

#190 — From Trials to Triumph with Dé Kwaan Wynn

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SPEAKERS

Dé Kwaan, Winston, Rena, Paul, Transition

Dé Kwaan Wynn 0:00

AVID became like a home outside of home, you can say. I got kicked out because of an assault of a teacher. I really wanted to get back in. I found my teacher's number and called her over the summer. And she said, there's no worries I already put you back in. I'll see you in August.

Winston Benjamin 0:15

The topic for today's podcast is From Trials to Triumph, with Dé Kwaan Wynn, aka Dé Dé, with Unpacking Education. Unpacking Education is brought to you by avid.org. AVID believes in seeing the potential of every student. To learn more about AVID, visit their website at avid.org.

Rena Clark 0:45

Welcome to Unpacking Education, the podcast where we explore current issues and best practices in education. I'm Rena Clark.

Paul Beckermann 0:56

I'm Paul Beckermann.

Winston Benjamin 0:57

And I'm Winston Benjamin. We are educators.

Paul Beckermann 1:01

And we're here to share insights and actionable strategies.

Transition Music 1:06

Education is our passport to the future.

Winston Benjamin 1:11

Our quote for today is from the author, Ken Poirot. He says, "There is no greater power and support you can give someone than to look them in the eye and, with sincerity and conviction say, I believe in you." What do you think about that, Paul? Rena?

Paul Beckermann 1:34

I love that quote. I think it's so important that we build people up. And it's important to those, those two words at the beginning. You know, at the end, there's sincerity and conviction. People can tell when you don't really mean something when you say it to them, but to say it with sincerity and conviction, that builds a person up and anytime that we can build somebody up, let's do it. It's got such power. And you know, it's free.

Winston Benjamin 1:58

Oooh, free 99.

Paul Beckermann 2:00

That's a great price.

Rena Clark 2:03

And I, I agree with Paul, and those words also stood out--sincerity and conviction--mean what you say, say what you mean. Because kids know, adults know, they know when you're not being sincere. And that also then loses trust. So be sincere. I also think that, you know, speak speak it to truth. So just putting it, putting it out there. Sometimes we think people know things about themselves, when in fact they don't. I know this is true for myself. And just hearing it said to you has a different meaning, than when you just think it. But lots of times, we're not as kind to ourselves as we are to others. So to have others kind of relay back to us some of those things that we should be saying to ourselves, but we're not, can really change our outlook and our projection.

Paul Beckermann 3:04

I was thinking of a sideline on that too. Somebody told me once that if you compliment somebody to another person, with that person in your presence, it's even more powerful than if you say it to their face because you're saying, you're telling somebody else now and you're extending that compliment on that person.

Winston Benjamin 3:24

Well, I like that do both right? And say it in front of the kid and then have the kids see you say it in front of another teacher.

Rena Clark 3:31

Or other students.

Winston Benjamin 3:32

Right. I like that. So well, we're gonna transition and jump into our section with our main guest. So we are joined today by a former AVID student--whoop, whoop, whoop, what?--and a current

software engineer, Dé Kwaan Wynn, to talk about another student success story and the difference teachers and positive influences can play in a person's life. We welcome you Dé Kwaan, DéDé, because he gave me permission to call him Dé Dé, y'all. I didn't just make up his nickname. He really gave me permission. Can you can you tell the audience you gave me permission?

Dé Kwaan Wynn 4:10

I gave you permission.

Winston Benjamin 4:10

All right, thanks. Dé Dé. Yeah.

Paul Beckermann 4:15

He said it in front of somebody else, too, Winston.

Winston Benjamin 4:19

You had a chance to share your story at AVID Summer Institute in 2019. In that message, you talked about the earliest memory at age four. Right? Can you talk about your first memory and how it impacted your early years?

Dé Kwaan Wynn 4:35

Um, so as far as like my first memory goes, right, you know, if everybody who's seen the video knows, you know, we get the raid on my mom's house.

Paul Beckermann 4:45

I'm thinking a lot of our listeners haven't seen that. Dé Kwaan, do you want to tell that story?

Dé Kwaan Wynn 4:51

So it's, you know, what's crazy is I learned more about that story when my mother got out of jail. She actually would tell me about that story. It became more of like a story where I learned a little bit more about myself whenever I was four. And kind of like, I guess who I eventually would become was already present. And I'll tell you the story, right? So I love Pokemon. Right? Pokemon 2000 was the movie that I could not get enough of. Truth be told, I haven't watched it since I was four. But I remember my favorite part. There's a part where Pikachu is trying to get asked to get back up. And then there's this this big explosion-like sound at the door. And all these people rush in the door. They're in black. Of course, we're talking, you know, the SWAT team. And the first door when you walk in, is the door that I'm sitting in, which is my mom's room. So they, of course, they point the gun towards me. I'm the only one in there. And then they keep going straight. You know, after they check and make sure nobody in the door--I mean, in the in the room that I'm in. They keep going straight, find my mom in the living room, they grab her and her friend and take her out the door.

Well, that's the way I remember it. My mom remembers it--of course, everything that I had mentioned that happened, happened. But what she said that I did, it wasn't that I froze or

anything. Apparently, I ran to the door, noticed it was broken, and started yelling at the police, telling them that my mother is going to beat you all up, if you don't fix her door. I guess no one was listening to me. So if any of y'all have seen Rush Hour, that was my favorite movie. And it's still my, you know, top five favorite movies of all time. I guess no one was listening, so I yell, "Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth?"

Paul Beckermann 6:59

And you were four.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 7:00

I was four. So, um, you know that that was a crazy movie. I mean, it's a crazy story to hear, like, when you're 20, right? When my mom got out when I was 14, but she didn't tell me that story until she got out the second time, when I was like 20. And, I don't know, it's just interesting. It was...But anyway, that kind of set me up for I guess you would say, like my collision course for AVID, or my collision course with AVID, because I ended up moving in with my grandmother, but I bounced between my grandma's house on the weekends and my aunt's house during the week. And my aunt was you know, much younger than my grandmother, so she took care of me and my sister, along with her two daughters. And, you know, I was just floating through school, if you'd say,

Winston Benjamin 7:57

Before we move on, before we move on, I just want to say thank you for being so vulnerable with your story, with your experience, with your humanity. You don't know us from a hole in the wall and I appreciate you sharing that honesty with us and our audience, so I just want to take a second to let that breathe so that we can actually appreciate what you just shared with us as a child, and as a person reflecting on that experience as a child. Whoo! The second thing, I just want to say as an educator hearing and recognizing that when we talk about trauma, it's not just teenagers, it's not middle schoolers who are dealing with the impact of trauma on a daily basis. So I just appreciate you bringing back, bringing me to recognize that even our babies' babies are seeing and remembering those experiences. So just want to say thank you for being that honest and vulnerable with our audience.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 9:04

Yeah, no problem at all. I'm an open book. That's what I usually tell.

Winston Benjamin 9:07

Yeah. But you still got to appreciate the book.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 9:12

Understandable. Thank you.

Rena Clark 9:14

So and thank you, Winston, for recognizing that. And, you know, we have you on here. We were hoping to talk a little bit about what it was like when you enter that AVID program in eighth

grade. I think you're kind of leading up to that. So if you just want to share a little bit more about what school and life was like, leading up to that eighth grade, and then what it was like in eighth grade joining AVID.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 9:40

Yeah, so um, I can tell you about a few of my memories from, I guess, the big lead up, right? So from like, we're talking let's say preK through sixth grade. Grades never slipped, right? I never had an issue with that. School was easy. I felt like I was smarter than everybody. I don't know. Not even in an arrogant way. I just felt like I didn't need no help. But because of that feeling, I guess I was what you would call bored. So I got in a lot of trouble, man. I was always looking for something to do, so, I spent a lot of time, I think I got suspended maybe once. I did a lot of ISS, went to middle school, right? I started at Nimitz, Nimitz Junior High, right? Y'all aren't from Odessa but just know that was where all the kids from the South Side go to school. But I lived on, like I said, I bounced between my aunt's and my grandmother's house. When my mom got out. I lived on the South Side with my mom in an apartment complex, deep in the South. And I went to Nimitz, and that's where all my friends went. I spent, you know, quite a bit of time getting in trouble there, too. In eighth grade, like I said, grades never slipped. So my mom, she was always big on as long as you get your grades, right? She didn't want me to get in trouble, but she wanted me to make sure I got my grades because her father was a computer technician. My mother, you know, regardless of what people may think of her, she was extremely smart, and she was a world-class athlete as a kid. So I was always looking to try to be like her in certain ways. So I would always hear these stories about my mom being so smart. So I was like, Yo, I'm gonna take care of my grades, too. So I didn't know I didn't have no plans for college, or none of that. It was just, I want to get my grades because my mom got her grades, and I wanted to be like her. So seventh grade, of course, I got in some trouble. When eighth grade came and I was still getting in trouble, without being you know, too descriptive, it was just little stuff--talking in class, maybe yelling, cussing the teacher out every now and then. And then...

Winston Benjamin 11:56

I like how you slip that one in. Like how you slipped that one in. I'm not gonna let it slide, but I like how you slipped that one in.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 12:05

So then, a friend of mine who's really like family, his name's Kubiak. He plays basketball in Australia now. He said, Hey, man, there's this blow off class I'm in, right? And you know, all you got to do is take notes. And that's the way he described it. Right? So I'm like, Yeah, of course, I'm taking this class. I was like, what's the class called? I'm gonna go and try to get into it next semester. He said, It's always called AVID. It's perfect, right? I jump into class. I'm already in all that, all the AP classes, so it don't really matter when they hit me with the, with the requirements. Man I was in for a ride, though. It was not a blow up. First of all, I can't study. Right? I don't know, I have no study skills. I was walking through class with ease because I just paid attention in class. I had this mentality that the teacher is going to tell you what you need to know during class. So what's the point of going home and study? Well, I needed that like, right, and I didn't, you know, really mess with homework like that. And as far as like TRF, like tutorial

requests forms, I couldn't do them. For some reason, I just couldn't get them together. Taking notes, didn't do it. So and then organization of the binder. Those things that I just mentioned, were literally the whole class and I couldn't do any of them. Right? And so, I maybe spent maybe three, four weeks in AVID in eighth grade at Nimitz before I moved, because I hadn't gotten, not necessarily trouble this time, but I just had some disputes with some people at the school. My mom came to me and said, do you want to move schools? I said, Yes, ma'am. And moved the next day. Next thing you know, I'm at this place called Bowie Junior High, which was on the other side of town. We used my aunt's address for this. This is where I used to live anyway.

So I'm there with my cousins and not as many friends, but I have this new AVID class. I have this teacher named Miss Ontiveros. And this tutor named Jonathan, right? So everybody knows Jonathan Grant Brown. If you know anything about AVID, you know Jonathan. And they were so much more welcoming on that side. I'm not saying they weren't welcoming at Nimitz, but it was different because whenever I couldn't get it together, right, I couldn't get the TRFs, I couldn't get the notes together, they were so welcoming. I tried my best to get it right for sure this time, right? So one day, I've got all the confidence in the world. I'm walking in thinking I got it this time. I did my binder. I've got my TRFs and I've got my notes. I was like I got it this time. I swear I got it this time. So when she called me to the front, she called me to the front, and she says, let me see your binder. So I hand it over. It's organized. And she goes, "Do you have your five notes?" And so I'm like, oh, no. I did five TRFs, and one notes. And so I'm thinking she's about to yell at me or give me a mark off. But actually, she smiled. And she gave me my grade. She gave me a good grade. And she's like, I can see you really tried this time. And instead of embarrassing me in front of the whole class, right? I've been embarrassed in front of the class. You know, I'm like any other eighth grader writing notes to girls and stuff like that. And one day, my teacher took my note and read it in front of class. And that was one of the most embarrassing things I have ever experienced in a classroom. And I would never do that to a kid. And I realized, like in AVID, they wouldn't do that to me. So made me want to stay in the class as much as I can, and even whenever I wasn't in class. So AVID became like a home outside of home, as you'd say.

Paul Beckermann 16:03

And then when you went into high school, Dé Kwaan, you were in AVID there, as well, right?

Dé Kwaan Wynn 16:09

I was. From eighth grade all the way up through 12th. And I did get kicked out later that year at Bowie, but she put me back in.

Winston Benjamin 16:21

Good teacher.

Paul Beckermann 16:22

What did that mean to you to, to get brought back in after that?

Dé Kwaan Wynn 16:27

So so let me tell you the story about how I got back in, right? So I got kicked out because of an assault of a teacher. But, but it was not my fault. Long story short, she got mad at me. My English teacher got upset with me because I was leaning back in the chair, right? And she came into she came to me and took me out of the room. And then she started yelling at me in the middle of the hallway. And I asked her like, please, and I'm very respectful when it comes to teachers. And I said, Please, Ma'am, can you step back? I'm not a fan of the smell of coffee. And she goes, your breath isn't too hot, either. And then she's, she's like, I'm not in your face. This is in your face. And she slammed the lockers besides my ears and put her face literally not even an inch away from my face. Scared the bejesus out of me. And my first reaction was just push her away and not even push her hard. I literally put my hand on her chest and moved her back. Another teacher came out of the next door classroom and said, "Did he just push you?" And my teacher said I don't know. She said, "Well, if he did, I'd sent him to alternative. It will get him put out of AVID."

I remember those words specifically. That was how I got kicked out. And whenever I described that to my principal, they said well, because of the accusation, we have to send you to alternative. But we're only going to give you 12 days because I understand the difficulty of the situation. That's how I ended up an alternative. That's how I ended up getting put out of AVID. Twelve days of school later, I came back into AVID, I came back to school, I was no longer in AVID but I spent every day in that classroom whenever I could. I'd spent my lunches in there. I spent my in between classes, I would ask my teachers when I finished my work, can I go sit in my AVID class? I was like, it was like I never left. And they welcomed me. They never, even though some of the students may have looked at me side-eyed, Miss Ontiveros and Jonathan, they kept talking to me, they let me come hang out with them. And they gave me a place to sit where somebody would listen to me. And they wouldn't make me feel like I didn't belong. And so, I never asked them to get back into the class, and I remember I really wanted to get back in so I went every avenue--I don't even remember how I got her number--but I found my teacher's number and called her over the summer. And I asked her can you put me back into class, please? I promise I'll get it right this time. She said there's no worries. I already put you back in. I'll see you in August.

Paul Beckermann 19:09

Unconditional support.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 19:10

Yep.

Winston Benjamin 19:11

Oh man, bro. I'm like I'm like trying to hold a moment to like really pay attention to you and also think of what to ask next, but also to fully be in your moment. So I have a question for you is like, because like right now you describe everybody's coming at you sideways. Right? You feel like the world is trying to fight you and beat you down. You got a spot that you feel safe, that you feel love, that you feel emotionally cared for. You mentioned in the Summer Institute speech that like people's views were changing of you as you went through high school. Like, how did AVID

help impact that change? And like how did you feel as you started to realize that like, how people saw you started to change? If that makes, does that makes that makes sense? Because I'm trying to make sure I ask the right question.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 20:07

Yeah. So what I realized was so--I'm glad you asked the question because it starts at ninth grade, right? Ninth grade, technically, when I was growing up was not high school, it was middle school. So I had the same exact AVID teacher, right, Miss Ontiveros and Jonathan. I did my absolute best. I got in trouble still, but not nearly as much.

Winston Benjamin 20:31

Yeah, you were a kid.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 20:31

And yeah, I'm a kid, right? And I'm getting it figured out. Right? And I always held with me this one thing that I never heard before and I heard it in alternative school, right in eighth grade. They told me, they told us all, he said, We don't believe you're bad kids. We believe you probably made a bad choice and ended up here and you're okay. And that stuck with me. I never went back, right? And when I got to AVID, that ninth grade, I held that with me. And then one day, I got into a fight. Got into a fight at the high school, right? I went up to the high school to fight the guy because I because he put his hands on my cousin, who was a woman, and I wasn't playing. Went up there, got into a fight. After the fight, went and took my physical in the gym, and then I went home. When I went back to the school, I was called into the office. They said, Hey, looks like you're gonna have to go to OHS tomorrow, which is the high school. Later today, we're going to take you to the OHS, which is the high school, and it seems that you're in trouble, right? So when all that went down, I got suspended, of course. And I came back into school just hoping I didn't get kicked out again. Because I promised Miss O, that I would get it right. When I got back into the class, I was not kicked out. The students were looking at me like hey what is he doing here? But Miss O looked at me like I belonged. And that kept me going. At that point of my life, I was pretty much doing a lot for the teachers. I just wanted them to feel proud of me. I wanted them to make me feel like I belonged. I never, I never really cared if the other students felt like I belonged. It was always the teachers, because I felt like it was other teachers that were you know, making me feel a certain type of way about myself. But these AVID teachers always made me feel good. And through high school, from the moment I got back from the fight all the way through 12th grade, every AVID teacher I had after that was the exact same. They always tried to make me feel like I could do something, or I belonged in AVID, or, you know, just like AVID was the place I needed to be, and that I was capable of more than what I thought I was capable of. So every time I got in trouble, I was like, well, I'm not gonna get too many more of these chances.

So I got to figure out a way to get it together. What I did was sophomore year, even after I got into the fight freshman year, sophomore year, I got zero trouble. Junior year, zero trouble. Senior year, absolutely no trouble. What I did was I followed my AVID teacher of 10th grade. She said join cross country. 5 a.m. I was with her. I didn't get out of school till 6 p.m. because I

had cross country, basketball, then I went to class, and went to basketball again. All that time, I dedicated my time to keeping busy. So when teachers hear that you're getting in all this trouble, you're getting all this trouble, then they don't hear anything at all. They have nothing really they can say about you because they can say he's a troublemaker, but there's no proof anymore. Maybe he used to be, but he's not anymore. And they're just regular humans, like everyone, like everybody else. Everybody's gonna say things based on what you've done in the past. But if they don't take the time to really, like once, actually, once they take the time to figure out who you are and all the things you've been doing, and then oh, well, actually, he's actually doing well. Maybe he's got it together this time. Right? There may be hope for him. Right? And and I say that because I remember in daycare hearing that there's no hope for me. And then, senior year there was, I was told that there may be hope and I literally can never forget that. So just a matter of, you know, the the opinion of me started changing based on how certain teachers started treating me whenever I got to high school. There was no more the kid that, you know, where there was no more treating me like I didn't belong, right? There was no more that, like everybody was treating me well, even if they weren't talking to me specifically, at least they weren't talking bad. And you know, that's why I felt like my opinion of me started to change. By the time my senior year came, everybody wanted me to, like every teacher wanted to talk to me, which was really cool. They were even voting for me for the, what is it? The homecoming king. The teachers voted. I thought that was cool.

Rena Clark 25:31

It kind of relates a little bit that we talk about--their opinion was changing, but it's, it seems like--and you can tell me that your opinion of yourself then changed as a result?

Dé Kwaan Wynn 25:42

For the most part. I had more goals. Like I believed that I could do a little bit more. And I had a history of asking for permission, if you'd say. I don't know if I've explained it well, but essentially, every time I wanted to do something, I would go ask my AVID teacher. Or I'd ask my principal who was Mr. Nelson. He was the person outside of AVID that I kind of gravitate, gravitated towards. Since still to this day, I call him.

Rena Clark 26:13

Yes, maybe not opinion of self but goals that you had. So thanks for revising that. Yeah. And as you said, come senior year, you ended up graduating with honors, where you, I believe you were your school's first Dell Scholar, and then you got accepted to the college of your dreams that you can tell us about. Because we'd love to hear just a little bit more about that next part of the journey and the support you got to get there.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 26:42

Yeah, um, so yeah, I did end up graduating with honors, had a four-two GPA, and it wasn't like I said--I never, I never, I never slipped up in school. My mom never allowed these in the house. But when she went to jail for the second time, it was, you know, I'll get A's and B's, right? But then talking to my, when my there I had a goal to become the first student tutor we had because everybody else was in college. I was like, well, I understand everything in class, so I want to be

a student tutor. He was like, well, once you get high, high A's in all your classes, then you could be a tutor. Got it together immediately. And subsequently, my GPA came up. All right? So every year after that, my GPA just kept rising and rising, and rising, I moved up 276 places, and I was in the top 10%. And, you know, in the process of all of that, I applied to the Dell Scholarship, I really didn't believe that I would get it because I heard like, you know, millions of kids probably applied to this thing. 300 people get them. Whatever. I got it. Right? I had no idea I was gonna get it. When I got into it, I really didn't even celebrate. I didn't know how big of a deal, like I just knew that you got some money, right? Nobody in my family went to college, so I was like, okay, they gave me some money. That's cool. Baylor's still expensive. So I got into Baylor. And once I got in, the next part was figuring out how I was going to pay for it. Right? Even though I got a scholarship to \$20,000 says nothing to \$55,000 a year. And, my guardian angels stepped in, if you'd say. There were these people that were a part of the Education Foundation, they came in, and paid for my college. And once I went to school, then it was time to apply everything that I had learned in AVID, right? It was time to keep my binders and everything organized. It was time to take notes. Study for once. Right?

Rena Clark 28:54

Got some challenge!

Dé Kwaan Wynn 28:57

Yeah, it was finally time to you know, be challenged at school. And man, when I tell you that challenge isn't really the word. When you don't have people around that went to school, it is hard. You can't call and ask for advice. And then I remember one day, my mom had called me. She's still in jail at this point. She's like, how are your grades? You know, she don't play no B's. Like I got you know, one A, two C's, and a B. She's like, I need you to get it together. I'm like ma, this ain't like high school. She's like, you need to figure it out, get your grades back up. I knew she had never went to college, so she really didn't understand, but also, there was no point in me making excuses as to why my grades was so low. So I did my best to get them back up. I think I ended up with like maybe no C's, but I did get two A's, two B's, and every year after that, my grades just started to climb up slowly but surely. I began to read more, right? Outside of school, right? This is something that I tell kids they should do now, like read outside of school, because once you get to college, that's all it is. It's nothing but reading. My reading score, like on my SAT and ACT, and what people don't know, is I nearly failed those things. Like if you look at the grades, as far as like, you know, like a high grade much like, on ACT, I scored a 28 on the math, a 20 on the reading. I was a horrible reader. I didn't read in school. I didn't read outside of school. Truth be told, I got out of AP English because I said it was summer reading. So I hated reading.

When I got to college, I realized that I had to do the hard stuff. Right? It's like going to the gym. You don't get credit for doing what you're good at. Right? You're in the gym to get better at something that you're not good at. So, you think about the gym, like you think about school, think about school, I can think about the gym. I could not read. Right? It took me an hour and a half to read two pages of the Bible for Christian scriptures. So when the summer came, Maya Angelou passed. Her book went on sale for \$3. It took me a month and a half to read I Know

Why the Caged Bird Sings. Then I started, then I read The Hunger Games trilogy, and it was on from there. The more I read, I picked up the piano. So the more I read, the more that I played the piano, the more than my grades came up. I had my first three 3.5 GPA one semester. And it just kept climbing and climbing, and climbing. And then after that, I graduated, went to school to get my Master's in Computer Science. My first degree was in accounting. I hated accounting. I wanted more of a creative aspect to my job, and accounting just wasn't it and when I tried to switch, they said it would take way too long. So I decided to get my computer science degree. I did that. And in the process of getting my computer science degree, that's where the AVID Summer Institute came. And after the Summer Institute came, a year later, I got my degree and I'm now a developer.

Winston Benjamin 32:19

That's a great transition. I'm glad you brought, we went from you being a kid, silly, running around in diapers. Being the child you should have been to experiencing the world as it is and it was. And then you grew and you became this man, proudly. As you look back on your journey, right, thinking about AVID, just like if you could sum up in like a few words, What did that AVID experience mean to you?

Dé Kwaan Wynn 32:54

Honestly, I'm not sure we would be having this conversation. That's the best way to describe it. Remember how I told you that there was a daycare teacher that said that I, there was no hope for me? That teacher continued to say that I was only a few years away from jail. Right? And I have yet to go to jail.

Paul Beckermann 33:23

And you heard the complete opposite from your AVID teachers.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 33:27

Exactly.

Rena Clark 33:28

So well, thank you for sharing that story with us and our listeners. I wish we had more time. I feel like we could dig in. But unfortunately, yeah, we're gonna move to just our next section called The Toolkit. So it's time to ask the question. What's in your toolkit?

Transition Music 33:52

Check it out. Check it out. Check it out. Check it out. What's in the toolkit? What is in the toolkit? So, what's in the toolkit? Check it out.

Rena Clark 34:03

You've given us a lot of ideas and different tools. And you can feel free to add if you want but go ahead, Winston. What do you think's in the toolkit today?

Winston Benjamin 34:12

I got two things to throw in the toolkit. The first one is idle hands is the devil's playground. My dad used to say that to me a lot as a child, and I never understood. Dé Dé, your story about having track in the morning, basketball in the afternoon, track again in the night. Sometimes it's as if a lot of kids that's where they get their love, their food, their all of the engagement, and staying out of trouble. So you know, get your kids, teachers if you're listening, get them into something. Get them into something. The second part of it is don't judge a parent by their circumstances. Because even though your mom's is where she was, I know that you were afraid of her coming down on you for not getting your A's, so you know what I mean? So it's important that our teachers realize what values our parents are putting into our kids. Even if they have made bad decisions, they are not bad people.

Rena Clark 35:13

How about you, Paul?

Paul Beckermann 35:14

I'm still thinking about the quote that we started with, and how kids need to believe in themselves. You know, we can't be like that daycare person who told you that you weren't good for anything. We need to be those other teachers who told you that you were good, you were smart, and you were going to have success because it's a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you believe you're going to do okay and again, that sincerity, you sincerely believe it, you have a good shot at being okay. We need hope together.

Rena Clark 35:50

You both kind of summarized what I was thinking, but in the end, it's simple, but difficult. Be kind, and think about your story, the difference of yes, belief. Being kind, being aware of your biases, and like the things that you can say or do and what the impact they can have on kids long-lasting, for good or bad. I still I have that thing, too. That thing I was told in fifth grade, I've never forgotten it for negative reasons. So it goes both ways. And just how important it is for us to be mindful. Because we, we might think one way, but we are our actions. So what are your actions every day? And what are your interactions every day, because it matters.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 36:37

So for the last 10 years, I've actually coached and taught kids. So, you know, last week, I went and spoke in Little Rock at a school. And one thing that I always tell student teachers is the things that you say really sticks with kids, even if you don't think they're listening. And the things that you don't say, never reach them. And so I usually tell the educators to be more than your job title, and also implore other educators to do the same. Because every week, you're within arm's reach of a kid who needs to hear the right words to get them looking in the right direction. And kids need to have a light these days. So do your best. Be that for them.

Paul Beckermann 37:29

I think we should drop the mic now.

Winston Benjamin 37:30

Facts. Yo, I like that one. That was dope.

Rena Clark 37:32

That was the one thing. We're done. We don't need that section.

Winston Benjamin 37:39

Seeing the things you want them to hear. Wooh!

Paul Beckermann 37:43

I think I think we are in the one thing section now. Right? I mean, this is definitely the one thing: be more than your job title. I couldn't say it better than than what you said there. That was amazing.

Transition Music 37:54

It's time for that one thing. One thing. One thing. Time for that one thing. That one thing.

Paul Beckermann 38:07

Rena, do you have a one thing?

Rena Clark 38:09

I just love that term of unconditional support. And you mentioned it as well, even when you were in that other placement, we might make a bad choice, here, there. Bad by whose judgment to start with? But that doesn't make us a bad person and we still have unconditional support.

Winston Benjamin 38:32

Help kids build a new resume. Everybody's gonna talk about them. Everybody's gonna say something negative about them from the past. So how are you helping a kid make a new resume where other people can see and hear the good about them and help them make that good resume.

Paul Beckermann 38:49

All right, Dé Kwaan. You have, the mic's yours. One one last message for for our listeners?

Dé Kwaan Wynn 38:58

Oh, well. It's my belief that it's that as an educator, you are, or as a teacher, you have a second best position in a kid's life. Because the other person that they see other than their parents is you. So you're best to build them up. And you know, like I said earlier, just be more than just an educator.

Winston Benjamin 39:24

Oh man, yo. Dé Dé, I appreciate you letting me love on you like all your teachers and your family do by calling you Dé Dé.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 39:34

Appreciate it.

Winston Benjamin 39:34

You have hopefully helped our audience figure out another way to see that kid that we might be calling that knucklehead, that high flyer, that whatever, is that we're filling the head with all the negatives, but we're not saying the things that they need to hear in order to fill their cup up. I really just want to say thank you for being so vulnerable. It reminds me to tell our teachers yo, pay attention to trauma. You are filling a child who's experienced something that they don't know how to process. And you're asking them to process it like adults. Help support our kids be able to deal with who they are as they grow, so that they can feel, lash out, and be all that they can be as they're young. And give them unconditional love to give them new ways to express those ways of being. All I gotta say is love on these kids.

Paul Beckermann 40:39

Thanks for being here, Dé Kwaan.

Dé Kwaan Wynn 40:42

Thank you all for having me.

Rena Clark 40:46

Thanks for listening to Unpacking Education.

Winston Benjamin 40:49

We invite you to visit us at avidopenaccess.org where you can discover resources to support student agency and academic tenacity to create a classroom for future-ready learners.

Paul Beckermann 41:04

We'll be back here next Wednesday for a fresh episode of Unpacking Education.

Rena Clark 41:08

And remember, go forth and be awesome.

Winston Benjamin 41:12

Thank you for all you do.

Paul Beckermann 41:13

You make a difference.