



ANNA JULIA COOPER

EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

FAITH · KNOWLEDGE · PRIDE

November 21, 2016

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To Whom It May Concern:

Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School is well into its 8th year as a school serving low-income families from Richmond's East End. 75% of our families now come from nearby public housing communities. Our mission remains the same: *through a program focused on the whole child, we help empower students and graduates to change the trajectory of their lives, setting their sights on success in high school, college, and serving their communities.* I believe our success has been genuine, even remarkable. That notwithstanding, our challenges and, at times, failures are also a part of the life of the School.

Our Episcopal identity is central to who we are as an institution. I sometimes describe AJC as a religious organization in the form of a school. We prize and value our relationship to the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia as one faith-based institution united with many others in the wider Church. We feel blessed to be part of that communion.

An update on our status this year would include the following:

- AJCES was formally accredited by the Virginia Association of Independent Schools (VAIS) this past spring. (Hooray!)
- We added a 4th grade this year in an effort to have an additional year to work with our students academically and socially.
- We currently have 101 students enrolled in grades 4 through 8
- We have 98 graduates and stay in close contact with almost all of them through our Graduate Support Program. This Program assists former students in countless ways, including tuition, fees, SAT prep, an on-site after-school program, transition into high school and college, transportation, employment, counseling, and tutoring. Much of that work is done in conjunction with UP RVA, a new non-profit based here at AJC.
- Our budget is nearly five times what it was when we had 25 students in 2009. For the second year in a row we are almost forward-funded for the coming year. Because we are a full-scholarship school, however, we know that we must continue to raise funds year-round to meet our growing needs.
- We recently began a significant addition on the building which will 1) nearly double our cafeteria/gathering/chapel/assembly space; 2) free up a large classroom (currently used for overflow eating; 3) add a classroom dedicated to our graduate support program; 4) provide at least one additional bathroom and

Michael Maruca

Head of School

and some additional office space; and 5) expand the size of our kitchen. We believe the addition, currently slated to be done sometime in February, will transform the day-to-day life of the School. We are in the midst of a campaign to raise money for the project and are confident we will meet our target by the time the addition is completed.

In addition to those significant milestones and developments, we continue our annual review of the curriculum and the commitment to solid, professional development for our teachers. We strive through training and practice to be a trauma-informed school where healing goes hand in hand with traditional academic work. Our board has grown to 18 members who continue to be extraordinarily devoted to the School both as caretakers of the mission and donors. We continue to attract a growing number of volunteers who enrich immeasurably the life of the School. Finally, our relationships with other schools, collaborating non-profits, churches, and other organizations continue to grow and deepen.

I feel that in every area of the life of the School and the wider community of affection that comprises all of Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School, we are stronger and more vibrant than we were just a year ago. The great challenge will be to sustain that high level of commitment, generosity and excellence day after day---particularly in the most important area of the interactions among staff and students---so that we can continue to facilitate a change in the trajectory of our students' lives.

Sincerely,

Michael Maruca
Head of School