



## **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Essay Contest Winners**

The Norwalk Board of Education is proud to recognize the Norwalk winners of Senator Chris Murphy's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day essay challenge. The challenge encouraged Connecticut students to honor the legacy of Dr. King with essays that reflected on Dr. King's dream and their own aspirations.

Approximately 700 students submitted essays for the second annual essay contest. Senator Murphy selected 15 elementary, middle, and high school students winners from across the state.

Brien McMahon High School student Latrel Stewart and Roton Middle School student Kristopher Flores were selected as winners for Congressional District Number Four. Latrel and Kristopher were invited to attend a pancake breakfast celebration along with other essay winners. Their winning essays are displayed in Senator Murphy's office.

A junior at McMahon, Latrel's essay reflects on how Dr. King would feel about equality and fair treatment for all in today's world. He points out that although our country has come a long way since Dr. King was alive, there is still much work to be done. Latrel also discusses how his own dream of being a professional basketball player correlates with Dr. King's message to work hard and never give up, no matter the struggles that you may face.

Kristopher is a Sixth Grade student at Roton. His essay focuses on the "American Dream," providing a historical glimpse back in time to civil rights in the 1960's, compared to the America that we live in today. He also discusses his own dream of a world without poverty, where everyone has access to employment that allows people to provide for their families.

The Board of Education thanks all our students from across the district who participated in the contest. We also recognized the teachers who supported their work or incorporated the contest into their classroom assignments. Last but not least, we congratulate Latrel and Kristopher for being named contest winners. Your reflections on Dr. King's legacy, and what those messages mean to young people today, is an inspiration to all.



## **Developing Tomorrow's Professionals**

The Norwalk Board of Education is proud to spotlight Brien McMahon senior Sharod Blackwell for his determination and perseverance in completing the rigorous Developing Tomorrow's Professionals program. We are also pleased to honor Brien McMahon High School Housemaster Qadir Abdus-Salaam for his tireless commitment to the program and to the young men who participate.

The purpose of the DTP program is to create, improve and sustain a young man's approach to academic achievement, character development, leadership, fatherhood, college matriculation and career potential. The program is specifically designed for Black and Hispanic male students, grades 9 to 11, and young men in adult education.

Those participating in the program are required to attend ten consecutive academic Saturdays from May through July at Southern Connecticut State University. Business attire is required. Four hours of instruction are included during this carefully crafted, highly demanding program. Academic Saturdays include a combination of skill set development, discourse, rigorous writing, and college lectures. Topics include etiquette, fatherhood and leadership, transition from high school to college, note taking, college writing and task and time management.

The program encourages young men to embrace the "DTP Eight Principles of a Man," focusing on faith, love, honor, discernment, being a leader, commitment, dignity of work, and victory.

It's not unusual for a student to begin this rigorous program, but not finish all that is required. This year, under the guidance of Mr. Abdus-Salaam, Sharod successfully completed the program. The Connecticut Department of Education and other state officials recognized Sharod at a breakfast in North Haven, along with other DTP graduates from throughout the state.

The Board of Education is pleased to honor both Sharod Blackwell and Mr. Abdus-Salaam. Your hard work and dedication are an inspiration. Sharod, as you move forward and explore opportunities, we know that your appreciation of the DTP principles will remain an important part of any future endeavors you choose to pursue. Congratulations!