



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 9, 2020

Contact:

Monica Lewis

mlewis4@philasd.org

215-824-6430

NEWS RELEASE

School District of Philadelphia Celebrates Class of 2020 During Virtual Graduation Ceremony

Two-time Super Bowl champion Malcolm Jenkins delivered stirring keynote address before announcing a special gift to the District

PHILADELPHIA — This afternoon, the School District of Philadelphia held a virtual graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020, a special event designed to celebrate the approximately 13,000 graduates from all District high schools, alternative education and charter schools whose senior years were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The event, which was streamed live via the [District's website](#) and aired on the District's Education Channel PSTV, featured speeches from graduating seniors and remarks from Superintendent William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D. and Philadelphia Mayor James F. Kenney. The seniors were also treated to a stirring address from National Football League All-Pro Malcolm Jenkins, a former Philadelphia Eagle who recently re-signed with the New Orleans Saints, the team that drafted him as the 14th pick in the first round of the 2009 NFL Draft.

Gwendolyn V. Jenkins, CEO and President of The Malcolm Jenkins Foundation (TMJF), followed Jenkins' keynote to announce the launch of Power Pathway Academy, surprising graduates with the news that all of them would receive access to TMJF's innovative digital empowerment program.

Created in partnership with Philadelphia EdTech company eThree, Power Pathway Academy is a groundbreaking digital career readiness program designed to engage young people ages 13-24 on their mobile devices with culturally relevant micro-learning

experiences. Through swipeable, visual storytelling content, Power Pathway Academy connects youth with career pathway opportunities, and the digital “power” skills, and soft “mind” skills required in a highly digital 21st century workforce.

“Starting from an early age, youth must see it to believe they can be it. This is especially critical for youth of color,” said Malcolm Jenkins, founder and chairman of The Malcolm Jenkins Foundation. “Power Pathway Academy highlights the career journeys of powerful, under-represented role models to create awareness for the wide variety of career pathways available to both college-bound and non-college bound students, including filmmaking, design, digital marketing, coding, advertising, music, fashion design and much more.” Students can register at www.powerpathway.academy

“To celebrate TMJF’s 10th anniversary year, we are scaling our impact using the power of digital, serving more students in underserved communities with our educational programming,” said Gwendolyn V. Jenkins. “When COVID-19 hit, we accelerated the development of our first e-learning curriculum, working alongside the Philadelphia School District to understand their goals and created a program that would connect students with skills, career pathways, and real-world role model stories.”

Having Jenkins participate in the event was extremely meaningful, especially in light of recent events around racism and social injustices, Hite said.

“During his time here in Philadelphia, Malcolm Jenkins has shown that he’s more than just a successful athlete,” Hite said. “His commitment to community and his passionate advocacy for social justice are wonderful examples for our students to follow. Each day, we commit ourselves to providing students with an education that prepares them to be responsible citizens of the world and part of that responsibility includes being of service to others. Malcolm Jenkins continues to be a shining example for us all and we hope our students can carry his message of advocacy with them as they begin the next chapter of their lives.”

The District decided to hold a virtual graduation due to stay-at-home orders designed to stem the spread of COVID-19. In addition to the virtual graduation, the District and the Fund for the School District of Philadelphia, along with local partners such as Comcast and the Kimmel Center for Performing Arts, worked together to coordinate activities to recognize and celebrate the Class of 2020. The Kimmel Center is the official host of the virtual graduation afterparty, which will begin at 7 p.m. and feature music by Philadelphia native DJ Aktive and a performance by R&B group Good Girl among others. In the days leading up to the graduation ceremony, the District also ran a social media and radio campaign featuring well-wishes from the likes of Grammy Award winner and Philadelphia High School for Girls graduate Jill Scott, DJ Diplo and Philadelphia Eagles safety Rodney McCleod. Additional 2020 Graduation partners included the Free Library of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Orchestra, iHeart Radio Philadelphia, CBS3, Fox29, 6ABC and NBC10.

“We’re very proud to have worked with so many people to recognize the accomplishments of the Class of 2020,” said Donna Frisby-Greenwood, president and CEO of the Fund for the School District of Philadelphia. “This has been a difficult time for many people, especially our seniors and their families, so we’re pleased to be a part of something that shows them how proud they have made us and how excited we are for them and what lies ahead.”

###