

# **A Pathway to Youth Advocacy: Strategies to Support Young People**

February 17, 2022



**COLLABORATIVE  
MENTORING**   
WEBINAR SERIES

# Participate in Today's Webinar

- All attendees muted for best sound
- Type questions in the **Q&A** panel
- Type comments in the **Chat** box
- **Live captions** available in the panel by clicking on the “**CC**” at the bottom of the screen
- Respond to polls
- Who is with us today?
  - Type in the **Chat** to introduce yourself!
  - For all participants to see your message, change to “All panelists and attendees” in the Chat

Audio Settings ^



Chat



Raise Hand



Q&A



Live Transcript

Leave

**COLLABORATIVE MENTORING**  
WEBINAR SERIES

# Good to Know...

**One week after the webinar, all attendees receive an email with:**

- Instructions for how to access a PDF of presentation slides and webinar recording
- Link to the [Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series webpage](#), where all slides, recordings and resources are posted

**Please help us out by answering survey questions at the end of the webinar.**

# Today's Webinar

- Strategies and practices to engage and support youth in advocacy
- Ways mentors and organizations can support youth and mentees
- The connection between advocacy, leadership, and mentoring

# Bianca Myrick



Bianca Myrick is the founder and executive director of Pretty Purposed, a non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring communities to empower young women and girls through mentorship and enrichment programming. Bianca is also the executive director of the Virginia Association of Environmental Education, championing the use of education to advance environmental literacy and civic engagement to create a more equitable and sustainable future. As a consultant, she is able to support individuals, organizations, and businesses, specifically in the areas of youth development. She is a graduate of Virginia State University, where she now serves as an adjunct professor teaching other students about the nonprofit sector, human service work, and philanthropy. Bianca also has a masters degree in public administration from Virginia Commonwealth University. In addition to being a grassroots nonprofit leader, she dedicates her time to grantmaking to Black and Brown led organizations and individuals, as a founding board member of Collective 365.

# Kristin Lennox



Kristin Lennox (she/her) is the Advocacy and Engagement Manager at Voices for Virginia's Children. She is responsible for identifying advocacy opportunities; developing traditional, digital, and grassroots engagement and advocacy strategies; and mobilizing advocates to support policy priorities.

Kristin has delivered global workshops and trainings on themes of trauma-informed care, healing centered engagement, and de-escalation. Kristin is passionate about increasing equity in community resources and mental health access for youth and families in Virginia. Kristin earned her Bachelor and Master of Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University, and is currently an Adjunct Instructor with VCU's School of Social Work. She is a practicing Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Certified Trauma and Resilience Practitioner.

# Kyndall Miller



Kyndall is a full-time student, writer, mentoring advocate and aspiring lawyer from Covington, Kentucky. After being a mentee for four years, she served as a board member for her local mentoring program, Covington Partners, to help ensure that a student's perspective was shown in all mentoring-related decisions. Now a freshman at the University of Louisville, she pursues a degree centered around restorative justice and peace studies. Kyndall has worked with MENTOR National as well as the NMRC on youth advocacy as well as establishing one of the first official peer mentoring guides.

# Khalil Sakho



Khalil is an aspiring lawyer, politician and board member. He is currently a senior studying Political Science and Economics, and plans to enter the workforce, gain professional experience, and then pursue his master's in Political Economy. He is dedicated to using his expertise in mentoring, advocacy, and leadership in hopes of transforming the school-to-prison pipeline into the school-to-career pipeline. In addition to his career pursuits, he serves his community as a mentor, advocate and ambassador.

# Poll

What experience does you or your organization have with youth advocacy?

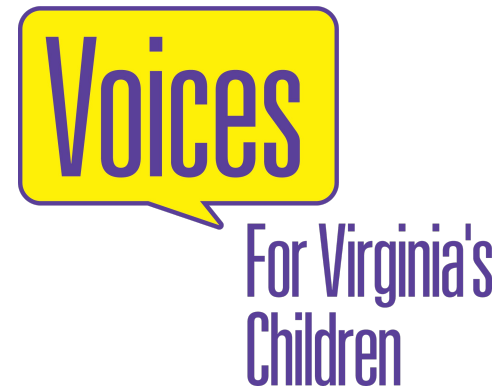
- a) A lot, youth advocacy is an ongoing part of my organization and/or youth work
- b) Some, but I still think there are some things we need to learn
- c) None, we're just getting started

# Voices for Virginia's Children

Voices for Virginia's Children is a nonprofit organization committed to improving and protecting the lives of Virginia's children, youth, and families. We believe every child should have equitable access to the resources, services and opportunities needed to thrive. For us, that means advocating for sound policies, educating the public, mobilizing communities, utilizing data to determine unmet needs, and leading with compassion. Our aim is to always close the systemic gaps that fail children, prioritize racial justice in policymaking, and ensure every voice has a role in shaping their future.

## Policy areas:

- Early care and education
- Family economic security
- Foster care and adoption
- Health and well-being
- Mental health
- Trauma-informed care



**COLLABORATIVE MENTORING**  
WEBINAR SERIES

# Youth Engagement

- Legislative advocacy
- Public speaking (rallies, press conferences)
- Public testimony
- Storytelling
- Blog writing
- Video blogs, PSAs
- Media
- Social media



# Preparing for Advocacy



- Building trust
  - with individuals and groups
  - engaging caregivers/supports
  - establishing group rules
- Workshops
  - legislative processes
  - justice advocacy
  - storytelling
- Meeting with policy analysts
- Small group and/or 1on1 storytelling coaching

# Equity at the Forefront

**Tokenism** - “the practice of doing something (such as hiring a person who belongs to a minority group) only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly”

- Centering, uplifting lived experience
- Focus on their passions
- Offering compensation
  - Financial
  - Skill-building
  - Networking/references
- Mindful follow-ups, debriefs
- Asking what they want to learn/grow



**D** Dogwood  
February 8 at 11:09 PM · 🌐

## Melissa Gilliam

Did you know that one-in-five Virginia children experience symptoms of mental health disorders? That's according to Voices for Virginia's Children, an independent multi-issue child policy and advocacy organization. The organization hosted a virtual mental health discussion with elected officials and youth advocates on Jan. 28.

One of those advocates was 23-year-old Melissa Gilliam, who said she shares similar stories with countless children and young adults.

"Whether it's trouble at home, anxiety, depression, or surviving a pandemic, we need help," Gilliam said. "We need resources."

# Healing-Centered Engagement

*“I am more than what happened to me.”*

Healing centered engagement is a non-clinical, strength-based approach that advances a holistic view of healing and re-centers culture and identity as a central feature in well-being.

- Principles: Culture, Agency, Relationships, Meaning, Aspirations
- Address the root causes of trauma that exist in the environment, not the individual
- Focus on healing through culture and identity rather than merely coping
- **Healing-Centered Engagement** can look like...
  - Mindfulness, self-regulation
  - Building confidence
  - Discussing identity, culture, lived experiences
  - Fostering meaningful connections

# Experience



- First became a mentee in 2018 after being recommended due to my status as a first-generation student who wanted to go to college.
- Was selected to be a student board member of Covington Partners in 2019 to take part in decisions related to funding of the mentoring program.
- Was selected to become a Youth Advocate for Mentoring by MENTOR the same year.
- Worked on developing a peer mentoring guide with the National Mentoring Resource Center in 2021.
- Currently serving as a literacy mentor with a local mentoring program called the DECODE Project and working on starting a mentoring program for first generation students.

# Best Practices



- Have a clear goal in mind before starting.
- Garner an understanding of your target audience - who is this issue affecting, who would support your efforts?
- Create a concrete plan - look at examples from other activists.
- Build a coalition - make as many connections as possible and build on them.

# Mentors & Advocacy



- Make communication a habit - if something bothers you, or if you need help, practicing honesty has the potential to resolve sticky situations.
- Mentors should let mentees take the wheel when it comes to their own advocacy efforts, even if the mentor does not personally identify with/understand the issue at hand.
- Regularly check in and make your presence known
- Offer help in finding resources or building connections with people who might be interested in helping.

# Advice For Youth Advocates



- It's okay to step back and take a break - the best work comes when you're happy and healthy.
- Ask for help often. Trying to represent an entire group of people is hard. It's okay to admit that you don't know everything.
- Only work with those who you know will be able to commit to what you're working on.
- Connect with other youth advocates.

# Experience



- AMACHI: Youth Ambassador for Youth With Incarcerated Loved Ones (14-17)
- Black Male Leadership Development Institute (14-17)
- M.A.N. U.P Mentoring (18-Virtual)
- MENTOR Youth Advocate for Mentoring (19-Current)
- STS Elite Memphis (20-Current)

# My Policy Work

Transforming “the school-to prison” into “the school-to-career” pipeline

- Congress should allocate federal funding for:
  - HBCU Mentoring Programs
    - HBCU students will serve as mentors in their respective title one school districts
    - HBCU Alumni will serve as mentors to students who plan to graduate from a HBCU
  - Leadership Programs
    - Funding programs that aim to develop youth leaders and advocates

# School - To - Career Pipeline



- Combat youth delinquency
- Develop student's professionalism
- Transition students to post-secondary success
- Provide students with real world connections

# Mentoring vs. Leadership Programs

## Mentoring Programs

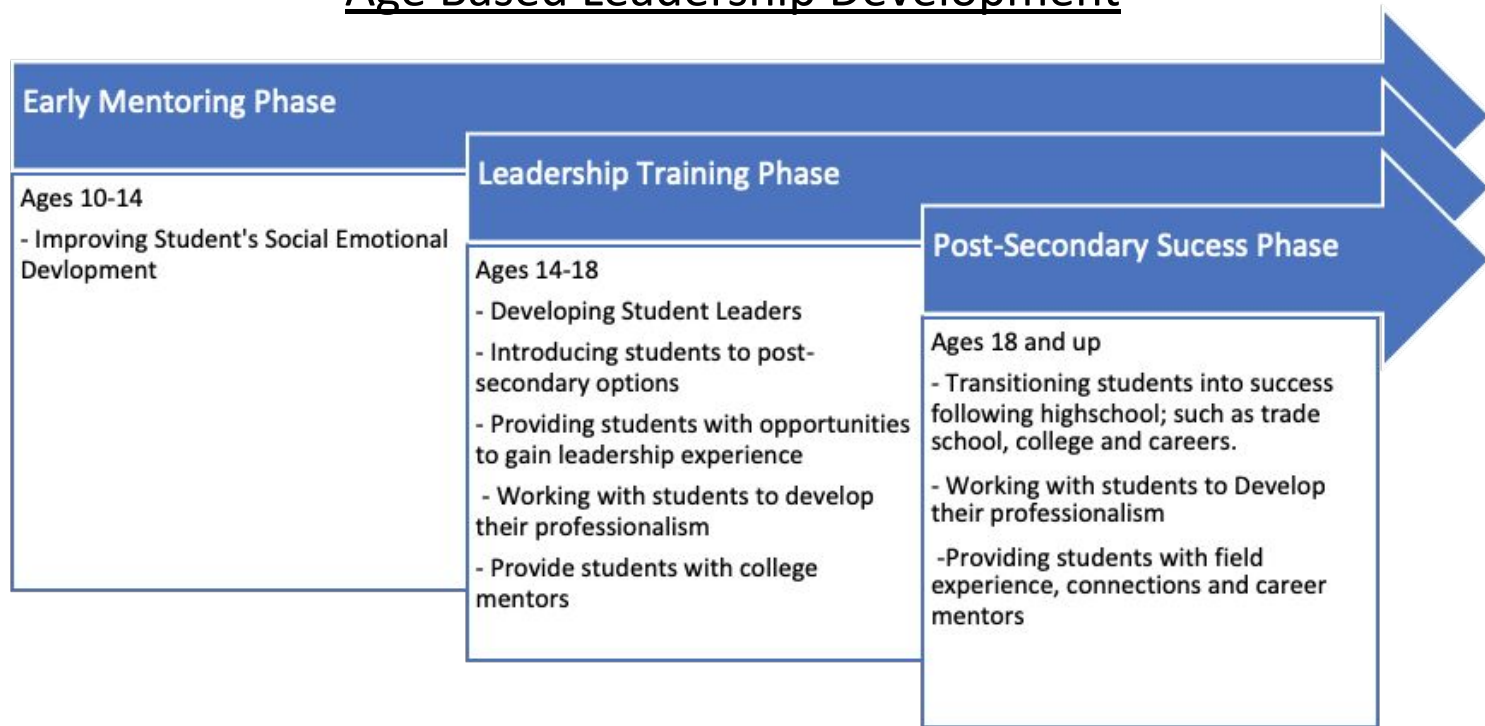
- Provide students with role models.
- Improves student's social emotional development.
- Mentors encourage students to become leaders in the classroom, college and in their careers.

## Leadership & Advocacy Programs

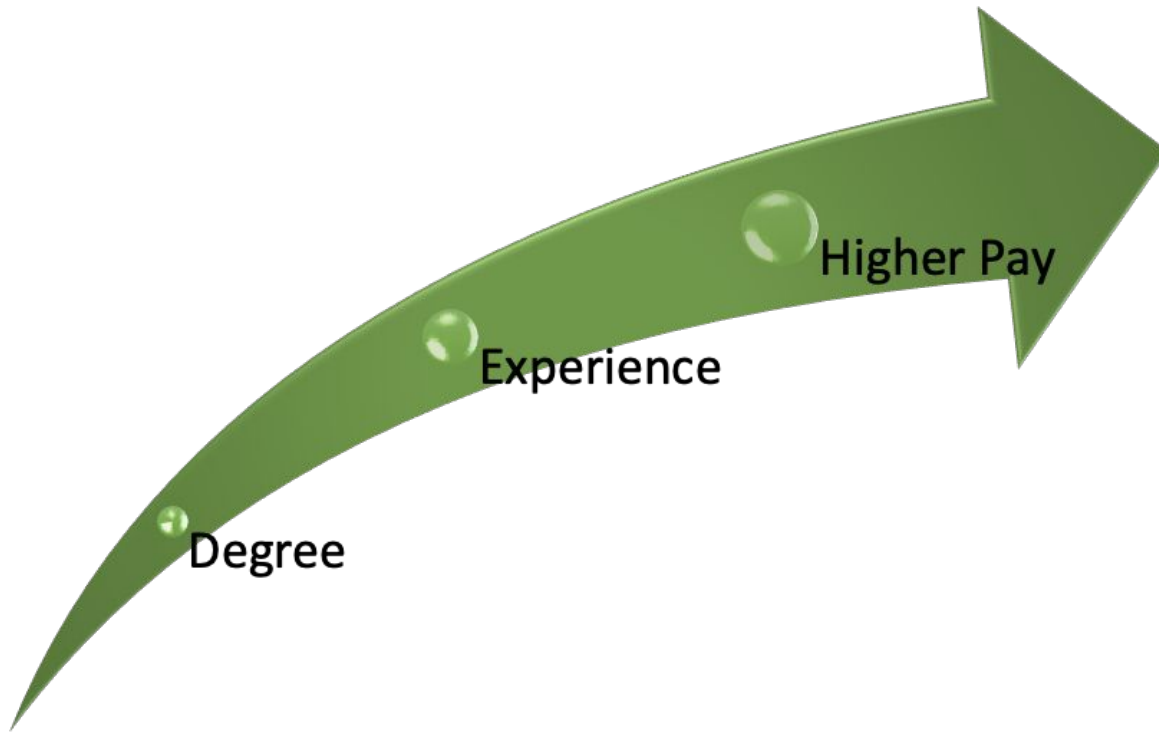
- Provide students with opportunities to develop professionalism and leadership.
- Prepares students to become leaders in their careers.
- Bridge the achievement gap

# Leadership Development

## Age Based Leadership Development

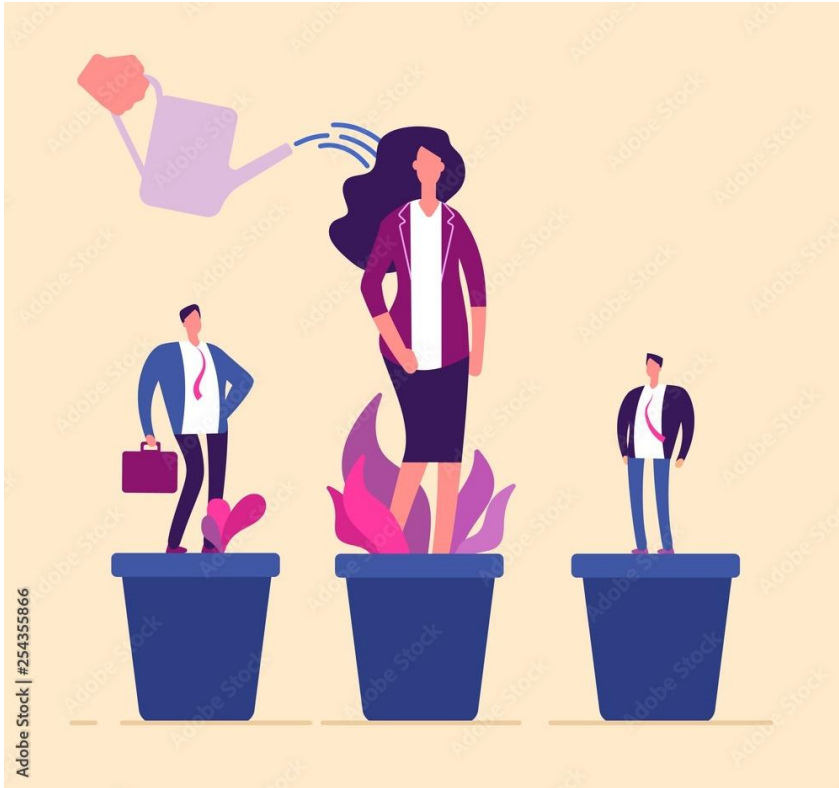


# The Career Development Continuum



- Degree (and/or trade certificates) + Experience = Higher Pay
  - Encouraging youth to pursue degrees as “assets”
  - Prompting youth to view college as a “fun learning journey”
- Using this frame work to help students build a roadmap for their next 5 years towards post-secondary success.
- Breaking the glass ceiling
  - Ensuring youth enter the workforce prepared to excel in their career

# Each One. Reach One Principle



- Create program models that account for students served in the program
  - Ensuring that each student accounted for benefits from the program
  - Ensuring that every student accounted for is on track to transition to post-secondary success.

# “Fun”ding



- Make programs fun and engaging.
- Ensure that programs are working to develop students while rewarding them.
- Be unique with incentives provided to participants.

# Ideas

- Tangible resources to express voice in virtual space such as podcasts, You Tube, Blog posts
- Leading round table discussions or hosting events on youth centered issues, giving them a platform within their school
- Exposure and opportunities to community and professional settings (ex: town hall meeting)
- Peer Mentoring
- Storytelling coaching & justice advocacy
- Life skills development

# Challenges

- Scheduling
- Supporting youth through life stressors
- Response to youth crisis (training and resources available)
- School & familial pressures
- Access to resources (transportation, phone service)
- Lack of incentives
- Youth Engagement

# Resources

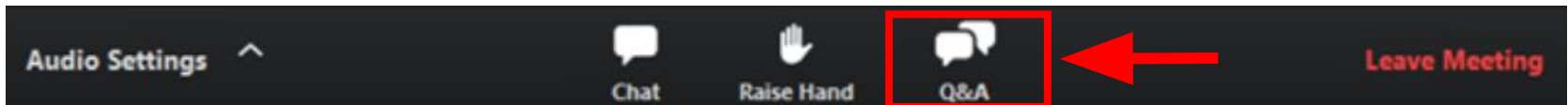
- Voices for Virginia's Children - vakids.org
  - Legislative advocacy guides, storytelling workshops, unified policy agendas, upcoming events/advocacy opportunities...
  - [Voices Advocacy Guide](#)

# Resources

- MENTOR Advocacy Resources & Legislative Priorities:  
<https://www.mentoring.org/resource/advocacy-resources/>
  - [Grassroots Advocacy 101 Webinar](#)
- Sign up for MENTOR advocacy and policy updates and alerts [here](#)
- MENTOR & Our Work [One Pager](#)

# Q&A

**Type your questions in  
the Q&A panel**



# Contact Our Panelists

- Bianca Myrick- [BiancaMyrick@prettypurposed.org](mailto:BiancaMyrick@prettypurposed.org)
- Kristin Lennox - [kristin@vakids.org](mailto:kristin@vakids.org)
- Kyndall Miller- [kimill02@louisville.edu](mailto:kimill02@louisville.edu)
- Khalil Sakho- [khalilsakho831@gmail.com](mailto:khalilsakho831@gmail.com)

# Additional Resources

## Affiliates

Affiliates serve as a clearinghouse for training, resources, public awareness and advocacy. Find your local affiliate here:

<http://www.mentoring.org/our-work/our-affiliates/>

## Mentoring Connector

Recruit mentors by submitting your program to the Mentoring Connector

<https://connect.mentoring.org/admin>

## National Mentoring Resource Center

Check out the [OJJDP National Mentoring Resource Center](#) to access evidence-based mentoring resources and to apply for no-cost training and technical assistance

# Remember...

## After the webinar:

- Please help us out by answering survey questions at the end of the webinar.
- Everyone will get an email with information on how to download the slides, recording, and resources on the CMWS webpage on the MENTOR website:

[http://www.mentoring.org/program\\_resources/training\\_opportunities/collaborative\\_mentoring\\_webinar\\_series/](http://www.mentoring.org/program_resources/training_opportunities/collaborative_mentoring_webinar_series/)

# Stay Connected

- **Email us** at [collaborativewebinarseries@mentoring.org](mailto:collaborativewebinarseries@mentoring.org)
- **Tweet** with hashtag #MentoringWebinar
- **Visit our webpage** on the MENTOR website for past and upcoming webinars:



The Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series is hosted by MENTOR National and facilitated by MENTOR and a planning team of MENTOR Affiliates. Through ongoing planning and evaluation of the latest developments in the field, this team delivers a webinar each month focused on strengthening mentoring practice, sharing new resources, and helping the field put research into practice. These webinars would not be possible without the planning team, which includes the following *Affiliates*: MENTOR Colorado, MENTOR Indiana, MENTOR North Carolina, MENTOR Vermont, and MENTOR Washington.

**COLLABORATIVE MENTORING**  
WEBINAR SERIES

# Join Us Next Month!

Goal Setting with Mentees  
Thursday, March 17  
1PM Eastern



**COLLABORATIVE  
MENTORING**   
WEBINAR SERIES