

■ **PLANS** Author and motivational speaker visits island to show students how to create educational goals

# Help young rise to potential

Nadia Arandjelovic

**M**ichael Wynn grew up in poverty on Chicago's South Side. No one in his family had graduated from college and the odds were stacked against him doing so either: the dropout rate at his high school was nearly 90 per cent; only 15 of the 500 students who started with him in the ninth grade continued on to university.

It's a story he shares with young people in hopes of motivating them towards higher education, something he's done since he graduated from Northeastern University in 1979.

The 59-year-old author spoke with students at the Berkeley Institute and CedarBridge Academy this week.

He was invited down by the leadership of Sandys 360, the community sports club that closed its doors to the public more than two years ago. Mr Wynn was an instrumental part of the organisation's mentoring programme that continues to help 25 teenage boys thanks to sponsorship from Lancashire Insurance Company Ltd.

"Parents often have this long-term conversation with their children about what they want to do when they grow up, but what we need to do is the planning around that," he told Lifestyle.

"I've met seniors in high school who said they wanted to become a doctor in primary school but they've been failing math and science. No one helped them align those goals with their actions."

Children should be encouraged to work toward their potential, no matter where their strength lies, he said.

"We know children are gifted in so many different ways and we fail to recognise it and hone those gifts.

"Parents can play a key role with this in a child's early stages, but eventually young people have to take ownership for their own college path. What I tell young people is I can support them, but it's their race to run. I can give them suggestions on which high school courses to take, but you have to do the work to succeed in class."

He only made it to university "by chance", Mr Wynn said.



Photograph by Akil Simmons

**On a mission:** Mychal Wynn is an American author and motivational speaker who is passionate about helping young people get to college. He spoke with students at CedarBridge Academy and the Berkeley Institute

"There was no guidance in my high school to get to college. I attended a conference one day. I went there to take photographs. A guy called me over to his table and he presented me with an application form to fill in for Northeastern. I went back to my high school and didn't tell anyone and I completed the application, sent it off and received a conditional acceptance."

He had to take a calculus and physics class to get accepted. Mr Wynn spent an extra semester getting the credits at a community college, working for the US Postal Service on the side.

"I was focused on my studies because I knew that was a way out," he said. "From a young age, before I even started school, although neither of my parents

graduated from high school, my father always affirmed I was going to college. He knew a college education was the way out of poverty.

"In the end I passed both the physics and math class and started at Northeastern on January 19, 1975. I graduated from the engineering programme in 1979."

He was recruited by IBM immediately after graduation.

To have full-time employment, get to drive his own car and have his own money was "an unimaginable experience" for him but the corporate world wasn't the right fit. He returned to his childhood passion of writing poetry. It eventually got him a job teaching middle school students.

"I realised working with young people was my passion," Mr Wynn said. "I started looking into the black male crisis in the United States and have been involved with the education crisis for over 30 years now.

"We've seen students move from primary school into colleges and universities across the country. Two are in law school, another one is in medical school at Morehouse, another is in graduate school and there's one young man studying mechatronics engineering."

One of the biggest challenges he's encountered over the years is what he calls the "college knowledge gap"; students don't know what is needed to get into the college of their choice or even how to go about applying.

"There's an inequitable counsellor ratio in the States, meaning a lot of children don't get the support they need early enough," he said. "And with college admissions being so competitive and college tuition being so costly, students are likely to make the wrong college choices. There are students who are very bright and should be applying to schools they are academically qualified for. Instead they apply for more basic schools thinking they will get a scholarship, but those schools have more competitive financial aid policies."

Instead of lecturing students, Mr Wynn tries to get them engaged in plotting their own path.

"Students research their own colleges and are able to conceptualise their own plans," he said.

## Get your children into college

Nadia Arandjelovic

Mychal Wynn suggests three steps for getting children ready for college:

**1. Constantly observe your child's interests, skills and passions.**

In Mr Wynn's case, whenever he saw that either of his two sons was interested in something he would get them items to do with that for Christmas and their birthdays. "When I noticed our son was interested in art I got him the apron, paints and all the supplies," he said. This gives them a chance to explore the skill or talent as much as possible early on.

**2. As your child reveals their interests, make sure to provide them with enrichment opportunities in those areas.**

Whether it's in their school curriculum, summer programmes or after school provide them with opportunities to grow in those areas, Mr Wynn said. Sometimes children change their minds about a certain hobby or activity as they get older, but you can always adapt their extracurricular around that.

**3. Start planning.**

Mr Wynn calls it "backward mapping" — whereby you start by looking at the type of interests your child has, then start researching which universities or degree programmes they might enjoy doing. Look at what types of students get into those universities and receive full scholarships — and set goals around that.

"Parents need to start taking into account what kind of education their child may need and how it will get paid for," he said.

## ■ DATING Online

### Double chins, bad lighting and cats: How you look while using Tinder

THE WASHINGTON POST — There's no shortage of art projects inspired by online dating. There's the Belgian artist who displayed Tinder profiles side-by-side with users' Linked-In photos. Or the woman who responded to online creeps by drawing sketches of what they might look like naked.

The latest version is an OnTinderAtTinder hashtag started by Someecards late last week. On the left, a Tinder profile pic. On the right, an image of what that user looks like while browsing Tinder. The left-side photos are sexy, polished and posed. The right-side photos are full of cats, double chins and under-eye circles. I thought about adding my own OnTinderAtTinder photo mash-up, but I'm not that brave.

Someecards sums up the Tinder v reality dichotomy like this: "In profiles, people are vivacious, hot and fun. When they're staring at their phones and wondering if they'll ever meet someone they can stand, they're the opposite."

Much of the response to the photo mash-ups has called the polished and posed Tinder pics "misleading" and the selfies more reflective of real life.

While it's true that golden-hour lighting doesn't follow a person around 24/7, neither does that look of boredom and desperation that could be called Tinder Resting Face.

Those candid shots are misleading in a different way. Say you were to get off the internet and meet that left and right version of the person on Tinder — and then get into a relationship with that person. In that case, you'd get both the left and right versions of that person — plus everything in between. You get to see the whole person, who's hopefully much more balanced than a best and worst snapshot.

In other news, researchers at Florida State University found that the more selfies someone posts on Instagram, the greater the chance they'll experience romantic break-up. Leading them back to Tinder, of course.



**Good deeds:** AIG departments and individuals selected 20 families they wished to sponsor, who received donations of gifts, gift certificates, food vouchers and Belco vouchers. AIG also got together nearly new clothes and nursery items which they also donated to the families that needed them for Christmas

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