

When Faith Pendleton wrote this poem, inspired by her class's Epiphany Project, she was a 16-year-old high school student at Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center in Columbus, Ohio. At the age of 16, she received a proclamation from the state house and won the National Bar Association's Evett L. Simmons Mock Trial Competition. She is an advocate of all people--a person who stands up for what she believes in. She expresses her advocacy as Vice President of her school's Diversity Club.

**Elise Ballard**  
**By Faith Pendleton**

I walked through those doors finishing up my orientation.  
I was excited and ready.  
9th grade.  
High School.

I looked around and smiled I didn't see a high school but a campus.  
The campus that would become my new home  
I left and returned on the first day  
I was a little late  
I scurried hurriedly up the stairs

Then paused and looked at the door  
This same door wasn't as scary the first time I saw it  
Now it looked eerie, almost intimidating (10s)  
I seemed to fall apart right there  
My entire perspective had changed  
I became terrified of the journey ahead of me

I wanted to run  
I could feel my spirit leaving me running down the stairs and moving over the  
brick path

This campus was dark and distorted  
All excitement was gone fear took its place as I stood in place still trying to bring  
my strength back I saw it fly away and disappear in my mind I reached for it but it  
was gone

Then I realized  
This isn't me  
I collected myself  
I went inside and I conquered  
It was a hard first day but I made it  
I even met people along the way  
I've learned not to fear but instead smile through the darkness.