608 | 3.1% | +/-0.6 |
| Scottish | 4,214 | +/-668 | 3.8% | +/-0.6 |
| Slovak | 87 | +/-62 | 0.1% | +/-0.1 |
| Subsaharan African | 2,337 | +/-754 | 2.1% | +/-0.7 |
| Swedish | 701 | +/-262 | 0.6% | +/-0.2 |
| Swiss | 138 | +/-115 | 0.1% | +/-0.1 |
| Ukrainian | 227 | +/-139 | 0.2% | +/-0.1 |
| Welsh | 917 | +/-281 | 0.8% | +/-0.3 |
| West Indian (excluding Hispanic origin groups) | 415 | +/-224 | 0.4% | +/-0.2 |

Source: <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

Table 2: Barnett Shoals Elementary School Ethnicity

| School | Asian/ Pacific Isl. | Black | Hispanic | American Indian/Alaskan | Multi-Racial | White |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 09-10 Barnett Shoals Elem. | 5.16% | 45.44% | 7.14% | 0.40% | 5.75% | 36.11% |
| 01 | 2.44% | 46.34% | 7.32% | 0.00% | 1.22% | 42.68% |
| 02 | 6.58% | 43.42% | 7.89% | 1.32% | 3.95% | 36.84% |
| 03 | 7.46% | 43.28% | 11.94% | 1.49% | 4.48% | 31.34% |
| 04 | 3.80% | 43.04% | 3.80% | 0.00% | 8.86% | 40.51% |
| 05 | 6.98% | 50.00% | 8.14% | 0.00% | 8.14% | 26.74% |
| KK | 5.41% | 39.19% | 5.41% | 0.00% | 5.41% | 44.59% |
| PK | 2.50% | 57.50% | 5.00% | 0.00% | 10.00% | 25.00% |

Source: <http://www.clarke.k12.ga.us/files/filesystem/Ethnicity%20Breakdown.pdf>

Table 3: Barnett Shoals Elementary Economically Disadvantaged/Free-Reduced Lunch

| Economically Disadvantaged | N | Y |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| 09-10 Barnett Shoals Elementary | 45.24% | 54.76% |
| 01 | 39.02% | 60.98% |
| 02 | 34.21% | 65.79% |
| 03 | 34.33% | 65.67% |
| 04 | 40.51% | 59.49% |
| 05 | 36.05% | 63.95% |
| KK | 59.46% | 40.54% |
| PK | 100.00% | 0.00% |

Source: <http://www.clarke.k12.ga.us/files/filesystem/Economically%20Disadvantaged.pdf>

Table 4: Barnett Shoals Elementary School Compensatory Program Enrollment

| Program | Program Enrollment | % of Student Population |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Special Education (Grades K-12) (PK) | 100/3 | 16.9%/N/A |
| English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) K-12) | 17 | 2.9% |
| Early Intervention Program (EIP) (K-5) | 140 | 23.6% |

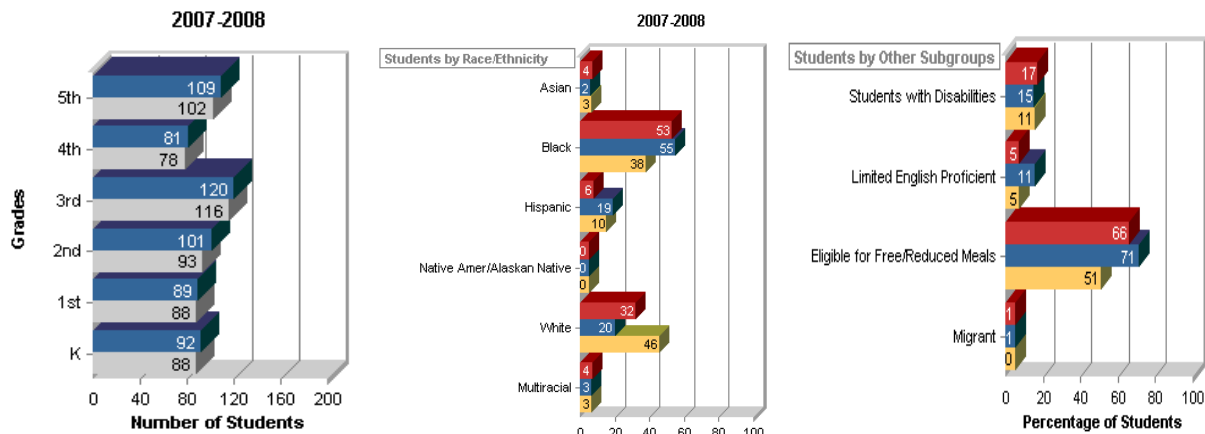
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Table 5: Barnett Shoals Elementary School 2008 District Information

| | District | State |
|--|----------|-------|
| Adults with at Least a High School Diploma | 84% | 83.2% |
| Adults with at Least a Bachelor’s Degree | 41.4% | 27.3% |
| Single-Parent Households | 84% | 83.2% |

Source: <http://www.schoolmatters.com/schools.aspx/q/page=sl/sid=43488/midx=CommunityDemographics>

Chart 1: Barnett Shoals Elementary School 2007-2008 Statistics



Source: [http://reportcard2008.gaosa.org/\(S\(elqpx4jfgoy25x3k4o3jkc45\)\)/k12/demographics.aspx?ID=629:2056&TestKey=EnR&TestType=demographics](http://reportcard2008.gaosa.org/(S(elqpx4jfgoy25x3k4o3jkc45))/k12/demographics.aspx?ID=629:2056&TestKey=EnR&TestType=demographics)