

## Jackson MTC Teacher Named First Nancy Brown Teacher Corps Fellow

Contributed by Tobie Baker  
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Amani Floyd

OXFORD, Miss. - Students at Jackson's Bailey Magnet School saw their state exam scores in American history increase by more than 10 percent this year, with 95 percent of those students passing the state exam.

This achievement at the inner-city high school of some 350 students marks the highest percentage of students passing this test in four years, thanks in part to their teacher, Amani Floyd, a student in the Mississippi Teacher Corps program at the University of Mississippi.

"To be honest, this is not unexpected," said Ben Guest, program coordinator for MTC, a two-year alternate route teacher certification program that recruits college graduates and places them as teachers in the state's most poverty-stricken areas while they complete a master's degree in education.

The 30 students selected annually to participate in the program are well-organized, intelligent and hardworking individuals, Guest said.

"We feel if they possess these three core qualities, then we can train them to be successful teachers," he said. "I was happy to receive the news about Amani, but I wasn't surprised. She's extremely dedicated."

Floyd's teaching excellence was recognized recently when she was named the first Nancy H. Brown Teacher Corps Fellow. The fellowship was funded by Cecil Brown, state representative from the 66th District, in honor of his wife, Nancy, a mathematics teacher in the Jackson Public Schools. "Nancy and I agreed when I was elected to the House nearly 10 years ago that we would always give all of my legislative pay to charity," said Brown upon establishing the endowment last year. Being chosen for the fellowship is honorary until the endowment generates funds, at which time recipients will receive monetary awards to use in their classrooms.

Floyd, who enters her second year of the MTC program this fall, said she feels honored to be named to the fellowship but amazed to learn of Brown's commitment to education.

"That's really bold for a politician to do something like that. Instead of just talking, he legitimately took some action. It's

really generous of him," said Floyd, a native of Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Describing her first year at Bailey Magnet, Floyd said she found the experience enjoyable but stressful. "It's hard to stay positive every single day," she said.

However, results of the state test scores helped to make it all worthwhile. She also found it rewarding to serve as a mentor to her students. One in particular, she recalled, needed a positive role model and the two became very close friends.

"This one girl needed somebody to guide her, to show her right and wrong," Floyd said. "It was a lot of pressure. I'm not perfect, but if my students feel like I can inspire them, then I have to try my best to lead them in the right direction."

Her classroom experience also enhanced her self-confidence, especially her public speaking skills, Floyd said.

"I will never have an audience that's as hard to reach as my students," she said. "They are forced to be there, and I'm responsible for making sure they understand. I have to break things down in the simplest forms and communicate effectively to them."

"Amani is very intelligent," said Andy Mullins, MTC co-director, who also serves as executive assistant to UM Chancellor Dan Jones. "She's done a great job. She's impressive and has a lot to offer." A track and field athlete at Vanderbilt, Floyd received her bachelor's degree there in religious studies. She anticipates obtaining her master's degree in education from UM in May. She hopes to eventually pursue an international law degree, with dreams of one day serving as an adviser in Middle East peace negotiations.

Self described as "motivated, driven and always with a plan," Floyd said her grandfather, Carl Character, taught her the most about following her dreams. Character was the second black male judge to serve on the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court, and at the time of his service was the court's only black male judge.

"He accomplished so much, and I just want to try to follow his footsteps," Floyd said.

Floyd and two other MTC participants were invited to address the Mississippi House of Representative's education committee in February. Floyd told legislators that having stronger, more consistent teachers is the way to turn the state's education system around.

Established in 1989, the MTC is one of the nation's most competitive alternate route teaching programs. Participants receive teacher training and certification, a full scholarship to UM for a master's degree, job placement that includes full pay and benefits, and the opportunity to help strengthen education in Mississippi.

"Graduates of the MTC have proven time and again that they will be successful in the classroom and become leaders in educational excellence," Brown said. "Through the MTC, we are building an army of qualified teachers, one individual at a time."

For more information about the Mississippi Teacher Corps, visit <http://www.olemiss.edu/programs/mtc/>. To learn more about the Nancy H. Brown Teacher Corps Endowment, visit [http://news.olemiss.edu/index.php/Ole-Miss-News/News-Releases/dev\\_cecilbrown.html](http://news.olemiss.edu/index.php/Ole-Miss-News/News-Releases/dev_cecilbrown.html).