

Graduating senior hopes to use scholarship to become teacher at her former elementary school

When Acariyah Nelson was in first grade at Irby Elementary School in Alachua, she had a chance to come to school dressed for the job she wanted when she grew up. She came dressed as a teacher.

Now on the verge of graduating from Gainesville High School's Academy of Future Teachers (AFT), Nelson is much closer to achieving her goal of becoming a teacher, with an \$8000 scholarship to help pave the way.

Nelson is this year's recipient of the Florida Prepaid Superintendent Scholarship, which was made possible by a partnership between Alachua County Public Schools and the Florida Prepaid Scholarship Foundation. She'll be using the scholarship to attend the University of North Florida to pursue her education degree and earn her teaching certificate.



"I want to help the future generation and change people's lives," said Nelson. "I had incredible teachers who changed my life, and I appreciate them so much."



The AFT is one of several career tech academies offered by Alachua County Public Schools. They provide students with a rigorous and relevant curriculum along with real-world experiences in their chosen professions. For Nelson, that meant serving internships in local schools, including Irby Elementary.

"I really love Irby, and I enjoyed working with the first-graders," she said. "I would love to go back and teach there."

"Acariyah exemplifies all the characteristics of a fantastic teacher," said Katherine Martinez-Malo, director of the AFT. "She's intelligent, compassionate, empathetic, selfless, genuine, and creative."

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