



PARTNERSHIP PRESS

A PUBLICATION OF THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Community and Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works

by Jane Quinn

The Children's Aid Society has contributed ideas to a new monograph published in October by the Coalition for Community Schools, the National Association of Elementary Schools Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP): *Community and Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works*. This publication gives voice to the experience of community school leaders across the country, and distills the major lessons gleaned from their partner-



I.S. 98 Principal Claralee Irobunda congratulates graduate Navindra Rajkumar.

ships. Wanda Soto, Principal of P.S. 5, and Myrna Torres, former Community School Director, had represented Children's Aid at a national invitational meeting that resulted in this important new publication.

Both principals' associations are long-time and active participants in the

Coalition for Community Schools. Their directors — Vincent Ferrandino (NAESP) and Gerald Tirozzi (NASSP) — have encouraged members to reach out to the communities that surround their schools. As these national leaders note in the foreword:

"A principal's strong leadership is vital to school and student success. So too is community engagement ...The challenges facing today's principals have led to a vigorous and renewed interest in community-based solutions. More and more, principals are engaging their communities; many are developing community schools. As a result, they see positive changes in student academic achievement and other key aspects of development. They also see increased community support for public education."

For the monograph, Coalition for Community Schools staff conducted interviews and focus groups over the last year and a half with scores of experienced principals. The following six lessons emerged as central to the success of community and family engagement:

- *Know Where You're Going.* Create a vision of what your school should look like and a plan for getting there, seeking input from staff, families, partners and community residents.

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*Connecting School,
Community and Parents:*

Partnering Effectively for Children at C.S. 61

by Katherine Eckstein

"Partnering has made me a better principal," says Patricia Quigley, principal of C.S. 61, a PreK-5 school in the Bronx. C.S. 61 has been a Children's Aid Society community school since October 2001. Over the last six years, the partnership between Children's Aid and C.S. 61 has evolved and matured, like all relationships. (Children's Aid also partners with I.S. 190, which shares the building with C.S. 61.)



C.S. 61 Principal Patricia Quigley (left) and Children's Aid Society's community school director Robin Fleshman observe a class together.

Ms. Quigley stresses the importance of fostering positive relationships among all stakeholders in the school and keeping lines of communication open. She cites the seamlessness of the after-school programs as an example. "You wouldn't know there are two different programs,"

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P.S. 5 Principal Wanda Soto drops into a Head Start classroom staffed by Children's Aid at this community school in Washington Heights.

Not "Them" and "Us" — But "We"

Interview with Wanda Soto, Principal, P.S. 5

by Jane Quinn

When Wanda Soto became principal at P.S. 5 in Washington Heights seven years ago, her school was already a community school. Soto was familiar with the concept, having worked previously at the District Six office under the leadership of Superintendent Anthony Amato, a community schools champion.

Now, as the leader of this school, she is able to see many benefits from the long-term partnership with The Children's Aid Society.

"We are really able to respond to the needs of the 'whole child.' You hear a lot of lip service to this notion in education circles, but we really do it. We provide after-school enrichment that complements the day-school curriculum. And we address the medical, dental, mental health and social service needs of children and their families. These connections make it possible for children to succeed, regardless of the obstacles they face outside of school."

Ms. Soto has seen her school's partnership mature over the years, as Children's Aid became integrated into the school's planning and governance structures, such as the School Leadership Team and

Pupil Personnel Team. "It's not them (The Children's Aid Society) and us...it's 'we.' We do joint planning and problem-solving, assessment and re-assessment. Our partnership works because we have mutual respect and an agreement about children. We know we are both here to help them succeed."

While acknowledging that there are challenges — the biggest one, observes Soto, is "space, no doubt about it!" — the benefits are clear. "Children and families can count on the school to address their needs, both academic and non-academic. Children feel a sense of security at our school. This feeling starts even before children reach school age, because we have Early Head Start and Head Start right in the building. The children who move from

our early childhood programs are able to function well in kindergarten. They are comfortable here, not scared. Our Head Start and kindergarten teachers talk with each other and help children make successful transitions. The goal is to start an early partnership that permeates our entire school." ■



Carolyn Chin-Bow (left), Children's Aid's community school director, with principal Wanda Soto at P.S. 5.

Partnering Effectively for Children at C.S. 61

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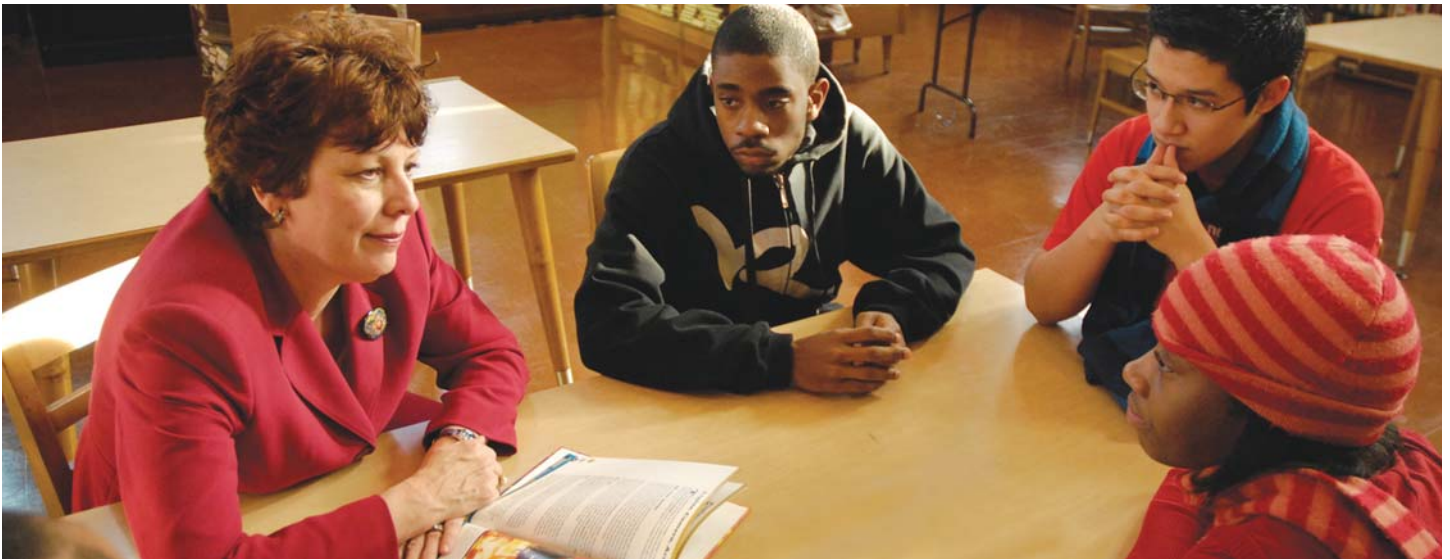
says Quigley, referring to the school's extended-day program (which is mandatory for some children) and Children's Aid's after-school program, which offers children enrichment activities such as chorus, band and archery. Helping to ensure vision and mission alignment, Children's Aid staff is involved in staff development, school safety, pupil personnel and School Leadership Team meetings in the school.

Most importantly, the partnership helps connect parents, community and the school. "Every November we take staff, parents and students to Wagon Road Camp (a rural retreat operated by Children's Aid in Westchester)," says Principal Quigley. The most popular workshops there, she says, are those between parents and teachers. It provides parents with a different kind of access, she says. An outcome of the 2005 retreat is the formation of a group for single parents facilitated by Children's Aid and the C.S. 61 parent coordinator. A C.S. 61/I.S. 190 Parent Leadership Team was the result of the 2004 retreat.

Partnership adds resources

Along with helping to increase parental involvement (which research shows is a contributing factor for increased student achievement), the partnership has helped to bring additional resources into the school, including facilitation of relationships with Mercy College, NYU, Bronx Community College, Tremont Day Care, McDonald's, I.S. 98 and Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School. The partnership with The Children's Aid Society was commended in C.S. 61's Quality Review, a yearly assessment conducted by an outside evaluator for the Department of Education.

Ms. Quigley proudly describes how much more connected the children at C.S. 61 feel to school since the partnership with Children's Aid began. She also cites an improvement in their self-confidence and attendance. "When they came back from vacation, they said they missed school!" ■



Manhattan Center for Science and Math's principal Corrine Vinal joins an after-school group at the community high school.

Bringing Manhattan Center for Science and Math's Mission to Life

by Richard Negrón

Since its founding 25 years ago, Manhattan Center for Science and Math (MCSM) high school has sought to embrace a mission with three roots: interfacing with the community, building effective relationships within the neighborhood and preparing students to develop a sense of, and to commit to, service.

MCSM defines itself as a school that **CARES**: It is a Community of Learners that is Aware of our Diversity and has Respect for Ourselves and our Environment and is committed to Service to our school and our local, national and global communities.

Since her arrival three years ago, Corrine Vinal, the principal of Manhattan Center, has felt a sense of responsibility to uphold the tradition of the school, or, as she describes it, "It has always been the

mission to create a caring community and more and more this is becoming a bigger part of the work."

She also credits The Children's Aid Society with providing MCSM "with the time, venue and support to make this possible through the after-school program."

It is during after-school that the school's mission comes to life. One example is the Aspira Club. The members of the club recently sponsored a food drive that generated over 3,000 cans of food, which they donated to a local church. Another effort resulted in the collection of about 100 winter coats that were also subsequently donated to residents of East Harlem.

It was these efforts and others that led to the naming of Manhattan Center's Aspira Club as the Aspira Club of the Year for New York City/Long Island by the lead

Aspira organization. Faculty advisor, Joe Barreto, was named advisor of the year and a student, Vladimir Cruz, student leader of the year.

Ms. Vinal also notes that the after-school program at MCSM allows high school students to tutor middle school students, gives time and space to peer tutoring and to student preparation to build schools in underdeveloped countries, as three students did this past year in Mali. Children's Aid not only supplies the financial support for the clubs, but provides oversight and serves as a vital partner to sustain student enthusiasm as well as the interest of sponsoring organizations.

The principal says that making MCSM's mission real for her students helped them. She notes that the mission helps to foster a "spirit of social activism. We can honestly say that students who graduate from MCSM are responsible citizens who make informed decisions and take action to improve the quality of life for those in need." ■

Principals Share...

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- *Share Leadership.* Invite community partners that share your school's vision to also share resources, expertise and accountability.
- *Reach Out.* Learn about the community, become visible in it and listen to what families say they want and need.

- *Don't Ignore the Elephant in the Room.* Acknowledge and address issues of race and class and define diversity as a strength.
- *Tell Your School's Story.* Know how to make your school's vision come alive, using both stories and data to engage the community.
- *Stay on Course.* Only engage in partnerships that are demonstrably

aligned with your school's vision, goals and objectives. Regularly assess your progress, and focus on long-term sustainability.

In this issue of *Partnership Press*, we highlight the experience of three Children's Aid Society community school principals in New York City and explore their ideas about the key ingredients of successful partnerships. ■

The Children's Aid Society Community Schools At-A-Glance

The Children's Aid Society partners with the New York City Department of Education in 21 public schools called community schools. These public school partnerships combine the best quality educational practices with a wide range of vital in-house extended day, health and social services to ensure that students are physically, emotionally and socially prepared to learn. The Children's Aid Society also has a large number of important public and private partners to ensure that all children have access to high quality services in these schools. We gratefully acknowledge the support of New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development and its Out-of-School Time Initiative.

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Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics (Community High School)

280 Pleasant Avenue
New York, NY 10029
(212) 423-9630
Fax (212) 423-1101
CAS Director: Yalenis Cruz
Principal: Corrine Vinal

Mirabal Sisters Campus

21 Jumel Place at 168th Street
New York, NY 10032
(212) 923-1563
Fax (212) 923-1859
CAS Director: Maria Lopez
Principal: Ysidro Abreu (M.S. 319)
Principal: Janet Heller (M.S. 324)
Principal: Pamela Russell-Glover
(M.S. 321)

P.S. 5 Community School

3703 Tenth Avenue at Dyckman Street
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CAS Director: Carolyn Chin-Bow
Principal: Wanda Soto

P.S. 8 Community School

465 West 167th Street
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CAS Director: Arnery Reyes
Principal: Rafaela Landin

P.S. 50 Community School

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Phone (212) 860-0299
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CAS Director: Jeanette Then
Principal: Rebekah Marler-Mitchell

P.S. 152 Community School

93 Nagle Avenue, RM 121
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(212) 544-0221
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CAS Director: Claudia Mitchell
Principal: Julia Pietri

Salomé Ureña de Henríquez Campus

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Principal: June Barnett (I.S. 218)
Principal: Bernadette Drysdale (I.S. 293)
Principal: Erica Zigelman (M.S. 322)

Community Schools National Technical Assistance Center

(212) 569-2866 Fax (212) 544-7609

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Bronx, NY 10460
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CAS Director: Robin Fleshman
Principal: Patricia A. Quigley (C.S. 61)
Principal: Diana J. Santiago (I.S. 190)

I.S. 98 Community School

1619 Boston Road
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(718) 842-2760
Fax (718) 842-2793
CAS Director: Jacquy Joachim
Principal: Claralee Irobunda

I.S. 166 Community School

250 East 164th Street
Bronx, NY 10456
(718) 293-3144
Fax (718) 293-2870
CAS Director: Jessica Rodriguez
Principal: Lauren Reiss

Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School

Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School

1001 Jennings Street
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