



### Alisha Galea

**Residency Placement: Elementary Education Specialist, Aspire APEX Academy**  
**Mentor: Jennifer Calvillo**

**Hometown:** Redding, California  
**Undergraduate University:** California State University, Sacramento  
**Degree Earned:** BS in Criminal Justice/Psychology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach comes from my own experiences with education and knowing first-hand the difference that a loving, caring and motivating teacher can make in a student's life for the better.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR because I felt it offered an opportunity no other program could offer by allowing me to work in the classroom with an experienced mentor teacher. I also love Aspire's college for certain mindset and the hard work and dedication put in by all of the Aspire's team.



### Amy Sept

**Residency Placement: Kindergarten, Aspire Vincent Shalvey Academy**  
**Mentor: Diana Puccio**

**Hometown:** Sacramento, California  
**Undergraduate University:** William Jessup University  
**Degree Earned:** BA in English Literature

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I teach to encourage curiosity with the belief that it can replace fear. I teach because on the worst days my inner cynic must interact with the most optimistic people group in the world (children). I teach because the most inspirational human beings I have encountered on this planet are, in fact, teachers. Because of their influence, I tried again, changed my mind, traveled far away, volunteered, pursued dreams, and ultimately got to know myself. This is called courage. It's also called opportunity. These things can change the odds for students, and that is what moves me to teach.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** Fact: there are plenty of credentialing/masters programs out there, but ATR was my first choice. This is because I saw the residency model eliminating the gap between theory and practice. I was drawn to the collaborative culture and the idea of quality time with a mentor teacher. I chose Aspire because I wanted to be part of a movement in education that keeps students at the center and maintains a culture of equity where dreams are accessible for everybody, regardless of circumstance.



### Ashley Cardenas

**Residency Placement: Secondary Education Specialist, Aspire Ollin University Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Kate Spencer**

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Santa Barbara  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My students' questions, interests, and passions, inspire me to teach. For me, teaching means preparing students for a meaningful future. I hope to help students cultivate their hunger for knowledge, nurture their gifts and talents, and develop their confidence so that they will contribute their ideas in school and beyond.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR because of Aspire's incredible reputation to prepare all of their students for college success. I had heard and read about Aspire's accomplishments but when I obtained a position as an instructional assistant at Aspire's Centennial College Preparatory Academy, I witnessed Aspire's mission in action. Working for Aspire, alongside a talented, supportive, and driven team, inspired me to want to join Aspire's cause as a teacher.



### Ava Dornbush

**Residency Placement: 6th Grade Math & Science, Aspire Langston Hughes Academy**  
**Mentor: Maria Cortez**

**Hometown:** Lodi, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of the Pacific  
**Degree Earned:** BS in Mathematics

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach has always been those teachers I have had throughout the years that have made the extra effort to connect to their students as individuals and take a personal interest in their lives. As a student I was lucky enough to have teachers who did this for me, and am excited to have the opportunity to do the same for my future students.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR because I want to be able to learn directly from people who are already effective and successful educators, and really liked that the ATR program places its residents with a particular teacher for the entire school year. Through having this experience, seeing the school year progress from start to finish, as well as receiving the support this model provides to me as a new teacher, I hope to be able to effectively emulate the teaching strategies I will have the opportunity to witness over the next year, and be more confident when I have a classroom of my own. In addition, the ability to serve students from communities close to my own was a really appealing benefit to the program, as well as the great lengths Aspire as an institution goes to in order to give their students what it takes to succeed in a four year institution.



### Brittney Smith

**Residency Placement: 8th Grade Humanities, Aspire Langston Hughes Academy**  
**Mentor: Yesenia Trejo**

**Hometown:** Elk Grove, California  
**Undergraduate University:** California State University, Sacramento  
**Degree Earned:** BA, History Pre-Credential

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired both by my passion for education in the humanities as well as the students with whom we work. I have dedicated the previous six years to Aspire Public Schools and the community among the students, family, school, and educators is astounding. It is an absolute pleasure to be part of that community.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR because it offered me an opportunity to continue to advance my career with Aspire Public Schools. I wholeheartedly believe in our mission of making college for certain for each of our students. We are making the difference.



## Carmen Robinson

**Residency Placement: Kindergarten, Aspire Port City Academy**  
**Mentor: Kim Bavaro**

**Hometown:** Oakland, California  
**Undergraduate University:** Paul Quinn College  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Business Administration

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I believe teaching is one of the most important functions performed in our culture. I want children to learn in a safe and comfortable environment so that their self-esteem will be increased. A high self-esteem will enable them to strive for and accomplish any goals they set for themselves. As a teacher, I will play a part in helping them to do that. I will have the privilege of shaping future parents and productive members of society. I want to be a part of a noble profession with the hope of one day being counted among those in whom future teachers find inspiration.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I am vested in the "College For Certain" mission Aspire Public Schools upholds. I want to be an agent of change and the Aspire Teacher Residency Program is the perfect catalyst for me to do so.



## Derek Smith

**Residency Placement: 2nd Grade, Aspire Berkley Maynard Academy**  
**Mentor: Ami Hanaoka**

**Hometown:** Santa Rosa, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Santa Cruz  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Literature/Minor in Education

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I was fortunate enough to have creative, kind and hard-working teachers who truly pushed me to do my best work, yet also made learning an enjoyable experience. I believe everyone should feel a sense of both achievement and joy at school, so I hope to provide my future students with an education that includes both of these things (and more!).

**Why I Chose Aspire:** Having already worked with Aspire on a part-time basis, I knew this was an organization I wanted to stay involved with! Although the Residency is an intense year, I don't think there is any better way to prepare to be a 1<sup>st</sup>-year teacher. We get to learn, practice, struggle, grow and perfect our skills, all while under the wing of a pro-teacher who is there to help us succeed. Afterward, we will be ready to continue the great work Aspire is doing in these under-served communities.



## Emily Ko

**Residency Placement: 3rd Grade, Aspire Junior Collegiate Academy**  
**Mentor: Rachel Gray**

**Hometown:** Arcadia, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of Southern California  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Fine Arts, Emphasis in Painting

**My Inspiration to Teach:** The classroom is an amazing place to be! No day is ever the same, and I love that I get to be a part of students' lives and make a positive difference. Teaching is important work, and difficult at times, but there is so much smiling and laughing along the way, too.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I applied to the Residency Program after having worked as an After School Educator at Aspire, where I got to experience firsthand the amazing staff and school culture of Aspire: the caring, generous, hardworking, and fun teachers and the truly supportive and collaborative environment. I can think of no better way to further my education career than to continue with Aspire and keep learning through this unique mentorship program.



## Erin Walsh

**Residency Placement: 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade, Aspire Hanley Elementary**  
**Mentor: Tamera Malone**

**Hometown:** Rockville Centre, New York  
**Undergraduate University:** Penn State University  
**Degree Earned:** BS in Rehabilitation and Human Services

**My Inspiration to Teach:** Simply put, I want to teach to make a difference.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR for the positive, collaborative working environment. I am excited to work with dedicated and passionate educators, especially my mentor, Tamera.



## Felicia Surber

**Residency Placement: 1st Grade, Aspire Rosa Parks Academy**  
**Mentor: JoAnna Beck**

**Hometown:** Ceres, California  
**Undergraduate University:** Chapman University  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Liberal Studies

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach comes from each and every child that I encounter. As a teacher I will have the opportunity to make an impact in each and every one of my student's lives. There is nothing more rewarding than being able to see a child grow and accomplish things that they may have thought were unattainable. I want to ignite the love of learning in every student that comes into my classroom.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The Aspire Teacher Residency Program is truly amazing; I believe that there is no better way to become a more prepared and effective teacher. The opportunity to work in a classroom from beginning to end, side by side a highly-effective teacher is unlike any other. I chose the Aspire Teacher Residency Program because of its commitment to training highly effective teachers in order to best serve the students in the community.



## Garrett Ramseyer

**Residency Placement: Elementary Education Specialist, Aspire Capitol Heights Academy**  
**Mentor: Heather Romanolo**

**Hometown:** Modesto, California  
**Undergraduate University:** San Francisco State University  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Radio & Television

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My grandmother was a teacher her whole life and when I was a little kid, she would teach me everything. Her passion led to a lot of successful stories around the dinner table when I was young. Most of them were about my adventures of learning with trial and error. Mostly error, but once in a while, I would come out solving a problem on my own. Her patience and always making me question the world is what I remember of her. Now, I want to do the same and help students who need the extra support. I believe I can become a voice to help those who are afraid to speak.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** ATR grants the ability to acquire education and then apply it in a classroom setting. This is one of the only programs where I heard you can teach and go to school at the same time, during the same year. Banding together with other residents makes this feel like a team effort rather than a solo adventure. I believe in Aspire because it is helping me become a better educator. I will gain tools and knowledge on how to succeed in teaching a class. Pairing up with a mentor teacher the whole year will give me the access to see how things are done up front. I learn from observing, so this will be a huge factor for me.



## Gisell Medina

**Residency Placement: 2nd Grade, Aspire Junior Collegiate Academy**  
**Mentor: Maria Vizcaino**

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Irvine  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Psychology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I teach because I want to help children reach their full potential. Every student deserves to have an equal opportunity to succeed regardless of their background. I was raised in a low income neighborhood and can relate to the struggles that students encounter. I want to support them and help them reach higher than they ever thought they could.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose the Aspire Teacher Residency Program because while working at Aspire I could see the positive change the entire staff makes. It's inspiring to work with people that care so much about all the students and their families. Aspire is more than a work place, it is a family that strives for the success of **all** its members. I also chose the ATR program because it provides the support, mentorship and academics that I need to become an effective and successful teacher.



## Hanna Kurowski

**Residency Placement: 10th Grade Biology & 12th Grade Anatomy, Aspire California College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Jai David**

**Hometown:** Steamboat Springs, Colorado  
**Undergraduate University:** Saint Mary's College of California  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Social Justice/Education

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My journey towards becoming an urban school teacher began my sophomore year at Saint Mary's College of California. I originally entered college with my heart set on becoming a doctor, so I could travel the world and provide healthcare to those in impoverished countries and "cure" people. I wanted a profession that was going to challenge me, while giving me the opportunity to help others, and allow me to learn about new cultures. However, the more biology courses I took, the more I realized that medicine was not for me. Though my passion for organismal biology, ecology, and conservation remains fixed, my definition of "curing" people has changed. I no longer view medicine as the most impactful way to help others. Once I became a part of the Liberal and Civic Studies program, which is focused on social justice, leadership, and education, I discovered that I am not only concerned with individuals' health, but I am equally concerned with the health and overall well-being of our society as a whole. I want to be a part of changing this world from the bottom up.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** A core value that I was taught at Saint Mary's is the Lasallian belief that everyone deserves a quality education. The goal of Saint De La Salle was to provide education for all, regardless of socioeconomic status. Being Lasallian means believing that education broadens and deepens the mind and spirit. It is understanding that teaching is a transformative practice, and that providing a quality education to all is a most gratifying experience. I believe that education is the most tangible way to address inequity in the United States. I also truly believe that in order to create any change in our nation it is necessary for us to change our societal values and the only way to do that is through education. I chose ATR because I believe that this organization aligns its goals with these values and is successfully preparing their students to be catalysts for change.



## Jamie Cole

**Residency Placement: 1st Grade, Aspire East Palo Alto Charter School**  
**Mentor: Chana Karlin-Neumann**

**Hometown:** Oakland & East Palo Alto, California  
**Undergraduate University:** Louisiana State University  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** Since I can remember I have always wanted to teach. As a child I would make my friends pretend to be students while I was the teacher. I am dedicated to teaching kids who live in urban communities because I also grew up in communities that weren't always promising. I want to be a role model and give back to my community as well as other communities who need more teachers that can truly relate to their students.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR because I loved working for Aspire as an After School Educator and later as a Kindergarten Aid. I strongly believe and want to contribute to the mantra of "College For Certain" for every child. I am extremely excited to be working with my amazing mentor teacher, Chana, and I am looking forward to learning so much from her!



## Janelle Jovellanos

**Residency Placement: Kindergarten, Aspire Triumph Academy**  
**Mentor: Alicia Arenas**

**Hometown:** Sacramento, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Berkeley  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Psychology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** It is an honor to work with students, help them grow as individuals, and learn from them as well. Students are my inspiration to teach!

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose to work with Aspire because I wanted to work with people I admire and want to learn from. The organization has amazing teachers and staff that truly care about the children and the work they do. Above all, the Aspire community is making definite impacts on the lives of our students!



## Jesse Deshayes

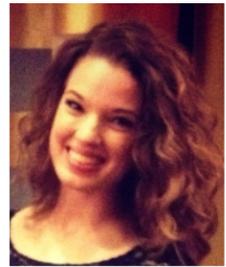
**Residency Placement: 8th Grade Humanities, Aspire Ollin University Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Keith Drucker**

**Hometown:** Ashburnham, Massachusetts  
**Undergraduate University:** Wellesley College  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Comparative Literature

**Graduate University:** Simmons College  
**Degree Earned:** MA in Gender & Cultural Studies

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My greatest inspiration to teach is my sincere, whole-hearted love of learning in community. I am happiest when I am part of a group reading together, asking questions, exchanging ideas, and encouraging each other's curiosity.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I was already interested in ATR above other credential programs because of its focus on creating positive change in public education, and its structure that puts residents in the classroom right away. Then the morning I showed up for my interview at Ollin, as I walked up the sidewalk and into the main office, every staff member or student I passed smiled at me and said hello. I did not know a single person at the school, but everyone was so friendly to me! I knew right then that I wanted to be a part of the Aspire community.



## Jessica Phenis

**Residency Placement: 3rd Grade, Aspire Hanley Elementary**  
**Mentor: Shea Quraishi**

**Hometown:** Jemison, Alabama  
**Undergraduate University:** University of Memphis  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Spanish & Philosophy

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration comes from the "aha" moment. There is nothing more exciting than watching a child light up from understanding and learning.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I left Memphis for two years to move back to Alabama. I realized during that time that I wanted to serve the urban youth in Memphis, and I wanted to teach. If I was going to teach I wanted to be the best at it. Aspire is by far the best way of reaching that goal!



## John Coffman

**Residency Placement: 6th Grade Humanities, Aspire Alexander Twilight Secondary Academy**  
**Mentor: Lisa Nguyen**

**Hometown:** Rocklin, California  
**Undergraduate University:** Wheaton College  
**Degree Earned:** BA in History, Summa Cum Laude

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I believe that ideas in the hands of young minds can change the world so I can't think of a more fulfilling career than one in education!

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I searched long and hard for a graduate/credentialing program which blended an equity minded ethos that would be both rigorous and community centered. The ATR program is a unique program that fulfills these criteria. It's a pleasure to be at work in my home community with the most talented and hardworking teachers I've ever met!



## Jose Fernandez

**Residency Placement: Elementary Education Specialist, Aspire Gateway Academy**  
**Mentor: Stephanie Sittner**

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Santa Cruz  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach comes from the want to help children from the same type of community I grew up in. Having had the privilege to be able to pursue education past high school, I want to help students develop essential tools that can help them pursue education for as long as they want. In addition I want to help students realize the connection between learning at school and applying that knowledge outside the classroom. A college ready student can become a very positive role model in their community.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** Having worked in education before, I had always wrestled with the possibility of one day becoming a teacher. But it wasn't until I started working at Aspire that I really felt the urge to become an educator. At Aspire I met a lot of very talented and inspiring teachers; they were very supportive but at the same time challenged me to improve in my work. In short, they really instilled a sense of confidence in me which in turn became the moment that I felt I could become an effective teacher one day. Once I heard all about the ATR program I felt it was the right program for me. I feel the program will really help me to develop as an effective teacher while at the same time contributing to student growth and success.



## Josh Taylor

**Residency Placement: 4th Grade, Aspire Monarch Academy**  
**Mentor: Sam Berg**

**Hometown:** Palo Alto, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Davis  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology – Law & Society

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am inspired to teach because I have a passion for working with kids. I believe in channeling their high energy into productive learning. I see education as the best platform for initiating change, promoting equity, and creating opportunity for all students.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose the Aspire Teacher Residency because I truly believe in Aspire's mission to serve the traditionally underserved. I admire the commitment and college for certain mentality Aspire fosters. I worked for Aspire for two years prior to becoming a resident, was moved by the dedication and support I saw from all staff members, and wanted to become a part of the catalyst for educational equality.



## **Keara Lipscomb**

**Residency Placement: 5th Grade, Aspire Inskip Academy**  
**Mentor: Christin Hwang**

**Hometown:** Memphis, Tennessee  
**Undergraduate University:** Christian Brothers University  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Liberal Studies, Elementary Education

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I aspire to help others to understand that success is attainable regardless of circumstances or setbacks in life. I want to influence future generations by being a positive role model just as my teachers were for me. I hope to show children there is not a limit on the amount of success you can achieve. I desire to help people become the best that they can be by instilling the basic principles of perseverance

**Why I Chose Aspire:** Aspire's mission to provide college for certain for all students and help educators become the best they can be by providing them with a yearlong program of training intrigued me. I believe every child deserves quality education regardless of their situation, and Aspire Public Schools provides this.



## **Kimberly Sazon**

**Residency Placement: 5th Grade, Aspire Gateway Academy**  
**Mentor: Taleen Dersarioian**

**Hometown:** Burbank, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Los Angeles  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology, Minor in Film & Television

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I believe that teaching and education are powerful tools to inspire and make a difference in the world. Every student is a champion who deserves to have a mentor/educator who believes in their growth and learning. Teaching is my passion and I am committed to give my heart and dedication to help my students reach their academic, personal, and holistic goals. As an educator, I want to be part of the movement to build future leaders and to provide my students the tools to be lifelong scholars and proactive citizens.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The residency program is uniquely designed with opportunities for dedicated educators to learn effective teaching theories and techniques. Aspire is aligned with my values in access to higher education for all students with their theme "College for Certain" by preparing and supporting their educators to teach with rigorous instruction and high expectations. As a resident, I love that we are provided with guidance, praxis, and constant encouragement where I can grow and be challenged as an educator.



## **Kristina Eddings**

**Residency Placement: 3rd Grade, Aspire Hanley Elementary**  
**Mentor: Johanna Zuniga**

**Hometown:** Memphis, Tennessee  
**Undergraduate University:** Excelsior College  
**Degree Earned:** BS in Liberal Studies

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach came from my experiences volunteering in urban schools. I saw many students fall so far behind in reading that the teacher quit trying to help and completely gave up on them. I never want to see a child feel so hopeless and ashamed of themselves again. I want every student to know that with hard work they can reach any goal that they set and have fun in the process. I want to help children enjoy learning and guide them on their way to becoming successful members of society.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR for many reasons. I love that the program stands for equity for all students. Aspire makes sure that all students know that college is a reachable goal and helps them along the way. It is inspiring to me that Aspire not only reaches out to the students but also to the families and the community that the students are a part of. I love that the residents have the opportunity to spend an entire year in the classroom learning to become the best teacher they possibly can.



## **Latifa Newbill**

**Residency Placement: 1st Grade, Aspire Hanley Elementary**  
**Mentor: Nicole Bellis**

**Hometown:** Memphis, Tennessee  
**Undergraduate University:** University of Memphis  
**Degree Earned:** BA in English

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach stems from my belief that a good educational foundation can be the key to success or disaster. When I was in school I had the misfortune of seeing lots of ineffective teaching practices that didn't give the students any useful information or applicable skills, and too many negative attitudes and apathy that spread like wildfire from teacher to student. I want to be part of the solution to this issue and help the upcoming generation excel as students and as citizens of the world.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I kind of feel like it chose me! Initially I wanted to be a part of it because it just seemed like a really good teaching program. However, now that I've taken a couple of courses and gotten to know more about the values and the mission of the organization, I can say that I want to be a part of it because of the care given to making sure the students' individual experiences and cultures are valued and validated. I love the fact that Aspire places heavy emphasis on character development as well as academic excellence.



## **Lautrell Smith**

**Residency Placement: Secondary Education Specialist, Aspire Golden State College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Emily Wells**

**Hometown:** Stockton, California  
**Undergraduate University:** California State University, Sacramento  
**Degree Earned:** BS in Speech Pathology and Audiology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** The past 3 mentors in my life have set high standards and expectations for their students and mentees. I wish to follow in their footsteps to help create equality schoolwork, alter the traditions of education, and supply opportunities for students to succeed.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** Having a younger sibling who attends Aspire, I was aware of the integrity that Aspire promotes. I also enjoy the idea that Aspire is like a family. They help everyone reach their full potential and offer a number of support systems.



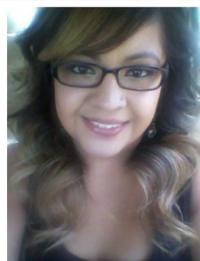
## Liz Tyson

**Residency Placement: 8th Grade English & 9th Grade Lab, Aspire Lionel Wilson College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Eva Kellogg**

**Hometown:** Dripping Springs, Texas  
**Undergraduate University:** Scripps College  
**Degree Earned:** BA in English

**My Inspiration to Teach:** Quality education and, in particular, literacy can open so many doors that this country's education gap usually shuts. I am so excited to share my love of reading and writing with students. I am determined to learn from the teachers around me in order to shape myself into a teacher that can give our incredible students access to those opportunities.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I admire Aspire's dedication to invest in their teachers. Aspire created the residency program to create and keep effective teachers. I could not be more excited to learn from the expertise of my mentor teacher, Eva, and to test out theoretical best practices in a classroom setting.



## Luz Castillo

**Residency Placement: 4th Grade, Aspire Vincent Shalvey Academy**  
**Mentor: Rose Ortiz**

**Hometown:** Stockton, California  
**Undergraduate University:** California State University, Sacramento  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Liberal Studies

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My love for children is what inspires me to teach! My biggest reward has always been the happy faces of student when they accomplish a goal.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR because it offers the opportunity to be able to learn while working with an experienced teacher. After working with Aspire as an after school educator, I was able to experience firsthand the way everyone values and agrees with the schools mission and vision.



## Mario Figueroa Jr.

**Residency Placement: 4th Grade, Aspire Titan Academy**  
**Mentor: Pablo Gomez**

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Berkeley  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Film Studies

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach comes from my desire to promote positive change and improve the quality of life within an urban setting. I feel that education is the way to transform not only individuals but also communities as a whole. Having been a product of an urban school system and earning my degree I feel that I am presented with a unique opportunity to help guide future students towards attaining a quality education. I know of the capabilities and aspirations that exist within these communities and want to help bring these to fruition.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** Having worked for Aspire this previous year I was able to see first-hand how a clear mission with a passionate staff can be incredibly effective. The culture that Aspire creates in each of their schools changed my perspective on the education system and contributed towards my decision to become an educator. I also like the structure of a program that combines academic courses with first-hand experience in a classroom. It allows for residents to work with students while having the support of a distinguished teacher.

## Natalie Galindo

**Residency Placement: 3rd Grade, Aspire University Charter School**  
**Mentor: Brandy Frakes**

**Hometown:** San Jose & Turlock, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of the Pacific  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Diversified Liberal Studies

**My Inspiration to Teach:** Becoming a teacher has always been my dream. I feel that having an education allows people to have power. I want to teach because I see the value. Teachers have more power than they know over young minds and I hope to use that power in a positive way. I want to be a teacher that allows students to be creative, themselves and comfortable. I want to teach because I want students to feel a passion for learning through my passion of educating.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose the Aspire Teacher Residency because it is a program that I really believe in. I believe in giving all students access to a good quality education as well as college preparation. I feel that the ATR program should be the model for all credential programs. I am excited to be fully submersed in a third grade classroom for the first time not as a student and thankful that I will not be doing so alone. This program is best for me because I will be better prepared for my first year of teaching because of my year long experience with Aspire. The whole program will completely prepare me for my career and I look forward to having a professional teacher mentor to be by my side throughout my teacher preparation.



## Nena Weinstein

**Residency Placement: 7th Grade Humanities, Aspire Langston Hughes Academy**  
**Mentor: Lourdes Colon**

**Hometown:** Orlando, Florida  
**Undergraduate University:** University of Central Florida  
**Degree Earned:** BA in English, Focus on Psychology

**Graduate University:** Full Sail University  
**Degree Earned:** MA in Creative Writing

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I am an urban teacher resident because I was once an urban student. I want to teach because I feel that it will place me in an optimal position to facilitate social justice. Knowing that each moment I am away from my son, I am positively impacting the community that shelters him, gives me peace of mind.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The Aspire Teacher Residency Program is very unique and effective because it allows residents the opportunity to implement the theories and practices learned in the UOP classroom almost immediately within the Aspire classroom. Being able to practice lesson planning and have it be further molded by an intricate and supportive network of educators, will allow me to become the best educator I can be; this is why I chose ATR. The reflective infrastructure makes me mindful of the constant evolution that will take place throughout my career as an educator.



## Patricia Garcia

**Residency Placement: 4th Grade, Aspire Titan Academy**  
**Mentor: Meredith Abel**

**Hometown:** Pomona, California  
**Undergraduate University:** California State University, Dominguez Hills  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I believe in Aspire's vision of "College for Certain". I see this vision flourish throughout all of the Aspire schools from the yard supervisors, building managers, to the teachers, principals, administration, and CEO. Aspire truly believes in every child and I want to be a part of this culture. I want to inspire students and mold their young, impressionable minds.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I choose ATR because of the rigorous coursework and strong support network. The collaboration with a highly-effective teacher along with outstanding academic courses builds residents for success. In order to be the best you must learn from the best and this is what Aspire offers.



## Rachel De Los Reyes

**Residency Placement: 3rd Grade, Aspire Inskeep Academy**  
**Mentor: David Cabrera**

**Hometown:** San Diego, California  
**Undergraduate University:** Biola University  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Cinema and Media Arts

**My Inspiration to Teach:** After graduation, I knew I had a deep passion to work in a helping profession. In pursuit of that I gained experience through working with various non-profits, working in youth and community development, which fostered my love for the city and its people. Most recently, I completed an Americorps program through City Year Los Angeles, where I gained experience working in 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom and coordinating an after-school program. It was in this environment that sparked my interest in education, for I saw the great need for effective teachers and the transformative process that quality education can bring to a community. I teach because I want to empower the next generation of leaders and bring change in a tangible way.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR because it promotes an environment of life-long learning through the process of collaboration. I look forward to developing my skills and gaining new insight to become an effective urban educator.



## Ryan Jordan

**Residency Placement: 4th Grade, Aspire Port City Academy**  
**Mentor: Leah Peterson**

**Hometown:** Riverbank, California  
**Undergraduate University:** California State University, Stanislaus  
**Degree Earned:** BA in English

**My Inspiration to Teach:** At the core of why I want to teach is creating an environment in which all students are encouraged and taught to wield the opportunity and power of their education. It is who my students may become, and getting to play an active part in that discovery, that inspires me.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** The Aspire Teacher Residency program is the only program I seriously considered. Its model of education, experience, and support seemed to provide the greatest opportunity for me to become the type of teacher I want to be: one who continues to care, to learn, and to grow, all for the betterment of the students I teach.



## Sandy Rodriguez

**Residency Placement: High School Spanish, Aspire Golden State College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Deanna Price**

**Hometown:** Los Angeles, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Berkeley  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Spanish Literature

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I want to challenge the minds and provide students with the proper tools needed to succeed in college.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I want to be part of the change that Aspire brings to the students. I believe in the mission of Aspire and in the value of higher education.



## Sheena Somoza

**Residency Placement: 7th Grade Math & Science, Aspire Centennial College Preparatory Academy**  
**Mentor: Jillian Eichenauer**

**Hometown:** Inglewood, California  
**Undergraduate University:** University of California, Santa Barbara  
**Degree Earned:** BA in Sociology, Minor in Music

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade teacher was the first person who inspired me to teach, because she was so passionate about education, and she genuinely cared about all of her students and their successes. After graduating from a high school that graduated only a little less than 50% of its students, I was even more inspired to be a part of the solution to the dropout crisis. My inspiration grew even stronger after completing a year of service with City Year Los Angeles. Two of our values that I have kept close to my heart and will continue to keep close to my heart are students first, collaboration always and the belief in the power of young people. The students are my motivation. They are the leaders of tomorrow.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** An old co-worker of mine told me about Aspire Teacher Residency. It sounded too good to be true, so I decided to look into it. It turned out to be everything my co-worker said it was and more. I felt like it was meant to be for me to be in this program. Aspire is only made up of excellent teachers who truly believe in the power of education. The motto, "College for Certain" showed me just how much Aspire believes in their students' success. Aspire isn't just satisfied with their students graduating from high school, but they are exposing them to the opportunity of gaining a higher education.



## Shikha Jerath

**Residency Placement: 9th and 10th Grade Algebra & Geometry, Aspire East Palo Alto Phoenix Academy**  
**Mentor: Deepti Khare**

**Hometown:** Augusta, Georgia

**Undergraduate University:** Emory University

**Degree Earned:** Bachelor of Business Administration, Organization and Management

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach originates from my 11<sup>th</sup> grade Calculus class. My teacher, Mr. Tim Shafer, changed the way I perceived myself and my capabilities by the way he approached learning and development. Mistakes in his classroom were not the end all; mistakes were the beginning of learning. Through his class, I learned the power of education in inspiring confidence, positive feelings of self-worth, and passion-driven learning.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose ATR because I believe that the organization and its people align with my values and approach to effective pedagogy. I feel absolutely supported in the program and hope that other individuals in teaching consider the program as a way to become effective teachers.



## Will Cantine

**Residency Placement: 11/12th Grade Economics, Pre-Calculus & Calculus, Aspire California College Prep Academy**  
**Mentor: Craig Rawe**

**Hometown:** Mt. Vernon, New York

**Undergraduate University:** Cornell University

**Degree Earned:** BS in Communication

**Graduate University:** Syracuse University

**Degree Earned:** MS in Broadcast & Digital Journalism

**My Inspiration to Teach:** My inspiration to teach comes from my high school experience. So many of my classmates had the potential to excel but, instead, were comfortable putting forth minimal effort. I saw the frustration on my teachers' face when they tried so hard to access my classmates' wasted potential. It is that wasted potential that drives me to teach high school students. I want to see students excel, whether inside or out of the classroom, and achieve as I know each one of them has the potential for success.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I chose Aspire because I felt that it was the right fit for me. Cliché, right? I know. As residents, we aren't thrown to the wolves our first year and expected to affect a great deal of change. ATR invests in its residents and is fully committed to developing strong, quality educators who will be more effective for students in the long run as opposed to recruiting teachers to "improve numbers."



## Zoë Henion

**Residency Placement: 4th Grade, Aspire ERES Academy**  
**Mentor: Laura Strait**

**Hometown:** Leverett, Massachusetts

**Undergraduate University:** Simmons College

**Degree Earned:** BA in History

**My Inspiration to Teach:** I believe that the provision of quality education is a direct and effective way to combat enduring social and economic challenges in our country. I want to participate in challenging the structures that perpetuate inequality and apathy.

**Why I Chose Aspire:** I love that Aspire supports and invests deeply in its residents and teachers. I know that ATR will provide me with the tools to become the best teacher that I can be, while providing me opportunities to collaborate with like-minded, passionate, and dedicated educators.