

Quarterly Confluence

Summer Edition 2025

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Alum Spotlight - Pierre
Board Member Spotlight - Faisal Awwal
Staff Spotlight - Taneika Blackwell



Alum Spotlight - Pierre

As a recent graduate of the Class of 2025, how would you describe your experience at Two Rivers and describe how it helped you grow both as a student and a person?

I started at Two Rivers in PK3. My experience at Two Rivers has been really good. I've made great connections, been part of a welcoming community, and enjoyed fun activities that helped me bond with others. I felt comfortable confiding in my teachers, and I believe Two Rivers has prepared me not just for high school, but for college too.

What did you enjoy most about the school year (e.g., EL modules, 8th Grade Passage Portfolio, events)?

I enjoyed collaborating with classmates, building connections with teachers, and making new friends through activities like Fun Fridays, the musical, field trips, school cookouts, and our trip to the University of Delaware. My favorite module was social studies because I loved learning about Alexander Hamilton, the Civil War, and history in general — especially analyzing texts and exploring the past in depth.

I really liked working on my Eighth Grade Passage Portfolio because it gave me a chance to show things I'm proud of, like my business proposal, where I used real-world skills. I also enjoyed presenting my science fair project. These projects showed that I'm ready for high school since I've learned how to listen carefully, take good notes, think critically, and take initiative on my own.

Scholarly Habits – Why does “I am independent and resilient” resonate with you?

The Scholarly Habit “I am independent and resilient” really speaks to me because it reflects my ability to handle challenges on my own, while also knowing when to ask for help if I need it. Another habit that resonates with me is “I know myself,” because I have a clear sense of my strengths, my limits, and what I need to do to achieve my goals.

Share any clubs or organizations that you were involved in.

This year, I was involved in Gaming Club, Band, and Drumming. I especially enjoyed drumming because it was fun to learn how to play the drums and be part of something creative.

What plans do you have for your future in highschool and beyond?

For high school and the future, I plan to take biology classes and study animals because I want to become a veterinarian, just like my mom. I've also been training hard to try out for my high school's basketball team, since I started playing young and really fell in love with the game.



Faisal Awwal - Board Member Spotlight

**Please share your journey to joining the board of Two Rivers. How did you hear about us?
What attracted you?**

I first discovered Two Rivers during a virtual open house in 2021. Hearing parents share heartfelt stories about their children's growth and experiences left a lasting impression on me. When my son later enrolled, I saw firsthand the school's potential to be a flagship charter in the region. Wanting to contribute, I joined the Finance Committee as a non-voting member to better understand the school's financial planning and budget. After a year of service and learning, I was honored to be appointed as a trustee, committed to helping drive the school's progress and long-term vision.

Can you please share your role on the board? What have you enjoyed so far in your tenure?

I was recently appointed Treasurer for the 2025–2026 school year, where I'll lead the Finance Committee. I also serve on the Governance Committee. What I've enjoyed most so far is the strong sense of camaraderie and collaboration between the board and school leadership. There's a clear mutual respect and a shared commitment to ensuring the school remains academically excellent, culturally responsive, and operationally sound. It's been rewarding to contribute to that partnership.

You shared that Be Thoughtful is your favorite TR Core Value. Can you please tell us why?

Be Thoughtful is foundational — not just as a personal value, but professionally as well. In my work in finance and analytics, being thoughtful means looking beyond the numbers to understand the people and impact behind them. It requires empathy, foresight, and responsibility — the same traits that drive strong decision-making in schools and organizations alike. When I think about what moves the world forward — from innovation to equity — it often starts with someone thinking deeply about how their actions affect others. That kind of thoughtfulness is what makes lasting progress possible, and it's exactly the mindset we want to instill in the next generation.

You've been on the board for over a year and have already attended a number of TR events. What do you want folks outside of our community to know about our community?

What really stands out to me is that Two Rivers is a grassroots community in the truest sense. It's not just top-down — everyone plays a role: school leadership, staff, parents, and students. There's a real sense of partnership, and when concerns come up or challenges arise, people roll up their sleeves and work together to move things forward. That collective effort is what helps create such a strong academic and social environment for our kids. It's a community that cares deeply and takes action — and that's powerful.

How does your background as a Senior Quantitative Analyst/Economist inform your approach to board governance or strategic planning?

In my day-to-day work as a Senior Quantitative Analyst and Economist, I'm constantly thinking about how to make sense of data, manage risk, and support smart decision-making — and I bring that same mindset to the board. I'm always looking at the big picture while asking critical questions about the numbers: What are the trends? What's sustainable? What's the impact? On the Finance Committee, that means making sure we're thinking strategically about the school's financial health — not just for today, but for the long term. I try to help the board stay grounded in data while keeping our mission and students at the center of every decision.

In your view, what are the biggest opportunities for Two Rivers over the next few years, and how do you hope to contribute toward them?

Two Rivers has seen some changes recently with leadership, staff, and student turnover, but now

with a clear strategic plan in place, there's a real opportunity to boost academic success and build stability. I'm excited to contribute by working closely with school leadership—asking thoughtful questions, spotting potential challenges early, and collaborating on solutions. I believe that by coming together as a team, we can keep moving Two Rivers forward and create the best possible environment for our students to thrive.



Staff Spotlight - Taneika Blackwell

Please share how you landed at Two Rivers and when? What compelled you to join the crew?

I joined Two Rivers two years ago after being deeply inspired by the school's mission statement and its emphasis on project-based learning. At the time, I was beginning to lose faith in education, feeling that many systems were no longer aligned with my personal values or the greater purpose of teaching. However, as I learned more about Two Rivers, I felt an immediate sense of alignment. What compelled me most was the school's holistic approach—not only focusing on academic achievement but also on preparing students to be thoughtful, compassionate, and engaged members of society. Two Rivers' commitment to nurturing both the minds and character of students reignited my passion for education and reminded me why I chose this profession in the first place.

How did you decide to become an interventionist? What led you down this path?

I became an interventionist through a unique and eye-opening experience during my time as a teaching fellow. Initially, I was slated to work in a third-grade classroom, but after the school reviewed student data, it became clear there was a significant reading deficiency. The school adopted an "all hands on deck" approach, and I was assigned to shadow a reading specialist. That experience was transformative—it was where I learned how to use data to drive instruction and

provide targeted support. My role quickly evolved into testing students across multiple grade levels and facilitating small group instruction focused on reading.

Following that experience, I spent eight years as a general education teacher in various grade levels. During that time, I consistently observed a widening reading achievement gap across schools. The impact of COVID-19 only exacerbated this challenge, making it even more evident how critical early and ongoing reading support is. I've come to understand that reading is foundational—it affects performance in all content areas and significantly shapes a student's overall educational experience.

This journey ultimately led me to become an interventionist. It has become my personal mission to help close the reading achievement gap, one group of students at a time.

You made incredible growth with your students this year. Bravo! Can you share a story of a child who was able to accelerate with your support?

Thank you! One student's story that has stayed with me happened about four years ago. When I began working with her, she was in third grade but reading at a kindergarten level. Her mother had been advocating for support and resources for quite some time but hadn't been able to secure the appropriate interventions.

Once we began working together, I implemented a targeted reading plan tailored to her specific needs. Over the course of the year, she made tremendous progress—by the end of the year, she was reading at a high second-grade, nearly third-grade level. With the support systems in place, including a specialized reading plan and consistent, data-driven instruction, she grew not only in skill but also in confidence.

She went from being a quiet, hesitant student who avoided reading aloud or answering questions, to someone who regularly raised her hand, volunteered to read, and actively participated in discussions. Her excitement for learning blossomed because she could finally access the material in a meaningful way.

I still keep in touch with her family. While reading continues to be an area of growth, she is no longer significantly behind—and most importantly, she now enjoys reading for pleasure. It's stories like hers that fuel my passion as a reading interventionist. Supporting her literacy development not only changed her academic trajectory but also empowered her to take ownership of her learning and re-engage with school.

Please share a fun fact about yourself.

A fun fact about me is that I once struggled with reading myself. It was thanks to the dedication of a reading interventionist who took the time to support and guide me that I was able to develop the skills and confidence I needed. That experience had a profound impact on me, and now I'm a reading interventionist who absolutely loves reading and is passionate about helping others experience that same growth.

Another fun fact is that the book *Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco has been a major source of inspiration in my journey. It serves as a powerful reminder that we never truly know the lasting impact we may have on a student's life. It inspires me daily to teach with intention, empathy, and purpose.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



Our **Spring Celebration of Learning** was a huge success! This special event allowed our students to showcase their high-quality work. Through authentic, complex, and beautifully crafted presentations, students will demonstrated their learning journeys and accomplishments.



During **Asian American and Pacific Islander Month**, our students deepened their understanding of AAPI culture by exploring the stories of historical AAPI figures, as well as learning about traditional dances and foods.



Our talented middle school students brought the magic of **Moana Jr.** to life on stage with vibrant costumes, heartfelt performances, and weeks of dedicated rehearsal. It was an **unforgettable musical** that showcased their hard work, creativity, and passion for the arts!

Also, a huge shoutout to our upper elementary school students for their incredible support—this was our first time involving elementary students, and they were fantastic!

Stay Connected for all that is coming in SY '25-'26

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