

For Immediate Release

June 7, 2019

Contact:

Erica Taylor – (843) 937-6303



West Ashley High School

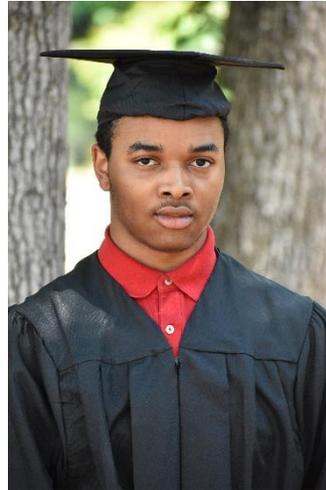
Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Cynthia Ambrose
Deputy Superintendent of Learning
Services

Sharon Randall
Executive Director of Secondary
Learning Community

Paul Runyon
Principal

Media Release



West Ashley Valedictorian Honored for 12 Years of Perfect Attendance

Charleston, SC – A 12-year perfect attendance record is unbelievable testimony to grit and dedication according to West Ashley High School (WAHS) Principal Lee Runyon.

Very few students across South Carolina can boast that accomplishment but two scholars from WAHS can.

The State Department of Education recently recognized [Marcus Jackson](#), West Ashley's 2019 Valedictorian and fellow student Davonte Capers. The two have known each other since middle school. Jackson admits that there was a time when they were the only kids in the classroom during their junior year on the day after final exams.

He never set out to achieve perfect attendance. However, he had to pass on many field trips because he refused to miss class time. He always insisted that all doctor's appointments were scheduled after school.

"It is critical to show up so as not to get behind in class," said Jackson. "It is hard to recover from the missed instructional time. I take pride in showing up to class, and I do it because it is natural for me to want to go to school."

Impressed by Jackson's humbleness, Runyon bragged on his top student.

"Very few South Carolina students achieve a 12-year perfect attendance record and earn the title of Valedictorian," said Runyon. "This is only the beginning for Marcus. He will far surpass these accomplishments."

Jackson, who boasts a weighted 5.283 GPA, was awarded the Teaching Fellows Scholarship plans to attend the University of South Carolina to major in History. He expects to obtain a Master of Arts in Teaching as well. Aside from his love of history, Jackson enjoys reading, trivia, volunteering at the Lowcountry Food Bank, listening to classical music and K-Pop, and playing historical video games.

As part of earning the distinction of Valedictorian Jackson was awarded The C.E. Williams Cup is given annually to the graduate who has earned the highest grade point average over his or her high school career. This award honors Mr. C.E. Williams, former Superintendent of Charleston County District 10 schools.

In his Valedictory speech, Jackson told his fellow classmates, "Curiosity, Integrity, Flexibility. These magic words can bring you success, no matter which path you take after today."

His Rise to the Top

Jackson truly enjoyed school and learning, and credited his teachers for making learning fun.

"I was motivated to make straight A's and not get behind," said Jackson. "Earning the spot as my school's valedictorian was never my goal. My goal was to make nothing less than an A."

Principal Runyon said the leadership example he has set for his peers is unmatched.

"His fellow students have seen first-hand his diligence to produce exemplary work on a daily basis," said Runyon. "Every day he puts on his education hardhat. He is consistent, and he is unbelievably prepared to do the work."

His teachers have commented to Runyon that Jackson is one of the most exceptional students they have ever taught.

"He is a quiet, giant of a student," said Runyon. "He is so well loved that he is considered a rock star here at West Ashley High School."

Becoming an Educator

Jackson hopes to teach social studies and history. He enjoys the subject so much that he took every single social studies class offered at WAHS.

"Marcus is a gentle soul, firmly planted on the ground," said Runyon. "He has the ability and intellectual insight to understand people. He will be there for his students as a consistent presence."

Jackson said he is driven to do what his teachers did for him.

"I want to make history fun and inspire my future students to have a love of learning," said Jackson. "My teachers have always been my mentors, and they pushed me to do my best. My academic success is because of the great teachers I enjoyed. They helped me to grow as a student and as a person. Those teachers are more the key to my success than anything I have done."

Jackson is also driven by his competitive nature and a motivation to do his best.

"I would pick the smartest kid in the room and silently vow to be smarter than them," said Jackson. "The one and only B I received on one of my third-grade report cards made me upset enough that I told myself I would never again receive an Honor Roll ribbon – only the Principal's List Ribbon."

Runyon said that Jackson will forever be a legend at WAHS.

"Marcus was an academic giant in the Charleston County school system, and he will be one for his future students," said Runyon.

Jackson's love of education was evident in his final words at graduation.

"My teachers have always been my favorite part of going to school," said Jackson. "I would like to thank all of my teachers for fostering my growth and development as a student and more importantly as a person and for doing the same for all of us. I will work very hard these next few years in order to hopefully join your profession and do the same for future students, and I'm sure I speak for many of my fellow graduates."

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.