

Detroit Community Schools (DCS), an institution that has significantly shaped my life. Having stayed in touch with Mr. Bart Eddy since my high school days, I continued to witness DCS's growth through social media updates and word of mouth. My decision to revisit DCS was motivated by a desire to reconnect with the community and rediscover its evolving impact.

Upon returning, I was struck by how much the space had changed since my time there. The woodshop class I once knew had expanded into a comprehensive program that provides students with hands-on opportunities three days a week after school and on Saturday mornings. The newly developed makerspace, which now occupies what was once an underused area, reflects the school's commitment to continuous growth and innovation.

To truly understand and capture the essence of this transformation, I made it a point to visit DCS three times. These visits allowed me to immerse myself in the environment and feel the energy that left me with goosebumps. On November 23rd, I conducted a two-part interview with both the multimedia and woodshop departments, which helped me uncover the core spirit of this remarkable space. Through this process, I was able to reflect on how DCS continues to evolve while maintaining the values that initially drew me to the institution.

On November 23rd, I engaged with two departments after introducing the purpose of my visit and the goals of the interview. My objective was to connect with students and organizations across Southeast Michigan, emphasizing how their voices are being incorporated and empowered youth through various programs. During my session with the Multimedia department, I interviewed Antwon Wilson, a senior at DCS, and Seligmin Foster, a 2023 graduate and returning alumnus.

I open the interview up by asking them what is the name of the session we were in and the purpose of this department?

Seligmin: “At first, when I first joined, it was mainly video and recording little things around the school, in different departments, then us taking it back to their studio room to edit the videos.. But, as time went on, they started spreading out into different things. We started doing music and moved on to other stuff. We started going out and doing videos in the city, like skating videos. I think it was last Christmas and the Christmas before that, we went downtown where the tree was and did the ice-skating video. Derek had a little episode thing, a series I guess you could call it, called *Walk With Me*, and we just went around to places, walking and interviewing people. So it spread to different things as time went on”.

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So we can basically say this department is like, multimedia? What makes this department special and different from the other departments here?

Antwon: “What makes it different is that we’re not forced to do anything we don’t want to do. Like, we all have an interest in something and we entertain people with things that were entertained by”.

Seligmin: “That’s a good point because a lot of the other departments, I wouldn’t say they don’t want to do it, but some of them probably don’t, since they only have one thing to do. Most of them, like in the woodshop department, are just doing stuff with wood, or they’re making jewelry and clothes—just strictly clothes, with a specific description for their job. Us, we don’t really have that; some people are making music, some are taking pictures, others are recording videos or songs, so everybody’s doing something different, and it’s kind of spread out”.

Antwon: “We found a way to make our job fit for us, and Mike helped by entertaining us with things we are most entertained by”.

What is it like having an instructor or teen lead like Mike as part of this community, and how important is relationship building when working with youth?

Seligmin: “It’s like a dream come true because Mike’s so cool, bro—whatever you want your instructor to be, Mike’s doing that. He finds a way to incorporate the stuff you want to do into work, like how he made making music a part of it, which I don’t know how he did, but he did. Building relationships is really important, and that’s what Mike does first—he’s cool like that. He figures out what you want to do, teaches you, and if you’re not interested, he’ll help you find something else, even inviting you to jobs that match your interests, like recording skating. He’s real creative and a jack of all trades, but he doesn’t promote himself much—even though he’s sweet at music, like when he pulled out a guitar one day and played it perfectly while singing. Mike just knows how to pull stuff out of nowhere and do it, and that makes him someone you can trust, look up to, and work with”.

Antwon: “Mike’s a cool dude for sure—he’s down for a lot and doesn’t abuse his authority, which is why we get along with him. Coming from a school where a lot of people abuse authority, he stands out because he likes to chill but is still a stern instructor who makes sure we get our work done. He’s very creative and helps us think about things differently. Before we even thought about seriously getting into music, he helped us tap into our passion for it and guided us toward it”.

So, bringing it back to your department, how would you say the Multimedia department incorporates youth voices in the work you do? And at the same time,

how does it empower you as a youth to use your own voice? So, two parts: How does your department give space for youth voices, and how do you feel empowered to express yours?

Seligmin: “Mike kind of put it in our brains that the internet, social media, and media in general are the future. It’s what a lot of people look to nowadays, and he empowers us to get ourselves in the media and speak freely because it can reach out to whoever. He says there are a lot of voices people listen to in the media, and he’s putting us in the mindset that our voices are ones that people could listen to or relate to. As long as you put yourself out there, you can be heard. The whole youth voice thing is a confidence booster. People like being filmed, people like to share their ideas and opinions. When you put your work out there using the equipment we have, it feels like, “This is everything I’ve ever wanted.” Some people have dreams but don’t have the resources or equipment for it, but here, you’ve got everything you need. It just gives you the freedom to run off and do whatever you want”.

Next question: how important is it for young people to be able to express themselves?

Antwon: “It’s very important. I feel like, in recent generations, a lot of young people hold in their emotions and feelings due to family issues or other reasons. I feel like it’s very important because not only do you have the confidence to express yourself now, but you can express yourself and your talents without discouraging people or judgment”.

Do you feel like more schools should incorporate a multimedia department or like an audio recording department? And why?

Antwon: “Depending on their students’ or their community’s interests, yes. If they take an interest in music, then I believe that is something they should do because it helps people build confidence or be more open. It’s another way people can express their feelings. But not just multimedia; I feel like any type of program that helps students speak their minds and open up in a way they like to open up is a good program”.

How have your family members or friends outside of school received the work you’ve been doing here on Saturdays? It’s really transformational, almost revolutionary. Also, how has this program, especially as young males, transformed who you are and your environment?

Seligmin: “It kind of surprises family members, especially with the shift between generations. Our generation is advanced, but we’re not so far from the time before smartphones. So, when they see us doing things like making music or shooting films, they’re amazed. They’ll say, “Oh my God, that’s crazy.” “When I was a kid, I never even

imagined doing that". I think it opens their eyes because they didn't realize how far we've come. They probably don't realize how crazy it is that we're doing things like making music that good, especially since back in the day, you'd have to pay so much for a producer or studio for this kind of sound. People over 40 would be shocked, saying, "I never could have dreamed of getting a camera like that back in my day." It probably blows their minds.

Growing up in Detroit, a lot of people just told you, "You need to get a job in a plant or assembly line, that's how you make money." But nowadays, we see all these people online—streamers, music makers, rappers, basketball players—and they're making it big. Some people say, "That's a one-in-a-million chance," and push us to focus on something stable. But when you see people getting paid off the internet, it's not easy; it takes a lot of work and self-trust. But here, in the multimedia team, we're getting paid to do what we see our idols doing. It really puts you in that mindset that if you keep working at it, you could make it too. Even if the money isn't huge now, it builds confidence. It's motivating to do what you love, and eventually, if you keep at it, you might get exactly what you want.

I think it can be discouraging for people when they don't get anything out of what they're doing. They might start thinking, "Maybe I should just sign up for a plant job." But here, even if it's not a lot of money, we're getting something from what we love doing. That pushes us to keep going, and eventually, we'll get where we want to be".

If you could incorporate multimedia into the curriculum for teachers or should teachers incorporate more pop culture elements that allow kids to express themselves?

Antwon: "I feel like if we were to get a more media-focused course or class inside a school, it'd have to be someone like Mike—someone who appreciates what we do and how we do it, and doesn't stress over controlling it".

Seligmin: "I always wonder about that sometimes. I'd be like, how would they even feel? Like they wouldn't even get it. First of all, they'd probably think it's silly for them to have to do research on stuff that people in our generation do, to try to teach us. So I feel like that's the hard part. I feel like it would be hard for teachers to try to learn what we've been growing up with and then try to teach it. I just feel like teachers wouldn't even want to do it. It would be hard".

So, what I'm hearing is that it's important for teachers, instructors, leaders, or people in power to get off their high horse and see things from the student's perspective, right? Is it possible that when teachers don't do that, they're disowning or not acknowledging the youth in front of them?

Antwon: “They just gotta try to connect with their students more. Most teachers—I won’t say most, but from what I’ve experienced here—most teachers just don’t wanna be wrong and things like that. But when they never try to connect with the students, they only try to apply what they learned. They don’t realize that things have developed over the years. They just gotta want to develop”.

Seligmin: “I mean, it is important that teachers have experience, like when teachers say, “I have 40 years of experience in teaching kids.” I get that. But I feel like to some extent, when they just say that, it only matters when it comes to really, like, teaching. I feel like it only matters in their ways of actually teaching kids. Because the stuff they were teaching kids 40 years ago is not what they’re teaching us now. So to some extent, when they say that, yeah, it matters, but I feel like it doesn’t really matter”.

Why do you come back every Saturday? What inspires you to keep coming? What brings you here each week? And what comes next for you?

Antwon: “For me, I could choose to be in the streets or doing something illegal, but I choose to be here with people who are passionate about multimedia. I can express myself through music, photos, or editing, stay out of the streets, and even make money. That’s my goal—doing something I’m passionate about and being successful. As for what’s next, I plan on going to college, but I want to continue with music and photography”.

Seligmin: “It’s about more creativity. Like I said earlier, it’s like living out what you really want to do. It’s one thing to think, “Oh, I wish I could do this,” but it just stays a wish. When you come here every Saturday, everything you wish for that week, you can make it a reality. I feel like that’s what it is. I wish I could make a song that sounds as good as Lil Wayne, and then on Saturday, boom, you can do it. You can remix anyone’s song, get their beat, and make it sound just like them. Then, you can listen to it all week and get another idea, and by next Saturday, you can make it happen.”

Since I graduated in 2023, I’m 19, about to turn 20, so everything’s about to come together. What am I really going to do? With the confidence I’ve gained from the program, I’ve realized I have talent in what I like to do. I’ve gotten recognition and respect from people I look up to in the music field. They’ve told me, “You really are tough. You’ve got talent.” When you get that from people you look up to, it makes you believe in yourself even more. Right now, I’ve been releasing a lot of music, staying active with shows, and getting recognition. Producers are sending me beats, and I’m getting more respect. I’m getting to the point where I feel like I can make it happen. There’s a lot of talk about having plan B’s, but honestly, I barely have a plan B. I’m just going as hard as I can to do what I love, and I feel like it’s paying off. It might not be as high as I want right now in praise and earnings, but slow motion, no motion”.

Antwon: “Plan B is to make plan A work”.

Seligmin: “I’m going to keep making music. I feel like if I keep doing what I’m doing, I’ll eventually make it, and then I can do whatever I want with it. I might not have been able to go to a good school or have money for tuition, but if I keep working, I’ll be able to pay for classes and open up more opportunities. I’ll be able to take business classes, become a businessman, and create more revenue streams in the future. That’s why I want to go hard because I know I can do whatever I want after that”.

Last question: How would you describe the importance of music in three words? I’m guessing you both are artists, right?

Seligmin: “I’d say evolution, connection, and understanding. When you really listen to music or certain artists, you can understand their predicament or connect to their feelings based on what they’re saying. It’s also evolution because music changes over time. We have different types of sounds everywhere you look in music, but we always stay the same in the connection and understanding of each artist you listen to”.

Antwon: “It’s got to be therapeutic, creativity, and understanding”.

What is the best way for our readers, teachers, administrators and anyone else to get connected or familiarize themselves with your work?

Seligmin My email is seligminfoster@gmail.com But for my music, it's KRSH—everything is just KRSH. All those letters together. You can find it on YouTube, Apple Music, Spotify, really anywhere.

Antwon My email is wantwon65@gmail.com . As far as reaching me and listening to my music, I haven't dropped anything yet. But when I do drop, look out.

Alright, fellas, that’s going to wrap up our interview. Thank you.