

Corey Tafoya: Hello everyone. Welcome to Education Buzz Podcast. This podcast, the second in the series comes from Harvard School District 50 in Harvard, Illinois. This is Corey Tafoya. I'm the superintendent of our district here and today's episode is a special one because I've spent the entire day with Desiree Brady who is a senior here at Harvard High School. Desiree, you're very brave and kind for letting me shadow you today. Thank you.

Desiree Brady: Of course, any time.

Corey Tafoya: How did we do today? Did we have a good day?

Desiree Brady: Yes, I think we had a very good day and I think all the other students enjoyed it too, so.

Corey Tafoya: Okay. Well, good. Would you say that today was pretty typical or did we see a weird day?

Desiree Brady: No, today was pretty typical. The way that the classes we were in and the students' behavior in the classes and all the workload and stuff like that is pretty typical.

Corey Tafoya: So I got to see a normal day. Well, let me tell you a little bit more about why we did this. One of my mentors, his name is Dr. Luvelle Brown. He's the principal in Ithaca, New York. He does this pretty frequently and he does it with junior high and he does it with fourth graders and he does the same thing we did today, is turns over his Twitter and they just kind of copy their ... Or they share their ideas and tweet out what they did, what they think, some of their experiences. And that's what you were able to do today. I didn't know you had so many nicknames. There's D, Dezzie, a lot of people really must like you, but what I learned about a Desiree today is she's the fifth generation, well this spring, to graduate from high school. So your roots run really deep.

Desiree Brady: Yes. Very, very deep.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah. So maybe that explains in addition to all the things you're involved with that you got a lot of followers. I probably never had so many likes in one day in my whole life, other than when we tried to say if we should have the day after Halloween off. That was another high water mark.

Desiree Brady: Yeah.

Corey Tafoya: Well, good. Well, let me just ask you a few questions. First, why don't you just tell us a little bit about yourself and I've already said that you're a senior, but for all the people that don't know how awesome you are, like I learned today, just

tell us a little bit about yourself and your kind of where you're at with Harvard high school. I assume you've been here for all your years of education.

Desiree Brady: Yes. All actually 12 so.

Corey Tafoya: Okay.

Desiree Brady: So I play volleyball and I run track. I've been in volleyball for my past four years here and I have a strong connection to the program and to all the girls and coaches and stuff. I really enjoy it and I encourage a lot of people that go off for volleyball. And for track, I've ran for the past two years, well this will be my upcoming second. Last year was my first year and I just wanted to try something new and that was the thing that I tried and now I'm going to be a captain and it's crazy how many doors like Harvard High School can definitely open up for you too. Education wise, I'm involved in many clubs. I've tried many clubs, I've been in and out of many clubs. I really wanted to make sure that when I came up to the high school that I would get the experience that I would need in order to succeed in college, to gain any, how would you say it, abilities needed to strive through college and to use in other areas of my life as well. So I'm definitely using Harvard High School as a tool and using everything it can provide for me to-

Corey Tafoya: Well, I think we'll get to that towards the end because you were telling me a little bit earlier about some of your plans for next year and your post secondary plans.

Desiree Brady: Yeah.

Corey Tafoya: Pretty exciting, some of the things you already got lined up in place, so we'll talk about that. But one of the things that I noticed as I was with you today is just how familiar you were with staff members. You just could approach them, you talked to them. And one of the comments I wrote in my notebook is, I suppose there are plenty of downsides to a school. We have about 730-750 students here. I suppose there's some downside, but what's the upside of just really knowing everyone so well? Because in the first period of the day you said, "Well, let's just go talk to Cruz. He's the driver's ed teacher," and you probably haven't had him for a couple of years since you're a senior or maybe you had him as a freshman and you just went down and he knew you, you knew him and you started interviewing him, and we got an interview for him about winter weather driving. So I mean talk about that, being in a school this size and the family atmosphere that it provides

Desiree Brady: So I obviously have family deeply ingrained within the school as it is, but being able to have those connections with teachers, once you have them in a class, it's kind of hard to lose that connection because being in a small school, they'll always remember your face. They'll always remember your name. I can talk

about students that were here my freshman year and teachers still know who they are, where they're at, they're still in connection with them and knowing that I'll be able to continue those connections is truly a great feeling as well.

Desiree Brady: Also keeping those connections will allow all doors to stay open with you. So being able to go and talk to them, being able to go ask them for help. Like if you have a math teacher who taught in a different style than the teacher that you have now and you need help in that particular class, you know who you can go talk to and who you like. And on top of it, being in a tight knit community as well allows for you to have a more open mind. And I've realized that we don't have specific groups and cliques and all that other stuff here and the ones that we do, they're not strongly bonded together and secluded. I think that being in the community this size and surrounded by a bunch of different people, you are forced to communicate with them and you're forced to see from their perspective and to relate to them and it allows you to have an open mind as well.

Corey Tafoya: That's awesome. One of the things that they really talk to principals about is how to develop the school's culture and what's the culture of the building. And one of the things that impressed me, and I'm here fairly frequently and my goal is to be in every building at least once a week. So I'm here fairly frequently and one of the things I've always felt, but I've never felt it as strongly as today shadowing you was how warm and supportive the students are towards each other because I've never ... I'm more with the administrators. And so what principals are always trying to figure out is how do we create that culture where students are warm to each other and sure there's going to be conflict when you can get a group this big and there are some problems. But I was just really impressed by just the good nature of students in their interactions with each other, supportive, talking, laughing, overall happy. Would you describe it the same way, and then how does that happen? Is that the responsibility of the students or the teachers or they admin? How does that happen? Because there's probably a lot of administrators who might listen to this like, "That's what I want to create. How do I do that?"

Desiree Brady: I would definitely agree with what you're saying. When I go to other places, people kind of mentioned Harvard in a different tone and I just kind of look at them. I'm like, you haven't been in the building and we're not what we might be perceived as, you know? And just because we're smaller than them or something. But being within the classroom, I think that comes from being a small school. But additionally, I think it comes from almost forcing students to engage with each other within the classroom and to solve their own conflicts. Even if it's a problem, like an open ended question and letting the students debate and have a good, healthy communication bond between each other and then they get to realize how other students look at things and how they could look at things differently or what questions to ask another person have a different viewpoint. And I think essentially you just have to allow the students

to grow together and to realize that they need to work towards the same goal. And in addition, the staff should be encouraging that and they should be wanting to see that and engaging in that as well and just being involved in the conversation.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, that's a good ... Well, one of the other things I wrote down as an observation of mine just about you and I kind of want to know if this is something that you think, one of the words we learned in your psychology classes, is it an innate skill, something you were just born with or is this something you've grown over the years? But the idea of building a network, I don't think we teach that to our students well enough is how to build your network and people are always asking me, "Why do you go to these meetings where you don't really know anyone or why do you talk to someone?" And it's really to build a network. And we talked for example earlier about the business incubator that people that I've met through my networking and talk, were able to help us get that room built without any tax money. We were able to find donors and that was just the network that I built. You have built quite a network. You were telling me not only here, but through athletics and through your work that you've built quite a network of people. Is that something you think about or is that just naturally who you are?

Desiree Brady: I think it's naturally who I am, but also something that I've built. That's kind of confusing answer, but I think it's something naturally just because I'm going to keep coming back to this, we're a small town. I know I have to communicate with people. I know I have reach out and fill a specific role that I need to fill, but it's also something that I know that I have to do because there's not many ways to go out of Harvard, I guess you could say. You definitely need to make the networks while you can and while in this situation of your life to try to build your future for yourself and to use the resources that you do have to go somewhere farther than here.

Corey Tafoya: So you've already had an offer of an internship to work with the Bears. I mean you've just had a lot of really cool opportunities just through, I suppose being in the right place, but being kind, being inquisitive. What are some things for anybody your age who might be listening, like, "Wow, she did that already," how do they get started? Do they just kind of have an open mind or do they just talk or how do they get started with that if they're afraid to?

Desiree Brady: Like I said, I think it comes with confidence. Even if you have to maybe lie to yourself a little about that. Just knowing-

Corey Tafoya: Fake it until you make it, they always say, right?

Desiree Brady: Yeah, exactly. And to know that everybody has connections everywhere and it's up to you to reach out and ask them what those connections are and in that process you'll make your own connections. So definitely have confidence to go

and talk to somebody and don't be afraid to talk to a complete stranger or to tell them your story or to listen to theirs. Also, just to be enthusiastic and optimistic about your future. For granted, you might be from a small town and for granted, you might not know where you're going yet or you might be super young, but do what you can now. Make the connections that you can now and truly try and push yourself to go out and experience the worlds.

Corey Tafoya: Right. Well, kind of like you going out for track when you hadn't done that before. That took a little courage. But that's a kind of a good example of how you just have that ability to go out and try things. You were very humble that you didn't mention even that you're a three time all conference volleyball player. Am I right about that?

Desiree Brady: Yes, yes.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah. So quiet and ... What position did you play?

Desiree Brady: I'm an outside hitter, but my sophomore year when I originally began, I was a right side and then I transitioned to an outside.

Corey Tafoya: Coach [inaudible 00:11:11] a lot of different things about volleyball.

Desiree Brady: Yes. I cannot thank that woman enough. She's taught me a lot through volleyball and within volleyball and that's why I push it so hard on everybody is because I hope everyone gets the chance to learn what I got to learn and experience through that sport.

Corey Tafoya: Having a coach like that, that's fantastic. Well, that's kind of a good segue. Let's talk about your teachers. We saw some great teaching today. I was just really happy to see that because I usually walk in and out and I don't get to see much and I don't do classroom observations like I did when I was in a principal role. But talk about your teachers a little bit. You really had some good experiences today and really didn't just kind of sit there and they talked to you and you just took notes. You really were active and did a lot of things today in the four periods. We want to explain to our listeners that I'm here at Harvard High School, it's a block. So classes are exactly how long?

Desiree Brady: They're roughly an hour and 20, and an hour and 30 minute. Yeah.

Corey Tafoya: So that's a little different. And that's a long time. I'd never sat through an entire block until today. So, but let's talk about your teachers and kind of what they were like. We saw some fun things today. Talk about your teachers.

Desiree Brady: Yeah, so my first block class today, I had Miss Mackenzie and everybody calls her the mom of the school. She is very humble and kind, and you can truly talk

to her about anything. She has the greatest patience in the world and she's definitely open to other students and being a mom. So second block I had Mr. Petsca and he is definitely the uncle of the school. Kids find it very easily to connect to him and to be able to talk to him in a mature way about different conversations, especially since we have him for psychology. So some topics can be very hard to talk about, but he makes sure that he also relates to us by his own personal experiences, which are also difficult for him to talk about. But it allows us to relate to him more on a connected level. And he's always joking about different things and telling us stories from previous years.

Corey Tafoya: We heard about his crazy college roommate Pete, [inaudible 00:13:24] So he does have good stories. I saw that a little bit.

Desiree Brady: Yes. And yeah, and so we all know him because of his personality. Third block, I had Ms. Smith and I've never had her before, but prior to even having her in a class, she had open arms towards me. I used to come to her for help in the morning with pre-calc last year. Just, I don't know why I went to her. I was just drawn to her for some reason and I knew she was a good math teacher. Everybody talked very highly of her. But I walked into her room in the morning and then after walking in that one day I was there every morning after that. Not even for help, just to sit there and talk to her and hang out with her, and a couple other students as well.

Desiree Brady: And she's younger than what I'm used to at for teachers here. But I think that that adds excitement to the day and students can really look forward to her class as well. And especially her teaching style. It's without a doubt different than what I've experienced in the past. And you mentioned also using her AVID strategies and us seniors, AVID wasn't there when we were younger. So using those strategies, we don't really know or observe them, but it's cool knowing that she's trying to connect all aspects of her world to help us out. You know?

Desiree Brady: And then my fourth block class I had Mr. Ryan. I had Mr. Ryan my sophomore year for chemistry and when choosing classes this year I knew I wanted to take a science class. Without a doubt, I wanted to take a science class and I didn't know what class I wanted to take because I really enjoyed chemistry and I knew that part of it was because of him and I enjoyed it more than biology. But then somehow I ended up taking biology two honors because Mr. Ryan taught it. So they definitely have an influence on decisions that you make, and you definitely know what you want to do because of them. And they become role models and mentors and you make those connections with them. And without the teachers it would be very difficult to get throughout the day.

Corey Tafoya: Well, it was fun because there were a wide variety of styles and like you said, Ms. Smith, she was wearing a math scarf for goodness sake. So she loves math. And so it was just fun to watch everyone the stories that you were creating in Mr. Ryan's room about the fermentation, all that. It was really fascinating just to

see all the things that they're having you really deeply think about. And one of the things that I really noticed is they really want you to learn. They're not just giving you information, it's kind of your job. They really are going to care. You know, you took a formative assessment in Mr. Ryan's class, I mean there were a lot of things that they really put you through today. That was pretty fascinating to watch. But I guess you have a unique perspective because you mentioned in your four years here, do you think back about how the school might be different than it was when you were a freshman? I mean, you were different, so he had a different vantage point perhaps, we can talk about that in psychology maybe, but how is Harvard High School different than it was four years ago when you were a freshman, do you think?

Desiree Brady: It has changed tremendously ever since I was a freshman. Just the whole atmosphere of the school. Walking in, kids don't feel as dreaded, I guess you can say to be here. They feel excited because every day there's something different going on. Like today we had the incubator people here. Other days we have student productions going on and other days there's sporting events and Mr. Walter's works really hard to get kids there and to encourage them to go and he's provided-

Corey Tafoya: One of your friends went on a field trip today to Mercy Hospital?

Desiree Brady: Yes. And we have little field trips like that going on all the time and so students feel very excited to be here and to experience the different things of the day and stuff like that as well. But overall it is very different. Mr. Hobbs is super included with all of us and he walks around and everybody knows who he is, he knows who everybody else is. And if he doesn't know who you are, he makes the effort. And seeing you in school is very different than what we were used to as well. We went from never knowing or seeing the superintendent to now he's in our classrooms and now he's interacting with us and he's actually sitting in our classes. And I think that we have now gained the feeling of being cared for and knowing that there's change that is being wanting to be made and that it's not for selfish manners, but it truly is for the community and for the students of all ages, from K through 12.

Corey Tafoya: Well, we really know that students benefit and you described it better than I ever could with the benefit of having these great teachers that we got to watch today. But there may be some teachers that listen to this and they're really struggling to keep going because teaching is hard sometimes, and maybe give a little pep talk to those teachers, say here's why you make a difference. And maybe think about a teacher here that maybe you didn't even have as a teacher, but someone that's really made a difference for you. What's the pep talk we should give them to say, "Keep going, you make a difference for all of us kids."

Desiree Brady: Yeah. So honestly my teachers drive my day throughout the day because like you mentioned, I see different teaching styles. I see different challenges I have to face and I know that they truly do care. And for some students it's hard for them to be motivated within school. So whether it's a disrespectful student or something like that, I think it's important to continue trying to understand the student first off and then trying to maybe solve that challenge and meet that obstacle together. And if you just do that or at least try and show them, I think it makes all the world's difference to them rather than shutting them out right away maybe. But teachers set us up for our future, and this is kind of embarrassing, but the majority of my friends are teachers here at Harvard High School. And I say that with all the love that I can. But I think for every student they look for somebody in the school to attach to and to let them strive ... Like, to drive them throughout their day. And I think trying to become that teacher right off the bat for a student can make their for next four years after that so much better times.

Corey Tafoya: And sometimes you'll keep in touch with these people for a lifetime.

Desiree Brady: Yeah. I know Mr. Kostoff still keeps in touch with some siblings of students in my grade and grades of younger and so that's really interesting to hear too.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, and it happens in all different ways. The clubs, the sports, the things that you can do. It's just, those relationships will stay and that's really special. Let's talk about a part of our school that is a hot topic, at least for me. And that's just the facilities because we're doing a big facility study of all of the schools, like what condition are they in? What do we need to improve? What needs renovation? And we love Harvard High School for sure because it was built in 1921, historic. That front, you know when you walk up to it, it just looks like the traditional view of high school and it's just beautiful. But there are some things that maybe we could improve in terms of facilities. And so let's talk about that little bit because you've seen it and you've been in parts and clubs and athletics and been in the locker rooms. And one of the things that we know that we need to really do something about is the locker rooms. And so one of the things that that I'm wondering is as you see that, I think students are incredibly resilient and malleable. They can kind of handle things. But don't you wish we had some love and TLC spent on our locker rooms? Shouldn't we do that for you?

Desiree Brady: Yes. That would help so much. And I know a lot of students prefer to not be in the locker rooms or to even go to areas of the building to change for gym or sports and stuff. Our bathrooms end up becoming very, very packed because our locker rooms don't have enough space. Our showers don't work. So we don't have the privilege as the boys locker room to be able to shower after practices, especially with people that have morning practice. The lockers are super small. In the varsity athletic locker room, I can't fit my backpack and my athletic bag in the same locker. So I kind of have to be flexible with that, whether it's keeping one bag in one room and go into a different room and all

that other stuff. And our varsity locker room doesn't have bathrooms, so we have to go to the bathrooms that are packed with other athletes to try to get in there and try to get to practice on time.

Desiree Brady: So it definitely becomes a struggle to have to fluctuate between doing what we have to before practice and accommodating to what we have to work with before practice. So I think just doing something to the locker rooms will make it so much better. And I think that with the renovation to the locker room, it'll make it more of a bonding environment as well because the girls will be around each other and all that other stuff.

Corey Tafoya: And they won't rush out of there because it's not a great place to be.

Desiree Brady: Exactly. Yeah. And so we even have students who are in gym class prior to having to leave for their practice. They'll change right then and there and get out as fast as they can because they know that the whole herd is coming in behind them. So a renovation to our locker room has been talked with in the locker room for many years.

Corey Tafoya: So this has been a good little pep talk to those of us like me that'll be part of the idea of how do we do this, and we really haven't built that idea yet. As you understand there's a school board that kind of does this and they're really committed to addressing this. And so we have this big committee, we're trying to figure that out, but it's one of the issues. But I think the way you described that as more powerful than I can. When I'm talking to parents, we'll just kind of rewind that little section and say, yeah, because what I wonder sometimes it's like when you go to a volleyball game in Richmond Burton and you go into that locker room, do you guys just look around and go, "Oh my goodness, a locker room can be like this?"

Desiree Brady: Yeah, every locker room that, I'm not exaggerating, that we have walked into while playing in a sport. Every locker room I've walked into has been bigger than that of the high school. Our high school. And the first thing that is said out of the girls mouths is they start comparing it to ours and it can be a little selfish at times, but it's truly difficult to realize that as much love as we have for Harvard High School And then seeing like, oh well they have this and they have that and like we can actually sit down and change or we can actually use the bathroom that's in here or just all the other stuff. But I don't think that we would necessarily say that we're not lucky, but it is kind of difficult to look at other schools and yeah. I don't know. I think that we think that we also deserve that environment as well.

Corey Tafoya: Well, and as I think I shared with you earlier, I have two daughters of my own who are athletes and that's something very personal to me. That just, when I see that, and we had a tour here the other night and there was some people, adults were asking community members to come see the facilities, so they don't

think we're just making it up. Because sometimes people think, "Oh, they're exaggerating," but it really is a deep, deep need. Wouldn't you agree?

Desiree Brady: Yes. Sometimes I'll walk into the locker room or other facilities and I walk in there and I'm like, "Okay, this is what we're dealing with today. All right." And then, you know, you kind of walk out and I think all students and athletes and whether it's gym class or actual athletics or afterschool clubs or even changing for the play and everything, I think that they deserve an environment that they feel comfortable in.

Corey Tafoya: Well, it's part of this thing, and actually when we were in first hour today we were walking down the hallway and it was right after we saw the business incubator people and did a little interview of them and why they were here. And it was pretty cool that they chose to come to Harvard for, their professional development, the incubator. And I don't remember who said it but someone's like, "Yeah, that's Harvard rising right there." And so that hashtag that I've been kind of putting on things is kind of growing a little bit. Do you get a sense, I mean we have facility things to do but I mean we're making a plan for it, and that's part of this whole idea that we've got to work really hard to provide what we should and build that. But you see little moments like that you're like, "You know, we are on the rise." You don't think?

Desiree Brady: Yeah, I definitely would say that as well. Students will look at the school and they can kind of tell where the old part is and where the new part is. But we definitely see the overcoming of all the new stuff in how much more we're being lucky enough to have and to experience and we think about the younger kids as well. It's going to be amazing for them to have all this stuff and to be able to experience Harvard in a different way but still have the love and the connections and the family bond and stuff.

Corey Tafoya: Yeah, that's cool. Well, even the always we were walking down the hallway, I see your uncle. [inaudible 00:26:15] I was like, wow, I would've never experienced that. That's a pretty neat thing. Let's talk about your future a little bit. You were telling me some exciting things about ... It's probably not all a hundred percent finalized, but you've got some pretty ambitious ideas for next year. I want you to let everyone know some of the things you're thinking about.

Desiree Brady: It is not finalized yet, but I'm hoping to go and visit the college soon to get some questions answered and to have an overnight stay. But I've recently been accepted to Lake Forest College. It's a liberal arts school in Lake Forest, Illinois. It's about 30 miles away from Chicago and it's a small school. And being from Harvard I knew I wanted to stay small. Just the feeling from here, I wanted to transfer over into my college experience, but I've been offered a deal scholarship wise. I have made my connections and network to hopefully get that internship at the Bears and to also just make connections in general with people in the surrounding area. And I hope to go into college administration prior or

after, not prior, after being at that college and maybe even work my way into working at the specific college. I'm still working on my plan to get to my career goal, but I'm hoping that I can at least maybe get an internship within the administration office or to talk to other role models and mentors for myself to get there.

Corey Tafoya: So you met someone who has become or you're hoping to kind of develop a relationship with as a mentor and this all happened on your tour, your first tour? It just kind of came to you, this epiphany?

Desiree Brady: Yeah, so-

Corey Tafoya: How'd that happen? That sounds really fascinating.

Desiree Brady: I know. And this is all been crazy to me because like Lake Forest was one of the first colleges that popped up when I started researching and I was like, eh, I don't know about that. I never heard of it. I don't really know what to expect. It's kind of a wealthy area too, which I'm not really used to. But then I went through some other college research. I completely disregarded the idea and then continuing my college research, I mean that's all you can really do is keep researching. But I came back to Lake Forest and there was a college visit that was next weekend and I was like, you know what? I'm going to go. And I was like, "Mom, we got to get in the car, let's go." And so we took the drive down there and I had an interview with one of the assistant admission directors and me and her connected to a connection that I've never felt with a stranger before.

Corey Tafoya: Right.

Desiree Brady: And yeah, so she just became my role model. And in that 30 seconds I looked up to her and it did not take long. And so now I'm going back and we're going to see what happens.

Corey Tafoya: They always say that you find yourself connected, you just know when it's right. And I can tell just by the sparkle in your eye when you're talking about it, you found that there and that's what we hope everyone has, no matter what they decide to do. And that's an exciting thing, to realize that what we're doing is kind of helping you. And we talked a little bit today too. You did a lot of writing during the day today. One of the things with AVID is our WICOR strategy and the W in that stands for writing. You actually did a fair amount of writing today and when talking to you about what homework you have tonight, there's a little bit more writing to do. I guess that was one of my biggest takeaways is how much writing you actually did. And I was glad to see that because I think writing is one of those skills that you develop and you're going to need in any type of position you have. It's going to be valuable for you and I think we overlook that

sometimes. So talk about that a little bit. You felt very comfortable, it looked like, in doing a lot of these writing things you were asked to do today.

Desiree Brady: Yeah, and I've definitely learned a lot of that confidence from the English classes that are taught here. Our English department is very good at what they do. They really teach you the skills that you need and they teach you the different styles of writing and they give you options to choose a writing style that you are comfortable with. And that's where a lot of the confidence comes from. But yeah, anywhere from emails to homework to having to have discussions in class about paragraphs and analysis and all that other stuff. It's deeply ingrained in us that we express not only what is asked of us out of the assignment, but also our own character and personality and stuff like that. So that's really fun to do as well.

Corey Tafoya: Well, one of the things we saw in psychology class is people reading their observations, if you will, about a movie that you'd watch and their reactions and I was really impressed by the way people read and expressed what their opinions were on that. And it wasn't they were just freelancing, they were reading what they'd written the night before and kind of that observation. So I guess I was really happy with that because I think that's something that really is a way to learn to understand things. That's one of the WICOR things is, you know, you won't know what people really know until they write it. So it was good to see. But it's another way to keep people engaged. And one of my biggest fears as superintendent is that we're just boring kids to death. I mean, there's an old expression that a school is where kids go to watch teachers work, meaning that they're working.

Corey Tafoya: I'm just sitting here, this is so boring, but today wasn't a boring day for, at least for me anyway. I hope it wasn't for you.

Desiree Brady: No.

Corey Tafoya: I don't get the sense that this is a boring year. And one thing that you've chosen to do is take a fourth year of math and take a fourth year of science. And some people kind of bail out on that. So you have a dual credit class, your math is a dual credit class.

Desiree Brady: Yeah, along with my English.

Corey Tafoya: So I mean you really are preparing for things and you'll save you some money hopefully at Lake Forest with those dual credit classes. Right? But you've not opted for the senior blow off year, it doesn't feel like, to me anyway.

Desiree Brady: No, and I knew walking into the year that I couldn't. And being from Harvard, you know that you can't because while you're here, you really want to take full advantage of everything that this high school has to offer you. And that includes

the MCC courses and the dual credit classes and the more challenging classes that can prepare you for college. Because once you leave this high school, there's no going back and there's no trying to use those resources that you missed out on. So I wanted to make sure that I got everything that needed before I left, and I encourage other kids to do that as well. I'm telling sophomores right now to make sure that they take transition to college math with Ms. Smith. But yeah, so I know that my workload is very heavy and that I kind of knew what I was getting into before walking in and I asked questions to make sure I knew exactly what I was walking into. But the workload definitely pays off and it honestly is one of the best decisions I've ever made is to make sure that I kept going. Yeah.

Corey Tafoya: Good for you. One of the things that I told you, or I kind of pre warned you that I had asked you is I asked for some volunteers. Why do you think your teachers recommended you for me to shadow, to get a good sense of what it's like to be here at Harvard High School?

Desiree Brady: I think that they chose me because, how would you say, I'm involved? I guess you could say. Like I mentioned before, I made sure that I was involved, but I didn't want to make sure I was involved just for these types of opportunities and stuff. But I think I'm involved because I want to show other students what they can do too. I've always told myself like I wanted to show through example, not just by telling and so I pushed myself not just for myself and not just for my future, but for those around me in the younger classmen and the girls I meet through volleyball and the guys I meet through track, and just everybody. And I think that the teachers kind of see that. I take the lead and I ask questions during class and stuff and I'll even ask ... If I notice someone struggling next to me, I'll ask a question on what they're struggling on because they might be too afraid to ask, but they don't know I'm doing it for them. You know?

Corey Tafoya: Well, I noticed that in the first hour of class with Ms. McKinsey that you were really asking questions to kind of get things going. In the note I wrote to myself is that you're a real problem solver. Mr. Hobbs says that frequently, is like, don't just ... Anyone can identify a problem, come with solutions and you are really identifying solutions and I wanted you to give like a little workshop for some. Sometimes in my role I feel like people are always saying oh, this is messed up, this is wrong. And I'm like, well, yeah okay, but let's come with a solution. Let's figure out how we can fix it. One of my philosophy was always let's not spend 90 minutes talking about the problem. Let's spend five talking about the problem and 85 fixing it and that kind of ... You seemed to have demonstrated that in your class because you had all kinds of ideas and you were like, "Okay guys, but what are we going to do? Let's fix it. Let's get to it. Let's just not talk about ideas." You're doing things. That sounds like a fun class though, where you get to really get out and do things.

Desiree Brady: Yeah. And it definitely takes an independent role too. You have to learn how to be independent on your own.

Corey Tafoya: Right.

Desiree Brady: You get a little bit more freedom, but with that comes great responsibility.

Corey Tafoya: There you go. Spider-Man, right?

Desiree Brady: Yeah, exactly. And we have a constant deadlines and we're constantly going back and forth with who's going to do what because it needs get done by this time. And we understand that we're not just producing stuff for each other, we're producing stuff for the school and for the community, and what we're really putting out there matters. And we need to make sure that we get it done to what it needs to be.

Corey Tafoya: Well, you met with eighth graders yesterday.

Desiree Brady: Yes.

Corey Tafoya: What did you tell them that they should know about this? This place, how to be successful?

Desiree Brady: Yeah, so we each had topics of conversations and my specific topic was I had to express to them the importance of good grades freshman year. Yes. So I just kind of talked to them about that and really stressed to them that colleges do look at your first semester and every semester after that and that the difference between the junior high and here is that we can hold you back and you can become ineligible and there's different expectations that you need to meet here and just those types of differences and stuff. But I think the majority of them were getting it. That's what my job was and everyone else's job was to make sure that they were starting to understand and realize what it was.

Corey Tafoya: You also are really busy because you have a job.

Desiree Brady: Yes.

Corey Tafoya: And when we ate lunch today, five of the six kids at the table have a job and the other works for his dad. So everyone really had a job. How much do you work a week?

Desiree Brady: So I do have a seasonal job. So from all months other than winter, pretty much we're open five days a week and I work almost all five days of those weeks. And I mean it really does overlap with school and my weekend is taken away because I work nights, but this is kind of my off season. So I still work three to

four days a week, but the hours are shorter and just because we have less customers coming in. But I really try to utilize my time at work to work on homework and to get anything else that I need done. But when it gets a little bit more up to speed, then it comes a little bit more difficult. But that's one of the great things about high school is that you can learn how to balance all of that. And now is your time.

Corey Tafoya: There's a superintendent in the area, PJ Kaposi that says, you know, it's not really about time management, it's really about self management, that you just have to manage your own time and prioritize. And as we were talking prior to recording here, you're like, "Oh, I've got this to do tonight and a plan." And it was nice that you didn't have to go into work tonight, so you can get that done and might actually be a kid for a little while. Desiree, you took a big risk by letting me shadow you today and tweeting for me all day. I just want to thank you, I had a blast. I didn't wear a tie today, which was fantastic and I just had a blast hanging out with you, and just learning about that because it really helps keeps me focused. And as you can see by my notebook here, I just made all these notes, three pages worth of things to think about and keep in mind. Just like the food, just how we need to appreciate just that almost everyone that came in the first hour was eating and just the importance of our food program here and just that, that's something I shouldn't ever take for granted how important that is. I mean teenagers are always starving, all of them.

Desiree Brady: Yeah, especially with all the athletics and everything else too.

Corey Tafoya: But we had some good pizza today and so that was kind of fun. But thanks Desiree. It was my pleasure. Any parting shots for all of your friends and family and fans that are out there?

Desiree Brady: Just thank you guys for following along and I hope others get the chance to experience this because it was a great eye opener as well for me and thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this.

Corey Tafoya: Great. Yeah, so you can now subscribe to our podcasts. You can go onto however you'd find your podcasts. I'm always a podcast on the iPhone, but I just searched and found Education Buzz. There was and I hit subscribe and now it will always keep coming up. So we hope as we get more sophisticated with this and get more ideas, we'll keep going. There'll be a lot of things, but thanks Desiree. You sure made our second episode a fun one for me to remember, so thanks very much and we'll catch you next time. In December we anticipate talking to some of the people that are helping us with our facility study, John Mauer and Alison Andrews from World would be our topic about what is this idea of what we're going to do [inaudible 00:39:44]. Looking forward to that. Thanks very much.

Desiree Brady: Thank you.

This transcript was exported on Nov 18, 2019 - view latest version [here](#).