



### Benjamin Si Hyun Pae

**Residency Placement:** High School Biology, Aspire Pacific Academy  
**Mentor:** Venus Magtibang

**Hometown:** Upland, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Irvine  
**Degree Earned:** BS in Biological Sciences

**My Inspiration to Teach:** It's exciting for me to see students achieve their untapped educational potentials.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I noticed the ideals and values of Aspire closely resembled my beliefs about teaching. I want to let all my students know and instill in them the belief that we are in this world to change it.



### Carla Aria Caviness

**Residency Placement:** 3rd Grade, Aspire Inskip Academy  
**Mentor:** Joanna Bottrell

**Hometown:** Memphis, TN  
**Undergraduate University:** University of Memphis  
**Degree Earned:** BA in History

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired to teach by the need to close the achievement gap of urban youth.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The intensive coaching and real-time feedback.



### Christian McGrail

**Residency Placement:** 5th Grade Humanities, Aspire Junior Collegiate Academy  
**Mentor:** Ben Feinberg

**Hometown:** South Pasadena, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** Occidental College  
**Degree Earned:** BA in History

**My Inspiration to Teach:** It's exciting for me to see students achieve their untapped educational potentials.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I noticed the ideals and values of Aspire closely resembled my beliefs about teaching. I want to let all my students know and instill in them the belief that we are in this world to change it.



### Christine Yang

**Residency Placement:** 1st Grade, Aspire Firestone Academy  
**Mentor:** Janet Yang

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UCLA  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Economics

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I believe all students, regardless of their backgrounds, are entitled to a high-quality education. Teaching allows me to make a difference in the lives of my students, their families, and their communities. I am inspired by my students and their potential to grow academically and personally

**Why I Chose Aspire:** What drew me to the Aspire Teacher Residency program was the comprehensiveness of the teacher training program. I have a unique opportunity to learn from the diverse backgrounds of my instructors, mentor teacher, and peers and to apply what I am learning in the classroom on a daily basis. Everyone at Aspire is supportive and dedicated in helping students reach their full potential. I am excited to be part of the Aspire family!

### Christopher Brown

**Residency Placement:** 10th Grade Biology, Aspire Langston Hughes Academy  
**Mentor:** Susheela Nath

**Hometown:** Concord, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** University of the Pacific  
**Degrees Earned:** BA in Environmental Science and BA in Music

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I teach to create curiosity and critical thinking in our students. Classrooms are miniature societies that ultimately affect our nation and world. I want to prepare our students so that they are equipped to become experts and leaders locally and globally. Engaged, motivated, and curious youth will push our cities, nations, and species closer towards a fair, productive, and connected world society.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The ATR program is geared towards personal growth so that I can explore my teaching before I have my own class. I feel that after I complete my first year, I will have a solid foundation of who I am as a teacher and be able to apply that to my own classroom.



### Contessa Cannaday

**Residency Placement:** 4th and 5th Grade, Aspire Tate Academy  
**Mentor:** Semi Park

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Santa Barbara  
**Degree Earned:** BA in History of Art & Architecture

**My Inspiration to Teach:** What inspires me to teach is a commitment to give young people a fair and equal education. I grew up in the inner city where there were not a lot of opportunities for advancement. Education was the only way out from beneath the poverty. I was fortunate to have strong mentor figures in my life, but there are many who do not and now I can be there for them.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The first time I walked into an Aspire classroom as a Guest Teacher I was amazed. I loved how each classroom was draped in college memorabilia. The "College for Certain" promise was all around. Aspire students were different, their teachers were different, the school atmosphere was different. I knew this is where I was meant to be.



## Corian Po

**Residency Placement: 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, Aspire Capitol Heights Academy**  
**Mentor: Mercedes Lopez**

**Hometown:** Grass Valley/Nevada City, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Davis  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Dramatic Arts

**My Inspiration to Teach:** There is nothing more exciting to me than guiding growing minds as they explore and begin to make sense of the world around them! There is nothing more fulfilling to me than instilling in children a love of learning that will keep them curious and invested in their educations throughout their lives!

**Why I Chose Aspire:** In a society where disenfranchisement begins with educational inequality, Aspire's aim to help underserved students build the best possible foundations for their lives mirrors my own. I feel that the Residency program will set me up to succeed through the combination of rigorous coursework and the chance to immediately apply what I am learning under the guidance of a master teacher.



## Daniel Shapiro

**Residency Placement: 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Grade Humanities, Aspire ERES Academy**  
**Mentor: Amy Youngman**

**Hometown:** Newburgh, NY  
**Undergraduate University:** Brandeis University  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Politics

**Graduate University:** Institute of Social Studies  
**Degree Earned:** MA in Development Studies

**Graduate University:** Central European University  
**Degree Earned:** MA in Public Policy

**My Inspiration to Teach:** The most influential people in my life have been my teachers; I can still look back at my middle school and high school teachers and trace their influence on my personal and professional goals. Successful education is the link between students' dreams and achieving successes. I aim to be the catalyst that builds bridges, inspires passion, and produces the foundation for students to reach existing goals and set even higher ones. I believe that every student should have the agency to be on her/his own ever-rising trajectory of self-improvement, exploration, and access to affecting the change that originates within their hearts and minds. Teachers have a responsibility to empower students along this trajectory, and that is my primary motivation and inspiration to teach.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** When a friend told me about the ATR program, I realized it was the exact mix of in-class teacher training & support, master's education, and credentialing procedures that I wanted for my own career preferences. I didn't want to go back to school full-time, and I knew that I didn't have the prior teaching experience to step into a classroom by myself. Aspire's focus on student achievement creates a rigorous academic environment with objectively high standards—both in the classroom for students and for every Aspire employee. The more people from Aspire I talked with, the clearer it became that the ATR program best fit my personal goal to become a teacher in the classroom with the ideal support structure and training program. I was able to speak with current/former residents and mentors, and their unanimous enthusiasm confirmed my inclination to join ATR. Aspire's resident model is perfectly tailored to the demands in your individual classroom, the master's program, and the credentialing so that all three are manageable. I am extremely excited to begin this journey!



## Daniel Wolfe

**Residency Placement: 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, Aspire Vincent Shalvey Academy**  
**Mentor: Lindsay Fena**

**Hometown:** Newton, MA  
**Undergraduate University:** Rhodes College  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Anthropology/Sociology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired to teach because I believe that through education, we can open our eyes to new ideas and diverse thinking that will bring out a passion in children, who hope to make their dreams a reality.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I was drawn to this particular program because of Aspire's focus on socio-economically disadvantaged students and the guidance they provide to their students, so that these children can achieve their highest hopes, just as much as other students. I was also excited to learn that Aspire is branching out into Memphis in 2013. Having gone to a college in Memphis, I am determined to return to the city to help provide the high-quality education that Aspire has delivered to its California students.



## Danielle Soto

**Residency Placement: 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade, Aspire Huntington Park Charter School**  
**Mentor: Dea Inguito**

**Hometown:** Whittier, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Irvine  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Public Health Policy, Minor in Educational Studies

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired to teach because I love helping others. Teachers can help students discover their passion and talents and really help them grow as individuals. I want to make a positive impact in my students' lives and help them achieve their full potential.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I love the population that Aspire serves. Aspire has done so much to help low-income students, and their data shows how successful they have been. The entire Aspire team is so hardworking and compassionate, and I love being a part of that strong commitment to helping students succeed.



## Danita Thomson

**Residency Placement: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, Aspire Summit Charter Academy**  
**Mentor: Jeff Griffith**

**Hometown:** Modesto, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** CSU Chico  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Business Administration, concentration in International Business

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I have always enjoyed working with people, but I am especially happy when I have the opportunity to work with young people. Students have a bright perspective on life that is refreshing and contagious. Spending my days with them is not only energizing, it is rewarding.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I found Aspire when I was researching schools for my own children to attend and I was drawn to the emphasis placed on the child and setting them up for success in life. Aspire teaches using proven methods that inspires all types of learning styles while developing them to be life-long learners. When I discovered the Aspire Teacher Residency program I was thrilled with the prospect of becoming a part of such an innovative teaching organization. I believe that Aspire is the best place for me and my children to grow and learn to our maximum potentials.



## Dayna Perez

**Residency Placement: 5th Grade, Aspire Alexander Twilight College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Lisa Hoerner**

**Hometown:** Rancho Cordova, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** California State Polytechnic University, Pomona  
**Degree Earned:** BS in Zoology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** What inspires me to teach is the hope to inspire appreciation for the world around my students and prepare them for future challenges. I want to enrich their lives through the joy of learning.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I appreciate Aspire's mission and how they implement the fundamental values of their C.A.R.E.S. at ATCPA; Cooperation, Assertiveness, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control. I wish while I was going to grade school, I had such caring teachers like the teachers at Aspire. I like how the faculty is so supportive of one another. I was drawn to the teacher residency because you are matched with a master teacher, and you are given the opportunity to learn and become the best teacher you can be while being in the classroom. It is also a wonderful opportunity to earn your masters and credential at the same time.



## Dennise Reyes

**Residency Placement: 3rd Grade, Aspire Tate Academy**  
**Mentor: Melissa Greene**

**Hometown:** South Los Angeles, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Riverside  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired to teach by the kids and their families. All of my past experiences with students have enriched my life. This career is difficult, but getting the opportunity to make a difference in my student's lives makes it absolutely worth it.

I am also inspired by all the amazing teachers I've had. They helped open up the world for me and it was through them that I fell in love with learning. I hope that I can do the same for my future students!

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I first learned about Aspire because my goddaughter Bela attends Aspire Junior Collegiate Academy. I was taken aback by how excited she is about school. Since I worked at a traditional school district, I was not used to such excitement about school from a kindergartener. I figured that Aspire must be doing something different. After a bit of research, I knew that this was the place for me. The "College for Certain" motto sold me. I am proud to be part of an organization that makes a college education an attainable expectation for all its students; regardless of racial or economic background.



## Gina Perlite

**Residency Placement: 4th Grade Aspire Berkley Maynard Academy**  
**Mentor: Jay Stack**

**Hometown:** San Francisco, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** Georgetown University  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Psychology, Minor in Italian

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired by the children I teach. I love getting to know them as individuals and seeing them grow over the course of a year, celebrating their successes together and helping them through the challenges. I also appreciate what a powerful force for change education can be, and I want to help make that a reality.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I recognize that it takes a lot of time and hard work to become an excellent teacher, so I was drawn to the Residency program because of the high levels of support and guidance throughout the program. Participating in a residency year before entering a classroom by myself helps ensure that I am better prepared to give my students the kind of high-quality instruction they deserve. I also love the positive school culture that Aspire works so hard to build, along with the notion of high expectations for every student.



## Jacquelyn Lynch

**Residency Placement: 2nd Grade, Aspire East Palo Alto Charter School**  
**Mentor: Ivy Valant**

**Hometown:** San Jose, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** CSU Sacramento  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Government/International Relations

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I'm inspired by the kids! They are the reason to get up and go to work every day, they are relying on their teachers to give them a quality education, and I never want to let them down.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The ATR really is an amazing program. I feel so lucky to be able to have a year of student teaching under my mentor; that alone is enough to come to the program. Everyone who is affiliated with Aspire has been welcoming, helpful, and passionate about Aspire's mission. It's a place where people seem happy to be, and it seems like a right fit for me.



## Jenessa Hefler

**Residency Placement: 3rd Grade, Aspire Berkley Maynard Academy**  
**Mentor: Ami Hanaoka**

**Hometown:** Madera, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Davis  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Human Development, Minor in Education

**My Inspiration to Teach:** First off, I love being around kids. Their energy, excitement, and curiosity about life is contagious and inspiring. I also believe children are the future and the best way to ensure a better, more equal future is to offer a quality education to all children. I want to help change the realities and possibilities for my students by educating them to higher standards and, in true Aspire-form, make "College for Certain!"

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The ATR program stands out because it is the perfect combination of theory and practice. I've looked into other teaching programs, but none offer such useful, guided, real-time practice in teaching. This year will lay a great foundation for what I hope will be a lifelong career in education!



## Jennifer Sirkus

**Residency Placement: Kindergarten, Aspire Junior Collegiate Academy**  
**Mentor: Maria Vizcaino**

**Hometown:** Sonoma, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** Pitzer College  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I think there is no better way to give back than to become part of the teaching and learning process! I am from a community where a very small percentage of my peers excelled in school and I have therefore grown up with a personal goal to reverse that trend. I also find teaching to be exciting, invigorating, and awe-inspiring. I can't imagine doing anything else!

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I love that Aspire holds ALL of its students accountable! Aspire leaves no child behind, ensuring that each and every student has access to college. Aspire students are taught that they matter and anything is possible! I was drawn to the residency program because I am a hands-on learner, and I wanted to be able to teach while simultaneously learning the theory behind teaching in graduate school. Aspire gives its residents the best of both worlds!



## Lia O'Neale

**Residency Placement: 8th Grade Algebra, Aspire Centennial College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Juan Enriquez**

**Hometown:** Las Vegas, NV  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Berkeley  
**Degree Earned:** BA in English Literature, Minor in Dramatic Arts

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I believe that education is transformative. Many students come into math class believing that they are "no good at it." Often, however, students only need guidance to find the path that best suits their learning style and needs to unlock their true talents and skills. The look students get on their faces when they understand a concept they never thought they could is addictive, and that look is what inspires me to teach.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I have worked as an instructor for after-school classes prior to joining Aspire, and I often felt isolated. I saw my colleagues only twice a year, and interacted with my manager mostly via email. I love the supportive community and interaction at Aspire. Also, with the Aspire residency program, I will be working with an experienced, expert teacher every day, with feedback I can put into immediate practice. I want to be the best teacher I can be for my students, and Aspire will help me reach that goal.



## Luz Escalante

**Residency Placement: 6th/7th Grade Humanities, Aspire Vanguard College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Margaret Prella**

**Hometown:** Inglewood, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Davis  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Philosophy, Minor in Education

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My biggest inspiration to teach is the opportunity to serve students of diverse backgrounds in an environment that is both challenging and engaging. If I can instill a love of life-long learning in my students, I know I've done my job.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** What I like most about Aspire is their mission of College For Certain and the commitment to doing what works. Being part of a team that is constantly challenged and raising the standard is a chance I would not pass up!



## Marcy Rosner

**Residency Placement: 10-12th Grade History, Aspire California College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Ryan Grow**

**Hometown:** Tallahassee, FL  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Berkeley  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Ethnic Studies, Minor in Education

**My Inspiration to Teach:** The powerful hope that one day quality education will be accessible to every student regardless of race and class.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** Aspire has a by any means necessary educational model that is unfortunately incredibly unique in education.



## Mia Costello

**Residency Placement: 7th/8th Grade English, Aspire Berkley Maynard Academy**  
**Mentor: Rosario Parra**

**Hometown:** Millbrae, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Davis  
**Degree Earned:** BA in International Relations and Women and Gender Studies, Minor in Education

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired to teach because I feel that that in the United States, access to quality education is the defining civil rights issues of our time. I believe that the classroom is a space where incredible transformation can occur and I feel that it is our responsibility as educators to not only to push our kids to achieve their potential but also to recognize their power to be agents of change in our communities.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I believe that this program stands out for the way that it looks at the training of urban educators as a quality long-term investment, giving us incredible training and offering us significant support in the classroom. But more than anything, I am drawn to the ATR for the opportunity it gave me to teach and serve students in the Bay Area, where I was born and raised. I am proud of what we do and I know that not only are we building a better schools, but we are building better communities and in our small way, we are building a better world.



## Rachel White

**Residency Placement: 9-12th Grade Science, Aspire California College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Jai David**

**Hometown:** San Antonio, TX  
**Undergraduate University:** University of Texas at San Antonio  
**Degree Earned:** BS in Biology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I'm inspired by the fact that as a teacher I have the potential to make a difference in my students' lives by providing them with a well-rounded foundation that will impact their futures.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I was drawn to the Aspire Teacher Residency program because they expect excellent teachers for all their students and are willing to provide the

tools and resources necessary to make sure not only each student reaches their maximum potential but each teacher as well.



## Saumirah McWoodson

**Residency Placement: 2nd Grade, Aspire Port City Academy**

**Mentor: Ashley Sen**

**Hometown:** Dublin, CA

**Undergraduate University:** University of the Pacific

**Degree Earned:** BA in Psychology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired to teach because I am passionate about education and love working with children and young people. Working as an educator is extremely rewarding to me, and I feel fortunate to have found my calling in the field of education.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I believe that education is a gateway to freedom, opportunity, and choice, and that high quality education should be available to everyone. Aspire's mission to provide excellent education to students in underserved communities, develop effective educators, and to create large-scale change in America's public schools drew me to the residency program.



## Shea Nairn

**Residency Placement: 3rd Grade, Aspire Antonio Maria Lugo Academy**

**Mentor: Megan Monaghan**

**Hometown:** Humble, TX

**Undergraduate University:** University of North Dakota

**Degree Earned:** BA in Communications

**My Inspiration to Teach:** In any job I do, I am always driven by a strong desire to give people exactly what they need to be successful. Within teaching, I want to give students the tools they need so they can face future challenges with confidence, knowing that they have what it takes to reach their goals.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I was initially drawn to Aspire because I was impressed by the work they were doing to change the future paths of kids in urban areas. As I learned more, I knew I wanted to be a part of an organization where everyone is working toward the same goal. I like that Aspire is always evaluating its practices and seeking positive change. I was drawn to the Residency program because I wanted to be well-prepared to step into the classroom. I'd heard of too many people signing up for other urban teaching programs only to be left with little support, leading to burnout and frustration. However, the strong support, constant feedback, and overall goal of excellence that accompany the Aspire Residency program drew me in.



## Susan Summerfield

**Residency Placement: 1st Grade, Aspire ERES Academy**

**Mentor: Claire Hawley**

**Hometown:** Grover Beach, CA

**Undergraduate University:** Mills College

**Degree Earned:** BA in Child Development

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired to teach because I am passionate about education and love working with children and young people. Working as an educator is extremely rewarding to me, and I feel fortunate to have found my calling in the field of education.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I believe that education is a gateway to freedom, opportunity, and choice, and that high quality education should be available to everyone. Aspire's mission to provide excellent education to students in underserved communities, develop effective educators, and to create large-scale change in America's public schools drew me to the residency program.



## Tiarra Netter

**Residency Placement: Kindergarten, Aspire Capitol Heights Academy**

**Mentor: Elizabeth Boyer**

**Hometown:** Oroville, CA

**Undergraduate University:** CSU Chico

**Degree Earned:** BA Liberal Studies, Minor in Special Education

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I love kids; working with them allows me to be me...."a big kid at heart!" I love making connections and building rapport with the students and their families.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I love the "College for Certain" motto Aspire has taken on. It is important to expose children to the benefits a college education can provide early on. With Aspire, the question is not, "Will I go to college?", but rather, "Which college will I go to?" My daughter has attended Aspire Schools since 2nd grade and I fell in love with the highly structured, individualized educational opportunities available here. The residency model attracted me because it puts you in the classroom from day one with an amazing, experienced expert teacher who is willing to share their best practices and support you as you learn and grow from them.



## Tonia Arevalo

**Residency Placement: Kindergarten, Aspire Vincent Shalvey Academy**

**Mentor: Diana Puccio**

**Hometown:** Lockeford, CA

**Undergraduate University:** CSU Sacramento

**Degree Earned:** BA in Liberal Studies

**My Inspiration to Teach:** The kids! I enjoy working with children and helping them to achieve their goals. It makes me feel good knowing that I am having a positive impact on today's youth.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I like that Aspire is giving kids, who might not otherwise have the chance, the opportunity to create a pathway for themselves to college. There were many things that drew me to the ATR program, but the biggest would be the opportunity to work beside a mentor teacher for an entire year in the classroom. I feel that this is an invaluable experience to work with a seasoned teacher and learn all I can so that when I do acquire my own classroom I will be prepared and supported.



## **Valerie Valdez**

**Residency Placement: 1st Grade, Alexander Twilight College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Tawna Turner**

**Hometown:** Livingston, CA  
**Undergraduate University:** UC Berkeley  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I teach because it makes me happy! I have worked at Alexander Twilight prior to starting the residency, and I can't begin to explain how much joy the students there have given me. I feel that they have taught me so much. The fact that I get to work with children, in the supportive, inspiring environment at Alexander Twilight is something I feel incredibly fortunate to do. I am also very inspired by my colleagues at ATCPA; I feel that observing their practices was a huge part of my decision to become a teacher.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The residency program is amazing; I truly feel that there is no better way to become a teacher. Working toward my master's and credential while being in the classroom is something I find invaluable. I love that I will have the opportunity to take what I've learned and immediately put it into practice in the classroom. I also love the mentor aspect of the program; I will be working with an awesome teacher this year, and I'm very excited to learn from her. I love Aspire because I feel that I will always be learning here; I want to work somewhere where I am inspired and challenged to grow, and I feel Aspire is a great place for that.