

Getting technical

Centennial Place stays on cutting edge

By MEAGHAN CASEY

To cultivate 21st century learners, you have to provide them with 21st century tools. That's the mission of administrators, faculty, parents and community partners at Centennial Place Elementary, which opened in 1999 with an emphasis on science, technology and math.

"As the first 21st Century school in the Atlanta area, Centennial Place was designed to be a prototype for other elementary schools in the areas of science, math and technology," said Principal Alison Shelton. "But technology is always evolving and we

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Keith Hudson writes on a Promethean board as teacher Gloria Kim observes.

APS students are making the grade



Dr. Hall

By DR. BEVERLY L. HALL

Welcome to the summer 2010 edition of *The Atlanta Educator*, which celebrates our outstanding teachers, administrators, business partners and parents for their dedication to student achievement.

This is an exciting time for Atlanta Public Schools. The district has made remarkable strides in student achievement over the past decade. For signs of our progress, we look to national tests called the Nation's Report Card or National Assessment of Educational

Progress (NAEP). During a news conference here in Atlanta recently, NAEP announced that on reading tests between 2002 and 2009, APS students demonstrated the largest gains of Trial Urban

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Meet our Valedictorians: Pages 14-15

Word's out: Burgess-Peterson has much to offer students

BY DAVID LEE SIMMONS

When Tina Kim Carrera moved into East Atlanta Village about five years ago, she fell in love with restaurants and shops dotting the intersection of Glenwood and Flat Shoals avenues. Five years later, the mother of a 3-year-old has a different focus: schools. It's a topic she frequently discusses with friends like Dennis Madsen, a 10-year resident of East Atlanta and father of a 3-year-old as well.

Both young professionals are starting to look at Burgess-Peterson Academy — and Burgess-Peterson is ready for its close-up.

In just two years, the school has been emboldened by an eager new principal, an award-winning wellness program, innovative academic programs and strong partnerships with East Atlanta businesses. All this adds up to a metamorphosis that not only translates into improved student achievement but also increased interest from incoming East Atlanta residents.

"We're really excited about the types of academics being taught at Burgess-Peterson Academy," said Carrera, a former consultant. "Burgess-Peterson has many of, if not the same, opportunities as there are at other schools. They're just not being marketed as well."

When a private-school parent marveled at the school's facilities and programs during a bi-monthly tour, Principal Robin Robbins knew her school had become a major competitor.

"[The parent] said, 'I just can't believe all of this is under one roof,'" said Robbins, a former instructional liaison specialist at Mary Lin Elementary. "She said, 'I'm spending all this money on a private school, and I didn't even know what a Promethean Board was!' They were in awe, especially when they saw the playscape in the middle of the school."

Robbins noted that Burgess-Peterson is really breaking down



Kei'Aasia Jackson helps Stan Melburg of the EPA get a water sample from a bubbler at Burgess-Peterson.

perceptions. "This is like a well-kept secret," she added.

Not for much longer.

Robbins is bracing for increased enrollment next year as more East Atlanta residents spread the news about the school's accomplishments, including:

Award-winning health and wellness efforts: Along with Morningside Elementary, Burgess-Peterson won the bronze Healthy Schools award from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. To promote healthy living, the school implemented the district-wide Student Wellness Ambassador program; the school also expanded its courtyard garden, with help from a Lowe's grant. The school also created partnerships with Trees Atlanta, the East Lake Family YMCA, the East Atlanta Farmers Market, Georgia Organics, Seeds of Nutrition, and Slow Food Atlanta. Recently, Burgess-Peterson hosted the citywide launch of "Be Water Wise Atlanta," which promotes water conservation.

A series of math and science initiatives that boost student achievement: Robbins formed a partnership with Georgia State University early childhood education professor Dr. Lynn Hart to launch "Math Matters," which provides Burgess-Peterson math teachers with innovative instructional tools. Burgess-Peterson Teacher of the Year Lorraine McFadden also keeps students engaged through hands-on science experiments during weekly science labs. As a result, 82 percent of Burgess-Peterson students met or exceeded state standards on the science portion of the CRCT in 2009, up from 47 percent in 2008.

Participation in the Confucius Institute: Students will be able to study Chinese, a language that has grown in popularity throughout the district. This gives elementary students an early introduction that will continue as they move on to Coan Middle.

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Produced by:

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APS students making the grade

SUPERINTENDENT: From Page 1

District Assessment (TUDA) school districts and schools within large cities and the nation overall.

APS eighth-grade students gained 14 points on the NAEP reading test since 2002. APS fourth-graders also experienced dramatic gains, increasing results since 2002 by 14 points. The district also has made consistent progress in closing the performance gap with the State of Georgia on NAEP reading test results.

As our graduates prepare for college, it's worth noting another national distinction APS students earned this year. Twenty-nine APS students received 2010 Gates Millennium Scholarships — more than any other school district in the nation. You will learn more about our stellar Class of 2010 in this issue. We wish them well as they begin an exciting new chapter.

Let me also take time to note that the district anxiously awaits results of an investigation concerning excessive erasures on 2009 Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) answer sheets. Headed up by a blue-ribbon panel of business and community leaders, the investigation is expected to be complete by mid-June. Initial reports have found that the district has "tight" testing security and is using many

exemplary practices. To strengthen our processes, the panel made a number of recommendations that we implemented for the 2010 CRCT, which our students took in April.

In the meantime, our work for the students of this district continues, and we are happy to share those success stories. In this issue, you will learn about the High School Transformation Initiative. When our doors open on August 9, every public high school in every neighborhood of Atlanta will be a transformed, college-preparatory, more personalized learning environment.

You also will read about our Middle School Transformation Initiative, which helps students make a smooth transition from elementary school through the difficult middle grades. We rolled out nationally recognized best practices at four pilot schools this year, and this issue features examples of this model in action.

We also proudly introduce the best and brightest from the Class of 2010. Meet our valedictorians, before they move on to Boston College, Emory University, Johns Hopkins University Middlebury College, Morehouse College and other esteemed institutions around the country. Their accomplishments serve as a

reminder that all students can succeed in the presence of a highly effective teacher, many of whom you will meet in this issue.

Successful community partnerships also shape our success story. Thanks to Project GRAD Atlanta, which is celebrating its 10th

year with Atlanta Public Schools, more of our students are charting a path to college than ever before.

Please enjoy the stories in this publication, which was delivered to every student and employee's household thanks to the generosity of the GE Foundation through its Developing Futures in Education grant. The newsletter that accompanies this issue of *The Atlanta Educator* highlights their contributions to the district.

Also, we ask that you help us spread the good news about Atlanta Public Schools and share both publications with colleagues, neighbors and friends. Even during the summer, we are laying the foundation for an even better school year and we thank you for supporting Atlanta Public Schools.

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

Twenty-nine APS students received 2010 Gates Millennium Scholarships — more than any other school district in the nation.

REASON TO BE PROUD OF APS: Atlanta Public Schools is on a consistent 10-year trend of progress.

APS BOARD MEMBER PROFILE

Nancy Meister

From involved parent to PTSA president to Board of Education member

Nancy Meister serves as the Atlanta Board of Education representative for District 4. This is the sixth in a series of board member profiles in The Atlanta Educator.

LEADERSHIP

Nancy Meister was elected to the Atlanta Board of Education in December, replacing Kathleen B. Pattillo when she completed her final term on the board. Working in District 4, Meister represents Garden Hills, Morris Brandon, E. Rivers, Warren T. Jackson and Sarah Smith elementary schools, Sutton Middle and North Atlanta High.

BACKGROUND

A Realtor by trade, Meister has been an active parent in Atlanta Public Schools for several years. She and her husband, Steve, believe in public education and sent their two sons, Matthew and Andrew, through Garden Hills and Morris Brandon elementary schools as well as Sutton Middle and North Atlanta. Andrew is finishing his junior year in North Atlanta's International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, while Matthew is wrapping up his freshman year at Georgia Tech, where he majors in mechanical engineering.

EXPERIENCE

Meister served as the Sutton Middle PTSA co-president for two years during the school's \$20 million renovation project.

She also has served as co-president of the North Atlanta PTSA. A founding member of the North Atlanta High School Foundation, Meister works to raise private-sector support for academic excellence and to fund athletic, extracurricular, and other innovative programming at the high school.



Meister also has served three years as co-president of the North Atlanta Parents for Public Schools, and has experience working with all school administrators and PTSA representatives in the District 4 cluster. In 2003, APS Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall invited Meister to join the Northern Corridor Task Force and work with APS board

members, business leaders and community members to create a strategic plan for attracting and retaining students in the public school system.

"What really excites me [about becoming a board member] is, I've been involved at the grass-roots level — from room mom to PTSA president to [North Atlanta Parents for Public Schools] president to starting a foundation at the high school," said Meister. "I feel like this is the natural step in

serving the community and helping kids coming up the pipeline."

POINTS OF PRIDE

As a first-year board member, Meister is just getting started. She would like to see APS, "get to the top of the mountain so that all of our children have opportunities throughout the system."

Years as a public-school parent have prepared Meister for this challenge.

"The thing I'm most proud of, as a parent, was for our children to be around a very diverse group of children, and they have learned and grown from that opportunity," Meister said. She added, "I'd encourage parents to get involved, because I think that's very important for the success of a student — being an involved parent."

"I see [APS] as the No. 1 urban district in the nation. I really believe we can get there."

Nancy Meister's e-mail address is nmeister@atlantapublicschools.us. Board meetings are generally held on the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m., unless otherwise noted, at the Center for Learning and Leadership auditorium, 130 Trinity Ave. SW, Atlanta, GA, 30303. For more information about the board, visit www.atlantapublicschools.us/board.



PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR, PROJECT GRAD INITIATIVE

DR. ERIC ROSSER

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



Today, many of those same schools are considered to be blue ribbon, model, trailblazing and distinguished schools. The data shows schools have made significant increases across all grade levels, and when we look at the

data from our high schools, graduation rates have increased significantly.

This year we anticipate a record number of students receiving the Brumley-GRAD scholarship, higher graduation rates at all of our GRAD schools and more GRAD students making a commitment to attend a post-secondary institution. In fact this year, students in our GRAD high schools represented 52 percent of all students in the district to receive the prestigious Gates Millennium Scholarship.

Also, the data indicates that the GRAD model has had a positive impact overall. In 2002, the graduation rate at Carver was 14 percent; in 2009, the combined graduation rate for The New Schools at Carver was 94 percent.

For more information, please contact the Project GRAD office at 404-802-2315.

Q What are your duties as the program administrator for Project GRAD in Atlanta Public Schools?

A To ensure that our students achieve positive academic outcomes throughout elementary, middle and high school and that they're provided with college-readiness opportunities and successfully transition into post-secondary institutions. Although the Project GRAD initiative has existed in Atlanta Public Schools for 10 years, the position I hold has been in place for three years.

Q What's Project GRAD's mission, and how does it work?

A The mission of Project GRAD is to ensure a quality education for all students in economically disadvantaged communities so that high school graduation rates increase and graduates are prepared to enter and be successful in

college. The Project GRAD model provides an academic and social wall of support around students, as well as teachers and parents. Project GRAD works to provide students with a solid foundation in literacy, math and college readiness. Social support is provided to both students and families to overcome obstacles to attendance, academic achievement, college enrollment and success.

Q What are the core components of this initiative?

A There's high school/college readiness, which provides activities and services to build student awareness of and preparation for college success. The math component, which focuses on K-8 students, gets students at every grade level to study algebra so they are prepared for higher-level math courses during high school and beyond. The literacy component is a comprehensive reading approach under the

Success for All program that is designed to guarantee every student reads at grade level or above. The classroom-management component uses the Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline (CMCD) model to help students prepare for success, achieve self-discipline and develop responsibility. The family-support component uses the Communities in Schools Atlanta dropout prevention and social service model that offers guidance, counseling, community outreach and family case-management services to GRAD students.

Q How would you characterize the evolution of Project GRAD over its decade?

A In years prior to the initiative being adopted by the district in 2000, many of the schools that Project GRAD served were low performing. The outcomes of students in high school and beyond did not meet what we would want for our children.



Cleveland Avenue teacher Rita McGlothlin helps girls change the way they see themselves.

Beauty is as beauty does

Cleveland Avenue teacher helps girls embrace positive self-image

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

It's a girl's world every other Thursday at Cleveland Avenue Elementary School, where all-female programming, image-building, bonding, risk-taking and leadership training are not only encouraged, but required.

The participating girls are members of Just Be Beautiful, Inc., a mentoring organization that believes in changing the way young women see themselves. Founded by teacher Rita McGlothlin, Just Be Beautiful runs from September to May. McGlothlin offers classes that address healthy relationships, body image, healthy eating and exercise, volunteering in the community, etiquette, career planning and investing, among other issues.

"It's a lifesaver," said student Tasja Grier. "I was one of the girls who thought I needed cute clothes to be beautiful and have friends. Ms. McGlothlin taught me how to be myself."

McGlothlin, a certified mentor, counselor and educational



Rita McGlothlin

consultant, has made it her life mission to elevate her students' self-esteem and inner beauty. Participants meet after school for classes, field trips or small group discussions with female faculty for two hours, every two weeks.

"It's an opportunity for these girls to be free and let out steam," said McGlothlin. "They don't have to worry about boys judging or snickering. It's a comfortable environment."

"I wanted to be a Just Be Beautiful participant because it would help me to be more expressive and get out of my quiet shell," said student Ny-Kendra Mattox. "I'm able to trust the girls in my group and share ideas with them."

A graduate of Florida A&M University, McGlothlin has been teaching and training throughout the United States since 1994. She joined Cleveland Avenue Elementary in 2008 and has since been certified as a Gifted Teacher and named a Teacher Leader at her school. She launched Just Be Beautiful in 2005, while she was teaching in College Park, Ga.

"A lot of today's students are dealing with some pretty adult issues, and they need individuals whom they can turn to," said McGlothlin. "I grew up in a family without a father, so I didn't have that parental guidance. I made a lot of mistakes in my youth. I want to prevent other girls from doing the same."

Her students are grateful for her efforts.

"Just Be Beautiful is a great place to learn about girlhood,"



Cleveland Avenue students are learning to Just Be Beautiful. From left, Shonterria McCrary, Ms. T. Cason, and Manisha Strozier.

said student Manisha Strozier. "When we go over girl subjects, it gets in my system and stays in because of all the great facts about what to do and not to do as a girl."

"It makes a difference with girls that age," said Manisha's father, Abraham Strozier. "There's only so much she's going to talk to me about, so this has helped to bridge the gap. She's learned how to be a young lady."

Overcoming obstacles

Slater teacher makes a difference in the lives of students

By PAUL HALLORAN

A horrific accident on the side of a highway 30 years ago could have become the defining moment in Deborah Mitchell's life, but she is simply too strong to let that happen.

"I have a strong faith. I was brought up in the church," said Mitchell. "That sustained me, along with a large group of people supporting me."

A senior at Spelman College in January 1979, Mitchell was a passenger when a friend's car broke down on the highway. Mitchell was standing behind the car when she was hit by another vehicle and suffered a broken neck and two broken legs. One of the legs had to be amputated at the knee.

Her room at Grady Memorial Hospital was inundated with cards and flowers for the duration of her stay. She did not return to Spelman until the following January, and graduated in the spring of 1980.

"The campus at Spelman was just becoming handicap-accessible," she said. "The people there were very helpful."

Mitchell, who earned a master's in special education at Columbus State University, taught special education for one



year in Columbus before getting married and moving to Chicago. She enjoyed it, but somehow knew elementary school is where she was meant to teach.

"My dad was a teacher, principal and coach," she said. "I

felt at home in that setting."

Mitchell relocated to Atlanta and landed a job teaching second grade at Slater elementary in 1986. She has never left.

Mitchell has served in a variety of positions at Slater, including the last three years as director of the computer lab, where she exposes students to the wonders of technology. But even Mitchell admits that many students are pretty tech savvy.

"We get kids acquainted with the parts of the computer, but we also talk about cyberbullying and acceptable uses of the computer," she said. "We call it digital citizenship."

Mitchell also supports teachers at Slater by assisting students with various projects. While the lab has been in existence for several years, Mitchell is the first Slater teacher to be certified in technology. She has also taught a course to help other teachers get certified.

Her accident may have slowed Mitchell down physically, but it has not kept her from making a difference in the lives of APS students for two generations. "I've tried to be fit for the fight," she said.



Deborah Mitchell assists fifth-grader Santeria Harris in the computer lab at Slater.



Parkside kindergarten student Cherokee Connell raised more than \$1,000 for the American Heart Association.

Parkside student jumps at chance to help

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

One young girl with one big heart set out to prove that one person truly can make a difference.

Kindergartener Cherokee Connell of Parkside Elementary raised \$1,009 for Jump Rope for Heart, an American Heart Association program that promotes physical education and heart-healthy living, while also raising money for research and lifesaving treatments.

"It's wonderful to see students take such an active role," said Parkside physical education teacher Judy Lynn. "If you ask them why they're doing it, they tell you they're trying to help children with heart disease."

Many APS elementary schools participate, merging fitness with philanthropy. This year, Parkside students raised nearly \$6,000 by soliciting pledges and participating in a one-day jump-roping event.

"It helps our students to recognize how blessed they are, and that there are kids out there who need their help," said Dr. Phillip Luck, principal of Parkside Elementary. "They're learning to give back." For Cherokee, giving back is the most important aspect of the event.

"We saw one video of a little boy and he had 11 surgeries," she said. "We're lucky that we're healthy."

Her mother, Mary, couldn't be prouder. "She just walked door to door, telling people about the cause," Connell said.

In the their household, Jump Rope for the Heart has turned into a family affair. As a fifth-grader at Parkside, Cherokee's brother Tommy set the school record by collecting \$1,758 last year.

"A lot of the students brought in \$50 to \$100, but no one came close to \$1,000," said Lynn. "The whole Connell family is very committed to this."

Student achievement

Johns Hopkins awaits Carver Early College valedictorian

If you ask Chris Watson why he chose to participate in the Teach For America program, he will give you a very simple answer. It's all about students like Angelique Harris, valedictorian of the Early College class of 2010 at The New Schools at Carver.

"Kids like Angelique make me enjoy my experience," said Watson, a second-year science teacher as well as Harris' adviser. Watson enjoys teaching so much that he signed on for a third year at Carver through Teach For America, which recruits outstanding recent college graduates to work in low-income communities. The organization requires a two-year teaching commitment. "I love Teach For America, and Angelique is one of the reasons why."

With support from dedicated teachers and administrators, Harris will attend Johns Hopkins University in the fall, starting a journey that she hopes will lead to a career in medicine or research. She leaves behind an impressive legacy of accomplishments in academics and extracurricular activities.

"I'm nervous about going away, but I'm excited, too," said Harris. "It's important for me to go to college, because

my parents didn't get to go. Nobody in my family has ever lived outside Georgia."

As an Early College student, Harris took college courses at Georgia State University. Through the district's High School Transformation Initiative, Carver functions as four small schools on one campus, each focused on helping students chart a path to success after graduation.

"Carver has really prepared us," said Harris, who has taken a variety of college courses during the past two years. "The Georgia State experience has showed me that."

Early College students have studied English, sociology, psychology, government and world history at GSU. Harris was one of three Carver students to tackle biology at Georgia State — all of them earned an A.



Angelique Harris

"We tried to blend in with the other college students," said Harris, who took GSU classes three days a week. "The professors didn't even know we were high school students."

Harris enjoyed no such anonymity at Carver, where she thrived in the small-schools environment. She was president of the Student Government Association, a National Honor Society member, peer mentor, art club secretary, media center volunteer and a member of the golf team. Outside of school, she has participated in the Fulton County Youth Commission, and volunteers at the Stuart-Lakewood library. She also conducted research on prostate cancer last summer.

"Angelique is one of those students they tell you about," said Watson, who plans to go to medical school after teaching one more year at Carver. "She does everything right. She's a great kid and a great student. She has taken on the challenge to push herself to the limit. She's a role model for her peers."

For Harris, it's Watson who serves as a role model. She plans to follow in his footsteps.

"I'm pretty sure I want to go to medical school," she said. "But Johns Hopkins also has good programs in engineering and economics in case I change my mind."



Damien Weaver said he came out of his shell in the small-school environment.

Small-school setup at Jackson brings out best in Weaver

By PAUL HALLORAN

Damien Weaver, a 2010 graduate of the Engineering Early College Academy at Maynard Holbrook Jackson High, is the perfect example of how a student who may not have realized his full potential in a bigger school can thrive in a smaller environment.

"I used to be really quiet, but I came out of my shell," Weaver said. "I like the small learning communities a lot better. It gives students a better chance to focus on what they like to do, both academically and extracurricular."

What was once one large school now comprises three academies with different areas of focus: Engineering Early College, Fine Arts & Media Communications, and Information Technology. Under the direction of Principal Dr. Shirlene Carter, academy leaders at Jackson help students make the most of their high school years, and prepare for success in college.

"We're excited to have a student like Damien," said Engineering Early College Academy Leader Richard Williams. "He's one of the go-to students when we need something done. He has had a positive influence on other students. We're going to miss him."

Weaver always had an interest in engineering, so when Jackson officially transformed into the small schools model in 2008, he jumped at the chance to enroll in

Engineering Early College. When Weaver attends Georgia State University in the fall, he may focus on computer science or aerospace engineering, with the ultimate goal of working for Microsoft or Apple some day.

"It's close to home and it has the programs I'm interested in," said Weaver, a HOPE scholarship recipient who acknowledges that there were some bumps along the road to graduation. But Weaver credits his math teachers with helping him master the subject. AP statistics teacher Hilaire Anelone — the APS Teacher of the Year — was his favorite teacher.

"We have increased the rigor in our classes," Williams said. "Students stay with the same cadre of teachers, so teachers are able to push them harder because of the relationships that have been fostered."

During his time in the small learning community, Weaver also participated in extracurricular activities. He played soccer until asthma no longer allowed it. Weaver also participated in the art club, the robotics team and the Boys & Girls Club.

"Damien is reliable, dependable and trustworthy," Williams said. "He is always willing to do something extra to make the academy better."

Look for Weaver to continue building on the success he achieved at Jackson during the next phase of his journey.

HIGH SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

In APS, smaller is better

APS HIGH SCHOOLS

The New Schools at Carver

(Small schools)

- Early College
- School of the Arts
- School of Health Sciences & Research
- School of Technology

Crim Open Campus

Frederick Douglass

(Small learning communities)

- Business & Entrepreneurship Academy
- Center for Engineering & Applied Technology (CFEAT) Academy
- Communication & Journalism Academy
- Hospitality, Tourism, & Marketing Academy

Henry W. Grady

(Small learning communities — August 2010)

- Communications and Journalism Academy
- Travel, Hospitality and Tourism Academy
- Technology Academy
- Law, Government and Public Policy Academy

Maynard H. Jackson, Jr.

(Small learning communities)

- Engineering Early College Academy
- Fine Arts & Media Communications Academy
- Information Technology Academy

Benjamin E. Mays

(Small learning communities — August 2010)

- Technology, Engineering, Math & Science (STEMS) Academy
- Mass Communications Academy
- Business and Entrepreneurship Academy
- Leadership Academy (Male)
- Leadership Academy (Female)

North Atlanta

(Small learning communities — August 2010)

- Center for International Studies Academy
- Center of the Arts Academy
- International Business and Marketing Academy
- Center for Global Broadcasting and Journalism Academy

South Atlanta

(Small schools)

- School of Computer Animation & Design
- School of Health & Medical Science
- School of Law & Government

D.M. Therrell

(Small schools)

- School of Technology, Engineering, Math & Science (STEMS)
- School of Health Science & Research
- School of Law

Booker T. Washington

(Small schools)

- School of Banking, Finance, & Investment
- Early College
- School of Health Science & Nutrition
- Senior Academy



Maynard H. Jackson Jr. - Fine Arts & Media Communications Academy



South Atlanta - School of Health & Medical Science



Frederick Douglass - Hospitality, Tourism & Marketing Academy

Transforming final three schools to complete initiative

BY DAVID LEE SIMMONS

Shirlene Carter saw Atlanta Public Schools' High School Transformation Initiative coming a mile away — and she couldn't wait.

"When I heard the district was moving to the small-school model, it was music to my ears," said Carter, principal at Maynard H. Jackson High.

"I liked the fact that our school is divided into smaller academies, in which each unit has its own autonomy with an academy leader, and with a principal overseeing all of them," added Carter, who oversees Jackson's academies of Engineering & Early College, Fine Arts and Media Communications, and Information Technology.

Over the past two years, the transformed Jackson High has enjoyed a remarkable turnaround. Students have thrived in the academies, exploring such themes as information technology and modern dance, and others have taken notice.

Midway through the 2008-09 school year, *U.S. News & World Report* named Jackson one of the best high schools in the nation. *BusinessWeek* bestowed a similar honor later that year. Student achievement also has improved in recent years. Jackson had an 82.8 percent graduation rate in its first year as an SLC. Also, 89 percent of students met or exceeded state standards on the writing and English/Language Arts portion of the Georgia High School Graduation Test; 87 percent met or exceeded standards in math, and 76 percent met or exceeded standards in social studies and science.

That marked improvement also is music to the ears of Randolph Bynum, associate superintendent for APS high schools. Under his direction, the High School Transformation Initiative has successfully led to the creation of an SLC at Douglass and small

schools at Carver, South Atlanta, Therrell and Washington high schools. In the fall, the initiative enters its third and final phase, as Grady, Mays and North Atlanta become small learning communities.

"We found that in these more traditional, larger schools, we know the kids at the top and we know the kids at the bottom, but we were having a harder time identifying those kids in the middle of the pack, or the kids on the fringe of being at the bottom," Bynum said. "So we were seeing more students falling through the cracks. We needed to create a new atmosphere in APS high schools."

"Students started telling us, 'There's somebody at the school I could reach out to if I had issues, needed support or advice, that extra help,'" Bynum said. "At Carver, for instance, what students said they like most is being in a personalized environment where the faculty and staff cared about the whole student."

"Just making sure the kids graduated from high school isn't enough," Bynum added. "We're trying to prepare them for life."

Edith Richardson admits to being a little confused by the smaller school model when her son, Lamar, joined the legacy class at Carver five years ago. But then Lamar started talking about the more personalized learning environment and the faculty's ability to advise him on everything from test-taking to job-interview skills.

"Lamar absolutely loved it," Richardson said of her son, who graduated from the School of Technology last year and is now a freshman at Auburn University majoring in mechanical engineering. "In his calculus classes at Auburn they have study groups, and he's the leader of his study group."

Continued on next page



Maynard H. Jackson Jr. - Fine Arts & Media Communications Academy

Continued from previous page

Carver's graduation rate rose accordingly, improving from 23 percent in 2005 to 94 percent for last year's Legacy class. That same class earned \$16.5 million in scholarship offers.

Recent Carver graduates such as Dasjah Bledsoe, with her 3.5 grade-point average and \$58,000 worth of scholarship offers, built on that momentum. A transfer student, Bledsoe said friends from her old district often remark about all of the opportunities she had at Carver's School of Health Science & Research.

She credited her success, and their jealousy, to a personalized atmosphere that comes complete with advisor teachers. This hybrid teacher-counselor monitors academic performance as well as students' personal issues. After a few months at Carver, the once-shy Bledsoe realized she had a lot more to offer. Bledsoe was part of the school's biomedical debate team, which captured the state championship at an event in Athens hosted by the Health Occupation Student Association.

Thanks to Carver, she said, "I know when I get to college, I'm not going to be a lost soul. I'm going to be more prepared for the world."

District-wide, the graduation rate has increased 30 percentage points, from 39 percent in 2002 to 69 percent in 2009. This year's group of APS graduating seniors lead all school



Booker T. Washington - School of Banking, Finance & Investment

districts across the nation in Gates Millennium Scholarships with 29. (It's no coincidence that Carver, the first transformed school, led the way with eight recipients. Washington, which made the switch this year, had seven.)

The remaining three schools will benefit from their predecessors' transformation, ensuring a seamless transition next school year. Each has established core themes, such as the journalism program at Grady, math and science programs at Mays and the arts at North Atlanta.

"We've been working with de facto

SLCs since 2006, and we've been diligent in choosing themes for our four SLCs that reflect the best of our past and that meet the needs of our community and students in the 21 century," said North Atlanta High Principal Mark MyGrant. So there will be little change in the quality of the school's award-winning arts and International Baccalaureate programs as they become academies.

"Although we have a strong record of success," MyGrant said, "we also anticipate improving our results even further as a result of this transformation."

Parents in favor of new setup

BY PAUL HALLORAN

As Atlanta Public Schools' High School Transformation Initiative heads into the final stage this fall with the conversion of Grady, Mays and North Atlanta into small learning communities, *The Atlanta Educator* spoke with three parents who have children in schools that have already been transformed. Parents shared their thoughts on the initiative thus far.

Kim Brookins has two children at Therrell — a son, Devon Brookins, a 2010 graduate of the School of Technology, Engineering, Math & Science (STEMS), and a daughter, Natajah Hardaway, a rising senior in the School of Health, Science & Research. Brookins also had a daughter graduate last year.

"The transformation was a little hectic, but the overall idea is a good one," Brookins said. "Kids do better with individual attention. The teacher-student relationship is a lot better in a smaller school."

Devon Brookins will attend Georgia Southern University this fall.

Cherise McDougal has a son, Terrell Dantzler, who graduated from the Engineering Early College Academy at Maynard Jackson, which completed its second year as small learning communities. She said the switch has led to increased and enhanced interaction between teachers and students.

"It gives teachers and students the chance to get to know each other right from the beginning of school," said McDougal, whose husband, Raymond, teaches economics in the Engineering Early College Academy. "With a lower student/teacher ratio, it makes it easier to address the needs of all students."

As Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) president, McDougal has developed a close relationship with academy leader Dr. Richard Williams as well as many teachers. "I'm in the building a lot and I can e-mail my son's teachers as frequently as I need to," she said. "There is good interaction between the school and parents."

Dantzler will attend Fayetteville State University in North Carolina in the fall.

Rhodope Sesay said the small learning communities model, which is in place at Douglass, gives students such as her daughter Ariel, a senior in the Communications & Journalism school, more a sense of belonging to a team.

"It changes the whole attitude of students," said Sesay, whose daughter will attend the University of West Georgia. "They get more attention academically and they are able to excel." Sesay said she is pleased that AP courses are open to all students. "All children have the same educational opportunities," she said. "That's how it should be."



Luther Judson Price Middle School



Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy

Middle school MAKEOVER

Transformation Initiative promotes positive learning environment

By PAUL HALLORAN

Buoyed by the success of its transformed elementary and high schools, Atlanta Public Schools is redefining the middle school experience.

The Middle School Transformation Initiative began in 2007 with the opening of two single-gender schools: — Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy and the Business Engineering Science Technology (B.E.S.T.) Academy for boys. In just three years, students at those schools have achieved at a higher level than their predecessors at the Ben Carson Honors Preparatory School, which was split to form the two academies.

The next step in the transformation initiative took place this year, with block scheduling and two-person teacher teams in grade 6 at four middle schools: Inman, Kennedy, Price and Martin Luther King Jr.

With block scheduling, sixth-grade classes are 80-100 minutes — about twice the length of traditional periods. The goal is to give teachers more time for instruction and to delve deeper into the content, said Raynise Smith, Instructional Mentor on Special Assignment who is working on the initiative.

"We picked schools that would represent a cross-section of the middle-school population in terms of demographics, performance and the size of the schools," said Smith of the initiative.

"I feel like my lessons are stronger," said LynAnne Betz, who teaches math and science on a team with Marquise Delaney at Inman Middle School. "Students are getting more out of it by having a longer block of time."

The initiative establishes two-teacher teams in which one educator teaches English and social studies, while the other handles math and science. With most teachers accustomed to instructing in only one content area, adding a second subject has presented a challenge, though by all accounts it has worked out better than expected.



John F. Kennedy Middle School

"I've received a lot of support from my colleagues," Betz said. "I had only taught math before, so adding science was a challenge. My colleagues in the science department have helped me develop strong lesson plans. That has made it a successful year instructionally."

Teachers also receive ongoing support from the district's Math and Science Initiative, a large-scale professional development program that retools the way teachers deliver math and science instruction. Funded by a \$22.5 million grant from the GE Foundation, teachers attend sessions during the summer and throughout the school year. (Please see the GE Foundation newsletter that accompanies this issue.)

"We've worked very closely with APS staff to align the support we give to teachers," Smith said. She also noted that, by incorporating two-teacher teams to handle the four core subject areas, teachers and students get an opportunity to develop a closer relationship.

"I feel like I know my students better," said Betz, who teaches only 50 students along with Delaney. "I learned their strengths and

weaknesses quicker. The cohesion of the students is tighter. They function more like a family than classmates. They're very attached to us and they're very protective of each other."

At Inman, all sixth-graders are following block scheduling. There are a pair of two-teacher teams with 50 students each and a pair of four-person teams with 100 students each. Kennedy Middle School Principal Dr. Lucious Brown said the pilot program also is working out well at his school, after a challenging start.

Solomon Jefferson and Shakina Champion comprise a two-person team at Kennedy, with Jefferson teaching English and social studies and Champion handling math and science. They have 32 students.

"I was able to allot a good amount of planning time, which gives them a chance to plan lessons together," Brown said, adding that the training provided by APS on constructing lesson plans for the block scheduling has also been very helpful.

Four more schools will participate in the transformation initiative next year, with block scheduling and at least one two-teacher team in the sixth grade. Next year, the four pilot middle schools are scheduled to adopt two-teacher teams for all sixth-graders. Block scheduling will occur in grades 6 and 7. By 2013, all APS middle schools will be in transformation, Smith said.

"It helps ease the transition from elementary school to middle school, so students are not overwhelmed by the middle-school environment," Smith said.

The initiative also helps promote a smooth transition from middle school to high school. On high school campuses, APS students get a glimpse at the college experience and are able to focus on areas of interest ranging from arts to law — with the goal of graduating and succeeding on a college campus.



Samuel Martin Inman Middle School



John F. Kennedy Middle School



Samuel Martin Inman Middle School



Children are learning at a young age at the Early Learning & Literacy Resource Center at Dunbar Elementary.

Getting an early start

Learning center serves children as young as six weeks old

BY MEAGHAN CASEY

It's never too early to plant the seed for educational success. That's what prompted APS to establish the first high-quality learning complex for children age six weeks to 10 years old housed at Dunbar Elementary.

The school now offers an Early Learning & Literacy Resource Center (ELLRC), which represents a joint effort by various organizations, including the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Staffed and managed by Sheltering Arms, one of the state's largest childcare providers, the ELLRC has the capacity to serve 193 children, from six weeks old to 4 years of age, from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

"When we as a community broke ground on this property, I submit that the mold was broken on a private-public partnership that will truly deliver a world-class education to every child," said APS Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. "We're excited about the future. This day represents the next level of work in our school district's 11-year journey to



transform the academic experience for our students."

To help students strengthen their reading skills, Sheltering Arms and Dunbar faculty also will collaborate on projects and lesson plans with the goal of ensuring that all students meet or exceed state standards by

third grade.

"I've seen children come to school without the skills to be cooperative learners," said Dunbar Principal Betty Greene. "Every day, Steve White, our ELLRC director, and I will pull out the needle and thread to stitch out high-quality education to help the children

we serve."

The ELLRC also has a two-generation strategy designed to ensure that children are healthy and prepared for school and parents are able to achieve economic success. Through a partnership with The Center for Working Families, Inc., parents receive support services so they can chart a path to careers and homeownership.

APS parent Shondra Carter has experienced the strategy first-hand. A working mother of four children – ranging in age from 4-15 – Carter is thrilled to have her two youngest daughters in the same school building. One just completed first grade at Dunbar and the other finished her first year at the ELLRC.

"This makes sense for families," said Carter, who is involved with the ELLRC Parent Leadership Organization and served as president of the Dunbar PTSA. She noted that students and teachers also benefit. "My youngest is already more excited about school and more focused. And when it's time for her to start elementary school, her teachers will be ready, too. They're already getting to know her and her learning needs."

Q & A

2009 VALEDICTORIANS KEITRA THOMPSON & TYSON SHEPHERD

Keitra Thompson, left, and Tyson Shepherd, 2009 valedictorians at Jackson High and the School of Business & Entrepreneurship at Therrell, respectively, discuss their APS experience and offer advice to the Class of 2010.



Keitra Thompson — Emory University



Tyson Shepherd — College of the Holy Cross

Q How well do you think APS prepared you for college and beyond?

A I learned many valuable lessons inside and outside of the classroom at Jackson. I think APS prepares students well for college and beyond, especially through real-world experiences. Many of the teachers are very committed to students' success. They provided individual guidance based on my talents and abilities.

Q How did you decide to enroll at Emory?

A I was very impressed with Emory from the time I moved to Georgia. Although I was accepted and offered scholarships by many other top institutions, I ultimately decided Emory was the place for me due to their strong connection with the community, commitment to service and their abundance of resources and opportunities across all fields, such as the performing arts, social sciences and medical research.

Q What advice would you give about preparing for college admissions?

A Start early, the sooner the better! Prepare as much as possible for standardized tests in advance. Visit colleges and know what you are looking for - but have an open mind.

Q What are your college and career goals?

A I have not yet officially declared a major, but I'm considering anthropology/human biology with a minor in global health. I am pre-health as well. Although I am still in the exploration phase, I am sure I want to pursue a graduate degree and work in the public health field.

Q What have you found to be most memorable about your freshman year?

A Meeting people — students, faculty and staff from all over the world — who share similar and different issues with me. Encountering the world of academia, where professors are doing research and excited to share their knowledge with students has also been very exciting.

Q What advice would you give this year's college-bound graduates?

A Rest, have fun, explore and prepare. Begin to notice your areas of interest, passions, strengths and weaknesses so that when you enter college, the road may not be as rocky.

Keitra Thompson was 2009 valedictorian of Maynard H. Jackson High School and has excelled as a pre-med student during her freshman year at Emory.

Q How well do you think APS prepared you for college and beyond?

A As a student, you have to take the initiative and take advantage of the resources that you're provided. That's what I did. I took advantage of the resources that APS made available to me, and those skills eased the transition into the college academic course load.

Q How did you decide to enroll at Holy Cross?

A After visiting Holy Cross and learning of its reputation as one of the top schools in the country, I just couldn't say no. It felt like home, some place where I could "grow up," to quote a faculty member at Therrell.

Q What advice would you give about preparing for college admissions?

A Start early and work hard. There is no substitute for hard work. If it may seem impossible to complete all the tasks necessary to go to college, just remember what you are trying to accomplish by attending college, and those who are depending on you.

Q What are your college and career goals?

A I am majoring in English and my goal, career wise, is to become a writer. I love to write and I hope that passion will push me to win a Pulitzer, or a writing award of equal prestige.

Q What have you found to be most memorable about your freshman year?

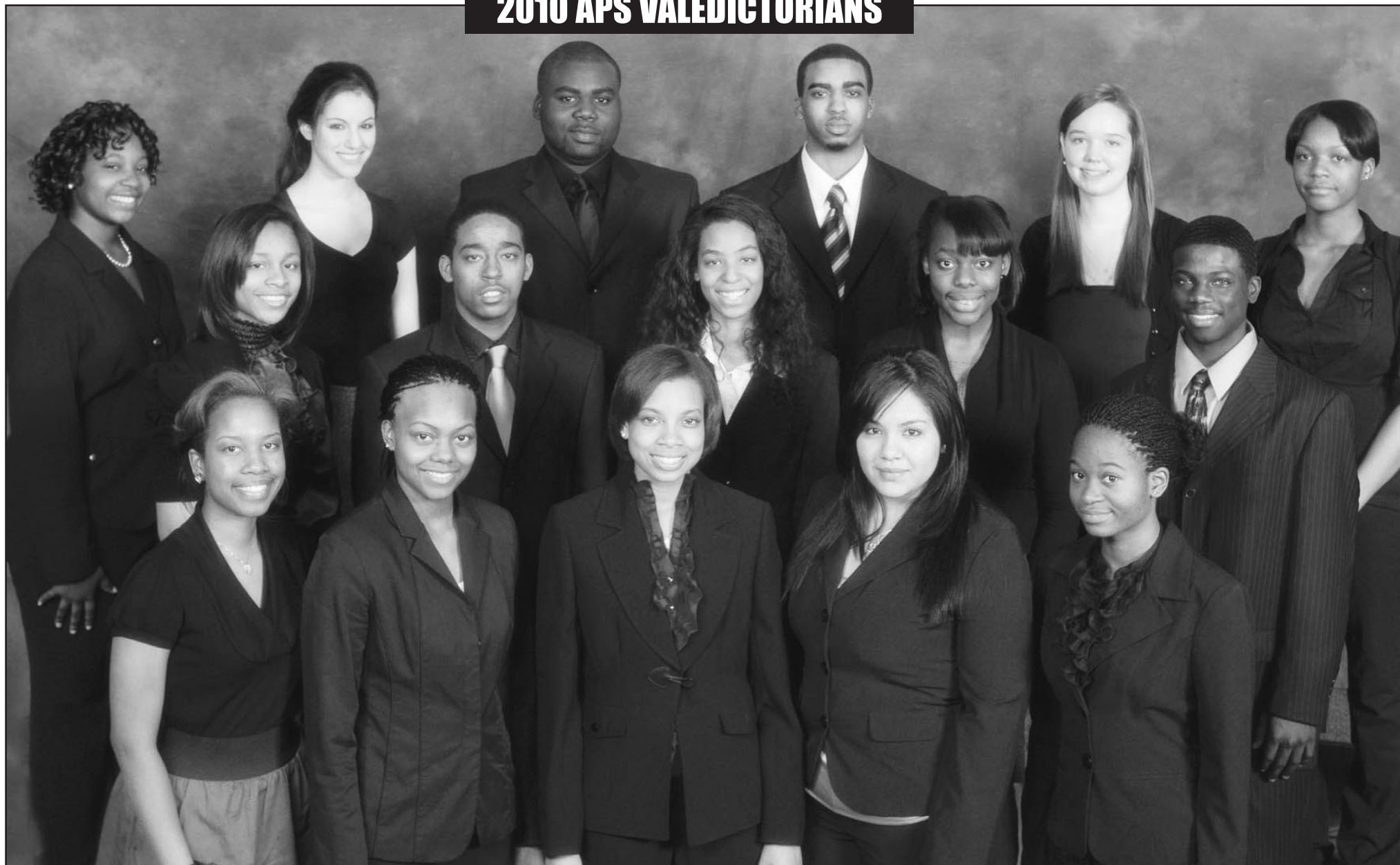
A I have performed in several cultural events on campus, and I spoke at the opening orientation ceremony for my freshman class. But if I had to choose, I would say that every day of this year has been memorable. Meeting new people, going new places and learning to function in a society so much different from what I was used to was like a nonstop rollercoaster ride.

Q What advice would you give this year's college-bound graduates?

A Buckle down. Get ready. Make the most out of your freshman year. You're in for a year of excitement. You're going to see, hear and encounter some things you could never have dreamed of. Relish the opportunity to broaden your mind and have fun while doing it.

Tyson Shepherd was 2009 valedictorian of the School of Business & Entrepreneurship at D.M. Therrell High School and a 21st Century Atlanta Scholar.

2010 APS VALEDICTORIANS



Best and brightest

Meet the APS valedictorians from the Class of 2010

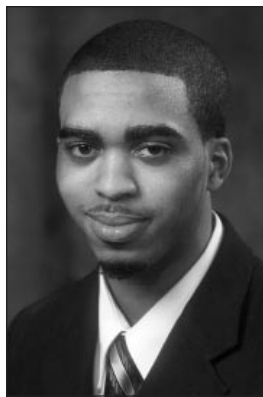
Deonte Bridges

*Booker T. Washington
Senior Academy*

College choice: University of Georgia

Teacher who made a difference: Mr. Charles Allen

Favorite school memory: When I participated in the "No Place for Hate" rap competition. We were challenged to write a song combating racism and bigotry. After performing for the student body and being selected the school winner, I had the opportunity to record and copyright the song, and perform at the Anti-Defamation League's 2009 Community of Respect Dinner.

**Mandy Eidson**

North Atlanta High School

College choice: North Carolina-Chapel Hill

Teacher who made a difference: All of them, especially Ms. Courtney Preston

Favorite school memory: Beating Riverwood High in their homecoming game during 10th grade. Students from North Atlanta took a bus, and we showed up covered from head to toe in our school colors. Our marching band was on fire, and the game was intense. After our victory, NAHS students celebrated and remembered the experience with pride.

**Zyer Beaty**

D.M. Therrell High School of Health, Science & Research

College choice: Spelman College

Teacher who made a difference: Mr. Keene Walker, my AP U.S. history teacher, taught me about my roots, and how to appreciate my African-American heritage and its influence on American culture. He helped me to improve my study skills and to become a stronger writer.

How has APS prepared you for college? The small schools allowed me to develop stronger teacher/student relationships, and provided more personal attention.

**Rachel Feinberg**

Henry W. Grady High School

College choice: Eckerd College

Teacher who made a difference: Ms. Susie Mercer

Favorite school memory: Yearbook late nights were always my favorite. Whether I was with Ms. Mercer or pushing my staff, late-night yearbook sessions were always productive and fun.

How has APS prepared you for college? Grady High School has taught me how to seek out opportunities, how to take the initiative to accomplish goals, how to deal with different people and how to strive to do better than my best.



Vernon S. Gibbons Jr.

*South Atlanta -
School of Law & Social Justice*

College choice: Hamilton College

Teacher who made a difference:

Ms. Candace Moore

How has APS prepared you for college?

The School of Law & Social Justice has helped me learn to cooperate with others. The teachers at this school have given me the skills necessary to be a well-rounded college student. Through the advisory class, I have learned money-management, time-management and organizational skills. Ultimately, the school has given me skills that will help me to explore new possibilities, and become socially conscientious and successful in life.

**Denera James**

Mays High School

College choice: Emerson College

Teacher who made a difference:

Mr. Robert Jeffrey, middle school band director

Favorite school memory:

I was appointed as student director of bands and clarinet section leader.

How has APS prepared you for college?

APS provided academic challenges in core subjects, opportunities for leadership, an atmosphere that supported freedom to make decisions and to learn from my mistakes, the opportunity to talk with my counselor as needed on an individual basis, and exposure to motivational speakers and colleges.

**Kamika Santrecie Ragland**

Carver - School of Technology

College choice: Georgia State University

Teacher who made a difference:

Mr. Adam Danser

Favorite school memory: When I was named Ms. 10th Grade

How has APS prepared you for college?

Carver School of Technology exposed me to several college fairs, and took me on many college visits. I took AP classes and SAT prep classes. The tutors helped me in all my math and English classes.

**Maza Rose Tchedou**

Carver - School of Health, Science & Research

College choice: Xavier University

Teacher who made a difference:

AP physics teacher Mr. Darren Tarshis is by far one of the most brilliant educators I have ever had the pleasure of coming across in my academic years. He challenged me and unlocked such a deep passion for learning that I actually surprised myself.

How has APS prepared you for college? APS and my school have given me the greatest gifts for success by encouraging my love for science, cultivating my ability to communicate with my peers and those in my community, highlighting my ability to make a change, and by supporting me in all my endeavors.

**Angelique Harris**

Carver - Early College

College choice: Johns Hopkins University

Teachers who made a difference:

Mr. Christopher Watson and Ms. Caroline Jernigan

Favorite school memory:

When I was in 10th grade, the science teachers took our class to Huntsville, Ala., to the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center. I really enjoyed the trip. I vividly remember the bus ride. I actually got a chance to know more of my classmates during this trip.

How has APS prepared you for college? I was exposed to excellent teachers, a challenging course load, and the opportunity to take classes at Georgia State University.

**Keira Monique Kruger**

South Atlanta - School of Computer Animation & Design

College choice: Converse College

Teacher who made a difference:

Ms. Shawnika Anderson

How has APS prepared you for college?

My school has prepared me for college by challenging me to reach my full potential. I have learned that in order to progress in life, you will encounter challenges. This will only make you a better person in the end. South Atlanta School of Computer Animation & Design has exposed me to rigorous classes, opportunities to visit colleges I never thought I would visit, and a variety of enriching experiences.

**Justin Savage**

Therrell - School of Law & Government Policy

College choice: Oakwood University

Teacher who made a difference:

Mr. Damon Massey, math teacher

Favorite school memory:

My favorite memory would be in 10th grade when I participated in several debates during a tournament that consisted of public-forum debates between various schools in Georgia. Of the eight debates conducted that day, my partner and I won seven. The experience was exhilarating, and I knew that I had reached a pivotal point in my academic career, a moment that I had been waiting for since the first day of high school.

**Mariana Villasenor**

South Atlanta - School of Health & Medical Science

College choice: Barry University

Teacher who made a difference:

Ms. Carla Aldridge

Favorite school memory: Being named valedictorian

How has APS prepared you for college?

APS has exposed me to many colleges and universities through school-sponsored college field trips. As an honoree of the 21st Century Atlanta Scholars program, I was flown to Massachusetts to visit Hampshire College. I have also been a semifinalist in the Governor's Honors Program.

**Marques Terrell Harris**

Douglass High School

College choice: Morehouse College

Teacher who made a difference:

Ms. Cleopatra Warren

Favorite school memory:

Passing the AP U.S. History exam

How has APS prepared you for college?

APS has provided a rigorous curriculum as well as myriad activities focused on making my transition into college as smooth as possible. My school has furthered this process by taking a look at my weaknesses and improving them, while making my strengths stronger. I have become a far more intelligent and well-rounded person as a result of the teachings of APS as well as Douglass High School.

**Chelsea Renae Little**

Maynard H. Jackson

College choice: University of Georgia

Teacher who made a difference:

Mr. Nicholas Alarcon. He is a phenomenal teacher who has made an indelible impact on my life.

How has APS prepared you for college?

Maynard H. Jackson High School has taught me the value of perseverance. A former teacher reminded me that we, as students, are all capable of making a difference. As I have endured these past few years in high school, I have learned that perseverance separates those who are successful from those who are not.

**Amber Smith**

Carver - School of the Arts

College choice: Wesleyan University

Teacher who made a difference:

Mr. Demetri Sermons

Favorite school memory:

One of my most memorable experiences was completing a community-service project with the entire school. We teamed up with Turner Broadcasting System for their national day of community service when I was a ninth-grader. More than 100 of my classmates helped clean up and beautify Grant Park. It was an exciting, fun yet meaningful project from which we all benefited.

**Treana L. Williams**

Therrell - STEMS

College choice: Agnes Scott College

Teacher who made a difference:

Mr. Maurice Thomas

Favorite school memory: The joy I felt after I was accepted to Agnes Scott College; passing all parts of the Georgia High School Graduation Test on the first try.

How has APS prepared you for college? Atlanta Public Schools and STEMS at Therrell have provided me with knowledge to compete against anyone without fear. I also believe that I will be successful in all endeavors.



Elementary schools

Benteen

In one of many heartwarming examples of generosity around the district, staff and students raised \$300 for rebuilding efforts in Haiti. The money was hand-delivered to the American Red Cross by fifth-graders Carol Mijares and Phuc Dang, and program coordinator Henry L. Coleman of Communities in Schools Atlanta.

Capitol View

Students Nyla Brittain and Zoin Williams proved their science wizardry in a recent competition. Brittain was an individual Gold Key winner in the Novice division, and Williams was a Silver Key winner in the Novice division of the district's One Academic Fair at North Atlanta High. They were among 45 APS participants in a fair that celebrates the APS Math and Science Initiative, which is funded by a \$22.5 million grant from the GE Foundation. Student projects were evaluated and ranked by a panel of judges based on their use of the scientific method to develop theories and conclusions.

Cleveland Avenue

Counselor Rosalind Harkless-Brown hosted the school's Career Day on May 6, barely a week before hosting the same event for Capitol View (May 11). The events allow students at both schools to get an early peek at career opportunities in Atlanta.

Dobbs

Fourth- and fifth-graders learned financial-literacy skills through a partnership with Operation Hope, a non-profit social-investment, banking and financial literacy empowerment organization.

Dunbar

In the first public-private partnership of its kind in metro Atlanta, APS celebrated the grand opening of an Early Learning and Literacy Resource Center (ELLRC) housed at Dunbar. Funded by partners such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation and the Atlanta Housing Authority, the facility provides an educational foundation for children between the ages of six weeks and 10 years of age.

Gideons

Students received a very high-profile compliment in March when Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue offered special recognition for their winning artwork. Every year the Georgia Department of Agriculture sponsors an art/essay contest for elementary and middle school students. This year's theme was "Agriculture: Touching Every Georgia County." The following Gideons students received special honors: Naomi Yearwood, first-place recipient, \$200; Jackson Chadwick, second place, \$100; Avery Dixon, third place, \$50; and Nadia Beavers, honorable mention.

Heritage Academy

More than 50 dedicated male role models and 38 enthusiastic and energetic fifth-grade boys read to one another in March for the first-annual "Driven to Read: 5th Grade Boys-Male Read-IN." Although the event was planned exclusively for fifth-grade boys, an overwhelming response from volunteers meant that fourth-grade boys also were able to participate.

Humphries

To help prepare for the CRCT, students engaged in a month of activities that shed light on how math affects their lives. Math March Madness kicked off with a Math Smart Cookie Problem of



the Day, followed by Math Bingo, and a Math Scavenger Hunt. Students were especially excited about Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) Math Problem Solving, along with guest speakers from the Atlanta Police Department and "McGruff" the Crime Fighting Dog.

Emma Hutchinson

The Bank of Hutchinson opened in February, thanks to a partnership with Capitol City Bank & Trust Company. Speaker Elese Simmons of Capitol City Bank encouraged each student to develop financial-literacy skills by depositing their allowance and birthday money on a regular basis.

Thomas Heathe Slater

Slater physical-education instructor John Beliard helped fulfill a seven-year dream as volunteers from Surgical Care Affiliates joined KaBOOM! to build a school playground in April. As a bonus, volunteers added an outdoor classroom, picnic tables, a sandbox, a terrarium and a mural of the world. "Before this, all we could do is go play football down on the [open] field and run up and down the streets — and I didn't want to do that," fourth-grader Sherrod Moore said after a ceremony attended by Atlanta Board of Education member Brenda Muhammad. "Now we have swings and stuff like that, and there's enough room for each of the grade levels to use it each time."

D.H. Stanton

The school's fifth-grade reading team, along with the Morris Brandon Elementary

reading team, won top honors at the Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl in February. Both schools also represented the district in the Georgia Regional Bowl at Clayton State University in March. The honors continued as fourth-graders Tanesheia Arnold and Raygan Headrick won first place at the APS district One Academic Fair and advanced to the State Technology Fair in Macon for their digital project called "The Inuit: People of the Arctic."

Thomasville Heights

Students Jacqueshea Williams and Andrea Dozier were Gold Key winners in the Novice division for elementary schools during the district's One Academic Fair at North Atlanta High School.

Middle Schools

Crawford W. Long

The school scored a Triple Crown this semester. Dr. Elizabeth L. Harris won the Dr. Beverly L. Hall Administrator of the Year Award for her work as principal of Long, while Program Assistant Dr. Donna Murrell-Speed earned Debate Coach of the Year from the Atlanta Urban Debate League of Emory University. The school also received the Commitment to Excellence Award.

W.L. Parks

Parks welcomed two distinguished literary figures in March, including noted children's book author Evelyn Coleman. With help from Morris Garner, program division manager of the Auburn Avenue Research Library, sixth-graders learned how to capture video footage of famous Atlantans for a documentary about the Pittsburgh community.

Luther Judson Price

Talk about a model of consistency: For the third consecutive year, eighth-graders participated in IBM Engineers Week (E-Week) activities in mid-February. The event helps students understand the value of engineering, math and science. Volunteers from IBM helped students create puffmobiles using three straws, four Lifesavers candies, one piece of paper, tape and scissors. Guided by IBM staff, teams of students tested their mobiles, made necessary corrections and then raced their puffmobiles for bragging rights.

High Schools

The New Schools at Carver

Students from Carver's School of Health Sciences & Research won the Georgia biomedical debate championship during the Health Occupation Student Association's state conference. The title underscored Carver's commitment to mixing real-world experience and classroom instruction as students prepare for success in college and career.

South Atlanta

APS led the nation with the most 2010 Gates Millennium Scholarship recipients. Of the 29 students honored, South Atlanta senior Allysia Clore just might have the most inspirational success story. She overcame diabetes and homelessness to earn her scholarship. Clore plans to major in biology at Spelman College in the fall and credits the district's High School Transformation Initiative as a key factor in her accomplishments, which include earning more than \$500,000 in scholarship offers.

Scholarships awarded to the Class of 2010

Each year, APS students earn millions in scholarship offers from colleges and universities around the country. Here are a few programs and scholarship recipients from the Class of 2010:

Gates

The Gates Millennium Scholars Program, established in 1999, was initially funded by a \$1 billion grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The scholarships provide support for the cost of education; renewable awards for scholars maintaining satisfactory academic progress; graduate school funding in the areas of computer science, education, engineering, library science, mathematics, public health or science; and leadership skills.

This year APS led the nation with 29 students honored. Recipients of the 2009-10 Gates scholarship are: Elicee Edgers, Erika Clater and Jasmine Herndon of Benjamin E. Mays High; Quanteshia Tennyson, Chelsea Falcone, Shaeroya Earls, Kamalia Blunt, Mia Philpot and Deonte Bridges of Booker T. Washington; Toyia Gray, Jhamarcus Jones, Briahna Head, Brittany Magee and Orane Douglas of Carver School of Health Sciences & Research; Javon McLester of

Carver School of Technology; Zyer Beaty of D.M. Therrell School of Health Science & Research; Justin Savage of D.M. Therrell School of Law Government & Social Justice; Randie Henderson and Cerise Clarke of Carver Early College; Cachet Pinson, Marieh Scales, Ashley Wilson and Jared Vallair of Frederick Douglass; Chelsea Little of Maynard H. Jackson; Aundrea Collins, Tykeria West, Celeste Gee and Graves Taylor of North Atlanta; and Alyssia Clore of South Atlanta School of Health Science & Research.

21st Century Atlanta Scholars

The 21st Century Atlanta Scholars program grooms high-performing students from economically challenging backgrounds for admission to top-tier small U.S. colleges. This year's scholars are: Booker T. Washington's Veronica Coates (Middlebury College) and Quanteshia Tennyson (Middlebury College); Carver School of the Arts' Amber Smith (Wesleyan College) and Quinesha Tillman (Holy Cross); Douglass' Marieh Scales (Wellesley College), Jared Vallair (Tufts), Kenya Wilkerson (Holy Cross) and Jessica Doanes (Hampshire College); Grady's Asha Farmer (Wesleyan University); and South

Atlanta School of Law & Social Justice's Vernon Gibbons (Hamilton College).

Coca-Cola

The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation supports more than 1,400 college students each year, with annual scholarships of \$3.4 million. Of the 250 outstanding high school seniors named as Coca-Cola Scholars this year, one came from Atlanta Public Schools: Julia Darien Durham of North Atlanta High.

Posse Foundation

The Posse Foundation identifies public high school students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential. Partner colleges and universities award Posse Scholars with four-year, full-tuition leadership scholarships. Once chosen, each scholar is assigned a mentor to guide him or her through the first year in college, and a group of nine other scholars — who serve as their "posse" — provide support along the way. The 2009-10 Posse scholars from APS, and the schools they will attend, are:

Bard College — Durante Barringer of D.M. Therrell Health Science & Research; Treyonna Frazier of

Carver School of the Arts; and Benjamin Powers of Grady.
Boston University — Mariah Burch of Grady and Spencer Lai of North Atlanta.
The College of Wooster — Chelsea Addison of North Atlanta, LaShanda Evans of Tech High School, Janna Haywood and Erin Johnson of Grady; Lisa Paige of Booker T. Washington; and Joshua Reese of Benjamin E. Mays.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarships are awarded each year to outstanding students from Atlanta Public Schools whose qualities of mind and spirit promise outstanding contributions to society. Scholarships cover tuition, fees and room and board at Emory University. The 2009-10 MLK Scholars include: Deonte Bridges of Booker T. Washington; Orane Douglas of Carver Health Sciences & Research; Asha Farmer and Madeline Roorbach of Grady; James Friedman of North Atlanta; Saibre Shy of D.M. Therrell; Sharlee Taylor of North Atlanta; and Nichole Wiggins of Douglass.

Congratulations to



**Project
GRAD**

ATLANTA

for **10** years
of Making a Difference at APS!

As the district's signature reform model, **Project GRAD** helps students in economically disadvantaged communities chart a path to college by offering social services, college-prep skills and instructional support — from elementary school through high school.



GRADUATION



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THANKS TO PROJECT GRAD ATLANTA:

More than 1,400 APS students have earned Brumley-GRAD scholarships

APS students in 33 schools can now envision a path to college

Brumley-GRAD scholars pursue higher education at more than 70 colleges and universities



Together, we're showing our students that Graduation Really Achieves Dreams!



Centennial Place teacher Gloria Kim uses a Promethean board in class.

Centennial Place gets significant technology upgrade

CENTENNIAL: from Page 1

have to make sure we have what we need to prepare our students for an ever-changing world.”

To bolster that mission, Shelton worked with community members to form the Centennial Place School Foundation in February 2007. The following year, Centennial Place installed 255 Thin Client workstations; a new Mac Tech Lab with 30 computers; and Promethean boards in the science lab, tech lab and media center. This year, the school was able to purchase an additional 24 Promethean boards – nine of which were purchased by the foundation. Georgia Tech also bought one of the boards. As a result, every classroom in grades K-5 has a Promethean board.

A far cry from traditional blackboards, Promethean boards connect to a classroom computer and display curriculum software as well as other educational resources. These interactive teaching tools encourage students to actively participate in learning.

“When I first saw one at work, I was blown away,” said foundation board member Andrea Ashmore, who serves as special assistant to the president and director of institute partnerships at Georgia Tech. “I knew it was a major teaching tool, but I was surprised by just how much it captured students’ attention. Every hand went up. Not only did the students want the opportunity to write on the white board, but they were really anchored and listening. They knew the answers; the technology spurred more response.”

Parents have noticed an improvement as a result of the school’s commitment to developing 21st century learners.

“It’s getting kids excited about what they can do because it’s so interactive,” said foundation board member and PTA President Janet Kinard, who has two daughters at Centennial Place.

Centennial Place’s teachers also are excited about the technical upgrades.

“Students are able to manipulate objects and take part in their own lessons,” said technology teacher Jilene Murray. “It’s truly amazing, watching second-graders

creating iMovies or voice-overs. I just show them the tools and they run with it.”

Fifth-grade teacher and foundation board member Karin Searls added, “It doesn’t replace the teacher; it enhances the learning process. These are the babies of the digital era. They already have their iPods and their games. It’s second nature to them. They’re so excited about the technology; they don’t even realize how much they’re learning.”

Students who are less familiar with the equipment also benefit from early exposure to a technology-rich learning environment.

“Some kindergarteners have never had the opportunity to touch a mouse,” said Murray. “This evens the playing field, giving them skills they can take wherever they go.”

In addition to the technology initiative, the Centennial Place School Foundation also funds mini-grants for teachers, supporting projects such as high-tech treasure hunts, an urban garden, field trips and a school newspaper. Five grants were awarded last year, and an additional six this year. Since its inception, the foundation has raised more than \$134,000, funding these initiatives and spurring the organization to do even more.

As further proof that strong communities build strong schools, Centennial Place also benefits from a network of 26 business and community partners, including Georgia Tech and Coca-Cola. Georgia Tech, which has many employees with children attending Centennial Place, offers an annual Shadow Day for fifth-graders in addition to tutoring and mentoring by college co-eds. Ashmore said the university is committed to creating a pipeline so Centennial Place students can successfully advance to Inman Middle School, Grady High and, ultimately, Georgia Tech.

“It’s an invested group, getting the best of everything for our children each and every day,” said Shelton.

To learn more about technology at Centennial Place or to support the Centennial Place School Foundation, visit www.cpschoolfoundation.org.

APS students make dramatic gains in NAEP tests

By KEITH BROMERY

APS students demonstrated the largest gains of all states and participating Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA) school districts in the nation between 2002 and 2009 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading tests.

Atlanta Public Schools eighth-grade students gained 14 points on NAEP reading test results since 2002. The gain was significantly greater than all states and all other 2002 participating TUDAs. Eighth-graders showed a 5-point increase from 2007, one of only two TUDAs to have significantly improved performance from the previous administration of the NAEP and the highest of all TUDAs.

APS fourth-graders also experienced dramatic gains from 2002 of 14 points, which was the highest point gain of all states and TUDAs. Furthermore, only five states had comparable increases in scores. For 2007, the average score at fourth grade increased by two points.

The district has also made consistent progress in closing the performance gap with the State of Georgia on the NAEP reading test results since 2002.

Additionally, among fourth- and eighth-graders, APS is closing the score gap between students who are eligible for the federal free and reduced meals program within the district and across the nation, since 2002.

NAEP, also referred to as the Nation’s Report Card, is a uniform assessment of student performance administered across the nation by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). The standards upon which the NAEP is developed are more rigorous than the current Georgia state standards upon which the CRCT is based.

Spread the good news!

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Wilkins holds court with scholar-athletes

By DAVID LEE SIMMONS

Atlanta Hawks Hall of Famer Dominique Wilkins encouraged Coca-Cola Scholar-Athlete Award recipients to maintain their level of dedication to academics and athletics.

"You need patience," said Wilkins. "It's when you try to do too much too soon that you mess up." Earlier, he told the audience, "I knew I would be a professional basketball player when I was about 15 years old, but I knew I also had to educate myself on life."

He delivered those words of wisdom in April during the second-annual Calvin "Monk" Jones Lecture Series at The New Schools at Carver. The lecture honors a retired Carver High basketball coach, who guided his program through the desegregation of the Georgia High School Association basketball tournament in the late 1960s, leading his teams to two state titles.

APS scholar-athletes also played a key role in the lecture series. Marques Harris of Douglass High, 2010 Male Superintendent Scholar Athlete, welcomed special guests, while 2010 Female Superintendent Scholar Athlete Julia Durham of North Atlanta introduced Wilkins, who played under her grandfather, Coach Hugh Durham, at the University of Georgia.

Billette D. Owens-Ashford, director of health, physical education at athletics, recognized the 2010 Coca-Cola Scholar Athletes with the help of Don Osborne and Dannelle J. Thomas of Coca-Cola Enterprises.



Former Hawks great Dominique Wilkins addresses the crowd at the Monk Jones Lecture Series. At right are the Coca-Cola Scholar-Athlete Award recipients.



Here is a list of the 2010 Coca-Cola Scholar Athlete Award winners from around the district:

NEW SCHOOLS AT CARVER

Fine Arts – Janeesa Payne
Achievement Award Male – Brendan Johnson
Achievement Award Female – Treyonna Frazier
Golden Helmet Award – Deric Scott
Scholar Athlete Award Male – Brendan Johnson
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Treyonna Frazier

DOUGLASS HIGH

Fine Arts – Ashley Kyera Gonsalves
Achievement Award Male – Tommy Gooden
Achievement Award Female – Khaalidah Miller
Golden Helmet Award – Garrison Smith
Scholar Athlete Award Male – Marques Harris
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Brooke Smith

GRADY HIGH

Fine Arts – KhalyN Yvette Jones
Achievement Award Male – Joseph deGive
Achievement Award Female – Kristin Cooper

Golden Helmet Award – Christopher Walton
Scholar Athlete Award Male – Jackson Martin
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Madeline Roorbach

MAYNARD H. JACKSON HIGH

Fine Arts – Kiana Odom
Achievement Award Male – Nathaniel Heard
Achievement Award Female – Quinnesia Twine
Golden Helmet Award – Jose Avelar
Scholar Athlete Award Male – Deontae Johnson
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Ericka Brown

BENJAMIN MAYS HIGH

Fine Arts – Denera L. James
Achievement Award Male – Acey L. Palmer Jr.
Achievement Award Female – Larrisa L. Carter
Golden Helmet Award – Timothy Wynn
Scholar Athlete Award Male – Mambay A. Kanu
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Davina L. High

NORTH ATLANTA HIGH

Fine Arts – Teresa Momon
Achievement Award Male – Malcolm Perry
Achievement Award Female – Elizabeth Grace Lahasky
Golden Helmet Award – Lironta Archie
Scholar Athlete Award Male – Evan Glanville
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Julia Durham

SOUTH ATLANTA HIGH

Fine Arts – Harine Beshea
Achievement Award Male – Joshua Davis
Achievement Award Female – Alisha Crooks
Golden Helmet Award – Joshua Davis
Scholar Athlete Award Male – JaTaurus Hughley
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Keira Kruger

D.M.THERRELL EDUCATIONAL COMPLEX

Fine Arts – Jessica Reid
Achievement Award Male – Michael Johnson

Achievement Award Female – Ramanda Christian
Golden Helmet Award – Therracus Mims
Scholar Athlete Award Male – Gregory Oshotse
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Zyer Beaty

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON HIGH

Fine Arts – Ceerra Mintz-Basden
Achievement Award Male – Tyrell Lee
Achievement Award Female – Securia Moore
Golden Helmet Award – Antonio Goodwin
Scholar Athlete Award Male – William Samuels Jr.
Scholar Athlete Award Female – Shaeroya Earls

SUPERINTENDENT SCHOLAR ATHLETE AWARD

Male — Marques Harris – Douglass High
Female — Julia Durham – North Atlanta High

COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD

Male — Michael Reddick, South Atlanta High
Female — Natasha Harrigan, Mays High

Durham receives \$10,000 scholarship from Coca-Cola

DURHAM From Page 20

Durham has been equally successful in her academic, athletic and extracurricular exploits. Ranked in the top five of her class, she is a National Honor Society member, HOPE scholarship recipient and an International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme graduate. She also became the district's first female winner of the Superintendent Scholar Athlete Award, in recognition of her academic work as well as outstanding performance in softball and soccer.

In the fall, Durham will enroll in the University of Georgia's Honors Program — unless Harvard selects her from its waiting list. Her father, David, is a Harvard alum, so it

would obviously make for an interesting decision.

"I only applied to schools I know I would love to go to," said Durham, who also considered Florida, North Carolina, Princeton, UPenn and Emory. "I honestly didn't have a first choice."

She is excited to be going to UGA where her father earned a law degree. Durham's grandfather, Hugh, is the all-time winningest men's basketball coach at UGA, with 298 wins in 18 seasons. Julia's mother, Amy, is a University of Florida grad, so you can imagine what it's like in the Durham household when the Bulldogs and Gators meet in any sport.

"My family grew up with sports," said Durham, who has two younger brothers and a

younger sister.

Durham will not be playing a sport in college, but that doesn't take away from the distinguished career she had at North Atlanta, where she was a three-time MVP in softball and a soccer standout. She ran cross country one year and was team MVP.

She was a pitcher in softball until she tore her rotator cuff, forcing her to move to first base. She caught this year, though it was fitting that she ended her career on the mound, pitching the last game. In soccer, Durham was a rock as a stopper and sweeper.

"She is so well-rounded," MyGrant said. "She doesn't excel in just one sport; she's good at everything she does."

The common denominator in Durham's

legion of extracurricular activities is service to others, including Atlanta Community Food Bank's Youth Leadership Summit; Books for Africa; Charity:Water; Sunday School teacher; Teen Trendsetters reading mentor; and a mission trip to Kenya last summer.

Durham also served as assistant executive director of Each One Reach One, a tutoring and mentoring program founded by 2006 North Atlanta graduate Antonio Jennings.

In fact, Durham appears to be as close to a perfect student as one could find. But MyGrant did offer one flaw.

"She's not very good at the arts," he said. "She'll tell you she is a terrible dancer, but she took a dance class and she really enjoyed it."

SPORTS

THE ATLANTA EDUCATOR

The Real Thing

**North Atlanta
standout
wins
\$10,000
scholarship
from Coke**

BY PAUL HALLORAN

Coca-Cola got it right: Julia Durham is the Real Thing.

A standout scholar-athlete and community service leader at North Atlanta High School, Durham was one of 253 students nationwide – out of 70,000 applicants – selected as a 2010 Coca-Cola Scholars finalist, earning a \$10,000 college scholarship.

“Julia has the ability to develop relationships with a huge cross-section of people. I think that’s her greatest skill,” said North Atlanta Principal Mark MyGrant, who also served as Durham’s middle-school principal at Sutton. “She was elected student body president, which shows the type of respect her peers have for her. She is very genuine and that quality is quickly recognized by everyone.”

See DURHAM Page 19

