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Southern Area

**THE**  
*Magical Impact*  
OF INTENTIONAL FRIENDSHIP & SERVICE

*40<sup>th</sup>* **SOUTHERN AREA  
CONFERENCE**

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**VANESSA FALLS**  
SOUTHERN AREA DIRECTOR

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# Alchemy for the Ages: Managing Positive and Effective Interactions with Youth (Kindergarten-College)

**Presented by:**

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# Research for Working with School-Aged Students

## 1. Age Appropriate Connections

Strong connections between the school and students are vital for academic success, social-emotional development, and overall well being. Connected students are less likely to engage in risky behaviors like substance abuse, violence, or gang involvement.

## 2. Create a Safe Space for Students

Social activities like talking and laughing cause the body to release the hormone oxytocin. This helps us to bond with others. Those bonds create a feeling that's often called "psychological safety." When students feel psychologically safe, they're more likely to participate in class discussions, ask questions, try new things even when it's hard or perceived to be boring, and talk in a tone of voice that's appropriate and respectful. Building psychological safety is harder with some students than others.

## 4. Make Connections to Who We Are and our Goals

Share our Links story, who we are, why we do what we do, why we've chosen their class or school to work with, how our work with them will benefit and broaden their experiences. (DO NOT give off an "elitess" demeanor. You will lose the student.)

## Summary-Age Appropriateness:

Research suggests that the way educators connect with students should be tailored to their age and developmental stage. For example, younger children may benefit from playful, hands-on activities, while older students might appreciate more challenging academic tasks and opportunities for leadership.

# What's the difference in the learning style needs?

## Elementary Age/School (K-6)

- **Elementary Students:** Younger learners tend to benefit from **hands-on, kinesthetic learning**, where they engage in activities that involve movement and interaction.
- They also respond well to **visual aids** like pictures, diagrams, and storytelling. Their attention spans are shorter, so lessons need to be engaging and varied

## Secondary Age/School (7th-12th)

- **Secondary Students:** Older students typically develop stronger **abstract thinking skills**, allowing them to grasp complex concepts and theories.
- They may rely more on **reading/writing and auditory learning**, such as lectures and discussions. They also benefit from **self-directed learning**, where they take more responsibility for their education. \*\*Give them a voice and make connections.

# What's the difference in the learning style needs?

## Elementary Age/School (K-6)

1. **Hands-On Learning:** Using manipulatives like blocks, puzzles, and interactive experiments helps young learners grasp concepts through direct experience.
2. **Storytelling & Role-Playing:** Narratives and imaginative play engage children in ways that make learning enjoyable and memorable.
3. **Visual Aids & Multimedia:** Charts, videos, and colorful graphics help reinforce understanding.
4. **Games & Movement-Based Activities:** Incorporating learning into games—such as scavenger hunts or educational songs—keeps students engaged.
5. **Short, Focused Lessons:** Given their shorter attention spans, lessons should be broken into small, digestible parts with frequent breaks.

## Secondary Age/School (7th-12th)

- **Project-Based Learning:** Encouraging students to work on extended projects fosters independent thinking and collaboration.
- **Debates & Discussions:** Older students benefit from critical thinking exercises like structured debates or Socratic seminars.
- **Technology Integration:** Digital tools, interactive simulations, and multimedia presentations can make lessons more engaging and relevant.
- **Real-World Connections:** Linking lessons to current events or practical applications enhances motivation.
- **Student-Led Learning:** Encouraging autonomy, such as flipped classrooms or independent research, promotes deeper understanding.

# How does this connect to Links as we mentor, engage in STEM, and partner with schools?

School volunteers play a crucial role in supporting students' learning experiences, and understanding different learning styles can make their contributions even more effective. Here's how learning styles connect with volunteer efforts and what volunteers should know:

## Elementary Students

- **Be Hands-On:** Young learners thrive with interactive activities, so volunteers should engage students in crafts, games, and storytelling.
- **Use Visual & Kinesthetic Methods:** Showing pictures, using flashcards, and incorporating movement (like acting out stories) can help reinforce learning.
- **Be Patient & Encouraging:** Elementary students need positive reinforcement, so volunteers should focus on building confidence and enthusiasm.

## Secondary Students (Grades 6-12)

- **Encourage Critical Thinking:** Older students benefit from discussions, problem-solving activities, and debates, so volunteers can help by facilitating conversations.
- **Support Independent Learning:** Secondary students may need guidance with research, organization, or goal-setting rather than direct instruction.
- **Use Technology & Real-World Applications:** Incorporating digital tools and real-life connections can make learning more engaging and relevant.

## General Tips for Volunteers

- **Adapt to Student Needs:** Observing and adjusting to students' preferred learning styles can make interactions more productive.
- **Be Flexible & Engaging:** Students respond well when lessons feel dynamic and relatable.
- **Foster a Positive Learning Environment:** Encouraging curiosity, participation, and confidence helps students succeed.

Let's hear from a local chapter and how they have implemented an effective mentoring program at the secondary level. What has been their strategy to connect with students.

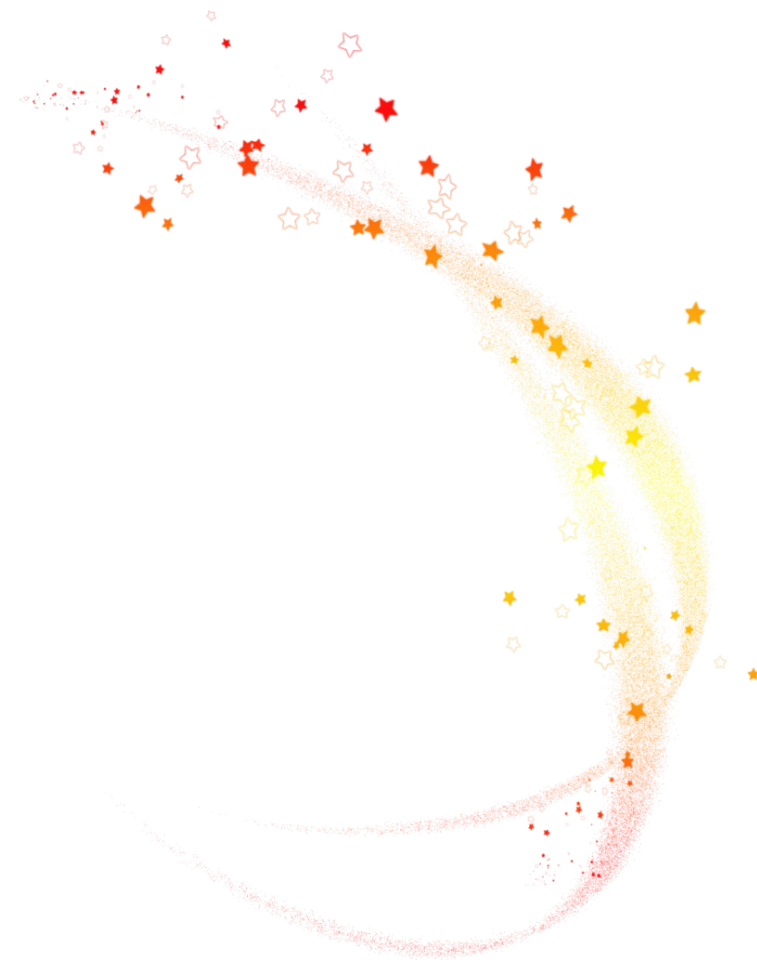
**Magic City (AL) Chapter  
Birmingham, Alabama**

**Link Yvette M. Richardson, STY Facet Chair**  
**Link Monique Houser, STY Facet Co-Chair**



*Let's Play!!!*

<https://create.kahoot.it/details/7546a44d-b94c-4095-a118-60c454e66607>





# The Alchemy of Impact: Crafting Powerful Bonds Between Mentors and HBCU Changemakers

**Presented by:**  
**Link Ebony Lumumba and Juno L. Jacobs**  
**HBCU Co-Chairs**



# The Mentor's Charm: Relate, Reflect, Rise

# Tips for Making Mentoring Magic

## 1. Practice Cultural Humility, Not Assumptions

Even with shared cultural ties, generational differences can create distance. Approach each mentee with curiosity rather than assumptions. Ask open-ended questions about their goals, values, and challenges—and listen with care.

## 2. Prioritize Relationship Before Results

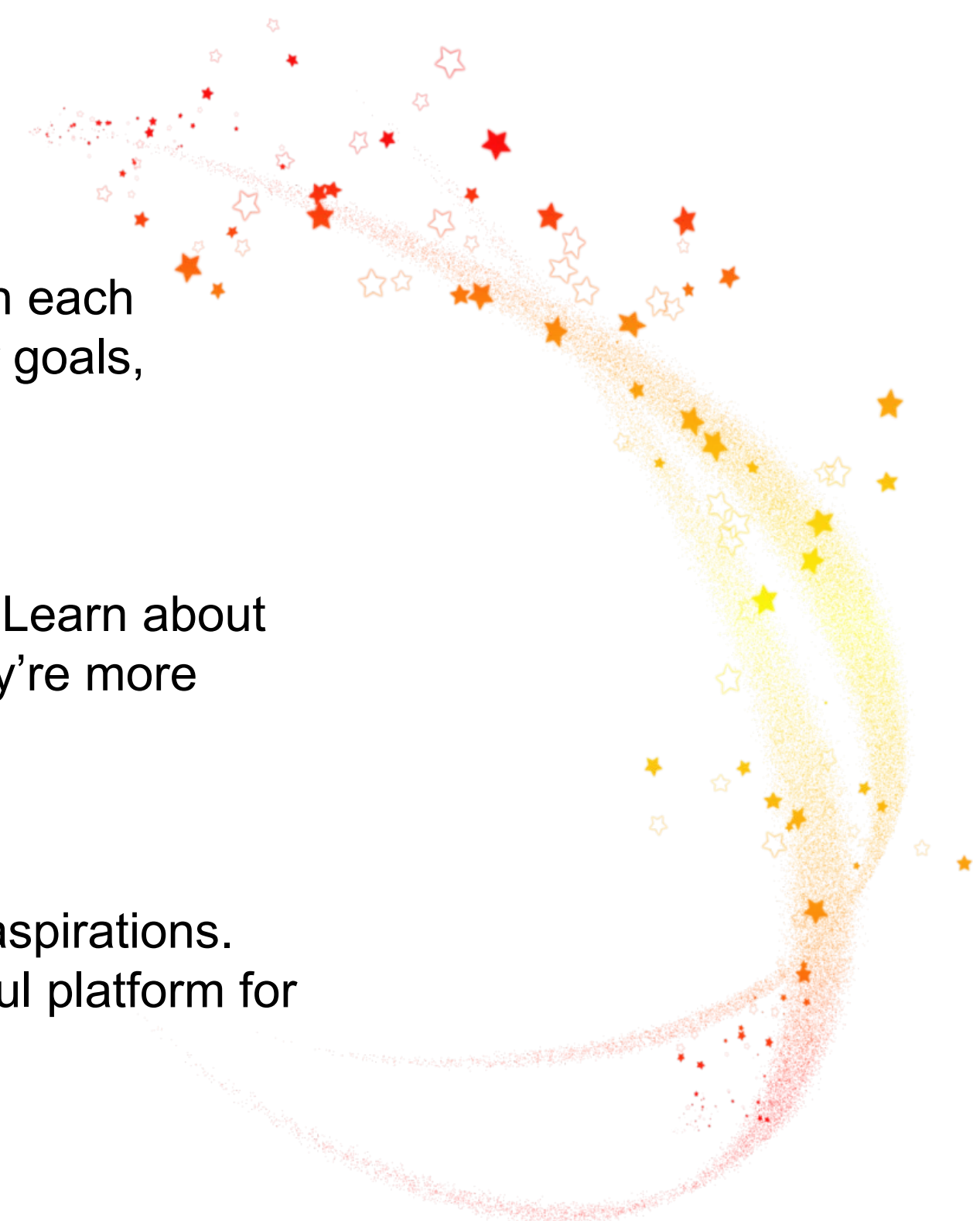
Before diving into career or service project tasks, take time to build authentic rapport. Learn about their interests, academic paths, and personal triumphs. When mentees feel seen, they're more likely to stay engaged and open.

## 3. Align Service with Student Purpose

Help mentees connect their service projects with their personal passions and career aspirations. Encourage them to see community engagement not as an obligation, but as a powerful platform for leadership and legacy.

## 4. Share Your Story—and Your Growth

Let them see the full arc of your journey—including missteps, lessons, and resilience. Vulnerability builds trust. Storytelling is a culturally resonant tool that can affirm identity and inspire action.



# Tips for Making Mentoring Magic

## 5. Be Consistently Present, Not Perfect

Consistency often matters more than perfection. Show up—virtually or in-person—as scheduled. Offer texts or calls of encouragement. Presence, especially in times of stress, builds lasting bonds.

## 6. Stay Open to Their Cultural and Digital Worlds

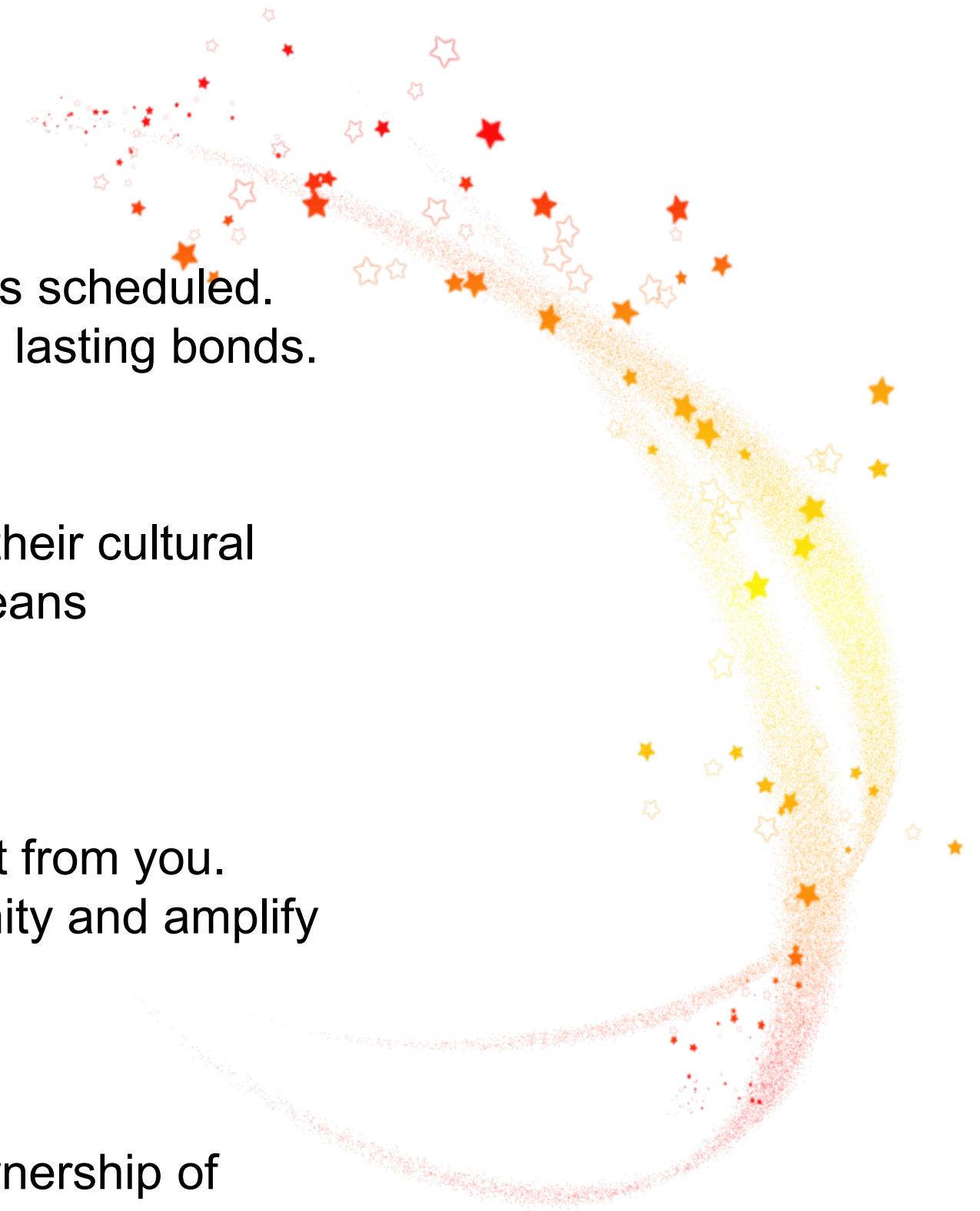
Engage with the platforms they use (Instagram, TikTok, GroupMe) and understand their cultural touchstones (music, memes, social movements). This doesn't mean imitation—it means awareness and openness.

## 7. Facilitate Peer Networks

Encourage group mentoring sessions where students learn from each other, not just from you. Your chapter can host “mentoring circles” or cross-campus cohorts to build community and amplify collective brilliance.

## 8. Co-Create, Don't Dictate

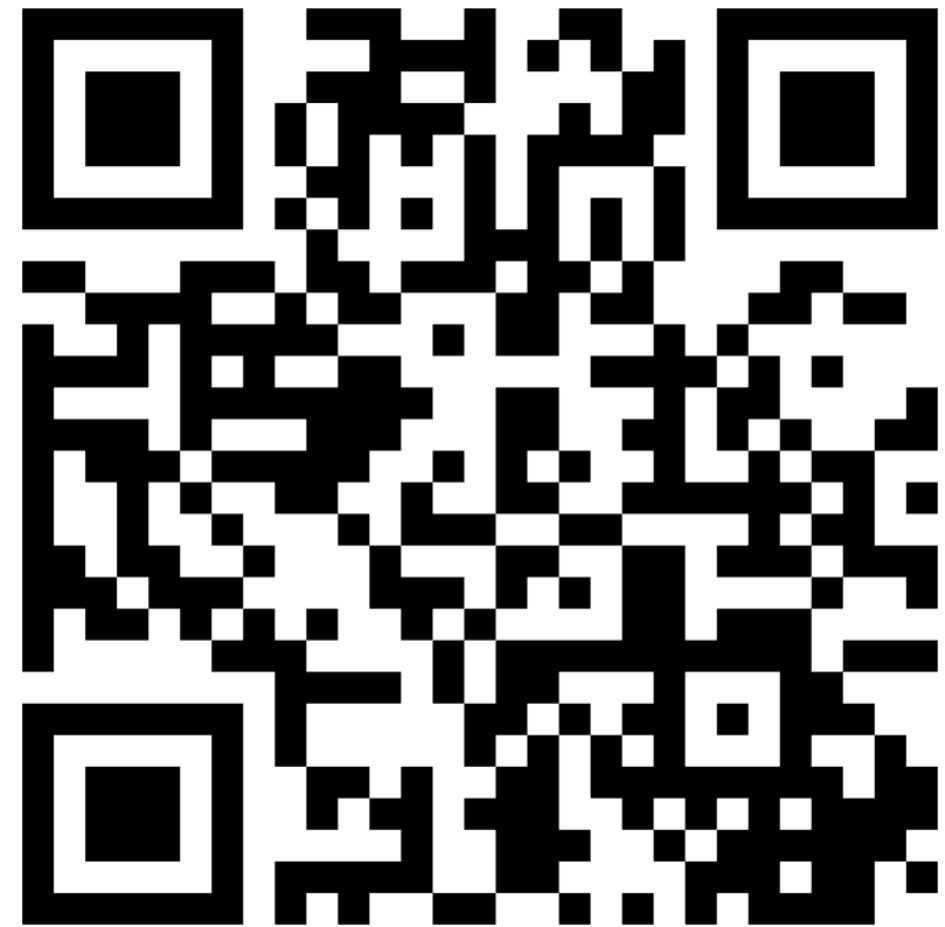
Invite students into the planning and execution of service projects. Let them take ownership of initiatives, supported by your guidance—not constrained by it. Empowerment is a form of mentorship magic.



# Spellbinding Support

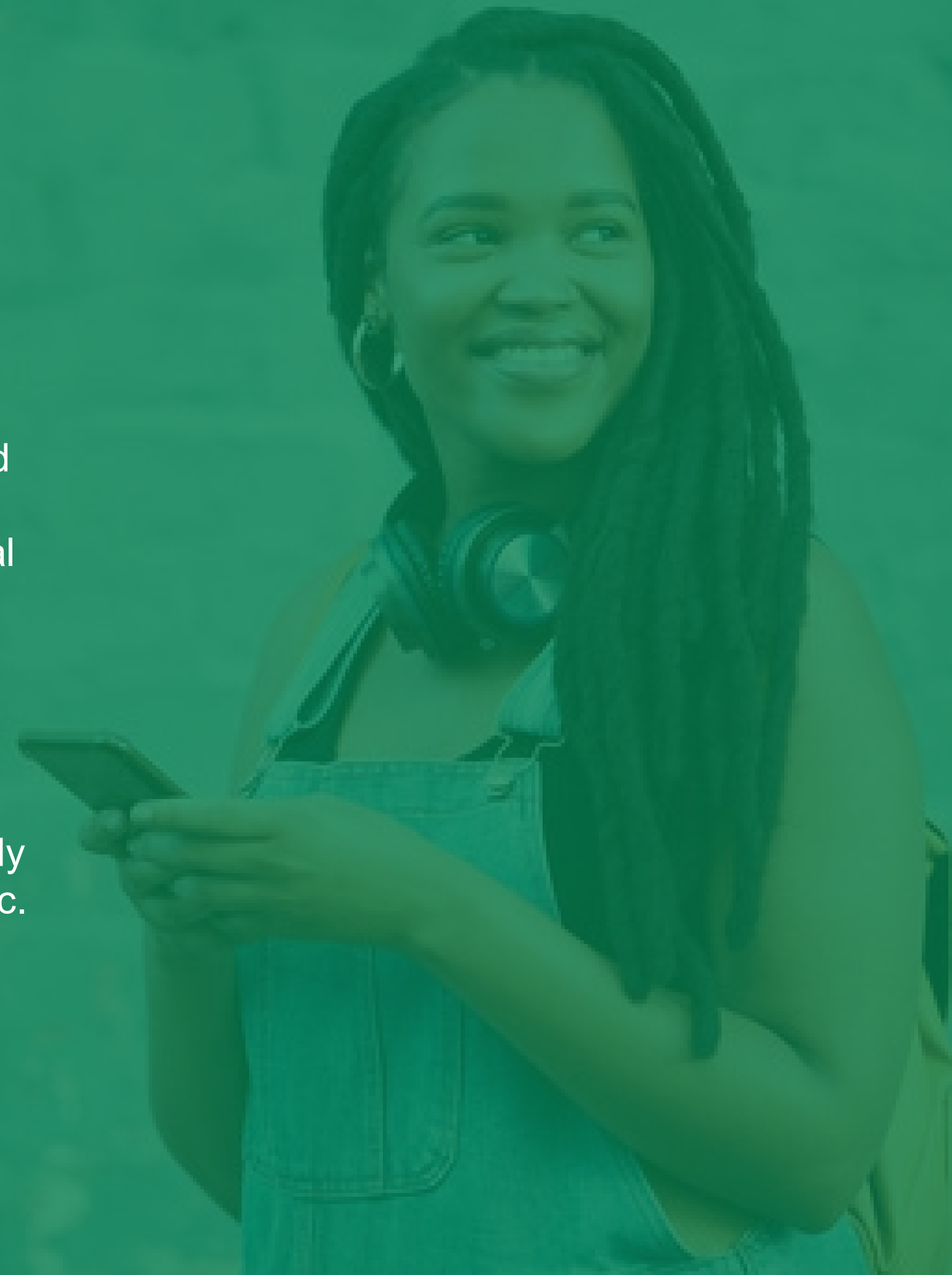
- **Interactive sites for polling**
  - Slido
  - Mentimeter
  - Poll Everywhere
  - Canva
- **Communication Tools**
  - Marco Polo
  - Calendly
  - Zoom
  - Google Meet

**SCAN THE CODE**



# Spellbinding Support

- **Cultural & Career Development Platforms**
  - The Plug – A digital news and data platform focused on Black innovation and entrepreneurs, helpful for mentees interested in business or tech.
  - BlavityU – Tailored for Black college students, with content on wellness, career prep, and student life.
  - HBCU Buzz – Stay informed about student issues, campus news, and cultural trends across HBCUs.
  - LinkedIn – Create professional profiles together, practice informational interviewing, and join HBCU alumni and professional affinity groups.
  - Handshake – Many HBCUs use this for internships and job listings; mentors can help mentees navigate opportunities and prep for applications.
- **Creative & Relevant Connections**
  - Spotify Playlists – Invite mentees to co-create themed playlists (“study vibes,” “legacy anthems,” etc.) as a fun way to connect through music.
  - Podcasts – Listen and discuss episodes together from shows like *Code Switch*, *The Read*, or *How I Built This* (especially Black entrepreneur episodes).
  - YouTube Channels – Share content from creators like *Jacque Reid* (journalism), *Issa Rae* (media), or *Kier & Them* (lifestyle) to build cultural connection.



# Sacred Circles of Mentor Magic: Being Trauma-Informed in your support of HBCU

## 1. Lead with Empathy, Not Assumptions

Assume that every student may be carrying unseen burdens. Rather than asking “What’s wrong with you?” shift to: “**How can I support you today?**” This language invites trust without requiring full disclosure.

## 2. Understand the Impact of Racialized and Generational Trauma

Many HBCU students navigate generational trauma, structural racism, and cultural expectations—all while striving to succeed. Be sensitive to the emotional toll of activism, discrimination, or isolation, even if not explicitly stated.

## 3. Create Psychological Safety

Ensure students feel emotionally safe to be themselves—no need to perform or impress. Affirm their experiences without minimizing or trying to “fix” them. A simple “That makes sense” can go a long way.

## 4. Offer Choice and Voice

Trauma can leave people feeling powerless. Give mentees choices: how they want to communicate, what projects to lead, or when to meet. Let them steer their growth—and listen without judgment.



# Sacred Circles of Mentor Magic: Being Trauma-Informed in your support of HBCU

## 5. Watch for Nonverbal Cues

If a student withdraws, seems distracted, or becomes overly apologetic, it may be a response to stress—not disinterest. Check in gently, and let them know you're available without pressing for immediate answers.

## 6. Connect to Mental Health Resources

Know when mentorship reaches its limits. Encourage use of campus counseling services or community mental health programs, and model that seeking help is a strength, not a weakness.

## 7. Celebrate Resilience, Not Just Achievement

Honor the student's perseverance, not just their grades or project outcomes. Trauma-informed mentors recognize that showing up—especially consistently—is often a radical act of strength.



Q & A



# Thank You!

LET'S CONNECT

Name:

: Email Address

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