



TEACHER SPOTLIGHT



OTIS KITCHEN

Tampa, Florida

Administrator - HCPS

Favorite emoji 😊

Favorite TikTok challenge:
"Motivation Monday" challenge

"Every student can excel!"

Teacher Spotlight

Otis Kitchen

What inspired you to choose teaching as your career?

My passion for education was shaped by my desire to make a lasting impact on students. I was inspired by the educators and mentors who poured into me and saw teaching as a way to give back. Over the years, my work has expanded beyond the classroom to leadership, mentorship, and advocacy, ensuring that education is not just about academics but also about empowerment and opportunity.

What do you find most rewarding about being an educator?

Witnessing transformation and seeing students gain confidence, develop leadership skills, and realize their potential. I take pride in creating spaces where students, families, and educators feel valued and heard.

What signs tell you that your students are truly connecting with and understanding what you're teaching?

When they engage in meaningful discussions, apply what they've learned in real-life situations, and take ownership of their growth. Seeing students advocate for themselves and their communities reinforces that they are not just learning but internalizing and applying knowledge.

In your opinion, what is the biggest gap in education today, and how can we begin to address it?

Ensuring that all students receive the support and resources they need to succeed. Many students face challenges outside the classroom that impact their learning, such as access to academic enrichment, mentorship, and social-emotional support. To address this, schools can strengthen community partnerships, provide more opportunities for family engagement, and create programs that meet students' diverse needs.

When you're actively engaging with students, how do you recognize those magical aha moments when the light bulb turns on?

A shift in their expression—eyes widening, a sudden smile, or an eager nod. It's in the confidence of their response, the follow-up questions they ask, and the way they engage with their peers about the concept.

Teaching often goes beyond the classroom; how do you balance your professional role with the personal drive to support students on a deeper level?

I view education as a vehicle for empowerment, so I integrate mentorship, leadership development, and community advocacy into my work. Whether it's through initiatives like the NAACP ACT-SO program, career days, or partnerships with organizations that support youth such as the Boys and Girls Club of Tampa Bay, I ensure that my students have access to role models, resources, and experiences that shape their futures.



Every student has the potential for greatness when given the right support and opportunities.

When your students think of you in 20 years, or as adults, what is the one thing you hope they remember about you?

I want them to recall how I created opportunities for them to succeed, advocate for their voices, and modeled growth, resilience, and faith.

What was your proudest moment as a teacher?

Every time I run into a former student, and they tell me how I inspired them to believe in themselves. Whether they're in college, launching their careers, or leading in their communities, they often share how my encouragement, high expectations, and belief in their potential helped shape their paths.

If you could give one piece of advice to new teachers entering the field, what would it be?

Understand that teaching is about more than just delivering content! It's about transformation. Build relationships, engage with the community, and create spaces where students feel valued and seen. Use your platform to empower!

What do you think is the most important lesson students can learn beyond academics?

The power of advocacy, self-determination, and resilience. Know their voice matters - whether in their education, community, or future careers. Teaching them to navigate systems, speak up for themselves, and create opportunities will empower them to lead and uplift others.

How do you stay motivated and inspired in your role as an educator?

By my deep commitment to leadership, and community engagement. Seeing the impact of my work through mentoring aspiring principals, expanding opportunities for educators, or fostering student success. My faith also plays a significant role, guiding me to serve with purpose and integrity. Attending conferences, engaging in professional development, and collaborating with like-minded educators.

What is one innovative teaching method or strategy you've found particularly effective in the classroom?

Integrating real-world connections by bringing in guest speakers, organizing career days, and fostering mentorship opportunities. Through partnerships with Latinos in Action, All Pro Dads, the Boys & Girls Club, NAACP ACT-SO, and Gentlemen's Quest of Tampa, Inc., I create spaces where students can connect with mentors who reflect their backgrounds and aspirations. These experiences not only broaden their perspectives but also equip them with valuable skills, confidence, and a strong sense of purpose.

