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Duval Schools Superintendent Offered Top Job in Detroit Public Schools

As you know, Duval County Superintendent Nikolai Vitti will be leaving Jacksonville this summer to lead public schools in Detroit, Michigan, his hometown. Dr. Vitti has been a force for change in Jacksonville since he was first hired in 2012, and our schools have continued to improve across a broad variety of measures.

From the Quality Education for All Fund, which invested \$40 million into 36 of the district's historically highest-needs schools, to the expansion of services for overage students, to expanded mental health and arts education – the results are apparent. The graduation rate has vaulted up to 78.8 percent, no longer the lowest of Florida's largest seven urban school districts (often known as the Big 7). And when compared with those districts, Duval now has the lowest achievement gap between white and African-American students and between students with and without disabilities.

The QEA Fund Advisory Board has been monitoring the situation with Dr. Vitti closely, and is poised to address the questions raised by his departure. The Advisory Board will be meeting on Monday, April 24 to explore what adjustments, if any, should be made in response to this change in leadership. We will keep you informed as this process continues.



Three of Five Finalists for 2017 Duval County Teacher of the Year Employed at QEA Schools

Great things are happening at QEA schools. Of the five finalists for the 2017 Duval County Teacher of the Year award, three are employed at QEA schools.

Latrece Brown, Andrew Robinson Elementary

Latrece Brown, fourth grade teacher at Andrew Robinson Elementary, was named the 2017 Florida Blue Duval County Teacher of the Year. Brown will represent Duval County teachers in the state-level competition this summer.

As a teacher leader, Brown serves as the chairperson for the fourth grade team. She demonstrates a deep understanding of the content and works collaboratively with her team to plan and deliver rigorous instruction in the classroom. As a member of a few committees, Brown single-handedly planned STEM week, FSA parent night and a pep rally for the school.

In addition to being a phenomenal teacher, Brown is a great resource to parents. She created a closed group Facebook page to help parents understand the concepts of mathematics she is teaching. Weekly, she "goes live" to model strategies for solving a variety of problems or review commonly missed questions from parents and students in real time. Because of her ability to think outside the box, Brown has created a firestorm at the school as it relates to the Facebook page. Students and parents from other classes frequently request information for participation in the group. Brown is truly the "cheerleader" of Andrew A. Robinson and her positive demeanor and personality make her a "go to" faculty member in her building.

Michael Bostic-Jones, William M. Raines High School

William M. Raines High school is a QEA school that has been the recipient of several

investments from the QEA Fund, including principal and teacher incentives, Summer Principal Academy Fellows and Jacksonville Teacher Residency program participants. In addition to this, Raines also benefits from the hard work of some amazing educators like Michael Bostic-Jones, a Teacher of the Year finalist for the second time in three years.

Bostic-Jones currently serves as U.S. History teacher, Social Studies department chair, Leadership team member, Rainesmen sponsor and an athletic coach. As a teacher, Bostic-Jones provides instructional support to a unique group of students. His ability to build productive relationships and solid knowledge of his content has helped him emerge as a respected leader in his role as an educator.

Bostic-Jones is not your average teacher, as his high level of teacher efficacy is authentically evident in everything he does for his students. He consistently reflects on his childhood experiences and takes advantage of every opportunity to give students what he lacked as a result of growing up in the foster care system and attending multiple schools. "Be great!" is often loudly reverberating in the corridor as he monitors students transitioning from one class to the next.

Bostic-Jones' innate ability to reach students through teaching goes beyond the four walls of the classroom. As a teacher of history, he plans lessons that will journey the students through the various eras, the United States and regions of the world through his genuinely engaging delivery. Having experienced being locked into a system of deprivation throughout his childhood, Bostic-Jones has worked hard to provide his students opportunities to break those locks. He has raised funds that have allowed him, over the past two years, to take students to Costa Rica to provide volunteer services, gain an experience in another country's culture and ultimately realize that they can do anything, go anywhere and be anything they dream. He is a dream weaver for many of his students.

Caitlyn Stetson, Reynolds Lane Elementary

Reynolds Lane also produced a top five Teacher of the Year finalist for Duval County. Caitlyn Stetson is a shining star at Reynolds Lane. Her positive attitude and willingness to help others is an inspiration to everyone. She has a special fondness for all of her students and makes it her personal mission to help each and every one of them become successful. Her enthusiasm about her students and her work is uplifting and makes her classroom a wonderful environment in which to learn.

Stetson's classroom is an amazing place to learn. It is bright, inviting, and full of students' work. She is a math whiz, who involves her students in hands-on, interactive lessons. She leaves a lasting impression on her students. She not only strives for the very best in her classroom, but she also works to ensure that the school is a wonderful place to work and learn.

Stetson's students very often begin to mimic the growth mindset of their teacher. This contributes to a classroom culture in which everyone is growing, learning and striving for

high achievement every day.

JTR Receives Federal Grant from the National Science Foundation

The Jacksonville Teacher Residency program has once again secured federal dollars to support and sustain its unique program at the University of North Florida. In March, it was announced that JTR would receive a grant from the National Science Foundation that will provide stipend dollars for their program for the next four years. Specifically, the grant dollars will cover the \$20,000 stipend for 15 residents, as well as a \$10,000 per year stipend for each year that they complete as a teacher in a low-income school for up to four years.



The National Science Foundation provided the funding as part of an initiative designed to support teacher preparation programs targeted towards STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) subject areas. These are typically the hardest to staff subjects in public schools, particularly those serving high poverty neighborhoods. The Jacksonville Teacher Residency program is designed for the very purpose of providing high quality, highly prepared teachers for exactly those types of classrooms and schools. And thus far, the program has been hugely successful in Duval County.

“We are so thrilled to receive this funding,” said JTR Program Director Dr. Wanda Lastrapes. “It not only allows us to continue this important work of training the next generation of STEM teachers, but it also validates the program that we have created. To be one of just a handful of urban teacher residency programs receiving this grant across the nation, and the only one in the state of Florida, lets us know that we are doing something right.”

To date, 27 residents have gone through the three cohorts of the Jacksonville Teacher Residency program. The fourth cohort will begin the program in June of this year.

Quality Education for All Fund in the News

[Board, Vitti debate whether to expand teacher pay incentives to other schools](#)

[UNF gets \\$1.4 million to train math, science teachers in Duval schools](#)

[How would Duval schools fare if Vitti were to leave? Community and school leaders disagree](#)



From left to right: Latrese Fann, Vincent Hall and Teacher of the Year Finalist, Caitlyn Stetson with her principal, Marianne Simon.

Principal Incentives from QEA Bringing Transformational Leadership to Struggling Schools

Strong leadership is the foundation for any successful business or organization, and when it comes to struggling schools, this could not be more accurate. But many schools in high needs areas experience disproportionate rates of turnover in their leadership, which can cause frustration and inconsistency for teachers and students within their schools.

For this reason, the district's strategic plan adopted in 2013 places a priority on strong leadership in schools across the district. The QEA Fund has also played a role in supporting principals and assistant principals in the Duval Transformation Office schools. Beginning in 2014, the QEA Fund provided performance incentives to high performing principals with a proven track record of improving Title I schools, believing that the philosophy behind this investment is that by providing schools with strong leaders, teachers will be motivated, supported, developed and encouraged and in turn, student performance will increase.

Three principals who have received the performance incentive personify this philosophy. Latrese Fann, Marianne Simon and Vincent Hall, principals at Andrew Robinson Elementary, Reynolds Lane Elementary and Raines high respectively, have shown the type of visionary leadership that leads to real change within a school building. Nothing reflects this more than the fact that each of these principals had Teacher of the Year

finalists from their school this year, and those three finalists largely credit their principals for their success.

Marianne Simon, the principal at Reynolds Lane Elementary, received a performance incentive to come to the school at the beginning of the QEA Fund initiative. She has since moved the school from an “F” grade to a “C” grade. Roughly 40 percent of teachers at Reynolds Lane receive some level of performance incentive from the QEA Fund, and the Fund also supported the placement of a reading interventionist in the school in the 2015-2016 school year.

Latrese Fann is the recipient of a principal incentive that drew her to the school three years ago. Additionally, Andrew Robinson has a Summer Principal Academy Fellow, Willie Brewster, who was formerly the teacher of the year at Rutledge Pearson Elementary before he decided to transition to a path of school leadership. About 40 percent of Andrew Robinson teachers receive some level of performance incentives through the QEA Fund, and last year, a reading interventionist was funded for the school through QEA as well.

Vincent Hall was brought to Raines High School in 2014 with a recruitment incentive. Hall was serving as the principal of First Coast High School when the opportunity to lead his high school alma mater became available. Unable to pass up the opportunity to serve as the principal at the high school he attended, Hall joined the team at Raines and has been their fearless leader ever since. As a result of his leadership, Raines today is a very different school than it was three years ago. The graduation rate at Raines is higher than both the district and state averages and it has post secondary readiness rates that are equally impressive. One of Hall’s most rewarding tasks is serving as the administrative mentor for participants in the Summer Principals Academy program, a school leadership intensive training program funded by QEA. So far, Hall has had 3 Fellows from SPA to serve as his interns, and one of them, Brian Ellis, became his assistant principal last year.



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