

## Meet Giselle Furlonge

Read Giselle's online bio [here](#). For a deeper dive and insights into her background and leadership approach, see the Q&A below.

### What are some experiences growing up that shaped who you are as an educator?

I'm a third-generation educator and first-generation American. My grandparents and parents immigrated to Boston from the island of Trinidad and I spent much of my childhood moving between each place's unique cultural, educational, and historic contexts. I learned how to adapt, how to approach challenges from a community-first perspective, and how to listen.

My grandmother's leadership and the work ethic of my parents shaped my earliest memories. Our kitchen table was a center of dialogue, story telling, and fellowship. It was where I learned how to move in the world with purpose and articulate my own ideas and values. Most importantly, our table was a place where laughter and curiosity motivated introspection. And everyone played their part in doing chores!

During college I lived abroad in Athens, Greece for a year. I'd dreamed of being an archaeologist since I was kid and jumped at the chance to study Ancient Greek and travel. Each morning as I walked from my apartment to the famous Acropolis, I experienced the relationship between the past and the present. Modern Greeks don't just live among ancient archaeological sites, they understand how to navigate the past's impact on the present. I learned to respect how the physical environment shapes communities and the way that each place carries with it a legacy of people.

### Who have been key mentors to you in your growth as a leader?

My first mentor as a brand-new teacher was Hadley Ferguson. A sharp intellect and fierce advocate for kids, Hadley pushed me to center innovation in my teaching and to never lose sight of what was best for kids. She taught me that it's a teacher's job to encourage students to take risks and explore new ideas without fear of failure, and that relentless belief in kids is what empowers them to reach their full potential.

My high school Latin teacher, Nathan Costa, helped me hone my skill as a linguist through the epic of Vergil's *Aeneid* and the poetry of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Years later, he was a colleague when I returned to my high school to teach Latin and Greek. Nathan modeled peerless patience and a bone-deep belief in the success of every student and adult.

When I first came to SAAS, former Registrar Gayle Pearl showed me how to live SAAS values with nuance. Gayle wasn't directly in the classroom with kids but she knew the ins and outs of what they needed to thrive.

### Why SAAS? What do you love about leadership in this community?

What first drew me to SAAS is how dynamic this community is. We are seekers. Students, faculty, and staff alike are seeking to collaborate, to design, to innovate, and to connect every day. SAAS is bold. We're also a community unafraid to try new things, to make room for difference, and to push limits.

What I love most about leading at SAAS is our habit of taking purposeful action and our disposition to act from the seat of our guiding principles. *College and Life*, *Know the Kid*, *Inclusive Community*, and *Culture of Performance* animate how we live and learn together. That synergy is what will keep me rooted in this community for years to come.