

Ashlee Peters-Roberts is a 2006 graduate of Freedom Area High School where she was a member of the “Big Red” Marching Band for five years and was the Drum Major her sophomore, junior and senior years. She played the flute and alto saxophone primarily, but also learned other woodwinds. Ashlee was a member of the Jazz Band, Drama Club, Wrestlerettes, National Honor Society, Homecoming Court, German Club and other various career-based clubs. She participated in five Freedom musicals including “*Jesus Christ Superstar*”, “*The Music Man*”, “*A Chorus Line*”, “*Seussical*”, and “*Leader of the Pack*”. She received a Mancini Award scholarship.

Ashlee began her post-secondary education at the Community College of Beaver County in 2006-2008 and transferred her credits to the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). In 2011, she obtained her Bachelors of Science degree in Social Studies Education from IUP and while there she received the Honors Scholar Award. Ashlee was a founding member of the Future Social Studies Teachers Organization at IUP and also served as the President and Vice President during her time at IUP and plans to speak to the group in March of 2023. She also served as a Lead Group Exercise Instructor at IUP. In 2014, Ashlee obtained her Masters of Arts in Teaching from California University of Pennsylvania and received the Presidential Scholars Award.

After completing her college education, Ashlee worked as a long-term sub in multiple school districts, but ultimately landed a permanent position as a Social Studies teacher at Charles A. Huston Middle School in Burrell School District where she has been teaching for the last 5 years. Prior to Burrell, she had been teaching in the Kiski Area School District. She is a 6th grade Team Leader and the Social Studies Department Liaison for the District. Ashlee serves on the committee for the District’s Safety Plan and as the coordinator for the Huston Middle School LIGHT (Leadership through Innovation in Genocide and Human Rights Teaching) Education Initiative. This program provides her middle school students with education in cultural awareness, human rights, genocide, and specifically the Holocaust. Burrell’s LIGHT Center at the Huston Middle School is one of 15 centers in Western PA with a dedicated, permanent space to remember victims of the Holocaust, human rights violations and genocide. The Burrell LIGHT Center provides her students the ability to study the Holocaust in 8th grade and provides opportunities for 6th-8th graders to interview the family of a Holocaust survivor for a Yom HaShoah event through the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh, attending the Day of Light Student Summit, and creating artwork for the school through the Positive Painting Project.

Ashlee achieved the state’s highest teaching honor by being named one of 12 finalists for the 2023 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year which is awarded by the PA Department of Education and the National State Teachers of the Year Organization. With this distinction, Ashlee became a member of two prestigious organizations: National Teachers of the Year and State Teachers of the Year. Her membership in these organizations will provide her with infinite opportunities to play a role in elevating teaching and improving education.

Ashlee’s best memories of learning at Freedom was Ms. Ionta’s World Cultures education and trip to the Holocaust Museum. This class and trip were formative in shaping her beliefs about how people should be treated. Her music education with Mr. Kovalic was critical in training her

how to be a collaborative member in a group and taught her that true leadership is not a dictatorship, but rather an intimate and diplomatic endeavor. Ashlee's elementary music education with Mr. Kline taught her at an early age how to love learning, but also to hold herself to a high standard of excellence while maintaining a sense of humor. She also loved that her parents frequently had the opportunity to be involved in her education and enrichment at Freedom Area. Because of this, her parents became lifelong friends with teachers and other Booster parents.

Ashlee says, "Freedom shares the same mission of many districts in the state of PA; the comprehensive purpose of providing a rigorous yet safe learning environment where students can learn employability (soft) skills and pursue interests at the same time. As an adult in education, I see that other school districts aspire to reach this vision and are having difficulty reaching this goal. Looking back, I can say that when I was at Freedom in the early 2000s, I knew I had a place and a purpose."