

# SPRING 2019



# THE A. QUINN JONES JOURNAL

The teachers and staff at A. Quinn Jones want to work with you to meet the academic, social and emotional needs of our community's children. At AQJ, we expect our students to be respectful, responsible, and ready to learn.

Working together as a student-parent-teacher team, we hope to prepare every student for educational success. Whether your student plans to return to your home-zoned school, to complete his or her education here at A. Quinn Jones, or would rather prepare for vocational success through work/study programs, we are committed to working together to help your child get the most out of his or her school experience.

We will cultivate creative thinkers, competent communicators and career-focused students. We seek to establish equity for all student learners so that each child feels valued and respected. Our school environment embraces uniqueness and creativity, fostering support for student enrichment. Our daily routine is to inspire and motivate students, wherein their outcomes will include successful academic achievement, career readiness, college preparedness, social-emotional stability and noble citizenship.

We hope the families and educators in our communities will come together here at A. Quinn Jones to establish the building blocks for future excellence.



PRINCIPAL  
DARIN JONES

Hello A. Quinn Jones family,

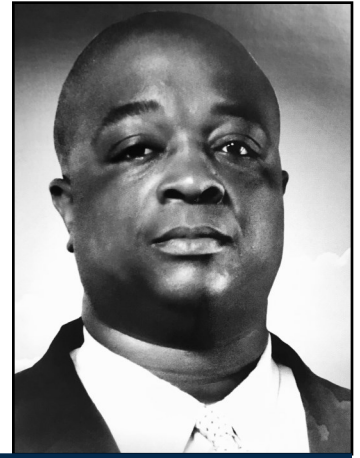
As the school year nears an end, our A. Quinn students, faculty and staff continue to work towards students' individual academic, social and emotional goals. We have smart, competent students at A. Quinn Jones. Many of our students are placed here due to the deficits in their social and emotional development. We provide a wealth of support in these areas. Ms. Sezra Gay, Mrs. Malia Norris and Mr. Lance Hastings do a wonderful job of meeting our students' needs by providing them with both individual and group counseling. Mrs. Gay serves as our school counselor, Mrs. Norris serves as our mental health counselor and Mr. Hastings serves in the role of school psychologist.

Also, as the school year closes we are continuing to look for parents and community members to serve on our school advisory committee. These meetings are held once per month. Parents, teachers, and other community members are encouraged to contribute their input on important school issues.

A couple of weeks ago we lost a beloved member of our staff Officer Adrian Taylor who unexpectedly passed away on March 31, 2019. Officer Taylor was known throughout the Gainesville community for his effort in supporting our youth in their journey towards success. He would respond to calls from parents for help at any time throughout the day and night. If you were ever able to meet Officer Taylor you know that you had a true friend. He leaves behind a beloved wife and three children.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Terriana Taylor for winning the First Annual A. Quinn Jones Essay Contest. She was recognized at a recent school board meeting by board members for her wonderful essay. Through her essay Terriana is showing us that being responsible, being respectful and being ready to learn are the Wildcat Way!

# Officer Adrian TAYLOR



It is a rare blessing to work with someone who embodies such a wide range of compassionate qualities as did our beloved Resource Officer, Adrian Taylor. He was kind to those who have not known kindness, understanding toward those who were misunderstood, gentle to those who have been treated harshly, stern to those who lacked willpower, and always patient to those who needed a second chance. The A.Quinn Jones family mourns the loss of Officer Taylor with great difficulty, for he was such a warm, welcoming soul on his visits to our hallways.

Officer Taylor frequently went above and beyond the call of duty. As a leader at the Outpost, he took his responsibilities far beyond the traditional school day. He visited students and their families at home, supported his students' at their court hearings, attended proms and special school events of the like--he tended to his students the way a parent might tend to their own child. While the halls of A.Quinn Jones and the Outpost will never be the same without him, the bonds he established with his students and co-workers will last long and steady, making a brighter and warmer future for those he left behind.

Here are just a few of the many comments his friends, family and co-workers had to say upon his passing:

<p>You will always be missed my brother, but never forgotten! Rest in peace, we love you. - Rob Ramirez</p>	<p>This news still doesn't seem real, it was just last week you stopped by my job to check on me as you usually did. Truly going to miss you my brother. You were living example of what a brother is. Until we see each other again, keep an eye on us from above. Love you bro, Danny Prince</p>
<p>Truly an angel on earth. My condolences to the family. We have gained a guardian angel - NC</p>	<p>Our hearts and souls are wrapping around you all Geneva, Frazier and you wonderful kids. We love you and will always know that sweet, amazing Adrian is with God . The loss to all is unspeakable. His smile, contagious.. his soul, that of an angel. Love with all our hearts, Jill, Bruce, Sean, Darron, Chaelin, and Meghan</p>
<p>So sad to hear; such a loss. Such a man of impact in the wrestling community and lives of the young ones he mentored and led. I will not forget his welcoming and compassionate nature. Rest easy, coach. With love and prayers, Pat and Bekah McDonald</p>	<p>Condolences to the Family and Friends of Coach Taylor. I can truly say he was all about the betterment of the kids. - Alphonso Burnett</p>
<p>Officer Taylor, you will be missed. I thank you for your service and looking out not only for my son but all the other youth you came into contact with. My prayers are with the family &lt;3. - Yolanda Hawkins</p>	<p>To the family and Reichert House family, Mr. Taylor was a great, caring person who saw the good in people. He never had anything negative to say about anyone, always positive. He will surely be missed. - Sheree Ross</p>

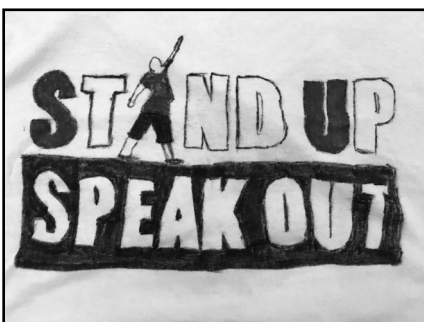
# THE ANTI-BULLYING CLUB



Bullying has finally met its match—Ms. Clare and Velez, their students Jas’manique Pringle, Jashavia Corbin, and Madison German are fed up with bullying and plan to do something about putting a stop to it. It all started during a discussion between Ms. Clare and her paraprofessional, Ms. V, regarding their concern that many of their students were missing out on some of the most exciting aspects of attending a traditional high school—playing for their school’s athletics teams, joining the school band, cheerleading, etc. While these devoted teachers didn’t have the means to provide these experiences, they pinpointed one thing that was definitely within their reach—school clubs.

“I wanted my homeroom class to feel like they were part of a club. Ms. V and I suggested the idea to them and asked if they had specific issues on campus they felt strongly about.” says Ms. Clare. Her students immediately chose bullying. “Mostly because bullying is something they’d noticed on campus since they’d arrived here. They were really passionate about it, too.”

Since then, the mostly student-driven Anti-Bullying Club has campaigned from one classroom to the next with homemade t-shirts, posters, and strongly worded speeches urging their classmates not only to empathize with the victims of bullying, but also with the bullies themselves. Their approach is effective and inspiring. The A. Quinn Jones family is proud to see students and teachers like these rising above the negativity and making a difference in our hallways.





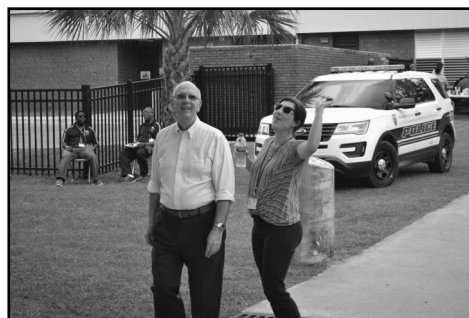
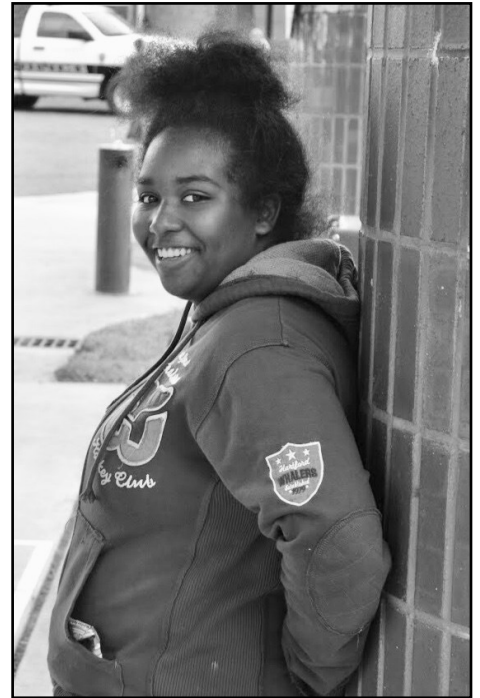
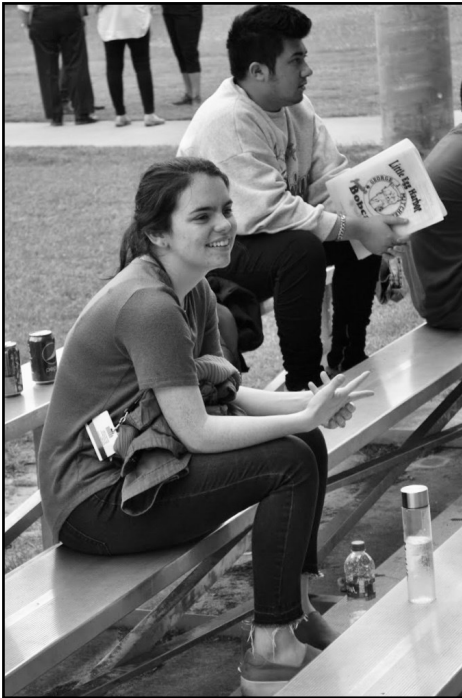
# CAREER FAIR

Ms. Sezra Gay and A.Quinn Jones family would like to send a huge thank-you to the entire AQJ Team for their support in encouraging our students to participate in our Career Fair this past February. Without all the hard work, it would not have been such a huge success. All of the following students completed their Passports and were rewarded with a Chik-fil-a meal, a drink and chips. The winners of the drawing received additional rewards.

- Don-ye Washington, 1<sup>st</sup> Prize:** Google Play Card
- Calaya Jones, 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize:** \$5.00 Wild Card
- Andrick Thrope, 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize:** \$5.00 Wild Card



# AQJ FIELD DAY





# AQJ FIELD DAY





# WILDCAT CORNER

## CASSIDY CLARE

Cassidy Clare is one of the newest additions to our A. Quinn Jones family and right from the start, she has proven herself to be an incredibly positive influence on both her students and coworkers. When she attended University of Florida, she immediately knew that she wanted to work in elementary education. At first, her passion focused upon students with significant physical disabilities but after interning at A. Quinn Jones with Mr. Long she fell in love with the students here. Since then she has devoted herself to the treatment of all students, including those with emotional disabilities.



Such a hefty task is not easily accomplished but Miss Clare's success may be linked to her natural ability to create strong personal bonds with her students. This helps her keep her passion burning warm and bright even in the bleakest moments. However, she recognizes there are times that these close connections make it hard not to take her students' behaviors personally. When a student acts up in class, while many teachers believe their disciplinary goals should be geared toward maintaining an ideal classroom environment, Miss Clare's first concern is with the student. "I just want to make sure my student is okay!" she says. And in the end, when each student feels important and cared for individually, the classroom environment generally reflects their calm.

Despite the struggle, Clare is eager for her students to continue sharing their experiences. "Today we had intense discussion about the achievement gaps and racial injustice in Gainesville. It was cool to hear their perspectives. These are moments I really live for. It's been very humbling." Miss Clare also welcomes the opportunity to grow within her classroom alongside her students. "It's so easy to come into a school and think I'm aware of the things going on in our community. I realized I need to understand where my students are coming from before I can assume anything about them."

In addition to her broadening perspective, Miss Clare has learned some other essential skills in her classroom that will undoubtedly be lifelong assets. "De-escalation is one of the greatest strategies I've ever learned. So many times managing the escalation is the most important thing I do in the classroom."

Miss Clare is certainly one of the most important additions AQJ has made to our classrooms. She's a passionate learner, an empathetic teacher, an enthusiastic coworker, and a devoted member of her Gainesville community. When she has satisfied her desire to be in the classroom, she hopes to get involved in child protection services. "I became a Guardian ad-Litem a few years ago. I really love working with children in foster care, it's been a wonderful experience."





# WILDCAT CORNER

## DIKASSA DIXON

Dikassa Dixon is a dynamic presence in the A. Quinn Jones middle school hallway. His belief in the future success of his students radiates from his classroom and follows behind the kids as they transition from class to class. Like a coach cheering on his players, Dixon motivates his students with the reality of their actions and the reality of their potential futures. Strangely enough, teaching was not a destiny he saw coming. “I discovered teaching by accident. I wanted to be an engineer or a drug enforcement agent. Teaching was far from my mind. I still don’t know how I ended up here, but I certainly don’t regret it.”

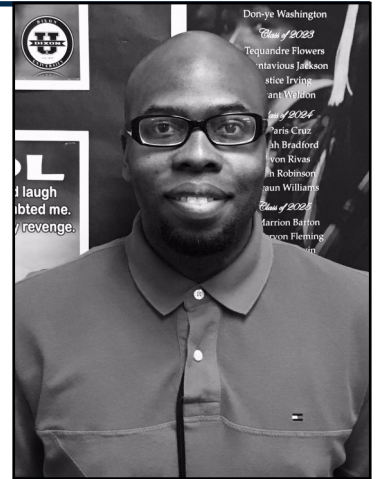
Mr. Dixon grew up in Jacksonville at a time when the murder rate was the worst in the state, especially for young African-American men. With the support of his family and the drive of his own determination, he ascended those harsh conditions, attended and graduated from the University of Florida, and joined the faculty at Fort Clarke where he taught Physical Education for sixteen years. “I used to mentor kids who would have been sent to A. Quinn if not for someone taking the time to help, so I knew what kind of school I was coming to and I wanted that challenge. I want to help kids in difficult situations.”

While he had plenty of experience working with his community and in the school system, there were some unexpected challenges facing Mr. Dixon when he arrived. “I used to be phys-ed teacher, I’m used to managing 100 kids in one area. It’s easy to manage a big crowd in a big open space, but classroom management is much different!”

Another surprise came to Mr. Dixon and his paraprofessional, Mary Staples, after they’d gifted a 3-ring binder to each of their students. “We handed them out and instructed them to organize their assignments, but not one student knew how a 3-ring binder worked!” Mr. Dixon and Mrs. Staples wondered what other educational experiences their students had missed out on. “Some of these kids never had someone make the effort to give some one-on-one time. Some have never had someone sit down and just read to them. Stuff like that means a lot.” After implementing a fifteen minute reading time each day along with some other basic experiences, they’ve seen great improvement in student behavior and academics. “I want to make sure these kids make something out of their lives. I always believe no matter where you are in life you can make a change if you’re dedicated to it.”

Mr. Dixon knows firsthand the consequences awaiting those on the destructive life path many of our students are tempted to follow. “I’ve been to a lot of funerals for young men caught up in that life. I’ve seen the police coming through the church to make sure no further violence happens, I’ve seen undercover cops outside the church, I’ve seen helicopters flying over. I’ve seen the father jump up when they close his son’s casket. I’ve heard the mother crying out, ‘Why?’.”

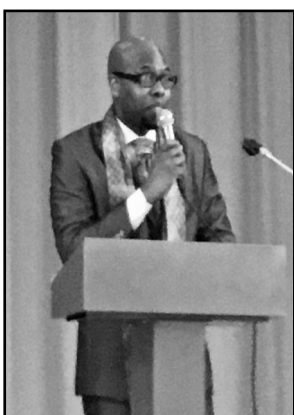
Mr. Dixon is determined to create a better future for his students. “I want to be a positive force that changes the direction of these kids. They might have it rough, but they’re not the only ones. People all over who had tough backgrounds were determined to make it and they succeeded.”





This year A. Quinn Jones celebrated Black History Month with another unforgettable program created and performed by the students, teachers, staff, and various members of our wonderful community in order to honor the great legacy left to us by our African-American leaders and freedom fighters of the past, present, and future. To open the ceremony, our own Dikassa Dixon stirred the crowd with a moving speech. Each word rang true in the hearts of the audience, but perhaps the most memorable arrived in his very first sentence.

## “When I think of Black History, I think of COURAGE.”

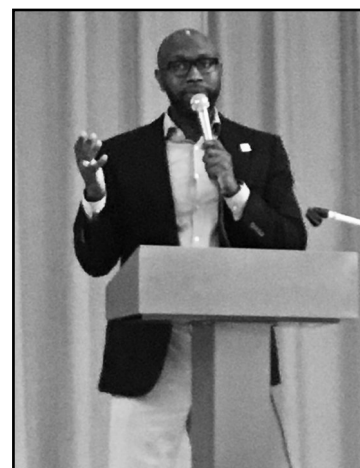


Truly there is no better word to describe it, and Mr. Dixon wasn't finished yet. He reminded the audience that it takes courage to believe in oneself despite the racism and judgement heaped upon the shoulders of African-Americans, reminded us to stay true to our self identity. “It's not what people call you that matters, it's what you *answer to* that counts.” And finally, he reminded the audience that mankind is meant to endure hardship. “Be like a rubber ball. If you hit the ground, bounce back up.”

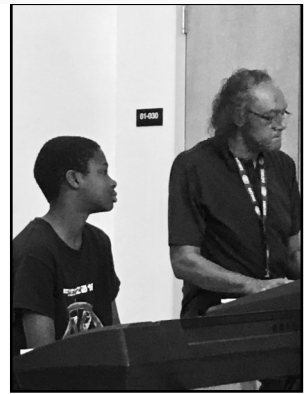
The program continued with just as much vigor and substance. Principal Jones gave stirring speech to our students, who needed reminding that pride in one's race and pride in oneself go hand in hand. “You have to

*believe* you deserve the best.” he told them, urging them to break free of their destructive behavior so they can achieve their potential. We were then treated to a variety of entertainment. Our AQJ choir, led by Mrs. Annette Larkin, filled the auditorium with warm, spiritual melodies. Our band director, McKinley Collier, showcased some of our most talented student musicians and Paula Anderson shared some incredible student art. Finally, one of our most accomplished students, Terriana Taylor, was awarded 1st prize in the first annual AQJ Black History Month Essay Contest.

Photos from this wonderful program can be seen on the next page.



# THE BLACK HISTORY MONTH







# WILDCAT CORNER

## STACY LONG

The first thing students notice when they meet Mr. Stacy Long is his big, jovial smile from which his enthusiasm beams. He is a man devoted to his students, devoted to spreading knowledge and hope, and of course, he remains devoted to A. Quinn Jones after sixteen years. He is a natural presence in the classroom, but strange enough, he did not intend to be a teacher from the start.

“I wanted to be a doctor when I was younger.” Long says. “Teaching was my backup plan. When I got to UF I wanted to get an art degree to do Arts and Medicine. I took some science classes, I prayed and asked God for a sign if I should be a doctor.” But as luck would have it, or perhaps some higher power would, Mr. Long received his sign in the form of a D in Biology. “I took that as my sign that I should become a teacher!” Mr.

Long then took a job as a reading tutor and found himself helping students at Terwilliger raise their reading scores. When he graduated, a school board member offered a position as a teacher’s aide and the rest is history.

Mr. Long knows that he can’t reach every student, especially those who seem determined not to learn, but that doesn’t deter him in the least. “You can try as hard as you can with those students. Sometimes they don’t like the teacher, the school, they don’t want to be here. Whatever it is, I might not reach all of them. But as long as I reach one student, I’ve done my job.”

And when he reaches those students, the rewards make all the hard work worth it. Even if he has to wait a little while to receive it. “Sometimes you don’t realize when you’ve reached them. They might come back a year or more later, just stop by my room to say hello. That’s when I know I made a difference, when they come back and acknowledge you.”

After all his time teaching, Mr. Long has learned quite a few things about his students. Our community might do well to pay attention to his perspective and take his well-seasoned advice on how to help our kids. “Take time with your kids, don’t just put them in the corner of the room with a coloring book. Some kids just need extra help, even if they don’t know it. And some kids need help immediately, you can’t just wait for later or else they’re going to shut down.”

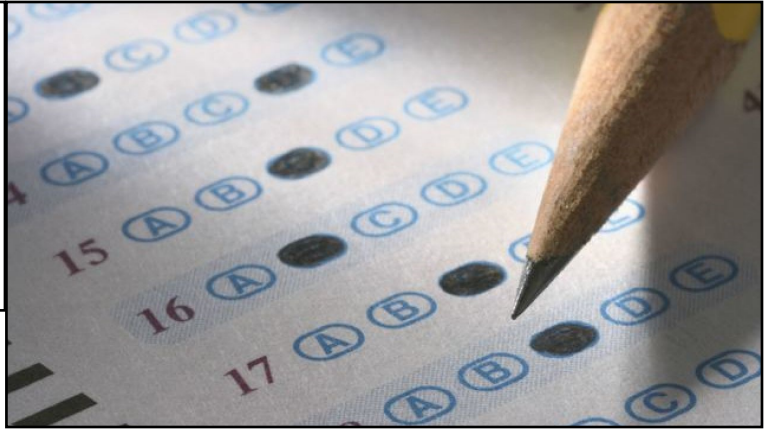
He has some words of wisdom for our incoming students as well. “Just because you’re here, that doesn’t mean you have to act like the other kids here. Your main goal should be to try to get back on track and back to your school.”

In addition to his love for teaching, Mr. Long also loves to visit the happiest place on Earth—Disney World. Seven times now he has attended Disney’s Christmas Candlelight Processional at EPCOT and three of those times he’s gotten backstage to meet the one and only Whoopi Goldberg. “Everybody knows I love Disney!” he exclaims, and that comes as no surprise to any of his coworkers—despite the often stressful atmosphere of the A.Quinn Jones hallways, Mr. Long’s steady smile makes it seem as though he’s just walked off Pandora, his favorite ride at Animal Kingdom.



# FSA

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS



With the FSA and end of course tests right around the corner, we thought it might help to hear a few tips on preparing your students for their big day. Every parent

wants to see their student experience success in the classroom. So, what's the best way to help your child prepare for high-stakes tests and keep a healthy mindset while doing so? Here's eight simple tips for parents to help your child perform his or her best on testing days.

### **1. Prioritize attendance and homework**

Tests are ultimately intended to be a measure of how well students have learned the material being taught in class. The best piece of test-prep advice for parents is to ensure that your child is fully engaged with his or her classwork. Set aside dedicated homework time each night to make sure that your child is completing their assignments consistently. And of course, only allow your child to stay home from school when it's truly necessary.

### **2. Communicate with your child's teacher**

Regular communication with your child's teacher can help you gain insight into his or her progress. Make a point of meeting or talking with your child's teacher on an ongoing basis to understand what your child is working on, what he or she will be tested on, and the areas that he or she is exceling and struggling in. Your child's teacher is also a great resource for test-preparation activities or strategies you can use with your child at home.

### **3. Talk to your child about test taking**

Sometimes, the purpose and goals of testing are difficult for children to understand. It's easy for children to be intimidated by testing and not feel motivated to put forth their best effort. Have open, ongoing conversations with your child to explain how they will benefit from testing.

### **4. Offer positive reinforcement**

A little encouragement can go a long way in helping students walk into testing days feeling confident. Praise your child for the work they do to prepare for testing, share in their excitement when they succeed in a new concept or skill. If they struggle with a topic, point out their progress, encourage them to continue working. Experiencing success with the testing material will help your child avoid test anxiety and perform to their best ability on testing day.

### **5. Support healthy habits**

Sleep and nutrition can have a huge impact on your child's ability to focus and retain information. Well-rounded meals and a regular sleep schedule will help your child succeed on a day-to-day basis. On testing days, make sure your child gets a good night's sleep and starts the day with a filling breakfast

### **6. Give your child a study space**

A comfortable, dedicated space for homework and studying can work wonders for your child's productivity. Make sure that your child's space is quiet, well lit, and stocked with the right materials like a writing surface, pens, pencils, highlighters, scratch paper, a calculator, and any other tools that he or she might need.

### **7. Keep testing in perspective**

No single test is *that* important. Putting too much emphasis on your child's test scores can make your child feel pressure that will ultimately only affect their performance negatively. It's also important to not be upset by a single test score. Low test scores can occur for any number of reasons; it may have just been an off day for your child.

### **8. Debrief after the test**

After testing day has come and gone, talk with your child about his or her results and how he or she felt about the test. By discussing their answers, thought processes and feelings, you can gain further insight into what they struggle with and excel at and then help them to better prepare next time. Talking about testing can also help your child process the experience and overcome any anxiety they may have had.



## WILDCATS OF THE WEEK IN 2019

These students were recognized by their teachers because they exemplified our three most important expectations: be responsible, be respectful, and be ready to learn.

Anderson, Lou	Rasheed Dipiano	Jovani Lopez	Jehovah Smith
Delonte Bing	Alek Eade	Jason Lyndady	Kani Speed
Levon Brown	Gabriel Faught	Damari Mitchell	Terriana Taylor
Willie Chisolm	Tequandre Flowers	Kylie Patterson	Tyrell Thomas
William Clause	John Freeman	Na'Corey Patterson	Clayton Wamsley
Reggie Copeland	Germarris Hayes	Kamron Polk	Don-Ye Washington
Destiny Criscuoli	Quay Jackson	Brooklyn Prescott	Makhi Williams
Sh'Paris Cruz	Zakhia Jenkins	Jasmanique Pringle	Malik Williams
Greg Curtis	Kendrick Johnson	Juan Ramirez	David Willis
Kobbi Davis	Janiya Jones	Jordan Roberts	Mykel Young
Travion Davis	Calaya Jones	Jamarien Ross	Geraldo Zayas-Velez
	Jesse Lawrence	Keon'da Scott	

The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach. It isn't a calamity to die with dreams unfulfilled, but it is a calamity not to dream...It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for. Not failure, but low aim is sin.

— Benjamin E. Mays —