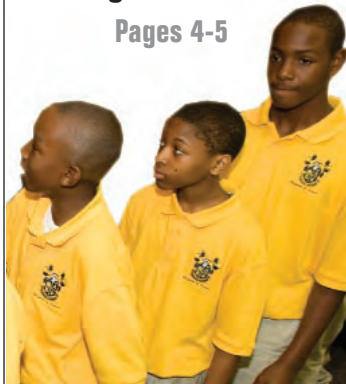


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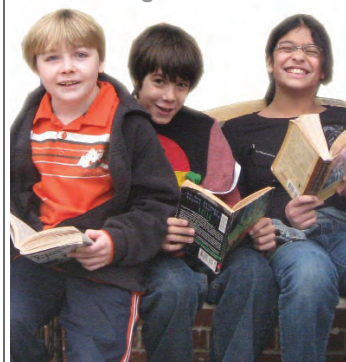
A singular success

Pages 4-5



Read after me

Page 18



Rockin' robots

Pages 12-13



Bulldog Branden

Page 24



BEST IN THE U.S.

Dr. Hall named 2009 National Superintendent of the Year

Dr. Beverly Hall's role in helping Atlanta Public Schools make dramatic progress has not gone unnoticed in the state of Georgia – or the nation.

In February she was named 2009 National Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Superintendents at its National Conference on Education in San

Francisco. It is the top professional honor for a K-12 school administrator, making Hall the first Georgia superintendent to receive the national title.

This is one of several recent honors for Hall, who was named Georgia Superintendent of the Year in December by the Georgia School

Superintendents Association, and one of the 100 most influential Georgians of 2009 by *Georgia Trend* magazine.

Since Hall came to Atlanta in 1999, student test scores have steadily improved, along with graduation rates.

"Beverly Hall is an outstanding superintendent whose leadership has

See SUPERINTENDENT Page 20



Dr. Beverly L. Hall

The real thing



Kennedy Middle School student Brandon Morris, right, works with Bethune Elementary student Jacoreya Comer as part of a tutoring program sponsored by the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. Story, Page 7.

PHOTO: REBA SALDANHA



Dr. Beverly L. Hall

Investing in our students' futures

Welcome to the second edition of *The Atlanta Educator*. This has been an exciting and historic year for Atlanta Public Schools. Test scores are up, students are on a path to success — and the nation is taking notice.

Over the past few months, our schools have welcomed Tuskegee Airmen, Colombian exchange students and musical icons. Innovative academic programs such as Project GRAD and the Confucius Institute are providing unparalleled opportunities for our students.

In this issue, you will read about kindergarteners who speak Chinese at Toomer Elementary School, and Inman Middle School girls who take the “CSI” approach to solving math and science problems under the leadership of award-winning teacher

We've made major investments to improve our schools, and those investments are paying off.

Kelly Schlegel. You will learn how APS Chief of Security Marquenta A. Sands turned a crisis into an opportunity by forming a well-trained cadre of APS crossing guards. Don't miss the story written by a proud Sarah Smith Elementary parent who describes programs that led to higher performance on annual assessments.

We are extremely proud of our students and staff at Atlanta Public Schools and we are dedicated to making sure that the academic progress our students have made continues.

We know the Atlanta community, like the rest of the country, is going through very difficult economic times. In spite of the current financial climate, we are determined to continue providing our students with a world-class education.

We've made major investments to improve our schools, and those investments are paying off. Just

10 years ago, Atlanta was one of the lowest-performing urban school systems in America — today, we're one of the top. District-wide graduation rates have increased 80 percent. They've gone from 39 percent in 2002 — the earliest comparable year — to 71.7 percent for the class of 2008. To make this kind of dramatic progress, we've raised standards, redesigned our schools and invested heavily in our most important assets — our children and their teachers and school leaders.

We've made these strides thanks to dedicated faculty and administrators and through partnerships with our civic, business and philanthropic communities. Each understands that an investment in student success is an investment in the future. We are proud to share these inspirational stories with you.

Dr. Beverly L. Hall is superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools.



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By its very nature, the Atlanta Public Schools Web site — www.atlantapublicschools.us — can be unwieldy because of the volume of information it contains. The redesigned version adheres to one rule: simplicity.

“We wanted to make sure the content was easy to find,” said Stephen J. Alford, a director of communications and leader of the site redesign team. “We didn’t want visitors to feel overwhelmed.”

The Communications and Information Technology departments worked with outside contractor SchoolWires to create the site’s first major update in four years. This transition also included the launch of Web sites for each school in the district.

“The migration of our school and district Web sites onto a single format enhances APS’ ability to streamline communications,” said IT project manager Glenn Melendez. The result is a site that can be tailored to individual needs.

Visitors can download an interactive calendar onto a smart phone or PDA, or sign up for e-mail alerts. Thanks to a Google translator, users also can view the site in several languages.

The screenshot shows the Atlanta Public Schools website interface. At the top, there's a language selector (English to Spanish) and a 'Translate' button. The main header features the APS logo and the tagline 'Making A Difference'. Below this is a navigation menu with links: HOME, COMMUNITY, DEPARTMENTS, INSIDE APS, PARENTS & STUDENTS, SCHOOLS, VIDEO CHANNEL, and CALENDAR. A large banner for 'National Signing Day 2009' is prominently displayed. To the right, a 'Quick Link' sidebar lists various resources like APS Resources, Registration, Careers at APS, Calendars, Transportation, Homework Hotline, Confidential Tip, Online Meal Pay, Vendor Services, Employees (e-A), Sub Finder, and School Menus. Below the banner, a 'WELCOME TO ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS' section contains a message about the school environment and a photo of Dr. Beverly L. Hall, Ed.D., Superintendent. The footer includes the website URL www.atlantapublicschools.us.

All of these options also are available on the individual school Web sites. Bolton Academy parent Beth Hamilton appreciates the change.

“More parents are using the Web site,” she says. “Many people ‘shop’ for schools these days, and

if a school can’t provide an exceptional — or at least adequate — Web site, then parents of potential students may question if the school can educate their children.”

The new APS Web site also features expanded video and photo

galleries that highlight district activities, teacher profiles and a section for realtors. These additions provide more examples of how APS is making a difference in students’ lives.

Visit the new district Web site at atlantapublicschools.us

APS BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Cecily Harsch-Kinnane

Board vice chair and former teacher values parents' input

Cecily Harsch-Kinnane is vice chair of the Atlanta Board of Education. This is the second in a series of board member profiles to be published in *The Atlanta Educator*.

Position

Cecily Harsch-Kinnane has served on the Atlanta Board of Education since January 2006. She was elected vice chair in January 2007.

Background

A native of Atlanta, Harsch-Kinnane is a former middle- and high-school math teacher. She earned her bachelor's degree in mathematics from Brown University and has done graduate work in math education and educational psychology at Georgia State University.

"As board members, we all have our own strengths in certain areas," she said. "Educational policy has always been a special interest of mine."



Experience

Harsch-Kinnane has been involved in Atlanta Public Schools for more than a decade. She and her husband, Paul, have three children, two of whom are APS students at Inman Middle School and Grady High School. Their eldest daughter graduated from Grady and is a freshman at Brown University.

"All three of them have had a wonderful experience in APS," said Harsch-Kinnane. "I'm a strong believer in public schools. My husband and I built a house near Morningside

(Elementary) purposely, so that we could send our children there.

I remember when we went in to meet with the principal, she was so receptive and so intuitive. The outreach was immediate, and they did a lot of work to make sure our daughter's placement was correct. We walked

out in love with the school and in love with the district."

Harsch-Kinnane has served as PTA president at Morningside. She also has served on the PTA boards at Inman and Grady.

She was co-president of the Council of Intown Neighborhoods and Schools, and has served on the principal selection committee at several schools. She also has been involved with Habitat for Humanity, the City of Atlanta Elected Officials Compensation Commission and the Atlanta Youth Soccer Association. Harsch-Kinnane is currently a board member for the Odyssey program, a non-profit organization that manages summer programs for APS students.

Points of Pride

"APS is unique in its appreciation and respect for what parents and community members bring to the district, and what individual schools bring to the community," she said. "There's a receptiveness that you don't always find in every system. Our schools are wonderful places, happy places, vibrant places. Dr. Hall is diligent in making sure of that. I value that, and it's something I hope to continue to build on."

Cecily Harsch-Kinnane's e-mail address is chkinnane@atlantapublicschools.us. The Atlanta Board of Education meets April 13, May 11 and June 8 at the Center for Learning and Leadership Auditorium, 130 Trinity Ave., S.W., Atlanta, 30303. For more information about the board, visit atlantapublicschools.us/board



CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

CHUCK BURBRIDGE

Each quarter, The Atlanta Educator will introduce you to Atlanta Public Schools faculty, staff and administrators.

Q How long have you worked for Atlanta Public Schools?

A 18 months.

Q What does your current position entail?

A I manage all finances for the district, including procurement, as well as the Information Technology department.

Q What was your mission when you started?

A The overall mission was to change the way we do business and instill the appropriate

controls. When I was hired, there was a question of whether the controls that were in place were actually working. The problem was not the budget; the auditors didn't have confidence in the procedures.

Q What measures have you taken to streamline the budget and increase efficiency?

A We have taken a very collaborative approach to managing the budget. I'm working with senior cabinet members to put our resources to best use. We have a balanced budget, even in these stressful financial times. We have implemented a project-management approach to improve our control structure. With this methodology, we have confidence the changes we are making are successfully implemented.

Q What challenges does the district face moving forward in this economy?

A We have high fixed costs and our revenue bases are contracting, which is not good. Revenues from property taxes, sales taxes and state aid are all contracting. Government has constraints on revenue streams.

Q What structural upgrades are planned in the next year?

A We are upgrading the basic financial system of the district with new software. We have hired 31 new people in the last 18 months and created new functions, including treasurer. We are putting the right processes in place. We still have improvements we are working on in accounts payable and grants accounting.

Q What are the biggest cuts in the budget?

A That is not clear yet. We are analyzing the federal stimulus package, and that may buy us some time and allow us to continue our programs for another year.



Chuck Burbridge

The public is invited to attend the following meetings regarding the 2010 fiscal budget:

- ◆ April 2 - Community meeting on proposed budget, Inman Middle School, 6 p.m.
- ◆ April 23 - Community meeting on proposed budget, Maynard H. Jackson High School, 6 p.m.
- ◆ May 11 - Adoption of final budget and proposed millage rates, Atlanta Board of Education Meeting, Center for Learning and Leadership Auditorium, 7 p.m.

APS
SINGLE-GENDER
SCHOOLS

Coretta Scott King and B.E.S.T. academies: Singular success

BY RICH FAHEY

Everything that's old is new again. For the first time in more than 50 years, Atlanta has adopted the single-gender school model. In the fall of 2007, Benjamin S. Carson Honors Preparatory School was transformed into the Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy, and the B.E.S.T. (Business, Engineering, Science, Technology) Academy.

Tamara Cotman is executive director of School Reform Team 4, which includes both schools. She said the initiative has gained support from the community, including social organizations such as the 100 Black Men of Atlanta and the Links, Inc. Cotman added that early results have been positive.

"We're a data-driven district," she said, "and the early data is promising."

The sixth-grade students at both schools showed marked improvements in reading, math and English language arts on Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) tests.

In sixth-grade reading, 69 percent of B.E.S.T. students met or exceeded state standards, compared to 50 percent at Carson the year before; 87 percent of Coretta Scott King students met or exceeded standards, compared to 77 percent at Carson the year before.

In math, the number of B.E.S.T. students who met or exceeded standards improved to 38 percent from 15 percent at Carson, while 46 percent of Coretta Scott King students met or exceeded standards, compared to 21 percent at Carson the year before.

In English language arts, 64 percent of B.E.S.T. students met or exceeded standards, compared to 53 percent the year before, and 81 percent of Coretta Scott King students met or exceeded standards, compared to 73 percent the year before.

Melody Morgan, principal of the Coretta Scott King Academy, also has noticed improvements among her students. "They're not afraid to ask questions or seek help," she said. "When we've done things with the boys, all of a sudden they're not as vocal."

The two Atlanta schools join other single-gender public schools, such as Western High in Baltimore,



B.E.S.T. Academy students line up to hug John Hope Bryant, vice chairman of the President's Council on Financial Literacy.

Detroit's International Academy for Young Women and Douglass Academy for Boys; and New York City's Girls Preparatory Charter School. Boston has not had single-sex schools since 1971, but education officials are considering seeking a change to state law so that two schools can open. As of December 2008, South Carolina offered single-gender classrooms in 198 public schools.

There is so much interest in this school model that the National Association for Single Sex Public Education (NASSPE) will hold its fifth international

conference from Oct. 9-11 in Atlanta.

The trend toward single-gender schools received a major boost two years ago when the U.S. Department of Education clarified regulations that mandate equal opportunities for female students. Single-gender schools are allowed as long as equal programs exist at a co-ed school.

In Atlanta, the single-gender academies are set to expand. Coretta Scott King and B.E.S.T. academies began with sixth-grade students in 2007, and expanded to include the seventh grade this year. They will add an eighth grade in August, when all students in grades 6-8 move into their new facilities.

Construction for the adjoining high school will be complete in time for the addition of a

ninth-grade class in August 2010.

Students in both schools are required to conform to a uniform dress code. A positive attitude also is expected.

Morgan said Coretta Scott King students constantly are being reminded of the legacy of the woman for whom the school is named — and their responsibility to live up to that name.

"There's a culture here of non-violence and high expectations for the students," she said.

APS created the Shirley Clarke Franklin Lecture Series to inspire young girls of CSK Academy. Spelman College President Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum spoke to students March 20 at Washington High School. Visit www.atlantapublicschools.us and find out more.

“

**“They’re not
afraid to ask
questions or
seek help.”**

**Melody Morgan
Coretta Scott King
Academy principal**



John Hope Bryant, vice chairman of the President's Council on Financial Literacy, is one of many speakers to inspire B.E.S.T. Academy students.

All-male school strives to do its very B.E.S.T.

By DAVID LEE SIMMONS

When Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall separated Carson Middle School into two single-sex schools, she stressed that a "one size fits all" approach to education no longer works.

"We took these routes after identifying a curriculum that caters to the separate learning styles of girls and boys," Hall said. "For example, research tells us that most African-American boys prefer hands-on/tactile learning, project-based assignments and lessons integrated with technology."

That approach to academic achievement takes place daily at the all-male Business, Engineering, Science and Technology Academy (B.E.S.T.). The school also has implemented a strategy that emphasizes partnerships, mentoring and support for students and faculty. Under the direction of Principal Curt Green, students enjoy a range of support from inside and outside the building.

Here are a few examples of how B.E.S.T. Academy promotes success:

Model behavior: A partnership with the civic group 100 Black Men of Atlanta places business and community leaders in classrooms twice a month for mentoring sessions. The organization also helped purchase school uniforms.

"We're trying to provide a stellar learning environment that provides a holistic approach to student achievement," said 100 Black Men member Dr. Howard Grant, who also is administrator for the Atlanta Board of Education.

Customized curriculum: Media specialist Kellye Carter points to a number of projects that help reinforce student achievement and self-esteem. Art teacher Rodney Tisdale coordinated a "Color of Yes" poster contest that encouraged students to interpret President Barack Obama through a varied color palette.

Golden Ambassadors: Exemplary students are chosen to represent the academy and speak to prospective students at area elementary schools.

Afterschool All-Stars: Math coach Vernon Smart takes students on field trips to cultural events around Atlanta.

Saturday Academy: On Saturdays, teachers help students prepare for upcoming Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests.

Boy Scouts: With its 60 members, B.E.S.T. Academy has the largest African-American Boy Scouts chapter in the nation

B.E.S.T. and its female counterpart, Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy, started with a sixth-grade class last year and added a seventh grade this year. Eventually both schools will be 6-12.

It's a small world after all

Coretta Scott King students bond with South African peers

The world has become a little smaller for 25 students at the Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy. Rather than using textbooks to study South African culture, the young ladies simply grab a pencil and paper and start writing.

Thanks to the Fulton County Global Youth Leadership Program, their letters reach equally inquisitive peers in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Fulton County Commission Chairman John H. Eaves created the global exchange as part of the county's Youth Commission. Now 25 students on each side of the ocean compare notes on everything from sports to history.

"We're finding out from their letters to us that we've bridged the gap when it comes to many cultural issues," said seventh-grade social studies teacher Ashante Reese. "For instance, we share many of the same tastes in music."

Civic leaders and students from the Johannesburg

Student Council kicked off the program with a visit to Atlanta last October. In addition to visiting APS schools, they toured landmarks such as the state Capitol, Morehouse College, CNN and the High Museum of Art.

Now the students compare notes on a regular basis. To promote writing skills, Reese said, e-mail takes a backseat to handwritten letters.

She said APS students have learned that their South African counterparts enjoy sports such as "netball," which resembles volleyball. Also, letters to Johannesburg arrive in a much more timely manner than Atlanta-bound correspondence.

Reese said next year the cultural exchange experiment moves to Germany and China. Thanks to the district's expanding foreign-language program, many of those outbound letters may be handwritten in Chinese.



Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy students write to pen pals in South Africa.

APS
SINGLE-SEX
SCHOOLS

COURT IS IN SESSION



Students judge peers at John F. Kennedy Middle School

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Teens are holding court at John F. Kennedy Middle School, where they serve as attorneys, bailiffs, court clerks and jurors.

Zone 1 Court represents a unique partnership between Atlanta Public Schools and the Fulton County District Attorney's office. The court allows students to judge their peers, with the goal of deterring non-violent offenders from committing more serious violations. Twenty-nine Kennedy students were sworn in to the program last October, following a rigorous application and interview process.

Now the district attorney's office refers cases to the school's state-of-the-art courtroom.

On the first and third Thursday of each month, an adult judge and other APS faculty members assist students with operating the court, which is funded by a Project Safe Neighborhoods grant. Kennedy is the first middle school in the state to have a teen court of this magnitude, and this innovative program has drawn attention from around the city and the state.

"The students are so excited, I love it," said Olivia Davis, a John Marshall Law School student who mentors young prosecutors and defense attorneys in the Zone 1 Court. "They've just embraced the program and taken pride in their positions."

Zone 1 Court frequently reinforces the theme that actions have consequences for teens and their community. The program also affords them the opportunity to avoid a criminal record — if they fully comply with sanctions issued by the court.

"All of the sanctions are designed to be positive — getting to

the root of the matter, putting kids in supportive programs and helping them contribute to society," said Debra Tavaras, director of Zone 1 Court. "It's an alternative to suspension. When you take kids out of class, they're not learning. This gives them the chance to weigh what they've done and become more accountable."

Kennedy student and Zone 1 defense attorney Kira McLaurin said the program makes a

difference in the lives of her peers as well as student court officers.

"I enjoy that I can actually help some of the students and work on solving the problem, instead of just punishing them," she said. "There's less chance they'll do the same thing over and over."

McLaurin also gets a first-hand view of the criminal

justice system, complete with access to the Fulton County District Attorney's office. As a result, some participants identify potential career paths in the criminal justice field.

"As trial attorneys, it's important for us to come here and let the students know we're just regular people," said Assistant District Attorney Kimani King, who serves as the court's judge and trains the student attorneys. "Folks start emulating what they admire, but also what they can see and touch. It's all about exposure."

The impact of that exposure is not lost on students like Tre'von Fitts, who serves as a prosecutor. "I thought teen court would be like mock trial, but these are real cases and real people that we're dealing with," he said. "It's getting us ready for later on in life. I've learned that whatever you think you can do, just strive for it."

“

"It's an alternative to suspension. When you take kids out of class, they're not learning. This gives them the chance to weigh what they've done and become more accountable."

Debra Tavaras
Zone 1 Court director



Clockwise from top photo: Fulton County Asst. District Attorney Kimani King, serving as judge, listens to student attorney Tre'Von Fitts after a Zone 1 Court trial; John Marshall Law School student Kara Smith coaches prosecutors Se'Derrick Nelson and Kira McLaurin; student jurors, from left, Arnesha Stroud, Jimmy Paige and Angelina Barden; and Se'Derrick Nelson makes his closing argument.





Kennedy Middle School student Marquise Knox, right, works with Bethune Elementary student Cameron Clayton as part of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

The real thing: Coke and APS

Partnership enables Kennedy sixth-graders to tutor Bethune students

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Students at Bethune Elementary and Kennedy Middle School are learning that some lessons just can't be found in textbooks.

Every Monday through Thursday, sixth-graders from Kennedy tutor kindergartners and first-graders at Bethune. It's a win-win partnership formed through the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (CCVYP), which promotes dropout prevention.

"Bethune students now have older students to look up to and to help them with their class work, and the tutors develop a sense of responsibility, integrity and pride," said Bethune Principal RoseMary Hamer. As a result, all of the students — the tutors and the tutees — do better in school."

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) created this dropout-prevention program in 1984 with funding from Atlanta-based Coca-Cola. Over the years, CCVYP has helped more than 400,000 children, families and educators nationwide. The Kennedy-Bethune partnership began five years ago, and the results have been positive.



Kennedy Middle School student Emmitt Grier works with Bethune Elementary student Joie Phillips as part of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

"The younger kids really look forward to it," said Pamela Bowles-Moore, a CCVYP teacher coordinator and speech pathologist at Kennedy. "They want to work and have someone paying that extra attention to them. For the older kids, it gives them a lot of responsibility. They're

really conscientious about doing their job. It gives them a reason to be more accountable."

Each of the 22 Kennedy tutors is assigned to one-to-three kindergarten or first-grade students. Guided by Bethune classroom teachers, tutors work with the students independently, focusing on math and reading skills. The program also provides a full range of training, technical assistance, evaluation and support materials to ensure that students succeed. Tutors also receive a stipend, which keeps them motivated to perform well and stay in school.

"I like that I'm able to help the kindergartners learn more and get them prepared for first grade," said tutor Cherbeya Hood. "I was surprised to be able to teach them more than I thought I really would at first."

"I want to grow up to be a teacher, so this is a good experience for me to learn how to interact with kids," said tutor Brandon Morris.

In addition to the tutoring, the Kennedy students are required to keep a journal and meet every Friday to reflect on the week's activities. Field trips to the World of Coca-Cola, Clark Atlanta University and Atlanta's CW network affiliate, CW69, also help tutors stay on track for success in the classroom and beyond.

South Atlanta students follow Emory pipeline



South Atlanta High students practice ER skills at Emory University School of Medicine.

Studying health and medical sciences in Atlanta Public Schools means getting up close and personal with the subject matter. Montavis Fluker, a junior at South Atlanta's School of Health & Medical Science, learned that firsthand during a weekly visit to the Emory University School of Medicine.

He is one of 20 students who participate in the Emory Pipeline Project, which allows them to study health issues under the guidance of Emory medical school students and faculty. During one visit, Fluker and his classmates re-enacted an emergency room case involving an injured teen. Medical school instructors walked South Atlanta students through the exercise in a model emergency room using a life-like doll.

"They put it in straightforward terms, so that most of the instructions they give, I can pick up," said Fluker. "I could take what I learned at Emory and bring it to class."

South Atlanta High functions under the small schools model, with four schools on one campus, each with its own principal. In addition to the School of Health & Medical Science, there are schools of Leadership & Economic Empowerment, Law & Social Justice, and Computer Animation & Design.

Fluker aspires to be a veterinarian. Early emphasis on health sciences helps to maintain his interest in the field. It's one of many examples of how the district's high school transformation helps students prepare for success in college and beyond.

Benefits of the small-schools model are evident to teachers, students and family members.

"They leave invigorated by the stimulating learning experiences and thought-provoking dialogue with the medical students and undergraduates," said Termerion McCrary, principal of South Atlanta High's School of Health & Medical Science.

Douglass students experience real-world hospitality

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Students at Frederick Douglass High School are getting a taste of the real world.

The school's Hospitality, Tourism and Marketing (HTM) small learning community (SLC) unveiled a new partnership this year with the Grand Hyatt Atlanta Hotel in Buckhead. Earlier this year, Chef Rodney Ashley and employment manager Garry Ann Brown conducted a culinary arts demonstration, salad competition and employment career seminar for ninth-grade students. Nearly two dozen Douglass freshmen also toured the Grand Hyatt, gaining new insight into the range of employment possibilities in the hospitality industry. In April students will welcome hotel employees to the school for a seminar on job interviews. Internships for select seniors run through the spring semester.

"It's an opportunity for students to paint a picture of their future and see where that career path might lead," said Assistant Principal Stephanie Bailey, who manages curriculum and instruction for the HTM at Douglass. "We're building these relationships to change students' lives."

HTM is one of four small learning communities at Douglass. The school also offers centers for Engineering and Applied Technology, Communications and Journalism, and Business and Entrepreneurship. Douglass is one of five APS high schools that reflect the district's plans to transform all APS high schools. Each



Frederick Douglass High School HTM students learn about the hospitality industry.

school offers an intimate atmosphere.

"It gives us exposure to all of the fields that we can get into," said Douglass freshman Austin Daniels. "I came in here wanting to be a chef, until I realized I can't cook. Now I want to be an air traffic controller."

Daniels, who hopes to own his own airline someday, will try his

hand at aviation this summer when he participates in a flight program through Delta Air Lines. The company is one of several corporate partners that enhance the academic experience of APS students. Other Douglass partners include the Four Seasons Hotel; InterContinental Hotels Group; Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts; Georgia State University; the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators and Developers; and Justin's Restaurant, owned by part-time Atlanta resident Sean "Diddy" Combs.

"I can't say enough about our partners," said Dr. Bridgett Isaac, a teacher in Douglass' Program for Exceptional Children. "Justin's Executive Chef, Joe Rickerson, gave a fantastic demonstration to students at the restaurant, fed them a four-course lunch, gave them a tour of the kitchen and talked to them at length about careers in the food industry. Hotel Indigo hosted our special-education students, presenting them with job shadowing experiences. It's exactly what we want our children to get out of their high school experience. We're preparing them for college, for the workforce and for life."

HTM students develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, along with people skills. Career goals range from pediatric medicine to culinary arts to fashion design.

"It helps prepare you for a career and teaches you to be warm and welcoming," said student Brendan Brooks. "No matter what you do, you have to meet and greet people all the time."

Building bridges

Marriott Foundation helps students with disabilities pursue careers

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Atlanta native Jonathan Keepler, 19, grew up with ambitions of pursuing a career in the hotel industry. Today, Keepler is living that dream at the Renaissance Concourse Hotel, adjacent to one of the busiest airports in the world.

The South Atlanta High School graduate achieved success with support from the Marriott Foundation's Bridges program, one of many partnerships that help Atlanta Public Schools prepare students for college and career.

"What makes Jonathan stand out is that this is what he wanted to do when I met him," said Tony Singleton, an employer representative for Bridges. "He told me that his dream was to work in a hotel, and here he is, doing just that. He's a good kid who has come from humble beginnings and done well."

Since 1990, Bridges has helped more than 13,000 young people with disabilities in seven cities. Launched in Atlanta, the program prepares students for vocational success by helping them find and maintain employment over a two-year period. Bridges also offers job coaching and follow-up services.

"Students are referred to us by their schools, and we in turn teach them job readiness and then go out and find jobs for them," Singleton said. "The appreciation you get back from students and their families is so rewarding. You're changing a life through employment."

Singleton worked to pave the ideal career path for Keepler. He said the program works to bridge student interests and abilities with the needs of employers. Bridges also promotes strong employment relationships.

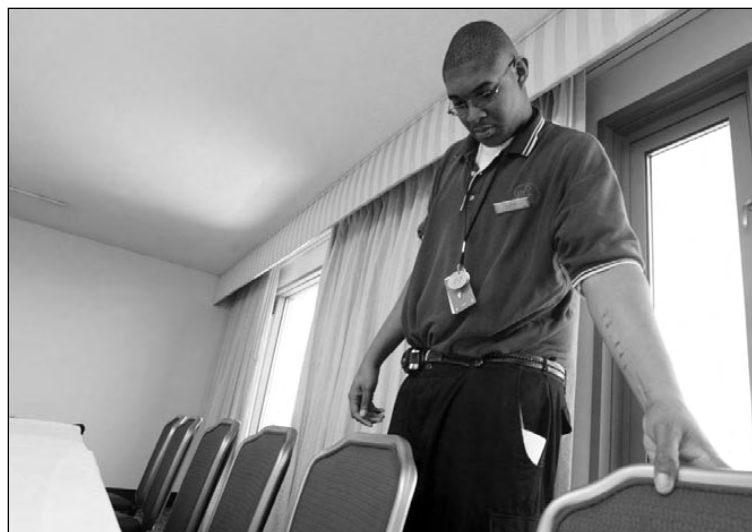
Based on Keepler's interest in hospitality, Singleton initially placed him in a part-time position at Emory University, where he trained for three months as a member of the dining and catering staff. The position allowed Keepler to prepare for more detailed responsibilities in the hotel industry, including tasks related to his job in the Renaissance Concourse Hotel's banquet department.

"There's a lot involved with the set-up," said Keepler. "For a 6 o'clock event, we might start at 2 or 3, moving tables and refreshing the rooms."

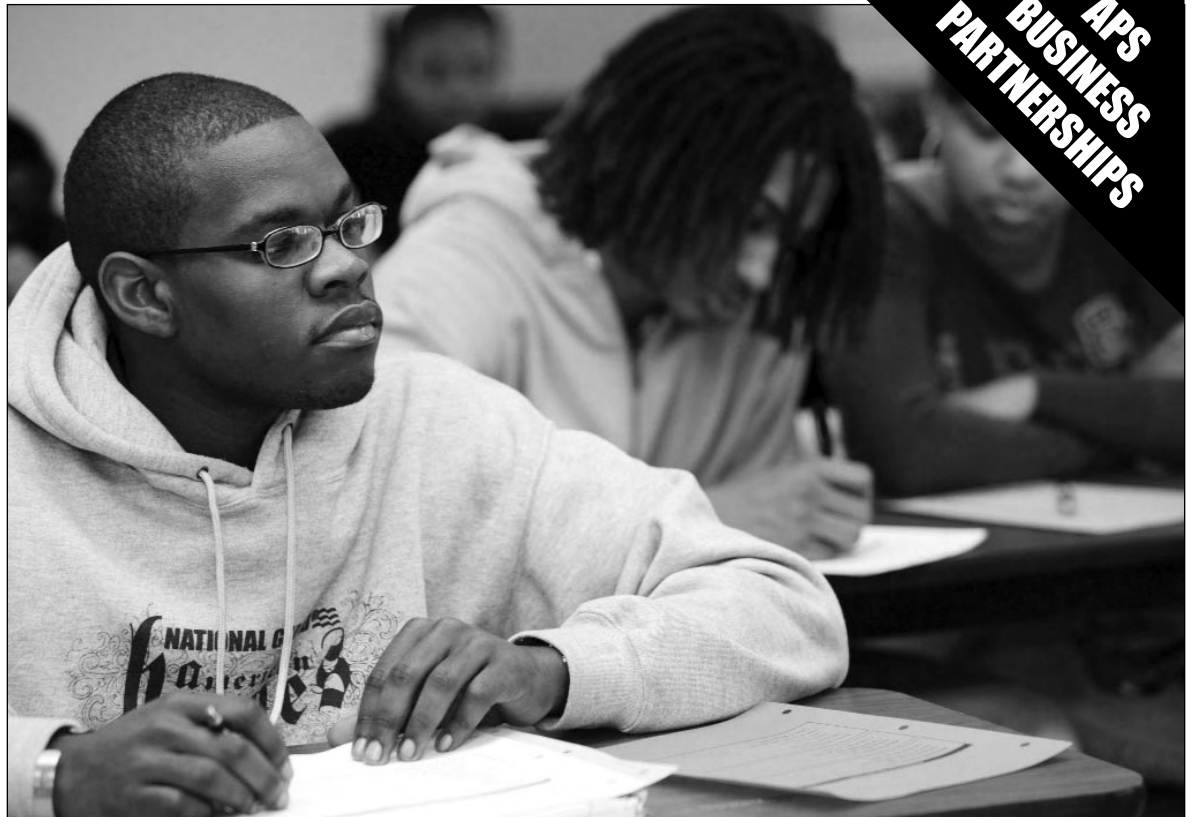
Since he was hired in June, Keepler has handled his workload efficiently, and was rewarded with the title of Employee of the Month last fall.

"Jonathan's very willing to work and to learn," said David Nelson, senior banquet manager at the hotel. "Bridges is a wonderful program in that it gives young men and women the opportunity to see what they want to do in life. It gives them a start."

Keepler is one of more than 900 APS graduates to have joined the workforce with help from Bridges. Nearly 70 APS students participate in the program this year.



Jonathan Keepler works at the Renaissance Concourse Hotel.



Therrell High School entrepreneurship class student Raymond Riley Jr.

Therrell business students prepare for global economy

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

There's no better time than the present to begin molding America's next generation of business moguls. The School of Business and Entrepreneurship at D.M. Therrell High School does just that.

Under the theme "Programmed for a Pathway of Purpose and Power," the small learning community aims to produce independent thinkers who are prepared to thrive in a rapidly changing global economy.

"This generation is influenced by so many things, and so many come in and say, 'I want my own business some day,'" said teacher Melissa Turnipseed. "Our mission is to expose them to what that really involves."

The business program is one of four small schools focused on leadership at Therrell. The transformed high school also houses the School of Technology, Engineering, Math and Science, the School of Health Science and Research and the School of Law. All seek to help students prepare for college and career within four years.

At the School of Business and Entrepreneurship, students like senior Mario Liles engage in college tours, business leadership courses, work-based learning experiences and mentoring from business leaders. These experiences help him prepare for the challenges of college life at



Therrell teacher Melissa Turnipseed.

Marquette University, which he plans to attend in the fall.

"I want to open my own retail store," said Liles. "This is a big thing for me to get a first look at what it could be like."

In Turnipseed's entrepreneurship class, students are challenged with the task of developing business plans, which they will present to investors at the end of the school year.

"It's important to recognize how the classroom experience relates to the business world," said Turnipseed, who earned her bachelor's degree in marketing and master's in business education. "Students are more technologically literate today, so I'm finding the interactive approach is more helpful."

Guest speakers and on-site visits

to local companies also enhance the teaching and learning process. Since 1992, Therrell has benefitted from a strong relationship with global shipping giant UPS. The collaboration offers students a chance to visualize a range of careers with a \$50 billion global corporation that's within a half hour's drive of the school's southwest Atlanta campus.

"We want students to see the potential of what's out there," said UPS Industrial Engineer Manager Bruce Gunning, who helped coordinate a student trip to the company in February.

In the span of a morning, students were divided into three groups and offered a tour of the company's headquarters. Students also learned about career opportunities at UPS in positions ranging from accounting to information systems.

Partnerships with Georgia State University, T.J. Maxx and Marshalls further enhance students' learning experiences through job shadowing, internships and mentoring opportunities.

As an example, a representative from T.J. Maxx visits the school to discuss interview skills. Each student is given \$65 for interview apparel at the store. Students are asked to interview for potential jobs with Marshalls, the company's sister retailer.

APS
BUSINESS
PARTNERSHIPS

ART IN ATLANTA

APS students get creative inside and outside the classroom

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Atlanta Public Schools strengthens its emphasis on arts education through a program called On Site/Insight. This innovative approach to arts actually takes students out of the classroom and allows them to build leadership and critical-thinking skills.

High-school students from Grady, Washington, Carver School of the Arts, and South Atlanta School of Animation and Computer Design begin with a rigorous art history course at Atlanta's High Museum of Art. Then they become docents for students at M. Agnes Jones and Finch elementary schools.

In November, the high school students guided their elementary school charges

through the High's permanent collection, which consists of more than 11,000 pieces of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art, as well as European artifacts, modern and contemporary pieces and photography.

"This is art-centered education at its best," said M. Agnes Jones art teacher Raymond Veon. "High school students develop leadership skills while talking intelligently about art. Elementary students hang on every word of their high school mentors. After the museum tour, everyone works together on major art projects, learning the creative problem-solving skills essential to success in our 21st century economy."

Veon launched the program last year, funded with a \$7,430 academic enrichment grant from the McCarthy Dressman Educational Foundation. He coordinates the multi-school effort with visual arts chairman John Brandhorst at Grady, and art teachers Sachi Richardson of Washington, Felecia Waldon of Carver, Tokie Rome and Courtney Bryant of South Atlanta and Andy Kerr of Finch Elementary.

Veon also secured a second, \$9,850 McCarthy Dressman grant to fund continuing education for teachers. The grant allows 15 APS art teachers to participate in a Masterpiece of Learning program at the High Museum. They also have the opportunity to develop 75 new



North Atlanta High School students guide their elementary school charges through the High Museum of Art as part of the innovative On Site/Insight Program.



The On Site/Insight Program takes APS high school students out of the classroom and allows them to serve as art docents for elementary school students.

lesson plans and bring their students to the museum for individualized, interdisciplinary learning experiences.

"The foundation is pleased to support those individuals and teams of educators like Mr. Veon who share our commitment to make teaching and learning exciting, innovative and motivating — and to ensure that what happens in the classroom contributes to the highest development of each child and mentor and to our society as a whole," said Sarah McCarthy, chair of the McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation Board of Trustees.

Hands-on learning exercises will continue this spring as APS students from participating schools create several large-scale pieces that will be displayed throughout Atlanta. A permanent sculpture will be installed on the grounds of the Hammonds House Museum of African-American Art in the city's West End district. Permanent sculptures also will be built at South Atlanta Educational Complex and M. Agnes Jones, while an interdisciplinary sculpture and live performance will be created at Carver School of the Arts.

Students help design new gateway to Isabel Gates Webster Park

Someday students from Peyton Forest Elementary will be able to take their sons and daughters to Isabel Gates Webster Park and show off ceramic tiles they designed as part of an 18-foot metal sculpture.

Atlanta's Public Art Program commissioned artist Robert Clements to design the piece. He enlisted Peyton Forest students to help, and they happily obliged.

About 150 students contributed tiles for the project, with designs ranging from self-portraits

to sports scenes. Principal Karen Barlow-Brown said students also had a chance to meet Webster's family and learn about her contributions to the city of Atlanta. Three of Webster's children attended Peyton Forest, and many community residents regarded her as "a beloved neighbor" of the school.

Webster was the first woman to serve on the Georgia State Personnel Board. As an active member of the NAACP, she won several court cases involving employment and housing

discrimination in the '60s and '70s. She also served the city as an associate judge from 1987 until her death in 1991.

"I was happy the students could learn a little bit about the legacy of my wife as part of the beautification project," said Donald Webster. "I hope they'll be pleased with what they did."

Clements' tower structure will support 12 figures depicting men and women running to improve their health. It will serve as a gateway to the park, which features expansive views, a

playground, walking trails, tennis courts and picnic shelters. It's one of four Atlanta Neighborhood Gateway Parks Projects selected to get a permanent, site-specific, public art piece.

The sculpture will be completed this spring, and this hands-on art project will impact Peyton Forest students for years to come as they walk past the park.

For more information on Peyton Forest Elementary, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us/peytonforest.

Excellence rewarded

Four Atlanta Public Schools principals and 11 teachers have won the 2009 Atlanta Families' Awards for Excellence in Education. Each educator received \$7,500. Ed Michaels and his family conceived the awards in 2005, in conjunction with APS Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall. The goal is to recognize educators' ability to improve student achievement and self-esteem, as well as their ability to collaborate with other APS schools and leaders. Here are the winners and their plans for the award money:

PRINCIPALS

Gwendolyn Benton of East Lake Elementary School will purchase the First-In Math program to raise the percentage of grade 1-5 students that meet and exceed mathematics standards.

Karen Evans of Morris Brandon Elementary School will help manage the school's opening of a separate campus for kindergarten and first-grade students next school year.

LaPaul Shelton of Cook Elementary School will implement a Boys to Men program to increase self-esteem and academic success among male fourth- and fifth-graders.

Arlene Snowden of Capitol View Elementary School plans to promote student achievement by engaging parents and the community during a Math and Science Curriculum Night.

TEACHERS

Graham Balch of Grady High School will implement smart-technology tools that help teachers to better understand student learning.

Jacob Hackett of Grady High School will take students to Georgia's Sapelo Island for team-building, communication and trust exercises. It's the final activity of his six-week Summer Literacy Camp.

Amanda Lynch of Cook Elementary School will create a sustainable space within Cook's new science laboratory, focusing on organizing materials, equipment, media and technology.

Jacinta Williams of Cook Elementary School will create a garden where students can apply classroom concepts, including healthy eating, as part of Cook's Digging in the Dirt project.

Tracy Wilson of Inman Middle School will purchase software and incorporate new activities to provide students an interactive math experience.

Kelly Schlegel of Inman Middle School will provide more activities, such as pig dissections and rocket launches, for the Girls Excelling in Math and Science (GEMS) after-school program.

LaVasia Bullard of M. A. Jones Elementary School will create, operate and maintain Jones' WMAJ News Center, which helps students hone their writing and editing skills through newscasts.

Raymond Fields of Bethune Elementary School will use digital photography and real-life experiences to increase student mastery of math concepts.

Monica Groves of Jean Childs Young Middle School will start a student literary magazine that will honor and develop students' creative voices.

Malaika Jordan of Carver's School of Health Sciences & Research will explore biotechnology topics with students to increase interest in research science, laboratory techniques and problem-solving skills.

Beth Kelley of Centennial Place Elementary School will reshape the Parent Resource Center to promote more collaboration between parents and teachers. She also plans to purchase learning materials and invite experts to discuss effective parenting tools.



Inman Middle School students meet after school for the GEMS program.

These programs are real GEMS

There is a mystery to be solved at Inman Middle School. It appears that someone is sending anonymous notes to the captain of the basketball team, sealed with a kiss.

But fear not, GEMS are on the case.

GEMS — Girls Excelling in Math and Science — meet after school every Tuesday to tackle science, math and engineering activities. Seventh-grade science teacher Kelly Schlegel created the organization with a simple goal: keep girls interested in math and science.

"Research shows that the interest level declines between fourth through eighth grade," she said. "We want to bridge the gap and keep the interest level high."

To do that, Schlegel recruited Inman parent Mary Lynn Realff, associate professor and director of undergraduate affairs at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Female Georgia Tech undergraduates also participate, offering the Inman students guidance as well as a glimpse into their future. They all work together to help the GEMS create activities that are fun and educational. "The Tech students have served as role models for our

girls," Schlegel said. "There are projections of huge growth in the science, technology, engineering and math fields in future years, and I want young women to be ready for those opportunities."

For GEMS, that means unlocking the mystery of those anonymous letters with "CSI"-style maneuvers, such as conducting chromatography tests on lipstick samples.

"It helps me understand math and science in a fun way," said seventh-grader Koya Siebe, who has recruited some of her friends to join GEMS. "It's more interactive."

The program builds on APS' efforts to strengthen math and science programs in every school. With support from a

\$22.5 million science grant from the GE Foundation, APS is implementing instructional strategies that generate renewed interest in these topics.

The Atlanta Families' 2009 Awards for Excellence in Education have taken notice of Schlegel and her passion, naming her as a recipient of the \$7,500 grant. One-third of the grant money will be for her personal use, another third will go toward professional

development and the rest will help fund more GEMS programs, such as purchasing rockets to test wing design, dissecting fetal pigs and studying solar energy. The Council of Intown Neighborhoods and Schools also provided Schlegel with an \$800 grant to help get the ball rolling.

GEMS' unique approach to math and science has led to a few other welcome surprises for Schlegel.

"Often the girls who are interested in the club are not the high performers," she said. But after a few weeks with GEMS, they are more focused and classroom behavior typically improves dramatically. "I'm a firm believer that behavior impacts academics," she added. To help promote the same level of success throughout the district, Schlegel has devised a guidebook for other schools interested in starting a GEMS club.

Currently, GEMS are busy designing their weekly after-school projects, creating a Web site and brainstorming future assignments. As the program continues, Realff said, all students will benefit from its success: "Girls like projects that help society. If you make it better for girls, it makes it better for boys."

To see the GEMS in action, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us and click on the photo gallery.



It helps me
understand math
and science in a
fun way. It's more
interactive.

Koya Siebe
Inman Middle School
seventh-grader



Clockwise from top: Jackson High School robotics team member Faustino Aranda works on the team's latest robot; Jackson High School robotics team member Emanuel Hudson drives the robot; Jackson robotics team advisor Kami Tucker.



The Inman Middle School robotics team competed in the SuperQualifier held at Warner Robins Air Force Museum and the state competition at Georgia Tech.

Gearing up for ROBOTICS

APS teams participate in regional competition

By MEAGHAN CASEY

In a battle of will, sportsmanship and engineering, five Atlanta Public Schools teams geared up to compete in the annual FIRST Robotics Peachtree Regional Tournament.

High school teams from Mays, Crim, Grady, Jackson and Carver's School of Technology spent six weeks preparing for this year's challenge. To score points, robots must pick up 9-inch balls and deposit them in trailers hitched to their opponents' robots. APS teams dedicated almost 200 hours to the competition, working after-school and on weekends.

"This is what they'll be doing in corporate America," said Kami Tucker, Jackson's engineering dean and robotics coach. "They have a problem and a short time to solve it, and they have to work together as a team and be efficient with their time and money."

FIRST — For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology — was founded in 1992 to help high school students, college students and technical professors solve engineering challenges in a competitive game environment.

It's about interaction and hands-on learning and making learning fun — that's what they like best, said Dr. Patricia Ford, interim director of Career and Technical Education (CTE) in the Office of High Schools. "We have to ask ourselves, 'How can we infuse



The Inman Middle School robotics team participates in a competition.

math and science into the CTE curriculum and bring the subject matter to life?" We want to engage kids through the lens of engineering technology and encourage them to be problem solvers and critical thinkers," Ford said.

More than 42,000 students on 1,686 teams competed in 40 events around the Southeast. The Peachtree Regional March 12-14 welcomed teams from nine states to the Gwinnett Civic and Cultural Center. This year's event was the largest hosted by the Georgia FIRST chapter. All regional events lead up to the championship event April 16-18 at the Georgia Dome.

"It's electrifying," said Tucker. "The whole

city embraces the event and welcomes teams from around the world. Walking into the arena and seeing all the spectators and these young minds creating and using those critical thinking skills, it is very contagious."

It also can be a little overwhelming.

"I never expected to see so many people out there supporting us," said four-year team member Lamar Richardson, a senior at the School of Technology at the New Schools at Carver.

The competition has spurred further excitement about the field of engineering.

While robotics creates a fun, collaborative atmosphere, students also improve math and science skills. Often the program reinforces a student's interest in pursuing engineering in college and beyond.

"The best part is the electronics, and watching everything finally come together," said Jackson freshman Emanuel Hudson.

"There's a lot of science involved, whether it's learning how to distribute the weight to make it move faster or adjusting so that it's easier to navigate around the playing field," said Gabriel Tucker, a sophomore at Jackson.

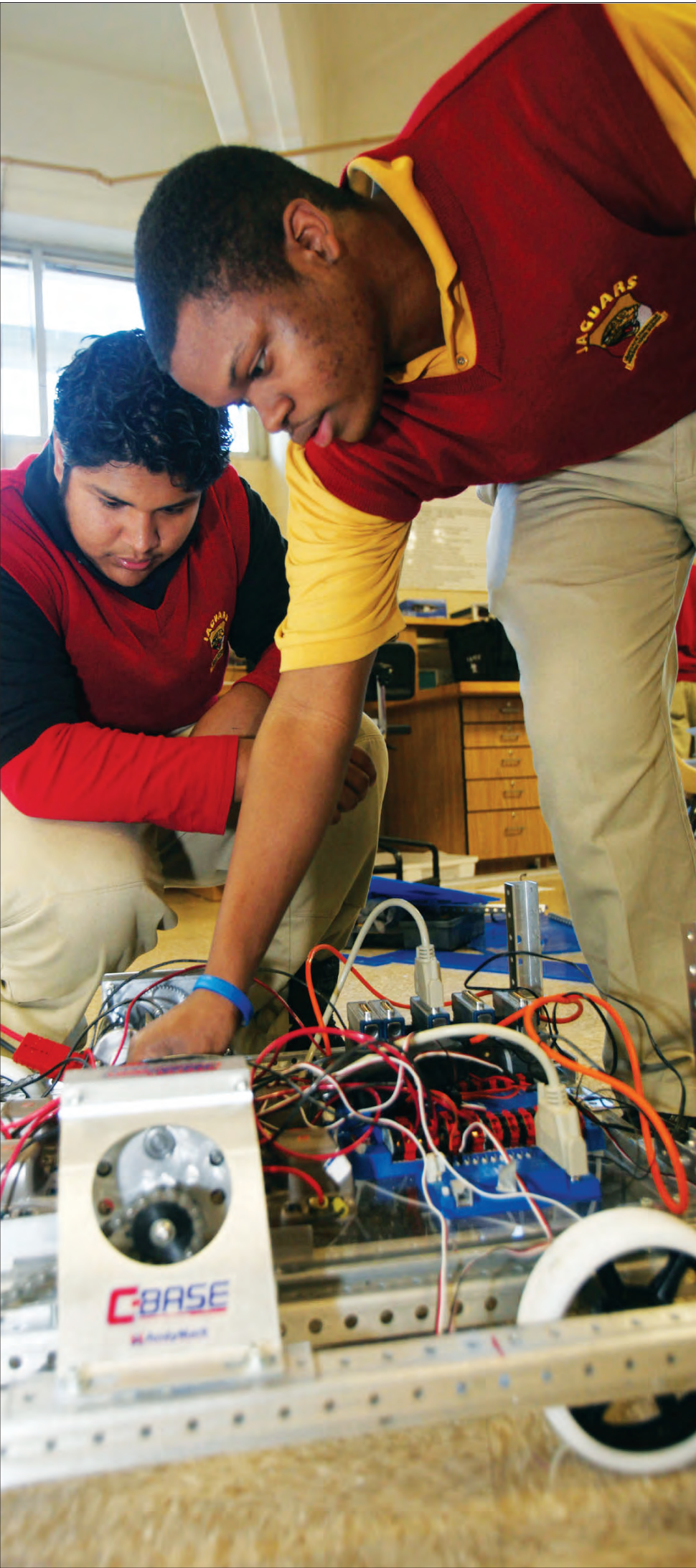
Students are guided through the process by high school advisors and mentors from sponsor companies. At Jackson High School, sponsors include General Electric, ITT Technical Institute, Arthur Blank Sponsors cover registration fees, equipment, uniforms and other expenses. Volunteers from GE, Delta and Georgia Tech also work with the Jackson students.

"A big component is exposure to the mentors," said Raquel Rimpola, model teacher leader in the Office of High Schools, who also works to acquire corporate partners for all APS teams. "The students are also getting in a habit of fulfilling a commitment. Those skills will carry them in any field."

Also, students at Inman Middle School participate in FIRST LEGO League (FLL), a robotics program that ignites an enthusiasm for discovery, science and technology in students ages 9-14.

"I've always been interested in robotics, so this was a good outlet," said Inman eighth-grader Walker Bolch.

This year Inman's program attracted 36 participants who were divided into three teams. One of those teams went on to compete in the SuperQualifier at Warner Robins Air Force Museum and the state competition at Georgia Tech. Inman parent Dave Gluck, STEM teacher Jimmy Stapp and science teacher Melissa Nunnick coached the team.



Jackson High School robotics team members Faustino Aranda, left, and Gabriel Tucker work on their robot.

She's No. 1

Woodson third-grade teacher honored as Atlanta's top educator

By SEAN LEONARD

Dedicated, nurturing, intuitive and kind are all words that have been used to describe Charon L. Kirkland, Atlanta Public Schools Teacher of the Year for 2008-2009.

"I think I was chosen because I can easily relate to the children," said Kirkland, who teaches third-grade students at Woodson Elementary School. "I get to know where they're coming from, I connect with them, and I enjoy coming up with creative ways to introduce lessons."

Kirkland began her APS career eight years ago at E.L. Connally Elementary School, where she won the Project GRAD Teacher Award in 2002.

In 2005 Kirkland moved to Woodson Elementary, where she has served as a leadership team chairperson, cooperating teacher for student teachers, and mentor/coach to her peers. She co-chairs the Woodson Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports organization, leads a Girl Scout troop and serves as a poetry coach.

"This is what I've always wanted to do because I love working with children, and at the elementary age, they're eager to learn," said Kirkland.

She earned a Bachelor of Science in

Elementary Education from Florida A&M University. She received a master's degree in urban teacher leadership from Georgia State University and an education specialist degree from the University of West Georgia.

"Her innovative presentations keep her kids engaged through the school day," said Dr. Viola Blackshear, principal of Woodson Elementary. "While rigor is her menu of choice, kindness and helping others are the culture of her classroom. She has a dream that one day her students will graduate from colleges and universities and change the world to make it a better place."

To prepare students for life beyond Atlanta Public Schools, Kirkland enjoys conducting end-of-year field trips, including last year's visit to the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. A trip to Cincinnati is planned for the end of this year.

"There's not a lot of money for field trips, but the teachers and parents donate what they can," she said. "It's a whole different experience for the kids when we can take them out of the classroom."

Kirkland, who enjoys traveling to Jacksonville, Fla., to visit her nieces and nephews, says she's living her own dream teaching in Atlanta Public Schools. "I couldn't imagine working anywhere else."



Tamara Cotman, right, Executive Director of School Reform Team 4, congratulates APS Teacher of the Year Charon L. Kirkland.

Atlanta Public Schools to implement pre-K lottery

School officials will implement a lottery that will determine who gets the 800 state-funded pre-kindergarten slots in Atlanta Public Schools.

Registration for the pre-kindergarten lottery will be held from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. on Saturday, April 18, at Inman Middle School, 774 Virginia Ave., NE, and the New Schools at Carver, 55 McDonough Blvd., SE. It will also be held from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. on Saturday, April 25, at Douglass High School, 225 Hamilton E. Holmes Blvd., NW, and Maynard Holbrooke Jackson High School, 801 Glenwood Ave., SE.

The lottery drawing is scheduled to be conducted on Monday, April 27, and managed by Data Systems and Games, Inc. A certified public accounting firm will validate the results, which will be posted at each

pre-kindergarten site by May 1. All parents and guardians who registered for the lottery will be notified by mail.

Eligibility lasts only one year. To participate in the pre-K program, a child must be four years of age on or before September 1, 2009, and must live in an Atlanta Public Schools' attendance zone or be the child of an APS employee.

The pre-K staff will also request voluntary presentation of the child's Social Security number/card. Parent/guardians who choose not to provide their child's Social Security number or card will be asked to complete a waiver form,

which will be available at each registration site.

For more information, visit the APS Web site at www.atlantapublicschools.us or call the APS pre-K help line at 404-802-3640.



APS will use a lottery to fill pre-kindergarten slots.

REGISTER YOUR CHILD

To begin the lottery registration process, a parent or guardian must appear in person at one of the four registration sites on the dates specified, and must provide one of the following forms of identification:

- any valid state or federal government-issued photo ID, including a free voter ID card issued by the county registrar's office or the Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS)
- a Georgia driver's license, even if expired
- valid employee photo ID from any branch, department, agency, or entity of the U.S. government, Georgia or any county, municipality, board, authority or other entity of this state
- valid U.S. passport
- valid U.S. military photo ID
- valid tribal photo ID

The parent/guardian **MUST** also bring the following documents for pre-K staff to verify age and residency requirements:

- child's original certified birth certificate, passport, official medical documents, legal documents or official documents from other countries

- proof of residence — We will accept one of the following: electric, gas or water bill, apartment lease or house contract
 - a driver's license, voter registration card, Medicaid card, or any type of telephone bill cannot be used as proof of residency
- If the parent/guardian does not have a utility bill, apartment lease or house contract in their name, an Affidavit of Residency must be completed. An Affidavit of Residency will be available at each pre-K registration site. Parents who are legal guardians must bring a certified copy of the court order granting guardianship for the pre-K child. Persons in control or in charge of a pre-K child who do not have legal guardianship may conditionally enroll the child with the submission of the Non-parental Enrollment Affidavit. A parent or legal guardian must return to the school within 30 calendar days to complete the enrollment process or the pre-K child may not be allowed to enroll in a pre-K class. A Non-Parental Enrollment Affidavit will be available at each pre-K registration site.

Principal of the Year

Principal's principle:

Take the time to get to know all students



At left, the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) 2008 Principal of the Year Armstead Salters with several of his Gideons Elementary School students. At right, Salters smiles with student Jewel Scott.

BY SEAN LEONARD

Gideons Elementary School Principal Armstead Salters makes a point of getting to know his students and often spends his lunchtime with them in the cafeteria.

"That's a priority for me. Since I've been here for 27 years, I'm getting a lot of my former students' children," said Salters. "That's nice to see."

His approach mixes friendliness with practicality. Salters said that knowing his students' individual needs helps teachers and administrators understand students' strengths and weaknesses.

"We have to know what's going on in their lives and make sure each child is challenged in the classroom," said Salters, who enjoys working with at-risk students. "If they're reading above their grade level, we'll shift them up, and we set high expectations for them."

This hands-on approach has its rewards. Gideons routinely exceeds its Adequate Yearly Progress goals, and in 2007 the school received the Excellence in Education Award from San Diego State University's National Center for Urban School Transformation.

Salters, who is approaching 40 years of service in Atlanta Public Schools, was chosen as the 2008 Principal of the Year by the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE).

"It was a great surprise," Salters said. "A group (from NABSE) came out to visit the school earlier in the year, and we showed them around."

During the visit, NABSE representatives saw

Gideons students perform various project-based exercises. Studying the pyramids of Egypt means not only researching and writing about the historic structures but also erecting models that incorporate math and science skills.

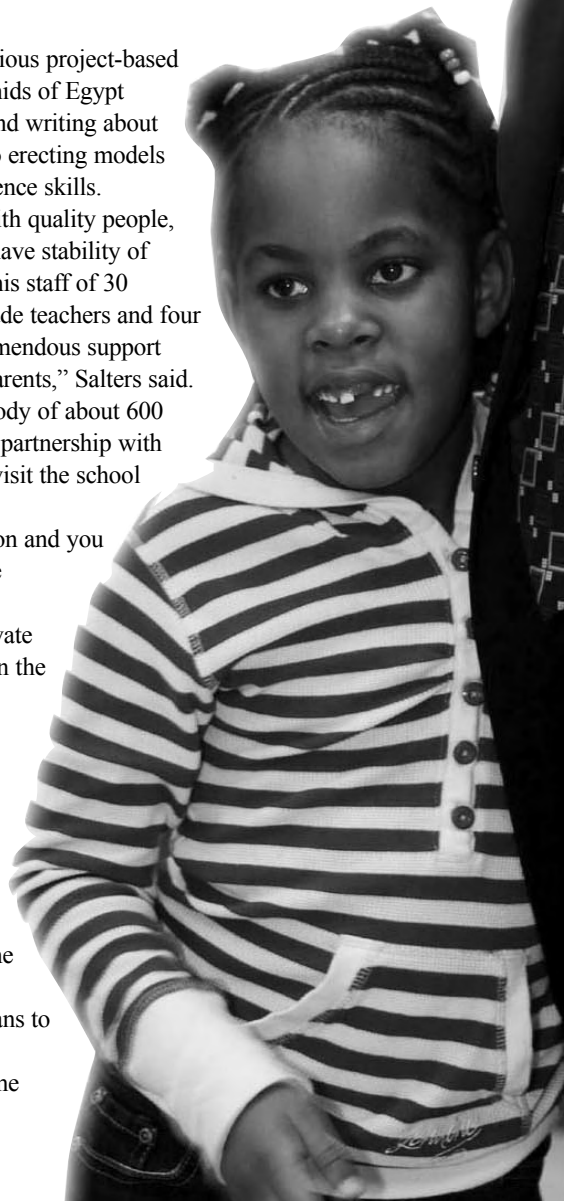
"I've surrounded myself with quality people, and we've been fortunate to have stability of staff," Salters said, crediting his staff of 30 kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers and four pre-K teachers. "We have tremendous support from the teachers and from parents," Salters said.

Gideons, with its student body of about 600 children, also enjoys a strong partnership with The Salvation Army. Cadets visit the school each week to tutor students.

"We're laying the foundation and you can see tangible growth in the students," said Salters. "It's personally rewarding to motivate children and get them going in the right direction."

When he first joined APS, Salters briefly taught high-school students, then became assistant principal of Washington High. He later served as night principal at Washington, working with adults and veterans. In 1982 he made the switch to Gideons Elementary, and he has no plans to leave anytime soon.

"They're not going to let me retire," he said, laughing.



Changing of the guards



Carole Willis, left, school crossing guard supervisor, and APS Chief of Security Marquenta A. Sands in the crossing guard training room at the operations building.

APS takes over public-safety function

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

This school year ushered in a changing of the guards for the district's crossing guard program. It started when the Atlanta Police Department told APS Chief of Security Marquenta A. Sands that budget cuts required them to transfer the operation.

"My first thought was, 'Wow, this is an opportunity to do something great,'" said Sands. "We conducted research on programs across the nation, and it was exciting to create a program here that will impart knowledge to children that they'll use for the rest of their lives."

She settled on a new approach, modeled after Miami-Dade's award-winning program. Sands started with a three-day training program for all 75 school crossing guards. They received extensive training on real-world scenarios, including roadway hazards, emergency procedures and state traffic laws. Sands also created an indoor, simulated roadway to help her guards practice in a secure environment.

"It's designed to provoke their levels of thinking and really explore different scenarios," she said.

Before receiving their school assignments, APS crossing guards also were required to complete indoor and outdoor exercises, and pass a written exam.

"It's a big change," said dispatcher Sandra Hartsfield, who had worked as a school crossing guard before the transition. "The training through APS was much more intensive. Now I think our crossing guards are more

prepared and professional, and our kids are more watchful and alert. It's a win-win."

"
The training through APS was much more intensive. Now, I think our crossing guards are more prepared and professional, and our kids are more watchful and alert. It's a win-win.

Sandra Hartsfield
APS dispatcher

school. Willis also launched a new safety education program in February, covering topics such as stranger danger and pedestrian safety. She will visit 20 schools by April and is hoping to introduce crossing guards as guest speakers next year.

"It's helped to ramp up and standardize the department," Willis said.



Ashley Mayfield poses with her award and with Candy Hill, her aunt; Jay Waring, her uncle; and Alan Shuman, chief fire marshal for the state of Georgia.

Grove Park third-grader a lifesaver

Grove Park Elementary School student Ashley Mayfield was recognized by Georgia's fire marshal for rescuing her aunt from a fire in December.

Ashley, a third-grader at Grove Park, woke up in the middle of the night to the smell of smoke coming from the kitchen. She immediately sprinted out of bed and awakened her aunt, Candy Hill.

"I ran to her room and I woke her up," Ashley said. "We saw fire and smoke." Together, they rushed out of their home in the Center Hill neighborhood and watched as firefighters battled the blaze.

"I was just in a state of shock and got us out in a hurry," Hill said. "One of our neighbors called 911. I'm very proud that she saved my life because I didn't smell smoke or anything."

Alan Shuman, chief fire marshal for the state of Georgia, named Ashley a junior state fire marshal in a ceremony held before classmates, Grove Park Principal Caitlin Sims and Hill. Ashley received a bag of assorted gifts to go along with the award.

An energetic young girl, Ashley has taken the attention in stride. When asked how it felt to be a hero, she replied, "Boring. I have homework to do."

Ashley said she learned her fire-safety techniques at Grove Park. The school conducts school-wide safety drills each month, in accordance with state law, and teachers discuss safety procedures with students as part of the process.

In addition to an evacuation plan, Shuman stressed the importance of having a functioning, frequently tested smoke alarm in every home. He also noted that increased heat from a fire can cause someone to go deeper into sleep. Without a smoke alarm, the situation is more hazardous.

Citizens of the world

Large numbers of APS students learning Chinese

By RICH FAHEY

The prevailing wisdom is that Chinese is a very difficult language for English speakers to learn. March Wang, who teaches Chinese at the Coan Middle School and is director of the Confucius Institute at the school, says that couldn't be further from the truth.

"That is propaganda," he said, laughing. "We are giving Chinese too much credit." The reason it's not difficult, he said, "is that there is no grammar in the Chinese language."

And although Chinese is spoken in 56 different dialects and has its own alphabet, in its written form, it is the same for all.

"The trick is to grow your vocabulary as quickly as possible," Wang said.

Interest is growing in both the Chinese language and culture, spurred by last year's Olympics and China's status as the second-largest trading partner of the United States.

An ever-growing number of Atlanta Public Schools students are studying Chinese. That includes every student at Toomer Elementary School, about 50 at Coan Middle School, and more than 200 at each of the three high schools — North Atlanta, the New Schools at Carver and Maynard Jackson High — where it also is an elective.

The students spend half their time studying the language and the other half studying Chinese culture, including calligraphy, martial arts and

music. On Jan. 29, the Confucius Institute, which opened on March 17, 2008, hosted a Chinese New Year celebration that included food, music, traditional Chinese dance, and a Chinese language writing competition.

Last November, 83 North Atlanta High School Chinese language students and about 100 other students from Toomer Elementary and

Coan Middle School saw the Beijing Opera perform, thanks to the institute.

That same month, a delegation of Confucius Institute officials from China, Canada, Australia and the United States visited Chinese language classes in two APS schools before meeting with Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall to discuss future collaboration.

The delegation conducted an "inspection tour" of the Confucius Institute at Coan Middle School, then sat in on Wang's Chinese language class, where his 20 students demonstrated proficiency in conversational Mandarin and Chinese characters.

Atlanta's Confucius Institute is a partnership among Emory University, Atlanta Public

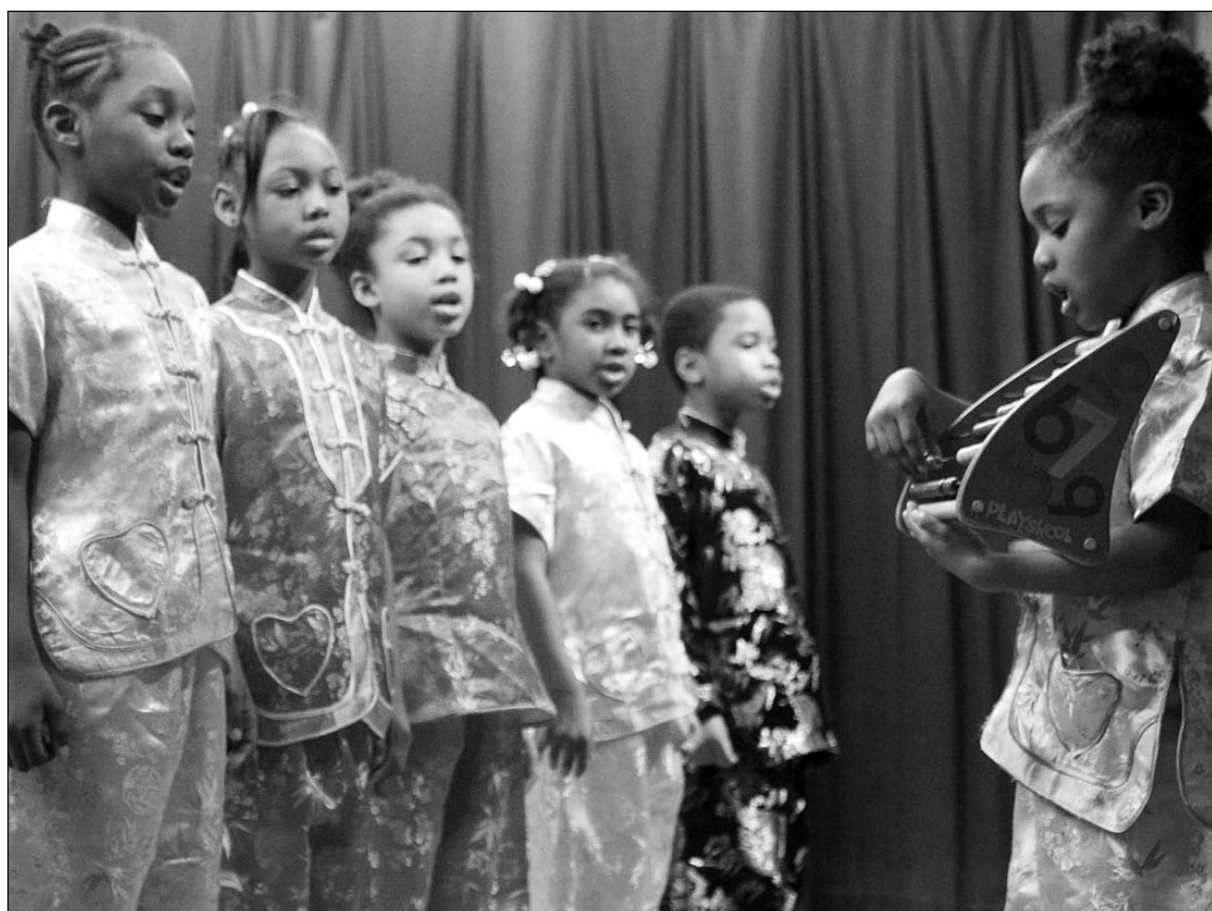
Schools and Nanjing University in China. It is supported through grants from the government of China to foster understanding of Chinese language and culture.

The facility is not only the first Confucius Institute in the region, it is also the only one in the nation to be jointly administered by a private university and a public-school system.

The demand for Chinese language teachers is acute. Wang, a graduate of Emory's Chinese language program, said there were several job offers waiting for him when he graduated.

Atlanta Public Schools is working on establishing the framework for a standardized curriculum for the study of the language. Wang noted that because of the partnership among Toomer, Coan and Maynard H. Jackson High School, it is possible for students to study the language from K-12.

He said the Confucius Institute serves as a resource for Chinese-language teachers and will also offer APS students other opportunities, including the possibility of studying in China.



Part of the Chinese curriculum in Atlanta Public Schools includes learning about China's culture.

Deerwood students listen and learn in French

Atlanta Public Schools is preparing students to compete in a global economy that requires mastery of more than one language. At Deerwood Academy, teachers Martin Bong, Chantal Mengueme Edjang and Darling Joseph conduct K-5 French classes entirely in the language. The program, now in its fourth year, is funded by a foreign language grant from the International Baccalaureate program.

Principal Lisa Smith said the transition to French has been seamless. Even students who transfer to Deerwood later in the year have made the adjustment. The secret, Smith said, is the teaching strategy.

"Classes are very lively and there is a lot of modeling and manipulatives," she said.

A typical exercise might involve translating a restaurant menu from English to French. Teachers also encourage students to engage in

French conversations.

"When I observe the French language classes, I forget this is not my language and I follow along with everything," Smith said. She added that students also study countries where French is spoken, including France, African nations and Haiti.

"We remind the students we don't live in a box," she said. "We're part of a small community that is part of a larger community."

Test scores in reading and English language arts have been rising steadily at Deerwood, and Smith credits the French program with contributing to student achievement. "You have to master the rules of your primary language before you can be successful at a foreign language," she said.

The principal expects students to apply their conversational skills in French during a trip to

Paris in May.

The district offers students a variety of language options, ranging from German to Latin. Chinese and Arabic have been woven into the fabric of classroom instruction at North Atlanta High School for years. The school houses a Teachers of Critical Languages program that pays for instructors in languages deemed important to the U.S. national interest.

Students who demonstrate proficiency in Chinese or Arabic qualify for college scholarships through the program, which is run by the American Councils for International Education and the U.S. Department of State.

The 128 juniors and seniors enrolled in North Atlanta's International Studies Program also can work toward the prestigious International Baccalaureate diploma.

They not only have to complete four years of study in a foreign language, but reach achievement levels in five other subjects. Program coordinator Douglas Frutiger said students who achieve the diploma can earn up to 24 credits at Georgia colleges and universities, increasing their chances of getting accepted by colleges of their choice.

"They can get the best of both worlds," he said.

Frutiger plans to strengthen students' grasp of Chinese and Arabic by expanding course offerings to Sutton Middle School.

In the meantime, students benefit from a district-wide cultural exchange program. Two APS students are studying in France, another is in Ecuador, and two more are headed to Fukuoka, Japan, under the Sister Cities Program.

Reading is elementary at Sarah Smith

BY KATE PUNWANI

One cold day each spring, you may notice something different about the children pouring out of morning buses at Sarah Smith Elementary. They are wearing comfy stripes, spots, hearts and flower pajamas – and lots of fluffy bathrobes — in honor of Pajama Reading Day, part of the school-wide read-a-thon.

All classes come to school wearing pajamas — including the teachers. Then everyone spends most of the day curled up reading a good book.

It's part of a two-week event that is one of several ways reading is woven into the fabric of success at Smith, said Tommy Usher, program administrator of the Smith Kindergarten Annex.

"It's a wonderful community activity that really gets the families in on the reading, and really goes to support the work our teachers are doing," he said.

Children secure sponsorship from family and friends, and keep a careful tally of everything they read. They also receive extra points for visiting the library on Local Library Day. Reading lists, filled with options for each grade level, are available at the local and school libraries as well as the school Web site.

"Read-a-thon is fun because you can win prizes," said Smith first-



From left, fourth-graders William Darby, Graeme McLeod, Zaira Khan and Victoria Gray on the first day of this year's read-a-thon activities at Sarah Smith Elementary School.

grader Haley Zoellick.

Haley's teacher, Annie Cecil, added, "The competition allows each child to read on their own level, so every child can be successful."

Smith parent Susan Sheffield said the read-a-thon "is great for encouraging children who aren't necessarily your usual readers. They definitely try a little harder and read more at home because the kids are talking about it at school."

In the classroom, students also use the SMART phonics system from kindergarten through second grade. This hands-on approach incorporates

real-world experiences and encourages students to share stories.

"We ask all children across all grades to read for at least 20 minutes a night," Usher said.

Students who complete their reading requirements can earn a monthly "Book-It" coupon towards discounts at Pizza Hut.

The results of these reading programs have been measurable. The school has been recognized for its performance on Georgia's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCTs). During the 2007-08 school year, 96.2 percent of Smith's fifth-

grade students met or exceeded state standards on the CRCTs.

Smith also incorporates other creative reading programs into classroom instruction. Dr. Sidney Baker, principal of Smith, noted that all students in grades 3-5 use the Junior Great Books series.

Initially, the Junior Great Books series was used for the gifted program at the school. But reading results were so impressive that use of the series will be expanded to all students in grades K-5. The books and reading materials are funded by the Sarah Smith Education Foundation, a

nonprofit organization that supports the school's pursuit of excellence.

For a few days each year, students also get to be "time travelers," visiting different periods of history. Parents run the popular program, organizing skits and creating hands-on activities with the support of Smith teachers. Before students step back in time, teachers introduce a book from a particular period.

Kindergarteners "visit" ancient Egypt, where they learn to write hieroglyphics and mummify a classmate. First-grade students learn about ancient Greece and Rome and practice Roman battalion formations. Second-grade students learn about the Middle Ages, jousting and enjoying medieval feasts. Third-graders spend time painting under their desks, replicating Renaissance artist Michelangelo's method for completing the Sistine Chapel.

Fourth-grade students get to re-enact scenes from the 18th century, sending Puritans to the stocks for daring to kiss their wives on Sunday. A more peaceful moment takes place among fifth-grade students, who relive the immigrant experience at Ellis Island.

Kate Punwani is a Sarah Smith Elementary parent. To share a story about your child's school, e-mail Morieka Johnson at mjohnson@atlanta.k12.ga.us.

Q & A

BY DAVID LEE SIMMONS

As the third vice-president of the Atlanta Council of Parent-Teacher Associations, Thelma Malone coordinates various projects that promote parental involvement and student achievement. Malone says that success often begins with a strong relationship between parents and teachers.

Q Why is the parent-teacher relationship so important?

A This helps teachers and parents work together, because in the past they've often felt like it's the other one's fault when a problem occurs. We're starting to have parents become more active in the schools, visiting the schools and listening to what the teacher has to say. That way, the child knows the parent and the teacher are on the same page.

Strong parent-teacher relationships benefit students

Q What can parents and teachers learn from each other?

A There could be something going on in the home that the teacher doesn't know about but needs to, such as whether the child is in a group home or the mother is working two jobs. When the teacher understands and the parent understands, the teacher can find the best way to work with the child.

Q You coordinate the annual Parents Taking Control of Discipline Conference. How did that come about?

A I met a lot of parents who told me they did not know how to control their children. We wanted to let them know what they can do as a parent, what their rights

are, how to understand the court system and how to understand the developmental stages of their children.

Q What was the initial response?

A At first we heard that parents wouldn't stay the whole day. We had nearly 300 parents show up, and a lot of them wound up staying after the workshops were over, hoping to get more information.

Q What's the value of the workshops?

A The key is helping good parents become great parents. We do this through interactive workshops. The

other key: It's down to earth, it's relatable. Parents learn to be better by gaining tools they didn't otherwise think were available.

Q What can parents expect to learn at the workshops?

A We explore three key topics every year: learning the ages and stages of child development, understanding the judicial system and making a family environment healthy and strong.

The third annual Taking Control of Discipline Conference takes place May 1 at Atlanta Metropolitan College. Atlanta Public Schools co-sponsors the conference with the Atlanta Council of PTAs and Communities In Schools, Inc. Registration forms are available at the counselor's office of each school. For more information, call Thelma Malone at 404-775-0104.

“APS TODAY”

Learning to grow

Cascade, Rivers students reap what they sow

BY SEAN LEONARD

Embracing the environment is not a new concept for Atlanta Public Schools. But recently students truly have been getting their hands dirty. Gardens have taken root at various elementary schools, including Cascade and Eretus Rivers, where students learn about caring for the earth and their health.

During the 2007-08 school year, Georgia Organics and the Mendez Foundation helped third-grade classes prepare gardens at each school. Both nonprofit organizations focus on offering instructional tools to promote nutrition and healthy living.

Local chef and APS parent Linton Hopkins also lent his talents to Eretus Rivers, where each classroom has a garden bed to conduct projects. Georgia farmer Joe Reynolds helped Cascade students build a mini-farm in the school's courtyard.

“We were looking for a second program to pilot in Atlanta and learned Cascade used to have a garden,” said Erin Croom, Farm to School coordinator for Georgia Organics. “We reached out to the Mendez Foundation and they were able to donate some time for Joe Reynolds to come out and help re-establish the garden.”

She added that the Mendez Foundation's involvement was spurred by its efforts to educate children about proper nutrition, and to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic. In addition to enjoying goodies from the garden, students pick up several valuable lessons along the way.

“We used all recycled material — plastic and old wood — to build the garden in the courtyard,” said Cybil Moore, a third-grade teacher at Cascade. “We did all types of activities, keeping with Georgia Performance Standards, incorporating math to measure the perimeter, science and some reading.”

Farm to School teaches children about the food cycle and how important it is to take care of the Earth, promotes good nutrition and healthy foods, and explains how buying locally grown produce benefits the local economy.

Those goals helped the program gain fans throughout the school. This year, the program at Cascade was expanded to five classes in grades 1-5. Four other teachers are involved, including Anthony Molock.

“Last year everybody was watching Ms. Moore and her class build this farm right outside the cafeteria and the rest of us got curious,” said Molock. “It wasn't long before we had some of the best cherry tomatoes I've ever tasted.”

Correction: Eretus Rivers Elementary School was incorrectly identified in the Fall 2008 edition of the Atlanta Educator in a story on the environment.



Therrell High School's Gynnelle Newsome, left, and Kris Hardy worked on “APS Today.”

Therrell High student shares TV experience

“APS Today” features students, educators, business partners and parents who are dedicated to increasing achievement throughout the district. Gynnelle Newsome, a student in the Therrell School of Law, Government & Public Policy, shares her experience working on the monthly television show.

BY GYNNELLE NEWSOME

Participating in the “APS Today” program was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I highly enjoyed. The moment I found out that I was selected, I was overwhelmed with excitement. I said to myself, “I have to take part in this, I just have to!” Thanks to my principal, I was able to take advantage of the opportunity.

Producer and Host Nwandi Lawson was fun to work with. She was patient and coached my classmate, Kris [Hardy], and me.

The job of being an anchor was not difficult at all. Nwandi supplied Kris and me with a script, which included our lines. We rehearsed constantly to make sure we were as close to perfection as possible. After all, practice does make perfect! After we memorized our lines, it was time to put us in front of the camera.

Watch “APS Today” at 9:30 p.m. each month on PBA TV Channel 30. You also can view the broadcast online at www.atlantapublicschools.us.

Here's a schedule of upcoming shows:

- ◆ **Monday, April 13**
The value of a well-rounded education
- ◆ **Monday, June 8**
Graduation 2009

This is where the fun part kicked in. “Lights, camera, action!”

Being in front of the camera was a fun experience, especially as an anchor. Looking into the lens of the camera was not as difficult as I imagined. It was almost as if I was talking to myself in the mirror. Kris and I did, however, encounter errors, so re-takes were needed.

Following the on-screen portion of the

show was the audio part where no cameras needed. Finally, our work was done.

Eager to watch our interactions on the camera, Nwandi and videographer Vincent Hutcherson ran a playback so that we could see our on-screen footage. Pleased with what we had seen, we gratefully thanked both of them for their time and for the opportunity to be part of this program. Kris and I even gave them our contact information and took their business cards because we knew this was something we wanted to take part in again.

I was proud when our show aired. The following day, we received a lot of positive feedback from our teachers and other staff. My mother was happy as well. I can see myself doing something similar as news anchor somewhere in the future.

Thanks, “APS Today”!

Local leaders walk in the shoes of APS principals

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Stepping out of the corporate office, more than 160 of Atlanta's business, political and civic leaders walked in the shoes of APS principals during the ninth annual Principal for a Day event.

Executives from such companies as Merrill Lynch, Coca-Cola, Georgia Power, Arby's Restaurant Group, AirTran Airways, United Way, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Wells Fargo Bank and the Atlanta Falcons spent the day shadowing principals to see firsthand the district's progress and its challenges. The event also is designed to lay the groundwork for lasting partnerships between APS schools and the business and civic community.

"It's no coincidence that for nine years in a row, student achievement has risen steadily and dramatically across the board

at APS," said Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall, who complimented the district's business partners for contributing to that success.

Thanks to the relationship formed between Fickett Elementary School and the UPS Foundation through Principal for a Day, students are now reaping the benefits of \$50,000 worth of new technology. Last year, Lisa Hamilton — in her first year as president of the foundation — spent the day shadowing new principal Anthony Dorsey.

"She toured the school, looked at our data and turned to me and said, 'How can we move from good to great? What can we do?'" said Dorsey. "It's all about exposure and establishing trust."

As a result, the UPS Foundation funded Fickett's 21st Century Technology Lab, two mobile labs, as well as technology

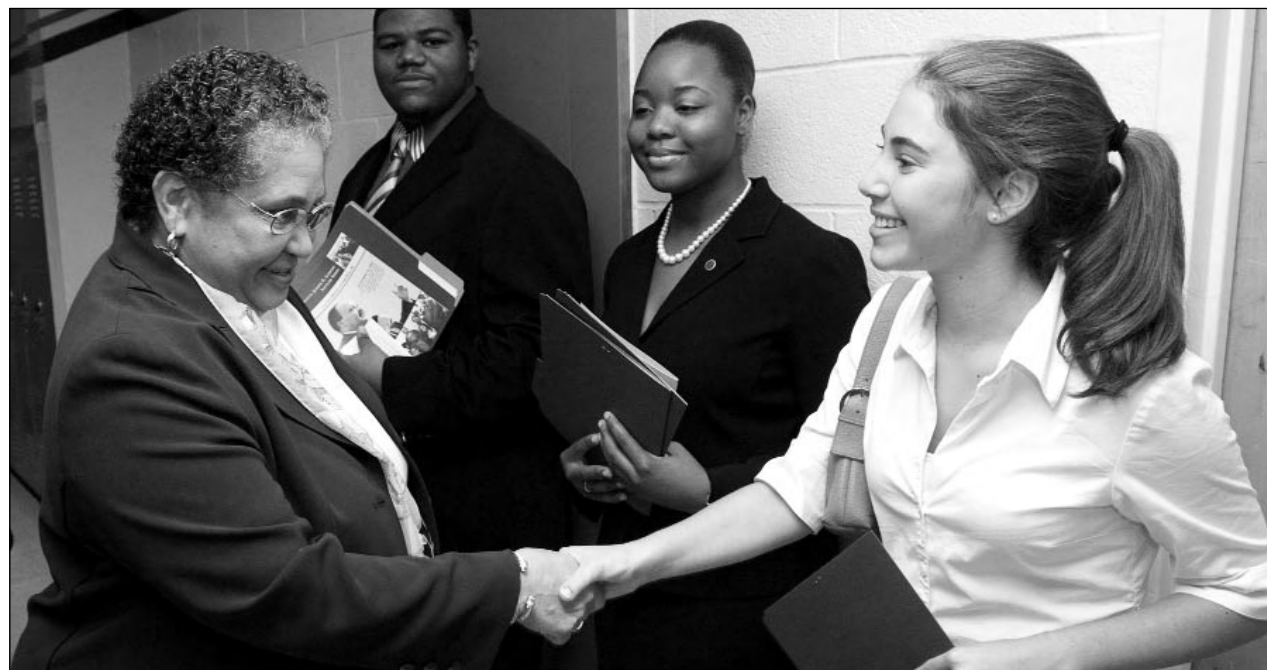
upgrades throughout the school. In March, UPS also awarded a \$25,000 grant to Fickett.

"It's just awesome for our students, teachers and parents to have access to state-of-the-art computers and software programs," said Dorsey.

The Principal for a Day program is coordinated by Atlanta Partners for Education, a long-standing collaboration between APS and the Metro Atlanta Chamber. Merrill Lynch serves as the sponsor.

"When we invest in these students, we invest in the future," said John Nicholson, vice president and associate director of Merrill Lynch. "It's an investment that will yield high returns for years to come."

To participate in the program, e-mail Mariama Tyler at mt Tyler@atlantapublicschools.us



National Superintendent of the Year Dr. Beverly L. Hall greets students at a Lowery Lecture Series event.

Dr. Hall named best in the U.S.

SUPERINTENDENT: From Page 1

turned Atlanta into a model of urban school reform," said AASA Executive Director Dan Domenech. "Throughout her long and successful tenure in Atlanta, she has accomplished significant gains in student achievement and demonstrated a commitment to setting high standards for students and school personnel."

In Atlanta, Hall has required low-performing schools to implement rigorous programs that focus on literacy and math skills. She also has increased the amount of training teachers receive, and hired new principals to improve student learning.

The changes have made a difference: State data show 72 percent of the system's students graduated on time in 2008, up from 39 percent in 2002.

Test scores still lag behind national averages, but Atlanta was the only one of 11 urban school districts that improved

test scores in each subject and grade level between 2002 and 2007 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress exams. These tests compare academic performance across states, using tougher criteria than Georgia's own state exams.

LaChandra Butler Burks, chair of the Atlanta Board of Education, said the board is "extremely proud of Dr. Hall for her latest accomplishment. It speaks to her dedication to recruiting quality staff and maintaining high standards for the students, teachers and administrators of Atlanta Public Schools."

Hall has said her goal is to make Atlanta one of the nation's top-performing urban school systems, with 90 percent of students graduating in four years.

Prior to her post in Atlanta, Hall was state district superintendent of the Newark Public Schools, the largest school district in New Jersey. She also

served as deputy chancellor for instruction of New York City Public Schools.

Born in Jamaica, West Indies, Hall immigrated to the United States after completing her high school education. She received her doctorate in education from Fordham University and was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Oglethorpe University.

"Dr. Hall's entire professional career has been dedicated to improving education for students in urban districts across the country and nowhere has the dedication been seen more clearly than over the past decade in Atlanta," said Georgia Schools Superintendent Kathy Cox. "Beverly is a change agent who does not back down from a challenge and is not afraid to be held accountable for the results. She has made improving education in Atlanta a community effort, not just a school effort."

Smith set to play football at Georgia

SMITH: From Page 24

Game.

"He has been wanting to go to Georgia for a long time," said Smith's mother, Teresa Wynn. "He liked it when we went down there for his official visit. He can get his No. 1 jersey at Georgia, and he has the chance to play early if he works hard."

In the TV ceremony, Smith had all four hats in front of him, and then narrowed down to Georgia and Alabama before pointing to his brother Anthony Wynn, who took off his shirt to reveal a UGA jersey with the No. 1 on it.

"Georgia has a good program, good academics, and I had that good connection with the coaches," Smith said.

Smith may play both ways for the Bulldogs. He is expected to compete right away at cornerback, while UGA offensive coordinator Mike Bobo has promised to install some plays for him.

Smith joins four other APS grads on the Bulldogs' roster, including a good friend, Washington High graduate Reshad Jones, a sophomore free safety with whom Smith played when he was in the ninth grade.

Many of the country's top scouting services ranked the 5-11, 171-pound Smith as the top prospect in the state. The recruiting process for Smith was so intense that the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* ran a feature detailing every part of his official visit to Georgia in December.

"I think he made a good decision to stay close to home and go to Georgia," said Washington High Football Coach Stanley Pritchett. "There was a lot of pressure on him during the recruiting process, but he was a good sport about it."

Although Smith is projected to play defensive back, he was a threat every time he touched the ball during his senior season at Washington High. He caught 32 passes for 1,085 yards; returned 12 kickoffs for 481 yards and three touchdowns; returned 20 punts for 456 yards and two touchdowns; and recorded 50 tackles; two fumble recoveries, and two interceptions.

Pritchett said that Smith hopes to play in the NFL some day, and playing in the Southeastern Conference, which he called "the best conference in the nation," is a good way to start.

Pritchett, himself an Atlanta native and a graduate of the University of South Carolina, is in a good position to advise Smith about a possible pro career. He played nine years in the NFL — from 1996 to 2004 — as a fullback for the Miami Dolphins, Philadelphia Eagles, Chicago Bears and the Atlanta Falcons before becoming a teacher and coach with Atlanta Public Schools.

Elementary schools

Benteen Elementary

Students completed the Student Wellness Ambassador (SWA) training. The SWA program allows students to serve as hosts at health fairs, develop wellness bulletin boards and plant gardens.

Capitol View Elementary

Principal Arlene Snowden was one of five APS principals recognized for their schools' academic achievement by the National Alliance of Black School Educators at the group's annual banquet in November. She also was one of four APS principals and 11 teachers to be named as winners of the Atlanta Families' Awards for Excellence in Education.

Cleveland Avenue Elementary

In conjunction with Communities In Schools of Atlanta Inc., 173 Cleveland Avenue students with perfect attendance were invited to participate in an AttenDANCE celebration Jan. 30.

John Wesley Dobbs Elementary

Second- and third-graders have been learning and playing chess every Friday through a grant provided by America's Foundation for Chess' First Move program.

Paul L. Dunbar Elementary

As a school named after the first African-American poet to gain national attention, Dunbar understandably takes pride in its monthly Def Poetry Jam. Each classroom presents a poem during the school assembly, with classmates providing a variety of speaking roles (individual, group, by gender, etc.) for a given poem.

Charles L. Gideons Elementary

The school's long-time principal, Armstead Salters, was named 2008 Principal of the Year by the National

Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) at its annual awards banquet in November. Salters, Gideons' headmaster for 27 years, also was one of five APS principals recognized by NABSE for their schools' academic achievement.

Heritage Academy

Kindergarten students and parents participated in Smart Start Family Creativity Night in late January. They went to a rhyming table, selected different objects, used their imagination to come up with different names and uses for the objects, and made their own masks.

Joseph W. Humphries Elementary

Students were actively engaged in the school-wide Math Step Show Competition in early December. Christi Langston, the school's Move It Math coordinator, spearheaded this special event, which motivates students about the wonders of math and making real-life connections.

Emma Hutchinson Elementary

Male faculty members at Emma Hutchinson Elementary School sponsored the third annual Boyz to Men Summit on Jan. 23. This year's theme was "Change, Yes We Can." The event was co-sponsored by community business partners, including staff from Atlanta Fire Rescue.

Thomas Heathe Slater Elementary

Kindergarten through third-grade teachers and students who reached the Benchmark Mastery Level on the Mid-Year Reading DIBELS Assessment received an honorary wristband, took the Benchmark Club Oath, and received recognition by Literacy Coach Marnie Brown.

Daniel H. Stanton Elementary

Stanton joined Parks Middle and South Atlanta High as three schools to host officials from Project GRAD-New Orleans, offering examples of how Project GRAD



(Graduation Really Achieves Dreams) schools in Atlanta have been successful.

Middle Schools

Crawford W. Long Middle

Students enjoyed a field trip to the Fox Theatre on Feb. 2 to watch the stage production of the musical "Freedom Train." The production tells the story of Harriet Tubman through highly theatrical scenes that use dance, dialogue and music of the period.

Walter L. Parks Middle

Students participated in a school-wide writing workshop to prepare all students for the Georgia Middle Grades Writing Exam.

Luther Judson Price Middle

Price participated in its annual Junior Achievement Day in late January. Business leaders from IBM, Turner Broadcasting and Clarkston Associates worked with the entire school population on a variety of activities involving economics and real-world practical activities.

High Schools

The New Schools at Carver

Students from Carver School of the Arts joined students from Grady High to guide scores of students from M. Agnes Jones and Finch elementary schools through the High Museum's permanent collection in December. It was the third visit to the High by the high school docents and their elementary school visitors, and is part of a program called "On

Site/Insight" launched last year with a \$7,000 Academic Enrichment Grant from the McCarthy Dressman Educational Foundation. (See Page 10 for more details.)

Alonzo A. Crim Open Campus

History teacher Tiedra Hutchings participated in the 2009 Presidential Inaugural Conference, held Jan. 17-22 in Washington, D.C. Hutchings' primary duties were to facilitate group discussions based on invited speakers such as Colin Powell, Al Gore and Joe Biden.

Frederick Douglass High

Teacher Celeste Johnson took six of her Multimedia Arts Club (MAC) members to the Macworld Conference and Expo, held Jan. 5-7 in San Francisco. They worked in Photoshop and Illustrator, iMovie and Final Cut, and met and even competed with adults who have been in the industry for years.

Henry W. Grady High

Environmental Science Instructor Korri Ellis was named 2008 APS High School Teacher of the Year in November. Ellis was honored along with Middle School Teacher of the Year Cheryl Parker of Coretta Scott King Academy and Elementary School Teacher of the Year (and overall APS Teacher of the Year) Charon L. Kirkland of Woodson Elementary.

Maynard Holbrook Jackson High

U.S. News & World Report magazine named Jackson one of the best high schools in the nation – one of only 26 Georgia high schools selected. Jackson was selected from 21,000 U.S. high schools analyzed by the magazine. Jackson later was named by *BusinessWeek* magazine as one of the best high schools in the nation.

Benjamin E. Mays High

Four Mays students had articles published in the national edition of the American Society of Newspaper Editors' online newspaper: Adriana Bibbs' article

on historically black colleges and universities; Chelsea Samuel's review of the Biggie Smalls bio-pic "Notorious"; Mudiwa Pettus' editorial on student theft; and Victoria Silva's personal article on self-harm.

North Atlanta High

Math teachers Cathy McNair and Kasele Mshinda were among five APS educators to become National Board Certified in 2008 by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GPSC). They are among 42 teachers throughout Georgia who achieved National Board Certification this year.

South Atlanta Educational Complex

Twenty students from South Atlanta's School of Health & Medical Science are in the second semester of their participation in the Emory Pipeline program, which includes field trips to Emory's School of Medicine for dialogue and interactive experiences. (See Page 8 for more details.)

D.M. Therrell Educational Complex

Twenty-five students from Therrell's School of Business and Entrepreneurship spent a February morning on the school's annual job-shadowing trip to UPS' corporate headquarters. Students learned about the wide range of career options at the worldwide shipping service in a partnership with Therrell that started in 1992 and now includes Junior Achievement. (See Page 9 for more details.)

Washington High

Six Washington High School students were awarded \$1,000 each in college scholarships from Aramark at the National Alliance of Black School Educators' annual awards banquet in November. They are Shervite Arnold, Kenneth Perry Jr., Ashley Jones, Jervald Washington, Subria Nisbeth and Bernard St. Cyr.

How to get ready for the CRCTs

By DAVID LEE SIMMONS

Everyone agrees testing can be stressful. But you wouldn't know it from the progress Atlanta Public Schools students have shown on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCTs).

The tests were instituted in 2000 but were drastically revised and toughened based on new curriculum standards the state issued in 2005. They measure mastery of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in reading, English/language arts, and math for students in grades 1-8, and measure science and social studies comprehension for students in grades 3-8.

For the past eight years, APS students have consistently improved test scores. More APS students are exceeding state standards than ever before. Preparation is a big reason.

At Woodson Elementary School, teachers conduct workshops with

parents to explain testing procedures, requirements for promotion and scoring.

"The use of test-prep materials, positive reinforcement and partnering with parents is a great tool in helping alleviate the pressures of testing," said Charon Kirkland, a third-grade teacher at Woodson Elementary and the 2008-09 Atlanta Public Schools Teacher of the Year.

"We encourage parents to motivate their children, support educational activities and limit television and video games leading up to the test. And we ask parents to maintain a calm demeanor about the test," she added.

At Inman Middle School, teachers go over results from the previous year with students, help set goals and offer test-preparation tutorials online and during after-school hours.

"The information is used to target a student's areas of weaknesses and provide assistance that is necessary to

meet their needs and make improvements," said Inman seventh-grade social studies instructor Jimmy Taylor.

Every school is preparing for the test-taking season April 21-30. Here are a few more tools to help students prepare for the CRCTs:

Before the test

They may seem obvious, but it's important to remember these basic tips:

- * Go to bed on time
- * Eat a healthy breakfast
- * Dress comfortably
- * Arrive at school on time
- * Think positively

Taking the test – any test

- * Listen carefully to directions
- * Take your time with each question to avoid making mistakes
- * Focus on test-taking strategies more than content knowledge
- * Avoid distractions and stay

focused

- * Take any extra time left over to review work

For the reading test:

- * Read the title
- * Read questions to establish the purpose of the passage
- * Read the passage/text completely
- * Review questions
- * Refer back to text when answering questions
- * Eliminate incorrect answers to narrow the selection
- * Mark the best answer choice
- * Fill in bubbles neatly

For the math test:

- * Read questions carefully
- * Be sure to write problems down correctly on scratch paper
- * Work through the problem
- * Check answers
- * Eliminate incorrect answer choices
- * Unsure about an answer? Skip it and review later

ONLINE RESOURCES

Help is just a click away. Check out these sites for more information:

Georgia Online Assessment System (Test Bank) – *Students have user names and passwords to login to this site and take the practice test assigned by teachers.*
www.georgiaoas.org/servlet/a21

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) – *This site provides the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), study guides and content descriptions that provide more insight. The Parent Information section on the homepage provides brochures for every grade level.*
www.georgiastandards.org

Georgia Department of Education (CRCT) – *This section of the GDOE site provides vital information for the test, including a FAQ with key answers, additional CRCT resources, content descriptions by subject, and test study guides for each grade level. Click on the Testing link under Curriculum on the homepage's GaDOE Web site Finder*
www.doe.k12.ga.us

ATLANTA DIRECTORY SCHOOLS

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West Manor
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ATLANTA DIRECTORY SCHOOLS

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Single-Gender Academies

The B.E.S.T. Academy at Ben Carson

Curt Green, Principal
320 Irwin St., NE 30312
404-802-4944

Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy

Melody Morgan, Principal
601 Beckwith St., SW 30314
404-802-4962

High Schools

The News Schools at Carver

55 McDonough Blvd. 30315

Early College

Marcene Thornton, Principal
404-802-4405

School of Health Sciences and Research

Dr. Darian Jones, Principal
404-802-4420

School of Technology

Rodney Ray, Principal
404-802-4410

School of the Arts

Dr. Marvin Pryor, Principal
404-802-4415

Frederick Douglass

J. Austin Brown, Principal
225 H.E. Holmes Dr., NW 30318
404-802-3100

Henry W. Grady

Dr. Vincent Murray, Principal
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404-802-3001

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Dr. Shirlene Carter, Principal
801 Glenwood Ave., SE 30316
404-802-5200

Benjamin Elijah Mays

Dr. Tyrone Smith, Principal
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404-802-5100

North Atlanta

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404-802-4700

South Atlanta

800 Hutchins Rd., SE 30315

School of Health Sciences & Medical Research

Termerion McCrary, Principal
404-802-5050

School of Law & Social Justice

Peter McKnight, Principal
404-802-5045

School of Computer Animation & Design

Scott Painter, Principal
404-802-5060

School of Leadership & Economic Empowerment

Frank Walker, Principal
404-802-5055

Daniel McClaughin Therrell

3099 Panther Trail, SW 30311
404-802-5300

School of Technology, Engineering & Science (STEMS at Therrell)

Esmie Gaynor, Principal
404-802-5360

School of Health Science & Research

Dr. Eric Parker, Principal
404-802-5355

School of Business & Entrepreneurship

Boris Hurst, Principal
404-802-5350

School of Law, Government & Public Policy

Byron Barnes, Principal
404-802-5345

Booker Taliaferro Washington

Robert Robbins, Acting Principal
45 Whitehouse Dr., NW 30314
404-802-4600

Open Campus High School Program

Crim Open Campus

Dr. Angelisa Cummings, Principal
256 Clifton St., SE 30317
404-802-5800

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Adult Literacy Program

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404-756-5153

Forrest Hills Academy

Tricia Rock, Principal
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404-591-7275

West End Academy (11,12)

Dr. Vivian Jackson, Principal
1325 Ralph D. Abernathy Dr., SW 30311
404-755-7755

Charter Schools

Atlanta Charter Middle

Matt Underwood, Principal
820 Essie Ave., SE 30316
678-904-0051

Charles Richard Drew Charter

Dr. Nicholas Stapleton, Principal
301 East Lake Blvd., 30317
404-687-0001

Imagine Wesley International Academy, LLC

James Taylor, Principal
1049 Custer Avenue SE 30315
678-904-9137

KIPP West Atlanta Young Scholars (WAYS) Academy

Kim Karacalidis, Principal
80 Joseph E. Lowery Blvd., SW 30314
404-475-1941

Neighborhood Charter School, Inc.

Jill Kaechele, Principal
688 Grant St., SE 30315
404-624-6226

Tech High School

Elisa A. Falco, Principal
1043 Memorial Dr., SE 30316
678-904-5091

University Community Academy

Dr. James Harris, Principal
2050 Tiger Flowers Dr., 30314
404-753-4050



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BULLDOG BRANDEN



Branden Smith

Washington star to play at Georgia

BY RICH FAHEY

For Branden Smith, some of the pressure has eased. But for the *Parade* All-American defensive back from Washington High, another kind of pressure is about to begin — performing before friends and family close to home at the University of Georgia (UGA).

The distance between Athens and Atlanta is about 75 miles, but you can expect a strong contingent to make the trip Saturdays in the fall when Georgia plays at home.

Smith was one of 40 students at Atlanta Public Schools who made their college intentions official on National Signing Day, Feb. 4, which was marked with a ceremony at

Maynard Holbrook Jackson High School.

Smith had actually followed his mother's advice and committed to Georgia on Jan. 4. He picked the Bulldogs over Alabama, Florida and Florida State, and announced his choice during ESPN's telecast of the Under Armour All-America High School Football

See SMITH Page 20



Washington High *Parade* All-American defensive back Branden Smith signs a national letter of intent with the University of Georgia.