Hello, Freedom Prep Families!

“Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”
– Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

This has always been one of my favorite MLK Jr. quotes (and there are many). I hope you find time to celebrate Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s life and legacy, the recent inauguration, and Black History Month, which is fast approaching, with your family even during the pandemic.

Let’s continue to work together to build a community of intelligent children and young adults who are of strong character to fulfill the goal of a true education at Freedom Prep and create their own enduring legacies. This work comes to fruition as we inform, engage, and empower every student, every day. It is our privilege to have the opportunity to do so.

Constance F. Horton | Executive Director

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**Celebrate Black History**

*This month’s theme: UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK*

**WHAT IS THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT?**

At Freedom Prep, we are committed to active citizenship. We define a citizen as any member of a community who works to lift up the people around them. In order to prepare our scholars for lives of active citizenship, we teach them to take passionate and well-informed stances on issues.

A well-informed stance means that we must study. John Lewis tells us that the studying of the path of others will make [the way] easier and more abundant.

This month will be a month-long celebration of Black History at Freedom Prep where we will learn about both moments and movements within Black History. The Black Lives Matter movement has become a path and way of activism in our country. We have seen it take on a life of its own in America and with our young people. This month, we will be teaching the principles of the Black Lives Matter movement -- beginning with the first: Unapologetically Black.

In addition to learning about Black inspirational and influential figures in history, we will also be learning about those who have paved the way in Camden.

Be sure to check out our social media accounts for the full calendar!
TRUTH TO POWER
LETTER WRITING FOR CHANGE

Formal letter writing is an effective advocacy tool with the potential to create change while building student confidence. Writing for social change encourages writers to use their own voices and promotes literacy skills. This month, Freedom Prep scholars used letter writing to speak directly to the change they want to see in their world and community.

Dear Governor Murphy,

My name is Angel Soto and I am from Camden, New Jersey and I go to Freedom Prep High School. So in the city of Camden, the poverty level is at an all time high. People in Camden work hard to get money and maintain themselves along with their families. Working 40+ hours a week and only getting 11 to 12 dollars and hours, which is minimum wage, isn’t enough money to help families pay bills and other things. So raising the minimum wage is important because it’ll give families the money they need for the amount of work they put in. So if you’re working 40+ hours a week and get paid minimum wage, you’re not getting enough money to pay bills and also provide for the people at home.

-Angel Soto

Our FPHS English Language Arts scholars previewed the text, Dear Martin. Dear Martin by Nic Stone is a realistic fiction book that takes place in the United States. It depicts identity, racism, and adolescence through the eyes of an African American teenager named Justyce McAllister. Justyce writes letters to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. where he reflects on these realities and asks if the principles of non-violence still ring true. FPHS scholars used this example to write letters addressing various topics of their choice.

To Whom It May Concern

As a former student, I believed that the money should be distributed equally between the four categories; operations, academics, socio-emotional support, and equity. Distributing the money equally will help to focus on each category because each one of them is important.

If the money is only focused greatly on one, the others will have little focus. Equally distributing the money, Freedom Prep will be able to have safety protocols, provide us with the materials we need, support the students by having social workers to talk to when we need it, and support students with special needs with the devices they need. Freedom Prep is doing a job supporting us during this virtual world. We are given all the materials we need to support us while learning from home. We also feel the support given by every teacher.

-Joanne Dominguez

AFRO-LATINX: THERE IS POWER IN UNITY

Where there is unity there is power. Freedom Prep has a diverse population of students, many of whom identify as Latinx. This month, and every month, it is important that we remember and celebrate the intersections and commonalities that we share with others in our community.

An example of that is found in Sarah La Morena after she went Viral singing Mariachi. La Morena is a Black woman raised in Zacatecas, Mexico by adoptive parents yet her appearance sparked strong emotion in both the Black and Latinx communities. Sarah shared “I just want people to see that, and what good can come from us uniting and us joining forces. We’re fighting the same battle, we have so many people against us already, why do we add to that?”

A SER BILINGUE ES EN SUPERPODER / TO BE BILINGUAL IS A SUPERPOWER

Amirah Williams, FPE Bilingual Teacher

Being bilingual in our current time and age is truly a gift. Many people have been taught differently in the past, but here at Freedom Prep we want to encourage and celebrate bilingualism. Our children have the extremely beautiful gift of being able to reach people across language barriers and we want to thank them and their families for fostering that.
Freedom Prep senior, Joanna Dominguez, will join the 2021 cohort of Dartmouth College students. Joanna never considered applying to an Ivy League institution but College Counselor, Kyrstyana Martin, pushed her to take that leap. "I am so proud of the work that Joanna put into her application. I am even more excited to see all that Joanna will accomplish and experience at Dartmouth," said Martin. High School teacher, Ashlee Schnitzer, has watched Joanna grow as a scholar and as her own person. She credits Joanna’s success to her commitment to working hard and not taking shortcuts, adding she “serves as a beacon of success in her classes.”

High school is where students grow into adults. Joanna started out as a shy, introverted girl who blossomed into a steadfast leader of the 12th grade. Joanna is a dedicated scholar who is deeply invested in her community, in and out of the classroom. After Dartmouth, Joanna’s goal is to become a pediatric nurse. "She will continue to succeed in whatever community she serves with her reserve and characteristic humility," says Jamie Wheatcroft, Leader U Fellow at Democracy Prep Public Schools.

Joanna's teachers and peers, along with every Freedom Prep staff member, are incredibly proud of her accomplishments. We are excited to see her live out Freedom Prep’s mission of attending a college of their choice and pursuing a life of active citizenship. She is a trailblazer who has laid the path for many to follow.

For more information, reach out to LARA SZOTT, Grants & Special Projects Senior Manager at lara.szott@democracyprep.org.

Teacher View of Scholar Screens

Student presenting view

Virtual learning has been challenging, engaging, entertaining, and innovative. Platforms such as Peardeck and Nearpod have alleviated a lot of issues in virtual classrooms for reading, science and history, but math has struggled to find it’s niche. Google docs, doesn’t allow for the hands on note taking and formatting. Peardeck is great for answering questions, but not much for showing work. This sent the middle school math department into a search for a platform that is user friendly to both teachers and students alike.

THEY FOUND CLASSKICK!

ClassKick is the medium 7th and 8th grade math, now runs on. It allows teachers to prepare materials as normal, but then push them to scholars. Scholars can write on the slides the same way teachers engage with the slides. Scholars can type, write, graph, show work, and all of the things that teachers want math scholars to do. Lessons are organized into slides where scholars copy notes, write answer, and solve problems on their own set. Teachers can monitor live what scholars are writing and type directly onto a scholar’s slide. Teachers can also chat, give sticker, and call on “raised hands,” to give feedback. Scholars and staff alike love ClassKick because scholars are more engaged and learning more math.

A COMMUNITY OF LOVE

By Victoria Couture, FPE 1st Grade Teacher

The scholars in the University of Tennessee have been building strong relationships with each other despite not being physically together in the classroom. Our first day of class on zoom was filled with so many happy first grade faces. As the school year went on scholars opened up more and more during advisory by sharing their outside interests and hobbies. UTENN is filled with a unique group of scholars with a variety of interests. We have gamers, athletes, gymnasts, swimmers, story tellers, designers, and artists just to name a few. We all look forward to continuing to build on our strong classroom community throughout the remainder of the school year.
In response to virtual learning, Ms. Cooke seamlessly transitioned visual arts from the classroom to the computer. She took it upon herself to create harmonious units that build scholar's skills and understanding of art. Her lessons develop motor skills, social skills, decision making, risk-taking and inventiveness while incorporating elements from other subjects scholars are taking. Projects include geometric shapes, which are studied in math class, as well as scientific materials and writing. This month, scholars created a card focusing on self-expression and unity. Scholars created a portrait of Martin Luther King Jr and crafted a letter including what they would say to MLK Jr. if he was still alive today, questions they have for him and how he has inspired them.

Ms. Cooke has demonstrated the want to go above and beyond in her role as the Visual Arts teacher. Ms. Cooke has been strategic about partnering with different stakeholders to increase the civic engagement of scholars across grades 6-8. Ms. Cooke supported the school leadership team and Operations teams members in the ordering and distribution of art supplies to middle school scholars. Ms. Cooke has been determined, despite the circumstances of teaching during Covid-19, to provide scholars with a well-rounded, rigorous, and engaging Arts instruction!