



**COMP**

Creating Conditions  
for Learning

[www.comp.org](http://www.comp.org)

Spring 2017



[a school bus under the jaracanda tree](#) by torbakhopper is shared via a [Creative Commons 2.0 license](#) and cropped to fit the space available.



Glenn Beltz's photo, [My son](#) is shared with a [Creative Commons 2.0 license](#).

See details to register for the  
COMP Training of Trainers at  
Vanderbilt University  
June 26-30 on page 3.

## COMP – wide-reaching and locally effective

School districts can have so many things in common – school buses and playgrounds to name a couple – yet individual schools can be quite different. Across a single district, it is possible to find rural, suburban, and urban schools – or schools that vary greatly by student demographics – or schools that differ significantly in size, grade levels, community participation, or any other number of factors. Across these differences, all schools seek to create conditions for learning, and, therefore, COMP can play a role to support and enhance the learning and teaching that take place.

This issue of the newsletter explores how COMP addresses needs across multiple settings. COMP Workshop Leaders, Tina Smith and Staci Sohn, give an in-depth look at their local school district and the way COMP is helping meet teacher and student needs at a variety of schools (beginning on page 2). Whatever the setting, desiring effective classroom management is a universal connection across schools – and COMP is a universal resource!

## Difference-Makers in a Diverse District



COMP Certified Workshop Leaders, Tina Smith and Staci Sohn, share how COMP is making a difference and developing difference-makers across their district.

Nestled on the Tennessee-Kentucky border and home to many families who proudly serve in the military at Fort Campbell army base, Clarksville has become one of the fastest growing cities in the state of Tennessee. With its proximity to Fort Campbell and the city's continued industrial growth, it is no surprise that the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System (CMCSS) serves more than 33,600 students. This ever-growing student body comes from a wealth of diverse backgrounds, and students attend one of 24 elementary, seven middle, seven high schools, one alternative school, and one Middle College high school at Austin Peay State University. The county geography includes a variety of landscapes, from metropolitan hubs in downtown Clarksville, to residential suburbs, to rolling farm hills in the most rural areas of the county.

When looking at the demographic distribution of students in CMCSS, it is noted that 50% of pupils are classified as economically disadvantaged, 14% have been identified as having a disability, and 3% are English Language Learners. Despite the many challenges that arise from having a high economically disadvantaged student population and high levels of transience, the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System has been named the number one school system in Tennessee for student academic growth for the past two years. Additionally, CMCSS boasts a 95% graduation rate, significantly higher than the state average of 88.7%.

At first glance, one might speculate how a large, diverse district with so many challenges maintains such high levels of success. As any educator would tell you, there are a plethora of strategies and supports that can attribute to student growth. However, at the core of CMCSS is a belief that quality professional learning and support for classroom teachers are key to ensuring the right learning environment for students to achieve. Especially important in creating a classroom environment that promotes critical thinking and nurtures social emotional growth is having strong classroom management skills. To provide training and support in this crucial area of quality teaching, CMCSS uses the Classroom Organization and Management Program (COMP).

COMP has made a huge impact on teacher practice in CMCSS. The management strategies taught in COMP work in classrooms across this

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"It definitely helped me in my first year of teaching, and it will forever help me in the years to come."  
-Brooke Smith, Ringgold Elementary

"From the moment it began, it didn't feel like the typical workshop."  
-Kara Eastman, Oakland Elementary

"This course was dynamic, engaging, and 100% relevant. I never felt a minute of my time was wasted."  
- Sean Rowe, New Providence Middle

"COMP has made a huge impact on my environment, student relationships, and delivery."  
- Tia Carmichael, Kenwood High School

"The COMP workshop...made me feel comfortable enough to voice my thoughts and opinions."  
- Rachel McDonald, Norman Smith Elementary

**emcss**  
The Defining Difference

Interested in having  
Certified COMP  
Workshop Leaders  
in your district?



The Vanderbilt University  
COMP Training of Trainers  
(TOT) is scheduled for  
June 26-30, 2017.

Registration information can  
be located on the COMP  
website ([www.comp.org](http://www.comp.org))  
or by contacting Jennifer  
Kinsey, COMP Program  
Coordinator, at  
615-322-0603.

diverse district. Teachers have seen success applying the strategies in classrooms in both rural and urban areas of the county as well as the suburban areas in between. No matter the grade level, experience, or content area of the participants, teachers who complete the program report that the experience was very valuable and relevant to their needs in the classroom. In fact, 100% of participant survey respondents stated they would recommend COMP to other teachers, regardless of how many years a teacher had been teaching. While it would be impossible to write about every benefit of every teacher who attended COMP, a few of the CMCSS difference-makers have shared their stories about their own personal growth.

**Rachel McDonald, Kindergarten Teacher  
Norman Smith Elementary School**

Sometimes it takes getting into one's own classroom to realize the need for support beyond that of a teacher prep program. Rachel McDonald participated in COMP as a first year teacher. After completing COMP, Rachel stated, "I felt I had hope and that I could finish the school year strong with those students, and I did it! The longer I have been out of COMP, the more I realize how beneficial it was and has been to my classroom." Entering her second year in the classroom, Rachel felt prepared for her incoming students because of the COMP strategies she learned. When asked, Rachel shared that the COMP workshop taught her to be more confident and organized, to reflect and be more positive, and how to have better classroom management. Rachel commented, "I feel like I became a different and better teacher after being able to have a toolbox of strategies to grab from."

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### Kara Eastman, 5th Grade Teacher Oakland Elementary School

Teachers with experience benefit from participating in the COMP workshop just as much as beginning teachers. Kara Eastman came to CMCSS from Indiana where she had taught for nine years. When she found her transition to be less smooth than expected, she looked to her principal for support. Kara's principal suggested the COMP workshop as a good fit, and Kara quickly found that the workshop was unlike others she had experienced. Kara shared in an interview, "It was a workshop that seemed to encompass everything we've always heard about classroom management, transitions, and teacher-student relationships put together in one place with practical application. I continually look back at my COMP binder to look at my notes and ideas that I have marked to see if there is anything I can add to my classroom. I have also begun to re-read each module and make notes to myself for next year. It (the COMP binder) is, without a doubt, the best resource that I have, and I will continue to use it to re-evaluate my classroom management and the overall environment of my classroom."

### Brooke Smith, 3rd Grade Teacher Ringgold Elementary School

Unexpected events sometimes create difficult situations. Brooke Smith entered the school system three months into the school year. The classroom she took over had seen a few educators by that time, so the students were poised ready to challenge the first-year teacher. Brooke's principal anticipated this struggle and immediately sent her to the next COMP workshop. Upon completing the program, Brooke returned to her classroom and began refining what it meant to be a warm demander. Brooke realized that she is the determining factor in whether a child feels safe and comfortable in her classroom and how that in turn impacts and promotes student learning. She set a positive environment by modeling how the students should speak to the teacher and one another. She modeled her rules and procedures, so they knew exactly what was expected of them. She admits it was not easy, but by the end of the year, they were a whole new class. Brooke implemented multiple strategies to build a learning community in her classroom. Looking back, Brooke reflected by saying, "I am thankful that my principal chose me to go to the COMP workshop. It definitely helped me in my first year of teaching, and it will forever help me in the years to come."



USFWSmidwest's [Caterpillar!](#) is shared via a [Creative Commons 2.0 license](#).

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*"As noted throughout each unique story shared, regardless of a teacher's grade level, background, student population, or geographic region, COMP offers relevant, research-based strategies for all its participants in an open, collaborative environment" (p. 5).*



What are some of the locales where COMP been "spotted"?

Los Angeles, CA  
West Allis-West Milwaukee, WI  
Birmingham, AL  
Everett, VA  
Kent, WA  
Franklin, TN  
New Brunswick, Canada  
Bronx, NY  
Merced County, CA  
Nashville, TN  
Tuscaloosa, AL  
Berkeley County, SC  
Prince Edward Island, Canada  
Norfolk, VA  
Selmer, TN  
Bayfield, WI  
Sonoma County, CA  
Kohala, HI

**Tia Carmichael, Resource English Teacher  
Kenwood High School**

Not only does COMP support teachers with different levels of teaching experience, the strategies learned in COMP can apply to students of various backgrounds, demographics, and learning needs. Tia Carmichael is a high school special education teacher. Although Tia has been in the system for a number of years, she continues to look for ways to better meet the needs of her students. She asked to participate in a COMP workshop provided earlier this school year and found that the strategies were advantageous to her after the very first day. Upon completing the workshop, Tia shared, “COMP has made a huge impact on my environment, student relationships, and (lesson) delivery.” Through COMP Tia was able to quickly realize how the smallest changes can have a huge impact on instructional time. She found that her procedure for handling composition books used during entering bell work was not efficient. By simply using tape to form a square in the center of each table and teaching the students a new procedure for stacking the composition books inside the square, Tia was able to save three minutes of instructional time from the beginning of each lesson. Saving three minutes a day compounds to fifteen minutes per week and 540 minutes in a school year. Transitions are essential to effectively managing a classroom.

**Sean Rowe, 7th Grade Math Teacher  
New Providence Middle School**

COMP workshops are packed with research-based strategies designed to facilitate effective management and instruction. Sean Rowe came to CMCSS after a career serving and teaching in the armed forces in various capacities. Sean’s participation in COMP eased the transition of entering public education from a non-traditional path. He quickly picked up how the environment and instruction provided by COMP facilitators emulated the atmosphere he wanted to see in his own classroom. A number of strategies stuck with Sean that he still uses consistently today. For instance, Sean saw the immediate impact that a simple timer could have on time management, getting students on task, keeping students focused, and managing behavior during transition times. COMP reaffirmed the importance of proximity. Sean declared, “I haven’t taught a single lesson from a stationary position since completing COMP training.” He also saw the benefits of using an equity system. Sean commented, “I started using equity sticks after COMP training for all of my checks for understanding, bell work, and other general questions. I have seen how powerful this simple tool can be, and I highly recommend it.”

These are just a few of the many Clarksville-Montgomery County teachers who have benefited from participating in COMP. As noted throughout each unique story shared, regardless of a teacher’s grade level, background, student population, or geographic region, COMP offers relevant, research-based strategies for all its participants in an open, collaborative environment. It could best be described with the words of difference-maker Sean Rowe when he stated, “The total wealth of knowledge accumulated during the training is difficult to measure.” Will COMP help you be a difference-maker in your district?



Tina Smith is the  
New Teacher Induction Coordinator, and  
Staci Sohn is the  
Online Professional Learning Facilitator  
for Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools, TN.  
Both serve as Certified COMP Workshop Leaders.



# Diversity

The word, “diversity,” can represent so many positive things – the vibrancy of our natural world, the variation across people who are otherwise connected, the vitality of a specific environment. Classrooms can be quite diverse from one another, even within a single district. Yet, they share several basics, including the goal of *Creating Conditions for Learning*.



empowers teachers to be more effective and efficient, *wherever* they seek to help students learn.



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