

E.L. HAYNES

BE KIND | WORK HARD | GET SMART

WINTER 2015

JENNIFER C. NILES

Head of School
2004 - 2014

Tribute Edition

Jennie Niles Becomes DC's Deputy Mayor for Education

On December 15, Mayor-elect Muriel Bowser announced her selection of E.L. Haynes Founder and Head of School Jennie Niles as DC's new Deputy Mayor for Education. She cited Jennie's deep roots in education and her record for bringing together DCPS and public charter schools in efforts to ensure excellence for students citywide. She praised Jennie's "impressive and innovative background" that has prepared her for her role "increasing collaboration between all of our public schools."

Chancellor of DC Public Schools Kaya Henderson, who will continue to serve on Mayor Bowser's cabinet, wholeheartedly embraced the appointment, saying, "She's not just about charter school kids; Jennie is about all kids."

Since writing the charter for E.L. Haynes in 2002, Jennie has remained steadfast in the school's mission of college readiness for every student of every race, socioeconomic status, and home language. Under her leadership, the school has grown from 138 to 1,160 students and expanded from its humble beginnings over a CVS drugstore to two gleaming campuses serving students from every ward in the city in grades PK-12. Over time, E.L. Haynes has become nationally recognized and the recipient of numerous awards, accolades, and visits from state and foreign dignitaries.

In a recent article in The Washington Post, Michael Alison Chandler writes that, "E.L. Haynes Public Charter School, which Niles founded in 2004, has become one of the city's most oft-cited examples of success, with frequent recognition from philanthropic and political leaders." She notes Jennie's citywide school reform efforts, including her work on the city's leadership team that resulted in \$75 million for the district through Race to the Top funding. Chandler also cites Jennie's record in promoting blended learning, special-education reforms, and competency-based graduation requirements.

Since its inception, Jennie's vision for E.L. Haynes has been to become a model of educational excellence and to make a lasting impact on urban education in Washington, DC, and across the nation. Through strategic partnerships with DCPS and public charter schools, E.L. Haynes programs have reached tens of thousands of students and hundreds of teachers across the city. As Jennie becomes DC's next Deputy Mayor of Education, she will undoubtedly build on this legacy to impact education reform in Washington, DC, and beyond.



Interview with Jennie Niles

E.L. Haynes Founder and Former Head of School

In your tenure as Founder and Head of E.L. Haynes, what are you most proud of?

Since drafting the charter for E.L. Haynes in 2002, our opening in 2004, and through today, there are so many things that make me proud. The buildings are great, but the people and their accomplishments make E.L. Haynes shine. I'm most proud of our students for showing us that they can tackle whatever we put in front of them. I'm proud of our families for ensuring that their students have the best education possible. I'm proud of our talented, passionate, and committed staff – they are more remarkable than I could have ever imagined.

Our first college acceptances, rolling in now, are the culmination of this journey so far. I can't wait to attend our first graduation of E.L. Haynes High School seniors in June. I know our students will accomplish great things someday, but I also know that they are demonstrating leadership and thoughtfulness, every day.

What are your fondest memories?

I remember our early days cramped in a very small space above the CVS. Our students would transition through the hallways quietly and orderly – except where I stood. Every day there was a bottleneck in front of me where students would stop by for a hug or a handshake. It was a mess but I loved it, even though our staff did not. So we adopted the silent “H” symbol for “Hug” or “Hello” in the hallways, and our transitions became much smoother.

Other fond memories relate to our students' successes over the years – when our boys soccer team won the league championship; when our student won a civics essay contest and met Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; when our ninth and tenth graders placed second in a STEM fair video game contest and were recruited by MIT scholars; when our students were selected to travel to Qatar and Guatemala to represent E.L. Haynes and Washington, DC; when three students were accepted into Phillips Academy's prestigious summer program in Andover; and most recently, when our high school seniors explored the impact of gentrification in DC.

One early memory, though, really embodies the spirit of E.L. Haynes. During our first year, the mother of one of our Kindergarten students was critically injured and hospitalized for many months during the school year and over the summer. Showing incredible compassion, his classmates' families took turns bringing him home over the weekends and to summer camps. It was so inspiring to see how the school bonded together. Our families are incredible, whether they are supporting others in need or creating artwork to sell at our holiday bazaar.

What will you miss most?

I'll miss talking to our students. They are really smart about what they need and they will tell you if you ask. I'll miss their joy of learning and hearing about their next book, next art project, or next math problem. Students across the city are exceptional, and I'm excited to get to know them all better, but I am particularly devoted to this group. E.L. Haynes will always hold a special place in my heart. I will need to find ways to come visit in the future.

What advice would you give our first class of graduating seniors?

I would remind them that they can shape their own futures and they can determine what life has in store for them. I would also encourage them to continue seeking out new ways to be good friends, daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, cousins, and neighbors – to try to make the world a better place for folks who don't have so much or are treated unfairly.

What advice would you give the next Head of School?

To spend as much time as possible with our students, families, and staff. They are our greatest assets.

What excites you most about your new role as Deputy Mayor for Education, and what are your top priorities for Washington, DC?

I am excited to do my part to make schools better for all students in the District. My top three priorities for Washington, DC, are aligned with the Mayor's priorities. First, we are committed to improving collaboration across DCPS and charter schools so that we can work as a unified sector to serve all students and families. Second, we must improve middle schools so that they excite young students during this pivotal time in their growth. And third, we must ensure equal access to a high quality education for all kids.

What else would you like to tell readers?

Making the decision to leave E.L. Haynes was one of the hardest things I've ever done. People who know me well know how much I wanted to stay and how I agonized over this decision. But deep down I knew that I wasn't afraid for E.L. Haynes, but for myself. E.L. Haynes is in excellent hands and will be fine without me, but I wasn't sure that I would be fine without E.L. Haynes. When I discovered the true source of my fear, the decision became clear. This decision wasn't about me, but about trying to make a difference for kids across the city, building on the amazing work we've accomplished together at E.L. Haynes. It's a great honor and an enormous responsibility. I'm excited to embark on this new chapter in my life, and I'll carry the spirit of E.L. Haynes with me wherever I go.



Thank You, Jennie Niles



Maura Ayala is a founding E.L. Haynes student and a high school senior.

Dear Ms. Niles,

First, I would like to say congratulations on the new job! I'm sure that you will do amazing things like you already did at Haynes. I can still remember the good old days back in 2nd grade. Your warm smile just filled my day. When we created plays, you took our jitters away and wished us the best. Then, years went on, and the school slowly began to transform into a masterpiece.

I was promoted from 5th to 6th grade, along with my classmates, and I could see that you were so excited to see us grow. Then in 7th grade, you drove me to the Junior National Young Leaders Conference in Washington, DC. Your big hug along with my mother's was all I needed to take away my shyness. Then graduation from 8th to 9th grade came, and the first class of Haynes was about to take a big step. A few months later, you congratulated me when I got accepted into the Minority Students in Math and Science program in Andover, MA, which I have happily completed for three consecutive summers. When my plane arrived home in DC, my mom and my sisters received me with open arms and so did you. To celebrate, you took us to a diner, where I was able to share my exciting moments at Andover. Now, I am a successful senior, with just less than six months left, waiting to graduate and begin a new chapter in my life. I can honestly say that without your support, I wouldn't be the young lady I am today.

I think that it is amazing how you had a dream and it became a reality. I had wonderful teachers who had a positive impact on my life, thanks to you. I know that things seem to happen so fast, but they happen for a reason. From my family's favorite show, Criminal Minds, Agent David Rossi once said, "Good things happen to good people." This quote relates so much to me, because in life, one encounters people with a good heart who will live now and forever. I think that you are one of those good people. Conversations from late rides home to the amazing speeches you gave at groundbreaking events will live with me to eternity.

Thank you for your kindness and time. My family, classmates, and I love you and hope to see you real soon.

Sincerely,

Maura Ayala
E.L. Haynes Class of 2015

Kind Words...

"When Jennie asked me to be the founding board chair of E.L. Haynes, it was a very easy decision because I knew she was going to create a school that we'd not only be proud of but it would be a model. It would be a school to which we could send our son (conceptually); and then we actually did and it changed his life. But, Jennie's vision and aspiration were and are bigger than her first love of Haynes. She's become a leader among leaders in DC education and is now stepping up to serve the whole city. I couldn't be more optimistic for our children or more proud of her."

Jim Shelton, Founding Board Chair and former Deputy Secretary of Education

"Thank you for your gift of E.L. Haynes Public Charter School to the residents of Washington, DC. You are a visionary leader and true inspiration. It is hard to think about E.L. Haynes without you but I know your vision extends beyond our school community to include students and families across the entire city. Thank you for your unwavering support of my career and family!"

Tanisha Jones, Founding Staff Member

"Jennie Niles is singular – the only person, anywhere in our city, who seems able to simultaneously produce results for kids and also marshal the whole city toward a place of greater coordination, cooperation, and high standards. What's not to love? She is kind and generous, a brilliant leader, and beloved by her students. The City is blessed to have her leadership as Deputy Mayor for Education at this moment of growth and success for our schools."

Katherine Bradley, President, CityBridge Foundation

"It's a sad day at E.L. Haynes Public Charter School - our beloved and fearless Head of School, Jennie Niles, announced she is stepping down. But it's a great day for the kids and families in DC who are gaining a fabulous new Deputy Mayor for Education. I still remember the day I met Jennie - at an open house where she was trying to persuade families to check out a new school she was opening. I'm not sure she even had a space yet, but I was sold - based purely on her optimism and enthusiasm. Jennie is a brilliant force of nature and I had no doubt my kids would be in great hands. Thank you for all you've done, Jennie. You're a rock star and will be missed more than you know. Even if you're not there, we will think of you every time we walk those halls. You have left an amazing legacy - you should be very proud of all you accomplished. We are eternally grateful and wish you all the best in this great new adventure."

Anne Crowley, Founding Parent

"Thank you, Jennie, for helping us to understand that our children's education is stronger in a classroom inclusive of all in our community and not just a select group. All of our kids will be better citizens when their education is not just about them as individuals, but is also tied to the greater good of our community."

Michael Hall, Founding Parent and Co-Vice Chair, Board of Trustees

"Jennie's vision and leadership have made E.L. Haynes the extraordinary school that it is today. Her deep commitment and compassion for the students inspire us all. We will honor her legacy by following her example and doing all we can to continue to support E.L. Haynes and the students."

Bill Rawson, Chair, Board of Trustees



save the date to raise a glass
for our fourth annual

toast to transformation

a celebration of innovation and impact in education
to benefit E.L. Haynes Public Charter School

2015 honorees:

Kaya Henderson, Chancellor, DC Public Schools

Jennifer C. Niles, DC Deputy Mayor for Education

Thursday, May 14, 2015

6:00 to 8:00 PM

Long View Gallery

1234 9th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20001