A 12-year career as a student (or 14, if counting PreK and kindergarten) is ending for thousands of seniors in Fulton County Schools. These young men and women will cross the stage to receive their diplomas and soon after will take their first steps into the world as an adult. Even though one chapter of their life is closing, a door is opening to the next one. As new graduates, the years ahead hold limitless opportunity to pursue their dreams – whether through post-secondary studies at a college or tech school, a career in the military, or as a working professional in their chosen field.

The years 2020 and 2021 were unusual and unpredictable for the Class of 2021 due to an unforeseen global pandemic. Even though their last two years were different than ever imagined, students held their heads high and valiantly accepted the challenges. They studied online, learned how to form and maintain friendships virtually, and participated in long-awaited senior class rituals in unprecedented ways. Because of their versatility and unstoppable spirit, these young adults are poised for success wherever they go, whatever they do.

Fulton County Schools proudly celebrates all graduates and their achievements through this Salute to the Class of 2021.

**Valedictorians and Salutatorians**

**Alpharetta**
- **Valedictorian**
  - Grady Etheridge
- **Salutatorian**
  - Sami Duggasani

**Banneker**
- **Valedictorian**
  - Talia Swanson
- **Salutatorian**
  - Ka’Niyah Galloway

**Cambridge**
- **Valedictorian**
  - Kathryn Amstutz
- **Salutatorian**
  - Or Yoked

**Centennial**
- **Valedictorian**
  - Emmanuelle Lamarche
- **Salutatorian**
  - Anika Chawla

**Chattahoochee**
- **Valedictorian**
  - Jennifer Zhou
- **Salutatorian**
  - Nityam Bhachawat

**Creekside**
- **Valedictorian**
  - Jacquez Johnson
- **Salutatorian**
  - Luis Fernando Lopez Reynoso
The “Star Seniors” web and video series profiled 17 outstanding seniors – one from each high school – to give a collective look at Fulton County Schools’ Class of 2021.

These students are the academic achievers, award-winners, all-star athletes, community volunteers and philanthropists, students with unusual or unique tales to tell, and those who have beaten the odds to graduate and succeed.

*Read more about these Star Seniors to learn makes them an extraordinary member of the Class of 2021 at www.fultonschools.org/starseniors!*

Arushi Mittal has a firm mindset when coming to school: to build relationships and bring energy into the classroom. An artist from a young age, Arushi loves the hands-on process of creating something and wants to challenge herself in numerous ways. Her artistic expression has helped her get through a very different senior year than expected due to the pandemic. Looking ahead, Arushi has committed to attending School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) to study fashion design. After that, she has set her sights globally, hoping to travel and see as much of the world as possible.

Born in Israel, coming to America was both helpful and painful to Talilah Brown as she left the worn-torn country with her mother and siblings at age 11. Although she was now safe, settling in the Banneker High community was difficult. As an Israeli, the American culture that greeted Talilah was the opposite of what she had been brought up in, but the educational opportunities in Banneker’s 3DE program have benefitted her future. After graduation she hopes to study art at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) and become a landscape architect or interior designer.

Phillip-Michael Collins’ high school resume is full of activities, leadership and positivity. Called PMC by friends and teachers, he is a stand-out athlete, dedicated student, leader in the school and community, and respected by his peers. A football player since second grade, Phillip-Michael has been on the varsity team all four years and is a three-year starter and letterman. He also brings teamwork and ingenuity to the table as a member of many student organizations. He is attending Centre College in Kentucky on a football scholarship and will major in international studies and politics.

The daughter of Bolivian immigrants, Maya Orthous Inchauste has a passion for social justice. In her lifelong travels to and from Bolivia, Maya has witnessed extreme poverty and started a nonprofit organization in eighth grade to fund medical care for Bolivian children. At Centennial, Maya is in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme and is Director General of the school’s Model United Nations (UN) program. Her career goal is to practice international or immigration law and she plans to major in International Affairs and minor in pre-law at Georgia Tech.

Chattahoochee High School – Kayla Wolensky – [https://youtu.be/9nNkBfjS7ok](https://youtu.be/9nNkBfjS7ok)
Kayla Wolensky learned at a young age what many people learn late in life – that opening up can bring healing. A formerly toxic environment took an emotional toll, but she found the courage to share her feelings with supportive friends. Throughout her struggles, Kayla excelled academically, maintained connections with friends, played volleyball and was named ‘Most Improved Player,’ served as yearbook staff photographer, and participated in BBYO (formerly B’nai B’rith Youth Organization), a youth group for Jewish teens. She loves literature, especially writing, and wants to study psychology and forensics at Georgia Southern University. She also hopes to study abroad and one day visit Israel.
Justin Ayiih is the eldest son of Ghanaian immigrants, often helping his parents care for his siblings and serving as a good role model. After getting his brothers ready for school, he begins his virtual day as a dual enrollment student at 9 a.m. and ends classes at 7 p.m. Learning computer science and calculus online is challenging, but he enjoys the subjects and knows they are good preparation. Justin credits Creekside’s AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a college and career readiness program, for helping him excel and is attending Georgia Tech in the fall to study computer science.

As his class’ valedictorian, Felix Fisch set goals for himself and exercised self-discipline to make his time at Independence really count. He is inspired when he sees positive change happening, and it motivates him to continue pushing those changes forward. Looking to the future, Felix hopes to own a successful vertical farming company using hydroponics with the goals of more efficiently using space and having freedom from weather dependency. He will spend the next four years at Georgia Tech finding his academic niche, whether it be mycology (the study of fungi for genetic or biochemical properties and toxicity) or mechanical, chemical or biomedical engineering.

Aditya “Adi” Bora has a passion for technology, engineering and invention. Seeing his mother, a child psychiatrist, help patients suffering from mental illness motivated Adi to use his capabilities to create positive change and improve people’s lives. Each year of high school, Adi sought a humanitarian project involving the empathy-based design thinking model. He will attend Stanford University, and one day he hopes to make a difference through a career in robotics and technology, whether leading research at a collegiate lab, running an organization, or becoming an entrepreneur and designing and bringing products to market.

Madison Webb is the first young woman to win the Harvard Debate Council Diversity program, an opportunity for African-Americans to learn debate skills. Only 25 students are admitted each year into the competitive program. Madison honed her skills virtually with her debate partner and the duo took first place. When she enters Harvard University in the fall, Madison will study sociology and government with the goal of becoming a CNN correspondent. A dual enrollment student, she already has earned an associate’s degree in communication from Georgia Military College.

Mamadou Diallo lived in New York for 16 years after moving to America with his West African immigrant parents. He left the U.S. to live in Egypt but came back with a determination to finish school after falling several years behind. His counselors recommended the dual enrollment program so he could take high school and college courses at the same time. He was successful and encourages students not to drop out but instead push through and ask their counselors for help, like he did. When he enrolls in college, Mamadou hopes to take subjects that will allow him to be creative.

Meghna Madhusudhan enrolled at Milton at a time when most students’ long-term friendships and activities were already well established. Navigating a new culture, language and education system was no small thing for a teenager. She channeled her energy into schoolwork, creating a smart composter that is completely automated, and it placed third at the Georgia Technology Competition. For fun, Meghna loves to dance and is part of the Milton Dance Team and also volunteers with North Fulton Community Charities. She will attend Georgia State University’s Honors College and someday wants to own a start-up company that uses technology and business to solve sustainable issues.

With Breanna Henry’s positivity, bright outlook, and her tremendous work ethic, one might assume she had all the comforts of life that would contribute to such a cheery personality. In reality, she has persevered through serious family hardships during her high school years but has maintained a stellar academic record. English and literature are Breanna’s favorite subjects, and her proudest moment was winning second place in a state-level literary competition. She plans to attend Kennesaw State University and is currently writing a book. She hopes by graduation, it and some of her poetry will be published. She also is interested in fashion, and as a side hustle, she dreams of creating a clothing brand.
Northview High School – Julie Wu – [https://youtu.be/DpTPd0ORoJQ](https://youtu.be/DpTPd0ORoJQ)
JiahHui “Julie” Wu is resilient, strong, and determined. She and her mother moved to America several years ago while her father remained in China to work. Three days before her senior year began, Julie’s mother unexpectedly passed away and she was faced with the choice of staying in the U.S. or returning to her family in Shanghai. Showing perseverance and grit, she chose to remain, finish her senior year, and apply to college. She has been active in Northview’s literary magazine and Student Leadership Johns Creek, and also spends hours volunteering. Julie’s dream of working in the fashion industry is on its way to coming true as she has been accepted to Parsons School of Design.

Riverwood International Charter High School – Amanda Solomiany – [https://youtu.be/2MC02VkJLeI](https://youtu.be/2MC02VkJLeI)
When Amanda Solomiany was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, she was surprised not many advances have occurred in treating the rare bone cancer. She endured nine months of chemotherapy and four surgeries, all while maintaining a 97 average and attending dual enrollment classes. The experience led her to raise awareness as well as raise funds for research and treatment innovations. Now in remission, Amanda has raised $90,000 for three different funds, one of which is a research project at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and has the potential to become a clinical trial. This fall, she heads to the University of Michigan to prepare for a career of helping others, focusing on those who are less fortunate or struggling with drug abuse.

As a freshman, Joan (pronounced Joe-Ahn) Gonzalez sat in the back of the classroom and did not talk much at all, and he continued to struggle academically in his sophomore year. When COVID-19 struck during his junior year and learning went online, the change was initially beneficial because he could work at his own pace, but he later stalled from the lack of an in-person support system. To make matters more complicated, financial hardships at home compelled him to work full-time. The turning point came early in Joan’s senior year when he realized he did not have the credits to graduate. Envisioning a fifth year of high school led him to change course, committing to take four online courses on top of his daily six classes. When he receives his diploma, Joan will be celebrated as the epitome of a turn-around success story.

Khalya Green is a versatile student who excels in subjects from art to biology to music, but also has shown maturity beyond her years to overcome challenging situations. When her cousin passed away in her 10th grade year, emotions took hold and Khalya sought mental health help. Her family also was facing eviction, which complicated her time of stress, but she continued her path toward graduation. A dual enrollment student, Khalya took courses from Georgia Military College as well as Tri-Cities and this fall she will enter Stetson University as a sophomore. After college, she plans to join the Air Force.

Westlake High School – Amina Mbow – [https://youtu.be/DTplj8tdEw](https://youtu.be/DTplj8tdEw)
Amina Mbow is a dual enrollment student at Westlake and Georgia State University while also cheering, running track, taking Advanced Placement courses, appearing in pageants, and working 40 hours a week at Chick-fil-A. She does not have much time to relax but plays piano and the clarinet in her spare time. Amina has been accepted to Howard University, the alma mater of her mother as well as U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris – two women who inspire her. She also has been accepted to Carson-Newman University but is leaning toward Howard where she will major in biology on a pre-med track to become an orthodontist.

Congratulations to all Class of 2021 Graduates!

Fulton County Schools

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