

MAKE JOY

2020 DEMANDED CRITICAL WORK

FROM US: bridging the digital divide, implementing a virtual learning program worthy of our kids, confronting racism in our schools and laying the foundation for becoming an anti-racist school network, and planning to reopen quickly and safely when conditions allow.

Amidst everything, we showed our school spirit with crazy socks and comfy clothes. We TikTok'ed (and learned what TikTok was). We celebrated graduates and welcomed new students. We got out the vote and set Democracy on Fire. We had a Blackout Experience, Instant Decision Day, Dragon Day, and Kindness Week. We had fun.

Moments of joy define our 2020 and give us the endurance to keep kids learning and growing no matter what. We hope the Freire Family's reflections on 2020 inspire joy in you the way your partnership has in us.



FREIRE
SCHOOLS

KHARY O.

FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2020

A YEAR TO INSPIRE

VIRTUAL LEARNING IS TEMPORARY— OUR FREIRE FAMILY IS PERMANENT. 2020 has demanded all our collective brainpower, resilience, perseverance, problem-solving and heart. Here are a few of the ways we've learned, grown, and found joy this year:

- Our kids enjoyed seeing their friends on Zoom and forging new relationships. They were excited to have laptops of their own, and their computer literacy grew in leaps and bounds. Most importantly, they developed their voices, advocated for themselves, fearlessly shared raw and real emotions, and remained hopeful for our future.
- We quickly connected students and families with food, mental health support, IT support, reliable WiFi, and college counseling. We never allowed physical distance to block us from doing what's best for our kids.
- Teachers pivoted to an entirely different teaching method with grace and openness, adopting new tools and technologies that we are excited to carry into our physical classrooms.
- Racist violence prompted us to confront racism in our schools and commit to supporting and uplifting our Black students, families, and colleagues through anti-racist action. From forming affinity groups to investing time and resources into extensive equity training, we are beginning the work to ensure racism has no home at Freire Schools.
- From Freestyle Fridays to home visits to virtual Back to School Nights, we developed new tools and strategies for consistent outreach.
- In a time of economic uncertainty, our philanthropic community came together to support both our emerging needs and the established programs that make a Freire education inspired and inspiring.

I have found joy in the demonstrated resilience of both our staff and students. Their resolve to push forward in these unprecedented times is both reassuring and motivating, and is a consistent reminder of our innate power to build the future.

NATE DURANT
CO-HEAD OF SCHOOL
FREIRE WILMINGTON

Even with all of the stress that's placed on our journey, Freire has shaped us to strive to do greater things in life.

CAMERON J.
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2020

FREIRE 2020 BY THE NUMBERS

15

alumni rejoining the Freire Family as teachers, teacher residents, deans, support staff, and Board members.

ONCE A DRAGON, ALWAYS A DRAGON!

2,630

Chromebooks purchased to provide first-rate virtual learning when our buildings are closed and revolutionize teaching and learning when we reopen, now as 1:1 computing schools.

58

virtual clubs and academic centers helping kids create, connect, and have fun.

275

Class of 2020 graduates receiving over

\$13.8M

in college scholarships and aid.

51.5%

of new Freire Schools staff identify as people of color – a 10% increase over last year.

40

network and school leaders participating in a 12-day Equity-Driven Leadership course – a first step in our commitment to anti-racism.

**2,000 KIDS +
4 SCHOOLS +
2 CITIES =
1 FREIRE
FAMILY**

VISIONS FOR 2021

We asked members of the Freire Family about their **HOPES, GOALS, AND VISIONS FOR 2021**. Overwhelmingly, our hopes include continued health and safety for our entire Freire Family and the ability to welcome our students and staff back into our buildings when risk is minimized. Here are a few more intentions as we enter the new year:

- Work every day to offer a virtual learning program that is worthy of our kids, and to translate the best parts of virtual learning into our schools when we are again in person.
- Push even further and hold even higher expectations of our students and ourselves.
- Help kids feel the Freire magic, even during virtual learning. Have fun and create more space to celebrate our successes.
- Emphasize our students' humanity, elevate diverse voices in their studies, and empower them to reshape the narrative of Black culture – a culture of strength, joy, and beauty.
- Ensure that our work toward becoming a 100% anti-racist school network takes sustainable, meaningful root.
- Recognize that everyone needs healing and that mental health is a human right. Normalize therapy in our community and continue to provide this support to our students and families.
- Show gratitude to the kids and families who choose Freire Schools, who are the reason for our work and our hope for the future; the teachers and staff who dedicate their full selves to this work; and the partners who embolden us to push ourselves each day.
- Hold Freire in our hearts in everything we do.
- Remember that peace starts inside each of us. Take time to breathe and refocus on breathing the DRAGON FIRE that defines Freire Schools.

In 2021, we need to celebrate the joy of our students, the joy of our families. Let's make joy a core value of Freire Schools.

CHRISTOPHER ZAGACKI
HEAD OF SCHOOL
FREIRE MIDDLE SCHOOL

My hope for 2021 is that we continue to innovate, adapt, and push through these challenging times to ensure that our students KEEP growing.

CHARLES WARE
HEAD OF SCHOOL
TECH FREIRE

VIRTUAL MAGIC

In 2020, social media was a lifeline. Follow @FreireSchools to see these posts, and the magic in store for 2021!

LIFE BEFORE COVID

FEBRUARY

A peek at early 2020 reminds us of the beauty that awaits us when we are able to return to our buildings – Black History Month, student performances, college visits, and more.



LAPTOP DELIVERY

APRIL 27

With support from our partners, we delivered 2,000 laptops to our students' homes to make virtual learning possible for our kids.

ANTI-RACIST ACTION

JUNE 5

The murder of George Floyd prompted civil unrest and a long overdue reckoning with racism in our country. Our commitment to anti-racism this day was a first step that we continue to follow with action.



SOCIALLY DISTANCED GRADUATIONS

JUNE 15 & JULY 29

We got creative to celebrate the Class of 2020. Faced with an interrupted year, these students' resilience and hard work inspired us to keep breathing fire!



SPIRIT WEEK

MARCH 30-APRIL 3

With school swag and TikTok swagger, Virtual Spirit Week brought our community together. No virus can dim our Dragon fire!



JAH'SIMA C.
FREIRE WILMINGTON
CLASS OF 2020

THANK YOU

As we eagerly start fresh in 2021, let's remember to hold onto the best of 2020 – the challenges that sparked our creativity, the pain that pushed us toward progress, the friends and family who supported us all the way, and the joy that constantly reminded us of the fortitude of the human spirit.

When we are finally able to learn together in person, we will channel the joy of our renewed togetherness to maximize the opportunities, experiences, and relationships we have missed. We cannot wait to welcome you back to our campuses.

Until that time, thank you for continuing to make the sacrifices necessary for our school buildings to reopen as soon as possible. Thank you for taking time to see joy even in adversity. And thank you for believing that our kids are worthy of the best education, the greatest opportunities, and abundant joy today and always.



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