



Fifth-grade teller Amanda Johnson helps a young customer at Slater's youth bank.

# STRONG PARTNERSHIPS + STRONG SCHOOLS = HIGH ACHIEVERS

BY MORIEKA V. JOHNSON

Students at Slater Elementary lined up in orderly rows. As they reached the front of the room, each eagerly displayed hands filled with pennies, nickels, quarters and even a few dollars. Slater's SunTrust Youth bank was open for business.

With assistance from teachers and SunTrust staff, fifth-grade bank teller Amanda Johnson patiently walked her peers through the paces of opening a savings account. To land a position with the student branch, Johnson had to be in good academic standing and complete the application and interview process.

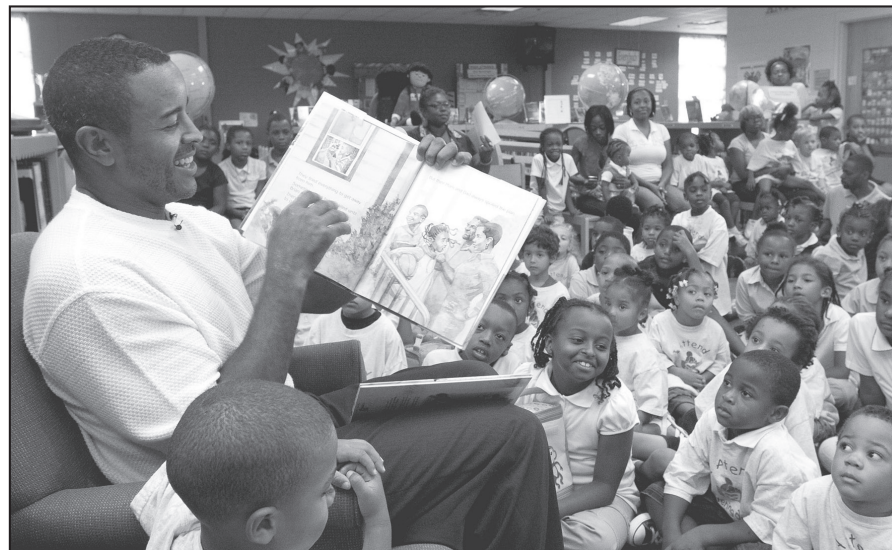
"Economic standards are often overlooked, but we wanted to place them at the forefront," said Slater teacher Rita McGlothlin. "It means a lot to see them actively participating. Now even the kindergartners are ready for next year and want to work in the bank."

As a result of the partnership, every student can open an account and make deposits throughout the year. To promote fiscal responsibility, SunTrust will donate up to \$25, based on the student's account balance in April. At that time, students may withdraw the money or roll it over during the next school year. Many choose the latter route, and enjoy watching their balance grow over time.

"It's innovative, it's cutting-edge, it's exactly what we need to be doing as a city and a nation," said Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed, who helped Slater students celebrate the mini-branch's debut.

Slater's youth bank is one of many examples of successful partners in action around Atlanta Public Schools. Strong community ties also have blossomed in the form of community gardens, job training programs and even new lab equipment.

"We know what happens when business, civic and education leaders



NFL and MLB star Brian Jordan, a proud APS partner, recently spent the day reading his latest children's book to students at Centennial Place Elementary.

join forces on behalf of students," said APS Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall, "good things – great things — happen."

Ask students at Hutchinson Elementary how the Grand Canyon was formed, and they may just offer hands-on demonstration.

Thanks to a network of partners that includes Horace Mann and Chick-fil-A, the year-round school opened its first interactive science lab this fall.

Inside, students donning facemasks gathered around shallow containers of sand. A slow stream of water quickly created dips and craters, just like the national landmark.

"When test time rolls around, our students will know the content because they've had hands-on activities," said Dr. Rebecca Dashiell-Mitchell, principal of Hutchinson Elementary, which boasts 25 dedicated partners.

The district's strong business and community partnerships has led to lecture series with former Atlanta Mayor Shirley

Franklin, former APS teacher and coach Calvin "Monk" Jones and civil rights icon the Rev. Dr. Joseph Lowery, who celebrated his 10<sup>th</sup> lecture with APS alum Judge Glenda Hatchett as keynote speaker in October. For more than a decade, APS also has invited the city's top business and civic leaders to spend a day shadowing principals.

"My participation today in the Principal Shadow Day program was one of the most refreshing and rewarding experiences I've had in a long time," said Atlanta City Councilman Kwanza Hall, who visited Venetian Hills Elementary this year. "For all that I do as a city council member, it pales in comparison to the work of some of our most humble servants, teachers and principals."

Educators also serve as inspiration for longstanding community partnerships. Since 1998, NFL and MLB athlete Brian Jordan has been a strong supporter of the district, attending school events and

providing scholarships through his Brian Jordan Foundation.

"My mother inspired me. She was a teacher and I watched her teach kids as I was growing up," Jordan said. "She really poured her heart and soul into giving back to kids. I knew that — if I had the opportunity in my life to reach my dreams — the best way to give it back was through kids."

Jordan recently visited Centennial Place Elementary to sign copies of his latest book, *Overcoming the Fear of the Baseball*. He also encouraged students to embrace reading and strive to achieve their dreams.

Threshing Floor Academy coordinated the visit as part of its Authors in Schools program. The organization, created by Director Meisha Card, helps to promote literacy throughout the district.

"If you can help a child get on the right track early on, they may discover what they are on this planet to do," Card said. "That is an awesome thing."