



**Podium**

**From Inside**

**Fall 2020 - Spring 2021**

## FROM INSIDE



**You** cannot be a writer unless you see yourself as one. Each program begins with an exploration of ourselves as writers, creators, and communicators. Some work is created by the individual, and some work is a collaborative effort.



Enjoy youth pieces from Podium's partner locations:

Albert Hill MS

Armstrong HS – A.C.E

Binford MS

Boushall MS

Henderson MS

Highland Springs High School Mentorship Program

Metro Richmond Boys & Girls Club

NextUp RVA

# Highland Springs High School: What does Mentorship Mean to Me

**Heavyn C.** Mentorship is helping someone and guiding them along the right direction. Having a mentor can be helpful, especially for students in their first year in high school as there are a lot of changes from middle school.

**Devon A.** To me, mentors are people who act as teachers and role models to others. They also inspire people to follow their dreams. I think that the ninth-graders of this year will have an especially difficult time adjusting to high school. Therefore, I feel obligated to take this opportunity to help them.

**Azariah J.** Being a mentor is helping someone accomplish their goals and guiding them onto the path they are on. I wanted to be a mentor because I know that this is a rough time for many students. I also feel like this would be a great experience to help myself grow as well.

**Theodore M.** Mentorship is when someone who has experience and knowledge about a topic teaches it to someone else. They also help fix their mistakes and encourage them to do better.

**Mekayla C.** Being a mentor to me means to be a positive listening ear for someone who needs it.

**Georgio H.** I enjoy helping others, so I am looking forward to training and being certified in this program. Guiding your mentee and learning more about them and yourself in the process is mentorship. Obtaining skills and continuously growing with your mentee is definitely an advantage. I have held leadership positions on the cheerleading team and in clubs, so I think this is a perfect opportunity for me to get more involved.

**Je'Nae H.** Being a mentor means sharing your experiences with others, so that maybe they gain knowledge from your mistakes or even learn from your choices.

**Michael I.** Mentorship to me is the act of being a leader and a role model to someone else. Like a parent, you show someone the ropes and tricks to allow them to have a better time than you had.

**Leira M.** It means being able to help someone and share my experience with others.

**Taivyon P.** It was hard for me to adjust to high school, so I wanted to do this because I know how hard it is to adjust to new surroundings and be around new people.

**LaShauna W.** I have always wanted to be a teacher, and I feel like this is a great addition to what I've already done. I have also participated in the early education technical center as well.

**Taniya R.** Mentorship is having someone as a guide and helping them get through any hard time.

# Dear Future Selves

**Dear Future Self  
Shaddiah J.  
Henderson MS**

Dear future self,

Hey girl, I hope you are doing is okay. Our life right now is a little upsetting, but it is going to be okay. Okay? The elections are coming up, and hopefully, we won't have this administration anymore.

Anyway, how is our business going? I hope we have at least three bakeries in countries other than the United States. How is Black & Beyond going? (that's our dance company). We better be married to a beautiful woman, and I hope we have beautiful or handsome kids. Well right now, we are dancing for the evolution dance company and we go to Henderson MS, but I'm hoping we get accepted into Appomattox Regional Governor's school. I really, really hope we make it into Juilliard (it's a dancing college in New York). Well, I wish you the best.

From,

13-year-old Shaddiah

**Future Adult Me  
Quinshawn U.  
Church Hill Academy**

Dear me,

I will wake up at 4 am and do my morning routine. By 5 am, I'll wake my boys up, make them do chores, and get ready for school. Once they're ready, they can play their game until it's time to get on the bus, and they will go to school. I will go kiss my wife, say, "See you later," and head to my job site. I need to check on the construction project because I'm going to be an architect. I might get a call from the foreman, but if not, I will be home all day eating and playing games.

At 2:30 pm, I will leave to go pick the boys up from school in my royal blue Maserati, and we will go on a bike ride and then go fishing. After that, we will get back to my mansion, go to the gym, eat dinner at 6:30 pm, and play games until we go to sleep.

From,

Quinshawn

**Letter to Future Me**  
**Sidney K.**  
**Albert Hill MS**

Dear Future Me,

What is 2035 like? Will people move around on jetpacks? Do people use hologram wrist watches? Have extraterrestrials visited Earth? Does Cici's still serve macaroni and cheese pizza? If so, do you still like it? Have you still kept with our dream of being a dermatologist? If not, are you a software developer, government official, or something else? Have you finished school yet?

Also, have you moved out? What path did Sierra take career-wise? If you haven't finished school, is it hard? I thought Mrs. Howard was hard, so where ever you are in school must feel IMPOSSIBLE.

What age do I get a phone? How are Mom and Dad doing? Is there a way to keep them alive until Sierra and I die? Did I do good in school? I have SO MANY QUESTIONS! Did humans get smarter or dumber? I bet we got smarter if you were involved!

Love,

Sidney

# Free Writes

## Love Imani A. Armstrong HS

I hope I heal from all the pain.  
No matter what I did, it was never enough.  
I put in my all and that still wasn't sufficient for you.  
But now, I realize it wasn't me, it was you.  
I'm gaining back every thing you took from me.  
The way I see myself now is breathtaking.  
I now know I am a true Queen.  
I'm going to be the Melanin Goddess I'm called to be.

## When was the Last Time you were Stressed Out? Manuel R. Armstrong HS

This whole school year, all of my classes have been giving out so much work. Sometimes, I don't do all of it. Instead, I just wait and do it on Friday after school.

**Why?  
Aniyah R.  
Armstrong HS**

Just because I'm a black girl  
does not mean I'm ghetto.  
Because I'm short, it doesn't mean  
I'm out in the streets.  
Because I'm black, it doesn't mean I'm dumb.  
Why do people judge me? I will never know.  
Maybe it's because they don't know me for me.

**The Lack of Education  
Allanah H.T.  
Henderson MS**

I feel like the lack of equal education is an important issue because all kids need an education to learn the importance of hard work and dedication. Kids having a good education opens up more opportunities for jobs and careers in their future.

## **My Thoughts** **Xzavier W.** **Henderson MS**

There was a time when I was debating if I should join the band or not. At that point, I had thought hard, so I just asked my mom. When I asked her, she said, "Choose what you want to choose."

I thought of the time when I was in our 5th grade band and playing a saxophone, which I wasn't good at. I said to myself, "If I can go to a different band, I can choose a different instrument." So then, I went!

## **Paying Attention** **Xzavier W.** **Henderson MS**

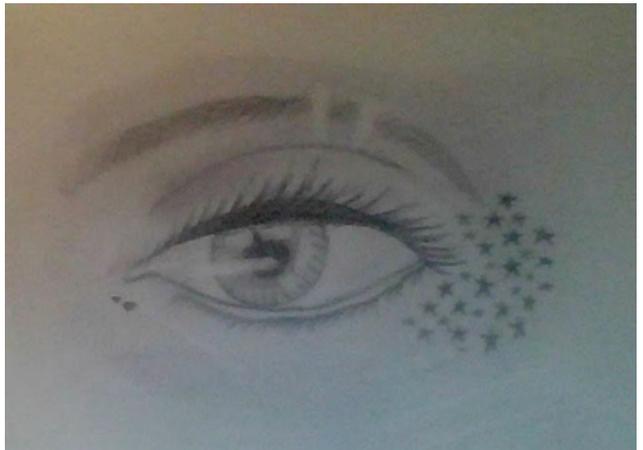
You need to know what you are doing, and instructions help with that. You need to go top to bottom before doing your task. Active listening helps someone see and understand what others are talking about. You can practice it by listening closely, of course, and by thinking hard about what others are talking about, so you can build on those ideas. In the long run, these skills help you get through difficult things that happen in your life. You may also need to listen to certain people to succeed, like your teachers, and to get through school.

**Think of It  
Xzavier W.  
Henderson MS**

The homeless and people who are poor are often the same thing. Listen, the people who are poor don't have enough money for food, clothing, and the things that they need to survive, but they will push themselves in a way that they will not give up. People without money are hustling for their family and friends. They have rough times.

Now, just think about how the homeless got to be homeless. They've had some harder times or been in places where they couldn't stand up for themselves. We should stand up against the things that create homelessness.

**The Eye  
Aniyah R.  
Armstrong HS**



**Feel**  
**Anonymous Submission**  
**Armstrong HS**

Why is it that I don't have any respect for myself because  
I don't do things your way?  
Why am I even here if you hate me like you say?  
All I want is the love you have for everyone else.  
You make my heart, but  
You've made me hate myself.  
If you hate, why do you keep me here?  
I just want to be happy,  
Is that too much to ask?  
I'm sorry I'm not perfect anymore.  
Maybe I should just go; you wouldn't care anyway.

**Six Word Story**  
**Imani A.**  
**Armstrong HS**

She  
    realized  
        she  
            was  
                worth  
                    it.

**The Intelligent Boy**  
**Jamari T.**  
**Armstrong HS**

There once was a boy who was stupidly intelligent  
who lived in a neighborhood that wasn't very  
benevolent.

He survived throughout life looking the most elegant,  
but there were always people hating who weren't even  
relevant,  
and never did he know they were simply just a fragment.

**What Matters To Me**  
**Tamiyah C.**  
**Metro Richmond Boys & Girls Club**

As a young child, my parents have always allowed me to voice how I feel about a situation and acknowledged that how I feel is valid. In May of 2020, a tragic experience happened to someone who is African American, and his name was George Floyd. The wrongful death of him sparked protests, social demonstrations, marches, and tons of social media voices. It not only hurt his family, but it has hurt other people who are African American. Living in Richmond during this time, a hub for historical activism, has shown me that this has to change, and we won't stop until it does.

We, the citizens of Richmond, have protested peacefully, and in return, we received hateful abuse from people who are supposed to protect us. Instead of allowing our voices to be heard, the city set a curfew and increased police attention. Why can't we express how we feel without being attacked? Why should the color of our skin cause us to be treated differently and looked at differently?

## What Matters To Me contd.

All we want is justice for every Black person who has been killed, injured, or put away for no reason. We want to be seen as equal and treated fairly. Why is that so hard to ask for? I am proud to be an African American. We have created history along with others who feel the injustice of our race. We have gotten racist statues taken down, and we turned the most racist statue, Robert E. Lee, into a memorial with national recognition. Not to remember what he has done, but to remember that history can't be changed but the meaning behind something can.

The Boys & Girls Club taught me that my voice matters. They provided me the resources and networks I needed to get something done and helped me instill the confidence I need to speak up and speak. You never know when there may be another person who feels the way I do, but they are too afraid to say it. They provided me with opportunities to go to multiple rallies such as the Red4Ed rally to increase teacher pay and other necessities. I was also able to attend a peaceful showing of talented African Americans who live in my city. My club has hosted zoom meetings, like these with Podium, and field trips that offer safe and supportive spaces to discuss what was happening in my community and why.

In the future, I want youth, such as myself, to be allowed the many opportunities that I had. Whether it be activism or just having someone or somewhere they could confide in and be comfortable as themselves. I want future club members to have the same support from staff when their voices, feelings, and opinions are heard. The biggest thing that I want is for Black Lives to Matter. I want justice. I want equality. I want to know that other Black queens and kings don't have to fear for their life or safety when going out. It will happen, and when it does, then and only then, will I be satisfied.

# From the Highland Springs High School Mentorship Program

## Skills I Prepared to be a Mentor

### Problem Solving

**Georgio H.**

I am good at problem solving. I know this because since I was little I've always been engaged in activities and real life situations that display that skill. Leave it up to me to have something solved if it's put on my plate. I take a second to work through things and try to understand and see how I can fix it or improve it. That's how I realized I was good with problem solving. I am always looking forward to improving or figuring out the end result.

### Relationship Building

**Matthew B.**

I think I'm good at building relationships because I previously did some community work with complete strangers, and we still keep in contact with each other after a few years.

## Obstacles I've Overcome

**Matthew B.**

I overcame losing both friends and family to help me understand that life is short. You only have limited time on Earth to enjoy yourself. Work towards your goals now so you can just relax in the future.

**Georgio H.**

One obstacle I overcame to be where I am now was worrying a lot about what other people think. I wasn't focusing on myself, and I let others' opinions overpower my own abilities. I was able to take a second and realize how much more I could be doing instead of limiting myself for the next person. This resulted in unhealthy friendships being broken, and I created a space to re-align for me and what I want to do for myself.

# Why Did I Become a Peer-Mentor

## My 4 Whys Michael A.

**WHY:** I became a mentor because I enjoy helping others.

**WHY:** Because I understand how hard this new virtual way of learning can be.

**WHY:** This method is very hard to learn from and stay focused. Especially if it your first year in high school, it's going to be painful.

**WHY:** Virtual learning is a new concept that has become our normal, and we are still in a learning period with computer and internet issues.

## My 5 Whys Taivyon P.

**WHY:** I became a mentor because I remember how hard it was when I first started high school and how complicated things were for me.

**WHY:** Starting high school is a big step and is not always easy for some.

**WHY:** There are more things to focus on when you're in high school, like classes, jobs, friends, etc.

**WHY:** Balancing school work and actual work can make students feel overwhelmed.

**WHY:** Sometimes high school life is too much to focus on all at once or so suddenly without help.

**In Podium, each of us  
has a creative voice!**

***Happy reading!***

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