

Fowlin offers Weston students pre-prom advice

By [Rose Horowitz and Eilene Brostoff](#), ADAP on May 30, 2013 in [Schools & Youth](#) · [0 Comments](#)



Michael Fowlin

Receiving a standing ovation from a rapt audience of high school students, Michael Fowlin, an actor and psychologist, told them that one of the most important lessons they can learn is go "beyond what you are supposed to do and do what you need to do."

Dr. Fowlin, who has a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, used different voices at two pre-prom assemblies for high school students last week to ask students to think about their actions and to reach out to one another: smile and say hello to 10 people you don't usually greet and welcome diversity, he said.

In acting out the frustration of being a student with cerebral palsy, he said, "If all you ever see is my wheelchair and my disability, you don't see me."

What they are doing right now in their everyday life counts, he told students. "Who you are right now — what is your legacy if you died today?" he asked them.

Dr. Fowlin was introduced by Tim Walsh, the director and facilitator of the Youth Leadership Council, which provides a monthly forum for Weston students to discuss the challenges they face in high school and the risks associated with alcohol and substance abuse.

YLC is organized by the Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program (ADAP) of Weston, which also provided fruit and bagels for breakfast for all students before the assemblies on May 23. ADAP and Weston Youth Services sponsored the assembly for all grades at Weston High School.

The prom for Weston juniors and seniors was held on Friday, May 24, at the Greenwich Hyatt.

Portraying a cool teenager with his friend who was eyeing a pretty girl, Dr. Fowlin said that when his friend said disrespectful things to her, he was silent, going along with it since that was what he was "supposed" to do.

But then his high school football coach taught him otherwise, he said. "If you can figure out the difference between the things you are supposed to do and the things you need to do, you will be successful in football and in life."

When students in kindergarten and first grade are given a sheet of paper with shapes and told to “cross out” the things that are different, Dr. Fowlin said the lesson needed to be revised, saying, “Find the things that are different and put a smiley face next to them.”

Dr. Fowlin started creating voices when he began making prank calls at age nine. He went on to pursue an acting career and in 2001, he received a doctorate in clinical psychology from Rutgers University. He calls upon his 25-year battle with depression and being one of eight black kids in a predominantly white high school to convey different personalities, such as a football player from the “hood.”

Dr. Fowlin’s words seemed to resonate with both students and teachers who gave him a standing ovation in the first assembly.