

A Writer for Life: Anna Quindlen's Visit

By Lucas McSwain

On December 13th, 2022, Anna Quindlen, New York Times best-selling author and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, visited North Ed Career Tech's Writers Studio program to talk about her new book, *Write For Your Life*. Students from other programs and Leland Public School students joined Writers Studio students to listen.

Anna Quindlen started the conversation by sharing facts about her childhood and her career with the students. After that, she opened up the room for questions, which she proceeded to answer in great detail.

Quindlen mentioned how she had a speech impediment at a young age, which led her to use writing as a form of speech, even after going to speech therapy. She was inspired by old British authors, and after she spent time as a journalist for the *New York Times*, she transitioned into writing novels.

Her 1998 novel, *Black and Blue*, was adapted into a movie in 1999. When asked by a student what kind of input she had into the movie adaptation, Quindlen responded by explaining the direction and freedom she allowed the filmmakers to have. She said that there is no point in having the author micromanage, and it is important to allow the filmmakers creative freedom to portray it in their unique art form.

She also gave the aspiring writers advice stemming from her experience, mentioning that criticism and markings should be seen as support to make work

better. This wasn't the only glimpse of her writing process that she shared. A big tip she gave students was to leave off writing in the middle of a sentence. That way, when you come back to the project, you are forced to finish the sentence, which can get you back into the flow.

Perhaps most importantly, she advised, "The biggest enemy of any art is fear. Fear is what makes you not take that flying leap, push past the caution." She encouraged the students to be confident in order to accomplish this.

Throughout Quindlen's visit, the students took notes, asked questions, and listened in as she talked to them and shared her experiences. It was very kind of her to go out of her way to visit as a guest in the Writers Studio class. This was an opportunity for the students to show their professionalism, which they did well.

Opportunities to meet writing giants like Quindlen, and hear from them about how writers get started, how their careers grow and change, and how to tackle issues like fear or rejection, are priceless.