





JACKSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS PRESENTS

The Spirit of Excellence

JACKSON
PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Transforming lives through excellent education

JACKSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS · 2026







STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

Vision

At Jackson Public Schools, we prepare scholars to achieve globally, to contribute locally, and to be fulfilled individually.

Mission

At Jackson Public Schools, we develop scholars through world-class learning experiences to attain an exceptional knowledge base, critical and relevant skill sets, and the necessary dispositions for great success.

Core Values

At Jackson Public Schools, we believe in the importance of equity, excellence, growth mindset, relationships, relevance, and a positive and respectful culture.









WELCOME TO JPS



Errick L. Greene, Ed.D.

Superintendent

As Superintendent of Jackson Public Schools, I am proud to celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of our scholars and team members through the 2025-2026 Spirit of Excellence. At Jackson Public Schools, we remain focused on accelerating scholar achievement through thoughtful strategic planning, high-quality instruction, and an unwavering commitment to joy in every school and classroom. These priorities guide our work each day as we strive to create learning environments where scholars are challenged, supported, valued, and inspired to reach their full potential.

Through this intentional work, we continue to see growth in academic achievement, expanded opportunities through innovative programs, and meaningful investments in our schools, facilities, and resources. These accomplishments reflect our shared commitment to transforming lives through excellent education and ensuring that every scholar has access to the opportunities they need to succeed.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our scholars and their families, team members, community partners, alumni, and supporters. Your partnership and dedication are essential to the progress we continue to make. The Spirit of Excellence shines a spotlight on the remarkable accomplishments of our scholars and educators while reinforcing a culture of pride, respect, belonging, and excellence across our district. As we celebrate our honorees, we also recognize the countless individuals whose daily contributions help advance our mission and strengthen our schools.

There is much to celebrate and even more to look forward to as we continue this journey together. Through strategic focus, excellent instruction, and a commitment to joy, we will continue to demonstrate the Power of People and Possibilities, creating opportunities for every scholar to thrive and every school community to succeed.

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CALLAWAY ASSISTANT COACH HONORED WITH WAPT ALYCE CLARKE EDUCATION AWARD



Christopher “C.T.” Taylor and Dr. Shemeka McClung

Christopher “C.T.” Taylor, assistant basketball coach and first-year teacher at Callaway High School, has been honored with WAPT’s Alyce Clarke Award for his impact on scholars and the community.

The Jackson native was overcome with emotion as he accepted the award. “This is real? Oh wow, this is amazing,” he said. “It’s a really great feeling to come back and teach the generation behind me, but I also went to school with their moms and dads.”

A proud Provine High alum and former Ole Miss basketball player, Taylor returned home after two decades away, bringing experience in athletics, youth development, and event management, including work at the Rose Bowl Stadium and the Justin Reed Basketball Academy. Inspired by his late best friend and NBA player Justin Reed, Taylor is committed to mentoring the next generation.

At Callaway, he’s already building strong bonds with students. Senior point guard Jonathan Brister shared how Taylor recently ran a final lap on the track with a player, saying, “He pushed him through.” Head Coach Skip Harvey described Taylor’s return as an answered prayer.

Coach Taylor hopes to help lead Callaway to its ninth championship while continuing to inspire young people in his hometown.

JPS LEADERS ACCEPTED INTO 2025–2026 PROSPECTIVE SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Dr. Anthony Moore, executive director of Advanced Academics, and Dr. Shemeka McClung, principal of Callaway High School, have been accepted into the 2025–2026 Prospective Superintendent Leadership Academy (PSLA) with the Mississippi School Boards Association. They will attend monthly training sessions covering a wide range of topics essential to effective superintendent leadership.

The PSLA is a yearlong program designed to prepare potential candidates for superintendent positions in Mississippi's public schools. Participants receive intensive, in-depth preparation for the challenges and responsibilities of serving as a public school superintendent.

This year, 30 candidates were selected to participate in the Academy.



Dr. Shemeka McClung



Dr. Anthony Moore

VETERAN JPS EDUCATOR ERICA TAYLOR-JOYNER SURPRISED WITH ALYCE CLARKE AWARD

Jackson Public Schools celebrates Erica Taylor-Joyner, a veteran educator, mentor teacher, and proud JPS alumna, who received the Alyce Clarke Award during a surprise announcement at McLeod Elementary on Tuesday, November 19.

The moment she opened her classroom door, Erica stopped in disbelief. The media was there; her family and friends were there, and all 51 of her fifth-grade scholars filled the room. She was speechless and moved to tears, calling her scholars, “her reasons why.”

The Alyce Clarke Award, presented by 16 WAPT, honors exceptional educators across the viewing area. Monthly recipients are chosen from public nominations, and the award recognizes those who make a powerful impact in their schools and communities. It is named for Alyce G. Clarke, a trailblazing Mississippi lawmaker, former teacher, and the first Black woman elected to the Mississippi House of Representatives.

Erica brings that same spirit of service to her work. She is a Jackson native and lifelong JPS scholar who attended Bradley Elementary, Northwest Middle School, and Provine High School before earning her education degrees from Jackson State University and Mississippi College. She began teaching in 2007 at Oak Forest Elementary, spent 13 years at Bates Elementary, and is now in her third year at McLeod Elementary teaching fifth grade ELA.

Teaching is her calling. She creates a classroom grounded in warmth, consistency, and a family feel. As McLeod’s mentor teacher, she supports new educators, shares best practices, and helps build a strong culture of collaboration.

Her achievements include Best of Mississippi Teacher of the Year in 2023 and McLeod Teacher of the Year. Still, this recognition feels special. “I am truly honored and humbled to receive the Alyce Clarke Award,” she said. “My commitment to education is unwavering. I am grateful to live out my purpose in Jackson Public Schools.”

Erica hopes her scholars always remember the love, stability, and encouragement found in her classroom. “I want them to say, because of you I did not give up.”



Erica Taylor-Joyner



WALTON ELEMENTARY'S DENISE THAGGARD NAMED ALYCE CLARKE AWARD HONOREE



Denise Thaggard

Walton Elementary School Assistant Principal Denise Thaggard was recently honored as the September Alyce Clarke Award winner by WAPT Channel 16. Her name echoed through the halls as scholars and staff proudly congratulated her on the recognition. Holding back tears, Thaggard said she was surprised and humbled by the award, especially meaningful because she now leads in the very school she once attended.

"I walked these very same halls, so I am a voice to say you can do it—I did it. I went to Walton, the same neighborhood. Anyone can do it," Thaggard shared.

A Jackson native, Thaggard has dedicated more than 18 years to education. She began her career at Lake Elementary School, teaching Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and 1st grade, later serving as an interventionist. Her administrative journey started at Pecan Park Elementary School, where she served as Assistant Principal before moving to Walton Elementary, where she continues to serve today.

Throughout her career, Thaggard has supported both scholars and teachers by providing instructional strategies, modeling best practices, and offering feedback that enhances teaching and learning. She is admired by her school community for her compassion and leadership. Fifth grader Mailaya Montgomery described her as "nice, kind, and always helping others after school or with their homework." Third grade English teacher Apryll Porter added, "I love Ms. Thaggard so much. She's perfect. She's like a mom to me. If you want support, she's always there. If you want guidance, she's always there—and it's more than just in the classroom."

Walton Elementary Principal Laroy Merrick praised Thaggard's leadership and dedication, saying:

"Mrs. Thaggard is truly deserving of the Alyce Clarke Educator Award. Her passion for literacy and her commitment to ensuring every scholar can read are unmatched. Walton is a better school because of her."

For Thaggard, serving others is both her passion and motivation. "It just makes me want to press on and keep going," she said.

Thaggard is a proud graduate of Belhaven University, where she earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees. She later completed a Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership from Liberty University and has finished all doctoral coursework toward her doctorate, now working toward completing her dissertation.

Her recognition with the Alyce Clarke Award is a reflection not only of her dedication to the profession, but also of the deep impact she continues to make on her school, her students, and the Jackson community.



JPS HIGH SCHOOL BANDS EARN TOP HONORS AT STATE MARCHING EVALUATIONS





Jackson Public Schools high school marching bands showcased their talent, discipline, and school pride during the 2025 MHSAA State Marching Evaluations held on October 11, 2025, in Pearl, Mississippi, and at Jones Community College. The performances reflected months of preparation, teamwork, and dedication from directors, scholars, and support staff across the district.

At the Region IV Evaluation in Pearl, the Jim Hill High School Band earned an overall rating of Excellent, highlighted by Superior ratings for its Color Guard and Band performance.

At the Traditional Style Marching Evaluation at Jones Community College, several JPS schools received high marks across multiple categories:

Forest Hill High School led the way with an Overall Superior rating, earning Superior marks in Drum Major, Percussion, and Band categories.

Murrah High School also achieved an Overall Superior rating, sweeping Superior honors in every judged category, including Drum Major, Color Guard, Majorette, Percussion, and Band.

Callaway High School earned an Overall Excellent rating with Superior ratings in Drum Major, Color Guard, and Band performance.

Provine High School earned an Overall Good rating with Excellent marks in Color Guard, Majorette, and Percussion.

Lanier High School received Excellent and Good ratings across various categories, with notable recognition for its Majorettes.

These results reflect the exceptional skill, artistry, and commitment of JPS band scholars and directors, who continue to uphold a proud tradition of musical excellence.

The district congratulates all JPS band programs for their strong performances and the spirit of unity and pride they bring to every competition and community event.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP SCHOLARS REFLECT ON CULTURAL DISCOVERY THROUGH GHANA SHOWCASE

Global Citizenship scholars gave family members, friends, and community supporters an inside look at their journey to Ghana during a showcase held at Forest Hill High School. The event featured photographs, cultural displays, and scholar reflections that highlighted the educational and personal experiences participants gained while traveling abroad.

Attendees had the opportunity to learn about the scholars' experiences firsthand and see how the international trip broadened their perspectives.

Throughout the exhibition, scholars described how the experience deepened their understanding of both African and American cultures. Many reflected on the value of building connections with people from different backgrounds and experiencing a new environment beyond the classroom.

Scholars also emphasized the impact of learning through direct experience, noting that visiting historical and cultural sites in person provided a deeper understanding than reading about them in textbooks alone. The trip offered opportunities to explore Ghana's rich history, traditions, and communities while helping scholars develop a broader view of the world.

As visitors moved through the showcase, they encountered more than photographs and keepsakes from the trip. The displays reflected the personal growth, confidence, and global awareness scholars gained through the experience.

The Global Citizenship Project is designed to expose scholars to diverse cultures and perspectives, helping them develop the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.









About the Global Citizenship Project The Jackson Public School's (JPS) Global Citizenship Project

The Jackson Public Schools' (JPS) Global Citizenship Project presents an incredible opportunity for eleventh-grade scholars to travel while engaging in collaborative learning experiences and developing valuable skills such as team-building, research, journalism, and public speaking. During the course of their program year, participants typically travel to Washington, D.C. and Nigeria. The program is funded through a collaboration with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

JPS TEACHERS SELECTED FOR 2025–26 TEACH PLUS MISSISSIPPI POLICY FELLOWSHIP

Jackson Public Schools proudly recognizes six of its outstanding educators who have been selected for the 2025–26 Teach Plus Mississippi Policy Fellowship. These teachers will join a statewide network of policy fellows working to expand opportunities for students through stronger college and career readiness initiatives.



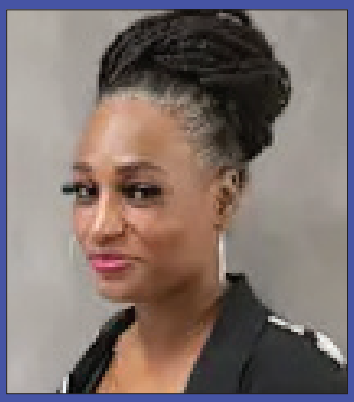
Kandice Taylor
Kirksey Middle School



Daphne Kyles
Peeples Middle School



Lucy Kaplan
Northwest Jackson Middle School



Keyana Hawthorne
Murrah High School



Sharon Buckhanan
Career Development Center



Tameka Battle
Callaway High School

Through this fellowship, JPS teachers will receive advanced training in policy analysis, advocacy, research, and communications. They will bring their classroom perspectives to the policy table, ensuring the needs of JPS scholars, families, and educators are heard as solutions are developed to strengthen Mississippi's workforce and open more pathways for students.

"Teachers are on the frontlines of education every day. They understand the challenges and opportunities facing our scholars, and they bring valuable insight to shaping policies that improve outcomes," said Dr. Michael Cormack, Jr., Deputy Superintendent of Jackson Public Schools. "We are incredibly proud of these educators and their leadership, both inside and outside the classroom."

JTECHS MOCK TRIAL TEAM CAPTURES FIRST PLACE AT MAGNOLIA BAR ASSOCIATION COMPETITION



The JPS–Tougaloo Early College High School (JTECHS) Mock Trial Program has once again proven its excellence, securing first place at the annual Magnolia Bar Association Mock Trial Competition. Competing against students from across the state, JTECHS' victory highlights the team's dedication, skill, and growing reputation in the mock trial community.

This year, JTECHS entered three teams in the competition, with two advancing all the way to the Championship Round—facing each other for the top honor. The winning championship team included Anna Martin, Marvin Sanders, Morgan Sanders, Ariel Bell, Makaila Nixon, and Kelsey Frazier. The second-place team featured Clarissa Coleman, Nicholas Sivak, Christian Steverson, Travis Collins, Nadia Harper, and Kylie Gillion.

Individual awards also celebrated exceptional talent. Clarissa Coleman was named Top Attorney of the competition, earning a $1,100 scholarship, while Marvin Sanders received Third-Place Top Attorney honors and a $600 scholarship. Other contributing team members included Faith Malembeka, Marvin Summers, Nadia Davis, Jeremy White, Lindsey Anderson, and Kadience Tabb.

Since its inception in 2023, the JTECHS Mock Trial Program has rapidly built a legacy of success:

- 2023: Second Place, Magnolia Bar Mock Trial Competition
- 2024: Champion, Magnolia Bar Mock Trial Competition
- 2024: Sixth Place, Mississippi Bar Mock Trial Competition
- 2025: Third Place, Mississippi Bar Mock Trial Competition
- 2025: Champion, Magnolia Bar Mock Trial Competition

The teams are guided by Attorneys Gayla Carpenter-Sanders and Catouche Body, both proud alumni of Tougaloo College, with Ms. Felicia Burton serving as Teacher and Administrative Coach.

With consecutive victories at the Magnolia Bar Association competition and consistent performances statewide, the JTECHS Mock Trial Program continues to demonstrate the talent, determination, and teamwork that define the school's commitment to academic excellence.

MURRAH HIGH SCHOOL CELEBRATES AP CAPSTONE DIPLOMA RECIPIENTS

Eight Murrah High School students from the Class of 2025 were recently recognized for their achievements in the AP Capstone Program, a two-year program for advanced students that consists of AP Seminar and AP Research. The AP Capstone program helps students develop the critical thinking, research, collaboration, and presentation skills that are critical for academic success.



Tracey Robinson



Hannah King



Sabrea Jordan



Gabrielle Johnson



Kaylynn Hundley



Aynecia Gardner



Josannah Clay

*Not pictured: Alex McLin

Aynecia Gardner, Sabrea Jordan, and Tracey Robinson were awarded the AP Capstone Diploma™. To earn the AP Capstone Diploma, students must receive a score of 3 or higher in AP Seminar and AP Research and on 4 additional AP Exams.

Josannah Clay, Kaylynn Hundley, Gabrielle Johnson, Hannah King, and Alex McLin were awarded the AP Seminar and Research Certificate™. To earn the certificate, students must earn scores of 3 or higher in AP Seminar and AP Research.

Unlike traditional AP® subject exams with a single end-of-year assessment, AP Seminar and AP Research assessments are project-based and evaluate skills mastery through group projects, presentations, and individual essays completed throughout the year. Instead of focusing on one specific academic discipline, AP Seminar and AP Research are interdisciplinary: scholars are empowered to create research projects based on topics of personal interest. Scholars are assessed on the critical thinking, research, collaboration, time management, and presentation skills needed to complete their projects.

Scholars are increasingly participating in the AP Capstone program worldwide. Jackson Public Schools and Murrah High School have been at the forefront of these relatively new courses, beginning the program in the 2018-2019 school year and graduating their first class with AP Capstone Diplomas in 2022. In 2025, fewer than 100 students in Mississippi were eligible for the AP Capstone Diploma or AP Research and Seminar Certificate.

Murrah's AP Capstone program instructors are Dr. Heather Green, Mrs. Sarah Ballard, and Mr. Micah Everson. "We are so proud of these scholars not only for conducting their individual research projects, but also for achieving success across the spectrum of AP courses," said Murrah's instructors. "All scholars who take on the challenge of the AP Capstone Program enter their college experience with the advantage of already having performed independent and original research. The scholars who earned the AP Capstone Diploma or Certificate, moreover, have shown that they have truly excelled in developing and researching their independent projects and communicating their research through a written paper and oral presentation. The College Board holds those papers and presentations to a high standard for students to earn the certificate and diploma."

Including AP Seminar and Research, Murrah High School offered 20 AP courses in the 2024-2025 school year, with over 160 students taking at least one AP exam.

JPS CELEBRATES SCHOLARS' SUCCESS AT ADVANCED PLACEMENT AWARDS PROGRAM

Dozens of Jackson Public Schools (JPS) scholars from across the district were recognized Monday, September 8, during an Advanced Placement Awards Program at Murrah High School. The celebration shined a spotlight on 137 JPS scholars who earned a score of 3 or higher on their AP exams in spring 2025, on a scale of 1 to 5. It's an accomplishment that earns them college credit.

Of the honorees, 46 were present for the ceremony, while many others have already graduated and taken their next steps in higher education.

The afternoon program blended celebration with inspiration. Guests were welcomed by the soulful sounds of the Murrah Jazz Combo before Murrah student Madison Cormack shared a heartfelt reflection on the AP journey. The program continued with encouraging words from Mississippi Representative Justis Gibbs, a proud Murrah graduate, who urged scholars to continue reaching for greater heights.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Anthony Moore, Executive Director of the JPS Office of Advanced Academics, expressed pride in both the scholars and the families who supported them along the way. "Our scholars have shown creativity, perseverance, and the determination to succeed," Dr. Moore said. "Their achievements reflect not only their hard work, but also the unwavering encouragement of their parents, teachers, and school leaders."

The Advanced Placement program, administered by the nonprofit College Board, gives JPS scholars an opportunity to take rigorous, college-level courses and exams. A strong performance not only demonstrates mastery of the material but can also save families thousands in tuition by providing college credit.

Monday's event underscored JPS scholars' determination to succeed and highlighted the community of teachers, families, and leaders who support them. More than an awards program, it was a celebration of potential, perseverance, and the future scholars are building.



A DOZEN JPS SCHOLARS EARN NATIONAL HONORS FOR TOP PERFORMANCE IN COLLEGE COURSES

Twelve JPS scholars have been inducted into the National Honor Society of the National Education Opportunity Network, recognizing their outstanding achievement in rigorous, college credit–bearing courses taught by professors from some of the nation's top universities.

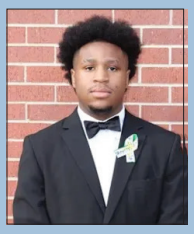
This spring, JPS scholars took on courses from Georgetown University, Spelman College, and Stanford University... and excelled. Their performance ranked in the top 20% of nearly 8,000 scholars nationwide who participated in the Ed Equity Lab program during Spring 2025. Each scholar earned widely transferable college credit and a certificate marking their induction into the National Honor Society.

"Our young people have shown they can thrive in college classrooms while still in high school," said JPS Superintendent Dr. Errick L. Greene. "Their success reflects not only their talent and drive, but also the dedication of our educators who make sure doors to opportunity stay open for our scholars."

The National Education Opportunity Network partners with top colleges and universities to bring college courses directly into Title I and Title I–eligible high schools at no cost to scholars. Through this model, scholars engage with college professors, connect with near-peer university teaching fellows, and receive support from their high school teachers, earning both confidence and credentials for their next chapter. In a Forbes article, Johns Hopkins University Professor Robert Balfanz described the program as "one of the most impactful education efforts we've seen in the last 25 years," noting that it has served more than 33,000 scholars in 32 states since 2019.

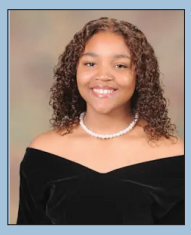
Honorees from Jackson Public Schools include:

Jim Hill High School

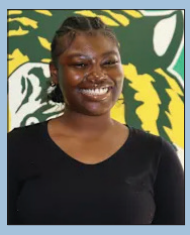

Anthony Fonville

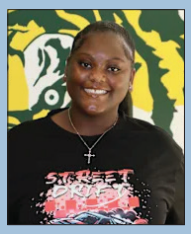

Brendon Freeman


Samuel Generette

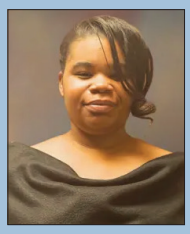

Kamora Greggs


Ashton McCoy


Ariyanna Nichols


Clara Pittman


Ivyuanna Pittman


Aza Reid


Chauncia Stewart

Murrah High School


Danielle McClellan


Zeniah McElroy

CALLAWAY JROTC CADET SELECTED AS THE JPS JROTC 2025-26 CADET OF THE YEAR



Jackson Public Schools is proud to announce that Cadet Brigade Sergeant Major Jeremiah Rufus of Callaway High School has been named the JPS District Cadet of the Year.

The son of Loretta Rufus, Jeremiah has distinguished himself as a strong leader and an exceptional student. He maintains a 4.0 GPA while serving in a key leadership role within the battalion, setting high expectations for performance, discipline, and character.

An active member of the Drill Team, he demonstrates precision, focus, and a deep commitment to teamwork in both practice and competition. His leadership extends beyond formation and ceremony, influencing the culture and standards of excellence within the program.

Academically, Jeremiah has taken on an ambitious course load that includes seven Advanced Placement courses, with two completed through Howard University. Choosing to pursue college-level coursework while still in high school reflects both his drive and his readiness for the next level.

He was selected during an awards ceremony held February 19 at the Mississippi eCenter. The event was led by JROTC Director Col. Fredrick Brown and Assistant Superintendent of High Schools Laketia Marshall Thomas.

The Cadet of the Year program recognizes outstanding 11th-grade JROTC cadets from each of the district's six high schools. Each school selects its top cadet, who then advances to compete for the title of JPS Overall Most Outstanding Cadet. The program highlights excellence in leadership, scholarship, and service.

JACKSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS HONORS 2025-2026 EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS



Parent of the Year: Cianna Jones

Cianna Jones, a Johnson Elementary parent, embodies JPS's core values through her advocacy, involvement, and genuine care for all scholars. As the parent of a child with exceptionalities, she champions inclusion and works tirelessly to ensure every scholar receives equitable support and access. She is deeply engaged in school initiatives, most notably helping lead efforts that funded stage curtains, chairs, and other resources that enrich scholars' day-to-day experiences. Jones builds strong, respectful relationships with staff and families, always showing up with solutions and a growth-minded approach. Her commitment to creating a welcoming, supportive school culture made her a standout choice for Parent of the Year.



Support Staff of the Year: Sergeant Judah Jamison

Sergeant Judah Jamison is a proud JPS graduate who has dedicated his career to serving the district that shaped him. Since joining JPS in 2020, he has built strong relationships with scholars and staff, first at Wingfield High School and now as a member of the Jackson Public Schools Police Department. After completing the Basic Law Enforcement Training Academy, he continued expanding his skills, earning certifications in crisis intervention, firearms instruction, CPR instruction, and more. Jamison brings steady leadership, compassion, and a commitment to safety that strengthens every school he serves. He credits the administrators and colleagues who invested in him and says his mission is simple: make an impact on scholars and help JPS continue to rise.



Teacher of the Year: Rakesia Gray

Rakesia Gray is an eighth-year educator at North Jackson Elementary who brings intention, heart, and high expectations to every scholar she teaches. After discovering her passion for working with young people through coaching at Belhaven University, she transitioned into K–12 education, where she found her calling in the third-grade ELA classroom. She holds degrees from Belhaven University and Jackson State University, along with National Board Certification in Early and Middle Childhood Literacy. Outside her classroom, she pours into the school community through leadership roles, mentoring new teachers, and coordinating programs that support scholars in need. Guided by the belief that every child deserves a champion, she strives daily to cultivate confident, curious, goal-driven learners.

JACKSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS HONORS 2025-2026 EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS



Administrator of the Year: Jocelyn Smith

Principal Jocelyn Smith has led North Jackson Elementary since 2019, guiding the school to an "A" rating through a clear vision, steady leadership, and a deep belief in what scholars can achieve. With more than 30 years of service in JPS, her career reflects unwavering dedication to the district and its families. She holds advanced degrees in Elementary Education and Educational Leadership, and her commitment to personal growth mirrors the expectations she sets for her staff and scholars. Smith is known for building strong relationships, creating a nurturing school culture, and empowering educators to deliver their best work. Her leadership has made a lasting impact on countless scholars and colleagues.



District Leader of the Year: Dr. Janet Wallace

Dr. Janet Wallace is a 14-year JPS educator whose work has strengthened teaching, mentoring, and educator retention across the district. A former award-winning classroom teacher at Barack Obama Magnet Elementary, she helped propel the school to #1 in Mississippi through strong instruction and scholar growth. Now serving as Manager of Teacher Support and Retention, she leads key initiatives such as the New Teacher Academy, Mentor Program, and TEACH JPS Scholarship; all designed to build and sustain a thriving teacher pipeline. Dr. Wallace is a respected voice on mentorship and resilience, presenting statewide and serving on multiple advisory councils that support future educators. Her leadership reflects her commitment to ensuring every scholar benefits from highly supported, well-prepared teachers.



Counselor of the Year: Adrienne Fleming

Jackson Public Schools recently celebrated the heart of scholar support during National School Counseling Week, honoring professionals who help scholars navigate academics, emotions, and life beyond the classroom. The district's celebration, held Friday, February 6, highlighted the theme "School Counselors Amplify Student Success" and recognized counselors who have gone above and beyond in serving scholars, families, and school communities.

At the center of the celebration was Mrs. Adrienne Fleming Jackson of the JPS–Tougaloo Early College High School Program, named Jackson Public Schools' Counselor of the Year.

"Mrs. Adrienne Fleming Jackson exemplifies what it means to be Counselor of the Year, an educator whose compassion, leadership, and unwavering commitment to scholars have transformed lives," said Dr. LeSian C. Davis, Interim Executive Director of Climate and Wellness. "Through authentic relationships, visionary programming, and a deep love for her community, she empowers scholars to dream boldly, achieve confidently, and soar to greater heights."



Librarian of the Year Stephanie Bryson

After more than two decades of dedicated service at McWillie Elementary, Mrs. Stephanie Bryson has been named Jackson Public Schools' Librarian of the Year. She was recently recognized for this achievement while surrounded by fellow librarians and her family.

Mrs. Bryson earned this honor for her visionary leadership, passion for literature, and unwavering commitment to scholar achievement. Known for her strong literacy programming and impressive circulation numbers, she continues to create engaging, innovative experiences that inspire a love of reading. She also played a key role in launching the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten initiative for Pre-K and Montessori scholars, helping foster early literacy from the very beginning.

For over 20 years, Mrs. Bryson has cultivated a vibrant library environment where books come alive, learning is encouraged, and scholars are inspired to explore the world through reading.

Congratulations to Mrs. Bryson on this well-deserved recognition, and thank you for more than two decades of outstanding impact.

ARI POTTER
FOREST HILL HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2028

Reflecting on Maya Angelou's powerful words, I've come to appreciate how they've reshaped my perspective. They've taught me to cherish the small joys and quality time with loved ones instead of constantly racing toward the future. Growing up, I was always focused on "what's next?" and stressing over the next milestone in my life. While adults encourage us to plan ahead before time slips away, I've learned that obsessing over tomorrow can make us miss the beauty of today.

> "Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."
>
> *– Maya Angelou*

My journey from middle school to high school tested me in many ways. Forest Hill brought a massive new campus, unfamiliar faces, and tougher academic and social challenges for me. Through it all, I formed lasting friendships, navigated fallouts, resolved conflicts, and celebrated wins in academics and softball. Those experiences built my resilience. Even setbacks became opportunities for growth, shaping me into someone stronger and more adaptable.

Today, I'm proud of my achievements: ranking in the top 10% of my class, being recognized by the Association of South Jackson for my high GPA and earning MVP in softball. These successes did not just build my résumé. They shaped my character, teaching me discipline, teamwork, and perseverance. Balancing rigorous coursework with practices and extracurricular activities has made me more confident and empathetic. These experiences have pushed me to strive toward becoming an extraordinary personal injury attorney, someone who can help others during difficult times. I hope to be a leader, a mentor, and a shoulder to lean on for those who need it.

In the end, Angelou's wisdom continues to guide me forward. I will keep striving for excellence, stepping up as a leader, and inspiring younger scholars along the way.



BRANDI DAE
JACKSON MIDDLE COLLEGE PROGRAM
CLASS OF 2026

My name is Brandi Dae, and I am a senior at Murrah High School and a dually enrolled scholar in the Jackson Middle College Program. My journey in Jackson Middle College has brought out a new version of myself that I did not know could grow into something great. Since ninth grade, I have always tried to find myself or find spaces where I truly belonged. I was an honors scholar, involved in honor societies, and recognized for my academic achievements, but I could never find a place where I could thrive beyond academics.

That changed when I became part of Jackson Middle College. This program allowed me to step outside of just being a strong scholar and grow into a leader and role model. Through this experience, I became Miss Jackson Middle College, a title that represents confidence, growth, and self-acceptance. I also serve as the President of the Jackson Middle College Ed Rising Chapter, where I advocate for education and inspire future educators.

> "If you are always trying to be normal, you will never know how amazing you can be."
>
> *– Maya Angelou*

Beyond leadership, I found purpose in service. I had the opportunity to participate in the Special Olympics, supporting children with disabilities and learning the importance of inclusion, patience, and compassion. I also worked with and tutored scholars pursuing their GED, helping them believe in their ability to succeed and reach their goals.

Jackson Middle College did not just help me prepare for college. It helped me discover who I am. I no longer strive to be normal. Instead, I embrace my growth, my voice, and my ability to make a difference.

Jackson Public Schools • Jackson State University

JACKSON MIDDLE COLLEGE



CYON BILBREW
LANIER JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2027

My name is Cyon Bilbrew, and I am a scholar-athlete at Lanier Jr./Sr. High School in the Class of 2027. I play varsity basketball, a sport that has pushed me to grow not only as an athlete, but as a person. Through hard work, dedication, and consistency, I have been blessed to earn several honors, including Mr. Junior, Clarion Ledger High School Player of the Week, Martin Luther King Tournament MVP, and selection to the 2025–2026 MAC Mississippi North-South All-Star Team.

When I first entered Lanier in ninth grade, I was shy and quiet, still trying to find my confidence. Over the years, Lanier has helped shape me into a more focused, confident, and driven young man. With support from my teachers, coaches, and teammates, I learned how to step outside my comfort zone, use my voice, and believe in my abilities both in the classroom and on the court. Now, as I move toward my twelfth-grade year, I am more confident in who I am and what I want to achieve.

Basketball has played a major role in that growth. The game has taught me discipline, accountability, and how to handle adversity. One quote that motivates me is from Michael Jordan: "I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed." That quote reminds me that setbacks are part of the process and that growth comes from perseverance and hard work.

High school has been a key part of my development, teaching me how to balance academics, athletics, and responsibility. The experiences I've had at Lanier Jr./Sr. High School have prepared me for the next level, both mentally and physically.

> "Stay disciplined, trust the process, and let your work speak for who you are becoming."
>
> *– Cyon Bilbrew*

Looking ahead, I plan to attend college on a basketball scholarship, where I will major in Business and Marketing. My goal is to continue developing my game while building a strong foundation for my future beyond basketball. I am grateful for the opportunities and experiences at Lanier that have helped shape me into the person and athlete I am becoming.



FAITH MALEMBEKA
JPS-TOUGALOO EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2026

"Be the reason someone feels welcomed, seen, heard, valued, loved, and supported." This quote has become the heartbeat of my high school journey. Every day, it pushes me to show up as the best version of myself by spreading kindness, lifting others up, and helping create a space filled with positivity and purpose. When I think about what it truly means to live out these words, I immediately think of my school, JPS Tougaloo Early College High School (JTECHS).

JTECHS has been so much more than a place of learning. It has been my family. The people in this community embody what it means to make others feel welcomed, seen, heard, valued, loved, and supported. They have encouraged me, guided me, and stood beside me as I discovered who I am and who I want to become.

> "Be the reason someone feels welcomed, seen, heard, valued, loved, and supported."
>
> *– Erykah Badu*

There is a line from the Broadway musical Hamilton that has always stayed with me: "Legacy. What is a legacy? It's planting seeds in a garden you never get to see." Over the years, I have worked to plant those seeds. My desire to serve and uplift others has fueled my advocacy for my peers, my school, my district, and public schools across Mississippi. I have strengthened this work through my involvement with Student Government Association, the Mississippi Department of Education State Superintendent's Student Advisory Council, The Lighthouse Black Girl Research Institute, the Southern Poverty Law Center Summer Advocacy Institute, and my work with the Mississippi Public Health Institute Maternal Health Innovation Taskforce.

These experiences have shaped my dream of earning a Doctor of Medicine or Juris Doctor degree. I also aspire to become a Reproductive Endocrinologist and Infertility Specialist. I want to dedicate my life to policy and advocacy in spaces where compassion, understanding, and support are essential.

When I first entered this early college program at just fourteen years old, I began balancing high school and college at the same time. From the very beginning, I was welcomed with open arms. The teachers, administrators, staff, and scholars at JTECHS truly saw me. They nurtured my potential, valued what I brought to the table, and encouraged me to use my voice boldly and confidently.

At JTECHS, scholars are not just included; we are heard. Our ideas matter. We lead professional development sessions, contribute to school conversations, and see our suggestions come to life. That level of trust and collaboration is rare, and it has helped me grow as a leader, an advocate, and a young woman with purpose.

The love and support I have felt here is undeniable. J TECHS has been my home away from home for four transformative years. It has surrounded me with a community that celebrates my growth, challenges me to be better, and believes in my future. For that, I am forever grateful.

As I prepare for the next chapter of my life, I carry this promise with me. I will always strive to be the reason someone feels welcomed, seen, heard, valued, loved, and supported.

And I will always honor the fact that my school, my family, JTECHS, has been that reason for me.

JPS-Tougaloo Early College High School Program @TOUGALOO COLLEGE


TOUGALOO
EAGLE QUEEN
1869

JALEN PETERS
PROVINE HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2027

My time at Provine High School has left a lasting mark on my heart and mind when it comes to what discipline can help you achieve. Through supportive classmates, teachers, and coaches, I have been able to accomplish things that, just a few years ago, felt impossible. Provine has pulled me out of my shell and helped me find my voice, speak with purpose, and hold myself accountable as both a leader and an individual.

I placed 4th in Mississippi South State Powerlifting with the help of my former Coach Timothy Wilson, who held me to the highest standard in football as well. I appreciate him deeply for that. Along with him, the rest of my coaches also hold a special place in my heart, including Coach Williams, Duram, Carlos, Gilkey, Randal, Shanks, and, most importantly, my late coach Terance Jones. May he rest in peace.

This experience does not just reflect football, but life as a whole. I am also a proud member of the Provine High School National Honor Society for two years, and I have been honored with the title of Mr. PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) for Provine High School.

> "Discipline, the thing that lays the foundation for the person you want to become."
>
> *– Jalen Peters*

High school has come with challenges, but each one has shaped me for the better, helping me build discipline and balance between life, school, and sports. The subject I enjoy most is ELA. I love reading and listening, because there is nothing like a good book to get lost in and learn from.

I plan to attend college, likely on a sports path, and study exercise science along with other fitness-related fields.

To close, I live by this quote: "It always seems impossible until it's done." – Nelson Mandela





JOHN BELL, II
CALLAWAY HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2026

My name is John Bell, II, and I am proud to attend Callaway High School, a place that has played a major role in shaping who I am today. My experience at Callaway has been defined by opportunities to lead, serve, and grow both inside and outside the classroom. With the support of dedicated teachers, counselors, and administrators, I have been encouraged to challenge myself academically while also pursuing my passion for leadership and civic engagement.

> "Leadership is not about a title or position; it is about impact, influence, and inspiration."
>
> *– Robin S. Sharma*

One of the most influential experiences of my high school journey has been my internship with Congressman Bennie Thompson. This opportunity gave me firsthand exposure to public service, government operations, and the importance of advocating for community needs. Through this experience, I developed a deeper understanding of leadership, professionalism, and the responsibility leaders have to serve others with integrity and purpose. It strengthened my interest in public service and civic involvement.

At Callaway High School, I have also had the honor of being selected as Mr. Callaway for the 2025–2026 school year, a role that reflects the trust and confidence my peers have placed in me. This position has allowed me to represent my school with pride, promote school spirit, and serve as a positive role model within the Charger community. I strive to lead by example through respect, responsibility, and commitment to excellence.

What I value most about Callaway High School is the sense of family and encouragement that surrounds its scholars. The teachers and staff consistently push us to aim higher while reminding us that our character matters just as much as our achievements. Because of these experiences, I leave Callaway equipped with confidence, leadership skills, and a strong desire to make a meaningful impact in whatever path I choose.

I plan to continue developing my leadership skills through higher education, with aspirations of pursuing a career connected to public service, leadership, and community advocacy.



REYUNNA OATIS
MURRAH HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2026

When I first came to Murrah High School as a ninth grader, I was shy and nervous about entering a new environment where I did not know anyone. I held tightly to my faith, reminding myself of Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," and Psalm 46:5, "God is within her, she will not fail." Leaving Peeples Middle School as Miss PMS and salutatorian, I did not yet realize how much I would grow as a scholar, leader, and servant over the next four years.

At Murrah High School and Wells APAC Performing Arts School, I quickly became involved in leadership and service while maintaining strong academics. I served on Student Council and was elected president in both ninth and tenth grade, working with peers and staff to improve school climate and support our community. This strengthened my skills in teamwork, communication, and advocacy. In theater at Wells APAC, I was selected as an apprentice, later became a State Thespian Officer, and now serve as president of my theater department and Miss APAC Theater. These experiences taught me that true excellence requires discipline, time management, and responsibility on and off the stage.

> "She believed she could, so she is making a positive change."
>
> — *R.S. Grey*

My leadership also extended into other activities. As a band manager in tenth grade, I organized schedules, coordinated events, and supported scholars and directors, earning Band Manager of the Year for my reliability and commitment. As a member of the cheer team, I received Junior Cheerleader of the Year and the "Get Yourself Together" Award, which reminded me to face challenges with resilience and always come back stronger. Even when I ran for Miss Murrah and placed first runner-up, I learned that success is not just a title, but the courage to try and the growth that comes from stepping out in faith.

Service is at the heart of who I am. I work at Operation Shoestring, where I encourage younger scholars to believe they can achieve greatness regardless of their background. I also volunteer through breast cancer walks, blessing bags for the homeless, school cleanups, food distribution, babysitting, helping at daycares, and praying with families. These experiences have taught me compassion, humility, and the importance of using my gifts to uplift others.

I am also a proud mentee in the Bee The Difference mentoring program founded by Mrs. Cassie McDuffey. Through this program, I became a co-author of the book Hey Sis, received the Bee Legacy Award and Mentee of the Year Award, was selected as a junior page for the Lieutenant Governor, and launched my "Be Bold for God" clothing business to encourage young believers to live out their faith boldly.

Despite a busy schedule, I remain an A and B honor roll scholar with a 3.9 GPA, often helping classmates while continuing to challenge myself academically. Balancing leadership, service, work, and school has strengthened my responsibility, organization, and perseverance.

Looking ahead, I plan to attend Clark Atlanta University or Tuskegee University, major in Business and minor in Theater, and later earn a master's in business and a Bachelor of Fine Arts. My goal is to combine leadership, entrepreneurship, and the arts to create opportunities for others. Long term, I hope to own a talk show, open homeless shelters, direct films and shows, and start a business institution to help others build their own businesses, continuing the legacy of service I began in Jackson Public Schools.

If someone asked how I accomplished so much, my answer would be simple: it was all God. I thank and praise Him for everything He has done for me. Through every challenge, I have trusted Him to guide my steps, and I am grateful to my parents, my village, my teachers, counselors, coaches, and administrators at Murrah and Wells APAC who have poured into me and helped prepare me for the next chapter of my life. I love y'all.

MURRAH
MUSTANGS


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MUSTANGS
HIGH SCHOOL

EDMOND PALMER
JIM HILL HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2026

Living in the moment is something I once questioned. As a student-athlete competing in track, cross-country, and soccer, I often believed that performing at my best was more important than simply embracing the moment. Over time, however, I have come to realize that I have been living in the moment more often than I realized—and many of the opportunities I experienced through JPS helped shape that perspective.

Since I was a child, I envisioned myself playing soccer for Murrah High School. That dream became a reality, and along the way, I was fortunate to earn multiple MVP honors. I also discovered new passions by simply being willing to say yes to opportunities. I joined Major's Cadet Challenge Team and became involved in JROTC. I tried out for Bailey's track team and discovered a love for running that I plan to continue pursuing at the collegiate level.

Some of my most meaningful memories came from competing in JPS track meets. Although the meets were competitions, they introduced me to a remarkably supportive community—one where teammates and even competitors encouraged and celebrated one another. My experiences in cross-country also led to my being selected to serve on the Murrah organizational court as Miss Cross Country for four years.

Beyond athletics, several organizations and programs have played an important role in shaping who I am today, including the UMMC Base Pair program, APAC Theatre, and the JPS Global Citizenship Project. Each experience allowed me to explore different interests, develop new skills, and better understand myself and the world around me.

> "Saying yes to unexpected opportunities taught me to embrace the present, discover new passions, and step confidently into whatever future I choose."
>
> *– Edmond Palmer*

These opportunities have helped me become more than a student or an athlete. JPS has provided an environment where I could bring together my strengths, interests, and passions while discovering possibilities I might never have considered otherwise.

As I prepare for college and beyond, it is difficult to identify just one path I want to pursue. Rather than seeing that uncertainty as a challenge, I see it as an opportunity. I am grateful to have so many possibilities ahead of me. The experiences I have gained through JPS have taught me to embrace opportunities, live in the moment, and remain open to discovering where my talents and passions can take me. Because of those experiences, I feel prepared to succeed in whatever future I choose.



ALANA HARP
MURRAH HIGH SCHOOL
OUTSTANDING FEMALE ATHLETE
CLASS OF 2026

I used to question the claim that living in the moment is of utmost importance. As a scholar-athlete competing in track, cross-country, and soccer, I couldn't imagine how embracing the moment could ever be more important than performing. But I actually live in the moment quite often. My ability to do so has been shaped by the opportunities placed before me during my time at Murrah High School.

Since I was a kid, I envisioned myself playing soccer for Murrah, and now I have won multiple MVP awards. In contrast, it was only because I had no reason to say no that I joined the Major's cadet challenge team and JROTC. Trying out for the track team led me to success in running, which I will now continue to pursue at the collegiate level.

I thoroughly enjoyed every chance to run at a JPS track meet. It introduced me to a supportive community of teammates and strangers all supporting each other. This even led me to be on the Murrah organizational court as Miss Cross Country for four years.

> "JPS has acted as a melting pot, allowing me to combine my strengths and passions in a positive environment."
>
> *– Alana Harp*

Organizations like the UMMC Base Pair program, APAC Theatre, and the JPS Global Citizenship Project have led me to become the person I am today. These unique experiences make me more than just a scholar or an athlete.

While it is hard to pinpoint what activity I want to focus on in college, I consider myself lucky to be at this crossroads. Because I was given so many opportunities to live in the moment and participate in a multitude of activities, I am prepared to succeed in the future.

Alana plans to continue running cross-country at the collegiate level.

MURRAH MUSTANGS


NIKE

KNOLYN BAILEY
OUTSTANDING MALE ATHLETE
LANIER HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2026

At Lanier Junior Senior High School, I am proving that I am more than just a standout athlete. I am a scholar-athlete who is building a legacy rooted in discipline, faith, and a relentless pursuit of greatness.

Standing 5 feet 10 inches and 197 pounds, I delivered a dominant sophomore season, rushing for 1,754 yards and 16 touchdowns. My performance earned me Rookie of the Year, Offensive Player of the Year, Mississippi Scoreboard Player of the Week honors twice, Blitz 16 Player of the Year, MS Metro Sports Junction Player of the Week, 1st Team All-District Offense, and 1st Team 5A All-Region recognition. Yet, even with the recognition, I remain grounded, knowing the journey is far from finished.

My work has already begun opening doors at the next level, earning a Division I offer from Miami University, but I understand that opportunity is only the beginning. What I do next will define who I become.

Off the field, I separate myself through discipline and focus. As a scholar in the Tougaloo Early College Program, I balance college-level academics with the demands of football, demonstrating the mindset, maturity, and work ethic required to succeed beyond the game.

My foundation is built on faith, family, and a relentless commitment to finishing strong. I give all glory to God for ordering my steps and sustaining me through both triumph and adversity. After overcoming a fractured collarbone, I returned with greater focus and determination, embracing the belief that adversity does not break you; it builds you. Every setback has strengthened my resolve and sharpened my purpose.

> "Football is the vehicle, but perseverance and purpose are the fuel that drive me."
>
> *– Knolyn Bailey*

I trust God's plan for my life. Even in uncertain moments, I continue to push forward with confidence, knowing that every challenge is part of a greater design.

With talent, discipline, and unwavering faith leading the way, and with 833 Nation behind me every step of the journey, I am committed to becoming everything I am called to be, not just as an athlete, but as a man.


Wilson
NFL

NIGHT OF STARS GALA

On December 6, the Jackson Public Schools (JPS) community gathered for the highly-anticipated "Night of Stars Gala." This event celebrated the hard work, dedication, and success of JPS educators, leaders, and support staff. With a dazzling "Masquerade" theme, the gala was filled with elegance, excitement, and, most importantly, the recognition of the exceptional individuals making a difference in the lives of JPS students.

The gala was more than just a celebration, it was a tribute to the JPS "rockstars" who go above and beyond each day to create an environment where every student can thrive. During the evening's festivities, we honored some of the brightest stars within our district by naming the Administrator of the Year, Teacher of the Year, Support Staff of the Year, and District Leader of the Year.

Guests at the gala were treated to a night filled with laughter, music, and camaraderie. The "A Night of Stars Gala" is an annual event made possible through the generous sponsorship of the Kellogg Foundation. Their ongoing support helps make this celebration of excellence a reality, providing the platform to recognize the individuals making a lasting impact within Jackson Public Schools.



JOIN OUR AMAZING TEAM

Are you looking for a career where you can make a deep impact on the lives of scholars, work with amazing colleagues, and build a great career?

We're on an exciting journey in Jackson Public Schools. Come join us in our journey!

The Jackson Public School District is seeking highly-qualified, committed, and dedicated applicants for teaching and other staff positions.

JPS is:

- The third largest public school district in Mississippi with over 16,000 scholars.
- Located in the historic capital city of Mississippi—also known as the "City with Soul."
- A provider of competitive salary and benefits.
- A place where there are plenty of career ladder opportunities.

What kind of opportunities are you interested in?

- Instructional
- Paraprofessional
- Leadership
- Non-instructional

JPS has many options for you. Are you ready to apply now for a position?

If you have questions, we're here to help. Contact the JPS Office of Recruitment for more information. Call (601) 985-3159.

We invite your sincere partnership as we work to transform lives through excellent education.











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1 DISTRICT DIRECTION

MARCHING TOWARDS EXCELLENCE

JACKSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Transforming lives through excellent education