



**Education Disruption Podcast / 7.2.2020**

**[Episode 17: From High School Drop-out to High School Graduate](#)**

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**Nick:** Map Academy's model was created for students who are off track, on the verge of dropping out or have already dropped out. By putting the students at the center of every decision and action, the map staff is able to focus on addressing barriers to learning and nurturing student engagement. Meet Kayde. He dropped out of school for a whole host of reasons.

**Kayde:** [00:00:30] One of my best friends passed away. I had known her for a while and I was really close with her from my church when I used to go to church. She got in an 18-wheeler accident and it just took a huge toll on me. I wasn't the same for awhile. My dad had started getting really sick and we didn't know why until probably, last year. It was kind of like, just like having to think about all those things. [00:01:00] Then a lot more stuff started piling on. My grandfather ended up getting cancer and a lot of stuff was just happening and I didn't really want to deal with it. I just wanted to find an escape from it.

**Nick:** In addition to all those personal complications, Kayde had an individual education plan or IEP, for short. Even with that plan in place, schools often don't, or can't make the accommodations or provide students with the support they need leading kids [00:01:30] to fall further behind. Often they feel like a failure when really it's the school that's failing them.

**Kayde:** I got it at the end of my junior year. Before it, I literally was failing like every class, except for gym. I used to not be focused in class. I didn't really get a lot of work done until I started being able to like listen to music and being able to sit there and just focus on doing what I was doing. If I didn't know the answer, I would talk to a teacher. [00:02:00] Sometimes when I would go to use my phone and my headphones, because they were like the ways to help me focus. They wouldn't let me do that. I don't know. It took a toll on me because it just made me upset every day. They aren't listening to what I'm supposed to have.

**Nick:** Kayde was looking for ways to cope with his pain and trauma,

**Kayde:** I guess, smoking, it helped me cope with some things, I guess. [00:02:23] Things that had happened over the years when I smoked a lot, it left me, I don't know. I felt really bare [00:02:30] and like things felt it didn't really matter, like what I did right then and there. At the same time, now that I look back, I could have been working so much harder on myself and prepare for being an adult, but I didn't.

**Nick:** I asked Kayde how this affected his relationship with his family.

**Kayde:** They didn't really like have control over me. I actually moved out of my mom's house and moved in with a friend. [00:03:00] They weren't really getting too affected by it. I obviously tried to stay away as much as possible [unintelligible 00:03:08] I felt like they needed to be affected by what I was doing. My mom was upset. At the same time, she understood where I was coming from because she didn't want me to impact everyone else's life around me that I'm around all the time. I was just doing my own thing.

**Nick:** Kayde knew he wanted more, he just didn't know where to start. Luckily he had friends who [00:03:30] went to Map. They encouraged him to check it out.

**Kayde:** I was like, "Wow, that seems like a really interesting school. I really want to figure things out and like see what it's like there." It was like resonating in the back of my head for awhile. I didn't really jump on the action. Then I let it sit for awhile. Then I was like, "Yes, I need to go back to school. I want to get this done. I need to do this for me. I can't just let myself [00:04:00] sit here and not be done with school. This is my chance to figure things out and get myself back in like finish things up because I'm only going to get this one opportunity."

**Nick:** Map believes social, emotional needs must be met first. Academics will follow. That's why Map has a wrap around support team. They work with students to get them to a place of trust and openness so they're ready to learn. Kayde talks about his relationship with two members of the team.

**Kayde:** Lance, he [00:04:30] was acting like a big brother figure when I first came in. He wanted to make sure I was okay and that I was comfortable with all the students and things like that. Then this year, Andre was like that too. Me and Andre had more of a bigger bond. We played basketball a lot and everything over at the rec center. I feel like I could just get a really close bond with all the teachers that are there.

**Nick:** This is Lance, he's on the support team at Map. He remembers when Kayde first [00:05:00] started at the school.

**Lance:** I think it was hard to get past some of the layers. Everybody has a lot of stuff and it was hard to unpack and figure out and talk about some of the real stuff. Kayde was always-- when he was at Map or at the beginning of his Map journey, he was always nice. He was a nice kid. He didn't have a long way to go in terms of credits. [00:05:30] Map is a lot more than credits for some people. I think his first year, while he could have achieved his credits but just in a couple of months in the first year, I don't think that he was ready and I don't think he got everything he needed from himself and From being in a place like Map academy.

**Kayde:** Well, they both like, when I first came in were like on top of me, "Hey, you need to get work done. Make sure you're getting work done." They would both come in classrooms, [00:06:00] come in and be like, "Hey, I just wanted to come in and make sure you guys are still doing some work," and stuff like that.

**Nick:** Even with that push for academics, Lance explains how academics are only half the battle at Map Academy.

**Lance:** That's not as important as making sure Kayde is ready to be a secure, productive person in his next phase of life. It was important that he wanted to do it for himself as he learned how to get that, have that motivation, [00:06:30] how to be self motivated and how to use the tools that you

have. It is very noticeable when a student transitions from whatever mindset that they're in, when they come in to Map, to a point where they are allowing us to give what we're offering or allowing themselves to receive what we're offering, when it does transition to that acceptance and that willingness it's [00:07:00] really nice.

**Kayde:** This year, my second year in, they both just would normally talk to me like as a normal adult, we would just talk about things. I how Lance has this, I wouldn't say retro, but his classic t-shirt collection, his vintage t-shirt collections. He actually gave me one of his Celtics jerseys that he had [00:07:30] for me completing a credit. He knew that that was like some big motivation for me because he knows I like basketball a lot. Same with Andre.

**Lance:** I remember sitting down and struggling with him to get some of his US history to done and he powered through it. It was tough, but he powered through, it was pretty impressive to watch.

**Kayde:** I remember he used to always come over to the rec center and play basketball with us. It kind of just was [00:08:00] a click happens. We just all got along and it just build up a bond between us that I felt was not really going to end up, I would say not breaking, but falling down the hill after I graduate. I feel like they're still going to be there for me if I need them.

**Nick:** This is on Andre, he's on the phone so his connection is a little rough.

**Andre:** I use a lot of my sense of humor and I guess my athleticism depending on the kid. [00:08:30] We would go over to the gym and we'd play basketball or play kickball or play Dodge ball or something. I'll just use my competitiveness and see where they're at. Then when we get back to the school building, it's like, "Okay, we did that. We had fun. Now, it's time to work and grind up for [unintelligible 00:08:47] credits." It all depends on what their interest is and I meet them at that level.

**Nick:** Map works with students up to 24 years old. Lance and Andre reflect on the nuances of working with young men specifically,

**Lance:** With the older boys, [00:09:00] I think that we typically have a little more like school related trauma and there's just been more time for, more time for negative experiences with male authority figures. It takes a little more time to feel things out and figure out who the individual is. Then I try to respond based on that.

**Andre:** I would say Map specifically, there's been a lot of growth and a lot of young men [00:09:30] from the first day they walked through the door. You can tell like there's a lot of certain people that actually have shown a lot of growth and figure it out themselves. They no longer had to prove themselves and be that alpha dog. One they have their personal life within Map, that's when they started focusing on the academics.

**Kayde:** 100%, they're both always on top of me because they want to make sure that I'm getting my stuff done because they both see the potential that I have in myself.

[00:10:00] **Lance:** He made tremendous progress and he tried really hard, like nothing at Map was just handed to him. He's coming from a place where he was a little bit older than a lot of the kids and he really tried hard. Like he's finished strong.

**Kayde:** Yes because honestly, like, before I went to Map, I had no motivation for anything. I didn't really want to do anything. I didn't care what happened. [00:10:30] Whatever happened to

happened, but then, once I stopped smoking and I started focusing more on schoolwork, I realized that like, "Hey, I can get a lot of stuff done and I don't have to do other things to help myself get through it."

I feel so much better as a person without it than I do when I was doing it. When I was doing it, honestly, I was kind of upset and depressed all the time and I felt like, I had no motivation and now that I don't do it, I feel like I have motivation and like, [00:11:00] I have goals that I need to look forward to and things that I need to actually look forward to later on in life than just smoking weed.

**Nick:** Map has been closed since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We asked Kayde how he feels about graduating in 2020.

**Kayde:** It's cool because we're kind of getting our own unique graduation. No one's really going to experience something like this again, for another say like 70 or 80 years, like if something like this were to break out. There [00:11:30] hasn't been something like a plague in however many years and then all of a sudden we have this one random thing pop up and it's worldwide.

**Nick:** Kayde is not letting that worldwide disruption get in the way of his pride for graduating

**Kayde:** Honestly, it feels amazing and I honestly couldn't be more proud of myself. It honestly is a pretty big step for me.

**Nick:** Andre and Lance, they asked for the last word.

**Andre:** I just want to say, Kayde, I'm proud of you.

**Lance:** Kayde, you did a great job. Learning [00:12:00] how to be not just who you are, but who you aspire to be. It was cool to be a part of that with Kayde.

**Nick:** If you want to hear more inspiring students stories, subscribe to this podcast. Map Academy is a free Public Charter High School in Plymouth, Massachusetts that believes with the right support all students can succeed. This is Nick Tetrault, our executive producer is Kristin Hughes, and this is a hairpin production. [00:12:30]

**Rachel:** Hey, this is Rachel, co-founder of Map Academy. As you can probably tell from that episode Map is a really unique school, and we're constantly looking for new talent to join our team. If you or someone you know works in education and wants to make a difference, check out our website, the mapacademy.org and take a look at our careers page. From there. You can check out current openings, our staff referral program and find a form to get in touch.

We're [00:13:00] always looking for talented teachers and youth development staff that are ready to do High School differently and serve the students that find their way to us. Thanks for listening

[00:13:19] [END OF AUDIO]