

ALUMNI

Celebrating Alumni – Dr. Tia Jones Honored as National Outstanding Assistant Principal

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**2022 National
Outstanding
Assistant Principal**

TIA S. JONES

**Catawba Trail Elementary School
Elgin, South Carolina**



GWU Alumna is One of 19 Recognized by the National Association of Elementary School Principals

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Students are the focus of Gardner-Webb University’s mission. Faculty members seek to engage students with unique, experiential learning opportunities to prepare them for their next steps. Whether they choose to begin a career or accept the academic challenges of graduate school, students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead and serve. Additionally, through GWU’s supportive and diverse Christian community, students are inspired to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others.

Gardner-Webb alumna Dr. Tia Jones (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzMsu89AnyE>) is a 2022 National Outstanding Assistant Principal, an award presented by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). Jones is an assistant principal at Catawba Trail Elementary School (<https://www.richland2.org/News/CATAWBA-TRAIL-ELEMENTARY-ASSISTANT-PRINCIPAL-IN-20>). (Elgin, S.C.) in Richland School District Two. Annually, NAESP recognizes a cohort of assistant principals from across the country. This year, 19 assistant principals received the recognition for demonstrating exceptional leadership and setting high standards for their schools and community.

Jones received the award while attending the NAESP Pre-K-8 Principals Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Reflecting on her educational journey, Jones said her love for education allows her to lean in and lead others.



▲ Dr. Tia Jones

“In this life, we may all face some type of adversity, at some time or another. I am reminded of not only my ‘why’, but the ‘why nots’ of the world,” Jones affirmed. “Why not be the change agent for the next generation. I am humbled and honored for this recognition and the opportunity to continue to grow the profession that I love so dear.”

She began her educational career 24 years ago working as an instructional assistant at Forest Lake Elementary School. She has taught at Rice Creek Elementary and Sandlapper Elementary schools and spent the last nine years as an assistant principal at Catawba Trail.

Jennifer Gillespie, principal of Catawba Trail Elementary School, was not surprised at Jones receiving the honor. “Her commitment and passion for education is apparent in all she does each day at Catawba Trail,” Gillespie praised. “Dr. Jones is a servant leader and prides herself in developing positive relationships with students, their families, faculty, and staff. Dr. Jones is extremely creative and I am proud to have her on our team.”

Jones holds a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education from S.C. State University in Orangeburg, a Master of Education degree in divergent learning from Columbia College, an Educational Specialist degree in educational administration from Cambridge College in Cambridge, Mass., and Doctor of Education in organizational leadership from Gardner-Webb. She is also national board certified.

She and her husband Woodrow have five children, all graduates of Richland District Two, one of whom is an elementary school teacher in the district. They recently lost one daughter, First Lt. Justice R. Stewart who was struck and killed by an impaired driver last year while jogging near Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina.

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- Touch base with [Alumni Relations \(https://gardner-webb.edu/alumni/alumni-relations/\)](https://gardner-webb.edu/alumni/alumni-relations/).
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