



Student Spotlight: Raneisha Gartrell

Michelle Garrison, Madison Foothills

We all know that numbers related to graduation and dropping out don't lie. Teenage pregnancy impacts those numbers because of the many hurdles teen mothers face. But, those hurdles did not stop Raneisha Gartrell from achieving success.

Raneisha entered our doors at Madison Foothills on November 3, 2015, at the age of 16 with 5 high school credits. Raneisha was one of those students who was affected by teenage pregnancy. She became pregnant at the age of 14, and decided to quit school in order to stay at home and take care of her baby. Raneisha expresses her reasons for quitting school by stating, "I left day school because I personally didn't want to put my child in daycare, so I chose to stay at home to raise and teach my child." She goes on to say, "I knew I had to better myself, and my motivation was my son because I want him to be proud of his 'mommy.'" It is very apparent that her son is her world. He is by far "the apple of her eye." Raneisha shared that every morning while he is getting ready, she always has him repeat, "I am strong, I am smart, and I am handsome."



Raneisha knew that she was going to have to finish school in order to support her son, so she met with her counselor at Oglethorpe High School to look at her options to finish high school. Once she entered our doors at Madison Foothills, she hit the floor running. Her time here at Foothills has been minimal compared to the traditional four years of high school. In fact, her dedication and determination has allowed her to receive a high school diploma in two years. She smiles and says, "My goals and dreams will become a reality because I will graduate in August of 2017." During our interview, Raneisha shared a daily devotion from someone in her church that has kept her motivated: "Choose your dreams, but always know the road that will lead you home again. You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it." The words "phenomenal woman" come to mind, and Maya Angelou says it best: "Nothing can dim the light which shines from within."

Education is very important to the Gartrell family. According to Raneisha, "Neither of my parents graduated high school, but both my mom and dad received their GED. My older brother is the only one in my household who graduated high school, and soon I will as well. My future plans are to become an airwoman in the United States Air Force. Also, I will be the first one to attend college in my family. After I enlist in the Air Force, I will be going to college to become a nurse as well."

"My experience here at Foothills has been awesome because I was able to connect with teachers, and they have met all my needs as a student." Aside from her experiences, she discusses her struggles and adds, "My struggles while attending Foothills have been minimal—just working around my mom's schedule to make sure I get to school on time. In fact, it has allowed me to be a full-time mom and a night time student." In addition, when asked if she would recommend Foothills to others, Raneisha says, "I would recommend Foothills to someone who has goals and is motivated to finish school because if you don't have a plan, working at your own pace may not be for everyone."

Again, Foothills has proven to provide a second chance to students who may otherwise never see the future and opportunities a high school diploma offers. This is another true testament of the successes we offer here at Foothills Charter High School.

Message from the Superintendent

July has been a busy month for Foothills! We have held what we hope will become an annual Strategic Planning Retreat with staff from all sites. We have also worked with staff from Coastal Plains Charter High School, which will replicate Foothills, as they get set to open their doors this fall.

Our students have also continued to make us proud this summer. As of July 29th, we have 158 graduates for 2017, and 7 of those have been added in July. We anticipate several more to be added before the end of summer.

As we head into our third year, we appreciate the support of our communities. We continue to make a difference for students.

Dr. Sherrie Gibney-Sherman, Foothills Superintendent

In This Issue

- Student Spotlight: Raneisha Gartrell, Madison
- Foothills Strategic Planning Retreat
- Collaboration with Coastal Plains

Collaboration with Coastal Plains

Just as Foothills Charter High School sought to replicate the work of Mountain Education Charter High School, Coastal Plains, officially opening this fall, will replicate the work of Foothills. Coastal Plains will seek to offer an “answer to the dropout problem” in South-East Georgia.

During the last weeks of July, Coastal Plains staff trained with Foothills staff. They were able to visit Foothills sites, observe operations, and attend train-the-trainer sessions. They will be redelivering the training back at the six Coastal Plains sites.

The Glynn County site, which operated as part of Foothills in the spring, was a pilot site for Coastal Plains and has joined Coastal Plains as of July 1st.

We wish our colleagues at Coastal Plains success as you begin this journey of supporting students in



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Collaborating for Success: Strategic Planning Retreat

Every school district in Georgia is required to complete a Comprehensive Needs Assessment and District Improvement Plan. In mid-July, central office leaders and leaders from all Foothills sites made their way to the Legacy Lodge Conference Center at Lake Lanier in an effort to have uninterrupted time to collaborate around prioritized needs for Foothills and develop improvement plans for the district and for all sites to address those needs.

Foothills staff spent two days reviewing data from the 2016-17 school year and collaborating as a site, as well as across sites, to identify needs based on the data. They then worked to prioritize these needs, using common needs across all sites to develop a District Improvement Plan. Then, each site worked to develop a School Improvement Plan to address site-specific needs.



Many of the sites set goals for 2017-18 related to improving Milestones End-of-Course scores and improving attendance. Individual sites also set goals related to improving the number of graduates or developing formative assessments to gauge student progress toward meeting expectations on the Milestones assessments or even reaching out and collaborating more with the local community.



Foothills Superintendent Dr. Sherrie Gibney-Sherman said she “could not have been more pleased” with the outcome of the two-day retreat: “We had a very productive two days. Our work allowed for Federal Programs Director Brittan Ayers to complete the District Improvement Plan.” The finalized site-specific plans were collected and shared via a Google Drive folder.

Each Foothills site begins the 2017-18 school year with a focused action plan based on needs identified in data from 2016-17. Sites have worked collaboratively to generate specific action steps they will take throughout the year to improve the outcomes for students at Foothills.

The Foothills Vision

Foothills Education Charter High School strives to be an accessible, high-quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the People of Georgia and its communities.