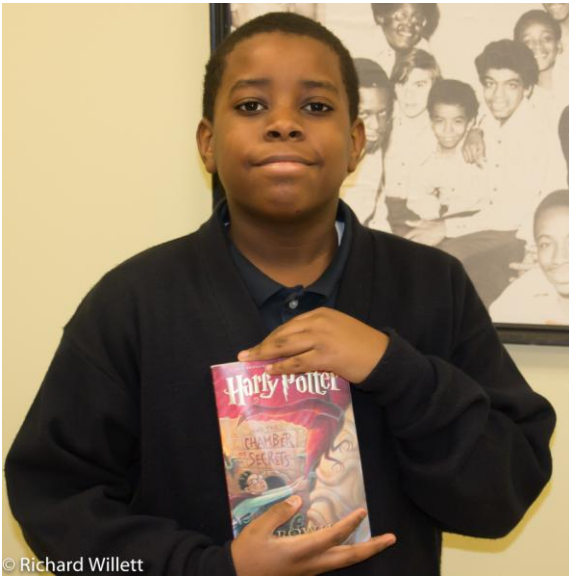


Ja'Corey Smith, Grade 5 speaks out as part of our continuing series of essays about our school written from our students' perspective.



© Richard Willett

When I first walked through the doors of Newark Boys Chorus School, I had no idea that my life was about to take an unexpected but exciting turn. From the moment I walked in, I knew that this was no ordinary school. Music was playing, and I recognized it as the Harry Potter theme! I could feel tingles all over, sensing something magical was about to happen. I followed the music to the large center room, and there, I met my teachers, including Ms. G, my new English teacher. She told me we would be reading Harry Potter at the end of the year, and that the school had a team-set up, just like Hogwarts! Harry Potter is already my favorite thing, so this made me very sure I was in the right place for me. On that day, I was sorted into my house, school teams which build camaraderie and competitive spirit, and knew that NBCS was where I belonged.

It was very different from my old school right off the bat. NBCS does not tolerate disruptive or horrible behavior at all. The amazing teachers make sure that the rules and codes are enforced, so I had to adjust quickly to remaining respectful and focused at all times. At NBCS, the students are able to learn at their own pace, even though the teachers move through the lessons quickly. There is time for all of us to get the clarification we need, thanks to the small class size, another marked difference from my old school. In my first week, I learned that it was okay to ask for help, I wasn't afraid to question or comment, and that was new for me.

The academics, though rigid, are exciting for me, but what is truly special is the music. Every day, we have music classes, including voice lessons, music theory, and rehearsals. It is an honor to have become a part of the apprentice chorus, knowing soon I will be in the renowned Concert Chorus, which made NBCS famous. It took some adjusting, but I quickly adapted to the routine and new classes, with the help of the music staff and my new classmates. We were all experiencing this for the first time, so it helped us bond, and made us more eager to help one another.

In my first 90 days here, I have learned so much! Classes squeeze a great deal of work into short periods, but the teachers are so helpful and kind; they want to be here, they want to teach, and it makes me more eager to work hard for them. The students are not like other middle-schoolers. There is no harsh bullying here, there is a brotherhood, and each day when I go home and talk to my family about my day, my parents are proud and so grateful that I only have positive words. NBCS has already changed me, in a short while I have grown and matured, needing to leave typical fifth grade behaviors and attitudes behind since NBCS will not stand for such things, they take pride in producing noble, intelligent, honorable, mature, talented young men. That is what I am now, and what I will become, thanks to NBCS.

Ja'Corey Smith, Grade 5