



Fall & Friends Mentoring



Happy Fall, Y'all!

For those who are new to Fayette County Schools, welcome! If we haven't met yet, let's fix that! It is my goal to serve you all and work together to support and supply students with what they need outside of the classroom.

The Friends Mentoring Program is growing more and more each month. The program's main focus is to connect community members with students to build relationships that will support their growth socially and academically.

This semester has been filled with recruitment, new programs, and getting more staff engaged with mentoring.



Whitewater HS added 18 more students to their HiTeen program this week.

There are over 30 student volunteers at Whitewater and over 100 HiTeen volunteers across Fayette County Schools.

New Program

READ GA



Retired teachers and nurses from Flat Creek Baptist Church are inspired to serve in Fayette County Schools. Under the leadership of Lynn Gilbert, over 20 members were trained to serve second grade students to help them with their site words while being a safe place for students to talk to. This program will kick off at Cleveland Elementary School in the first week of November!

Friends Mentoring GROUP PROGRAMS

- **Traditional Mentoring**
 - One on One mentoring with students and community members
 - All schools K-12
 - In person, during school hours
- **REACH GA**
 - One on One mentoring in connection with a person in the community that specifically relates to the students potential career path
 - 8th-12th grade scholarship recipients
 - In person and virtual, during lunch
- **READ GA**
 - Flat Creek Baptist Church volunteers that work with second graders on their site words
 - This program will serve at Burch Elementary School and Cleveland Elementary School
 - In person and during school hours
- **Fathers Being Involved (F. B.I)**
 - Small group, boys, leadership program for elementary school students
 - Fayette Elementary School
 - In person and during school hours
- **Pearls of Excellence**
 - Small group, girls, leadership program for elementary school students
 - Fayette Elementary School
 - Virtual and meet on Saturdays
- **KINGS (Keep Inspiring Next Generation mentoring program)**
 - Small group, boys, leadership program for elementary school students
 - North Fayette Elementary
 - In person and Virtual, during school hours
- **RISE**
 - Small group, boys and girls, leadership program for middle school students
 - Bennett's Mill Middle School
 - In person, after school
- **Amigos**
 - Fayette County High School students and community mentors of all ages work with Spanish speaking students who are learning English as a second language
 - Cleveland Elementary School
 - In person, before school
- **HiTeen**
 - High school students get paired with a student at a local elementary school. Students will mentor in a group setting and can read books, play games, and even play on the playground with students.
 - McIntosh, Whitewater, and Starrs Mill High School
 - In person, before or after school
- **Pass It On**
 - Peer Mentoring program between Seniors and Freshman
 - Sandy Creek High School
 - In person, during school

COUNSELORS, EMAIL DAVIS.CORA@FCBOE.ORG IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN STARTING A HITEEN PROGRAM OR ANY GROUP MENTORING PROGRAMS AT YOUR SCHOOL.



MENTOR OF THE MONTH

Niesha Braggs



This has been a challenging year and Niesha Braggs rose to the challenge. She saw a need within the Fayette County Schools and has done something about it. She is a bus driver, a substitute teacher, and mentor. All of which have been big needs to fill this school year. She does each of her jobs with joy, grace, and gratitude.

Niesha was inspired to apply as an out-of-the-box way to support her daughter. When Niesha reflected on her years in high school, she remembered the support she needed. She said, "When I was in school, I had peers who had parents who worked in the county or at the school and I felt like it helped them to be more of themselves. I wanted to provide that for my daughter to show support for her as she transitions [into high school]." Niesha saw the ad for bus drivers on Facebook at what felt like the perfect time.

Niesha is from California and moved to Georgia in 2018. She worked at Pinewood Studios on the Disney+ miniseries, *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier*, for over a year. When COVID hit, it changed everything. "I was ready to go back into the film industry and went this direction instead. It's so much more rewarding than working on set," she explained.

When Niesha first started her job as a bus driver, she began to see that she had to be more than a bus driver. She talked about different conflicts that would arise on her bus that sharpened her intuitiveness. She learned that conflict had history and each incident was not just a random instance. "While our driving incidents can feel like they come out of nowhere. I knew that if I had a deeper connection with each of my riders, they would be more likely to keep their hands to themselves. At the end of the day, they're more likely to respect someone as someone if they're a person to them," she expressed. She knew she had to focus on treating each of her riders as humans...not just riders. That mindset changed the way she operated her bus.

Today, when students board Niesha's bus, they are each greeted individually by name. Niesha said that this may take her students a little longer to board her bus but she still manages to pull off at the same time as other drivers. She knows the impact of taking the time to acknowledge each student is worth it. "I talk to them and take the time to get to know everyone who is on my bus. Every time they board my bus, I always say 'good morning'. When I pick them up, I ask them how their day is going. Sometimes, I ask them to rate their day. If they seem down, I'll give them a high five," she described. She believes that these seemingly little interactions can make a huge impact.

She takes this same philosophy with her into each classroom when she is subbing. This is just the beginning for Niesha. "Bus driving and subbing give me opportunities to have a flexible schedule so I can go back to school to finish up my bachelors in English," she said. Niesha is considering becoming an English teacher when she graduates. The children inspire her and she knows part of her purpose is to encourage them and be a part of their lives.