



YELLOWSTONE SCHOOLS

Magazine | Winter 2024



**9TH GRADE
LAUNCHES**

WITH NEW PRINCIPAL

**SPECIAL
EDUCATION**

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

**COMMUNITY
PARTNERS**

ARE OUR SECRET SAUCE

NEW BUSES

SERVE COMMUNITY

The Yellowstone Schools magazine is printed twice yearly for donors, volunteers, students, parents, alumni, and friends. Questions or comments? Contact advancement@yellowstoneschools.org. Copyright © 2024

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Candice Lapid, MEd
Principal, Lower School

Marian Williams, MEd
Principal, Lower School

ON THE COVER | Yellowstone student
Shomari Richardson, Kindergarten, in
costume at the 2023 Character Parade.

Founded in 2001 and rooted in the
Christian faith, Yellowstone Schools
collectively educates 600 children in Pre-K
through 9th grade and will grow a grade
each year to serve 12th grade by 2026.
Yellowstone partners with students and
families—regardless of financial means—to
provide a life-changing education, develop
a strong moral foundation, and prepare
scholars for life beyond high school. The
K12 campus is located in the Third Ward,
one of Houston's oldest historically Black
neighborhoods.

Most students served live in communities
without access to strong educational
opportunities. With an average class size
of 16 to 18, our students experience a rich
academic and co-curricular model while
receiving bus transportation, two meals
a day, and access to a comprehensive
student support program.

Dear Yellowstone Schools family,

I am thrilled to welcome you to the
latest edition of our school maga-
zine. This season, we have a col-
lection of articles showcasing the
initiatives that continue to shape
the Yellowstone experience.

Our school year began with the
launch of our 9th grade under
the guidance of our dynamic new
upper school principal. On page 2,
you'll read about how our school
leadership is committed to foster-
ing an environment where every
student can thrive academically
and personally. The article provides
a glimpse into the exciting devel-
opments that promise to make this
school year exceptional.

Yellowstone Schools is truly unique, and one of the ways we serve
our students is by harnessing the power of community partnerships.
These partnerships are not just collaborations; they are the secret
sauce that enrich our students' educational experience. We invite
you to explore how these connections extend beyond the classroom,
creating a supportive network that empowers our students to reach
new heights.

In a world where every student deserves a chance to shine, our ded-
icated educators are making a difference. This year we saw a huge
increase in the need for special education services, and we're high-
lighting how we are working to meet this need. Read more on page 8
as we dive into the transformative work happening within our special
education programs.

Lastly, I am excited to share the wheels of change with you—our new
buses! Your investment in transportation makes Yellowstone possible
for hundreds of our students who could not attend otherwise. Learn
more about how these new buses are a blessing for our community
on page 9.

We invite you to enjoy these stories and more as we showcase the
heart of Yellowstone Schools. Together, let's celebrate the achieve-
ments, partnerships, and innovations that make our community a
beacon of educational excellence. 🙌

Warm regards,

James Mosley, EdD
Superintendent



NINTH GRADE LAUNCHES WITH NEW PRINCIPAL

Light streaming through windows. New desks. The smell of a new building. Ninth-graders are experiencing these things everyday in Steadfast Hall. The new building expansion and high school program are the result of our recently completed *Yellowstone. Forever.* campaign. The doors opened in August, and laughter, curiosity, and learning have been filling the halls ever since. This marks the beginning of a transformative era for our schools, which will continue to grow by adding a grade each year until we get to 12th grade in 2026.



All of this is the charge of a remarkable educator, Marian Williams. Yellowstone's new upper school principal, Marian knows what educational success looks like. She believes schools provide opportunities through the efforts of teachers, administrators, volunteers, donors, and others who introduce young individuals to the possibilities life has to offer. She shares that these are the people who had the greatest impact on her and shaped her into the leader she is today.

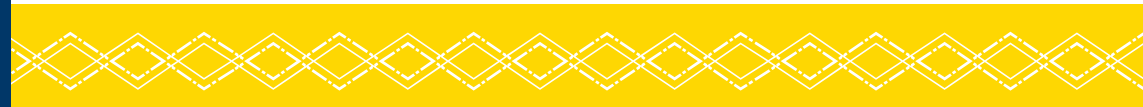
Becoming a Teach for America corps member after graduating from the University of Louisville changed her life. Marian first worked at a highly-regarded charter school in Memphis with demographics similar to Yellowstone. At this school she saw first-hand what was possible for scholars. This positive experience confirmed her desire for a career in education and drives her to create successful school environments.

Marian went on to earn a Master's in Education and led schools in Beaumont before coming to Yellowstone. Today she is a proven leader with many scholastic accolades to her name.

"I love being challenged and having an impact, so getting to build the upper school at Yellowstone is one of the reasons I am so excited about this job," Marian says. "I fell in love with the campus on my first visit during the summer when I was able to meet some of the staff and fellow educators. Now that school is in full swing, I'm even more impressed with Yellowstone."

Marian wants to maximize every moment our scholars are on campus. "Both our teachers and students need to have a growth mindset. We have to know about different opportunities and expose our kids to different paths so they know they have options when they graduate." This means emphasizing rigorous academics and soft skills like communication, leadership, and respect for others.

Marian, who grew up in circumstances similar to many Yellowstone families, believes God designed her for what she is doing now. The Yellowstone mission resonates deeply with Marian. "We are here to inspire and empower our students to grow into the plan God has created for their lives." Under Marian's leadership, our upper school students are already thriving. 🙌





ANNUAL CHARACTER PARADE FOSTERS A LOVE OF READING

Brimming with excitement, parents and upper school students eagerly lined Lion's Way for the highly anticipated annual character parade. The second-grade students delighted the cheering crowd with enthusiastic waves while dressed as their favorite Ninja Turtles. First graders, dressed as the Incredibles, proudly displayed a handcrafted sign that read, "We are incredible readers." PreK students held hands as they paraded past, donning Paw Patrol masks and sporting big smiles that warmed hearts.

Before the parade, volunteers captivated students by reading stories tailored to each class theme. This parade is about more than just

having fun—it ignites a passion for reading within our students as they embody their favorite literary characters. Moreover, the character parade exemplifies our commitment to project-based learning, an approach that deepens our students' education by allowing them to immerse themselves in personally meaningful projects.

This type of learning not only fosters the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and effective communication, but it also lays a strong foundation for guiding our students throughout their lives. Yellowstone moments like these celebrate and nurture every child's potential. 🙌



COMMUNITY PARTNERS ARE OUR SECRET SAUCE

Community partners are among Yellowstone's unsung heroes. One of our amazing partners is Building New Foundations (BNF). A supporter since 2018, BNF became a grade-level partner in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year, BNF gifted each of their sponsored students with a Christmas present. This year, BNF and other partners worked together to ensure every student in PreK through 5th grade received a gift.

One of BNF's most active volunteers at Yellowstone is Derrick Callahan. Callahan often serves as a lunch buddy, providing mentorship and support to students on a regular basis. He shares, "Empowering the next generation isn't just a choice, it's a compass guiding us towards a future where every act of volunteering becomes a stepping stone for underserved youth, paving the way for a community rich in compassion, resilience, and possibilities."

The kindness of this organization and other community partners, such as Ascend Performance Matierals, Energy Transfer Partners, and many area churches, benefit all our students and educators. From financial investments supporting student meals, transportation, technology, field trips, and more to volunteering tirelessly across our campus, they are the secret sauce to much of our students' success.

"We work hard to ensure we have meaningful opportunities for our partners to give to our community and build rapport with our students," says Maricela Ramos, Yellowstone's Volunteer Manager. "We truly rely on their generosity and are always looking for more community partners, especially as we grow and serve more children."

To learn more about community partners, financial support, in-kind donations and volunteer opportunities, visit the link below. You can also reach out to advancement@yellowstoneschools.org or call Maricela at 713-741-8000.

www.yellowstoneschools.org/community-partnerships



THANK YOU FOR YOUR MONTHLY GIFT!

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Monthly donors as of December 1, 2023. If you feel your name should be on this list, please contact us.



Add your name to this list by making a monthly gift online at yellowstoneschools.org/give-now, or text/call our advancement team to set up your gift at 713.741.8000.

ASK AMY

At Yellowstone Schools, we take pride in being a warm and welcoming community. Amy Tanner joined our staff as our Chief Advancement Officer in 2020, and she often works behind the scenes to make our school family strong. Over the summer, she transitioned into a new role as our Chief of Staff, and we thought it was time to get to know Amy a bit better.



Name your favorite things about Yellowstone Schools.

The kids, the staff, the mission. The first time I set foot on campus, I walked in the door and knew God was calling me to work here. The warmth I felt from the students and teachers was bar none. I never looked back!

What does Yellowstone's Chief of Staff do?

I serve as a right-hand person to our superintendent, Dr. James Mosley. Think of me as an extension of him. I have a wide range of responsibilities, including strategic planning and problem-solving as well as streamlining processes, systems, and communications across Yellowstone. In addition to handling special projects for James, I also oversee fundraising, marketing, admissions, HR, and alumni programs. Where James' background is in education and leadership, my experience is in nonprofit administration, business, and board engagement.

Why are people so passionate about supporting Yellowstone Schools?

People support Yellowstone for many reasons. They feel called by God. They believe everyone deserves a high-quality education. They believe a strong spiritual and academic education will be life-changing for Yellowstone students. And, finally, they care deeply about our community and want to make a difference.

When not working, what do you do for fun?

I'm a serial hobbyist, so I always have something brewing! Currently, I foster kittens for a local animal shelter. I also love making things—sourdough bread, clothes, knit scarves, jewelry. About a year ago, I got into leatherwork, and it's been a blast making belts, bags, and accessories.



SPECIAL EDUCATION MAKING A DIFFERENCE

This academic year marks a remarkable expansion in the special education program at Yellowstone Schools. Thirty percent of upper school students now receive support. Two years ago, only 11.3% of students across Texas received special education services, meaning Yellowstone is serving a population nearly three times the state average.

This explosive growth is due in part to how quickly recommendations have spread. Marian Williams, Yellowstone School's upper school principal, comments, "Parents and other caregivers are hearing about how students are being supported and they want their students to receive the same level of support."


Special education is more than just a program—it's a commitment to meeting student needs, according to Marian. Some students in the program need adjusted seating, modified grading, or simply extra attention to succeed.

Many students in the past have reported internalized feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, preventing them from participating in class. "You just don't see that here now," says Marian. "Kids aren't afraid to make a mistake

or ask an obvious question." The learning environment at Yellowstone encourages every student to believe their voice matters. Our scholars continually report a similar message: at Yellowstone, they feel safe.

Grant Funding for our Lower School

While it has been a long-standing dream to provide a special education program to our younger students, funding has posed a significant challenge. However, just this year, a generous foundation provided a three-year grant to launch a lower-school program. The grant provides resources for much-needed supplies and testing in addition to a dedicated paraprofessional.


"It is still a work in progress," says Candice Lapid, Yellowstone's lower school principal, "but we are excited so many kids are going to get the help they need to thrive." This personalized education would not be possible without donors like you. If you are interested in supporting this growing program at Yellowstone, please contact the advancement team for ways to get involved at advancement@yellowstoneschools.org. 





STOPPING GANG VIOLENCE TOGETHER

Yellowstone alum Ajada Wafer was deeply affected by the gang related drive-by shooting and death of a friend in 2023. Now a student at Pro-Vision High School, Ajada wanted to do something to support her fellow students in their grief and to help prevent them from thinking gang membership is cool. She wrote a letter to her former teachers at Yellowstone to ask if our middle school students would write cards to their peers at Pro-Vision to encourage them. "I also feel like this would change the middle school students at Yellowstone from thinking that gangbanging and throwing gang signs is cool."

Yellowstone's teachers and students were eager to support Ajada's vision. Middle school students wrote comforting notes to peers across town as part of an advisory class. Their words were well-received and the action our scholars took to console friends is a lesson they will long remember. 




**“
I have
been
waiting
fourteen
years
for this.
God is
good!
”**

NEW BUSES SERVE COMMUNITY

Mrs. Smith's third-grade class eagerly anticipated its field trip to Dewberry Farm until the trip was canceled because the bus broke down—again. Miraculously, our new bus arrived minutes before students were scheduled to go on the field trip.

Mr. McNeill, a long-time bus driver at Yellowstone, reports that the new buses are a huge upgrade. In addition to being reliable, they have seatbelts, air conditioning, and automatic doors.

"The kids tell me everyday how thrilled they are with the bus," says Mr. McNeill. "I have been waiting fourteen years for this. God is so good!"

When an anonymous donor gave a matching grant of \$250,000, you responded generously. An anonymous donor gave \$75k, and the MD Anderson Foundation helped us reach our goal with a generous \$75k grant! Because of your generosity, our third graders made their field trip, and, more importantly, many of our scholars now have a reliable way to get to school. One caregiver states, "It's not just a ride to school; it's a bridge to a brighter future for my child." Thank you to everyone who made this possible! 



Party in the Park

Thursday, April 4th, 2024

McGovern Centennial Gardens

Event Chairs: Lauren & Jack Burgher and Suzy & Paul Thompson

Honorees: Janet & Brad Childers and Anne & Les Csorba

For ticket and sponsor information, visit yellowstoneschools.org/party





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ALUM LOOKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

2014 Yellowstone alum Rakia Lewis couldn't be more excited to make a difference in the world. In December, she graduated from Grambling University with a degree in Kinetics, Sports and Leisure Studies, and a Minor in Therapeutic Recreation. She already has used her skills in a current internship in Houston to help those with disabilities and others who need assistance with daily living skills to improve their quality of life.

Rakia started attending Yellowstone when she was three and she remembers it vividly. "It was the first day of school and I was shy. I didn't want to participate, but the teacher held out her hand and from then on caring teachers made all of us feel safe—it was like home," she recounts.

She went on to graduate from Elgin High School and decided she wanted to go to college somewhere a little further from Houston. She fell in love with Grambling on a high school visit and set her sights on attending, helping fund college with a variety of jobs along the way.

Looking back on her Yellowstone days, she says "This school inspired me to think bigger. There is nowhere better—Yellowstone set me up for success and made me want to make a difference. I really want to contribute to the world."

With an entrepreneurial mindset, Rakia is set on getting licensed immediately after finishing college. She is fast becoming the community leader Yellowstone envisions for all its scholars. 