

## **VaLarie Humphrey: Recommendation**

When you meet Addison Trail High School Student Success Coordinator VaLarie Humphrey, you're greeted with a warm smile, an aura of positive energy and her catchphrase, "Be amazing on purpose." That statement is more than just words for Humphrey – it's a motto to live by. And her passion is to make sure students embody that philosophy as well.

Growing up, doing well in school wasn't high on Humphrey's priority list. Her parents and several family members were teachers and board of education members, but she didn't see the value in education. Humphrey reluctantly enrolled in college and made choices that caused her to be academically suspended – she had a GPA of 0.923. Humphrey's father pushed her to continue her post-secondary education, and she attended a junior college. Having to travel and work for her degree, Humphrey realized how much she took her previous situation for granted, and she began to appreciate what she could gain from being on a positive path.

Humphrey has now spent more than 30 years in the education arena and travels the world as a motivational and transformational speaker. She was an educator in Chicago Public Schools and Bellwood School District 88, served as a Principal with Quad County Urban League, was an administrator with Indian Prairie School District 204 and currently is a professor at Aurora University, where she will earn her doctorate in Educational Leadership: Coaching and Mentoring in 2024.

At Addison Trail, Humphrey focuses on supporting African American students to help them succeed. She joined the school in 2021-22 and immediately made an impact.

- She completes "BAG" checks for each student on her caseload, which stands for behavior, attendance and grades.
- She coordinated an AA Con (African American Conference) and a BLACKtopia Conference to recognize and celebrate Black History Month.
- She presented during a Student Leadership Conference called "Amplify" in 2022, which provided students from 10 high schools with an opportunity to amplify their voice and discuss mental health, diversity, identity, social justice, building community and more.
- She hosts meetings for African American parents and frequently contacts them to discuss their child's success.
- She implemented a BEYOND Club, which provides mentorship and academic support for African American students to enable them to thrive holistically in high school and BEYOND. About 85 percent of the school's African American student population is part of this group.

## **VaLarie Humphrey: Letter of Recommendation from Addison Trail Principal Jack Andrews**

When you meet Addison Trail High School Student Success Coordinator VaLarie Humphrey, you're greeted with a warm smile, an aura of positive energy and her catchphrase, "Be amazing on purpose." That statement is more than just words for VaLarie – it's a motto to live by. And her passion is to make sure students embody that philosophy as well.

VaLarie has an innate ability to connect with students and staff and push them to reach their full potential, while providing the support they need. Public education can be challenging to navigate, and VaLarie does it in a way that calls people in rather than calling them out. Her enthusiasm and passion to ensure a welcoming environment is contagious, and she inspires all of us at Addison Trail to be better. I'm a prime example of how VaLarie benefits our learning community. When I was named as Principal of Addison Trail in 2021, VaLarie was always there to provide the "tough love" and encouragement I needed to stay focused on the students and bettering our environment. She truly was – and will always be – an invaluable mentor and friend.

Growing up, doing well in school wasn't high on VaLarie's priority list. Her parents and several family members were teachers and board of education members, but she didn't see the value in education. VaLarie reluctantly enrolled in college and made choices that caused her to be academically suspended – she had a GPA of 0.923. VaLarie's father pushed her to continue her post-secondary education, and she attended a junior college. Having to travel and work for her degree, VaLarie realized how much she took her previous situation for granted, and she began to appreciate what she could gain from being on a positive path.

VaLarie has now spent more than 30 years in the education arena and travels the world as a motivational and transformational speaker. Her journey of perseverance, hard work and success inspires our students and staff on a daily basis to pursue a positive life path. VaLarie focuses on supporting student success at Addison Trail, and she has made a tremendous impact since joining the school in 2021-22.

- She educates students about the importance and value of the SAT.
- She completes "B.A.G." checks for each student on her caseload, which stands for behavior, attendance and grades.
- She hosts meetings for African American parents and frequently contacts them to discuss their child's success.
- She coordinated an AA Con (African American Conference) and a BLACKtopia Conference to recognize and celebrate Black History Month.
- She presented during a Student Leadership Conference called "Amplify" in 2022, which provided students from 10 high schools with an opportunity to amplify their voice and discuss mental health, diversity, identity, social justice, building community and more.

- She implemented S.H.E. Day, which stands for **S**upport one another, **H**onor each other and **E**volve together. The goal of this annual event is to provide students who identify as female with support and connection to honor and recognize Women’s History Month.
- She founded and sponsors the BEYOND Club, which provides mentorship and academic support for African American students to enable them to thrive holistically in high school and BEYOND. About 85 percent of the school’s African American student population is part of this group.
- She is a leader on the school’s CARE (Committed to Academics, Resiliency and Equity) Team, which concentrates on the social-emotional well-being of students and staff.

As a high school principal, I can honestly say VaLarie epitomizes what you look for in a staff member. She takes initiative like I’ve never seen and is a true asset to Addison Trail High School. Her efforts and dedication to the students of Illinois public schools deserve to be recognized as a recipient of the Those Who Excel Award.

Addison Trail student Mekalah Haywood (class of 2024) said it best.

“Ms. Humphrey’s transformative impact on Addison Trail’s environment for Black students is one-of-a-kind and most definitely commendable,” Haywood said. “The changes and improvements she has made were more than many of us students ever thought would come to the building, but we have loved all the changes and are forever grateful. Through her innovative ideas for spreading more positive Black culture by not only educating us, but others at the school as well; mentorship; diversity in leadership; and unwavering support during challenging times, she has improved the school atmosphere, not only enriching the Black students academically, but also empowering them. Ms. Humphrey’s dedication and persistence in positive change, motivation, support and cultural education make her more than deserving of the Those Who Excel award from the Illinois State Board of Education.”

Jack Andrews  
 Addison Trail High School Principal  
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