

Paul Vitale Galvanizes Bugs at Fordyce Arena

by Kierra Burks and J'Teija Jimerson

“If you’re willing to work for it, then no one can take it from you!” This was one of the insights Paul Vitale from *PeakPerformanceU* left 7th through 12-grade students as the guest speaker last Wednesday at the Fordyce FBT Arena.

Born and raised in Arkansas, Vitale said a motivational speaker he heard in the eighth grade inspired him to become one. Vitale said the speaker asked students when the last time was that they told their parents they loved them.

Although Vitale said the speaker’s question didn’t change him immediately, it stuck with him, and overtime, as he reflected on it, he began to tell his parents he loved them. The experience became a life changer for him. He realized how powerful a motivational speaker could be.

Vitale told students that he had a 2.8 GPA in high school and wasn’t really good with words, including trouble hearing vowel sounds, but Vitale said he was determined to become a motivational speaker and impact individuals. He said that his high school counselor didn’t dismiss his dream but instead helped him develop a game plan for how to make it a reality.

His counselor advised him to write letters, and he did...hundreds of them. He began to email and contact NFL teams for a chance to speak in front of crowds. In 2008, the Minnesota Vikings answered his letter. The Vikings liked his presentation, and Viking Matt Birk gave him an opportunity to speak.

Today, Vitale’s list of clients includes ESPN, the United States Postal Service, Southwest Airlines, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Washington Redskins, the Georgia Department of Education, Tyson Foods, the Minnesota Vikings, Antiques Roadshow, and the University of Kentucky.

He is a published author and together with Birk, he developed curriculum in use and partially funded by the Arkansas Department of Education Division of Career and Technical Education.

During his presentation to Fordyce students, what began as a quiet crowd soon became an auditorium filled with very enthusiastic teens. In response to a question about how he handles negative comments, Vitale said, “If they hate, let them hate.” The arena erupted.



Kierra Burks, Paul Vitale and J'Teija Jimerson

Vitale repeatedly connected with the crowd by sharing life lessons from his own youth and by conveying ambition, positivism, and high energy.

Vitale made many different points, “Arriving late is a way of saying that your own time is more valuable than the time of the person who waited for you.”

Vitale added the following advice, “If you want to make a change, you have to start with yourself. If you continue to make mistakes, you’ll be known as a mistake.”

On the other hand, Vitale emphasized the importance of being confident. He said, “It’s not about being arrogant; it’s about being confident. You follow up and follow through.” He summarized, “If you screw up, then you own it, but also make a change.”

In conclusion, Vitale said, “Whatever you do matters and so does who you influence because someone is always watching.” He advised students to “become better listeners and have patience. Don’t let negative comments get to you, and find humility, respect, and gratitude in small things. Remember, it’s never so bad it couldn’t be worse.”