



Foothills Mentor Program

Submitted by Dawn Meyers, Foothills Regional Director for Student Services
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January is National Mentoring Month. In this article you will read about the Foothills Mentor Program and be introduced to some of our amazing mentors. Mentoring is foundational to the non-traditional Foothills model of high school completion. While Foothills does not have football teams, cafeterias, pep rallies, or proms, one thing that we do have that is unique and different than the typical comprehensive high school experience is that each Foothills student is matched with a paid mentor. Decades of research have shown that mentoring is one key to positive youth mental health outcomes, engagement in school, and post-secondary success. Foothills investment in its mentor program has existed since the inception of the school. Foothills mentors come from far and wide across the communities where Foothills sites are located. Some mentors are retired educators, while others are community members who may work in the local bank or fire department. Some mentors have even been Foothills students themselves in the past—they know what it takes to motivate and encourage a Foothills student!



Photo Courtesy of Shutterstock

Bill Russell, MENTOR national co-founder said “There is no such thing as other people’s children.” Foothills mentors take this to heart as they invest time, energy and care into the lives of their mentees. Here, in the pages that follow, is what a few of our mentors and mentees are saying about our program. Stories are listed in alphabetical order by site:

Message from the Superintendent

Mentors have been a key part of the Foothills program from the very beginning. Over the year, as we have grown in size, scope, and purpose, we have also redefined the role of our mentors. Students not only needed a good, supportive person, they needed someone who could help them develop, monitor, and achieve personal goals for success—not only in high school, but in life beyond. We have developed a database that mentors can use to retrieve important information. Mentors stay very involved with students, meeting with them every other week, and with their families once per month, to make sure that everyone is clear about their students’ status and progress, where they are and what they need to be successful. And key to all this is that our mentors truly care about the students and families they work with.—**Sherrie**

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Barrow-Russell Site

Mentor: Ms. Missy Dorrell

Mentee: Jayden Burnett

Jayden Burnett is working so hard here at Foothills! This past year Jayden has overcome some serious medical issues yet still kept up with his school work and kept making progress. As his mentor, I couldn't be more proud of Jayden! I usually do his mentor progress updates via email but he takes time every night that I am here to stop by my work area and just chat. We chat about everything from school work to his personal life but mostly about his sports that he is involved in. Jayden is a prime example of a successful Foothills student and I can't wait to watch him succeed with completing his high school diploma!



Mentor: Mr. Bradley Williams

Mentee: Joseph Hut and Maurice Taylor

Joseph Hut is one of my younger mentees here at the Foothills Barrow Campus. I have been working with Joseph for almost a year. Joseph could be described as the perfect student. You can almost set your watch by Joseph's presence on our campus. He's here almost every day we are in session, and his progress is evidence of that. He has moved through several classes in less than 12 months. I can always count on Joseph to communicate with me, and he works hard to achieve the goals he sets for himself.

Maurice Taylor has been an awesome student to work with during my time at Foothills Barrow Campus. Maurice has been a mentee with me for almost a year. He is one of the most consistent students I have on my roster. He might have the most completed courses of any mentee I have worked with in 2023. Maurice works hard and is always ready to offer a smile when he is on campus. His positive personality is infectious, and Maurice makes an impact on all the teachers and staff members. We always look forward to seeing Maurice.



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The Foothills Vision

Foothills Regional High School strives to be an accessible, high-quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the People of Georgia and its communities.

Clarke Site

Mentor: Ms. Marge Dyson

Mentee: Keymari Baughens

Ms. Dyson writes: "I have a close bond with Keymari Baughens. I knew Keymari's Mother from CCHS where I worked for many years before retiring, and she asked if I would work with her son. When I would make the parent calls, Keymari's mom would fill me in on what support he needed. In turn, I would let her know when he needed a gentle nudge. Keymari's Mother shared with me that if it wasn't for her and I working together, she knows Keymari would have dropped out long ago. Keymari's mother has told me that whenever anything happens in their family Keymari always says, 'I need to let Ms. Dyson know.' When he completes a class and I am not working that night, he calls to tell me. He knows I am proud of him and I always want to know about his progress. He hugs me when he comes in and usually comes and says goodbye before he leaves. He is a special young man and I have worked with him for 5 years. He stayed active and even during Covid he completed his Geometry. He is a Senior and only lacks a few credits to graduate. Every week we set goals and he sincerely tries to reach them. When he doesn't, he smiles and says, 'I just didn't do it Ms. Dyson.' My response is 'I am glad you are honest. Now let's see what you can do this week.' He is a Mentee and a friend!" Note: Ms. Dyson also serves as the mentor for Keymari's brother, Jaden, with whom she is also close.



Jackson Site

Mentor: Mr. Julius Richie

Mentee: Caleb Maddox



Mentor Julius Richie has a great relationship with the students on his caseload, including Caleb Maddox who he met with recently to set goals and ask what has been going on in his life. Caleb says, "I enjoy meeting with my mentor and all of the other mentors. I like the way my mentor and the other mentors all keep me on track to graduate." Mr. Richie says, "Meeting with my mentee is a great joy. He is very cooperative and respectful. My mentee is a hard worker and very goal-driven. The thing I like about being a mentor is that it gives me great joy in knowing that I help others and make a difference in my mentee's lives by helping encourage them with their goals."



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Jasper Site

Mentors: Ms. Keisha Forston, Ms. Jennie Voyles, and Ms. Tomiko Rooks - pictured from L to R

Mentees: Miranda Faith, Aidan McLaurin, Dailynn Philman, and Wyatt Shelton

Mentoring at Jasper Foothills is so unique because all three of our mentors get to know their students and their challenges. They face the challenges with the student by understanding them, not judging them, and by being a real hero that transitions into a short-time or lifetime person they can always count on. We have witnessed students who no longer attend Jasper Foothills reach out to their mentor for assistance. Our mentors care about each of their students and form an everlasting bond that the students never forget. One example to share is that students say our mentors motivate them to attend class and to do the best on their work. Mentors have unmatched kindness that can never be erased. Keisha Foston, Tomiko Rooks, and Jennie Voyles have a lasting impact on every life they touch at Jasper Foothills and we appreciate them. Our motto at Jasper Foothills is a quote from Bob Proctor, "A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you."



Madison Site

Mentor: Ms. Patricia Carey

Mentee: Owen Fowler

Owen Fowler commented about his appreciation for his mentor, Ms. Patricia Carey: "She really helps me keep up with my classes. We speak on the phone and in person about things going on in my everyday life as well as school. Sometimes I check to be sure she'll be there before I come. I can talk to Ms. Carey about anything at any time."

Mentor: Mr. Robin Coile

Mentee: Jarrett Alexander

Jarrett Alexander, who enrolled in Foothills this past summer, commented on his mentor Mr. Robin Coile: "He really helped me feel welcome at Foothills. My mom is also a mentor and I can ask her anything about school, but Mr. Coile is like an extra parent or grandparent figure to me. We talk about my classes and goals, but he is more like my friend."



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Walton Site

Mentor Facilitator, Tammy Hyde

As the Mentor Facilitator of the Walton Campus, I am privileged to work with an extraordinary team of mentors whose hearts beat with passion and empathy. They come from diverse backgrounds and life experiences, each bringing their unique perspective. Together, we embark on a daily journey that requires us to tap into various skills, forge powerful connections with our students, foster effective communication, set attainable goals, and serve as shining examples of inspiration and trust.

Within our team, I have witnessed the creation of extraordinary bonds, as our mentors have proven time and time again their unwavering care, encouragement, and positivity. They go above and beyond, reaching into their pockets to purchase gift cards for special occasions, crafting goodie bags, or surprising our students with warm and fuzzy socks that remind them of their constant presence.

And when graduation day arrives, they show up with their hearts bursting with pride and monetary gifts, ensuring our students feel their continued support as they transition into the next chapter of their lives. But their commitment extends far beyond material gestures. Day after day, they shower our students with encouragement and motivational quotes.

Being a mentor is not a simple task; it requires a courageous spirit, an organized mind, and a deep reservoir of compassion. These mentors invest their energy, time, and tireless devotion because they desire nothing more than the success and triumph of our mentees.

We are proud of the partnership our mentors and their mentees have formed. We have a group of talented individuals who truly care about the success of our students. The hard work our mentors put in nightly is evident as told by our students; and according to Mentor Georgia, "Youth with mentors are 52% less likely to skip a day of school, 78% more likely to volunteer regularly, and 55% more likely to enroll in college." This is why our work is so important. Thank you for being a **Motivational**, **Encouraging**, **Nurturing**, **Transformational**, **Observant**, and **Reliable** part of our students' lives. Happy National Mentoring Month!



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