Walking Our Path With Purpose

Student Edition

Summer 2026

Cornerstone Christian Academy

From the Desk of the Head of School

by Brandon McNeice, Head of School and CEO

Dear Cornerstone Community,

In what has become one of my favorite traditions here at Cornerstone, I welcome you to the 2026 Student Edition of our newsletter. As in years past, every story, interview, and photograph was conceived and crafted entirely by our remarkable Student Ambassadors. These amazing Middle School students spent much of the past year pouring their creativity, curiosity, and insight into these pages, producing a publication that speaks in their own voices. Under the leadership of our Student Editor-in-Chief, Nayla West, they have once again created something we are deeply proud of.

The title they chose this year, "Walking Our Path With Purpose," captures something true about us. In these pages, you will meet the teachers who inspire our students each day, step inside KinderBee Nation where our youngest scholars bloom, and see how our Teammate Program pairs students with donors who invest in them. You will hear our Ambassadors reflect on what makes Cornerstone special, celebrate the arts and technology, and even find out what our second graders think about homework and lunch. Their work reflects the character, faith, and confidence that make Cornerstone students so uniquely engaging.

You'll also have one more chance to celebrate the Class of 2026—the "Tribe of Judah"—a class of eighteen who wear that name with pride. Led by our Valedictorian, Khloe Jarrett, and Salutatorian, Malia Mercer, these graduates are heading off to some of the most esteemed and selective high schools in the region. Their achievements are a testament to the strength of our community, and to the enduring impact of a Christ-centered education that prepares them for success beyond our walls.

As you read, I hope you will recognize that one of the foundational pillars that makes these stories possible is your support. Cornerstone thrives because of the generosity of donors like you—who provide nearly 150 scholarships each year and sustain a transformative K–8 education for the families we have served in Southwest Philadelphia for nearly forty years.

Thank you again for believing in our mission, and for helping to shape this next generation of scholars and leaders. With your support, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

Sincerely,

Brandon McNeice
Head of School and CEO
bmcneice@cornerstonephiladelphia.com

Above: Ambassadors Cree and Lance with some of the lower school students they interviewed for this newsletter.

Welcome to Our Student Edition

by Nayla West, 8th Grade - Student Editor-in-Chief

Dear Cornerstone Community,

Hi everyone! My name is Nayla West, and I'm honored to serve as the Student Editor-in-Chief of our Student Ambassador Newsletter. I've been part of the Cornerstone community since 6th grade, and over the years it has truly become a place where I've grown, learned, and found my voice. Now, I am pleased to introduce the other voices you will hear from in the following pages.

Many people at Cornerstone have ideas for how to make our school better, and **Jaila Riley** is sharing hers by exploring ***The Future of the Ambassador Program***. Her interviews highlight why this program matters and how it can become even stronger in the future.

Take a look inside KinderBee Nation with **George Sephes**. Through interviews and research, he gives a closer look at the joy, learning, and excitement that happens in this unique classroom.

We live in a world of technology, and now **Benjamin Johnson** is giving us an inside look. His article highlights the creativity, innovation, and impact technology has on our day-to-day lives at school.

Our students have big goals for the future, so **Alanna Postell** and **Blake Manning** are exploring that journey. They ask their classmates thoughtful questions about what it takes to pursue your dreams and how to turn goals into reality.

Skylar Burns-Dade and **Jada Hitchcock** bring us a look at ***The Lower School Experience***. In this fun experiment, they ask 2nd graders their thoughts on the future of Cornerstone.

Ayden Postell is here to give us an inside look at middle school. Ayden explores what it's like to teach at this level, the challenges students face, and the engaging lessons happening every day.

Creativity takes center stage as **Kaira and Kayla Young** explore the world of art at Cornerstone. This feature highlights the passion, imagination, and artistic spirit of our staff and students.

A picture can tell a story, and **Shawn Greene** uses photography to capture life around our school. His photo essay features pictures of the important spaces and moments that make our school unique.

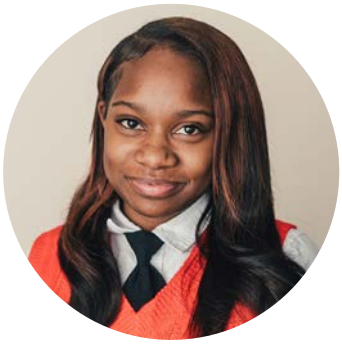
As the school year comes to an end, who better than **Khloe Jarrett** and **Devon Valentine** to help the Class of 2026 say goodbye. They highlight memories, experiences, and reflections from students as they prepare for high school.

What makes Cornerstone such a special place? **Lance Burns** and **Cree Jones** find out by exploring the people, programs, and experiences that make our school unique.

Have you ever wanted to experience support and mentorship from wise people? Well, Cornerstone's Teammate Program makes that happen! **Malia Mercer** tells you all about how fun it is to be a Teammate.

Thank you for your support of our students! I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter from the Cornerstone Student Ambassador cohort of 2025–2026.

Sincerely,
Nayla West '26



Nayla graduated this year and is attending Bonner & Prendergast High School in the fall.

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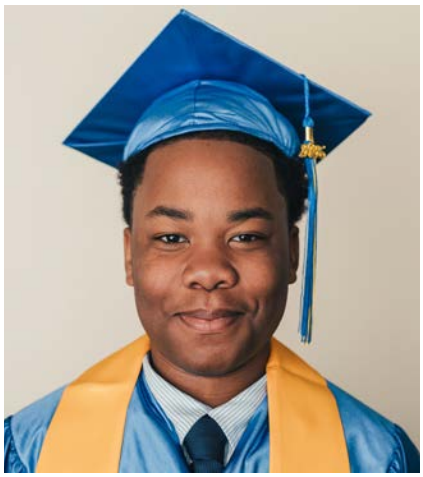
The Class of 2026

Kamari Bryson Barnes*
Carver School of Engineering and Sciences

Vaneya Liberty Brown
West Catholic Prep High School

Lance Angelo Burns*
Roman Catholic High School



Shawn Howard Greene*
Bonner and Prendergast High School

Khloe Abigail Jarrett** *(Valedictorian)*
Cardinal O'Hara High School

Benjamin Conner Johnson*
Girard College

Cree Jones**
Bonner and Prendergast High School

Sanai Marie Ladson*
Bonner and Prendergast High School

Blake Renee Manning*
Bonner and Prendergast High School

*Graduated with Honors **Graduated with High Honors

Malia Sedell Mercer** *(Salutatorian)*
Franklin Learning Center High School

Ayden Jasir Pitts
Bonner and Prendergast High School

Alanna Clarice Postell*
Girard Academic Music Program

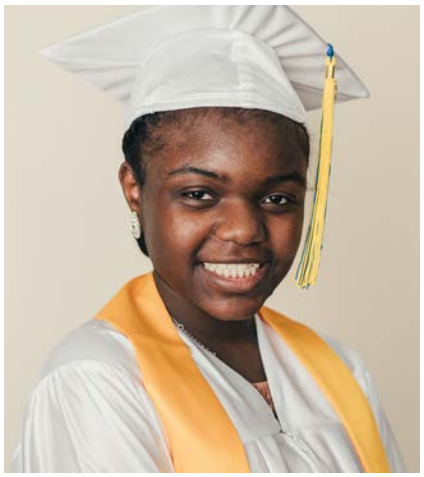
Dallas Couture Rhoads*
Bonner and Prendergast High School

Jaila A'merie' Riley*
Academy at Palumbo

George Joseph Sephes**
Science Leadership Academy

Devon Kaycee Valentine**
West Catholic Prep High School

Nayla Armani West
Bonner and Prendergast High School



Kaira Alexis Young*
Calvary Christian School

Student Voices

The Future Of The Student Ambassador Program

by Jaila Riley, 8th Grade

Hello, my name is Jaila Riley! I joined Cornerstone in 5th grade and became a Student Ambassador in 7th grade. Now that I am graduating, I have to part ways with my beloved school. Under all the emotions and preparation for high school, I have one question: "What will happen to the Ambassadors?" I talked to Cornerstone's teachers to find out which of their current students they could see as future Ambassadors.

I started by asking the 1st grade teacher, Mrs. Lee. She recommended a student named Ryah. At first, Ryah did not know what an Ambassador was, but once informed, she felt very excited. "I can help Cornerstone by being kind to everyone, especially when they are sad!" My heart was warmed when I asked why she loves Cornerstone: "I love it because it's Christian and I get to learn about God. I also think Mrs. Lee is the best teacher in the whole wide world!" Ryah said that she wants to be the kind of leader that inspires people to be kind. "I follow the directions," she said. "Then, my classmates follow my lead." I can tell she will be an excellent Ambassador because of her kindness and compassion.

I made my way across the school yard to 2nd grade, where Ms. Kallie selected a student named Kori. She said she was actually nervous because being an Ambassador is "a huge responsibility", but I could not tell in the slightest. "Cornerstone is special because it is unique, like no other school," she said. When I asked her how she sets a good example for her classmates, those other students chimed in: "Kori is brave!" one said. "Once, when I didn't have a snack, Kori gave me half of hers," added another.

My next stop was 3rd grade, where the teacher, Ms. Simone, selected two students, Urias and Taylor. Taylor expressed that she's "proud of Cornerstone because it's a special place in my heart", and Urias likes the fact that he is being taught life skills.

When I informed them that a big part of being an Ambassador is public speaking, Urias showed that he is up to the challenge: "I would feel nervous but also happy and excited," he said. "I'm not used to talking in front of a lot of people—usually I listen—but I would be happy and excited because it's a new thing for me to master." Taylor said she "would be nervous, but calm and collected because I have done similar things at Chapel." Urias jumped back in, saying "I really want to give a tour." Taylor agreed, "I'm ecstatic to show people around and answer their questions." To me, Taylor and Urias are excellent students and I have no doubt they could be great future Ambassadors.

Next I spoke with a 4th grade student named Sage who has ideas for the school: "We should have more sports teams in addition to basketball. We could also have clubs based on student interest polls!" She has a refreshing point of view on how to improve our school, and I believe Sage is a warm person with a positive outlook. She would be a stellar Ambassador.

My last interview was with Cianni, from fifth grade. "As a Student Ambassador, you are held to a certain standard," she said. "You have to conduct yourself in a way that reflects your character at all times." Cianni also shared that she wants to start an SEL (social/emotional learning) group for lower school and middle school because, "ahealthy and progressive conversations among peers is the key to a warm school environment." I found Cianni to be intelligent and composed, all while being humble. Definitely a future Ambassador.

I truly never had any worries about the Ambassador program after I'm gone. Cornerstone is special due to the people who make it up. I can not describe how full my heart was while doing this assignment.

The students I interviewed are stars in every way, and to all of the students that I didn't interview: know that you can still be an Ambassador. Shine so bright that you light up the school! Even as I graduate, I look forward to seeing how all of you rise.

Jaila graduated with Honors and is attending The Academy at Palumbo in the fall.

What Makes Cornerstone Special?

by Lance Burns and Cree Jones, 8th Grade

Have you wondered what makes Cornerstone Christian Academy the amazing school it is? Well, obviously the classrooms, teachers, and students, but would you like to hear what makes this place so special from the students' perspective?

My name is Cree, and I believe Cornerstone is truly special. It guides us in becoming better Christians and teaches us how to live meaningful and good lives. Our teachers are dedicated and patient, always willing to teach at our pace and provide extra help whenever we need it. For example, our Science Teacher, Ms. Grant, goes beyond academics by sharing important life lessons that will benefit us in the future.

My name is Lance, and this is how I think Cornerstone is special: It has helped me feel completely prepared for high school.

Cornerstone is also special to me because it helps me grow into a responsible, confident person who is ready for high school. It challenges me academically, encourages me to manage my time wisely, and teaches me how to stay organized with my work. The teachers support me and push me to do my best, which helps me build strong study habits and independence. In all subjects, it's about becoming ready for the next stage of my life.

Here are some more opinions from 3rd and 5th grade on why Cornerstone is so special:

"Because of Cornerstone, I feel more prepared to handle harder classes, new responsibilities, and the expectations that come with being a high school student. It's not just about learning."

"Cornerstone is special to me because they help me learn more about things I didn't know, like Black History Month. We presented a song and an interactive museum where you would press a button and the historical figures would come to life: Louis Armstrong, The Supremes, Duke Ellington, and more."

"Cornerstone is special because when I first came here, everyone was nice to me. My classmates make me feel good."

"It's special because it's a private school and they teach us about God with Mr. Dontae and in Chapel. Chapel makes us feel excited!"

"What I think is special about Cornerstone is how the new kids come to the school, see what it's like at Cornerstone, and are shown love and encouragement."

"I think that it is a great school, and it is a safe environment for children to learn."

"When I first started here I was nervous, but after getting to know the teachers and students, it was great."

If you are considering sending your children here, no matter their grade, they will receive more than just an education; they will gain lasting values and experiences. These are the reasons why I find Cornerstone so special.

Lance graduated with Honors and will be attending Roman Catholic High in the fall.

Cree graduated with High Honors and is attending Bonner & Prendergast in the fall.

"Our students' test scores and our graduates' admission into selective high schools tell the story of our academic success.

I am also proud of how the student voices in this newsletter share their perspective on what is happening within the walls of Cornerstone."

Natasha Grant
8th Grade Advisor & Middle School Science Teacher

Support Our Teachers

Make a gift in honor of educators like Ms. Grant who foster these amazing student outcomes with guidance, love, and support.

Middle School Social Studies Teacher Mr. Pratt, helping to make Cornerstone a special place to learn.

Inside Our Classrooms: Teacher Stories That Inspire

by Ayden Postell, 7th Grade

What inspires someone to become a teacher? What keeps them going year after year? I spoke with our middle school teachers to learn about their journeys, memorable moments, and how education has changed over time. Their stories show just how much dedication, care, and passion they bring to our school every day.

Ms. Grant, Cornerstone's Science Teacher and 8th Grade Advisor, has always enjoyed learning. She wanted to make it fun and engaging for students, especially at the middle school level. She is now in her 33rd year as an educator and her 28th year at Cornerstone. She says her faith and the impact she has on students keep her going.

One moment that stood out to her was when students wrote letters to their parents expressing gratitude, not just for academics but for personal growth and character. She believes that even though technology has made it easier to find answers, students should focus on applying what they learn and continue practicing writing by hand. She has also noticed that students today are more confident and willing to take risks, which she sees as a positive change.

Our Science Teacher and 7th Grade Advisor, Mrs. Harris, shared that teaching was not originally part of her plan in life. She stepped in to fill a position in the middle of the school year, encouraged by her daughter to try it for six months. However, after just a few months, she realized teaching was truly what she wanted to do. With 45 years in education, she continues to be motivated to help her students learn and grow.

One of her favorite moments is seeing a student finally understand something they have been struggling with. She also believes that important foundational skills like handwriting, telling time, and phonics should be strengthened in earlier grades so students are better prepared for middle school.

Mrs. Jones became the middle school ELA Teacher and 6th Grade Advisor during the COVID-19 pandemic, after stepping in to fill a sudden opening. She had experience teaching middle school during summer programs, which helped prepare her for the role. She has been at Cornerstone for 18 years and says her faith is what keeps her strong.

Her favorite memories are watching students learn how to read and begin to enjoy it.

Our Social Studies Teacher and 5th Grade Advisor, Mr. Pratt, was inspired to teach because of his passion for history and his desire to connect with students and support his community. With over 15 years of experience, he is motivated by the relationships he builds and the impact he has on students.

One powerful moment he shared was helping a student through a difficult day by taking time to talk and pray with him, which made a big difference. He believes schools should offer more extracurricular activities and more opportunities for students to learn outside the classroom through trips and hands-on experiences.

These teachers all have different stories, but they share the same goal of helping students succeed. Their experiences show that teaching is more than just a job. It is about building relationships, supporting students, and making a difference that can last a lifetime.

Ayden is a first-time Student Ambassador and is looking forward to graduating in 2027.

The Class of 2026: "The Tribe of Judah"

by Khloe Jarrett and Devon Valentine, 8th Grade

Hello Cornerstone, my name is Khloe Jarrett, and my name is Devon Valentine, and we are in the eighth grade. Our 8th grade class has been nicknamed "The Tribe of Judah" and we wear that title with honor and pride and would love to share our story with you.

Where did the title come from? The Tribe of Judah nickname came from our 7th Grade Advisor and Math Teacher, Mrs. Harris. We were playing a Bible game one day and everyone was so excited to show what we knew. She also called us the Tribe of Judah because we were a class of eighteen, much larger than previous years. This name meant a lot to us since it showed she truly loved us enough to name our class.

The Class of 2026, Tribe of Judah has been through a lot, but we made it through together. We would like to share a few quotes and memories from some of our classmates and teachers.

Benjamin: "The class is like a system that functions together to make sure we all succeed."

Lance: "I'm going to miss all the fun times we had together."

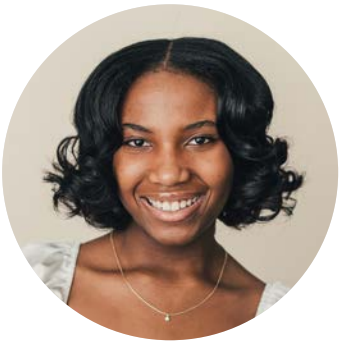
Alanna: "My bond with this class is amazing because we are all like one big family. Going our separate ways is difficult because I love them so very dearly. It's so hard to say goodbye."

We also wanted to ask Mr. Dontae, our Christian Concepts Teacher to share some thoughts on our class, and the Tribe of Judah nickname. "The students in this tribe are known for being strong, bold leaders. Emotionally, you have been through trials and experiences, but you hold each other. An example that I remember is when, as a class, you held one of your schoolmates up when she was afraid to speak in front of a large crowd during Chapel."

"Your excitement in class has pushed me to be a better teacher. This year has helped me find things I didn't know about, because you have often asked me to search for scripture. My students are my motivation for seminary. I wanted my students' voices to be heard. I don't think I would have attended seminary school if I didn't have this passion or level of excitement for my class."

"To say I am proud of you would be right on. You have stayed focused while pursuing your other interests, from sports to playing instruments. I have also enjoyed the friendly fight to be the top of the class. I am grateful for how far you've come. Whether going from goofiness, to seriousness, you have made me proud because you show up."

The tribe of Judah is the foundation of who we are, this class created such a special bond that we will cherish forever. We have been impacted by our teachers, classmates, and community, and it pains us to depart.



Khloe is the 2026 Valedictorian and will be attending Cardinal O'Hara in the fall.

Devon graduated with High Honors and is attending West Catholic Prep in the fall.

"As the Middle School Principal, the academic achievements of Cornerstone students

I am so proud of how these students took charge of the process for this newsletter. From choosing their topics, doing their research, interviewing staff, students, and parents, and developing a cohesive statement that reflects the pride they have in their school.

This is a student-led newsletter and along with these students, I feel great pride in the finished project."

Kia Walker
Assistant Head of School
Middle School Principal

Your Passport to KinderBee Nation

by George Sephes, 8th Grade

Hi, I'm George Sephes, and this is my student newsletter article! I will be talking about the academic foundation of Cornerstone: kindergarten, or as we refer to it: KinderBee Nation. The teachers are Ms. Pam and Ms. Janee. They love what they do! I wanted to learn more about their experience with Cornerstone's youngest students.

Is it hard teaching kindergarten? Do you like it?

Ms. Janee: "I love teaching the KinderBees! A philosopher said that kindergarten is a place where the children bloom. As a teacher, you're a gardener attending to your plants."

Ms. Pam: "Being a teacher has its ups and downs. Some days we may need to buckle up a little tighter. We may need to adjust our lessons and other things. We don't just work here; we work at home on lesson plans, resources, and ways to help the kids. I think if the kids saw what we did, they would be very appreciative."

What does a typical day in kindergarten look like?

Ms. Pam: "They keep us on our toes for sure! We do energizers and reminders of classroom expectations. The moments that stand out are when a lesson "clicks", then we get to watch them apply what they learned. It's a busy life, but for the most part, the rewards are great."

How did you find yourself working at Cornerstone?

Ms. Pam: "There was a position that opened in the middle of the 2019 school year. I was recuperating from an injury at the time but I did the interview and got the job."

Ms. Janee: "I started working with J-ROCK Summer Camp. I showed I was a hard worker and that I loved working with kids. Eventually, I was hired for a teaching position with Ms. Pam and the rest is history!"

What's the responsibility like with setting the foundation for your students?

Ms. Pam: "It's a lot of responsibility! The kids come from different backgrounds, so the challenge is to give them the skills that will not only help them learn but also to work as a community. So we learn from the students"

Ms. Janee: "We have to meet them where they are and build on that so they can be ready for the next grade. It can't be rushed."

How does it feel when you have to let all the KinderBees go at the end of the year after graduation?

Ms. Pam: "It's a little sad, but we still get to keep up with them and watch them grow. The bonds we form with our students stay, and we love to see them keep going. Even though we don't get to see them as much, we still get the hugs, and all the above. It's like we have to let another teacher hold their hand now."

"I have learned that being a teacher is a harder job than it seems. It includes more than just the work inside the classrooms. It includes adjusting lesson plans for students' needs, researching topics for students, and so much more for the kids."

"Despite all the rough days, there are way more good days that outnumber the bad in so many ways. Ms. Pam and Ms. Janee love their jobs here at Cornerstone, and the KinderBees love them too."

Ms. Pam and Ms. Janee are vital to the Cornerstone family. Without them, many of our students today wouldn't be who they are.

In conclusion, Kindergarten is the beginning of student life, where they learn most of their core skills. Cornerstone truly appreciates Ms. Pam and Ms. Janee. They raise the foundation of Cornerstone. We all love Ms. Pam, Ms. Janee, and the KinderBees.

My name is George Sephes, and this has been my student newsletter article.

George graduated with High Honors and is going to Science Leadership Academy this fall.

Goals, Dreams, and Future Planning for The Class of 2026

by Blake Manning and Alanna Postell, 8th Grade

Hello, I'm Blake Manning, and I'm Alanna Postell, and our article is on the Class of 2026 and their personal goals after Cornerstone. We have worked hard this year, and while we are sad to say goodbye, many of us have set inspiring goals for our future, showing our dreams and determination.

Khloe shared that she wants to graduate with honors and become valedictoria. (She did! Congratulations, Khloe!) She also wants to try new things and grow as a person. She believes staying consistent, praying, and taking every opportunity will help her achieve her goals.

Benjamin said he wants to get into a good high school, become a professional soccer player, and earn a 4.0 GPA, and he believes that working hard and never giving up will help him reach those goals.

Devon explained that her goal is to be in the top 3 of the class and possibly become salutatorian or valedictorian by maintaining high grades. She knows it may be challenging in a large high school environment, but is still determined.

Cree shared that his goals are to graduate with honors and succeed in football. He plans to study, train, and stay focused to achieve them because he feels confident in himself.

My goals (**Alanna**) are to graduate, do well in high school, and make my dad proud. I believe that praying and focusing on myself and my education can and will help me achieve my goals.

My goals (**Blake**) are to graduate, do well in high school, and not lose myself once I get there. And make my family proud.

Overall, our class is confident and motivated, thanks to our teachers. The goals of the Class of 2026 show strong determination, faith, and ambition for the future. We are willing to work hard, stay focused, and believe in ourselves to achieve our dreams.

Even though some goals may seem challenging, we are still motivated to push through and never give up. No matter what path we choose, we are prepared to take on new challenges, grow as individuals, and make an impact in our schools and communities.

Blake and Alanna both graduated with Honors and are attending Bonner & Prendergast and Girard Academic Music Program respectively.

Malia and her Teammate, Mrs. Davis posing for a selfie!

Building Relationships in the Teammate Program

by Malia Mercer, 8th Grade

Hello! My name is Malia Mercer, and I will be telling you all about the Teammate Program. But wait, what is a Teammate? A Teammate is a donor who spends time getting to know a Cornerstone middle school student. When you're a part of the Teammate Program at Cornerstone, you attend special events, go on trips around Philadelphia and the surrounding areas, and attend the 8th grade graduation ceremony.

I asked my Teammate, Mrs. Marossa Davis, her thoughts on how special the Teammate Program is, and its significance to Cornerstone.

Hi Mrs. Davis! How did you first discover Cornerstone?

Marossa: "A friend of mine was a member of the Board of Trustees at Cornerstone, and recommended that I come visit. When I got there, I saw that the students were very respectful and had amazing personalities. I've decided to be involved in Cornerstone, and for nine years, I've been a proud Teammate! "

Would you recommend the Teammate Program to others?

Marossa: "I would most definitely recommend the Teammate program to others. I enjoy being a Teammate, including getting letters, eating and conversing with my Teammate students. Being a Teammate allows me to pay kindness forward to other people. It would be a great investment."

Next, I will be asking a long-time Teammate and Cornerstone's very own Marketing and Communications Director, Mr. Matt, for his view on the Teammate program.

Mr. Matt, what is the most impactful part about being a Teammate?

Mr. Matt: "I've been a Teammate for three years, and by far the most impactful moments are the times that I get to spend with students. What I've learned is that as an adult, the best gift you can give to a child is your full attention. By genuinely showing that you're interested in what they have to say. I've learned that kids appreciate adults who show basic respect and meet them at their level."

Spending time together during Teammate Day is one of my favorite parts about this program, do you agree, Mr. Matt?

Mr. Matt: "Absolutely, Teammate Day is my favorite. Everyone is in the same room, and we're doing these games that bring a small table of people together, so you get to work with not only your Teammate student, but whoever you're lucky enough to sit and interact with."

"It always impresses me when I get to be a part of these conversations and hear our students bring so much of their genuine selves to the table. I have heard students share their interests outside of school; what sports they play and other activities they like to get involved in. I can tell that many Teammates are truly impressed by their poise and character."

I really enjoy my time as a Teammate, and will be sad to leave it behind as I head to high school. Though the parts of the program that these Teammates shared are outstanding, I believe that the best part is getting the chance to receive advice from such wise people.

Malia is the Class of 2026 Salutatorian, graduating with High Honors. She will be attending Franklin Learning Center this fall.

Having fun during Teammate Day

The Creative Art World at Cornerstone

by Kaira Young, 8th Grade and Kayla Young, 7th Grade

Hello! My name is Kaira Young and I am a proud Student Ambassador at Cornerstone Christian Academy. I will be cooperating with my sister, Kayla Young, to share the extraordinary history of fine art at our school. I will be interviewing Cornerstone's most talented art teacher, Mr. Lee, as well as some of our fellow classmates.

Our hallways are covered with beautiful and meaningful artwork from students from kindergarten through 8th grade. Our Art Teacher, Mr. Lee, helps students unlock their creative potential. He is also a proud and amazing artist. We asked him to share his journey and tell us how he became the amazing teacher he is today.

Mr. Lee, how did your journey in the world of art begin?

"What got me into art was some of the old cartoon shows, like Bugs Bunny and Mickey. I started drawing cartoon characters, and people were impressed by what I was doing. When I was in school, my classmates made fun of me, but that inspired me to draw even more."

What is one of your favorite art pieces you made?

"One of my favorite art pieces I made this year is one of candles, using oil pastels."

Who or what inspired you as an artist growing up?

"I was first inspired by old cartoons from animators like the Warner Brothers. As I got older, artists like Genndy Tartakovsky, Craig McCracken, and Jacob Lawrence helped me move forward in my art journey; among other things, I am inspired by their use of color."

Did faith have a part in your artistic journey?

"To me, faith means having real confidence in what you do. My faith helps keeps me going. People would mock me for my art, but I had faith and kept growing."

Are there students who you have seen improve in art over this last school year?

"It's amazing to watch my students express themselves, and there are definitely a few who stand out. I can name Devon, Malia, and of course, the two of you! I also recognize Vaneya, Mackenzie, Kai, Johanna, Basil, and Kordelia. These students demonstrate confidence, faith, and perseverance through trials in art and beyond school."

How long have you been teaching and doing art at Cornerstone?

"I've had the pleasure of working at Cornerstone for more than 20 years."

And now a statement from Azarya

Azarya, how would you describe your art journey at Cornerstone?

"When I was younger, I always saw people drawing, painting, and coloring, and I thought maybe I could do the same. Having art class in school is a great way to continue learning new things and creating in new ways. Today I'm still improving myself in art!

Kaira graduated with Honors and is attending Calvary Christian Academy this fall. Kayla is looking forward to graduating next year.

The Present and Future of Technology at Cornerstone

by Benjamin Johnson, 8th Grade

Hello, my name is Benjamin Johnson from the 8th grade. This is my article about the new technology at Cornerstone. In the following content, I will be interviewing the main technology staff and faculty for their thoughts on how we integrate technology at our school.

As a child, I was always interested in technology, and I wanted to learn more about it. It isn't my ideal career choice, but if I wouldn't mind having the opportunity to focus in that area. Our current Technology Teacher, Mr. David Dunnington, came to the school this year. Mr. Kenny, our campus IT Director, manages all technical infrastructure, digital learning tools, and data security.

I felt as if they would be the best people to interview to help us understand the relationship between technology and Cornerstone's approach to teaching students.

How do Cornerstone students feel about learning with technology?

Mr David: "All of the students here are technologically literate. Cornerstone students are creative when it comes to tech. I have a lot of trust in the students, and I believe they will take full advantage of the technology here."

Do you think students can use technology to learn new skills that will help us later in life?

Mr. Kenny: "Absolutely! General knowledge of how technology is set up, how it works, and what its capabilities are is very important. Obviously, you can take skills that you learn at Cornerstone and apply them to many real-world applications outside of school.

Is it better for students to have individual laptops, or to share computers in the classroom?

Mr. David: "There are benefits to both, but the communal aspect of sharing computers makes the students more responsible. It gives everyone a sense of responsibility for the learning equipment in the school"

Do you think anything could be improved with the current use of technology here at Cornerstone?

Mr. David: "If anything, things could be improved nationwide. I think we could train some traditional uses.

I do believe that certain subjects like math, should be written by hand. Students still need writing skills to combine with tech-based optimal skills. In my opinion, a combination of both learning styles is fundamental to a well-rounded, modern education."

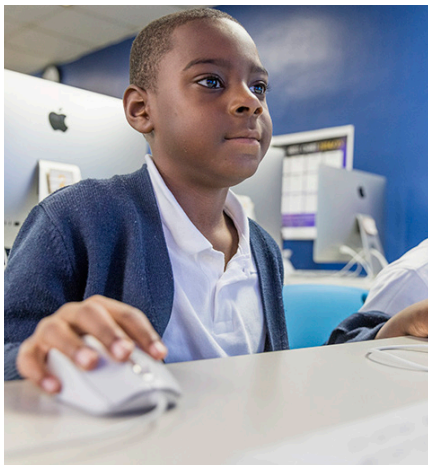
What is in store for the near future of technology at Cornerstone?

Mr. Kenny: "As of right now, we are implementing new software systems, looking to integrate better equipment, and develop automated processes for better device management. Also, new hardware is on the way for being implemented into the student body as well."

In conclusion, the tech we use today will be the important gear of tomorrow. As we navigate these updates and shifts together, remember that you're not just a user of technology, you're the one deciding what the digital future looks like!

I will close by saying technology can be very useful for the education of our new generation. Just make sure it doesn't consume all your time, and stay in good health! God bless, this was Benjamin Johnson. Thank you for reading.

Benjamin graduated with Honors and will be attended Girard College in the fall.



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Read Across America Week had lower school student flexing their reading skills for each other.

Shining a Light on the Lower School

by Skylar Burns-Dade, 6th Grade and Jada Hitchcock, 7th Grade

Hello Cornerstone family, our names are Jada Hitchcock and Skylar Burns-Dade. As middle school students, we wanted to find out more about what lower school students (grades K - 4th) think. We think it's important to let Lower School feel—especially at this time of their lives—that they are seen and heard and that people want to hear their opinions.

We wondered what they would like to change, if anything, about the school. We also want to know what they think Cornerstone will be like when they are in 8th grade. We decided that the best grade to ask would be right in the middle of the lower school grades: 2nd grade. We went to Ms. Kallie (Cornerstone's 2nd Grade Teacher) and asked her class a few questions that we present below:

How would you feel if you had pizza for school lunch every Friday?

"I would feel happy!"

"I would eat that and feel full!"

"I would feel excited!"

What would you pick for lunch?

"I would like to eat Burger King every day!"

"I will get some sushi!"

"I would like lobster!"

"We love Raising Caine's and Chik-fil-A!"

If you had the ability to decide to have homework or not, what would you say?

"I would do artwork instead of homework."

"I would choose homework because I actually like doing homework!"

"I would sleep or read books instead."

"If it was math, I would do it!"

What would you like to change about the school if you could?

"I would have the school give us less work!"

"I would eat lunch later in the day. Sometimes I'm still full from breakfast."

"More recess!"

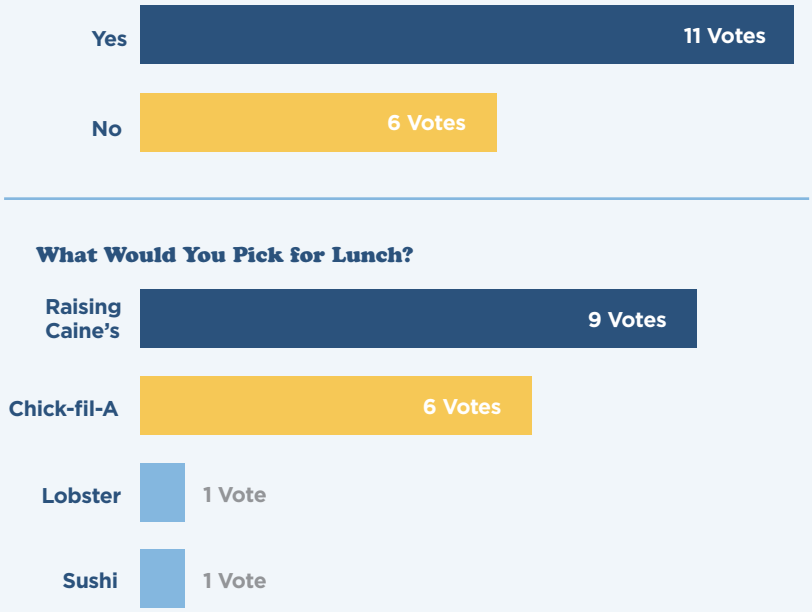
"More snack time! I'd like lunch every hour!"

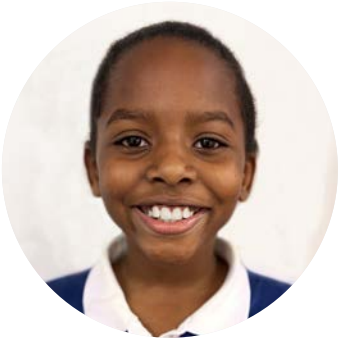
"I would like a playground!"

In the end, we are glad we got to talk to 2nd grade and find out what they like about the school. Skylar, would you have answered the same way?

No, I would have answered them way differently. For instance, when we asked about homework, I would say, "No! It's too tiring!"

2nd Grade Opinion Poll Results:





Skylar is the only 6th grader to be accepted to be a Ambassador this year! She is looking forward to two more years in the program.

Jada was the only 6th grader to be an Ambassador during the last school year and is now looking forward to graduating in 2027.

Cornerstone Through My Lens: A Photo Essay

by Shawn Greene, 8th Grade

Hello, everyone. My name is Shawn Greene, and my newsletter is about capturing the true spirit of Cornerstone. Through both photography and writing, I want to show how special this school really is. Every picture tells a story, and every moment at Cornerstone is worth remembering. Now, let's begin to explore what makes this school so great.

One of the most powerful ways to understand Cornerstone is through images. Photos can capture emotions, memories, and experiences that words alone cannot fully express.

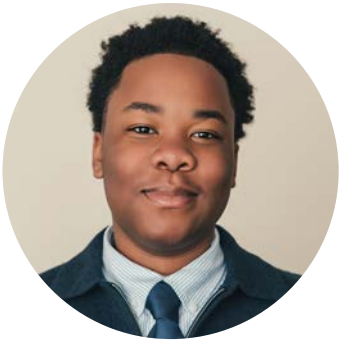
For example, pictures taken during chapel show more than just a gathering—they show a community coming together in unity, reflection, and faith. These moments reveal how students and staff connect on a deeper level, creating an environment that is both supportive and meaningful.

In addition to chapel, there are also important events like the Black History presentations. These photos highlight not only the talent and creativity of the students but also the school's commitment to honoring history and culture. Through these presentations, students learn, express themselves, and celebrate achievements that deserve recognition. The images from these events reflect pride, respect, and a strong sense of identity within the school community.

What stands out most in these photographs is how close everyone at Cornerstone is. The school is more than just a place for learning—it feels like a family. In the pictures, you can see students encouraging one another, laughing together, and supporting each other in different situations. Whether it's during events, in the classroom, or in everyday interactions, there is a strong bond that connects everyone.

Cornerstone is a place where people truly care about one another. The sense of community is clear in both words and images. No matter what challenges may come, students and staff stand by each other. This support system is one of the most important parts of what makes the school so special.

In conclusion, through photography and storytelling, it becomes clear that Cornerstone is an incredible place. The images capture moments of unity, celebration, and connection that define the school's spirit. By looking at these photos and reflecting on their meaning, we can see that Cornerstone is not just a school—it is a family that continues to grow stronger together.



Shawn graduated with Honors and is attending Bonner & Prendergast in the fall.

Your Generosity is What Makes These Student Stories Possible

The confidence and creativity of the student voices in this publication prove what we have always known: Cornerstone students are remarkable. Your support has given them the opportunity to find that voice. Thank you for helping to provide the opportunities that made these stories possible.

All of the field trips, musical instruments, art supplies, library books, computers, science lab equipment, and school lunches that have informed these student articles are a result of your generosity. So too are the incredible academic outcomes of our graduates.

Each year, thanks to your support, Cornerstone graduates gain admission into the region's highest performing selective admissions high schools.

Their journey is not possible without your support, as 100% of our students apply for, and are granted financial aid. Cornerstone donors like you have allowed us to provide academic opportunity for the families of Southwest Philadelphia, regardless of circumstance, for almost 40 years.

Additionally, the prayers, efforts, and attention of Cornerstone's community of support show these students that there are hundreds of individuals caring and rooting for them. The sense of pride and confidence instilled by that knowledge is invaluable.

Thank you again for making this Student Edition possible, and for providing nearly 150 Cornerstone student scholarships each year. By adding your voice to more than 400 faithful Cornerstone donors, you have provided our students with an academic opportunity that will last a lifetime.

Make a Gift to Support Cornerstone's Mission

Contact Alex Borders, Cornerstone's Chief Advancement Officer
aborders@cornerstonephiladelphia.com or call 215-724-6558 x257

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When making an online gift, you can set up a recurring gift on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis.

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Contact your broker to make a gift of stock or securities to Cornerstone.

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Your IRA, 401(k), life-insurance policy, or any other assets can be directed to Cornerstone students, while also offering tax deductions.

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If you're age 70½ or older, you can make a charitable gift directly from your IRA. If you're 73 or older, it can also count toward your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).

Funds go directly from your IRA to Cornerstone, so the amount is excluded from your taxable income which may help to reduce your overall tax burden.

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As a qualified charity under the IRS, Cornerstone is eligible for an individual to donate up to a maximum of $100,000 of your required minimum distribution from your IRA without paying income tax.

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Our Mission

The mission of Cornerstone Christian Academy is to educate children, including those from underserved families, in an environment that provides the highest standards for academic achievement and spiritual development.

Our Vision

It is our vision to be a model urban Christian school where students are grounded in faith, shaped with Christ- like character, and equipped with knowledge and skills to excel in high school, college, and throughout life.

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The 2026 KinderBee graduation ceremony was all smiles!