DEMONSTRATING THE POTENTIAL OF REBUILDING THE BLACK TEACHER PIPELINE

FREEDOM SCHOOLS LITERACY ACADEMY IMPACT REPORT CARD | SUMMER 2021

THECENTERBLACKED.ORG
TO OUR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS AND SUPPORTERS

We are proud to share this 2021 Impact Report Card highlighting how we’re demonstrating the potential power of rebuilding the Black Teacher Pipeline through the successes of our flagship program.

FREEDOM SCHOOLS LITERACY ACADEMY

During another challenging summer filled with uncertainties, we:

- Reinstituted in-person programming, expanding from one to three sites while enriching virtual offerings.
- Reached 322 students across 16 states, more than doubling the number of young scholars (from 105 to 233) and increasing by 90% the number of high school and college students (from 52 to 99).
- Exceeded the high standards we set for ourselves showing once again significant gains in key metrics.

THANK YOU

for believing in the life-saving, community-transforming possibilities of the Black Teacher Pipeline.

THANK YOU

for investing in the Freedom Schools Literacy Academy proof-of-concept for powering the next generation of educator-activists.

THANK YOU

for standing defiantly with our families in their struggles against the legacy of oppression and persistent educational inequities.

THANK YOU

for responding to our rallying call to liberate education, once and for all.
Diversity in our educational workforce—across the board—has been in steady decline since the mid-1960s. The shortage can be traced back to the systematic removal of Black educators following the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision and, later, the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As white schools integrated Black students, veteran Black educators were demoted, denied tenure or lost their jobs altogether and were replaced by a majority white teaching corps.

In the decades that followed, the court rulings and enforcement policies enacted to protect Black teachers came too late. The damage had been done, and the impacts continue in the teacher-to-student disparities we see today.

Students should be able to see mirrors to better futures in their teachers, but if they’re students of color, they just get windows.

We need to change this.

—SHARIF EL-MEKKI, FOUNDER/CEO, CENTER FOR BLACK EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT

Black students do better when they have a Black teacher:

• When Black children have one Black teacher by third grade, they’re 13% more likely to enroll in college. With two Black teachers, that percentage jumps to 32%. And for Black boys that come from low-income families, their on-time high school graduation leaps nearly 40%.

• When Black students have a Black teacher, they have lower rates of suspensions and expulsions.

• Black teachers, compared to their white colleagues, have higher expectations of their Black students.

But there remains a significant underrepresentation of Black teachers in the workforce.

As a result, most students will go through all 13 years of their public school education without being taught by a Black educator.

• Across the nation, Black students represent 15% of all public school students, yet only 7% of all public school teachers are Black.

• In Pennsylvania, the situation is even more dire. More than half of all Pennsylvania schools do not have a single teacher of color, let alone a Black teacher. Black educators accounted for just 3.7% of the total teaching staff compared with a 14.5% Black student body according to 2019 data.

• Even in Philadelphia, a multicultural city where nearly 80% of public school students are Black and Hispanic, only 24.5% of teachers are Black and less than 5% of teachers are Black men.

What’s worse, there are drastically less Black men and women in the teacher pipeline to eventually become the educators our children—and society—need.

Since 1996, there has been a 60% decrease in Black young men and women enrolled in Pennsylvania’s educator preparation programs and a 60% decrease in Black undergraduates declaring education as their major.

Rebuilding what has been purposely dismantled—the Black teacher pipeline—is imperative if we want to restore equity to America’s educational system. For the sake of all our children, this must be our goal.
BLACK TEACHER PIPELINE:
A BLUEPRINT FOR REBUILDING THE BLACK TEACHER PIPELINE

IN FOCUS: FREEDOM SCHOOLS LITERACY ACADEMY
A proven model for the school-to-activism track of the Black Teacher Pipeline

- Identifying, recruiting and training future educator-activists.
- Providing promising and aspiring high school and college students with mentorship, professional development and in-classroom teaching experiences, early and often.
- Mirroring great futures for our young scholars who consistently make significant early literacy gains at a time when their peers experience “the summer slide.”

- Activating Black history and pedagogy. Deepening and celebrating our racial identities.
Black students learn best within a context that celebrates their culture and with educators who serve as mirrors, and not just windows, to their future.

Studies have shown higher racial-ethnic pride is related to higher student achievement measured by grades and standardized test scores.

Freedom Schools Literacy Academy is no different than any other educational institution, including public school. All take a cultural approach. It’s just that most are white-centered, without saying so, because it’s been standardized and normalized, even when the school community is majority non-white.

At Freedom Schools Literacy Academy, we proudly take a non-standardized Black pedagogical approach. Which is why so many of our Academy members express they’ve never experienced an educational enterprise like this and that, by summer’s end, they feel mentally stronger, psychologically healthier and emotionally nourished.

From the start, Freedom Schools Literacy Academy was conceived to meet the unique needs of young Black children from disenfranchised communities, while at the same time strengthening the school-to-activism pipeline for the next generation of exceptional Black educator activists.

Every day begins with HARAMBEE, a joyful coming together of the entire community. We prepare for a positive, intentional and meaningful learning experience through chants, cheers, read-alouds and motivational songs. We also ask everyone to recognize others for an achievement or contribution they made, to say something to let someone else know you see them.

We embrace our Blackness and practice Black pedagogy to power the learning with cultural positivity and counter the devastating impact of racist and classist schooling perpetuated against Black students. All in pursuit of our revolutionary goal: to teach Black children superbly.

I learned to be true to myself.

38 SERVANT LEADER APPRENTICES
(COLLEGE STUDENTS)

GOAL: To build teaching skills and professional confidence.

APPROACH: Six weeks of training in Black pedagogy, instructor experiences, expert coaching and peer support as they learn on-the-job, delivering in-classroom and virtual instruction to Scholars.

233 SCHOLARS
(RISING 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD GRADERS)

GOAL: To make gains in early literacy and reinforce positive racial identity.

APPROACH: Virtual program scholars had 69 hours and in-person scholars had 161 hours of reading instruction over five weeks in phonics, reading comprehension and vocabulary-building, leveraging Black pedagogy, a culturally-responsive curriculum, and Harambee Circles, as well as calming mindfulness and movement breaks.

61 JUNIOR SERVANT LEADERS
(HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS)

GOAL: To examine Black experiences throughout the history of America’s educational system.

APPROACH: Six weeks of participating in workshops led by Black educators, presenting independent research and working within peer groups to complete group assignments on Black history and pedagogy as they learn on-the-job.
SERVANT LEADER APPRENTICES ARE COLLEGE STUDENTS ASPIRING TO TEACH.

This year’s 38 Servant Leader Apprentices were recruited from eight different states through a selective process.

Servant Leaders Apprentices want to pursue education careers, specifically to teach Black students.

“This experience was completely life changing...I am called to teach.”

“[I’ll] never be afraid to cherish Black and Brown skin colors and teach students how to embrace who they are.”

100% reported feeling respected and valued by, as well as comfortable with, their coach.

“I learned what an honor it is to be a Black male educator.”

97% reported their coach affirmed their racial identity and that of the scholars.

Servant Leaders Apprentices say their coaches made a positive difference in their summer experience and career outlook.

“[I’ll] never be afraid to cherish Black and Brown skin colors and teach students how to embrace who they are.”

100% reported an interest in teaching Black students at the end of the six week experience versus just 79% at the start.

“I realized how powerful it is for Black individuals to come together to learn and help the next generation.”

97% reported they felt they would be better teachers because of their coaching experience.

“[I’ll] never be afraid to cherish Black and Brown skin colors and teach students how to embrace who they are.”

100% reported an interest in teaching Black students at the end of the six week experience versus 91% at the start.

“The Academy is one of the most liberating, affirming, and challenging spaces.”

Servant Leaders Apprentices CITE SKILLS THEY WILL LEVERAGE AS TEACHERS

• Building relationships
• Creating meaningful lessons for engagement
• Utilizing differentiation to personalize learning
• Scaffolding complex material
• Solving problems

“This program has the power to change the educator paradigm—if we let it.”

“I learned what an honor it is to be a Black male educator.”

97% reported their coach affirmed their racial identity and that of the scholars.

“I realized how powerful it is for Black individuals to come together to learn and help the next generation.”

97% reported they felt they would be better teachers because of their coaching experience.
JUNIOR SERVANT LEADERS ARE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPLORING TEACHING CAREERS.

This year’s 61 Junior Servant Leaders were recruited from seven different states through a selective process.

They are more academically confident by the end of the summer.

“"I learned to be confident about my own education."”

90% agreed the program will help them focus more on their own education.
89% agreed they acquired the academic skills to do whatever they decide.
86% agreed they learned strategies for handling tasks that are academically challenging.

They gained skills for school success.

88% agreed that, when they need help they know how to ask for it.
84% agreed they developed coping strategies that will help them overcome challenges.

They want to become teachers.

“I’ve never wanted to be a teacher until now.”

They know what kind of teacher they want to become.

“I learned more about myself as a teacher, who I wanted to be in front of kids.”

“The first thing I will do with my students is build a relationship with all of them.”

They learned about Black history and pedagogy.

“We looked at how education impacted Black people. We are more than slavery and a few Black people.”

“I learned about the avenues by which I can help establish Black-centered teaching.”

They committed to liberating education.

“The fight for a righteous Black education is a battle I must continue.”

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OUR SCHOLARS ARE LITERALLY OUR FUTURE.

Of the 233 K-2 scholars who participated in 2021 Freedom Schools Literacy Academy over five weeks, 96% were Black or Latinx and 92% were from economically disadvantaged households.

“My son tested above grade level in his preliminary state reading test!”

Under classroom instruction led by our trained corps of Servant Leader Apprentices and Junior Servant Leaders, scholars increased their reading ability by an average of 33% (from 6.96 to 9.25 levels) in the Friends on the Block Literacy Curriculum, an intensive early literacy intervention for elementary students.

These statistically significant results show students with higher pretest scores increased an average of 1.7 levels and those with lower pretest scores increased an average of 2.6 levels.

A TYPICAL DAY FOR IN-PERSON SCHOLARS

8:15 AM  
Family Drop-off

8:30 AM  
Harambee

9:00 AM  
Group Activity

9:20 AM  
Early Literacy Instruction

11:30 AM  
Lunch

12:00 PM  
Recess

1:00 PM  
Drumming, Martial Arts or Art Class

4:00 PM  
Family Pick-up

While their peers experienced another summer slide, our scholars made leaps in literacy.

Reports show significant increases:

• Growing positive attitudes on their racial identities.
• Recognizing books written about Black people.
• Knowing Black history, including the success of Black people.

By the end of summer, scholars associated being Black/Brown with hard work, their racial heritage and being special.

I loved seeing my child’s confidence grow.”
2021
FREEDOM SCHOOLS LITERACY ACADEMY TEAM

ADMINISTRATORS

SHARIF EL-MEKKI
Founder/CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development
Mr. El-Mekki is a respected national educator-activist, popular blogger and podcaster, and former Philadelphia teacher, principal and ambassador fellow for the U.S. Department of Education. He is also the Founder of The Fellowship: Black Male Educators for Social Justice.

ERIKA ASIKOYE
FSLA Director (2021)
Formerly a founding program coordinator for Freedom Schools at the School District of Philadelphia, research associate at Education Trust and co-head of school at The SEED School of Maryland, Ms. Asikoye is passionate about creating systems that allow students to grow social-emotionally.

VICTORIA HARRISON
Director of Operations
A longtime educator, teaching a wide range of subjects (from music to computer skills) and ages (preschool through adults), Ms. Harrison also has several years of non-profit professional experience.

LEAD FACULTY

KELLI SEATON, Ph.D.,
Chief Learning Officer
Dr. Seaton is a former Teach for America teacher, Purdue University counselor, sought-after national urban-education consultant, and founding principal of Mastery Charter School-Pickett Campus.

SHAYNA TERRELL
Director of Pipeline Programs
Ms. Terrell has 15+ years of experience in education, including 10 years with Freedom Schools, working with at-risk youth, and building outcomes-driven school culture.

FACULTY

MAKAEL BURRELL
Director of Freedom Schools Literacy Academy
Mr. Burrell is a native Philadelphian and teacher, whose history students achieved the highest benchmark data in the Mastery network. He helped lead Uncommon Schools and manage Teacher Leadership and Development at Teach For America.

NADIRA SULAYMAN
Professional Learning Associate
Another native Philadelphian, Ms. Sulayman was a founding member of Mastery Charter Shoemaker Campus. With over 16 years of education experience, she has been instrumental in school turnarounds and closing student achievement gaps in West Philadelphia public schools. She was recognized with the MACCS Award for Excellence in Teaching.

ANSHARAYE HINES
Program Coordinator
Ms. Hines is a former teacher at Mastery Charter-Shoemaker campus. She produces a web series for Re/Member Black Philadelphia, which leverages digital media and technology to document and celebrate the rich experiences, institutions, spaces and cultures of Black people across the city.

FACULTY

STEVE BROWN
FSLA Site Coordinator, Mastery Schools - Harrity Elementary

LEE DATTS
FSLA Site Coordinator, Mastery Schools - Mastery Prep Elementary

BRIANA JACKSON
FSLA Site Coordinator, Mastery Schools - Molina Lower Elementary

“The energy here is just something different. I have never experienced anything like this before.”
RESEARCH PARTNERS

The Freedom Schools Literacy Academy integrates the highly respected Freedom Schools model developed by the Children’s Defense Fund and Philadelphia Freedom Schools with the best practices and latest research in culturally-responsive early literacy instruction, curriculum and professional development.

Research and implementation support was provided by Julia Lindsey, Ph.D., under the supervision of national literacy expert and University of Michigan Professor Nell K. Duke, Ed.D., and Miriam Ortiz, Ph.D.

JULIA B. LINDSEY, Ph.D.
Curriculum Design, Professional Development and Evaluation

Dr. Lindsey, a former elementary school teacher, earned her doctorate in literacy, language and culture at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on practical, culturally-responsive curricula and materials to improve the teaching of foundational skills and early reading in urban elementary schools.

MIRIAM ORTIZ, Ph.D.
Professional Development

Dr. Ortiz, a former K-12 teacher, is a Clinical Assistant Professor at Southern Methodist University, where her work focuses on early literacy and special education. She is also the executive director for the Division for Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional Children.