



# ANNA JULIA COOPER

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## SCHOOL

*faith • knowledge • pride*

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September 12, 2025

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To Whom It May Concern:

Year seventeen in the life of Anna Julia Cooper School (AJC) is underway. After our annual and very successful four-week summer school for all our students, we are well into the regular school year with an enrollment of 215 students.

AJC is in the midst of another period of significant growth. Several years ago, the Board made the decision to add a second section of each grade, K – 5, to match the two sections of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>. The primary motive behind this decision was to provide more students with the AJC experience. Currently in the second year of the expansion, we now have a second section of kindergarten and of 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

To accommodate this growth, we are building a new LS Building on the neighboring block and will relocate into it over the summer of 2026. Though not formally decided at this point in time, we will likely add a second section of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades next year, then of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> the following year to complete the expansion.

Financially, while the annual operating budget continues to grow, so, too does the support from those who believe in our mission. The Capital Campaign for the new building is currently  $\frac{3}{4}$  complete. Fully half of the money raised in the Campaign will be designated for operations over the next six or seven years, thus providing a significant runway of financial cushion. This will ease the burden of raising over \$5MM and growing each successive year. We believe this model, which we did to a lesser degree when we built the middle school building, is likely the best hope for long-term sustainability. The Board and key staff are very aware of this and committed to it.

Another significant development this year will be the hiring of a new Head of School. Mike Maruca, who has been the Head of School since its founding in 2009, will be stepping down on July 1, 2026. Obviously, such a change in any school leads to understandable anxiety about the future. We are confident, however, that the new Head, who will likely be named as soon as early October this year, will do a great job leading the School for the foreseeable future.

Meanwhile the School is as vibrant as ever. There is lots of joy in the buildings, a key and consoling marker of our success. The academic program remains strong while we've been able to garner more support than ever for those who struggle. Extra-curriculars are too many to name. We have more athletic teams than ever. Parent participation is high. Graduate Support is as active as ever. Retention of staff is solid. Our Board is supportive, committed, and kind. We have strong relationships with an ever-growing number of community partners. We remain 100% committed to our faith-based origins. Many extraordinary people not only work here but support us as

donors and volunteers.

The challenges? They are always the same. Number one among them is maintaining the esprit de corps, the 'community of affection,' among those working here. To love, educate and uplift our students, particularly given the challenges so many of them face, we need the best possible staff. Each one of our now 40-plus colleagues is human and this goal requires relentless attention. Hence, the number one goal each year is to re-create a community of colleagues who are skilled, mission-driven, committed to being here, and enjoyable to work with.

Owing to both the times in which we are living, and the growth in our staff in recent years, this challenge looms as large as ever. In addition, finding and hiring the best possible people for several teaching positions has been hard. These things notwithstanding, we have to rise to the occasion if we are to fulfill our mission. We are committed to doing so.

Although we have always known it, funding is an on-going challenge. Earlier in this report I mentioned how we are currently addressing it. This has enabled us to remain forward funded this current year. Our development staff is extraordinary, and donors continue to believe in the School's work, and that we are doing it for the right reasons and in the right way. When we are creating something beautiful, we believe the funding will follow. We know, too, that nothing lasts forever. That in itself is freeing.

Finally, again this year we have committed to serving students and families whose lives are enormously challenging. That challenge comes with them as they walk through the door each morning. Phones don't work, cars break down, money for rent is short, academic, social and emotional challenges are often never fully met, some students won't ever make it to grade level, many of our graduates are scuffling. All of this takes a toll on our resources, particularly the human ones. However, it comes with the territory. Our eyes are wide open.

As our namesake once wrote, *"I am thankful that my work has always been the sort that beckoned me on, leaving no room for blasé philosophizing and rebellious resentment and with just enough opposition to give zest to the struggle, just enough hope of scoring somewhere among the winners to keep my head 'unbowed tho bloody.'*

We are honored and grateful to follow, however haltingly, in her footsteps.

Sincerely,

Michael Maruca  
Head of School