


461
GRADUATES

OVER
\$8,000,000
RAISED



Over
1,200 
Hours of
Coding
Education

4
Posse
Scholars

4 Gates
Millennium
Scholars

7
Questbridge
Scholars

Acceptances at
103
High Schools

ACCEPTANCES AT
187
COLLEGES

Acceptances at
25
Graduate Schools

1
EVANS
SCHOLAR

3
JACK KENT
COOKE
SCHOLARS

About Reach for Excellence

Reach for Excellence is a non-profit, classroom based, academic and leadership enrichment program. In 2001, this program was begun by the Marist Fathers and Brothers, who also operate Marist School in Atlanta, Georgia. Through its mix of academic, cultural, and community based experiences, this tuition-free program prepares talented, limited income middle school students to meet the challenges of college preparatory programs and high schools. Students, along with their families, commit to three six-week summer sessions and three years of Saturday sessions throughout the school year.



Dear Friends and Supporters of Reach for Excellence:

I am pleased to report on the success and resilience of Reach for Excellence during the 2020–2021 school year.

Support for our mission to empower economically disadvantaged middle school students and expand their academic possibilities continued to grow. This year, we received an unprecedented number of donations from Reach for Excellence alumni. I can't think of a better testament to the quality of our program and the enduring impact we have on our students than the generous support of our graduates.

The 26 rising 9th graders of Cohort 2021 completed all three years of the Reach for Excellence program this summer. COVID-19 impacted their experience, but they remained diligent through a summer of virtual learning and hybrid Saturday sessions in the fall and spring. Our graduates have begun their high school years at a diverse set of college preparatory high schools

throughout Atlanta, including Chamblee Charter High School, Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School, DeKalb Early College Academy, Holy Innocents Episcopal School, Lanier High School, Marist School, North Gwinnett High School, Pace Academy, The Paideia School, Paul Duke STEM High School, and Providence Christian Academy.

Our alumni continue to take a leading role in supporting and guiding Reach. We recently formed the Alumni Advisory Council to help our graduates stay connected to each other and our program. We are also pleased that a second alum of Reach, Wollinsky Mendez of Cohort 2005, was elected to our Board of Directors. Mr. Mendez brings a unique perspective, resourceful network, and passionate commitment to Reach for Excellence's leadership.

In April, we welcomed Marisol Zacarias as Director of the Hispanic Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to improve the college success outcomes of our Hispanic students. Marisol brings extensive experience in education and program development. She got to work quickly, connecting with the community and recruiting new students to the program. Our first Hispanic Initiative Cohort of 10 students began their Reach for Excellence journey in August. All of these students will be first-generation high school and college graduates.

Your contributions accomplish so much in the lives of our students. We are grateful for your partnership as we continue to navigate the pandemic and guide students along the path of academic success. We hope you enjoy our 2020–2021 annual report.

Warm regards,

Rocco Testani

Chairman of the Board

Commit to the Climb! That is exactly what Cohort 2021 S, 2022 T, and 2023 U did on June 10 when 85 scholars reported in person, masked, in their red, yellow, or white T-shirts ready for Day One of Summer 2021! Smiles, virtual hugs, and elbow bumps abounded!

The daily schedule included Academic classes and Book Clubs before lunch and one Recreation class after lunch. DeKalb County Government offered the program “Youth De-Coded” to Cohort 2021 S, rising 9th grade scholars. “Youth De-Coded” provided Cohort 2021 S the opportunity to strengthen newly learned computer science and programming skills.

While keeping class sizes small, a few guests were able to meet with our scholars and teachers. Ms. Constance Barnes, Director of Programs & Partnerships at the New York City based Knowledge House, shared her high school and college experiences with Cohort 2021 S Ladies Book Club. Amanda Bradley, Cohort 2007 E, Marist 2011, Harvard 2015, Harvard Law 2018 met with the rising 9th-grade scholars. Amanda shared her post Reach for Excellence experiences with eager soon-to-be high school freshmen!

Cohort 2017 O — High School Class of 2021 accomplishments include two QuestBridge Scholars attending Macalester College and Yale University, the Tim Cambias Memorial College Scholar attending GA Tech, and new colleges to add to Reach's list: John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the University of Southern California. Reach for Excellence is well represented at Georgia Institute of Technology, the University of Georgia, and Georgia State University.

Committed to the Climb, Reach for Excellence graduates earned college degrees in the fields of Business Administration, Biology, Construction, International Relations and Affairs, Family and Consumer Science, Neuroscience, Public Health, and Psychology.

Ms. Rosalyn Roberts, mother of Zachary Roberts, Cohort 2013 K proudly shared that Zachary graduated from Georgia State University Summa Cum Laude and is attending Howard University School of Medicine!

“When I see him accomplish so many things, I can never forget how instrumental Reach for Excellence was with his matriculation from Marist School Class of 2017 and beyond. Thanks so much for helping Zachary achieve his goals.”

To all of our generous supporters, thank you!

Karen A. Dessables

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Reach Scholar Story



Adam Belew
Cohort 2018 P
Philips Exeter Academy, Class of 2022

Adam’s parents both immigrated to the United States from Ethiopia before he was born. They originally settled in Clarkston. His father is a taxi driver and his mother works at Grady Hospital. Adam does not have siblings but knew many other immigrant families while growing up.

Adam first learned about Reach for Excellence as a 5th grader attending DeKalb PATH Academy. Adam would often look for extra credit to do in the summers and some friends pointed him to Reach.

Adam was uncomfortable when he started at Reach. The private school campus was very different from the schools he had attended and he was intimidated by the older kids in the program. In Reach classes, Adam discovered that he had to think about problems and answers much more. Math classes were significantly more rigorous, but he enjoyed them. He felt like he kept an academic edge during the summers rather than having to relearn material and get back in the groove of school each Fall. Small classes helped him socialize and engage in longer discussions. He received more attention from teachers whom he recalls as being challenging, but consistent, while making lessons relevant to students’ lives. He credits Reach teachers with helping him learn to think critically about what he reads, and for learning to use a scientific calculator...it may sound simple, but it gave him an advantage in high school.

As Adam began to explore options for high school, he found that he valued the experience of being on a private school campus. He wanted to attend a school that was designed to be a learning environment with spaces dedicated to experimentation and creativity. This lead him to apply to Philips Exeter and becoming the second Reach graduate to attend the prestigious boarding school.

Adam believes that Reach for Excellence is important because it makes a difference in students’ lives when they are young. He hopes many more kids will have the opportunity to attend Reach for Excellence. In 2021, Adam served as an intern during the Reach Summer Session, helping a new generation of students continue along the path to academic success.

Graduates have attended the following secondary schools:

Arabia Mountain High School	Hapeville Charter Career Academy	Paul Duke STEM High School
Archer High School	Highville Change Academy, CT	Peachtree Ridge High School
The Asheville School, NC	Heritage High School	Peddie School, NJ
Atlanta Girls School	Holy Innocents’ Episcopal School	Phillips Academy, MA
Atlanta International School	Horizon School	Phillips Exeter Academy, NH
Banneker High School	Irondequoit High School, NY	Providence Christian Academy
Ben Franklin Academy	KIPP Atlanta Collegiate	Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School
Berkmar High School	Lakeside High School	Riverwood International Charter School
Blair Academy, NJ	Lanier High School	Rockdale County High School
Brookwood High School	The Lawrenceville School, NJ	Rockdale Magnet School for
Carver Early College	Lebanon High School, TN	Science & Tech.
Cedar Grove High School	Lithia Springs High School	Roswell High School
Chamblee Charter High School	Lovejoy High School	Salem Academy, NC
Chapel Hill High School	The Lovett School	School Without Walls,
Charles Drew Senior Academy	Marietta High School	Washington D.C.
Chattahoochee High School	Marist School	Shawnee Mission North
Collins Hill High School	Martin Luther King High School	High School, KS
Columbia High School	Maynard Jackson High School	Shiloh High School
Columbia High School, CO	Mays High School	South Atlanta High School
Cristo Rey Atlanta Jesuit High School	McComb High School, AL	South Cobb High School, Magnet
Cross Keys High School	Meadowcreek High School	South Gwinnett High School
Darlington School	Miller Grove High School	Southwest DeKalb High School
Decatur High School	Morrow High School	Sprayberry High School
DeKalb Early College Academy	Mount Vernon Presbyterian School	St. Andrew’s – Sewanee School, TN
DeKalb School of the Arts	The New School	St. Pius X Catholic High School
Druid Hills High School	New Schools of Carver High School	Stephenson High School
Duluth High School	Norcross High School	Stockbridge High School
Dunwoody High School	North Atlanta High School	Tri-Cities High School
Episcopal High School, VA	North Gwinnett High School	Tucker High School
Fayette County High School	North Springs High School	The Walker School
Frederick Douglass High School	Notre Dame Academy	Wesleyan School
The Galloway School	Our Lady of Mercy Catholic	Westlake High School
Grady High School	High School	The Westminster Schools
Grayson High School	Pace Academy	Westside High School, Macon
Gwinnett School of Math,	The Paideia School	Wheeler High School
Science & Tech.	Parkview High School	Woodward Academy

Graduates have been accepted to the following graduate schools:

American University	Georgia State University	Stetson University College of Law
Brenau University	Harvard Law School	Texas Southern University
Christian Brothers University	Medical College of Georgia	University of California, San Francisco –
Clayton State University	Mercer University	Dental School
Dornslife School of Public Health,	Mercer University, Walter F. George –	University of Georgia –
Drexel University	School of Law	School of Pharmacy
Emory University – Rollins School of	Midland University	University of Georgia –
Public Health	New York University –	School of Veterinary Medicine
Fort Valley State University	Tisch School of the Arts	University of Pennsylvania –
George Washington University	North Carolina Central University –	Dental School
Georgetown University	School of Law	University of Pennsylvania
Georgia Southern University	Ohio State University College of Medicine	Wake Forest University

Graduates have been accepted to the following colleges and universities:

Agnes Scott College	Georgia State University	Shenzhen University, China
Alabama A & M University	Grambling State University	Shorter University
Alabama College of Osteopathic Medicine	Guilford College	Simmons College
Albany State University	Gwinnett Technical College	South Carolina State University
American University	Hamline University	Southern Polytechnic State University
Armstrong Atlantic State University	Hampton University	Spelman College
Atlanta Metropolitan State College	Harvard University	Spring Hill College
Atlanta Technical College	Haverford College, PA	St. Augustine’s University, NC
Auburn University	Hinds Community College, MS	St. John’s University
Bard College, NY	Hofstra University	St. Leo University
Barnard College	Houston Community College, TX	St. Louis University
Baylor University	Howard University	Stanford University
Benedict College	Huntingdon College, AL	Stillman College
Berry College	Iowa State University	Strayer University, Washington D.C.
Boston College	Jacksonville State University	Swarthmore College
Brandeis University	Jacksonville University	Syracuse University
Brown University	John Jay College of Criminal Justice	Taledaga College
California Institute of the Arts	Johns Hopkins University	Temple University
Carleton College, MN	Johnson and Wales University, RI	Tennessee State University
Centre College	Kennesaw State University	Texas A & M University
Clark Atlanta University	Louisiana State University	Tulane University
Clark University, MA	Loyola University, New Orleans	Tuskegee University
Clayton State University	Loyola University, Chicago	Union College, NY
Clemson University	Lycoming College, PA	United States Air Force Academy
Cleveland State Community College	Macalester College, MN	University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa
Colgate University	Marquette University	University of Arizona
College of Charleston	Maryland Institute College of Art	University of Dayton
College of Wooster	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	University of Georgia
Colorado College	Mercer University	University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Columbia College of Chicago	Miami University, Ohio	University of Indiana
Columbia University	Middle Georgia State University	University of Kentucky
Cornell University	Middle Tennessee State University	University of Miami
Cumberland University	Midland University	University of Michigan –
Dartmouth College	Milligan College	Dental School
Davidson College	Morehouse College	University of Minnesota
Dayton University	North Carolina A&T University	University of North Carolina,
Delgado Community College, LA	North Carolina Central University	Chapel Hill
DeVry Institute of Technology	North Georgia College & University	University of North Georgia
DeVry University, IL	Northwestern University	University of North Texas
Drexel University	Notre Dame University	University of Pennsylvania
East Georgia State College	Oglethorpe University	University of Pittsburgh
Eastern Michigan University	Ohio State University	University of Richmond
Eckerd College	Ohio Wesleyan University	University of Southern California
Elon University	Old Dominion University	University of Tampa
Emory University	Philander Smith College	University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Emory University at Oxford	Pitzer College	University of the South
Escuela de Aviacion, Mexico	Pomona College, CA	University of West Georgia
Everest Institute	Presbyterian College, SC	Valdosta State University
Florida A & M University	Princeton University	Vanderbilt University
Florida Institute of Technology	Purdue University	Virginia Commonwealth University
Fort Valley State University	Queens University of Charlotte, NC	Virginia State University
Furman University	Reinhardt University	Wake Forest University
George Washington University	Rhodes College	Washington and Lee University
Georgetown College, KY	Rice University	Watkins College of Art, Design, & Film
Georgia College and State University	Rochester Institute of Technology	Wellesley College
Georgia Gwinnett College	Rollins College	West Virginia University
Georgia Institute of Technology	Saint Augustine’s University	Williams College
Georgia Middle State University	Saint Leo University	Wofford College
Georgia Military College	Saint Mary’s College	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Georgia Perimeter College	Salem College	Xavier University, LA
Georgia Piedmont Technical College	Samford University	Xavier University, OH
Georgia Southern University	Savannah College of Art and Design	Yale University
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