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FORMER PC AND BOSTON CETLICS STAR SPEAKS TO STUDENTS AT KINGSTON HILL ACADEMY

LOCAL BASKETBALL LEGEND ERNIE DREGRIO TALKS ABOUT PRATICE AND CONFIDENCE

South Kingston, RI – Master of jokes and singer extraordinaire he is not, but that was part of his point. When the famous Friar and Boston Celtics player, Ernie DiGregorio, came to Kingston Hill Academy on October 19, he spoke to students about practice, and the confidence that comes from it.

After doing a few basketball tricks and then singing a few off-key bars of “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” Ernie asked the kids, “Which do you think I’m better at, singing or basketball?” Of course, the enthusiastic audience’s thunderous reply was, “Basketball! And do you know why I’m better at basketball?” asked Ernie. The bright kids at KHA responded, “Because you practiced!”

Ernie explained to the kids that he always loved to play basketball, and that his goal from a young age was to play for the Boston Celtics. He also knew that the only way he could get to the NBA would be to practice harder than anyone else and do well in school so he could play in College. But when he told people about his dream, Ernie said that no one believed he could do it; except for him.

Ernie also explained that while the road to his success was paved by practice, that road was not always smooth. “No one can learn to walk without falling,” he said. “The most important thing when you fail is to remember to pick yourself up.”

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And that's where confidence comes into the equation. Ernie knew that he was practicing hard, and that gave him the confidence to believe in himself and his dream. Armed with a strong work ethic and confidence in their dreams, he told the kids at KHA they could do anything.

Ernie's message resonated with the kids. One very young student excitedly told him that he couldn't go on the monkey bars before, but he "practiced and practiced" and now he can! Ernie had the whole room applaud the young man's efforts.

After his speech, Ernie autographed one item per student. Hopefully, the memorabilia will serve as a positive reminder to keep practicing and have confidence.

"Ernie's talk and visit inspired and energized our students today," said Daniel Parker, Director of Kinston Hill Academy. "All of us here at Kingston Hill appreciate Ernie taking time out of his schedule to stop by and offer encouragement to our kids."

Kingston Hill Academy, a public charter school, is dedicated to the Groden Network's mission of individualized learning plans for all students. The Groden Network is the leading non-profit organization in Rhode Island providing evaluative, therapeutic and educational programs for children and adults with autism and related developmental disabilities.

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