“Underachiever” describes his path to success

Thursday 20 June, 2024

Imagine teaching someone you know is bright but underachieving. Or being 14 years old and believing that you’ll never “amount to much”.

Gavin Kamara broke through those assumptions with a little help from Urban Synergy to graduate from university and become a senior manager at the financial group CMC.

In May, he joined the charity’s Head of Programmes Dianne Johnson at Prendergast Ladywell School to share some career tips with 180 students aged 12-13 years - and most of all, to inspire them.

The path to success

Gavin talked about being raised in a single-parent family in Deptford, Lewisham, and being quite a shy and introverted child struggling academically at primary school and then moving to secondary school at Deptford Green.

Due to his low grades, Gavin was labelled as an underachiever who wouldn’t excel academically and amount to much in society along with 12 other students in his year group who they collectively called ‘The London Challenge Boys.’

One of the teachers at the school, Ms Bygrave, spoke to Gavin and the other students and told them the reality of the school’s perception gave them the tools that they needed to excel and also introduced Gavin and the other students to Urban Synergy who provided mentoring support - a life-changing moment.

Essential skills

Gavin spoke about working with Urban Synergy to deliver the first Career Role Model Seminar which introduced students at his school to barristers and pilots from diverse backgrounds, something they had never seen before.

With Gavin’s aspirations raised he successfully gained his GCSEs and studied a degree in Marketing. He told the Ladywell students: “*You can achieve anything if you put your mind to it.*”

Gavin also shared some career insights to his role as a Senior Website Manager at the CMC Group.

He said these are the essential skills needed in the workplace:

- communication,
- problem-solving,
- adaptability,
- teamwork,
- time management,
- being personable
- leadership and critical thinking.

He left the students with one final quote, “*It’s not how you start that counts, but how you finish that matters*.”

What did the students at Prendergast Ladywell School make of Gavin Kamara’s path to success?

99% of the students said they learned about a new career pathway, and 100% agreed that they’d learned about skills valued in the workplace.”

One said: “*It was good - it helped me to think about skills needed when it’s time for me to get a job*.”

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Scan Me:

Company Contact:

Urban Synergy

T. 07711331127
E. victoria.silverman@urbansynergy.com
W. https://urbansynergy.com/

Additional Contact(s):
Contact CEO Leila Thomas at ceo@urbansynergy.com

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