



FREIRE
SCHOOLS
SPRING 2021

ONCE A DRAGON, ALWAYS A DRAGON



DAVIANNA HOLLAND *(on left)*
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2010
PARAPROFESSIONAL, TECH FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL

FREIRE SCHOOLS' PURPOSE is to empower our students to build the future. It is one of our greatest points of pride when our alumni return to do just that.

This year, a record 19 alumni have rejoined our Freire Family as teachers,

teacher residents, deans, support staff, board members, college ambassadors, and more!

Freire Schools alumni know better than anyone what it takes to inspire and uplift our students—forming authentic relationships, providing

space for student voice, and making sure our kids know that they matter.

And amidst a critical nationwide teacher shortage, developing a teacher pipeline for Freire Schools alumni offers Freire graduates the opportunity to develop

their craft alongside some of the best educators in our region.

READ ON TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PHENOMENAL ALUMNI BREATHING FIRE AT FREIRE SCHOOLS! ▶▶▶



EVERYONE'S A STUDENT, EVERYONE'S A TEACHER



MEET MARKETAH!

MarKetah M. Richardson is a proud member of Freire High School's Class of 2008 and a 2017 graduate of Temple University. She rejoined the Freire Family in 2019 as a student services English Language Arts Teacher at TECH Freire, supporting students with disabilities. As a teacher and as TECH Freire's Head Cheerleading Coach, MarKetah is determined to make sure our kids see an advocate in her, develop their voices, and have the freedom to be both students and teachers.

HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR APPROACH TO TEACHING?

My approach would just be to not come with all the answers. I like to approach teaching like I would mental health, where you are the pioneer of what you know, of your future, of your life, and of your education—I'm just here to guide you. So I think my approach would be to always consider what

they already know. And how can I, as a teacher, guide them to know a little bit more.

WHAT WAS FREIRE'S CULTURE LIKE WHEN YOU WERE A STUDENT HERE?

The teachings of Paulo Freire were definitely ingrained in the school, where everyone was a student and everyone was a teacher. I felt that my voice was valued and never felt like a child, but always was OK with

being a student and learning something new. If we had concerns, they gave us the platform to express that. I just love that I always felt like I had a voice ... the teachers really cared about what you had to say and always considered you when making decisions.

WHAT SHOULD TEACHERS EXPECT WHEN COMING TO WORK AT FREIRE?

Expect to be challenged as an educator. Expect to

sometimes take the back seat. The answers are in the room with the kids—let them teach you when they can. They know a lot more than what society says that they do ... they know so much more than you think. So always allow those moments for them to teach you, because they will. 🔥

“ I hope that [my work here] will allow more Freire alums to come back. I have a special connection with Freire, and I want to make sure that the kids have the Freire that I had when I was there. That’s very important to me. As alums, the special love and connections that we have really will help us with that next generation.

ALEXIS PRINCE
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2014

ALGEBRA II TEACHER,
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL



“ Our alumni return to our community excited to transform our students’ education by providing practical knowledge and shared experiences. The benefits transcend our student body and provide an opportunity for our alumni to re-engage with their schools and former teachers and gain expertise.

TERYN THOMAS
DIRECTOR OF TEACHING &
LEARNING, FREIRE SCHOOLS



BUILDING FREIRE'S FUTURE

MEET KIARA!

Kiara F. Allison graduated from Freire High School in 2007 and went on to earn her B.A. in Government and Political Affairs from Millersville University and her Masters of Education in Higher Education Administration from Penn State. Now, as she finishes up her Ph.D. in Educational Studies, Kiara is the Deputy Title IX and EO Coordinator in Drexel University's Office of Equality and Diversity and also serves on Freire Charter School's Board of Directors. Kiara's considerable expertise and personal connection to Freire helps center our decision making on critical issues around student voice and equity.

WHAT DREW YOU TO FREIRE CHARTER SCHOOL'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

I really wanted to make sure that there was a voice of the students on the Board ... I can relate to the students because I am from where they're from, but I also can relate to other people because of my networks and who I talk to, my education.

I was very pleased to find out that everyone on the Board is very interested in making sure our students have a great education. And the education stays first—even when we're talking about budgets and things, the conversation always circles back to, "What does this mean for the students? Is this the best choice for the students?"

HOW HAS AND HASN'T FREIRE CHANGED SINCE YOU WERE A STUDENT HERE?

I still feel like there's a community ... Walking through the buildings, seeing people that I went to high school with working in the building, and you can see the students coming in and you can just see that level of familiarity. You can just tell that the students have a relationship with the staff.

I would say what is different is the student support services ... When I was there, we knew that [Director of Emotional Support Services] Mr. Alphonse, like, existed, but nobody talked about it. But now our students are like, "Yeah, I got a

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therapy session with such and such at this time.” They’re speaking about it openly. I think that’s super, super important, and I’m so happy that Freire has been doing this [trauma-informed] work ... I’m super impressed that our students are talking about things that perhaps, generationally, their parents still might have stigma around.

And the students are focusing on Black history. Again, when I was there, I don’t think there was this focus on, “We need to learn Black history.” We did [learn Black history] ... but I don’t think we were like, “The world is racist and we need to be prepared and we need to know how to talk about

these things critically.” But the students are talking about it ... That’s a testament to the times we’re in, but also to Freire keeping up with the times ... it’s always this idea that we can improve and we can adapt to the new environment.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE FREIRE SCHOOLS’ RECENT FOCUS ON ANTI-RACIST WORK WITHIN OUR SCHOOLS?

It’s very important to me that people can do this [anti-racist] work with fidelity, and that they are interrogating themselves. There’s so many ways you can mess this up. And I do feel like Freire’s doing this work in the best way possible—starting with the leadership, having honest conversations.

I feel that this has been in line with where Freire has always been trying to be anyway. Even before the word “anti-racist” was on the mouths of everyone else, I think that Freire

has been at least trying to embody anti-racism, even when I was there ... I think this is just the next step of a long history. I’m excited to see the future. 🔥



DIONNA AGGIE
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2011
DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS,
FREIRE MIDDLE SCHOOL

I feel I can relate [to students] on a different level. I’m not going to say they don’t listen to other people, but they’re more inclined to listen to me because they relate to me so much. I look just like the people in their home.

DAVON MANDY
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2015
STUDENT SERVICES
PARAPROFESSIONAL,
FREIRE MIDDLE SCHOOL



ALUMNI INITIATIVES

FREIRE SCHOOLS' ALUMNI COMMUNITY is full of incredible individuals committed to justice, equity, and ensuring the students who come after them are supported and valued. This year we piloted three new programs to help engage alumni in our recruitment process, encourage them to consider a career in education, and support Freire Schools' fight for educational equity. Learn more by visiting WWW.FREIRESCHOOLS.ORG/CAREERS/ALUMNI!

TEACHING RESIDENCY

College graduates—with an emphasis on Freire alumni—learn what it means to be a teacher by working at a Freire Schools campus while completing a two-year teacher preparation program at Relay Graduate School of Education.

CAMPUS AMBASSADOR

Campus Ambassadors use their firsthand knowledge to elevate Freire's presence on their college campus through networking, marketing, and small presentations, and work to identify student leaders who would be competitive candidates for instructional positions at Freire Schools.

ALUMNI RELATIONS COORDINATOR

Freire Alumni Relations Coordinators support Freire Schools' alumni employment initiatives and work to ensure that their fellow Dragons stay connected to Freire long after graduation. 🔥



INCREASING DIVERSITY

RECRUITING AND RETAINING STAFF OF COLOR is a priority for Freire Schools. All students, and particularly students of color, benefit from being taught by teachers of color.

When Black students have teachers who share their identities and look like them, they report feeling more cared for, more interested in school, and working harder, and they have greater likelihood of going to college. Having even just one Black teacher

can have a positive impact on a student.

But only 5.6% of Pennsylvania teachers are teachers of color, one of the worst records in the country. In fact, 55% of public schools and 38% of school districts in Pennsylvania employed only white teachers in 2016-17. In Delaware, 15% of teachers are people of color, but the gap between the percentage of students of color and teachers of color still exceeds the national average.

No single strategy will be sufficient to increase the number of educators of color in our schools. But introducing students to the education profession when they are still in high school and actively recruiting and developing alumni interested in entering the profession are essential to our efforts.

Thanks in part to our alumni initiatives, 51.5% of new staff at Freire Schools this year identify as people of color (a 10% increase over last year). 🔥



In my culture, our roots and where we come from are very important. Freire has been deeply rooted in my early childhood and my development as a person. That's why I find it important to help Freire flourish, and deeply impact the lives of others, like it did mine.

FAHAD ALI
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2020

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY
CLASS OF 2024
ALUMNI RELATIONS COORDINATOR,
FREIRE SCHOOLS

Our Dragons deserve mirrors and windows in the classroom: mirrors which reflect their identities, and windows which give them a glimpse of post-secondary success and opportunity. For these reasons, we prioritize holding our alumni close as they transform from students to college graduates to professionals.

SELENA CASTRO
TALENT MANAGER,
FREIRE SCHOOLS



MAKE AN IMPACT

JOIN OUR FIGHT

Our Teacher Residency program and other alumni initiatives are possible because our friends generously support our schools year after year. To support our alumni and join our fight for educational equity, donate today at WWW.FREIRESCHOOLS.ORG/SUPPORT.

REJOIN THE FREIRE FAMILY

Freire alumni interested in working with our kids and empowering the next generation of Dragons can visit WWW.FREIRESCHOOLS.ORG/CAREERS for more info and for open positions.

STAY CONNECTED

Our alumni are our roots, and Freire Schools continues to develop opportunities for alumni to network, support our schools, and have fun. Dragons, update your contact info at WWW.FREIRESCHOOLS.ORG/ALUMINFO!

ABOUT FREIRE SCHOOLS

Freire Schools empowers students to build the future. We are a network of four schools in Philadelphia and Wilmington serving 2,000 students in grades 5 to 12. We provide a rigorous, college prep education in a safe, creative, and supportive environment that enables and inspires all children to achieve.

[LEARN MORE AT FREIRESCHOOLS.ORG](http://WWW.FREIRESCHOOLS.ORG)

ZAHKEYAH ALLEN

FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 2015

STUDENT SERVICES TEACHER,
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL

