



Taylor Lena McTootle

Director of Education, Castle of our Skins

Taylor Lena McTootle is an educator and writer from the Washington, DC area now living in Roxbury, MA. Living, working, attending school in vibrant metropolises has afforded her access to an artistic discourse that centers Black life. In particular, rhythm has been central to her studies as, from a young age, she explored classical ballet, modern dance, and poetry. This early artistic trainer and affinity for poetry made her sensitive to the subtleties of meaning and emotion that later, she would realize, are crucial for developing critical understanding in young people.

Over the last ten years, Taylor Lena has worked with students of color ranging from elementary to high school. Her commitment to education began at Spelman College, where, outside of her graduate studies, she taught chess and tutored math. Since then, Taylor has been finding inventive ways to reach high educational standards and enrich lives. With charter schools in DC and Boston and with teachers in Colombia, South America, she built and executed a curriculum that used poetry, rhythm, and historical contexts. She also co-authored a syllabus on Afrofuturism for Boston University's Lifelong Learning program. Taylor Lena also published several articles for Boston Compass, Boston Hassle, and Mother Mercy, reviewing local art exhibits and music projects. Her knowledge of black musical history and innovation has a strong presence in her writing.

- **Leadership Superpower:** "My strong communication skills best characterize my leadership style. I am able to relay information in a variety of ways, with a variety of purposes, whether persuasive, instructive, or inquisitive. I pride myself on my ability to make people comfortable so that they interact with me openly, honestly, and with their sense of authority coming to the forefront. I love to see others shine!"
- **What brings her joy:** She enjoys singing in the car, dancing, lighting candles and calling a friend.
- **Theme Song:** "On and On" by Erykah is the song that always comes to my head in idle moments of wonder. I love this song because it really epitomizes the sheer simplicity of existence. It's a song that reminds me to keep going and moving forward with divine purpose even with the ebbs and flows that life brings my way."