



# PARTNERSHIP PRESS

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

*Community Schools:*

## *A Strategy for Integrating Youth Development with Education Reform*

by Jane Quinn



Students at the Salomé Ureña de Henríquez campus share their original writing with one another at the Poetry Cafe, an after-school program that combines academic enrichment with creative arts.

Since the inception of its *Children First* package of reforms some four years ago, the New York City Department of Education (DoE) has committed itself to the integration of youth development into school reform. The stated goal of *Children First* is "creating 1,400-plus schools, where all of the 1.1 million school children in New York City are able to learn the skills and receive the support they need to realize their potential." A key part of this reform effort was the creation of an Office of Youth Development and School-Community Partnerships as part of the core infrastructure. This summer, DoE announced the reorganization and refocusing of the work of that Office,

with increased emphasis on school climate and student engagement.

The Children's Aid Society's community schools model integrates youth development into school reform. Youth development is both a philosophy and approach that emphasizes four key ideas known as the "four A's":

- Young people need **access** to opportunities that develop skills and competencies essential to achieve productive adulthood.
- Young people have strengths and prior knowledge that are considered **assets** to their subsequent development.
- Young people are **agents** of their own development.

- Young people need assistance from caring, competent, consistent **adults** who support their positive growth.

The youth development approach contrasts starkly with approaches that focus solely on problem prevention, remediation or treatment. In Children's Aid's community schools, principals, teachers and youth workers, recognizing the importance of youth development to student success, have co-designed many successful interventions during both the regular school day and the non-school hours that take a youth development approach. Examples of school-day efforts to promote positive youth development include:

- Student advisories, which ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult and has a forum for discussing issues of concern.
- Town meetings that allow students to identify and discuss timely issues.
- Acculturation groups that help recently arrived students make a smooth transition to their new school, neighborhood and nation.
- School-wide efforts to address climate and connectedness, such as PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports), which establish school norms and reinforce positive behaviors.

Similarly, working together in community schools, DoE and Children's Aid staff have created a variety of initiatives implemented during the non-school hours:

- Youth councils to help young people identify, and act on, community problems.
- Ninth-grade seminars, which help students make a successful transition to high school.
- Math peer tutors, high-achieving students who share their knowledge with peers who are struggling.
- Balance centers, which provide adult guidance and support that helps students learn and practice self-management skills.

In this special issue of *Partnership Press*, we highlight several other ways that DoE and Children's Aid Society leaders and staff of community schools work with students to integrate youth development into school reform. ■

## Developing Young Leaders

by Katherine Eckstein



Members of community school P.S. 8's Youth Leadership Council include (left to right), Lorena Gómez, Elsamare Perez, Jeudy Brito and Laura Sánchez.

Asked why they wanted to become members of P.S. 8's Youth Leadership Council (YLC), Elsamare replies, "You get to be a leader." Bryan adds, "and a role model." Katherine pipes in, "I wanted to help other students."

Often associated with middle and high schools, the YLC at P.S. 8 proves that younger children could also benefit greatly from participating in youth leadership activities.

Developed four years ago, the YLC is a governing body comprising 22 fourth and fifth grade students elected to represent the 278 participants in P.S. 8's after-school program before the Children's Aid after-school staff.

### Learning better citizenship

Principal Rafaela Landin notes, "The Youth Leadership Council provides a wonderful opportunity for our children to learn how to assume responsibility for their community, solve problems effectively, and develop into productive leaders of our society." Children's Aid's Community School Director at P.S. 8, Arnerly Reyes, highlights the importance of learning advocacy. "We want to teach our YLC participants how to be better citizens and community members and how to work as members of a team." Elizabeth Blanco, Children's Aid's Program Director adds, "[It] helps children learn how to put ideas into action."

For example, in response to a concern that younger children were frightened by traditional Halloween celebrations, last

year the YLC created the Fall Festival at the school. This year, as an extension of the Fall Festival, the YLC is organizing a penny-drive benefiting the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

"They feel empowered to make changes," says Director Reyes, "and hopefully, they'll take this with them as they become adults."

### Responsibilities foster leadership

Anajairie, a graduate of P.S. 8 and the YLC, who is now in the sixth grade at M.S. 324 on the Mirabal Sisters Campus says, "I have become a leader. Before I was in the YLC I was a follower." Anajairie volunteers every day in P.S. 8's after-school program.

The Youth Council is serious business. Nominees must give a speech and be elected by their peers. Once elected, they participate in a two-week youth training institute. The YLC members' responsibilities include participation in after-school advocacy day in Albany, coordination of a community service project around global warming, supervision of supertime at the school, development of trips and other special projects and provision of feedback to the after-school program's leadership.

Franchesca Vasquez, head counselor for the YLC, sums it up. "They feel more responsible. They are more aware of the political community and how the community affects them. In the YLC, they learn to take charge." ■

### Learning Plus:

## Salomé Ureña Develops Leaders

by Hersilia Méndez

Youth development is a priority of The Children's Aid Society, as its president and CEO state in the agency's 2006 annual report, and is an element of successful schools, as noted by Department of Education leaders. Recognizing that too many teens are failing because they lack the tools to navigate critical life transitions, Children's Aid's community schools emphasize not only learning but problem-solving, relationship building, self-awareness and civic participation: all elements of positive growth and leadership.

At the Salomé Ureña de Henríquez Campus in Washington Heights, Principals June Barnett, Erica Zigelman and Bernadette Drysdale and Children's Aid's School Director Migdalia Cortes-Torres are promoting positive youth leadership by developing student advisories, peer mediation opportunities, student government and programs structured around the leadership theme.

"This year our summer camp focused on leaders from the past, present and future and the influence their thinking has on our lives today. Through weekly projects, the students explored how the actions of these leaders are still impacting them, their peers and the adults in their lives. Leadership is also the theme of our after-school program," says Children's Aid's Program Director, Miguel Balbuena.

Staff development is a key component. "It is important to learn to develop our positive leadership qualities because the students see us as role models," says Junior Staff member Kelly Mena. (Junior Staff are graduates of the school and teens from the community who work for Children's Aid in the Salomé Ureña after school.) "Helping only yourself is not being a leader. We are learning that and teaching it to our students," adds Yleana Torres, another Junior Staff member. "We are learning to be more responsible, to trust, to work in teams," says Torres. "We also teach that failure can be overcome and that we can help change our community and our future for the better."

"Clearly, young people who think of themselves as leaders contribute to a

more positive school environment,” says Program Director Balbuena.

According to School Director Cortes-Torres, youth development and leadership are infused in every component of the program. “The students and the staff are learning decision-making and problem-solving skills, public speaking and the electoral process, and they are exploring what defines them as individuals and community members. Our goal is to help them do well academically, personally and as members of the community.” ■



Members of the Salomé Ureña de Henríquez Campus youth leadership team (from left to right) Evelyn Fermín, Keith Cuesta, Jazmin Ogando and Jeuris Sandoval pose with Children’s Aid’s Program Director Miguel Balbuena.

‘Overcoming Obstacles’ in the Bronx :

## Youth Development in Action at Fannie Lou Hamer

by Sarah Jonas

Many youth workers and educators have long recognized the link between positive youth development and student outcomes. At Fannie Lou Hamer Middle/High School in the Bronx, Principals Nancy Mann and Lorraine Chanon are working with The Children’s Aid Society to ensure that youth development is part of the core curriculum. This work is aligned with the approach of the Department of Education (DoE)’s *Children First* reform.

At Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School, Principal Chanon reached out to Children’s Aid’s Community School Director, Tim Henderson, to discuss how to prepare incoming sixth graders to transition successfully to middle school. The answer was a Community for Education Foundation curriculum called *Overcoming Obstacles*, a program that provides fun, interactive lessons on communication, decision-making and goal setting.

A Children’s Aid youth worker, Darnell Holguin, teaches the curriculum to students during the regular school day, engaging youth through his skills in theater arts. However, as Principal Chanon puts it, “the key is that the facilitator makes sure students understand the important concepts and the learning embedded in these ‘fun’ activities.”

The focus on youth development continues at Fannie Lou Hamer High School, where Principal Mann and Director Henderson arranged to have Children’s Aid train teachers to deliver *Freshman Seminar*, a model first developed at Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics, a Children’s Aid community high school. *Freshman Seminar* helps ninth graders build the skills they need to thrive in a high school environment by incorporating *Overcoming Obstacles*, journal writing and team-building exercises. Teachers from

Fannie Lou have integrated *Freshman Seminar* into the last period of the school day.

In response to Principal Mann’s desire to address the potential dangers of violence in teen dating, Children’s Aid brought in staff from its Family Wellness Program to run *TARA, Teens Against Relationship Abuse*. This program helps young men and women learn about and help put an end to relationship abuse through activities such as role-playing and poetry reading.

Thanks to the vision of Principals Chanon and Mann and the support of The Children’s Aid Society, the students of Fannie Lou Hamer Middle/High School are getting an education that includes rigorous academics and quality youth development programs. This combination allows schools to develop, in Tim Henderson’s words, “successful and productive students who are also leaders in their communities.” ■



Fannie Lou Hamer Community School Director Tim Henderson and Freshman Seminar teacher Ellen Doyle pose with the Seminar leadership (from left to right) Nana Nantwi, Treasure Smalls, Avasna Collins Browles, Jamaal Lampkin, Demeterios Gould and Olori Lawrence, as well as Children’s Aid social worker Shannon Smith (far right).

# 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.

## MANHATTAN

### 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  
New York, NY 10034  
(212) 567-5787  
Fax (212) 567-5966  
CAS Director: Carolyn Chin-Bow  
Principal: Wanda Soto

### P.S. 8 Community School

465 West 167th Street  
New York, NY 10032  
(212) 740-8655  
Fax (212) 740-7420  
CAS Director: Arnery Reyes  
Principal: Rafaela Landin

### P.S. 50 Community School

433 East 100th Street  
New York, NY 10029  
Phone (212) 860-0299  
Fax (212) 860-2845  
CAS Director: Jeanette Then  
Principal: Rebekah Marler-Mitchell

### P.S. 152 Community School

93 Nagle Avenue, RM 121  
New York, NY 10040  
(212) 544-0221  
Fax (212) 544-0244  
CAS Director: Claudia Mitchell  
Principal: Julia Pietri

### Salomé Ureña de Henríquez Campus

4600 Broadway at 196th Street  
New York, NY 10040  
(212) 569-2880  
Fax (212) 304-3427  
CAS Director: Migdalia Cortes-Torres  
Principal: June Barnett (IS 218)  
Principal: Bernadette Drysdale (IS 293)  
Principal: Erica Zigelman (MS 322)  
Community Schools National  
Technical Assistance Center  
(212) 569-2866 Fax (212) 544-7609

### C.S 61 Community School

I.S. 190 Community School  
1550 Crotona Park East  
Bronx, NY 10460  
(718) 991-2719/8023  
Fax (718) 991-7555  
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  
Bronx, NY 10460  
(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  
Bronx, NY 10460  
(718) 861-0521  
Fax (718) 861-0619  
CAS Director: Tim Henderson  
Principal: Nancy Mann (High)  
Principal: Lorraine Chanon (Middle)

## STATEN ISLAND

### Community School I.S. 61

445 Castleton Avenue  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
(718) 727-8481  
Fax (718) 447-2112  
CAS Director: Lester Feuerstein  
Principal: Richard J. Gallo

## THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

**PARTNERSHIP  
PRESS**

The Children's Aid Society  
105 East 22nd Street, New York, New York 10010

C. Warren Moses, *Chief Executive Officer*

William Weisberg, *Associate Executive Director*

Jane Quinn, *Assistant Executive Director for  
Community Schools*

Richard Negron, *Director, Community Schools*

Alma Whitford, *Assistant Director, Community Schools*

Maria Acevedo, *Assistant Director, Community Schools*

Myrna Torres, *Assistant Director, Community Schools*

Hersilia Méndez, *Asst. Dir., National Technical Assistance*

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## THE BRONX

### Arturo Toscanini Complex (Community Middle Schools)

1000 Teller Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10456  
(718) 293-2728  
Fax (718) 293-2797  
CAS Director: Denise Santana Montes  
Principal: Robert Hannibal (J.H.S. 145)  
Principal: Patrick Kelly (M.S. 325)  
Principal: Dorald Bastion (M.S. 328)