



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

## Teacher Residency Program Spotlight

November 2017

### Jessica Beaver - Northeast High School

*“I’m thrilled to be serving as an English Teacher in the Northeast while also working to extend justice and fairness to those who did not have the same educational experiences that I did.”*

- Jessica Beaver



**The Teacher Residency Program Spotlight is a designed to showcase our residents doing what they love most - teaching. Every month we will highlight a different teacher resident to illustrate the ways in which Philadelphia’s new educators care for their students and communities.**

**Jessica Beaver is currently working at Northeast High School teaching English to middle school students. She is an avid reader, loves theater and has a passion for social justice advocacy.**

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### **Why did you apply to the Teacher Residency Program?**

*I applied to the Teacher Residency Program because I learned from my own research and from speaking with peers that first-year teacher burn-out is real. The [Teacher] Residency Program makes so much sense, because it is a year long warm-up to one of the most exciting and intense careers imaginable. I wanted to make sure that when I started teaching, I did everything in my power to make sure I stuck with it, and this particular structure felt like the right way to go. When I found out about the District's Teacher Residency Program it was like everything had kind of fallen into place-- it gave me that support I wanted and I didn't even have to leave home!*

### **Your mother is a principal in the District. In what ways has she inspired, encouraged and supported you on this journey?**

*To be completely honest, my mother was very skeptical when I said I wanted to be a teacher as a kid. I think she was always concerned that I just "said" I wanted to pursue a career in education because that is what she did. Or maybe it was because she thought I was too bossy to ever be a teacher--who knows? Regardless, the clearer it became that this is what I really wanted, she supported me in the same way that she would have supported me if I wanted to be a veterinarian or a circus clown or an astronaut. Her incredibly hard work and dedication to her job constantly inspires me, and it would even if she was a veterinarian or a circus clown or an astronaut herself. All of that being said, she is very proud and very excited to see me start my career with the School District. She's even more proud that I have been able to start that career at her Alma Mater, Northeast High School.*

### **How has your prior work in social activism shaped your desire to be a teacher?**

*My passions for social justice and my desire to be a lifelong educator are one in the same. I received a fantastic education in Philadelphia and graduated from a Philadelphia public high school, and so much of the reason that I did is because I am a white, middle-class woman and educational spaces were [tailor] made for me. From a young age however, I was exposed to the many barriers that stand in the way of equal opportunity, as well as the many advantages that I have personally received due to my own points of privilege. My "why I want to teach" was because it was (and still is) one of my core beliefs that education is the great equalizer. However, my prior work in social activism, mainly through community organizing, paired with my short time at Northeast High School has highlighted the power imbalances, especially those related to race, income, and gender, that cause our students to struggle to advocate for themselves. [I will] make sure that I teach my students [how] to advocate for themselves in any situation. I feel a personal responsibility to make educational spaces a little more accessible ... and the idea is that hopefully one day [my students] move to advocating for others as well.*

*Working at Northeast High School has provided me the opportunity to do the work in the neighborhood I grew up in, which is how real social activism should be. In the past ten years, Northeast Philadelphia has quickly become an enclave for immigrant communities with varied economic backgrounds, bringing an entirely new set of challenges that this area of the city hasn't seen. I'm thrilled to be serving as an English Teacher in the Northeast while also working to extend justice and fairness to those who did not have the same educational experiences that I did.*

**There is a saying, "To teach is to touch a life forever". How would you finish that sentence, "To teach is to ....."?**

*To teach is to spend about 25% of your time lesson planning, and the other 75% putting on a good show in order to captivate your live studio audience. Part of the allure of teaching is that I get to put all those years of theater camp to good use!*

*I'm so incredibly honored to have this opportunity with the School District of Philadelphia. I am having an amazing time at Northeast High School teaching *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros to our Ninth Grade Academy, and am looking forward to starting *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi after Thanksgiving. As a teacher, so much of my joy comes from the texts and works that I have been able to pull together for students to read. I started this year sharing with my students that it was my mission to get them to love to read as much as I did. It is honestly a dream come true to be teaching in the city that raised me. It is even more special to be teaching in Northeast Philadelphia, the super diverse and sometimes forgotten area of the city of Philadelphia that I grew up in. I hope to continue teaching in the city for a long time, attempting to convince teenagers that reading is one of the coolest things in the world.*

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- ❖ Meet the [Residents of Cohort 1](#).
- ❖ Interested in joining our 2018-19 cohort? We encourage you to apply [here](#). For full consideration, candidates must have a passing Praxis score in their content area and commit to teach in Philadelphia's public schools for 3 years.
- ❖ For more information about our Teacher Residency Program, please visit our [website](#).
- ❖ Teacher Residency Program [FAQs](#)
- ❖ For any immediate questions, feel free to contact us at [teacherresidency@philasd.org](mailto:teacherresidency@philasd.org).