



KAILYN P.
FREIRE WILMINGTON
CLASS OF 2025

LIGHT THE WAY

IN MOMENTS OF DARKNESS, WE CAN CLEARLY SEE HOW MANY STARS LIGHT UP THE NIGHT.

This year has been difficult for all of us on many levels— at times feeling like a night without stars. But in those moments— and every day this year— Freire Schools was able to push through because our incredible students, staff, and families shone brightly and illuminated the path ahead.

When we asked about the brightest points of 2021, Freire Schools teachers pointed to our students' and

staff's resilience, to their endurance, to their persistent drive to innovate and find solutions— and, most of all, to returning to in-person learning with our students. Love guided everything we did this year, and allowed us to tap into our shared humanity and find strength in the billion beautiful little things that make us one Freire Family.

These points of light form a constellation of hope that feeds our souls and ignites our action. We hope that our reflections on our year of light brighten your path into the new year, the way your partnership brings light to our Freire Family every day.

GUIDING STARS

Throughout this year, our educators' creativity and resilience has lit up the sky. Freire Schools staff have mastered virtual learning, then hybrid learning, and

now the return to in-person learning, all while leading students like Esunge to become leaders themselves who will light the way for the next generation.

SHAKEETA PARKER

SCHOOL CULTURE & CLIMATE COORDINATOR AND ENGLISH TEACHER, FREIRE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Knowing that our youngest students needed extra support transitioning back to school, Ms. Shakeeta founded Dragon U., a daily community-building class for all students where kids can access supports, learn to trust and have fun with each other, and collectively build their community.

ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS' RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

“It looks like a lot of love. It looks like joy, and happiness. Because even with being back, it's difficult after being virtual for so long. A lot of our kids are missing those social skills and social cues that they would have learned in those 18 months of school ... Love and care, along with keeping those same high expectations behaviorally as well as academically for our students.



KEISHA WEEKS

STUDENT SERVICES TEACHER, TECH FREIRE

In her three years at TECH Freire, Ms. K has earned her reputation as a force for positivity and strength. She knows we are stronger when we believe in each other and makes it a point to support and love ALL of our students every day.

ON STUDENTS' LIMITLESS POTENTIAL

“I want these kids to feel like they have the chance to be literally whoever they want to be. I don't want to just be a cliché, saying you can be whatever you want to be. I KNOW you literally can be whatever you want to be. And I want that to be felt and seen and heard.



MARLEY LUKE

SCIENCE TEACHER, FREIRE WILMINGTON

Ms. Marley is a Teach for America Corps Member who joined Freire Wilmington in fall 2019. Marley has used the challenges the pandemic poses to encourage students to be agents of change in our school community.

ON STUDENT VOICE

“We just started a student government, and I'm seeing them be so passionate about what they're doing. They're thinking about what happened last school year and saying, “we need to change the culture of what's happening so people are happy to be in school again”... Watching them grow and be the leaders that they are, that's been breathtaking.



ESUNGE N.

12TH GRADE, FREIRE WILMINGTON

From helping create Freire Wilmington's shot put team to becoming the founding Student Government President, there's no doubt that Esunge has shaped her school community for the better as she's grown into a true leader.

ON SUPPORT FROM TEACHERS

“I have really high goals when it comes to college. I like the fact that my teachers are letting me know that my choice of colleges is not completely absurd and I have a chance of getting in. And they help me through the process ... The teachers are just very reliable. If you need them, they are there.



MARCUS BALUM

ART TEACHER, FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL

Through art, kids can literally create a brighter future. In 2021, sponsored by a PCCY Picasso Grant, Mr. Marcus worked with Freire students to create a large-scale mural exploring young adults' unique experiences during the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism.

ON ENVISIONING 2022

“I'm looking forward to what we can accomplish, and what students can do, and how we adapt. I'm interested, because you never know how things can change and how something new and beautiful can come out of it. I'm excited for the potential of what's coming.



RAYS OF LIGHT

So many rays of light have lit Freire Schools' path through 2021. Here are just a few:

CELEBRATING THE CLASS OF 2021

In June, we celebrated our 293 graduates from Philly and Wilmington, who were accepted into 146 colleges and universities and raised over \$11.3 million in scholarships and aid. The rain couldn't dim our grads' excitement to celebrate with their families, and the fireworks at Freire Wilmington's ceremony sent our grads off with a bang!

BACK TO SCHOOL IN PERSON!

Easily the biggest highlight of the past year was safely welcoming our 2,000 students back into our buildings for fully in-person learning this August. Students and staff came masked up and ready to learn. Nothing beats a school full of Dragons!

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

Throughout the pandemic, our parents have embraced virtual platforms to be active partners with our schools. In April, reeling from the loss of one of our students and epidemic levels of gun violence in our cities, families learned how to advocate for safer communities at our Gun Violence Town Hall. From virtual back-to-school nights to our vaccine panel, Freire parents are showing up in record numbers to advocate for and support our Dragons.

NORMALIZING THERAPY

Mental health supports have always been an integral part of the Freire program, but this year counseling has become even more critical. Our Emotional Supports team provided individual therapy to nearly 225 kids during virtual learning and supported our school community with drop-in hours, group counseling, and clubs. Now that we are back in person, we are meeting our goal to normalize therapy as a core part of student life.

FIGHTING FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

June 2021 marked the anniversary of Freire Schools' Commitment to Antiracist Action. In that time, all Freire Schools staff have joined our leaders in extensive equity training with our partner REthinc. Our goal is to ensure our schools are places where students and staff are unencumbered by institutional racism, held to high standards, and supported and uplifted every step of the way.

DAMAR J.
FREIRE HIGH SCHOOL
CLASS OF 2021



THANK YOU

YOUR SUPPORT LIGHTS THE WAY FOR FREIRE SCHOOLS' 2,000 STUDENTS.

You empower us to accelerate student learning, make bold curriculum changes, normalize mental health services as a critical part of school, and create exciting opportunities for kids to connect and have fun after school and over the summer. Thank you.

As we look ahead to a new year and new possibilities, we hope you take time to reflect and hold onto the things that brought you light this year—and to see the power you have to drive change by supporting Freire Schools today.

When we join together to focus on warmth, wisdom, creativity, hope, and goodness, we create the spaces and opportunities for our students to realize their limitless potential and build a better future for themselves and for all of us.

SUPPORT FREIRE SCHOOLS TODAY:
[FREIRESCHOOLS.ORG/SUPPORT](https://freireschools.org/support)