



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

## Teacher Residency Program Spotlight

October 2017

### Zhuljeta Bardhi - Feltonville Arts & Sciences

“Our students are worthy and deserving of quality education and I am committed to address the evident gaps.”

-Zhuljeta Bardhi



**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.**

**Zhuljeta Bardhi is currently working at Feltonville Arts & Sciences teaching math to middle school students. She and her husband are proud parents to a daughter in college who attended Philadelphia public schools.**

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

*I entered the field of education on an accidental career change. I come from Albania, where I graduated with a BS degree in Economics and subsequently worked for almost two decades in accounting as a government employee. In the mid-2000s, my husband and I moved to the United States seeking a better future for our daughter; in particular, we wanted to offer her the best educational opportunities we could. We worked jobs unrelated to our original backgrounds while we enrolled our daughter in the Philly public school system and saw her head to a private university in DC for her undergrad. Around this time, an unexpected family circumstance led me to seek temporary employment; I needed a job that was flexible and would allow me to choose which days I worked based on my other commitments and availability. This is how I came into substituting. I liked that it was open to anyone and didn't require a teaching certificate or degree. After working in schools all over the city and at different grade levels for roughly eight years, I was convinced that I wanted to pursue it further and change my career for good. On top of the passion and comfortability that was there ever since early on, through the years I gained enough experience that I now felt confident in committing to teaching. [The Teacher Residency Program] resonated with me because not only would it allow me to gradually transition to a teaching position, but it was also structured in such a way that it was accessible to someone like me (including age, language skills, and professional background). I was particularly attracted by its intention to guide and mentor residents through the process.*

## **How have your life experiences informed your decision to be a teacher?**

*I noticed that there weren't enough teachers to serve students, and that made me turn to myself, asking "What can you do about this?" Though I enjoyed substituting - it's wonderful to meet different students every day and observe different school dynamics - I also felt that it wasn't enough. I wasn't sure if I was making a long-term impact in their lives, despite going above and beyond the tasks of a substitute teacher. I took the successes I experienced, as well as those of other teachers, and decided to act upon it. Our students are worthy and deserving of quality education and I am committed to address the evident gaps. I've been fortunate to have had great educators in my life, as has my daughter. So of course I believed teachers can lead students to better futures and do so much in terms of not only academic skills but also self-esteem, maturity, etc. I've put my daughter through our public school system and I'm immensely proud of how successful she now is. I teach every kid like she was taught, so they all achieve so much in life. I've doubted whether I was cut for this, thinking that teaching is something you must start early on in life. But now I know that it's never too late to do what you love and I am very happy I decided to switch to teaching. The accountant in Albania would have never imagined she'd end up being a teacher in Philadelphia, but I also know she'd be excited about this new adventure!*

**Think back to a teacher that inspired you. What would you say to that teacher now?**

*I can think of teachers whom I loved while in the classroom, but I also think it's important to remind myself of the teachers who pushed me to my limits and showed me what I could accomplish if I applied myself even more.*

*Those teachers who were never complacent and stressed the importance of not only meeting the expectations they had of me but also exceeding them. So I'd say "Thanks for the tough love!" It's from them that I learned a strong work ethic and understood that doing just the bare minimum is never enough.*

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

*...do justice. My "adult life" - so to speak - started successfully because others invested in me beforehand. That's what I wish for my students too: that they can aspire to continue with their education. This, of course, is on top of encouragement from teachers. A good education offers children and young adults the opportunity to have a good life and to positively contribute to society later on. Students deserve to be guided and supported and offered better options; that to me is justice.*

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- ❖ Meet the [Residents of Cohort 1](#).
- ❖ Interested in joining our 2018-19 cohort? Please fill out this [survey](#). For full consideration, candidates must have a passing exam 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: <https://jobs.philasd.org/teacher-residency/>.
- ❖ Teacher Residency Program [FAQs](#)
- ❖ For any immediate questions, feel free to contact us at [teacherresidency@philasd.org](mailto:teacherresidency@philasd.org).