



Learner's Name: Devan Williams

Age: 15

Location: Louisville, Kentucky

How would you summarize your background?

I live in a pretty laid-back suburb. My moms have always wanted me to be really safe, and not get drawn into gangs or drugs or any of that stuff. Especially with everything being so much crazier now -- hurricanes, food recalls, one scandal after another involving guys in suits. They try to give me a stable home environment but not protect me so much that I won't know how to make my way down the road.

Tell me more about your experiences and your family's background.

Yeah, I have two moms. Mama Abok got artificially inseminated so she and Mama Keyla could have a family together. Then Mama Keyla got pregnant with my little sister, Ivy. We have a pretty cool family.

We know the profiles of our dads, but we can't ever meet them. That's okay. My moms are sensitive to my not having another guy around, so they make sure I do stuff in the community that brings me into contact with guys my own age and older guys who can serve as role models. I don't always see what the big deal is about the role models, but I go along with it.

All of us have to go to church every Sunday. No discussion. It's really open, so it's not too bad.

How do you like to learn?

Like I said, I'd game all the time if I could, except when I'm playing soccer or maybe baseball, although a lot of the girls aren't so into the game-sphere. I like the gaming platforms where you can move around physically the best. My moms make me do brain exercises to help with reading. They're supposed to sharpen my focus or something. But I'm better at picking things up visually, or by interacting with them.

I'd rather do projects where I'm making something, if they can't be in the game-sphere. At least with the oral history project I can document people's stories lots of different ways. I've been videoing them and doing some sketching. I might put them into a game at some point.

How would you describe your current learning experiences?

Right now I have a mentor who started a parenting program for African-American men back in the early 2010's. He's pretty cool for an old guy. I do all right. I don't necessarily put myself all out there. I need to keep some credibility. But some of the stuff I study is pretty cool. A big part of it is a virtual gaming school, because I'm really into that. I'd game most of the time if I could. I still spend more time on the games I do just for fun than the ones we experience and construct for school, but it could be a lot worse.

I'm a member of a community learning center too. I can bike to it, so I can drop in whenever I want, bring my gear and do my own thing or hang out with people. Plus I do some structured stuff there. We

have to self-organize around one project with other kids every three months, and I do some focused training in reading. That comes less naturally to me than understanding visual displays of information and recognizing patterns. Right now, I'm doing an oral history project about what it was like growing up as an African-American guy in the 2000's. My mentor is advising us on it.

Please provide an overview of your learning experiences so far.

I was in an old-style classroom for the first few years, 2015-2018 or so. Our suburb's school district was one of the ones that were being rated excellent by the state, so my moms were all into it. But then more options started cropping up, and they realized I wasn't really picking it up the traditional way, so we started trying a lot of different options.

I struggled with learning some before we plugged into the gaming option. Everyone thought I was checked out because I was slower to read than other kids my age, but I was just seeing and hearing patterns all around me, and they were really distracting.

What do you find most motivating?

I like being active, both in the physical landscape and the game-sphere. I want to please my moms, especially knowing what Mama Abok went through when she was my age. I know I have it so easy in comparison, but she never lords it over me. I want to do good by her.

What you hope to do when you are older?

I'm at that point where I need to be thinking about what's down the road, not just what's easiest or the most fun, but where I might want to go. I want to be one of those men that everyone looks up to, but I also want to be able to do things my way.

What worries you as you think about your future?

How can you help me feel accomplished across a range of skills when I have such a strong preference for how I learn? How can you help me bridge my comfort in the game-sphere with my need to operate in the whole complex world?