

Passionate Teacher Brings the Goddard Model to West Africa



PRIMARY LEVELS
Mamadou Traore at the
International School of Dakar.

Goddard students seeking the path of rigorous, cultural inquiry hail from around the world. Mamadou Traore (BA EDU '14), whose family and friends know him as "Papi," embodies Goddard's holistic approach to education. Originally from Senegal in West Africa, he traversed the globe to the Plainfield campus, where he earned his bachelor of arts degree in education.

"I always knew I wanted to work with young children," he says. "I worked as a kindergarten assistant at the International School of Dakar while attending Goddard. It was hard, but so worth it. When I take the praxis this summer, I can be a full-fledged teacher with a classroom of my own."

Dakar, the westernmost

city on the African mainland, is a metropolis of 2.4 million people. The fact that it is a major point for trans-Atlantic and European trade makes its internationalism profound. The International School of Dakar is a private international school modeled after the U.S. style of education, with English taught as the primary language. It supports students starting at Pre-K through the twelfth grade. The range of ethnicities among families and faculty resonated with Mamadou, who was able to harness Goddard's mission of

inclusion in an environment that often feels like what he considers to be a "miniature United Nations."

"Coming from a developing country where over half the children don't have access to even primary school, I was inspired to contribute to the sense of tight community Goddard modeled," he says. "I felt like I was an important part of my cohort even while studying from abroad."

As a middle school soccer coach, he has taught first-time players, always emphasizing how to deal with people from different

cultural backgrounds.

"I always knew I wanted to teach internationally," continues Mamadou. "Attending Goddard just solidified my passion. Teaching is all about relationships and feeling safe." Mamadou is proud to serve as a linguistic mediator, using his Spanish and French skills to help families get by in the international school system. With his certification, he is empowered to create his own curriculum using the creative methods he adopted from Goddard. This approach is collaborative to reflect the needs of the school's student body.

It's easy to imagine how as soon as Mamadou steps foot in his classroom, his "kids" bubble forth with the same enthusiasm he exudes, calling him by his nickname, "Mr. Papis." They point eagerly to their clean desks or freshly-hung art projects. Seeing the shiny young faces glow with excitement secures Mamadou in feeling that he's doing the right thing.

"Goddard was the right choice for me, because now I know the significance of how nurturing the child enhances the community," he says. "No matter how old, what language you speak, or where you come from, we all need each other. That's the way it works." 



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