



101 N STREET NW WASHINGTON DC 20001 | 202.698.3762 |

# DUNBAR HIGH SCHOOL

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my honor to recommend Mr. Alex Clark for the NABSE Mary McLeod Bethune Outstanding Teacher Award. Mr. Clark is an innovative, passionate, and transformational educator whose work at Dunbar High School and across the District of Columbia has redefined what physical education and career readiness can look like for students of color.

Over the past several years, Mr. Clark has built something extraordinary — a cycling and bike-mechanic Career & Technical Education (CTE) program that began in one classroom and now operates in three DC high schools. What started as a creative response to engage students during the pandemic has evolved into a nationally recognized model of equity-driven experiential learning. His students not only earn physical education credits, but now also receive college-level credit and industry certifications through partnerships with Trek University and Project Bike Tech. Many have secured job placements at local bike shops, served as support staff (“sags”) for regional cycling races, and even transferred their technical and engineering skills into broader STEM-based careers.

Mr. Clark’s signature initiative, Prime Ability Youth Cycling Development, is the first African American youth cycling team in the country and the only Black-led high school bike tech and shop program in the United States — one of just six nationally. This is particularly fitting given that Dunbar High School itself is the first African American public high school in the country. Through Prime Ability, Mr. Clark has not only introduced competitive mountain biking to urban youth but has challenged stereotypes, changed narratives, and opened doors for students who rarely see themselves represented in these spaces.

His Bike Bus program has had a measurable impact on school culture, resulting in a 30% increase in 9th-grade attendance by encouraging students to ride to school together before the day begins. This initiative gets students active, builds community, and fosters responsibility — proving that movement can be both a physical and emotional catalyst for change.

Beyond the classroom and the bike lane, Mr. Clark also organizes an annual multi-day camping and cycling trip to West Virginia, taking 25 of our most at-risk boys and girls away from the pressures of their neighborhoods each summer. Through months of fundraising, he ensures that every student can participate regardless of financial means. The trip provides an opportunity for students to reconnect with nature, build leadership and teamwork skills, and refocus on their goals before returning home. Many students describe the experience as “life-changing,” often seeing, for the first time, a world larger than the one they’ve known — one filled with possibility and peace.

Mr. Clark’s impact has been recognized nationwide, with features in Time Magazine, The Washington Post, and Bicycling Magazine, as well as on national television. He was named the 2023 DC Teacher of the Year and the 2024 SHAPE America National Physical Education Teacher of the Year. Yet, his greatest success lies in the transformation he fosters in his students — empowering them to see that the lessons learned through cycling, teamwork, and perseverance extend far beyond school walls.

Mr. Clark’s mission is bigger than teaching; it is about creating generational change through movement, mentorship, and opportunity. Every ride, every repair, and every conversation he has with a student is an act of love and liberation — a reminder that they, too, can pedal toward success.

For all these reasons and more, I give my highest recommendation for Mr. Alex Clark’s nomination for the Mary McLeod Bethune Outstanding Teacher Award.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 786-301-2444.

Sincerely,  
Nadine Smith  
Principal, Dunbar High School

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." -Nelson Mandela

