



MAP ACADEMY

**Education Disruption Podcast / 10.20.2022**

**[Episode 34: Putting Students' Needs First So They Can Meet Their Goals](#)**

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**Nick:** Map Academy, an alternative school built for students on the margins, does high school differently. From academics, to wraparound supports, to hybrid learning, Map is intentionally designed to reengage youth so they can succeed in ways that work for them. Doing high school differently also means a different type of final project. For their capstone projects, many students in Map's, most recent group of graduates opted for a storytelling option...

**Presenter:** We're going to start...

**Nick:** ...authoring and then presenting their own narratives **[00:00:30]** in front of the Map community.

**Presenter:** Our students were tasked with reflecting on the life experiences that led them here today, which is incredibly close to graduating, and finding a story to share with you all, with our community.

**Nick:** In the season of Education Disruption, you'll hear the inspiring stories of how Map Academy students overcame obstacles in both life and their education to reach the milestone of becoming a high school graduate.

**Autumn:** Hi, I'm Autumn Glisper and I'm 23 and I am a graduate of Map **[00:01:00]** Academy.

When I first started school from the very beginning I was very focused and got my work done, but that was elementary school. Once I got to middle school, things got a little different. As I got diagnosed with ADHD and started getting distracted, school became super difficult, and I was always getting into trouble and ending up staying back my first year of middle school. This bothered me a lot but not enough for me to change and try to focus. **[00:01:30]**

**Nick:** We asked Autumn more about what this experience at her previous school was like.

**Autumn:** I don't know. I feel like it was personal life and school, but definitely the school played a huge role in it because when I got diagnosed it wasn't like they were like, "Oh, you got a diagnosis." They were just, "Okay, still come to school." If anything happened personal in my life that I found traumatic, it was still, "Oh, you still have to come to school." If I missed too much school it was like, "Oh, you're just trying to flunk," and it was like, **[00:02:00]** "You're not trying to pay attention." When I started getting distracted and getting in trouble, I got looked at more as a bad kid than a troubled student.

I ended up almost staying back again, but instead just put into an alternative school. This is where I feel things just got worse, and for the rest of my school years I would just never be in a normal school environment and just gave up. After I gave up, I felt hopeless and lost my goals and just started being really [00:02:30] reckless. At this point, school wasn't my main focus because I was becoming an adult, and other priorities like working became my main focus.

School was still a goal of mine, but I knew time was running out as I got older. This is when I started trying to get my GED – a charter school, a night school – and nothing got accomplished, and finding I didn't have enough support in needing extra help and not being in school for that long after that. [00:03:00] Then one day my mom told me about this school she found called Map Academy and how they worked with students, so we put my name in the lottery for the school and I was actually lucky enough to get picked.

**Nick:** We wondered what made Autumn give Map a chance after trying other alternative schools that didn't end up working out.

**Autumn:** I had more motivation at the time than all the other schools because it just seemed different. The way my mom described it to me and told me about it, I was really [00:03:30] intrigued by it, and I was honestly ready because at that point I just wanted to be done with school. I was already 21, I think, and I was just like, "I want this to be the chapter that's closed in my life." So I dove right in.

[music]

**Autumn:** First starting things at Map was very, very different from any other school I've ever been to. They made me feel like super comfortable and really relaxed. They gave me support and worked with me [00:04:00] on everything I already knew. They really helped me and went above and beyond for me and I'm so grateful for everything. It was amazing to have a school that didn't just support you in school, but in life in general.

**Nick:** At Map, that above-and-beyond support is made possible by a team of supportive staff, including Stephanie King, Map's wayfinding coordinator.

**Autumn:** Stephanie was literally so amazing with that stuff. She helped me with pretty much all that side support in my life than I have right now. Setting me up, when I wasn't working [00:04:30] at the time because I was trying to buckle down school mostly because my life was just already so hectic, if I had been working it would've been a lot harder. She helped me with unemployment and stuff like that, signing up for it. She helped me with things that I had trouble with, just trying to figure out over my phone with my food stamps and stuff. She was just always super helpful and went above and beyond with stuff like that.

**Nick:** We asked Autumn if there was a point that she lost sight of her goal to get her high school diploma or thought it might not be [00:05:00] possible or worth it.

**Autumn:** Definitely before I came here I was thinking like that, and then even a little bit during the time I was here and I became homeless, I lost that train of thought and I lost contact with the world – everyone, like my family, my friends. Everyone was pretty worried about me at that time, but I managed to somehow overcome it and I'm very proud of myself for that, because even to this day talking about it, I'm like, "Dang, I [00:05:30] overcame that."

It was a very big milestone for me, and I don't know why it was so hard, but it was pretty hard, and I did it. My two years at Map were very great, but not easy. My personal life while at Map Academy was very hectic and caused me not to be at school as much as I wanted to. The teachers at Map were amazing and understanding of my situation. I didn't like to talk about it much of what was going on because it was very personal, [00:06:00] but Map was supportive and it was truly a blessing.

**Nick:** One of those people was Mike Balaschi, a social worker and one of Map's assistant directors. Mike worked closely with Autumn to make sure she had the accommodations she needed to succeed.

**Autumn:** Well, from Mike... He would always tell me, "Come in when you can," and "Just when you can, do it," and, "We're not going to push you too much." He always made sure not to put too much pressure on me, which made me feel more relaxed and made me feel like, "Okay, I can do this [00:06:30] still." Because I feel like the pressure of the regular school — like, "Get this done, get this done, get this done" — it didn't really help at all. Mike was always so pressure-free, and then Stephanie was just always so, "I'm here. I'm here. Text me, I'm here." You what I mean? Those two combined was like a power team. It really worked well for me.

After two years of working hard and as best as I can at Map, I am graduating [00:07:00] at 23 years old with my diploma.

**Nick:** Now that she's done with high school, what's next for Autumn?

**Autumn:** I just see myself going up from here on out and I see myself doing more school and just learning new things, not necessarily business majors and stuff, but different languages and maybe little psychology classes. I see myself doing stuff like that. I see myself working in my career. I see myself saving up my money and eventually getting a house instead of an [00:07:30] apartment. I want to own a bunch of animals.

The only thing that's really stopping me is the little things like I'm working on getting my car and as soon as I have my car and my apartment, I feel like that's when things will be really going at a much faster pace and getting done because I'll be able to go places myself, run on my own time, and that's going to be hopefully happening very soon.

Also, something very important as well, I had to stay on my medication throughout this whole time [00:08:00] for me to stay stable. So as long as I do that and keep this little motivation in my head and my plan, I feel like I'll make it to my goals. Map was definitely a huge support of that.

Even though it was a long journey, I'm happy I experienced it and now have my diploma and the opportunity to see the world being more open and having possibilities for me. I can only go up from here and I'm very proud of myself. [00:08:30]

[music]

**Nick:** Thank you so much to Autumn for opening up and sharing her story with us, and congratulations on this milestone. Thank you all so much for listening to another episode of *Education Disruption*. You can find out more about Map Academy by visiting [themapacademy.org](http://themapacademy.org), or by checking out more from our archive at [educationdisruption.org](http://educationdisruption.org), where you can find articles in videos of some of the students and staff featured here on this podcast.

Please don't forget to subscribe and give us a rating on your podcast **[00:09:00]** platform of choice. My name is Nick Tetrault, our editor is Susie Blair, our executive producer is Kristen Hughes, and this is a Hairpin production.

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**[00:09:24] [END OF AUDIO]**