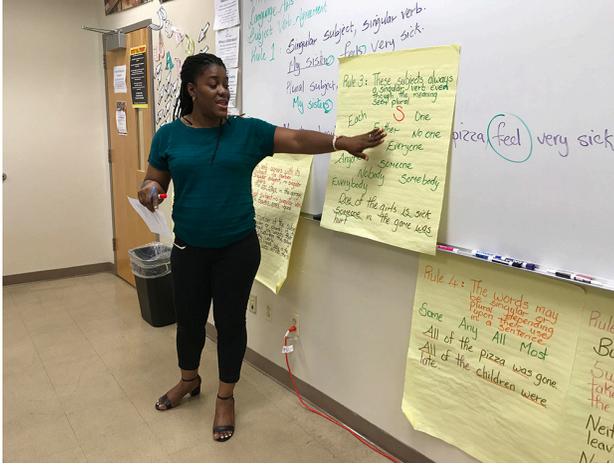


## Employee Of The Month: Odette Phillip



**Odette Phillip teaches class as Academic Enrichment lead instructor at the New Community Workforce Development Center.**

Odette Phillip is more than just a teacher to her students in the Academic Enrichment program at the New Community Workforce Development Center. She's Ms. P, their go-to person when they need help, both inside and outside the classroom.

Phillip is the lead instructor for the Academic Enrichment program, which helps Newark residents ages 16 to 24 get their high school diploma by preparing for and taking the exam TASC: Test Assessing Secondary Completion. She teaches science, social studies and language arts.

But she sees her job as more than that. She meets with each of the students before classes begin to get to know them and understand what prevented them from completing high school. She keeps the relationship with the students by having small talk and some fun at the beginning of each class. That connection leads to many of her students confiding in her when they're facing challenges in their life.

Sometimes Phillip is able to help them and other times she refers students to the Family Service Bureau for counseling. She's glad she's able to be a support system to them.

"I love what I do. I go to bed at night and they're on my mind. It's like a 24-hour thing for me," she said. "Once you work with them, they become like family."

Even after her students leave the program, Phillip maintains the relationship by reaching out to see how they're doing.

"New Community Workforce Development Center is fortunate to have Odette. She cares deeply about her students succeeding in life, not just the classroom," said Workforce Director Rodney Brutton. "Odette uses her creativity to make learning fun, which, in turn, increases student attendance, student performance and student recruitment."

Phillip started working at Workforce in 2015. She came to the location with a friend who was part of the Workforce ShopRite training program and had picked her up from Rutgers-Newark, where she earned a bachelor's degree in English. Phillip asked if there were any open positions and was able to get a job. She is now part of the Academic Enrichment team with math instructor Andrea Kelly and case manager/AmeriCorps member Quameria Edwards.

Her current position isn't her first experience teaching, however. She was born and raised in Dominica where she taught elementary and middle school aged children for 15 years. She came to the U.S. in 2003 and completed an elementary education program at Essex County College before enrolling at Rutgers-Newark. She's looking to complete a master's degree soon.

While the main purpose of the Academic Enrichment program is to help students complete their high school education, Phillip wants more than that for her students. She helps them set long-term goals, which could include college, the military or training for a trade job in one of the other programs the Workforce Development Center offers.

The success rate is high for the program. About 70 percent of the students pass the TASC and Phillip said that rate is even higher for the students ages 16 to 21. No one is turned away from the program, which means she works with students with a variety of skill levels.

"We try to reach them at the level they are. Some have a lot of challenges. We use what we do here to help overcome challenges," she said. "I'm very impressed with the work they put into it."

Phillip lives in Maplewood. She's married with two daughters, ages 12 and 9. In her spare time, she likes to read.