



Benja Jackson, EdS



Miss Benja Jackson is a 3rd generation educator who lives and works in her hometown of Hamilton, AL. She is a graduate of the University of North Alabama where she received a B.S. degree in History and Political Science as well as a Master's degree in Secondary Education. She received a second Master's degree (2014) and an Educational Specialist degree (2017) in Educational Leadership from the University of Alabama, Birmingham. She is currently working on her doctorate in Rural Education at the University of West Alabama. The topic of her dissertation is *Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions of Parental Involvement: Influencing Students' Academic Success in Rural Secondary Schools*.

She began her education career as the Parent/Community Liaison for Marion County schools. She then transitioned into the classroom and was a high school history teacher and yearbook advisor for 10 years. She is completing her fifth year as the Assistant Principal and Arts Coordinator at Hamilton Middle School, a rural Title I school of around 500 students, in northwest Alabama near the Mississippi border. Students from HMS typically come from low socio-economic backgrounds as currently over 60% receive a free or reduced lunch. She would describe her school as traditional, inclusive, and family oriented.

Growing and building the Arts program at HMS has added many layers to her life, both personally and professionally. She hopes to continue growing this program in order to bring greater opportunities and experiences to students in her rural community. Seeing students grow and transform through their participation in the Arts has been a tremendously rewarding experience.

Outside of school, she enjoys attending First Baptist Church Hamilton where she sings in the adult choir, shopping, home design, and spending time with friends and family, especially her nephews Jackson (19) and Braden (15). Travel is also one of her passions. She has visited most of the U.S. states including Alaska and has marked the countries of Canada, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Belize, England, and Holland off her bucket list. She is currently planning a trip to Ireland. Miss Jackson would sum up her personal and educational philosophy in a quote by Aristotle, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

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