

Press Release



WASHINGTON
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

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For immediate release**

Photo Captions

1. Deighton Alleyne delivers a poem he wrote during the Poetry Slam in June 2013, an event he introduced years ago for students in Grades 6 and 7.
2. Participants process past the family and more than 725 guests in the Memorial Service for Washington Episcopal School Grade 6 teacher Deighton Alleyne III on October 5, 2014 at the school.

Photos by Ali Bratun

Bethesda, MD – More than 725 students, alumni, faculty, past faculty, current and alumni parents, and family attended a memorial service in the school gym on Sunday, October 5 to celebrate the life of Washington Episcopal School (WES) Grade 6 teacher and coach Deighton Alleyne III. Mr. A, as he was affectionately called by students and alumni, passed away September 9, 2014 following complications due to a stroke suffered in late August. A District of Columbia resident, he was 57. During his 17-year tenure at the school, he became an icon for his distinctive style and booming voice in the classroom and for his passion coaching on the basketball court and soccer and lacrosse fields. A native of Philadelphia, PA, Alleyne attended St. Peter's Episcopal School and Northeast High School, and earned a Bachelor's degree in education from Springfield College in Massachusetts. He later served on the board of his college alma mater.

Former students traveled from long distances to the memorial celebration such as Seattle, WA; Tuscaloosa, AL; Chapel Hill, NC; Hartford, CT; New York, NY; Pittsburgh, PA; and Richmond, VA. The former Head of School flew into town from Los Angeles, CA, to honor Deighton, who worked for him for a decade. Nearly 20 members of his family from Philadelphia attended the event. Six speakers

gave reflections about Deighton, including alums, friends, colleagues, and sister Denise Alleyne. “My mother and I were overwhelmed when we saw over 700 people who attended the memorial service on Sunday,” said his sister. “We met former students who came from as far as Seattle to participate in the celebration of Mr. A’s life. The cards, letters, notes, and personal testaments have been a great source of comfort for us. We heard over and over what a difference Deighton made in the lives of the entire WES community. That is his legacy -- the students, faculty, staff, parents, and friends that he touched.” Emma Stanfill, 14, a Grade 8 student commented, “He was the person I looked forward to visiting most when I come back to visit from high school. College kids would come back to see Mr. A and he would know everything about them – their schools, their majors. He was very involved in you, not just your work.”

An integral part of the close-knit WES community, Deighton “Inspired students to take risks, ask questions, and work hard. His dedication to sharing his love for learning and encouraging self confidence in young people was apparent in everything he did,” stated Nancy Wright, a parent of two alums and Interim Head of School. “He was determined that each child achieve success.”

Mr. A’s life was full of many passions that included music, travel, cooking, sports, teaching, and learning. His homemade cinnamon buns and cookies were his trademark baked goods, and faculty raced to sample his dishes and desserts that he often shared with them. Guests at the service dressed in clothing that reminded them of their teacher and friend: sports jerseys of his favorite teams – Philadelphia Eagles, Duke Blue Devils, Atlanta Braves – and WES team jerseys and hats, as well as t-shirts from the annual Grade 6 study trip to the desert southwest. One alum sported a blazer that he wore in the sixth-grade musical a few years ago, and two former students wore their plaid school ties they wore when students at the school, which, from the length of them, was apparently a long time ago. Grade 7 student Ian Conway, 13, a reader during the service, said that “He changed me more than anyone outside of my family.”

To honor Mr. A, the school gymnasium will be named and dedicated to him, the Coaches Award, presented to a Grade 8 girl and boy in recognition of outstanding athletic performance, leadership, and commitment to WES Athletics will be renamed for him, and The Deighton Alleyne Memorial Fund has been established by his family and the school.

“Mr. A could inspire me to do things I hadn’t even imagined before, and gave me the confidence to actually do well in math. With him, math just clicked,” said Grade 7 student Libby Scanlon 13, from DC. “One of his famous sayings was ‘Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you’ll be among the stars.’ He was more than just a favorite teacher. He meant so much to all of us.” Eighth-grader Morinsola

Tinubu, 13, who also participated in the service, added, “He believed in me when I have doubt in myself. He taught me life lessons that I will carry with me the rest of my life.”

Alleyne was chosen as Bethesda Magazine’s article on best teachers in the September/October 2011 issue (page 100), having been nominated for his dedication to teaching students and his long-lasting impression on their lives. His biggest surprise as a teacher was “My own capacity for learning and thirst for knowledge. Every year a student points something out to me that I hadn’t realized before,” according to the article.

“Mr. A was one of those people who made whomever he was talking with feel special; he was connected with *you*, and at that moment in time you were what was most important,” said Athletic Director William Isola. “From the minute I met him in 1997, he welcomed me with that big, bright, warm smile, and a big bear hug. Right off the bat I felt I was going to like his style. He was friendly, engaging and full of energy and enthusiasm. It is a huge loss and we are going to miss our friend, coach, teacher, and mentor immensely.”

The service included a student playing Bach on the sinfonia, two songs sung by a cousin and a colleague. During the closing, three teachers led a group of students in Grades 6, 7, and 8 in a rousing rendition of “Happy” by Pharrell Williams, a favorite tune of Mr. A, in front of the stage. “Deighton was always smiling, always happy, always positive. What a remarkable man,” said music director Ron Valenzia, who played drums.

Washington Episcopal School is an independent, coeducational day school in Bethesda, MD for students age 3 to Grade 8, founded in 1986. WES is known for its strong academic program and outstanding offerings in art, music, drama, foreign language, and sports. WES also offers a unique study trip program included in tuition for students in Grades 5 – 8. WES believes that learning should be joyful because academic excellence and happy children belong together. For more information, visit www.w-e-s.org.

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