



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
PHILADELPHIA

Teacher Residency Program Spotlight

Takeisha Parks - Frankford High School

“I always introduce myself to students with some variation of ‘Hey, I’m Mrs. Parks. I’m weird but I’m dope’. Some of my students call me ‘mom’ and I always use comics in my classroom. I buy my students books all the time and have hooked my kids onto books, Ted Talks, music, and festivals.”



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.

Takeisha Parks is currently working at Frankford High School teaching English. She is a graduate of Lincoln University with a degree in English Liberal Arts and her favorite literary work is *The Lorien Legacies* by Pittacus Lore. Ms. Parks is also dual certified in high school English and Biology.

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Why did you apply to the Teacher Residency Program?

The teaching residency model was perfect for me as it allowed me to gain my teaching certification and complete the first year of my M.A. in Teaching for free while still bringing home the bacon. Also, the residency program was in Philly and I specifically wanted to work in an urban school environment similar to the one I experienced as a kid in New York City.

Along with being a first year teacher, you are a wife and mother. How do you balance all these aspects of your life? Any advice for married people and/or parents who are considering teaching as a career?

I'm going to be completely honest. I have had the hardest time finding a balance between my personal and professional life. I was scared that, in the process of figuring out who I am as a teacher, I would lose the relationships I have built with my family. This may seem shocking but society doesn't understand exactly how much of our students' trials and triumphs we, as teachers, internalize and project. If it wasn't for my husband, Malik, it'd be Lord of the Flies at home!

I would advise any married couple and/or parent to create a realistic schedule that includes blocked couple and family time and expectations of responsibilities. It was the one thing I regret not doing earlier in the school year. It is easy for this job to consume you and, as a result, consume those around you. Be honest about the workload you can carry and understand that the struggle is temporary yet necessary.

Tell us about your most favorite moment of your residency year.

I love comic books and graphic novels but I was uncomfortable with using them in a classroom. Teaching with comics at home felt different than in a classroom, almost inappropriate. In October 2017, I gave one of my more reluctant readers my graphic novel Anya's Ghost by Vera Brogsol to read over a weekend. The next class, he came back smiling and telling me that it was the first time he read EVERYWHERE. His dad was shocked that he was reading, even in the car. That experience reminded me that I need to be true to my inner geek. Since then, I've hooked my students on to a few indie comics and have used them as positive reinforcement in my classroom!

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

This is difficult because there are so many educators that have inspired me. So here's to the top three that I can remember:

- a. Dr. Button (Lincoln University, PA Advisor)- Our weekly conversations pushed me to challenge myself and my fears as a returning senior. You reminded me that I am amazing writer in my own right! Thank you for everything you have done for me.*
- b. Mrs. Dibinis (10th grade Chemistry)- I fell in love with science because of you. I still watch Forensic Files!*
- c. I.S.59Q (middle school)- This entire school shaped me and my work ethic. Every single teacher I came across challenged me and what I considered to be my limits. I was exposed to so much love, passion, discipline, and culture that when I think of the teacher I want to be, I think of the village that raised me in Queens.*

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 love, enlighten, nurture, and advocate for the community.

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- ❖ Meet the [Residents of Cohort 1](#).
- ❖ Interested in joining our residency for 2019-20? New application review will open at the end of 2018. For full consideration, candidates must have a passing [Praxis](#) score in ELA, math or science content area and commit to teach in one of the District’s public, non-selective admission schools for 3 years.
- ❖ For more information about our Teacher Residency Program, please visit our [website](#).
- ❖ For questions, contact us at teacherresidency@philasd.org.