

FREEDOM PREPARATORY ACADEMY

# ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER



IMPACT REPORT WINTER 2025



Pee Dee Rosenwald School in Marion, SC



Dear friend,

In my office at the headquarters of Freedom Prep Charter Schools in Memphis is a wall of transformative and historical photos. They feature Black children and teachers, striving for excellence, in a time when every American system worked against them. My favorite is a 1935 photo of the Pee Dee Rosenwald School in Marion, SC, above.

These are the ancestors we honor in our work every day. They are the reason I founded Freedom Prep in 2009 and why our vision expanded to transform education across the South, with Alabama being a cornerstone of that commitment in 2024.

They are also the reason we prioritize academics at Freedom Prep. **Because I see improving education - and expanding opportunities - for Black and brown children as the civil rights issue of our time.**

**Academics are the heart of everything we do.** We are intentional about ensuring that all of our students, regardless of their background, are prepared to pursue the college path of their choice. Just as importantly, we empower them to understand the strength of their culture and how it will help shape their success in the future. Our schools were built to provide Black and brown children with an education that honors their ancestry and upholds their cultural values. From the curriculum we choose to our powerful community circles, and in the way our staff mirrors the demographics of our students, every aspect is designed to affirm and empower.

Speaking of success, I'm proud to share that, **for the first time, all five Freedom Prep schools in Memphis have been named Level 5 schools by the state, a designation that honors exceptional student growth year-over-year.** You'll find out more about our academic progress as well as the stories that give us hope and drive our work throughout the rest of this report.



While we are excited about our Level 5 achievement, our work is far from over. Driven by our commitment to preparing students to excel in college and in life, we must continue to help them grow and thrive, equipping them to lead and shape the joyful, choice-filled future they deserve.

Because our ancestors won't let us rest.

CEO and Founder



# Academics, our Foundation

It's been an exciting year of academic growth for Freedom Prep in both Memphis and Birmingham. We have faced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and have made remarkable strides. In fact, English Language Arts (ELA) scores in our Memphis schools have surpassed our pre-COVID performance.

"Each of our schools is making significant growth year after year," said Tiffany Moore, Chief of Academics. "And our current data shows that, midway through the '24-'25 school year, we are already on track to surpass how we performed last year. That's extremely exciting to think about."



An FPA middle school student



## Level 5 Schools

for the first time ever!

- Westwood Elementary at Parkrose
- Whitehaven Elementary at Millbranch
- Flagship Middle at Jonetta
- Whitehaven Middle at Brownlee
- Freedom Prep High at Brownlee

Level 5 is a measure of growth and improvement, based on the Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) scores.



## Tennessee Reward School

Whitehaven Elementary at Millbranch, for the second consecutive year. A Reward School is a school that has shown high levels of performance and/or improvement, earning it the highest distinction a school can receive in Tennessee.

Since the '21-'22 school year, the year after the pandemic closures, Freedom Prep has made steady progress toward proficiency across the network in all the subjects TCAP measures.

ELA	Math
↑ 10%	↑ 8%
Science	Social Studies*
↑ 18%	↑ 3%

Our most significant increases have been in the most recent school year ('23-'24):

ELA	Math
↑ 9%	↑ 6%
Science	<i>*only measured in high school</i>
↑ 5%	

## How have we made so much progress?



**Strong school leadership.** All school leaders receive professional development support in pedagogical and leadership practices to yield results.



Emphasis on **developing our teachers**, including a two week long summer intensive and weekly professional development.



**Rigorous curriculum**, along with plans to continue to improve access to technology across all our campuses.



Focus on **improving chronic student absenteeism** by increasing support for families through our social work program.

# FREEDOM PREP BY THE NUMBERS

610

Alumni have received 100% college acceptance for 8 consecutive years



6

Schools currently in the Freedom Prep network in Memphis and Alabama

2009

Freedom Preparatory Academy Charter Schools founded in Memphis by Roblin Webb



2024

FPA Birmingham founded with grades K-1

1,927

Students currently enrolled at all Freedom Prep schools



969

50.3%

Male Students



958

49.7%

Female Students



1,577 Black

313 Hispanic/Latinx

9 White 1 Asian

27 Two or More Races



243

Freedom Prep Employees

213 Black

16 White

9

Hispanic/Latinx

4

Two or More Races

1

Not Specified



188 Female Employees

77.4%



55 Male Employees

22.6%

## How will we continue to improve our academic performance?

"This year, we are doing school audits," said Tiffany Moore, Chief of Academics. "Each school receives four audits throughout the year where a team of Freedom Prep consultants and staff members come together to analyze the health of the school, then we provide the school leader with a report that contains next steps and a plan."

“

"We create a culture for our students to be in a safe environment, a safe space so they can learn."

Melody Webber

Manager of Enrollment and Community Engagement

"Our schools are deeply held accountable for excellent outcomes, both internally and externally."

"We're excited about our progress and really proud of our schools."

Tiffany Moore

Chief of Academics





Whitehaven at Brownlee Middle School Head of School Natasha Smith connects with a student.

## Data and a dose of love: The view from a Head of School

It's unusual to find Natasha Smith, the Head of School at Whitehaven Middle at Brownlee, in her office. She's usually moving through the halls, laptop in hand and teaching materials at the ready, fully engaged with her students.

"When I arrived (in 2022), I wanted to raise the bar on, number one, teacher pedagogy and curriculum but also on student engagement and performance. **One of my strengths is relationships, so you'll see me in the hallway ... my students know they're loved.**"

But they also know that Smith is always aware of how they're doing, with a clear understanding of their progress. "I'm teaching them that they are excellent but I'm always talking to them about data – 'I saw you moved up!' I know what they did for TCAP, on their last assessments. On every door, in every classroom, you see data. Every conversation is about data." At Freedom Prep, data drives every decision we make, ensuring that we continually support and challenge our students to reach their full potential.

When visitors come to her school, she wants them to see "the J-factor, which is joy. And a hundred percent of classes engaged in rigorous academic content. I want them to see systems, meaning this is what these people do every day."

She also wants families to recognize that a free public charter school can offer the same level of academic excellence as a private school.

"Then we add a dose of love with it – I think every child in this building will tell you that. That's what makes us who we are."

“

**When visitors come to her school, Smith wants them to see 'the J-factor, which is joy.'**

**Natasha Smith**

*Head of School at Whitehaven Middle at Brownlee*

# MISSION, VISION & VALUES

## Our Mission

Our mission is to prepare all students in grades PreK - 12 to excel in college and in life.

## Our Vision

Freedom Prep will transform education for students of color across the South. We will prove what's possible. We will inspire broader change. We will carry the torch of the civil rights movement and help to realize its dream.

## Our Core Values



Excellence



Respect



Integrity



Community



Responsibility

## Exciting academic progress in Alabama

Though the Freedom Prep - Birmingham Campus has only been open for less than a year, Head of School Jessica Ramey is hard at work establishing the school's academic excellence.

"Because we are small and have so many adults here, we have been able to build our small group literacy instruction," she said. **"We're able to grow students, target any deficits immediately and also include our special education students so they are able to grasp the material the teacher is teaching."**

She is seeing great progress: Students are supposed to master letter names and sounds by the end of the first semester, but "our students had already reached that monumental moment by November. I was super-excited, because now we can start reading and decoding words."

In addition to pushing her students and teachers to continue to exceed state standards, the college-prep focus of Freedom Prep is built into everything we do in Alabama.

Classrooms are named for local colleges – currently Alabama A&M and Jacksonville State University – and students learn to understand and set goals for the week, a skill that will set them up for college success down the road. They'll be part of a college tour of the University of Alabama at Birmingham later in the year.

**"We are unapologetically college prep,"** said Ramey. Right down to the college chants that each class brings to the school's community circle, which is another feature of Freedom Prep that has translated to Alabama. "It's a way to come together to celebrate the kids' success and have fun."

Families, too, are learning the ways Freedom Prep prepares their students to read and learn at home. "A lot of our families speak to their child's growing independence," she said. "I think they understand and appreciate what we're trying to do here."



FPA Alabama student engaged in learning





Mama T and her daughter Teghan '25

## Our Stories

### Tehron Thompson, Parent

**If you asked students at Brownlee Middle and High to point out Tehron Thompson, they might not know who you were referring to. But mention Mama T, and everyone knows exactly who you mean.**

"Kids are one of my passions," she said. "I feel like I'm a mama bear of the school."

Thompson's daughter Teghan is a member of the Class of 2025, having started at Freedom Prep in third grade when Roderick Barber, now principal at Freedom Prep High at Brownlee, was her teacher. Her son, now graduated from another high school, began at Freedom Prep in sixth grade. Those long-standing connections are part of what gives Mama T her deep understanding of what makes Freedom Prep truly special.

"Freedom Prep is a community, a family. At Freedom Prep they care about the kids and they care a lot. I've heard and seen situations myself where I say, yeah, that teacher went to the mat for this student."

You'll often see Mama T cheering from the sidelines at basketball and volleyball games, fetching missing socks for one student, or bringing personal hygiene products for another, always ready to check on the students.

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**When people ask me, I always say, 'If you want a community for your child, bring them here. If you need some co-parenting help, bring them here.' Here, people are loving and caring about your children.**

Tehron Thompson



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**Freedom Prep is a school of respect, a school that teaches your child what life is really going to be about, to the point where they want to learn.**

**Pervania Stagers-Knox**  
*Grandmother of seven current Freedom Prep students*

## Randy Chavez '18, Bilingual Enrollment Coordinator

The first thing you notice when you meet Randy Chavez is that the lanyard holding his employee ID badge is covered with pins. These are the same pins he wore on his blazer lapel when he was a student at Freedom Prep: National Honor Society, honor pins for English and biology, a gold star.

"The reason I wear these is for the students, so they can see that it's an honor to show off what you do in school," he said. "They always ask me about them."

Chavez started at Freedom Prep in seventh grade, following in the footsteps of his cousins. Along with his four siblings, he became part of the Freedom Prep family – two of them are still students here today.

"I love the mission, honestly, that tells kids that they can go to college," he said. "Coming from different schools, I never felt pushed at all. But at Freedom Prep we had homework every day and it was a safe environment. I could talk to my teachers and ask for help, because English wasn't my first language."

Today, Chavez is a voice for other Latino families, helping bridge the culture of Freedom Prep by explaining community circles and college field trips, both of which were highlights of his own time as a student. "In our community circles, we give each other shout-outs to represent our core values, including community and respect," he explains. Chavez wants families to know that Freedom Prep is here to support and offer resources. "My work here brings me a lot of joy," he said. "It makes me feel like I'm actually making a difference."



Randy Chavez ('18), Bilingual Enrollment Coordinator

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Randy Chavez





# Freedom Prep in the Community



Fourteen students at Freedom Prep High at Brownlee earned a total of \$540,000 in scholarships in 2024 from Alabama A&M University.



WE ARE THE 2024 NEW MEMPHIS  
**EDUCATORS OF EXCELLENCE!**



NEW MEMPHIS

LaDerrick Williams, 7th grade science teacher at Whitehaven Middle at Brownlee, was named a 2024 Educator of Excellence by New Memphis.



Freedom Prep was selected as a semifinalist for the prestigious 2024 Yass Prize, which honors education innovation for students across the country.



Memphis Reads brought author Valeria Luiselli to Freedom Prep High at Brownlee in partnership with Christian Brothers University.



**Invest in Freedom**

**Make a gift TODAY.**

Contact the Development Department at (901) 538-9500, or [arosado@freedomprep.org](mailto:arosado@freedomprep.org). Thank you!





**FREEDOM PREPARATORY ACADEMY**  
CHARTER SCHOOLS

**OUR MOVEMENT IS FREEDOM**

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