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Speaker tells area high school students to set tempo for success

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MANILA—Motivational speaker Paul Vitale challenged Manila High School students to find their talent, see their potential and succeed as adults during an hour-long presentation Wednesday.

Vitale showed several videos that featured successful Arkansans. A Manila native, Chuck Robertson, wrote a song featured in one of the videos, and Vitale took that opportunity to impress upon the youngsters crowding the auditorium that they have many options and opportunities.

As part of his "Setting the Tempo for Achievement," Vitale told the freshmen through seniors about five actions they can take to give them better odds of being a successful adult. They include: identifying their talents, perfecting their edge, unleashing motivation, exercising patience and recognizing their range of opportunities.

He said he wanted to give the students a dose of pride so they could feel good about themselves. He encouraged them to talk to teachers, counselors and coaches in an effort to find

their strengths and weaknesses.

Vitale played a video that showed how several celebrities overcame obstacles to become successful, such as Johnny Cash, poverty and addiction; Maya Angelou, abuse; and Mary Steenburgen, shyness.

The speaker asked the students to ask themselves a series of questions: "What am I good at, what do I enjoy doing, and can I get paid to do it?"

Plans for future

During a breakout session with only juniors and seniors Vitale asked a few who do not plan to attend college what they want to do for a career. One girl said she wants to be a mechanic; another said she wants to be an "American Idol" performer; a senior said he wants to own a trucking company.

"Does that put a smile on your face? That tells me you're passionate about something," he said.

Although Vitale is a proponent of post-secondary education, he acknowledged that not everyone will attend college.



He said a college graduate will earn \$412 more a week than a non-college graduate.

"Every day we have an opportunity to do our best, to identify our talents. We are gifted with skill sets that are our talents," he said.

"How do you figure out what you want to do," a student asked.

Vitale asked him to list three activities he enjoys: video games, riding horses and duck hunting. He advised the student to search online for companies that produce video games and find out how many career paths are tied to it. Use the horse riding and duck hunting as choices B and C, he said.

One way Vitale gets his point across to the youngsters is using personal experiences. For example,

he was tutored in the hallway at school, and some boys leaving their classroom would kick his chair. When he was speaking at a penitentiary, he noticed that one of the boys who kicked his chair was serving time there. Vitale said he was fortunate to get to go home that night, but the boy who had been mean to him was not as fortunate.

"This is your life to live," he said. "Every day you have a chance to master your craft."

Vitale stressed that communication skills are essential, no matter what the students choose to do for a living. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism and mass communication, he said.

The 39-year-old also encouraged the high school students to "stay motivated, stand up straight, look people in their eyes and shake their hand. Seize the moment. This is our moment. This is our time. Think for yourselves, and make solid choices for the future."