

Understanding the impulses from within: *Students contemplate the future with motivational speaker*

**By Marty Pretty
Staff Writer**

- “Today is the first day of the rest of your life.”

The message behind Kwain Bryant’s frank conversation with Alternative Learning Center students Monday brought a connection between teacher and pupils that does not often reach the everyday classroom.

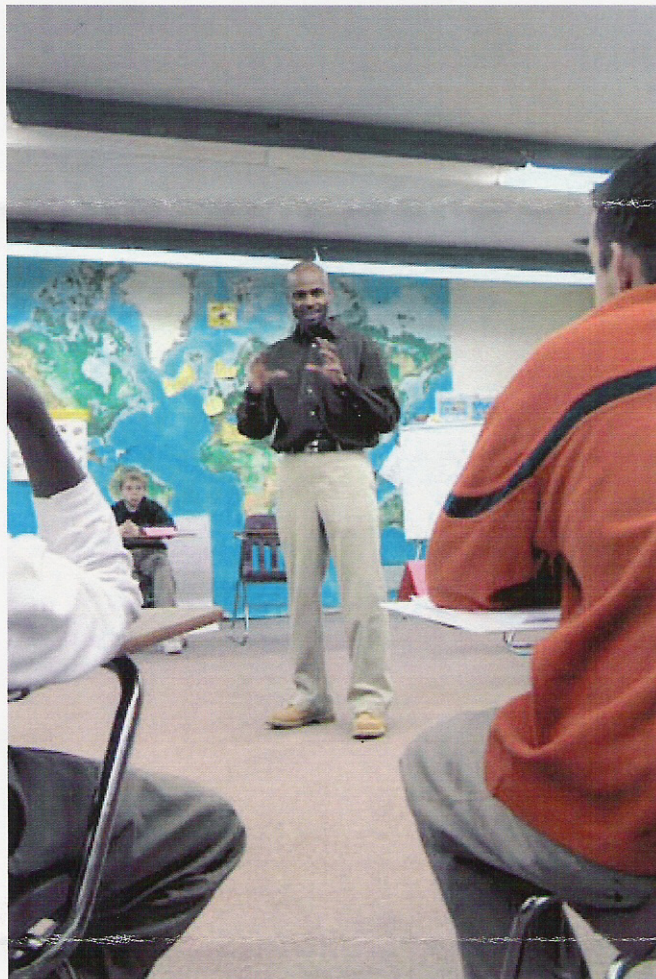
Nine students attending the alternative program on the campus Baptist Children’s Home engaged in conversation with Bryant, a professional consultant out of Charlotte, touching on subjects ranging from health to heartache.

Bryant drew the students in, discussing the problems that face them in their everyday lives using their terminology and social icons to make his points.

The interactive discussion that cycled through the room showed students they were not alone with worries and fears about acceptance and self esteem issues.

“There is a lot of great potential in this room,” Bryant said during a momentary break in the seminar. “They just have to realize it.”

Bryant conducts motivational workshops and presentations about adolescent life and getting on the right track and was sponsored by Thomasville’s Communities in Schools



Kwain Bryant, a Charlotte motivational speaker, talks with Alternative Learning students about dealing with themselves and problems today.

TIMES photos/Marty Pretty

program.

His work has been seen throughout the state as well as nationally. Simply put, the message is believe in yourself and dedicate yourself to whatever it is you decide to do with your future.

"If you don't like yourself, it's hard to like someone else," he said.

Bryant laid out several scenarios to students, separating the room into halves marked by two signs; one reading agree, the other, disagree.

What seemed to be a frivolous exercise of stretching the legs and silliness to a few actually led to students expressing their true opinions and realizing how peer pressure effects a situation.

Teachers also joined in on the question and answer session. Is it okay for men to cry, he asked.

"Men are supposed to be strong," Blake Ward said.

"Don't let anyone see the inner you," Trevon Crenshaw added.

But there was another side.

"I don't care what people think about me," Jamaal Baxter said. "I'm just me."

"It's all right to show emotions," Khriy Keith said. "If you don't cry, then you are not sensitive."

Bryant explained there were no right or wrong answers, instead made suggestions as to the positive outcomes students could strive for.

As the group talked, and more questions were asked, the doorway between the two signs, which served as the "I see both sides" area, began filling with people.

There were questions about diapering while child raising, and even whether a woman should pay during a date.

As expected, some of the responses were direct.

"If he helped make it, he should help clean up after it," Reavyn Williamson said.

"That's just gross to some guys," Heith Aldridge said.

Next Bryant gave students a contract to fill out, addressing their short-term goals in life. Bryant said it was a tangible sign the students could use as a source of inspiration and