A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Happy New Year, Freedom Prep Charter School Families!

New Year's Day has always been my favorite holiday. It is a time to reflect on the previous year's successes and disappointments, and what a year we have had, and to plan with great enthusiasm for the year ahead. The New Year represents new beginnings and infinite possibilities. This is true for Freedom Prep students this year more than even.

I want to encourage you to encourage your children to embrace the opportunity of the New Year. Learning remotely has certainly not been easy and some of your children may have experienced road bumps and frustrations along the way. If consistent attendance has been an issue, students can work toward perfect attendance starting right now. If they have struggled academically, they can begin attending tutoring and teachers' office hours on our first day back. If feeling connected and enjoying the social aspects of school has been difficult, participating in townhalls, advisories, special virtual lunches, or small groups remains an option available to them and we welcome them with open arms! The possibilities for success at Freedom Prep are endless. This is a new year and students can build on wins from 2020 or start totally fresh with no limits. We are here to support your family in either case. Please let us know how we can continue to do so.

Please also remember, even during trying times, to acknowledge the small wins that your child has accomplished thus far this school year. There are so many. There effort and your dedication are making a difference. During 2021, we will continue to grow better together, while remote and when we can again share a physical space. Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

With gratitude,

CONSTANCE FAITH HORTON
Executive Director
constance.horton@democracyprep.org

this month's civics focus:

ACTION, JUSTICE, AND SERVICE

Modern Day MLK -- the title of one of our Civic initiatives this month that allows scholars to reimagine what Martin Luther King Jr. may have said to the country during a national address, such as the inauguration. During ELA, high school scholars will preview the text “Dear Martin” as they reimagine what life’s most persistent and urgent question may be. Parents and families, join us on January 19th during our ‘Civics Immersion Day’ where civics, action, and service will be a pillar in each class and block. Details are included in the announcement section on page 4 of this issue.

The Vision Requires a Plan

We've all heard the adage, "New Year, New You." We usually use it to empower us to make resolutions that we hope will improve our lives and the lives of those we love.

We should've also heard that a very low percentage of those of us who make resolutions actually fulfill them. However, while it may be hard to keep those resolutions, what making them shows is that we have taken a look at our lives, the places where we are, and the places where we want to go. We envision our future and we strive to get there. We, perhaps, even dream of what life would be like once we do.

The life of Martin Luther King, Jr. shows us the power of a dream. It's important to dream, even necessary, especially in moments of challenge, much like 2020.

What may not be so evident in the story we are told of his life, however, is the amount of planning and strategy that the civil rights movement used in order to accomplish their ends. Their dream. Their vision. We must do the same. We must plan, anticipate, and strategize in order to accomplish our ends. Our country, our democracy, and our community need it!

Check out the Democracy Prep Strategic Priorities on page 3 of this issue. Scan the QR code to read the full report.

The Principal's Corner

Greetings Freedom Prep Community!

As we come out of the holidays energized, we enter 2021 with renewed hope and spirit for a successful school year. These last few months have been challenging for our community, and while we have celebrated many successes, we also know that there are unknowns to be tackled ahead. Our students have hit the ground running in trimester 2, using skills and content they learned in trimester 1 to propel them forward. Our community has also participated in various community outreach drives, and continue to create partnerships with organizations that also serve our resilient community.

January is also a time to recognize one of the most influential citizens in American history: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the midst of a social justice movement on race and inequity, this is a fitting time to shed light on those who came before us in the fight toward equality and justice. In the words or Dr. MLK Jr., “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” It is our collective responsibility to take action and meaningfully resist against the systems and policies that continue to hold communities like Camden back. We are incredibly proud and humbled to serve this community, and commit to leading Freedom Prep through these trying times. Thank you for your continued support, collaboration, and feedback.

Latoya Pearson, FPE/FPM Principal
Joshua Rivera, FPH Principal
Caitlin Rafter, Freedom Prep Elementary School

Throughout the year so far the second-grade scholars have been learning about the importance of their health and well-being. Remote learning can feel overwhelming and scholars often do not have opportunities to move around.

In UND we discussed the importance of emotional health and wellness as well as physical health.

Each day we take a morning and afternoon break so that scholars can step away from their computers to move around or get a drink and something to eat. To give our brains a break between difficult subjects we might do a dance or mindfulness activity on GoNoodle.

The Kidz Bop dance videos are our favorites! One last way we try to encourage each other is through props and shout outs in the Zoom chatbox. This allows scholars to support each other if they are having a rough day and celebrate accomplishments like earning Scholar of the Week.
Despite the pandemic, Democracy and Freedom Prep leadership has been hard at work to finalize a multi-year Strategic Plan. This plan will govern how we make decisions over the next five years and will help us stay disciplined about focusing on the key priorities that will help us ensure excellent academic and civics outcomes at all 22 schools across our Network.

**Antiracism**
We will become an antiracist organization and evaluate all systems, practices, pedagogy, and policies through an antiracism lens.

**Curriculum**
We will provide high-quality, college-ready, and culturally relevant PK-12 literacy, math and civics curriculum that meets the linguistic and regional needs of each campus.

**Instructional Systems**
We will streamline and curate the resources and training to support implementation of our college-ready curriculum, including content-focused professional development, intellectual preparation, data analysis and coaching.

**Culture**
We will develop a shared vision for positive and productive school culture at Democracy Prep and a common definition of Purpose Over Power, and design and provide the resources and training that support consistent implementation of systems in service of this vision.

**Talent**
We will implement strong talent management systems to attract, retain and develop a diverse workforce.

**Sustainability**
We will develop financially sustainable staffing models and funding strategies to enable a uniform school experience across regions.

DO NOW (5 min): What determines a person’s privilege, and can privilege be both a blessing and curse?

¿Qué determina el privilegio de una persona y puede ser el privilegio a la vez una bendición y una maldición?

Students, write your response!

In December, Democracy Prep presented the creative work of scholars across our network during our Winter Arts Showcase. The evening event displayed a host of creative, passion-filled projects from July - December 2020.

Scholars filled the livestream with heart-felt messages of “As a superhero, every day I want to save people’s lives,” and self-love, “I am beautiful, I am kind, I am great, and I am intelligent.” They also made us chuckle with puppet shows and rhythmic stylings to Christmas songs.

Each project brought smiles to the viewers, and they also taught important life-skills to Freedom Prep scholars. Check out some pieces created in FP art classes by FP scholars below or scan the QR code above to watch the full virtual event!

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**A LONG WALK TO FREEDOM**

Scholars in Mr. Kinkopf’s Senior Literature class started reading Nelson Mandela’s autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom. Scholars opened the unit by discussing privilege and gender roles, two themes prominent in the work.

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**DPPS ART SHOWCASE**

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**There is Power in Our Voice**

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**DO NOW (5 min): What determines a person’s privilege, and can privilege be both a blessing and curse?**

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Students, write your response!
**PARENT & FAMILY FOCUS GROUP: LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM**

One of the priorities of the DPPS five-year strategic plan is to ensure a cohesive and rigorous curriculum in K-12 ELA (English/Language Arts) and Math. Accomplishing this priority, however, would not be possible without the help and expertise of our teachers, parents, and families.

On December 8th, Margaret Marrer, Senior Director of K-12 Curriculum & Assessments, led a meeting with Camden and New York families to begin the work of building a shared vision for what our ideal ELA experience should entail.

The working group will be evaluating top-tier ELA curricula (pictured below), along with our existing curriculum, to provide recommendations on which curriculum may be the best fit for DPPS moving forward.

Partnerships between our families and community stakeholders are essential to ensure the highest quality of academic experiences for our students. We thank those who participated and welcome additional families to join us again on January 12th at 4PM via ZOOM! For more information, contact Fatimah Dale at fatimah.dale@democracyprep.org.

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**New Family Read Alouds**

Are you a preschool or Headstart parent who is thinking about enrolling your scholar in Freedom Prep for Kindergarten?

Are you a Headstart or Preschool program’s director or teacher that wants to partner or have a member of the Freedom Prep community do a read aloud during one of your classes/events?

The Family Engagement and Enrollment team will be doing read alouds, book and prize giveaways, and information sessions beginning in the month of January for any student who is graduating from preschool in 2021!

For more information, contact Fatimah Dale, Family Engagement and Enrollment Senior Manager, at fatimah.dale@democracyprep.org.