



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Teacher Residency Program Spotlight

Natalie Dixon - Northeast High

“I realized that becoming an educator would allow me to use my passions and share my gifts with children who are deserving of a good education.” - Natalie Dixon



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.

Natalie Dixon is currently working at Northeast High School teaching Social Studies. She has an undergraduate degree from California Baptist University and a graduate degree from Goldsmiths College in London. She is the daughter of Liberian immigrants who instilled in her the immense value of education. Ms. Dixon’s motto is, “Get your education because no one can take it from you”.

Why did you apply to the Teacher Residency Program?

I applied for the teacher residency program because I loved the model. It gave me the opportunity to take classes and actually be in a classroom setting all year which I thought was great.

When did you know that you wanted to be a teacher?

Growing up I was the kid that was going to either be a lawyer or a teacher, because of my love for advocating, teaching and having meaningful debates. However, it was not until I served as an AmeriCorps Vista that the idea of possibly becoming a teacher resonated with me. During my year of service, I realized that becoming an educator would allow me to use my passions and share my gifts with children who are deserving of a good education. I would be able to be that advocate, have meaningful debates and teach, all things that I love to do. I served at an Elementary school in West Philadelphia and thru my experience working with students on a regular basis I witnessed the impact that I had on them and the great bonds that were developed.

What has surprised you most about teaching?

I was very surprised how comfortable I am with teaching in front of high school students. At first I thought it was going to be very intimidating but my students have been awesome and they look forward to hearing [my] lessons, ideas and opinions. We have built a great classroom culture that is very open and understanding and I believe this has supported me greatly.

You have a masters in Rights and Development. How has this informed your work as a teacher?

My degree has allowed me to use my knowledge [about] human rights, culture and economic development in the classroom. I have the opportunity to educate my students on how these issues affect our world and daily lives. For example, as a requirement for my master's program I had to complete an internship at a human rights organization. This allowed me to work with unaccompanied minors who were victims of human trafficking, refugees and child soldiers. As a social studies teacher these are issues that continuously come up in discussion and I am able to discuss how these issues affect young people who were close in age with my students.

Why did you want to teach in Philadelphia?

I love Philly because you do not have to travel far to experience some of our nation's historical sites. I believe that [the city] has a rich history and culture, which gives me the ability to make the city come alive for my students on a daily basis.

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

I have had some great teachers over the years but there are four that were just very special to me. These teachers have greatly impacted my educational career. The reason why they inspired me is because of the time they took to get to know me while I was their student. These were the teachers who had an open door policy. They would

*notice when something was wrong , make jokes and just ultimately show that they cared and loved what they did.
I would like to say to all of them thank you for the work you did and never giving up on your students.*

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 have a meaningful relationship with your students.

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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 questions, feel contact us at teacherresidency@philasd.org.