What to expect from Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies

An interview with Dr. Amanda Jones of Mobile County Public Schools

As the Barton Foundation has been raising funds to renovate the interior of Alabama’s first public school building, officials with Mobile County Public Schools have been working on the curriculum for what is to be the Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies (BAAWS).

The first-of-its-kind school will enroll about 300 students in grades six through nine. A goal of the academy will be to provide students with classroom activities that will be applicable to their lives in our community and beyond. BAAWS will provide authentic learning experiences for students by integrating various subjects. Student learning will be connected to solving real-world problems through projects and student-inquiry (project-based learning) rather than learning solely through traditional practices such as textbooks and memorization. Barton Academy will offer multiple foreign languages, advanced fine arts and entrepreneurial learning with a global emphasis.

“One difference is going to be that we will examine opportunities to veer away from the traditional bell schedule,” said Dr. Amanda Jones, Coordinator of Professional Learning, Special Projects and Innovation with Mobile County Public Schools.

While the recently renovated exterior of the school will maintain its historic integrity, the interior is designed to be state-of-the-art. Students will have access to the latest technology as well as collaboration labs and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) labs.

Students will have to apply for the school – similar to application for a magnet school – and would have to meet certain academic criteria. Jones said students who are inquisitive, globally minded and driven learners with an interest in problem-solving should apply.

“We will be looking for students who want to create and who want to be problem solvers,” she said. “These students will think beyond our city and beyond our state. They will learn to think globally.”

The students will move on from Barton Academy prepared to enter any of Mobile County Public Schools’ Signature Academies, based on their career interests. All 12 Mobile County high schools offer Signature Academies ranging from International Baccalaureate to Advanced Placement, and from health, law and the arts to entrepreneurship to engineering.

“Everyone who has been involved in this project brings to the table a wealth of knowledge from various backgrounds,” Jones said. “We would like to build a true community at this school and continue these partnerships by showing our students community connections and how what they are learning applies to the real world.”

Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies is sure to be a valuable recruiting tool for the city of Mobile and Mobile County as officials look to attract new business and industry.

“Our parents realize that we have many great options in Mobile County Public Schools,” Jones said. “This is going to be another dynamic school choice.”

The Mobile County Board of School Commissioners recently approved a construction bid on the interior work at Barton, with the goal being to open the new academy in August of 2021. Look for information about how to apply for Barton in the fall of 2020 or the winter of 2021.
Nick Holmes, III to be Honored at Barton Academy

Nick Holmes’ favorite word was “gratitude.” When he and Ginger married nine years ago, Nick designed a “thank-you” card that had “gratitude” imprinted on it. Those of us who worked with Nick on the Board of Barton Academy Foundation are truly grateful to have served alongside him on a project to which he was so dedicated. Unfortunately, we lost Nick on December 12, 2019 after a long illness.

Nick’s family described him in his obituary as “a man who lived and loved well” and as an artist, poet, reader and thinker who enjoyed both solitude and gathering with friends.

Nick was a talented architect, an avid bird hunter, and a blues musician. An old college friend, Ken Stone of Minneapolis, remembers Nick’s sketching on a one-legged stool that was his dad’s or grandad’s when they traveled to Italy with the Auburn Architecture program while in college. Ken lived across the street from Nick at Auburn and “would so enjoy his blues guitar.” He credits Nick’s family with helping him get his first job in Seattle.

The ladies at Alpha Gamma Delta House in Tuscaloosa described him as “wonderful” and said they all enjoyed working with him when he designed their chapter house.

Nick and his father played important roles in Barton’s history. When MCPSS converted the school building to administrative offices, Nick’s father was an architect for the project. Nick said it was easy to know what was done to the building during that renovation because all the drawings were still in their office.

Some of the first gifts ever made to the Barton Academy cause came after Nick’s mother Nancy died in 2008. Mrs. Holmes’ family named the Barton Academy effort as a beneficiary for memorials. After Nick’s untimely death in December 2019, Nick’s family again mentioned Barton Academy Foundation as a favored charitable cause.

To honor this family’s multi-generational involvement in the care and preservation of Barton Academy, the Foundation will recognize the family by naming one of the gates in their honor.

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Find a full list of all donors to the Barton Academy campaign on our website: www.BartonAcademy.org

Thus far, thousands of dollars have been contributed to the Foundation in Nick’s memory. We hope you will join us in remembering Nick by making a gift at www.bartonacademy.org or by sending a check to Barton Academy Foundation, P. O. Box 571, Mobile, AL 36601-0571.
Thank you to Donors since our December Newsletter

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*List continued on back page
It’s (Almost) A Wrap!

Mobile City Council comes through in a Big Way, putting us **less than $200,000 away from our $10 million goal.**

Thanks to a gift of $250,000 from the Mobile City Council, Barton Academy Foundation has less than $200,000 to raise to complete the “Restoring the Past/Building the Future” Campaign for Barton Academy for Advanced World Studies! All funding for the $10+ million project has come from individuals, foundations, corporations and institutions.

Mobile County Public Schools (MCPSS) will assume financial responsibility once the renovations are complete and Barton Academy is ready for its first students.

On Jan 24, the Board of School Commissioners certified Ben M. Radcliff Contractor, Inc. as the low bidder. The contract now goes to the state for final review and approval.

Donors Matter!

Barton fundraising has been a wonderful collaboration between local foundations, community organizations, the city of Mobile, Mobile County, and the state of Alabama. Mobile County Public Schools hopes to keep those partnerships flourishing by inviting local leaders and businesspeople into Barton Academy to mentor the students.

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