

## Our People: Cameron Franklin

My name is Cameron Franklin. I'm currently the assistant director at bands at KIPP Atlanta Collegiate High School. I also serve as president of the KIPP Metro Atlantic Alumni Association. I'm also just a brother, friend, and a mentor.

One thing that surprised me about KIPP is the reach. Being as an alumni president, I've done like KIPP on the hill, so I would go advocate for charter schools. I've seen how much people give to KIPP. I didn't know that as a kid in fifth and eighth grades, these things magically popped up. It came from somewhere, right? So, I didn't understand the reach KIPP has. When I go in space and say, "Yeah, I'm an educator at KIPP," or "I went to KIPP," they're like, "Oh. Oh, I know. Okay. I got you." I didn't know the reach was like that. It's almost its own little secret fraternity. That's what KIPP is, and I think that's... I work with a badge of honor. If I could, I'd put KIPP on my back, tattooed right across the back. Folks know that I'm KIPP for life. That's how important KIPP is to me.

My dad wasn't really around. I guess my dad left around second grade, so I didn't really have no male father figures. First of all, I didn't have any male teachers. I don't remember one male teacher I ever had before KIPP, and he ended up going to Morehouse, Mr. Russell. That's the only one I remember. When I came to KIPP, I'm surrounded by male teachers. My first teacher, Mr. Washington, who was also my mentor. He's the principal at KAC now, but he was my band director since fifth grade all through high school, he was my advisor in high school. Now, he's my principal and my boss. We also went to the same school. When I went to Howard, we had the same exact major, we had the same exact advisor in college. I had so many male role models in that space, and that's the biggest thing for me.

Another thing was, I took bits and pieces from all my male teachers and made this super father. The super imaginary father who I wanted to mentor me. So I want to be that same male role model to all my kids because I think my identity as a black male teacher, I want to be that father figure for them, regardless of the age, regardless of what they going through. I want to be that support system. So I know without those male teachers, I wouldn't be here. I could be doing anything else besides this right now. So, I really appreciate them and that's why I came back.