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Author talks motivation with high-schoolers

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HAMPTON - Ed Gerety told Winnacunnet High School student council members that they don't own others' negativity.

"As student leaders, 10 percent of the school population will like everything you say and do and will be behind you 100 percent. However, another 10 percent won't like you - won't support you no matter what you do. It doesn't matter if you've done anything to them - they don't like your shirt," said Gerety.

He told students that, sometimes, people focus on that 10 percent that will always be negative.

"Step away from them. Don't ignore them, but don't let them take your energy away," he advised.

He suggested, instead, keeping the focus on the remaining 80 percent, which could go either way.

Author and speaker Ed Gerety empowers youth to reach their dreams.

Gerety wrote the book, "Combinations: Opening the Door to Student Leadership."

The three-time Boston Marathon completer is also contributing author of three other teen books, "Teen Power, Too", "Teen Power and Beyond," and "Go M.A.D. (Make a Difference) - Real Stuff Real Teens Can Do to Make a Real Impact in an Unreal World."

He also published an inspirational folktale called "The Special Frog."

Gerety encouraged the teens to dream high, set specific goals and keep attaining mini goals that lead to the completion of their quests.

"Putting forth your best effort toward a goal makes you a better person because you made the attempt, and makes WHS a better place because you made the attempt.

He said, if he walked into any student's bedroom, he should know what his dream is because of what pictures he has placed on the wall. Anyone who wants to attend a certain university, for example, should have a photo of the college on his or her bedroom wall as an every-day reminder that that's where he or she wants to go.

The Exeter resident, who has inspired audiences in all 50 states as well as Canada and Europe, told the WHS student leaders to fill their minds with their goals.

He cited the example of Oprah Winfrey, who had a tragic childhood, but fed her mind with books and went on to be one of the most successful talk-show hosts in the world.

He also taught the youngsters how to state their goals. He worked with senior Hoban Ansel Blume, who told him he wanted to be an astronaut, preferably by the time he was 30.

Gerety told him to replace "I want" with "I will," which is more powerful, and to eliminate "preferably" with a firm decision, and to be as specific as possible.

The end result was Blume's goal. "By the time I'm 30, I will be a flight commanding astronaut in a spaceship."

Other students who worked on their goals before the group were the following: Sophomore Tia Pydynkowski said, "I will produce an award-winning movie for Universal that is a comedy." Student Body Treasurer Chris Legendre stated, "I will earn \$100 million before I'm 30, so I will retire young and enjoy it."

Gerety has been speaking to students since his first year at the University of New Hampshire, where he graduated with a communications degree. During his first year, his high-school teacher called him back to speak to his former homeroom in high school.

"I wanted to work with students to help them reach goals, make positive choices, have respect for themselves and for one another," said Gerety. "I give a strong message against bullying and for maintaining character and being kind and respectful of each other. I think the issues of respect and accepting each other are important for schools all over the country."

His four reminders for successful leadership are appreciation, respect, kindness and belief.

Gerety had the student leaders break into three groups to brainstorm ideas on areas they

believe need improvement at WHS. A unified student body, school spirit and communication between both students and student leaders and students and administration were the three areas they determined to work on.

For creating a more unified student body, Gerety suggested making a huge poster on which each student could trace his hand and sign his name.

"You can put it out there, even if not everybody signs it," said the motivational speaker.

School spirit could be improved by publicizing sports events, dances, clubs, etc., on a communication board. Team captains could also announce games over the school intercom.

For communication, the student council members suggested publishing minutes of their meetings and placing an ad in the newspaper with their phone numbers and e-mail addresses to be accessible to the student body. They also decided to invite administrators to their meetings.

Gerety told the students to take action on those ideas and that he would come back in a month to follow up on them.

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