



Arkansas Department of Education

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April 10, 2018

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Computer Science Initiative Brings National Children's Author to Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK — Sasha Ariel Alston, author of *Sasha Savvy Loves to Code*, a children's book aimed at getting girls excited about the field of computer coding, will be in Little Rock on Thursday and Friday, April 12-13, 2018. Her visit, which will include reading to students at area elementary schools, addressing an all-girls conference and presenting to the State Board of Education, is being sponsored by the Computer Science Education office at the Arkansas Department of Education.

At 9 a.m. on Thursday, April 12, Alston is scheduled to read her book to approximately 140 second-grade students at Don R. Roberts Elementary School, 16601 Lamarche Drive, Little Rock. At 10 a.m., she will be the guest speaker at the 2018 Girls of Promise Conference, sponsored by the Women's Foundation of Arkansas, at the Arkansas 4-H Center, 1 Four H Way.

"We are thrilled to have Ms. Alston kick off our 2018 Girls of Promise Conference as our first keynote speaker," said Anna Beth Gorman, executive director of the Women's Foundation of Arkansas. "Ms. Alston will serve as an incredible source of inspiration to our 200 eighth-grade girl participants. We believe that girls are encouraged when they meet and learn from other women who are challenging stereotypes. Ms. Alston has written a wonderful book that helps girls see their own potential."

Thursday's schedule will conclude with Alston giving brief remarks to the State Board of Education at 1 p.m. at the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, 5301 North Shore Drive, in North Little Rock.

In *Sasha Savvy Loves to Code*, the main character, Sasha Savvy, is a 10-year old, African-American girl who must choose which class to take for summer camp. Her mom discovers that the camp is offering a new class for girls on how to code. Sasha thinks this will be boring and does not think she is good at computer stuff. Despite this, she decides to give it a chance and convinces her best friends, Gabby Reyes and Ashley Webster, to attend the coding camp with her. Sasha's mom, a software developer, gives her a unique formula to help her remember how to code.

"Sasha Ariel Alston's visit to Little Rock is going to change the future for some of our students," Gov. Asa Hutchinson said. "This is a great opportunity for them to meet a young author whose enthusiasm for coding is contagious, and whose leadership and personal example will open up the world of computer science for many who may not have thought of it as a career. I am pleased that Sasha included Little Rock on her book tour."

On Friday, April 13, Alston will read her book to students at the following schools: Hill Farm Elementary School, Hill Farm Road in Bryant, at 8:20 a.m.; Martin Luther King Elementary School, 905 State Capitol in Little Rock, at 10:30 a.m.; and College Station Elementary School, 4701 Frazier Pike in Little Rock, at 1 p.m.

Alston, known as the STEM Queen, is from Washington, D.C. She is a college student majoring in information systems, with a minor in marketing at Pace University, Lubin School of Business in New York. With eight successful information technology and business internships at Infor, Microsoft and Everfi, she is a sought-after speaker encouraging youth, especially girls of color, to pursue educational and career opportunities in STEM. She has appeared on Good Morning America, been featured in the *Huffington Post* and *Black Enterprise*, and inspired girls to dream big in Disney, Google, Snapchat and Yahoo initiatives.

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