



MAP ACADEMY

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[Episode 16: A Different Approach to Helping High School Students Find Their Path](#)

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Nick: [00:00:00] Map Academy embraces the whole student and their lives complex realities. Map meets students where they're at every day. By prioritizing relationships and wraparound supports, each student is able to get on their individual path to graduate and prepare for life after high school. Today, we'll talk to Sabrina. She's a Map Academy class of 2020 graduate. Sabrina is one of the founding students at Map, and today we're going to find out how Map supported **[00:00:30]** her through graduation, and helped prepare her for the future.

[music]

Nick: When I was 15, before I started Map Academy, I was in a regular school, and it wasn't really working out for me. I got in trouble a lot. My grades were pretty good, but it was just hard for me because I felt like I didn't have the support I really needed. The teachers didn't really understand them. **[00:01:00]** I don't know. They weren't-- It's way different than Map Academy. We didn't really have a connection. I felt like they just looked at me as a student that was a bad kid, which I was never really a bad kid, I don't think.

Nick: Even with her Individualized Education Plan, Sabrina still fell out of step. She needed more support.

Sabrina: Also, I just felt like I wasn't getting taught the right way anyway, so it didn't really matter. I basically just do work but didn't really know what I **[00:01:30]** was doing. My parents saw Map Academy, and they're like, "Oh, this looks really good for Sabrina." When I heard about this school, I was like, "Yes, it actually sounds like a really good school. It sounds like they care about us." I was already sure. Regular school wasn't good for me because I felt like I just kept getting in trouble.

My parents are really supportive, though, they've been supportive through my whole high school experience. Most of my friends don't have that, so I do feel lucky for having two parents that care about me a **[00:02:00]** lot and help me with school and stuff.

Nick: Sabrina remembers being able to tell right away that Map Academy was a different kind of school.

Sabrina: When I went to Map Academy, the first time I thought of it like a therapeutic school. It just looks so different than regular schools. Just all the couches and, not desks, but tables, so you can all see each other in a classroom. It's just very different from a regular school, **[00:02:30]** and it just

feels more comfortable to be in a nice little community. Then, all the teachers are really welcoming, and all the staff, they're the counselors and staff. It was a home feeling, I guess. They treat you like an adult and normal human beings. They don't just see you as a student, they see you as someone that is trying to learn and just needs help getting through high school.

Nick: This approach looks different than a lot of [00:03:00] other high schools. They don't have guidance counselors, instead, they have wraparound support, which consists of social workers and pathway coordinators. They work with the students to prepare them for the resilient life skills they need to reach their goals.

Sabrina: Yes. Regular school has guidance counselors, and we don't really call ours guidance counselors, we have people who actually care about our feelings, and that we can talk to, to vent to, stuff like that. Then, we also have a career development teacher, so that's nice. [00:03:30] Then, there's also someone who will help you with colleges you want to find, dual enrollment, and how to get a job, things like that. In a normal school, you can't really find that.

Nick: Pathways coordinator, Stephanie King, played a major role in supporting Sabrina and preparing her for the future, as well as the many other students at Map.

Stephanie: My name is Stephanie King. I am the pathways coordinator at Map Academy. I actually started working there last March. It has just been a wonderful experience [00:04:00] of getting to work with students on their career development, their post-secondary planning, and their Capstone completion. Typically, I do work with the students that are close to graduation, their graduation is coming up soon, they're planning it, and they typically meet with me to figure out what are the plans aftermath, and what do those dreams look like.

I first met Sabrina when I started last March, and I just was blown away. She just had all these amazing ideas.

Sabrina: I [00:04:30] work with Stephanie King. She's amazing. She really cares about all her students. She really wants the best for you, and she just helps you a lot. She'll help you apply to things, help you get a job. I already knew I would graduate, but I wanted to prove people wrong, because some people thought I was way behind and didn't think I'd graduate, or didn't really think I'd make it. [00:05:00] I wanted to prove people wrong. I just wanted to show them what I can do.

Stephanie: I would have to say just a wonderful growth. She was such a bubbly, excited, and very loud when I first met her. She knew what she wanted, but just trying to focus in all those areas was taking some time. At first, when I first met her, I don't think she thought, college, dual enrollment, touring the different schools and checking these [00:05:30] places out, she knew what she wanted, but she wasn't really almost excited for that.

I started to see that more and more where she was coming to me and asking about dual enrollment opportunities and taking the placement test, which is a little nerve-racking for high school students have to go to college and take a test to figure out what type of classes you go into and applying to colleges. We completed her FAFSA as well. She actually came to me with those questions, and she was ready to go and right into it.

Sabrina: [00:06:00] Stephanie asked me if I would be open to doing a dual enrollment either at Cape Cod Community College, or Quincy College. I wasn't really sure at first because I never thought I'd go to any college before. I'm just not really the school type, but I decided I wanted to go

to Quincy College and take an English class there. While I was still in high school, Stephanie helped me apply to the school. We took a tour [00:06:30] to Quincy College. We also took a tour to Cape Cod College to see what one I like better. She just told me about both of them and how they're different, how some things are similar.

She just wanted to make sure I liked it and wanted to do it. When she started, I thought about it, and we applied to both schools. I got accepted to both, but I decided I wanted to go to Quincy College. I started doing Roman [00:07:00] in January, and I ended May 13th. I started off going to the class during school at eleven o'clock. I'd go to class, and I'd sit there and come back to Map Academy.

Stephanie: Her willpower to do that and to have that self-motivation. I can motivate Sabrina all day long, and I love doing it. Every time we talk, I love making sure she knows that I'm always here for her and she has that support. I motivate [00:07:30] her as pathway's coordinator, but someone that genuinely cares about her as well. She's just wonderful. I cannot express it. I'm actually almost trying not to tear up just talking about her.

Nick: Map creates a culture built on trusting supportive relationships, and flexible student-centered academics that empower their learners.

Sabrina: Because they want the best for you. They want to make sure you have a job when you leave here and know what you want to do, so you're not just graduating and they're like, "Okay, goodbye." They still [00:08:00] want to have a connection with you, and they want to make sure you're going to be doing good and do what you want to do.

Stephanie: Yes. I think there's trust there. I try to build upon their trust and let them know that I'm just here to help them, and I will continue to help them long after they graduate as well.

Nick: Map has been closed because of COVID-19 like most other schools around the country. Sabrina has been balancing her dual enrollment, all of her classes moving online, and working two jobs.

Stephanie: Which is huge definitely for her. [00:08:30] Your first college class, your first college semester, during COVID-19 as a high school student, that is a huge accomplishment. She was able to power through that and ask for help when needed. If I can say so, Sabrina received an A for her course.

Sabrina: The biggest thing I miss about Map Academy is coming into school every day and then all saying, "Hi and good morning."

Nick: Having experienced this success at Map Academy, Sabrina [00:09:00] felt a responsibility to her peers and fellow students to help keep them motivated and get them on a successful pathway as well.

Sabrina: Well, they were asking, how should we get kids to do more work because some aren't that motivated. I was just thinking of ideas how we could and how our students-- It's our jobs to motivate each other, and our friends, and try to help them get some work done, [00:09:30] especially the ones that have been there for two years like me.

Nick: As Sabrina heads off on her next adventure, we asked her to reflect on her time at Map.

Sabrina: Yes. Well, I'm definitely independent. I'm definitely more mature. Map Academy got me through that. I wouldn't be who I am today if it wasn't for Map Academy. I don't know, I definitely wouldn't be because everything there changed my perspective **[00:10:00]** all the teachers, even the people around me, my friends. Everything's just different. I know what I learnt in life now, when I wasn't too sure three years ago.

Nick: Sabrina is just one of the amazing stories of resilience and perseverance at Map Academy, a high school based in Plymouth, Massachusetts, that believes with the right resources, **[00:10:30]** every student can thrive. We'll be sharing more of these inspiring stories. Check back soon.

My name is Nick Tetrault. Our executive producer is Kristen Hughes. This was a Hairpin production.

Josh: Hello, this is Josh, co-founder of Map Academy. If you or someone you know works in education or youth development and wants to make a difference, check out our website at themapacademy.org for current openings, **[00:11:00]** a staff referral program, and a form you can use if there isn't a listing that matches what you do. We need talented teachers and youth development professionals that are ready to do high school differently and be there for students who need them the most.

Thanks for listening.

[00:11:28] [END OF AUDIO]