



Teacher Andrew Lovett Jr. works with AP Calculus students Briahna Head and Orane Douglas at the Carver School of Health Sciences & Research.

GATES WAY TO SUCCESS

Gates Foundation boosts initiative to maximize teacher effectiveness

BY DAVID LEE SIMMONS

Andrew Lovett Jr. is a born leader who constantly seeks new ways to engage his math students. That dedication helped him win 2009 Teacher of the Year for Carver's School of Health Sciences & Research.

The same qualities that make him a prime candidate for administrative

positions within the district also make Lovett an asset in the classroom.

A management position in the district would be a natural progression for Lovett or any teacher who makes a positive impact on student achievement. But Atlanta Public Schools is dedicated to retaining and rewarding teachers who motivate students and produce results in the

classroom. That's the driving force behind the Effective Teacher in Every Classroom Initiative, which received a huge boost in January in the form of a \$10 million, three-year grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Gates grant bolsters the district's work to develop a comprehensive evaluation system for

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Learning Chinese
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Checkmate

Chess programs in Atlanta Public Schools have students such as Peter Maynard, right, of M. Agnes Jones Elementary feeling like kings and queens. *Story, Page 5.*



PHOTO: SCOTT KING

We're all about student achievement



Dr. Beverly L. Hall

Welcome to this school year's second issue of *The Atlanta Educator*. In this publication, we have tried to capture the stories of our staff and students who continue to make a difference in our community. You will read about programs and initiatives that are helping turn Atlanta Public Schools into one of the fastest improving urban school districts in the nation.

Just last month, APS received a \$10 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that will intensify our system of teacher performance and accountability under the banner of our Effective Teacher in Every Classroom (ETEC) Initiative. Our work to improve teacher quality reflects a keen understanding of what we know from data and experience: Children can excel in the presence of highly effective teachers. While the district incorporates several innovative reform models, we know that the ETEC work will have the single

greatest impact on achievement. In this issue of our newspaper, you will meet the director of the ETEC program and many APS teachers who exemplify what it means to be an outstanding teacher.

In this issue, you also will meet students from Fain, Dobbs, West Manor, Usher-Collier Heights, Humphries and M. Agnes Jones who are developing extraordinary analytical skills, academic proficiency and self-esteem through the game of chess. You will get a better understanding of the role international relations plays in our schools after reading about our partnerships with China, Turkey and Germany.

Read about the oral history lessons students at Morningside Elementary are getting from graduates from the 1940's and 50's and learn about talented writers who participate in the Def Poetry Jam at Dunbar Elementary. In this issue you'll also see why music education continues to inspire and

motivate our students.

We've had many famous visitors to our schools over the years. The latest two — famed primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan — are featured in this issue of *The Atlanta Educator*.

These are just a few examples of how Atlanta Public Schools is working toward its goal of making sure all students graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers.

I encourage you to take the time to thumb through the pages of *The Atlanta Educator* and help us spread the good news about APS in the weeks and months to come.

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



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Harvard takes note of APS

Urban Superintendents Program pays a visit to Dr. Hall

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

More than a decade ago, Dr. Beverly Hall began her mission as superintendent to transform APS into a continuously improving urban school district.

Eager to observe that transformation first-hand, Dr. Robert S. Peterkin, former director of the Urban Superintendents Program (USP) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, paid a visit to Atlanta during the week of Jan. 11-14. Peterkin brought with him Harvard Graduate School of Education lecturer Dr. Janice Jackson and doctoral students Leslie Boozer, Lizzy Carroll, Drew Echelson, Laura Kelley, Melissa Matarazzo, Lynette Tannis, and Maqueda Randall-Weeks.

The group spent time shadowing Dr. Hall, who chairs the USP Advisory Board and regularly mentors program participants.

"Dr. Hall has the powerful ability to communicate from families to the boardroom," said Echelson, speaking on behalf of his fellow USP classmates. "She understands that in order to get results, she must engage an entire community in the complex work of improvement. It's apparent that the

dramatic improvements of APS are a result of the work of an entire community, who, under the leadership of Dr. Hall, stood up and said, 'We want more for APS students.'"

Established in 1990, USP is a rigorous course of study designed for professionals who have worked innovatively and effectively in metropolitan school districts as teacher-leaders, school principals or central office administrators. USP doctoral students build upon their own experience as educators through coursework, an internship, research and writing of a dissertation.

As part of the on-site experience in Atlanta, the USP visitors witnessed board and cabinet meetings and participated in reflective conversations with Dr. Hall and APS staff. They also toured the single-gender Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy, as well as The New Schools

at Carver.

"During our time there, we noticed that the use of student data drives instruction throughout the district," said Echelson. "District leaders, principals and teachers all seemed very

comfortable and excited describing how data analysis shapes teaching and learning in schools. We also noticed abundant student work displayed throughout each of the schools we visited, demonstrating the rich variety of learning taking place in Atlanta Public Schools at all grade levels.

"We observed a level of consistency among and between schools in APS that we have never

observed in large school districts," Echelson added. "There is a distinct APS culture found in every school that involves common language, common expectations and instructional practice. There is a palpable spirit in APS that it is a school district on the move, and that was felt throughout the organization."



There is a distinct APS culture found in every school that involves common language, common expectations and instructional practice.

Drew Echelson

Doctoral student, Harvard Graduate School of Education

APS BOARD MEMBER PROFILE: KHAATIM SHERRER EL

Sherrer El works to put ‘public’ back in public education

Khaatim Sherrer El serves as the Atlanta Board of Education representative for District 2. This is the fifth in a series of board member profiles in The Atlanta Educator.

LEADERSHIP

Khaatim Sherrer El has served on the Atlanta Board of Education since 2003, when he won a special election. He was re-elected in 2005, and again last fall, winning the majority in every precinct.

Sherrer El represents District 2 schools: Bethune, Connally, Finch, Gideons, Herndon, M.A. Jones, F.L. Stanton and White elementary schools, as well as KIPP Ways and University Community Academy charter schools; Brown, Kennedy, Parks and Turner middle schools; and Douglass and Washington high schools.

BACKGROUND

Sherrer El became interested in public education at an early age. During his junior year in high school, he served as a student representative on the Newark (N.J.) school board.

“Activism, and youth activism, was always my thing,” he said. “Serving as a student representative on the school board was an eye-opening experience in terms of learning what a board does in influencing how kids my age received the education we deserved. It lit the passion for me in terms of public-education advocacy.”

As a student at Morehouse College, Sherrer El attended Atlanta Board of Education meetings and organized campus activities such as College Day 101 to promote awareness of public education. He also scheduled more frequent meetings of the Community Council, which seeks to engage the community in public-

school issues.

“We saw the neighborhoods stepping up their efforts to shut down drug dealers who were located on the routes kids took to school or the bus stop,” he said. “It was big and small stuff all at once that we worked on.”

EXPERIENCE

Sherrer El’s experience with the Community Council inspired him to run for the Atlanta Board of Education’s District 2 seat during his senior year at Morehouse. His

mantra: “Put the ‘public’ back in ‘public education.’” Sherrer El said voters could relate to “this young, energetic man with the commitment and passion to bring the community and the schools together in a city where only half the African Americans were graduating from high school.”

He became the youngest board member upon his election in 2003, and graduated from Morehouse in 2007 with a bachelor’s degree in Urban Studies and Public Policy.

Sherrer El also serves on the board of directors of Helping Teens Succeed and the Fulton County Board of Health.

The school board and the schools have to be willing to engage, just as the parents have to be willing to engage.

POINTS OF PRIDE

As someone who’s passionate about connecting the community with the school district, Sherrer El is proud of building parent involvement and public engagement.

“The school board and the schools have to be willing to engage, just as the parents have to be willing to engage,” he said, adding that neighborhoods have to view their schools as more than just buildings in the community and that they have to invest in a school’s success.

Sherrer El also seeks to reduce truancy while increasing high school graduation rates, especially for African-American males; improve access to affordable



Khaatim Sherrer El served as a student representative on the Newark (N.J.) School Board during his junior year of high school.

child-care programs; and enhance afterschool and summer-enrichment programs.

He’s proud of how the board works with Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall to achieve success in the district.

“When she first came in, she did a very good job of managing expectations while at the same time instilling this sense of urgency to turn this thing around,” he said. “Wholesale reform system-wide takes time, and she’s built confidence that we’ll reach that ultimate goal.

“I’m most proud when a parent, a student or anyone in the community comes up to me and says thanks for something I’ve done,” he said. “It’s so huge for them, but for me it’s just a part of the responsibility of the position I took on.”

Khaatim Sherrer El’s email address is khaatimsel@atlantapublicschools.us. The next Atlanta Board of Education community meetings take place April 12 and May 10 at the Center for Learning and Leadership, 130 Trinity Ave. SW, Atlanta, GA 30303.

Atlanta Public Schools welcomes three new board members:



Courtney D. English
At-Large Seat 7 Districts 1 & 2
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Reuben R. McDaniel, III
At-Large Districts 3 and 4
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Nancy M. Meister
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For more information about the board, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us/board

Q & A

Director of Strategic Programs and Projects Angela Smith

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

Q What does your position entail?

A I am focused on the execution of large strategies, initiatives and projects.

Q What is the philosophy behind the Effective Teacher in Every Classroom (ETEC) initiative?

A Recognizing that teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement, we have placed an emphasis on individual teachers and their needs. Teachers want consistent feedback to help them be better at what they do. The research tells us that when you focus on schools and teachers, there is a significant increase in student achievement.

Q What is APS doing to implement ETEC?

A We are working hard to provide more support for teachers as they improve students'

experiences and, ultimately, achievement.

Our ETEC strategy has five goals 1) Develop a new evaluation system for teachers based on student achievement; 2) Implement a Teacher Effectiveness Dashboard; 3) Increase principals' ability to identify effective teachers; 4) Build a pipeline of highly effective teachers through the urban teacher residency program; and 5) Reward the most effective teachers.

Q How will the grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation fit in with these plans?

A The Gates Foundation is our partner and a financial supporter of this work. We were already doing some of this work before the Gates opportunity came about. The Gates grant allowed us to develop a full-scale plan and accelerate our work.

Q How will teachers have input into these plans?

A Teachers played an integral role in the design of the plan we submitted to Gates. We had a 90-percent response rate on a survey we sent out. That gave us a great wealth of knowledge as far as what we should and shouldn't include in the plan.

Q How do teachers feel about a performance compensation system?

A Of those surveyed, 83 percent said they want compensation linked to performance. We already have a system where, if a school meets its targets (for student achievement) everyone at the school shares an incentive bonus. We are ready for the next step, which is to individually reward the most effective teachers.

For more information about the Effective Teacher in Every Classroom Initiative, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us/etec



Gates Foundation boosts initiative to maximize teacher effectiveness

GATES: From Page 1

teachers focused on student achievement as well as student growth; implements tools that maximize teacher effectiveness; and strengthens the role of principals in attracting and cultivating effective teachers.

Lovett joined LaVasia Bullard, a second-grade teacher at M. Agnes Jones Elementary, in a meeting with representatives from the Gates Foundation to determine how to best challenge, monitor and reward teachers; and how to motivate highly effective teachers to stay in the classroom.

"Professional development for me is critical," said Lovett, who plans to earn his educational specialist degree from Mercer University in May. "No matter how good you think you are, there's always room for improvement. You need to learn how to teach your content more effectively, and to make it more rigorous and relevant to your students."

Bullard, a Teach For America alumna, had planned to attend law school after fulfilling her commitment, but realized how rewarding teaching had become. Now she wants to focus



Teacher LaVasia Bullard assists students Dream Gist, left, and Rantavius Love at M. Agnes Jones Elementary.

on becoming a better teacher.

"The most effective teachers I've seen are passionate about what they do; it's not just a job," said Bullard, a former Atlanta Families' Award winner. "They're driven by data.

They're constantly reflecting. They're willing to admit, 'This plan didn't work; what will I do now?' And they're accountable. I know my children come in with these issues, so what can I do to make sure that by the end, everybody

will be successful?"

Lovett and Bullard are among the 83 percent of APS teachers surveyed who indicated they would like to have their incentives linked to performance.

But Lovett's effectiveness is measured by the accomplishments of students such as senior Orane Douglas, whom he advised for the previous three years at Carver.

Douglas, who earned the highest SAT score in his school, credits Lovett with being a huge influence. He chose Lovett as the "Star Teacher" – even though he hadn't taken a class from him until this year. Lovett led students on a trip to Washington, D.C., for President Obama's inauguration in January 2009.

If Lovett were to jump from teaching to an administrative position, Douglas said it would significantly impact other students.

"That's a disservice, not only to me, but to the others who could benefit from his character and his personality," said Douglas, who has earned about \$300,000 in scholarship offers from various colleges. "I'd have lost my advocate. I would've interpreted it like someone had left me again."



Chess clubs are thriving at Fain, Dobbs, West Manor, Usher-Collier Heights, Humphries and M. Agnes Jones elementary schools, spurred by a partnership with the Kappa Boule of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity and America's Foundation for Chess. Students compete each month for a traveling trophy that stays with the winning team.

ON BOARD

Chess program has students feeling like kings and queens

By MEAGHAN CASEY

Chess is a game steeped in tradition, concentration and strategy. Yet, despite its ancient roots and stark simplicity compared to video games, more and more young people throughout Atlanta Public Schools are jumping on board.

Chess clubs are thriving at Fain, Dobbs, West Manor, Usher-Collier Heights, Humphries and M. Agnes Jones elementary schools, spurred by a partnership with the Kappa Boule of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity and America's Foundation for Chess. Kappa provides chess equipment and training, while the foundation provides a First Move curriculum that helps students develop analytical skills, academic proficiency and self-esteem.

"It's a game, but they're learning math and history along the way," said Ann Hill, a First Move teacher at M. Agnes Jones. "They're really enthusiastic about it, and their concentration and critical-thinking skills have definitely improved. They've learned to think ahead and anticipate other people's actions."

Jones fifth-grader Nasir Campbell calls chess a game of war and strategy. "You have to attack but you also have to

defend what you're doing," he said. "It challenges your thinking."

Jones students have been playing competitive chess since 2005, and regularly participate in sanctioned tournaments. Jones third-grader Yusef Abdul-Hakim excelled during a recent citywide competition, before losing to a college student.

"It teaches you to think more than one move at a time," said Abdul-Hakim. The game also teaches students to excel in other areas. Many of the club members have been recognized for attaining honor roll status or earning straight As.

"Over the years, these students have been at the top in terms of academic achievement," said Louis Childers, school social worker and coordinator of the First Move program at Jones.

"It can make you smarter," said Jones third-grader Micah Maynard. "You do better in other subjects like math and science. If I keep playing, it can open a lot of doors for me in life."

Maynard and her brother, Peter, a fourth-grader, hone their skills at home. And they've learned to do so without

exhibiting sibling rivalry.

"Win or lose, you learn how to be a good sport," said Micah Maynard. "And you're having fun."

According to Bertram Sears, a Kappa Boule volunteer, that is exactly the type of attitude his fraternity hopes to encourage.

"It exposes them to sportsmanship — the thrill of victory and gracious defeat," said Sears.

Parent Michael Scholfield agrees. He has been more than impressed with his 6-year-old son Matthew's improved behavior since learning the game at Jones.

"He's more disciplined and patient," said Scholfield. "Chess has taught him to lose gracefully and to win gracefully — not to gloat. It's all about doing your best."

Chess club members from the six elementary schools compete monthly for a traveling trophy, which stays with the winning team. At the end of the year, the school with the best cumulative performance earns the trophy permanently. The winning team will also be invited to Kappa's annual Social Action Luncheon on May 15, where individual trophies will be presented.

Bringing China to Atlanta

The Confucius Institute in Atlanta opened its doors at Coan Middle School in March 2008, marking an unprecedented public-private-international partnership among Atlanta Public Schools, Emory University and Nanjing University in China. It is the only Confucius Institute in the world that is an alliance between a K-12 institution and institutions of higher learning.

In December, the fourth-annual Confucius Institute Conference was held in Beijing, China. Five members of the Confucius

Institute in Atlanta attended: APS Executive Director Dr. Robin Hall of School Reform Team 3; Monishae Mosley O'Neill, APS director of Literacy and World Languages, Department for Learning Excellence; Holli Semetko, vice provost of Emory University; Dr. Li Hong, senior lecturer at Emory University; and Dr. Changsheng Li, professor, Nanjing University. The group presented information on how Confucius Institutes can help local schools, and learned valuable tools that will enhance the APS program.



Mandarin Chinese teacher Yi Peng Wang of Coan Middle helps APS student master a language that is growing in popularity throughout the district.



More than 500 students celebrated the “Year of the Tiger” during a celebration at Jackson High. To show their mastery of Chinese, students from Toomer Elementary, Coan Middle, as well as Carver Early College, Jackson and North Atlanta high schools offered spirited performances. Tiger Tales Performance Troop also treated the crowd to a puppet show.

A student holds up his work during a Chinese lesson.

Atlanta’s IB program fosters academic excellence

The International Baccalaureate (IB) program fosters academic excellence and international awareness among students. Its mission complements the district’s goal of preparing future leaders.

With seven authorized IB schools and more in the pipeline, APS is one of a select few public school districts in the country to provide the challenging curriculum from first-grade through senior year. That amounts to about 4,600 APS students engaging in an inquiry-based form of education along with

more than 706,000 students at 2,595 schools in 134 countries. Its curriculum is divided into three sections, Primary, Middle and an advanced Diploma Programme. Offered during grades 11 and 12, Diploma Programme coursework exceeds not only the Georgia Performance Standards but also the standards of honors and Advanced Placement coursework.

In the early years, teachers encourage students to form global connections through E-Pal (pen pals through email) projects. They also use the Socratic

method, asking questions about international events like the earthquake in Haiti.

“These questions create a foundation for children to engage in a discovery of learning through the lens of different concepts,” said Tamara Cotman, executive director of School Reform Team 3, which includes IB-authorized Brandon, Jackson, E. Rivers and Smith elementary schools as well as Sutton Middle. “These concepts can help them understand things like honesty, integrity, creativity and curiosity. They’re always

questioning and learning.”

North Atlanta Principal Mark Mygrant said that about a third of his students pursue the Diploma Programme, which requires six assessments. Not everyone earns the diploma, but all students finish the coursework and are better prepared for college.

“It really gives you a leg up,” Mygrant said of the diploma, which can help students earn as much as 24 hours of college credit. “Plus, it really gives students an active role in their instruction.”

| IB SCHOOLS |
|---------------|
| Brandon |
| Garden Hills |
| Jackson |
| E. Rivers |
| Smith |
| Sutton |
| North Atlanta |

GLOBAL RELATIONS

The world at their fingertips

Bolton Academy students have friends in far places

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Though international travel might seem foreign to most Bolton Academy kindergartners, they now have the world at their fingertips.

To help cultivate an international learning experience, ESOL kindergarten teacher Claudine Curry registered for ePals, a social network optimized for K-12 learning that encourages global collaboration and communication among more than a half-million classrooms in 200 countries.

For their first project, Curry's students became pen pals with a class in Spain. Her students also have formed relationships with families in Kenya and Syria as well as classrooms in Chile, Dubai, Turkey and the United Kingdom. In one hands-on activity called My Blue Kite, students created and wrote about various kites in English, Spanish and Turkish.

"I wanted to connect my students with others from around the world," said Curry. "Even though their parents are from Guatemala or Mexico, many of them have never been outside of Atlanta, so it's important to open their eyes to what's beyond their own neighborhood. We can fly to distant homes and schools on Google Earth, reach out to faraway students through video chats and work together on meaningful projects."

With encouragement from Principal Laura Strickling, the entire Bolton community embraces global education. Students in grades K-2 partnered with classes in Turkey, Australia and the United Kingdom, while grade 3-5 students exchanged e-mails with pen pals in France and South Wales. For an International Baccalaureate (IB) candidate school, the experience has been priceless.

"It's very important for students to engage in global learning, especially in today's society," said Katrel Angry, IB coordinator at Bolton. "We're living in a globalizing world



Teacher Irem Ebru Gursoy of Ankara, Turkey, visits with Bolton Academy students as part of the ePals cultural exchange program.

where students must be prepared to interact and become well-rounded individuals. This program allows students to collaborate with their peers regardless of their geographic locations, cultures or language differences.

In January, Bolton students were treated to a week of Turkish delights. Irem Gursoy, Bolton's ePals partner from Ankara, Turkey, paid a visit along with other educators from the country.

"It was wonderful for the kids to see people from another country coming to visit them," said Bolton exchange teacher Ingrid Arriagada, originally from Chile. "They could see that,

although our geography and cultures are different, we're all the same people with hopes, dreams and feelings. It's very important for them to learn this when they're young. The more exposure they have, the more open-minded they'll be."

Bolton students also learned about Turkish dance, music, language, legends, traditions and customs. They delighted in fun facts, such as the popularity of kabobs vs. burgers in Turkey.

For Gursoy, who has partnered with other schools in Italy, Romania and Lithuania, as well as Texas, her first visit to the United States was a memorable one. She was eager to finally meet Curry and her students face to face. "We're so close," she said. "We write almost every day, and our sons are pen pals now."

Gursoy added, "If you can make something more exciting and personal for students, it has more of an impact."

As part of the visit, the Turkish educators also stopped by North Atlanta High School and Sutton Middle School to discuss plans for a student exchange during the 2010-11 school year. School business partners Sodexo and Spice Market provided complimentary meals. The week concluded with an assembly celebrating the International School Day of Peace and Nonviolence.

"These young children are our future; they will one day be leading us," said Oktay Kuru, Gursoy's father, who retired from the military in 1991 and went into teaching. "If we develop stronger ties early on, we could resolve possible problems later."

To reciprocate the visit, Curry and Arriagada will travel to Turkey the week of May 30-June 5, observing and presenting lessons of their own.

"I've always wanted to see another educational system from the inside," said Arriagada. "I've been able to do that here in the U.S., and now I'll be able to do the same in Turkey. It's a dream come true."



English teacher Oktay Kuru from Ankara, Turkey, quizzes Bolton Academy students during his visit.

APS
VETERAN
TEACHERS

Sharing wisdom

Dobbs is happy she answered the call of teaching

BY MEAGHAN CASEY



Darlene Johnson Dobbs

Ever since she was 5 years old, setting up make-believe classrooms for her siblings and childhood friends, Darlene Johnson Dobbs knew that teaching was her calling.

Today, the 30-year veteran of Atlanta Public Schools feels rewarded by that decision.

"I love it," she said. "I knew there was

nothing else I wanted to do."

Dobbs, a Gifted and Talented instructor at Gideons Elementary School, works with students and teachers at every grade level. The district's Program for the Gifted and Talented, also known as The Challenge Program, is designed to maximize students' critical-thinking, communication, research and reference skills.

"All students are gifted learners in their own right," Dobbs said. "The challenge is to help them bring their unique gifts to the surface by using creative and engaging techniques."

Gideons is one of 17 APS elementary schools involved in the Talent Development Program, which aims to increase the number of gifted students in each school. Since Dobbs' arrival in 2006, Gideons' Gifted and Talented pool has grown from three students to 48.

The 1974 graduate of Frederick Douglass High returned to APS in 1980 as a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher at Emma Hutchinson Elementary. After 23 years at Hutchinson, she moved to Long Middle, then Slater Elementary before accepting her current position at Gideons.

"I never considered another district," she said. "This is my community, my neighborhood. This is where I went to school. I wanted to give back."

That APS pride runs in the family. Dobbs, one of seven children, has two sisters who are art teachers in APS. Her daughter, Ashanté, graduated as valedictorian from Douglass High School in 1998 and now works for her alma mater, Emory University.



Gideons Elementary student Haley Summer Ford adjusts a robot display with longtime educator Darlene Johnson Dobbs.

To support her school, Dobbs' commitment to education extends far beyond the classroom. Dobbs has coordinated student participation in local, regional and state social science fairs and sponsors the Gideons Junior Beta Club. She is also certified as a teacher support specialist and mentors first-year teachers.

"You have to be passionate about what you do," she tells them. "You have to be consistent. Say what you mean, and mean what you say. You also have to keep an open mind and try new things."

And she doesn't just talk the talk, as her mentees and students would agree.

“

All students are gifted learners in their own right. The challenge is to help them bring their unique gifts to the surface by using creative and engaging techniques.

Darlene Johnson Dobbs

"For the last seven years, Mrs. Dobbs has been far more than just a teacher to me," said former student Brittany Sapp, a freshman at Augusta University. "She has been my advocate, mentor, biggest fan and, most importantly, a second mother. She always strives for excellence and her passion for success encourages her students to never settle for less."

That approach helped her earn the title of 2008 Gideons Teacher of the Year. Dobbs' success also stems from her belief that gifted education should take place inside and

outside of the classroom. She encourages hands-on activities, as well as travel abroad. Two years ago, Dobbs led a group of APS Gifted and Talented students to China. This spring, she will lead students on a 12-day tour of London, Paris and Rome.

"It's critical to be able to expose students to the world," said Dobbs. "You never know where it might take them or how far they'll go."

Dobbs applies the same counsel to her own life, consistently exposing herself to new opportunities. In 2008, she traveled to Egypt through the Fund for Teachers summer grant program. She also remains committed to keeping up with the latest advances in technology and curriculum training.

"That's the beauty of teaching — you never stop growing and learning new things along the way," she said.

Atlanta Public Schools is dedicated to placing an effective teacher in every classroom. Meet three veteran educators who help fulfill the district's commitment to 'Making a Difference' in the lives of our students.

Daniel is a valuable fixture at Gideons

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

Media specialist and former teacher Alice Daniel has influenced generations of students throughout her 36 years of service to the Atlanta Public Schools.

"I've seen children and grandchildren of students I've taught come through these same doors," said Daniel, who has been a valuable fixture at Gideons Elementary School for the past two decades. "It's nice to see those students come back with their families and to know they're doing well."

Raised in the small town of Madison, Ga., Daniel decided at an early age to pursue a career in teaching.

"Growing up, I had great teachers," said Daniel. "I still remember them

fondly. I think I was influenced by them, to some extent."

After one year of teaching at an all-girls private school, Daniel took a position at Capitol View Elementary School. She taught at that level for eight years and then moved on to Parks Middle. Making the switch from the classroom to the library, she was hired as a media specialist at Gideons in 1989.

One of her primary initiatives has been promoting the quality and quantity of books that students read, both in school and at home. Through Gideons' Drop Everything and Read program, students in kindergarten and first grade read a book a day. Daniel makes it a habit to read to pre-K students once a week, and invites guest readers to the school. In addition, the media center hosts

events for parents, such as having fathers of pre-K students read with their children.

In her role as media specialist, Daniel also tries to unite traditional approaches with the latest technology.

"I don't discourage computer usage, but I love to pull out books to show them — whether it's a biography or a novel — that a movie they've seen was based on a story in a book," said Daniel. "I want them to still have exposure to those resources and be able to compare it to what they're seeing in today's media outlets."

In this ever-changing world, Daniel also has to study and keep up with education trends.

"There's so much more going on with technology, with The Challenge Program and smaller learning communities," she said. "The district continues to train us on the latest advancements so that we're growing every day."



Alice Daniel



Media Specialist Alice Daniel assists Gideons Elementary students Jamila Kemp, left, and Keimunta Elliott.

Bracy's legacy lives on in her students

BY PAUL HALLORAN

After more than a quarter-century teaching at Whitefoord Elementary, Mattie Bracy has built a reputation as a competent and dedicated educator. Long after she retires, that will live on in her students' achievements.

When Natisha Howell transferred from Dekalb County to APS in 1992, Bracy was her fourth-grade teacher at Whitefoord. The shy, young girl was immediately struck by Bracy's teaching methods.

"She caught our attention in ways that made learning fun," said Howell, who was so impressed by Bracy that she decided right then and there to become a teacher someday.

At the age of 20, Howell dropped out of college, got married and had two daughters of her own. After earning her associate's degree in December from Shorter College, she is on track to receive her bachelor's degree in education next year.

"Ms. Bracy inspired me to become a teacher so that I can impact children's lives, just like she did for me," Howell said. "I plan to teach in Atlanta."

That's music to Bracy's ears. She still remembers the teachers who inspired her years ago.

"Roy Morrison, my English teacher, taught me that schools don't give you everything you need. You can look to other areas to supplement your learning," said Bracy of her high school years in Chicago.

"Mr. [David] Layman, my biology teacher, validated me as a human being," Bracy added. "I was taking home economics, and he told me I should be taking more challenging classes."

Born and raised in Alabama and Pensacola, Fla., Bracy moved to Chicago with an aunt and stayed there through high school.



Longtime educator Mattie Bracy has spent the last 10 years of her APS career working with kindergartners, whom she affectionately refers to as "short-legged human beings."

She returned to Pensacola and took courses in junior college before moving back to the Windy City. While attending junior college, she held a variety of jobs including nurse's aide, factory worker and clerk at the post office. But she never took her eye off the prize.

"I always wanted to get a college degree," said Bracy, who went to Parsons College in Iowa on a package that included a

scholarship, student loans and work-study jobs. She majored in sociology with a minor in education. She earned a master's in education from the National College of Education in Illinois and also holds an education specialist degree from Troy State in Alabama.

In 1982, Bracy was teaching elementary school in Chicago when the city suffered through one of its worst winters ever, including minus-26 degree temperatures. "I can't take this anymore," Bracy said to herself, before making the move to Atlanta.

She eventually landed at Whitefoord in 1984 and has been cultivating young minds at APS ever since that move.

"It's invigorating and inspiring," Bracy said of her vocation. "It keeps you vibrant. It's wonderful being around young people."

For the last 10 years, she has been around the youngest of students, teaching kindergarten after a lengthy stint in grades 3 and 4. Bracy affectionately refers to her students as "short-legged human beings," and is amazed at their communication skills and knowledge of current events.

As the mother of a Georgia Tech senior majoring in mechanical engineering, Bracy also has not stopped learning. She is currently taking a Gifted and Talented Endorsement class. "I love to learn," she said.



Mattie Bracy

Barlow is a commanding presence

By MEAGHAN CASEY

As one of nine children, Michael Barlow refers to himself as lucky No. 7. But No. 7 is quickly moving up the ranks to No. 1 in APS' Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC).

The self-possessed junior at Grady High School is the youngest student in APS history to be named brigade commander. As such, he holds the rank of cadet colonel and is responsible for the district's corps of cadets – a tremendous accomplishment, especially for someone who was drawn to JROTC based more on an impulse than a calling.

"I'm competitive by nature, so I thought I'd join," said the 17-year-old. "A couple weeks into it, I found out I agreed with the lifestyle and teachings of the program. It's taught me how to think strategically and solve problems and to make those tough, critical decisions. It's also taught me how imperative teamwork is. To accomplish any big task, you need the support of others."

A debater since the sixth grade, Barlow is adept at thinking outside of the box and leading his peers toward a collective goal. A battalion commander since his sophomore year, he has fulfilled his leadership responsibilities with ease. Barlow also serves as commander of the drill team and a member of the rifle team. His accolades include the Commanders' Award, Superior Cadet

First Award and Georgia National Guard Recruiting Award, as well as numerous other ribbons and badges. He was invited to attend the West Point Summer Leaders Seminar in June.

Barlow is one of many APS students to benefit from JROTC. Nine APS high schools offer the program, training nearly 3,000 cadets. Grady typically has the lowest enrollment among the high schools, while Carver and Mays top the charts. The primary mission is "to motivate young people to be better citizens." Collectively, the cadets log more than 17,000 community service hours in one year and earn more than \$2.3 million in scholarships.

Barlow alone has logged quite a few hours of community service collecting money for needy families, volunteering with Special Olympics and mentoring students at Hill/Hope Elementary School. He is currently working to expand service opportunities with organizations such as the Atlanta Community Food Bank and Habitat for Humanity.

Outside of JROTC, Barlow is active in Model United Nations. He serves as secretary of the debate team and captain of the policy debate team.

He hopes to attend West Point and become a military intelligence officer in the U.S. Army.

"The military can do a lot for a person, helping you through some of the toughest challenges in life," said Barlow. "You just have to be willing to adapt and change."



Leadership skills have Paige going places

The Fulton County Youth Commission seeks strong leadership skills and a track record of community service in the 20 students it selects for the program each year.

The Posse Foundation also chooses outstanding student leaders for its coveted scholarship program.

Both organizations selected Lisa Paige of Washington High School.

Spend just a few minutes with the Washington High School Senior Academy student and you get the sense that this young woman is going places. She already has traveled abroad to promote diplomacy.

As a member of the Fulton County Youth Commission, Paige spent 12 days in Germany visiting historic sites and meeting with dignitaries, business leaders and German students as part of the Global Youth Leadership Program.

"It was excellent, amazing," Paige said of the trip. "It was my first time overseas."

Paige and the other Youth Commission members – including students from Grady, Mays, North Atlanta and Douglass high schools – spent three days living with host families while in Germany. Prior to the trip, they visited the United Nations in New York and the State Department in Washington, D.C.

The exchange program was created in 2008 by Fulton County Commission Chairman John Eaves to promote global diplomacy, civic responsibility and international collaboration. Students traveled to South Africa in 2008 through the program, and a group will visit Turkey this



Student Lisa Paige, right, shown in Germany with her host mother, Martina Brueser.

year. It's another example of strong community partnerships that reinforce the district's commitment to cultivate students who are prepared to join a global workforce.

Paige said the organization also helped her qualify for the Posse Scholarship. Each year, the Posse Foundation recruits public high school students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential. After a rigorous three-round interview process, Posse Scholars are selected to receive

full tuition scholarships from one of 37 partner colleges and universities.

"Posse is based on leadership and that's what the Youth Commission is all about," said Paige, who plans to study pre-dentistry at the College of Wooster in Ohio. "They want great youth leaders who will better the campus."

It's a safe bet that Paige will do just that, based on the impressive résumé she has compiled while at Washington. She is president of the National Beta Club chapter, as well as the Ivy League Mentoring Club for Young Women and the Future Educators Association. She also is a shot putter on the spring track team and a member of the marching and concert bands. Also, she ranks in the top 10 percent of her class.

"Washington is like a second family for me," said Paige, who has an older sister at Luther Rice Seminary University and a younger sister at Washington. "The teachers here have been very nurturing and supportive, but also stern in helping prepare me for college. They try to develop great leaders in students. If I could go back to middle school and make my choice again, I would definitely choose Washington."

That's the extent of looking back for Paige, who is eagerly waiting for the next phase of her life. She has already started weekly pre-collegiate training with other Posse Scholars, and will visit the College of Wooster in March.

"I'm excited to meet different people and experience different things," she said. "I'm happy and I'm ready."



Register your child in a FULL DAY STATE-FUNDED PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM for the 2010-2011 school year

Registration Dates and Locations for Pre-kindergarten Lottery:

Saturday, April 17, 2010 – 8:00 am to 6:00 pm

Benjamin E. Mays High School
3450 Benjamin E. Mays Dr., SW, Atlanta 30331

New Schools at Carver
55 McDonough Blvd., SE, Atlanta 30315

Tuesday, April 20, 2010 – 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Samuel M. Inman Middle School
774 Virginia Ave., NE, Atlanta 30306

Thursday, April 22, 2010 – 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Samuel M. Inman Middle School
774 Virginia Ave., NE, Atlanta 30306

Saturday, April 24, 2010 – 8:00 am to 6:00 pm

Maynard H. Jackson High School
801 Glenwood Ave., SE, Atlanta, 30316

*** Lottery Drawing: Friday, April 30, 2010 – 1:00 pm**
Instructional Services Center at Dean Rusk
433 Peoples St., SW Atlanta 30310

Registration Requirements for Pre-kindergarten Lottery:

- Child must be 4 years old on or before September 1, 2010
- Child must live in an Atlanta Public Schools' attendance zone

To register and determine eligibility, the parent or guardian must bring:

- 1) Child's original birth certificate, passport, official medical documents, legal documents, or official documents from other countries
- 2) Proof of parent or guardian residency (electric, gas or water bill, apartment lease or house contract)
An Affidavit of Residency must be completed if the parent or guardian does not own or lease the property in which they reside. A driver's license, voter registration card, Medicaid card, or any type of telephone bill will not be accepted as proof of residence.
- 3) Child's Social Security number/card (optional)

For more information, call the Pre-K Registration Helpline 404.802.3638 or www.atlantapublicschools.us



So far, the interviews with alumni have only been recorded on paper. Another event is being planned, where students will again interview alums, this time recording them on film.



The Living History project allows Morningside students to celebrate the school's storied past.



A Morningside student interviews Dr. Richard Franco, who attended the school in the late 40s. "I learned so much in fourth through seventh grade here," said Franco. "The world opened up to me."

LIVING HISTORY

Morningside alumni share stories with students

By JESSICA BENSON

Some things never change. The auditorium is the same. So is the lunchroom. The spot where students played tetherball during recess is still there. Yet, things were very different for the earliest students at Morningside Elementary School. Years ago, there were no cell phones, or computers, and the principal was a strict disciplinarian who made sure all students did their homework every night. "It's very much the same, and yet different," said Lynn DeWitt, who attended the school in the late 1940s and early '50s. At a special event held in the fall, on the 80th day of the 80th year since the school opened in 1926, alumni including DeWitt returned to the school to share their memories with current Morningside students. The students were transfixed by the stories. "The kids loved hearing about what it was like when these alums were in school," said Cathy Tilman, a PTA member and organizer of the event. "They were sort of fascinated by the lifestyle differences." A total of 29 former students and teachers attended the event and participated in the



Morningside students were transfixed by stories from the schools alumni.

"living history" project. Some were from the very first years of the school and are now in their 80s, while others either attended Morningside or taught there in the 1970s and '80s. Over coffee and breakfast snacks, the alums sat down to interviews conducted by the

students. Margaret Brackett, who organized the event along with Tilman, enjoyed hearing the stories. "It was just really fun," she said. "It was really kind of an inspiring experience to see them reliving their past." In her own interview, DeWitt talked about

Miss Edna Pounds, principal of the school from 1946-59. Pound demanded the best from her students, DeWitt recalled. "No one wanted to go see Miss Pounds. She was pretty strict," DeWitt said. "They expected you to do your best. That's how we learned." DeWitt shared several happy memories from her time as a Morningside student. She recalled the tetherball games, dance lessons and being a member of the Brownie troop. DeWitt is lucky; she gets to revisit her elementary school on a regular basis because her 11-year-old granddaughter, Melissa Drake, attends the school. "She thinks that's really cool, being as old as I am, that I went to school there, too," DeWitt said. DeWitt also gets to see some of her former classmates every month, when they get together for a monthly luncheon. DeWitt started the lunches for fellow 1956 graduates of Grady High School, many of whom also attended Morningside through the seventh grade. Dubbed the "Grady Girls," the group started two years ago with just four or five members, and has since grown to include 37 on the official list. An average of two dozen



Morningside PTA member Cathy Tilman said the project is "sort of a connection across the generations."

attend the lunches. Though many in the group had been out of touch for decades, they find today that they share many things in common, such as their children's weddings and the birth of their grandchildren. "We've reconnected again," DeWitt said. "And we have so much to talk about." At the same time, the living history project at Morningside has also been growing. What

started as a simple idea to celebrate the school's 80th anniversary has turned into so much more, said Tilman. So far, the interviews with alumni have only been recorded on paper. A few weeks after the event, one of the participants passed away, underscoring the need to better preserve the stories of Morningside's past, before they are gone forever. That's why another event is being planned, where students will again interview

alums, this time recording them on film. Tilman thinks it's important for today's students to hear these stories and pay tribute to the past. "It is sort of a connection across the generations. And it's important for our kids to have that perspective," she said. "We want them to remember, to respect their elders and respect their history."

MORNINGSIDE SCHOOL FAST FACTS

- Effie Albright**
First lead teacher at the school
- Gertrude Pollard**
First principal, 1932-46
- 1969**
First African-American student enrolls
- Bible, a copy of the Atlanta Constitution and a letter from each grade to the children of the future**
Some of the items included in a cornerstone of the building in 1934
- 35 cents**
The cost of lunch in 1970s
- Tiombe Lockhart**
Student who appeared on the TV show "Star Search" in 1989

TIMELINE

- February 1929**
School built, with six classrooms for \$39,580
- May 27, 1929**
PTA formed
- 1934**
School is expanded to accommodate a growing neighborhood
- 1957**
Enrollment peaks at 859. Another addition is constructed at rear of building
- Fall 1994**
New building opens, with 17 classrooms, a media center and an art and music suite.
- January 1996**
School moves back into fully renovated original school building

APS
ALUMNI
PROFILE

Man of many talents

Thomas protects interests of APS employees

As director of risk management for Atlanta Public Schools, Jeff Thomas watches over the district's \$2 billion worth of property, including 400 school buses that transport 28,000 students on a daily basis.

"We handle a wide range of things," Thomas said of his 14-person department. "I don't know if I'm smart or crazy."

Actually, he is uniquely qualified for

the challenge.

Born and raised in Atlanta, Thomas grew up in the Lenox Park and Virginia Highlands communities. He attended Inman Elementary from kindergarten through seventh grade before moving on to Grady High as his parents did before him. Both of Thomas' children followed the same path.

Over the course of his 20 years working for APS, Thomas also has seen his role evolve to include handling employee benefits such as insurance (life, health, disability), pension and annuities.

As an APS alum, protecting the interests of APS employees comes as second nature.

Thomas and his staff continually strive to educate employees about their benefits and how the system works for them.

He also gets to see firsthand the improvements APS has made over the years, including the district's "strict focus on students and cultivating



Jeff Thomas is director of risk management for APS.



Jeff Thomas with his son, Alex, at Grady High graduation.

their lifelong search of knowledge." Of course, his biggest source of pride in APS comes from the success of his two sons, Alex, a graduate of Georgia State University, and Jeffrey, a graduate of Emory University. They are now

preparing for graduate studies.

"Both sons graduated from Grady High, not only with scholarships to universities," he said, "but with a thirst and quest for knowledge and both are voracious readers."

Washington takes note of APS

U.S. education secretary impressed with district's reform initiatives

BY DAVID LEE SIMMONS

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has been so impressed with what he's seen in Atlanta Public Schools and Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall that he keeps coming back for more examples of the district's transformation. The education secretary made three trips to Atlanta in three consecutive months (December through February) — twice to check in on innovative curriculum approaches in the schools and once to participate in a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. birthday commemoration attended by Dr. Hall and APS students.

Duncan visited Grady High School and Tech High as part of "listen and learn" events in mid-December. U.S. Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) and

community leaders joined Duncan in a roundtable discussion with Georgia education officials, including Dr. Hall and business partners.

"We're going to have to look at how to provide incentives for the best and brightest to teach," Dr. Hall said during the discussion. "We know what the best practices are [for teachers]. But now the question is how do we provide professional development and give [teachers] the opportunity to lead and still teach?"

During his December visit, Duncan also called Dr. Hall "the real deal" for introducing effective education initiatives. He returned in January for the Dr. King commemoration activities that also featured the Rev. Al Sharpton and Dr. Hall as speakers. APS students from Washington,

Douglass, Grady, Maynard H. Jackson and Mays high schools; Inman, King and Young middle schools; and the single-gender schools, B.E.S.T. Academy and the Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy also attended the event.

Duncan challenged them to fulfill Dr. King's legacy.

"What is freedom? If you cannot read, I promise you, you are not free," Duncan said. "Freedom is the ability to seek your own path, and education is the only way to make that happen. We can't wait five or eight years to transform our failing schools. We need to act now, and we need to act together. It is next to impossible to get a good job with just a high school diploma."



U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan visited two APS schools in December, returned in January for a Dr. King birthday commemoration, and again in February to tour Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy.

Duncan returned in February to visit Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy, where he observed classes and hosted a roundtable discussion with educators, students and community

members. Atlanta Board of Education Chair LaChandra Butler Burks and Dr. Hall participated in the roundtable discussion. Duncan said he was impressed with the new school and campus, which opened in January.

APS POINT OF PRIDE: Using in-depth academic and social services, Project GRAD is turning around schools once labeled lowest performing.

APS
ALUMNI
PROFILE

Live, from Atlanta

‘SNL’ star returns to host APS neighborhood celebration

No stranger to the spotlight, comedian and former “Saturday Night Live” star Finesse Mitchell took center stage at the inaugural Atlanta Public Schools Neighborhood Celebration.

Mitchell, a distinguished APS alumnus, served as one of the masters of ceremonies for the event, which kicked off at North Atlanta High School on Nov. 21. Part pep rally and part open house, the celebration stressed the theme “All for All, One by One.” It included student performances, a parade of schools, educational displays and a canned food drive benefiting the Atlanta Community Food Bank.

Born and raised in Atlanta, Mitchell attended Morris Brandon Elementary, Sutton Middle School and Frederick Douglass High School. He excelled both in the classroom and on the football field and later went on to earn his bachelor’s degree at the University of Miami.

“Being raised by a school teacher, my mother always stressed to me the importance of education and prioritizing,” said Mitchell, whose mother taught in APS for 36 years. “I always came home and did my homework, wanting to be one of the brightest students in class. That’s the best way to get wherever you want to go in life.”

Mitchell received his first big break when he was asked to be a feature player on “Saturday Night Live” and was promoted to cast member in 2005. Long before becoming a regular on “SNL,” the author, actor and former insurance salesman made an impact in the world of stand-up comedy, with sold-out performances all over the country and abroad.

Mitchell also is a columnist for *ESSENCE* magazine and published his first book in 2007. He also created Snap Famous Productions, LLC, which produces content for television, commercials, music videos and on-air graphics.

“No matter what you do, it’s competitive,” he said. “You can’t take for granted some of the basic skills you learn in the classroom, like how to speak and to communicate with people.”



Finesse Mitchell

Helping hands

Mentoring program brings out best in Harper-Archer students



Lamar Young and Joi Fuller have helped develop and maintain the mentoring program for students including Cameron Colbert and Briana Scott.

BY JESSICA BENSON

Every morning, Harper-Archer Middle School eighth-grader Shakita Baker greets her mentor, teacher Stephanie Purvis, with a hug. At the end of the day, the two get together again and talk about their day, schoolwork, or problems at home.

“It’s nice to have someone to talk to,” Baker says.

It’s only been a few weeks since Purvis started mentoring Baker, but already she has seen a difference in the 15-year-old. Her attitude has improved, and so have her grades. She even made the honor roll for the first time last quarter.

“She has improved so much,” Purvis said of her mentee. “She’s changed tremendously.”

That’s exactly what the new mentoring program at the Harper-Archer is designed to do — change the lives of students. The program is a collaboration of the counseling office at the school and Communities in Schools (CIS) Atlanta. Many of the nearly 30 mentees were part of Joi Fuller’s caseload at CIS. Fuller, a graduation coach with CIS, has noticed a difference in more than just one student participating in the program. “Their (test) scores have gone up,” she said. “Their attendance has improved.”

The idea came from a longstanding goal to

provide mentoring for students during the school day. The program received a boost from Holly Hayes-Morrissey, a teacher mentor for APS who had a contact at Spelman College and was able to sign up several Spelman students as mentors.

The students use the program to fulfill community service requirements at the college, making it a win-win for them and their mentees, according to Lamar Young, a guidance counselor at Harper-Archer who helped create the program.

“We wanted to come up with something for this school year to help our kids on a personal level and expand our counseling program,” Young said. “What better way than to find people who are looking for volunteer opportunities, and to pair them with children who would be comfortable talking to them?”

In addition to Purvis, other mentors are students at Georgia State University and Georgia Perimeter College as well as a pastor from Jackson Memorial Baptist Church across the street from the school.

Mentors are carefully screened and must pass a background check before they are approved for the program. Then, they are matched to a student based on their interests.

The program only requires mentors to spend an hour a week with their mentee, but

most spend considerably more time with the students. Time is set aside during the school day for the meetings.

Purvis, for example, sees her mentee every day. When Baker had trouble with math class, Purvis made sure she received one-on-one tutoring.

“I keep up with her grades,” Purvis said. “And I try to keep abreast of what goes on at home.”

The attention has brought out the best in Baker, who always has a hug for her mentor.

“She’s a wonderful young lady,” Purvis said. “She’s a very positive little girl.”

Baker is proud of how well she’s been doing in school, and credits her mentor — whom she likens to a second mother — with helping her succeed.

“I really appreciate her and I’m thankful that she’s helping me,” Baker said.

Though the mentoring program only started in November, already organizers are hoping to see it grow. Members of the community, as well as college students, are being encouraged to apply to be a mentor.

The program comes highly recommended by those already acting as mentors.

“Joi Fuller and Mr. Young are really running a positive mentoring group,” Purvis said. “I hope they can continue.”

ARTS IN APS



Music teacher Letricia Henson takes a hands-on approach to instruction with kindergartners Deasia Weaver, left, Drenae Crawford and Greyson Jackson at Miles Elementary.

IN HARMONY

APS committed to music education

Four decades ago, Atlanta was home to artists such as Ray Charles, James Brown, Little Richard and Gladys Knight. It has since evolved into the mecca for a modern-day, multi-million-dollar music industry, spawning the works of Grammy Award-winning performers Usher, Ludacris, Ciara and OutKast.

Inspired by those creative roots, Atlanta Public Schools is committed to ensuring that music education continues to thrive.

"We give students their first introduction to the opera or the symphony and to different genres of music, from classical to hip-hop," said Letricia Henson, music specialist at Kimberly and L.P. Miles elementary schools. "We have band starting in grade 4 and chorus and orchestra in most elementary schools. It's important to start early and give them that exposure. This district has a long tradition of having great music programs and producing great artists and musicians for Atlanta."

Henson said she was "bit by the performance bug" early on and began singing at age 4. As a student at Spelman College, she was a member

of the glee club and participated in choirs for the 1994 Super Bowl and 1996 Olympic Games, both held in Atlanta. Henson also worked in the private sector for 10 years before joining APS in 2006. A member of the Atlanta Opera Chorus, she toured Paris, Luxembourg and Grenada in 2008. She also traveled to Italy as a member of the Mark Norwood Spiritual Ensemble in 2007.

"No matter where you go, people come together through the arts," said Henson. "There's a universal and lasting bond."

Henson is as passionate about teaching elementary students as she is about performing.

"I love this age group," she said. "Many of them have an innate ability, and they might not even know it yet. They have that innocence and curiosity, and that thirst for knowledge."

According to Henson, the benefits of music education often transfer to other areas as well.

"Music plays an important role in strengthening character, building self-esteem and utilizing both the left and right sides of the brain," she said. "Studies show that music education can help improve SAT scores. Music is a core subject. It encompasses history,

language arts and math skills while infusing rhythm, sound and creativity."

The Atlanta chapter of the GRAMMY Foundation supports the district's music education program and sponsors a career day for students interested in the music industry.

"Music gives students a sense of belonging and accomplishment," said Jay Wucher, educational coordinator for the GRAMMY Foundation. "It's what hooks them, keeps them going to school and keeps them active after school."

He added, "I've always admired Atlanta Public Schools' dedication to and support of music education. We all fight a difficult battle in the arts, and they've made a real effort to keep their program strong for the benefit of their students."

Musically minded students also benefit from strong community partnerships with the Atlanta Opera, Metropolitan Youth Symphony Orchestras, New Trinity Baroque, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Georgia Boy Choir, Atlanta Boy Choir and the Alliance Theatre of Art.

"Atlanta has a wealth of assets and partnerships," said Henson, who also serves as business manager for the APS Honor Chorus. "As a public school system, the more we reach out, the better."

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



Corey W. Nelson

For Corey W. Nelson, a sixth-grade student at Brown Middle School, music is a means of opening doors to a lifetime of possibilities.

"It's important to have music available," said Nelson. "Not everyone wants to be an architect or businessman. If you take out art or music, you'll never know if someone could have become an important artist, someone who could have touched the world."

In June, Nelson will embark on a summer tour of Italy with the Atlanta Boy Choir. The renowned choir, directed by Maestro Fletcher Wolfe, will visit Rome, Florence, Assisi and the Abruzzi region and is hoping to sing for Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican.

"I'm excited; I've never been out of the country," said Nelson. "I love being on stage, hearing the crowd clapping." Of course, Nelson's mother also does her share of clapping as well.

"You have to push and encourage them," said Coretta Nelson, an assistant pre-K teacher at Kimberly Elementary. "You never know how far they'll go. The arts are all part of learning and finding ways to express yourself."

Nelson, who is also active in his church choir and Brown's drama club, joined the Atlanta Boy Choir last year, while he studied music with Letricia Henson at Kimberly.

"Ms. (Letricia) Henson was a big influence," said Nelson. "She always pushed me to do my best, work hard and keep on singing."

ARTS IN APS



Students perform during the Dunbar Def Poetry Jam.

Poetry in motion at Dunbar

Geometry

by Ms. Moreland Bey's fourth-grade class

Angles we know them all
Acute — very small!
Obtuse is a breeze
It's over 90 degrees
Mr. Right angle is never a factor
He measures 90 degrees on a protractor
Equilateral triangle
All sides are the same.
If you have two sides that are equal
Then Isosceles is your name.
If you are scalene, then congruent aren't your sides
If you know your angles, then through geometry you will slide.
To tell if it's a right triangle, then look for the box
An obtuse triangle is as big as an ox.
In an acute triangle, all the angles are very small,
So if you know all your angles, then your math grade won't fall.

Fusing rhythm and rhyme during the school's monthly poetry jams, Dunbar Elementary School students are proving that poetry belongs not only on the page, but on the stage.

Held on the last Friday of each month, students recite their poems using various elements and forms. The poetry jam concept puts a dual emphasis on writing and performance, encouraging poets to focus on what they are saying, and how they are saying it. Prior to each event, Dunbar teachers engage students in such interactive activities as performing choral reading chants, raps and songs, all while focusing on the various elements of poetry.

"The ultimate goal of the poetry jam is to use poems to expose our students to beautiful and powerful language," said Dunbar teacher Lera Middlebrooks. "Our jams give students the opportunity to connect with poetry personally and academically. We want our students to become active writers and readers through these experiences."

Georgia On My Mind

by Angela M. Allen, third-grade

We cannot imagine how the children felt that
day
When the worst type of trouble
came their way
An earthquake that tore
their country apart
A country where life was already hard

Boys: See Georgia is on my mind

Girls: But Haiti is on our hearts

We cannot imagine how the children felt that
day
Not able to recognize a familiar person,
place or thing
But distinctly hearing human beings
whimper, moan, and scream
Deep cries of despair clouding the Caribbean
air
whispers of the young and the old
reciting their silent prayers

Girls: See Georgia is on my mind

Boys: But Haiti is on our hearts

I cannot imagine how the children felt that
day
Seeing bodies that once were alive
now laying lifeless
side by side
men,
women,
boys
and girls
sending a plea for help
heard around the world

Girls: See Georgia is on my mind

Boys: But Haiti is on our hearts

I cannot imagine how the children felt that
day
But I bet they were ...
Wishing for a super hero
to come and save the day
Or
Hoping to awaken
from a horrible dream
but sound sleep is not possible when there
are human beings suffering

Girls: See Georgia is on my mind

Boys: But Haiti is on our hearts

We cannot imagine how the children felt that
day
And even though
the students of Dunbar
live very far away
we will keep Haiti in our thoughts
and wish for them the best
for the children of Haiti also
deserve
an opportunity for life, liberty and the
pursuit of happiness

Hilaire Anelone stands alone

By DAVID LEE SIMMONS

If you have a hard time getting in touch with Hilaire Anelone, it's probably because you're not a student, or another teacher, for that matter.

When he's not teaching Advanced Placement statistics and calculus classes at Maynard H. Jackson High School, Anelone is coaching the girl's soccer team. Weekends? He spends Saturday mornings helping AP students get a leg up on their studies or tutoring middle-school students at B.E.S.T. Academy as a volunteer with the 100 Black Men of Atlanta. In the evenings, he's probably putting the finishing touches on a doctorate in education studies.

The only challenge with naming Hilaire Anelone as Atlanta Public Schools' 2009-10 Teacher of the Year might have been tracking him down to actually hand over the honor. In a district focused on placing an effective teacher in every classroom, Anelone is committed to making education a lifelong pursuit. He joined APS in 1995 with a bachelor's degree and has sought professional development ever since.

His students provide plenty of motivation. "I've seen so many people graduate in front of me, so I said, 'Why not me?'" said

Anelone, a native of the Ivory Coast in Africa. "A bachelor's degree isn't good enough to be a highly effective teacher. The more you know, the better you are prepared and armed to help a student in the classroom."

Not only does Anelone stay active inside the classroom, but also in the community as well. Volunteering with the Atlanta Football Classic, he has collected money to help students enroll in colleges across the country. Anelone also volunteers for the Boys and Girls Club of Metro Atlanta, where he has helped juniors pass the Georgia High School Graduation Test on their first attempt.

"He is so willing to help students achieve," said Jackson Principal Dr. Shirlene Carter. "He does not stop teaching when the bell rings. He even volunteered a large portion of his summer tutoring and working with our students."

Jackson High graduate Keitra Thompson also appreciates Anelone's wit and wisdom.

"With him it wasn't always about math and statistics. He was funny and helpful, and he'd share his life experiences, like his coming to America from the Ivory Coast," said Thompson, the valedictorian of her class who now attends Emory University on a full academic scholarship. "I was taken by the fact he spends so

much time doing all of these things. But I think it shows his dedication to teaching students at all levels, and his love of sharing the gift of learning with others."

Sometimes his lessons have little to do with statistics or calculus. Jackson's girls' soccer team struggled after being placed in the same division as some of the more soccer-intensive private schools in metro Atlanta. Anelone treats that challenge as an opportunity to help his team develop character, discipline and sportsmanship.

"All of my seniors last year graduated and went to college," he said, adding that the girls develop more confidence, which comes in handy when dealing with boys.

"I make sure the girls have time to play against the boys, get to know the boys, and then they don't get intimidated when the boys play them," says Anelone, who is less focused on the win column. "If I see you play hard, give best effort, in my eyes you win."



Hilaire Anelone
2010 APS Teacher of the Year

APS students provide aid to Haiti

When a devastating earthquake struck the people of Haiti, students of Atlanta Public Schools quickly rallied to provide assistance. Here are a just a few examples:

Morris Brandon Elementary: What began as a conversation among teachers became into a full-blown fundraising drive that raised \$4,000. With assistance from teachers Susan Friedrichs, Sarah Visel, Nza Willingham and Judith Maisonneuve, students' coins turned into dollars, and dollars turned into checks.

Forrest Hill Academy: Students in a Current Issues class at Forrest Hill Academy watched clips from CNN and were moved by the devastation that they saw. Then they took action by organizing and selling tickets to a spaghetti dinner. They also worked hard on the dinner program, which included a song, step routine, a brief history of Haiti and a poem. The event raised nearly \$1,000 for Wyclef Jean's Yele Haiti organization.

Continental Colony Elementary: Principal Sandra R. Sessoms launched a two-week "Pay It Forward" campaign to teach students about helping those in need. Each student was asked to contribute \$1. About 70 percent of the students and all of the school's administrative team participated, raising \$485.48 for the America Red Cross Foundation.

King Middle: In honor of physical science teacher and Port-Au-Prince native Patricia Dunac, King rallied several programs to raise money for Haiti. The After-School All-Star Program

challenged students to donate bottled water; Hosea Williams Feed the Homeless and Hungry matched each contribution. King's Outward Bound and Cool Girls programs sold candy-grams and cookie-grams for the cause. Also, seventh-grade English/language arts teacher Barry Blackmon put his DJ skills to work during a "Donate to Dance" event.

Parkside Elementary: Third-grade teacher Gregory Coleman suggested that Parkside support earthquake victims. Armelia Braddy, the cheerleader sponsor, decided to manage the project and the many donated items that resulted from faculty and students' generous contributions.

Inman Middle: Seventh-grader Hope Van Duyne led a penny drive and bake sale that raised \$1,200 for water purification packets that will be made in Haiti and distributed to survivors. Band Director Arneesa R. Woods and band parent Guy Seymour also coordinated "A Night of Jazz for Haiti."

White Elementary: Students and staff donated toiletry items, water, medical supplies, baby food and other baby needs. Students also helped load boxes for delivery to The Haitian Alliance, Inc.

Frank L. Stanton Elementary: Staff and students started by donating cases of bottled water, and later shifted their focus to

fundraising efforts for the Red Cross' Hope For Haiti Now project.

Parks Middle: Gabriel Benoit, director of Haitian-American Women-Children Health and Educational Services, Inc., detailed the earthquake's devastating effects during a presentation he gave during a student program. Students responded by collecting donations Pittsburgh residents and creating art projects. Poems and essays were read during morning announcements as part of the school's "Hope for Haiti Now" campaign.

Fickett Elementary: Daily French lessons and a Haitian-American teacher led students to take action quickly. On Jan. 21, more than 500 students packed the school gym for a good, old-fashioned Sock Hop. With a \$1 admission fee and a packed concession stand, Fickett raised more than \$1,000 for the cause.

Gideons Elementary: Students, faculty, parents and staff raised \$1,000 for the Red Cross to help victims of the earthquake in Haiti.

Deerwood Academy: Faculty members and students have relatives in Haiti, and decided that they could make the biggest difference by improving health conditions. Students collected pocket-sized bottles of hand sanitizer and labeled each with a message of support. Parents joined the efforts with donations of clothing, water, Gatorade, first-aid necessities and toiletries.

Mary Lin Elementary: Teacher Patricia Derrico noticed that very few organizations had collected baby items. "My husband and I had become very concerned about the struggling situation of babies in Haiti. We saw on CNN how it was really hard to keep all of those babies clean," she said. "I brought the idea to my principal, Dr. Brian Mitchell, and he immediately supported me." That idea turned into a donation of 3,013 diapers and 13,548 baby wipes.

Hill-Hope Elementary: Students, parents, teachers, staff, and community members donated such hygiene products as deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, hair products and baby powder during a month-long "Flip-Flops February Hygiene for Haiti Initiative."

For more information about these projects and other APS contributions, visit the district blog, www.TalkUpAPS.com.



Morris Brandon third-graders (from L-R) Alden Evans, Franny Motley and Avery Culp. Teachers (from L-R) Judith Maisonneuve, Sarah Visel and Susan Friedrichs participated in a school-wide campaign to collect \$4,000 for earthquake victims in Haiti.

APS POINT OF PRIDE: APS' move to small high school learning environments results in higher graduation rates.

Roots & Shoots



Dr. Jane Goodall visited Jackson Elementary fifth-graders on Feb. 19.

Jane Goodall shares her experience with Jackson students

BY MORIEKA V. JOHNSON

During her visit to Atlanta Public Schools on Feb. 19, famed primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall greeted Jackson Elementary students in English, French, German — and even a little Chimpanzee. Delighted elementary students listened eagerly as Goodall shared her path from animal-loving toddler to world-renowned humanitarian, author and environmentalist.

“As a child, I wanted to live with animals in Africa and write books about them,” Goodall said. “It’s been 50 years since I began that study. That’s half a century, half of a hundred years, wow.”

During that half-century, Goodall and 16 teens devised a Roots & Shoots program that would harness kid power to fuel programs for people, pets and the planet. An idea that began nearly two decades ago has expanded to include thousands of students in nearly 100 countries. The Jackson Roots & Shoots organization began in 2006 when parents Mary Mapes and Liza Purcell approached the school principal, Dr. Lorraine Reich, about a local chapter.

“These parents came to me with kids who wanted to help the environment and wanted to help people,” Reich told the crowd, which included students from the inaugural group.



Jackson Elementary fifth-grader Thomas Phillips interviews noted primatologist Dr. Jane Goodall during her visit to the school.

“Because of them, we are visited by Dr. Goodall.”

Jackson students showed Goodall examples of their service projects, including a toy collection drive for Scottish Rite Hospital, visits to the Atlanta Community Food Bank and the

creation of a teaching garden. Each grade level actively participates in the program.

“Jackson Elementary applies the International Baccalaureate curriculum model,” said Assistant Principal Patrice Austin. “The Roots & Shoots program enhances classroom instruction by embracing an international view of community service.”

But for many students, Goodall’s visit was the perfect opportunity to share their interest in chimpanzees. Fifth-grade student Thomas Phillips noted a quote from Goodall expressing her desire to see things from the chimpanzee’s perspective. What would she see and feel as a chimpanzee, he asked?

“That’s one of the big mysteries, that’s what we will never really know,” Goodall answered. “I could guess, but I like the fact that I don’t know.”

She also complimented Jackson students for their commitment to caring for the planet and its inhabitants.

“You get a good feeling helping animals, plants and the environment,” Goodall said. “You are part of something very exciting. Something that is changing the world.”

To view student Thomas Phillips’ interview with Dr. Goodall, visit the APS Media site at <http://www.apsk12.org/media/>

STRAIGHT FROM THE SOURCE

Two APS students offer CRCT preparation tips

When it comes to preparing for the annual Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCTs), we can't think of a better resource for tips than APS students. The tests measure students' knowledge of the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in reading, English/language arts and math for grades 1-8 and include science and social studies in grades 3-8.

Students Jasmine Cousin and Tucker Lancaster offer their keys to success during test time, which takes place April 20-29.

JASMINE COUSIN
FIFTH GRADE, HERITAGE ACADEMY

Get parents involved: My mom goes to the PTA meetings to discuss the CRCT and to get the study materials. My teacher will provide her worksheets, and we go over these at least an hour a night. We spend more time each night getting closer to the test. She'll make up a little test for me, and if I get 100 percent, she'll treat me to ice cream!

Take advantage of pre-tests: I try to go over all the pre-tests with my teacher. We'll play these social studies games, and they will help us learn more about the subject.

Mark each answer carefully: I try not to rush through the test, and I make sure I fill out the bubble neatly and completely so

that the answer's not wrong.

Get rest the night before: I go to bed at a reasonable hour each night before testing, because you sit there for at least an hour, reading passage after passage, and you get real sleepy if you don't get proper rest. In the morning, you feel tired so you might go to sleep.

Eat a healthy, filling breakfast: If you skip breakfast, you can't think about anything but, 'Oh, I'm so hungry,' and you'll 'bubble' whatever answer you see. You just want to get it over with.

Don't be nervous while taking the test: When I'm in my chair, I'm usually nervous, but our teacher tells us to relax and do our best so we don't panic when we get the test, and we are encouraged to focus.

Go over the answers thoroughly: I read all of the directions because it might give you a helpful tip, or, it might help you in so many different ways. I have to read the whole question and all possible answers before making my own answer. If it says, 'Which is not true, and you mark it and it's true, you automatically get it wrong. You have to know all your options.

Don't leave an answer blank: I answer every question. And if I don't know the answer, I make an educated guess. If you do that, there's a 50 percent chance you'll

get it right. I also use process of elimination. If you have four answers, you know two are absolutely wrong, so I choose between the remaining two.

Stay focused: I have to concentrate, and I do not allow myself to be distracted by noises or movement around me. I have to know how much time I have to complete each section. I can pace myself so I can finish each test. I'll go through it the first time, and if I know it, I'll mark it. And then I'll go through it the second time. My second time, I have more than enough time.

TUCKER LANCASTER
EIGHTH GRADE, INMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Don't waste pre-test opportunities: I always listen in class and do my homework every night. With smaller tests during the semester, I'll set up a concept list, and think about what we've done. And I read a lot, because it helps you with vocabulary, which helps you with everything. I take lots of notes. You tend to listen better when you take notes. It keeps you engaged; it keeps you thinking.

Take tutorials, if they are offered: They've been offered all three years at Inman. You get an hour in the morning, an

hour in the afternoon, and you're able to ask whatever question you have.

Be punctual: Make sure you arrive on time. It is a pain having to take the re-test if you arrive late for this. First, you're missing class. You're testing in a library instead of a classroom. If you're there late, they aren't going to let you get in to take it.

Use the process of elimination: When you're actually taking the test, one of the things they'll really get you on is where "all of the following are true except..." You've been taking the test for hours, and it'll trip you up. Read all your answers. They give you plenty of time.

Pace yourself: I usually will go through the test and answer every question as I go, but I'll make a note of the ones I'm not sure of. If I run out of time, that's my quick answer. But if I'm not sure, I make a note. When I get to the end, if I have 20 minutes left, I'll go back, re-work it, and make sure that's the right answer.

For more information on the CRCTs, visit the Georgia Department of Education's section on the subject. Go to www.doe.k12.ga.us; "Testing" is the third topic down under Hot Topics (followed by "CRCT").

Brown Middle School's cheering underdogs come out on top

CHEERING: From Page 24

that they would have their own identity," explained Hamilton, a seventh-year math teacher who is in her fourth year coaching the squad.

The result this year was phenomenal. Brown had never before won the competition, which previously had been dominated by Bunche Middle. (Inman finished second and Parks third this year.) "We've just had a different environment at the school," said Crayon, a second-year chorus and drama teacher. "The students are excited to learn. It's boosted the morale all over the school."

For their efforts, Hamilton and Crayon shared the Coach of the Year honor.

Both coaches underscore the value

of an activity that too often is dismissed as unimportant. They point to the way cheerleading builds discipline, self-esteem, leadership, commitment and dedication. Those who stick with it can earn college scholarships, while performing serious, athletic maneuvers worthy of gymnasts.

"And people don't get that," Hamilton said. She notes the improved behavior and academic performance of several of her squad members, one of whom has qualified for the school's "First Lady" program of student ambassadors. Another has become a gifted student.

"This is great," Hamilton added, "because now our squad members want to participate on the high school level."



Brown Middle cheerleaders Alexia Wright, Furassa Rashid and Alexis Phillips pump up the crowd.

Elementary schools

Adamsville

The school was named an APS Title I Distinguished School for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for four or more consecutive years. Adamsville has made AYP eight consecutive years, including six distinguished, and was recognized at the 2009 Convocation for meeting its targets.

Beecher Hills

In a partnership with Target and Heart of America, the school unveiled a media center makeover in September that included 2,000 new books as well as new bookshelves, tables, chairs, carpeting, lighting, a Promethean board and repainted walls with an undersea mural.

Bethune

The school partnered with Atlanta Taskforce on Play and KaBOOM! to present students with the unique Imagination Playground in a box — a portable playground where kids can create their own playground figures.

Cascade

In October 2009, the school was honored for achieving at least 70 percent of its performance targets during the APS Convocation 2009 at the Georgia International Convention Center. A total of 26 APS schools were recognized at this event.

E.L. Connally

William N. Failor, president and COO of Cobbs, Allen & Hall, Inc., served his third consecutive year as Principal for a Day in October. Failor read the book *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* to a kindergarten class and later treated each student to a banana or blueberry muffin.

Continental Colony

The school was named an APS Title I Distinguished School for making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three or more consecutive years.

Continental Colony has made AYP for seven consecutive years, five distinguished. Also, teacher Andrea Arnold served as co-coach for the Atlanta Wolfpack, which captured the American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP) Wheelchair Handball State Tournament in October.

Deerwood Academy

The Goizueta Foundation awarded a music grant that allowed students in kindergarten through second grade to attend an Atlanta Symphony orchestra concert in February. Students were able to explore compositions by Camille Saint-Saens ("Carnival of the Animals"), William Krell ("Mississippi Rag") and works by other composers.

Margaret Fain

The school was recognized as one of two Atlanta Public Schools to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 11 consecutive years. D.H. Stanton Elementary was the other school recognized.

R.N. Fickett

Foresters and KaBOOM! helped build a massive playground that made incredible use of the school grounds. More than 540 volunteers from around the neighborhood joined the project, which involved pouring 15,000 pounds of concrete and moving 150 cubic yards of mulch for a swing set, a geodesic "superdome," a spiral slide and an adventure tube.

W.M. Finch

A group of 25 students participated in Jumpstart's annual Read for the Record event at the Hyatt Regency. Mike Beatty, commissioner for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to Finch and Venetian Hills students.

A.F. Herndon

Corporate partner Target at Atlantic Station helped students meet their attendance "targets." Since then, students that have perfect attendance celebrate with an ice cream party, and Target rewards them with \$5 gift



cards. Names of students with perfect attendance are placed in a lottery, and a randomly selected student receives gifts up to \$100 from the Target toy catalog.

M. Agnes Jones

Art teacher Raymond Veon was awarded a fellowship through the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. He was one of 22 educators selected for the nine-month program that promotes a better understanding of policy process and cultivates leadership skills in education.

L.O. Kimberly

Over the past five years, Kimberly has received numerous interns and student teachers, reducing the school's student-teacher ratio in a partnership with Georgia State University. The school's faculty also provides staff development.

L.P. Miles

Improvements in fifth-grade science helped Miles earn a Distinguished Achievement Award from the Georgia schools superintendent. The school also has met AYP for seven consecutive years. This is the second Superintendent's Distinguished Achievement Award for Miles.

Perkerson

Kindergarten paraprofessional Jimmy Roberts served as co-coach of the Atlanta Wolfpack, which captured the American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP) Wheelchair Handball State Tournament in October.

Peyton Forest

Teacher Beth Bolden watched as a three-year dream came true when The Home Depot and KaBOOM!

helped to build a playground that completely transformed the school's grounds. This is a particularly special playground for APS, because it features an interactive nature trail to take advantage of an adjacent forest and creek.

Venetian Hills

Twenty-five students participated in Jumpstart's annual Read for the Record event at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Mike Beatty, commissioner for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

West Manor

The school is among the top 10 percent of schools in the state, earning the 2009 Georgia Schools of Excellence in Student Achievement designation. A total of 27 schools from across the state were singled out for student performance in two categories — greatest academic gains and the top 10 percent in overall student achievement.

Middle Schools

J.E. Brown

Representatives from the Atlanta Falcons visited the school as part of the NFL and the United Way's Hometown Huddle project to promote better health and fitness.

Bunche

The school was honored during the APS Convocation for achieving at least 70 percent of its performance targets. A total of 26 APS schools were recognized during the event.

Kennedy

Nineteen members of the Builders Club spent nearly three hours pulling weeds, collecting organic matter for compost and laying mulch in the 1-acre community garden at Atlanta Good Shepherd Community Church in November. The students were greeted by Pastor Richard Bright, who

manages the 25-crop garden that includes greens, okra, squash, watermelons, beans, sweet potatoes, garlic and eggplant.

Sylvan Hills

Pat Willis, executive director of Voices for Georgia's Children, and Courtney Gay, community affairs manager for the Atlanta Braves, served as "Principals for a Day" at the school. The pair visited the school's Program for Exceptional Children classrooms, along with sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade wings of the school, where girls and boys are taught separately.

Jean Childs Young

The school will use a \$5,000 Back-to-School grant to buy books and equipment that will support media program and reading initiatives. Media Specialist Lisa Gaither said the grant will fund books for the library collection, classroom book sets, audio books, listening stations, radio/CD players, speakers for laptop use and other items.

High Schools

D.M. Therrell

The school will undergo a \$36 million renovation of and addition to its campus that will make it more compatible with its three small schools - School of Health Sciences and Research; School of Law, Government Public Policy; and School for Technology, Engineering, Math & Science (STEMS). The work is scheduled for completion in time for the 2010-11 school year.

Booker T. Washington

Out of more than 500 art and writing entries, Kamalia Blunt and Rosa Cromartie were selected as the first- and second-place winners, respectively, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Essay Contest. Washington had the second-largest number of essay submissions for the contest.

TALK UP APS: SHARE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE DISTRICT

By DAVID LEE SIMMONS

Atlanta Public Schools' journey to excellence is built on singular accomplishments, high honors and teachable moments. Here are a few more reasons to be proud of APS. Please share the good news.

Building a strong future: New schools and classroom additions greeted students returning from the holiday break. Students at Sarah Smith Intermediate and Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy attended classes for the first time in new buildings and campuses that feature state-of-the-art technology. Students and staff at Dunbar Elementary and Young Middle School left temporary facilities and started the new calendar year in completely renovated and expanded buildings and campuses. New building phases also opened at B.E.S.T. Academy and Brandon and Jackson (elementary) primary centers.

PEC workshop: Transitions require support from multiple sources for the student and his/her family to make choices, develop connections, and access services. Atlanta Public Schools' Program for Exceptional



Children will host a Parent Mentor workshop April 17 focusing on transitions for parents with children ages 3 to 21 and grade levels of preschool through high school. For more information, call 404-802-1695 or email kma@atlantapublicschools.us.

Neighborhood celebration: More than 800 APS students, parents, faculty members and staff welcomed prospective students, parents and members of the community during the inaugural neighborhood education celebration in November at North Atlanta High School. The two-hour event included a pep rally, open house, live performances, a parade of schools,

educational displays and other colorful events highlighting students attending North Atlanta High School, Sutton Middle, and Brandon, Bolton Academy, Garden Hills, Warren T. Jackson, E. Rivers and Sarah Smith elementary schools.

The sporting life: APS student-athletes signed national letters-of-intent to play football and basketball for the colleges of their choice on Feb. 3 — National Signing Day — in a ceremony held at The New Schools at Carver. Star APS athletes made their commitment official, most notably blue-chip football players such as the No. 1

defensive lineman in the nation, Garrison Smith of Douglass High, who signed with the University of Georgia, as did Douglass girls basketball star Khaalidah Miller.

State champs: APS' Atlanta Wolfpack team took first place at the American Association of Adapted Sports Programs (AAASP) Wheelchair Handball State Tournament hosted by Henry County Schools in partnership with the Henry County Parks and Recreation Department. Four junior varsity teams and four varsity teams competed for the wheelchair handball state championship.

Sew pretty: Grady High School's UrbanCouture design program was on full display at the third-annual Doggies on the Catwalk fashion show in January at the Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) studio. "Each year the show gets bigger and bigger," program founder and Grady teacher Vincent Martinez told the crowd. "This year we set the bar and then flew right over it!" Proceeds from the event go to PALS Atlanta, a non-profit organization that provides vet care for the pets of elderly and terminally ill Atlantans. GPB produced and aired a documentary on the fashion show.

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404-802-4050

Sarah Rawson Smith

Primary campus
Dr. Sidney Baker, Principal
370 Old Ivy Rd., NE 30342
404-802-3850
Intermediate campus
4141 Wieuca Rd., NW 30342
404-802-3880

Springdale Park

Yolanda C. Brown, Principal
1246 Ponce De Leon Ave., NE 30306
404-802-6050

Daniel H. Stanton

Dr. Willie Davenport, Principal
970 Martin St., SE 30315
404-802-4200

Frank Libby Stanton

Dr. Marlo Barber, Principal
1625 M. L. King Jr. Dr., SW 30314
404-802-7500

Thomasville Heights

Janice Kelsey, Principal
1820 Henry Thomas Dr., SE 30315
404-802-5750

Fred Armon Toomer

Nicole Evans Jones, Principal
65 Rogers St., NE 30317
404-802-3450

George Alexander Towns

Carla Pettis, Principal
760 Bolton Rd., NW 30331
404-802-7400

Bazoline E. Usher/Collier Heights

Dr. Gwendolyn Rogers, Principal
631 Harwell Rd., NW 30318
404-802-5700

Venetian Hills

Clarietta Davis, Principal
1910 Venetian Dr., SW 30311
404-802-4550

West Manor

Cheryl Twyman, Principal
570 Lynhurst Dr., SW 30311
404-802-3350

Walter Francis White

Tamarah Larkin-Currie, Principal
1890 Detroit Ave., NW 30314
404-802-2950

Whitefoord

Patricia Lavant, Principal
35 Whitefoord Ave., SE 30317
404-802-6900

Carter G. Woodson

Dr. Viola Blackshear, Principal
1605 D.L. Hollowell Pkwy., NW 30318
404-802-7350

Middle Schools

Joseph Emerson Brown

Donell Underdue Jr., Principal
765 Peebles St, SW 30310
404-802-6800

Ralph Johnson Bunche

Keisla A. Tisdell, Principal
1925 Niskey Lake Rd., SW 30331
404-802-6700

Sammye E. Coan

Dr. Tonya Saunders, Principal
1550 Hosea Williams Dr., NE 30317
404-802-6600

Charles Lincoln Harper - Samuel Howard Archer

Dr. Frances Thompson, Principal
3399 Collier Dr., NW 30331
404-802-6500

Samuel Martin Inman

Dr. Betsy Bockman, Principal
774 Virginia Ave., NE 30306
404-802-3200

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Dr. Lucious Brown, Principal
225 James P. Brawley Dr., SW 30314
404-802-3600

Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. Danielle Battle, Principal
545 Hill St., SE 30312
404-802-5400

Crawford Williamson Long

Dr. Elizabeth Harris, Principal
3200 Latona Dr. SW 30315
404-802-4800

Walter Leonard Parks

Christopher Waller, Principal
1090 Windsor St., SW 30310
404-802-6400

Luther Judson Price

Sterling Christy Jr., Principal
1670 B.W. Bickers Dr., SE 30315
404-802-6300

Willis A. Sutton

Audrey Sofianos, Principal
4360 Powers Ferry Rd., NW 30327
404-802-5600

ATLANTA DIRECTORY SCHOOLS

Sylvan Hills

Gwen Atkinson, Principal
1461 Sylvan Rd., SW 30310
404-802-6200

Henry McNeal Turner

Karen Riggins-Taylor, Principal
98 Anderson Ave., NW 30314
404-802-6100

Jean Childs Young

Thomas Kenner, Principal
3116 Benjamin E. Mays Dr., SW 30311
404-802-5900

Single-Gender Academies

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

LaPaul Shelton, Principal
1890 Donald Lee Hollowell Pkwy,
30318
404-802-4944

Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy

Melody Morgan, Principal
1190 Northwest Drive, 30318
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

Dr. Robert Robbins, Interim Principal
225 H.E. Holmes Dr., NW 30318
404-802-3100

Business & Entrepreneurship

Dr. Mary J. Harris, Academy Leader
404-802-3162

Center for Engineering and Applied Technology (CFEAT)

Dr. Reginald Lawrence, Academy Leader
404-802-3156

Communication & Journalism

Sharonda Murrell, Academy Leader
404-802-3160

Hospitality, Tourism & Marketing

Stephanie Bailey, Academy Leader
404-802-3161

Henry W. Grady

Dr. Vincent Murray, Principal
929 Charles Allen Dr., NE 30309
404-802-3001

Maynard Holbrook Jackson

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

Engineering/Early College

Dr. Richard Williams, Academy Leader
404-802-5206

Fine Arts & Media and Communications

Leah Ervin, Academy Leader
404-802-5231

Information Technology

Dr. Phyllis Earls, Academy Leader
404-802-5205

Benjamin Elijah Mays

Dr. Tyrone Smith, Principal
3450 Benjamin E. Mays Dr., SW 30331
404-802-5100

North Atlanta

Mark Mygrant, Principal
2875 Northside Dr., NW 30305
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

Daniel McLaughlin Therrell

3099 Panther Trail, SW 30311

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

Esmie Gaynor, Principal
404-802-5360

School of Health Science & Research

Frank Walker, Principal
404-802-5355

School of Law, Government & Public Policy

Byron Barnes, Principal
404-802-5345

Booker Taliaferro Washington

45 Whitehouse Dr., NW 30314

School of Banking, Finance, & Investment

Dr. Charcia Nichols, Principal
404-802-4663

School of Early College

Dr. Vanessa Nason, Principal
404-802-4641

School of Health Science & Nutrition

Dr. Samuel Scavella, Principal
404-802-4667

Senior Academy

Mr. Boris Hurst, Principal
404-802-4603

Open Campus High School

Crim Open Campus

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

Non-traditional Programs

Adult Literacy Program

Jacquelyn Davenport, Principal
1444 Lucille Ave., SW 30310
404-802-3560

Forrest Hill Academy

Tricia Rock, Principal
2930 Forrest Hills Dr., SW 30315
404-802-6950

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

Don Doran, Principal
301 East Lake Blvd., 30317
404-687-0001

Imagine Wesley International Academy, LLC

Michael L. Rossano, 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

Guy Cooper, Principal
2050 Tiger Flowers Dr., 30314
404-753-4050

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Brown Middle School cheerleading co-coaches Belita Hamilton and LuShaun Crayon (back row) with some members of the APS middle-school championship cheerleading squad. PHOTO BY SCOTT KING

CHEERS!

Brown Middle School squad
takes top prize at competition

Brown Middle School had something to cheer about after its cheerleading squad came out of nowhere to win Atlanta Public Schools' annual middle school competition in January at Douglass High School.

Co-coaches Belita Hamilton and LuShaun Crayon found innovative ways to motivate and inspire this relatively young group of girls; only six squad members had any cheerleading experience. To compensate for this inexperience, and promote unity and discipline Hamilton and Crayon inspired the squad to relate with the players they were cheering.

"We had them wear school football jerseys instead of the traditional cheerleading outfits, and Capri-style pants the same length of the football uniform pants, so

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