



JAMES WELDON JOHNSON COLLEGE PREPARATORY

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Principal: John Kniseley • Assistant Principal: Berreath Dukes • Assistant Principal: Michelle Chambers

Dear Trojan Community,

I am very excited to be joining such an amazing school and community that has obviously been doing great things as indicated by the many accolades and recognition as a school. I appreciated the opportunity to share a little about myself via the Meet and Greet and continue to be appreciative of the many positive communications from parents, guardians, students, and staff.

I want to assure the Trojan Community that my first order of business will be to look, listen, and learn the culture, climate, and history of the school. I will take the time to meet every staff member personally and be visible around the school talking to students. In addition, I will schedule Coffee with the Principal to allow parents and guardians the opportunity to discuss their thoughts, ideas, and concerns. I will make the needed decisions but will promise not to make unnecessary changes. James Weldon Johnson is a great school that I want to be a part of making even greater. It will be my charge to learn everything about JWJ and learn everything about middle school as I transition from the high school.

My leadership style is one of empowerment and shared decision making. However, using Naval terms, I am ultimately responsible and accountable for the ship. I am not afraid to make the tough decisions or have courageous conversations. I want to utilize the strengths of our staff and maximize ownership. I have high expectations, but am relationship driven. I believe you can have high expectations and pull kids up to the bar through building positive relationships. I use the analogy of the iceberg. If we only get to know students by what we observe of them (iceberg) above the waterline then we are only treating the symptoms. If we truly take the time to get to know and see what is below the surface, then we will truly know our students and can better address their needs. I understand that we need to hold students accountable and responsible, but we need to approach this ideal through realism.

Ultimately, I am an instructional leader and the playing field is the classroom. I will be very visible in the classroom and look forward to seeing teachers and students in action. I am a believer that we need to focus on learning and be great at assessing students and take corrective action when they do not. I love the quote from Malala Yousafzai. She said, "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world." The impact that educators have on students is immeasurable and lifelong.

I want to speak directly to our support staff. Whether you are a Paraeducator, Custodian, Office Administrative Assistant, Security, Kitchen Support, or any other position that impacts the operation of the school, you are highly valued and do make a difference in getting a student to graduation.

I look forward to getting to know parents, guardians, students, and staff at James Weldon Johnson. I am excited to be a Trojan. I know we are operating in crazy times with the Covid-19 pandemic. I hope we are able to get back to some sort of normalcy soon and I we will again be able to instruct and meet our amazing students face to face.

Respectfully,

John R. Kniseley II

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