

Newsletter

Volume 4 December 2008

Access, Art, Opportunity

The launch of the **DreamYard Art Center** is just a few weeks away. For an update on the state of education in the Bronx and the needs of our students, we talked with **Jesse Mojica**, Director of Education and Youth at the Bronx Borough President's Office.

How is the Bronx doing, and what is its most pressing need for children?

We all remember Howard Cosell saying, 'The Bronx is burning,' but we have turned the page on the desperation of the 1970s. The Bronx has improved a great deal, but we still have much to do to ensure that there is equal access to opportunities.

Access to arts programming is readily available in other boroughs. The programs in Manhattan are full because that's what children want and the opportunity is there. A lot of Bronx kids have never been out of the borough. It is very important to bring these opportunities to their neighborhoods, through places like the **DreamYard Art Center**, and to design opportunities within their reality.

How have you seen the arts address public education and the needs of children?

Many children who are not engaged in school are engaged through the arts. The arts are a bridge not only to learning subjects, but also to understanding your identity. The arts are the greatest form of expression and can give a voice against an injustice or a concern.

Growing up on the Lower East Side, I had access to a cultural center, and I firmly believe that access influenced who I am and strengthened the skills I needed to compete in school. I don't want our children's future determined by a lack of opportunity. That is tragic, and we are working hard with the city to make sure more resources are allocated back into the Bronx.

Can you discuss specific needs expressed by Bronx constituents?

Bronx communities,



Self-Portrait by Younhee Choi,
Bronx Art Collective Student



Excited? Surprised?

Students explore their emotions and facial expressions through a theater residency.

organizations and parents are consistent in their demands: out-of-school opportunities are essential; we need to create additional arts programs; our children's potential is not being realized. **The DreamYard Art Center** will be a beacon for all of these children to have the opportunities they need. If we provide it, they will be there. It's something that families and children crave and need.

In your vision of the future, where do you see the Bronx?

I'd like to see a 100 percent graduation rate as a given and not something kids are fighting to achieve. I would like to see more access to early childhood education, more access to the arts. I want to see kids going to college, and their parents moving up the economic ladder.

How do we get to that point?

The mayor has made schools and education his number-one priority, and a lot has been done. We now must stabilize what we have. We cannot have our schools continue to exist in a state of disrepair, and overpopulated classrooms are not acceptable. Schools must have the facilities to give our kids the best, such as the latest technology, gyms and art spaces.

I think about it this way: Take some of the best private schools in the nation and see what they have. They have small class sizes, they are college preparatory, they have the arts. It's not rocket science; we don't need a study to understand what is needed.

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DreamYard Welcomes these Amazing People

New Board Member

Ashley Goodale received a B.A. at Yale University and a J.D. at New York University School of Law. Previously, she worked as an associate at Dewey Ballantine, before joining the New York City law department in the legal counsel division, where she advised the mayor's office and city agencies on policy initiatives and legislation. Currently, she is a director of the Washington Environmental Council and sits on the NYC Affairs Committee of the NYC Bar Association.

New Staff

Yesenia Macedo (*School Programs Assistant*) received her B.A. in community studies at University of California at Santa Cruz. As an Americorp volunteer, Yesenia worked as a bilingual specialist with Youth Venture, a nonprofit organization that encourages young people to start and lead their own organizations for the betterment of their communities.

Aden Munassar (*Development Associate*) received her B.A. in political science and Middle Eastern studies from Fordham University and is working toward an M.A. in election and campaign management. Previously, Aden worked as a research assistant at Bronx Health Link, a nonprofit advocacy group providing health information to low-income adults. She serves as secretary for the American Association of Yemeni Scientists and Professionals.

The Camel

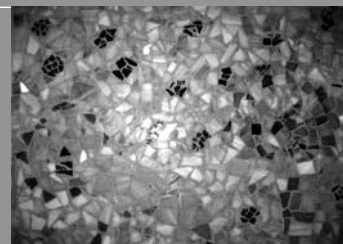
By **Elvis Nolasco**
Fifth Grade, PS/MS 95

The camel is walking
towards the cave, crying.

It's a steamy oven, and the
birds flying around him
make him jealous.

The sun is angry.
Burning flames
floating in the sky.

The thirsty camel
goes into the cave
exhausted.



DreamYard Administration

Evelyn Bojorquez
OSP Managing Director

Rod Bowen
Principal, DY Prep

Jason Duchin
Co-Executive Director

Nancy Kleaver
Director of School Programs

Tim Lord
Co-Executive Director

Maile Ogasawara
School Partnerships Coordinator

Yesenia Macedo
School Programs Assistant

Aden Munassar
Development Associate

Robyne Walker Murphy
OSP Director

Nancy Robledo
Office Manager

Hannah Stein
Development Director

Frances Sulle
Director of Finance and Operations

Alicia Wargo
Director of Arts Programs, DY Prep

DreamYard Project, Inc. Board of Trustees

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Life

By **Cristina Castillo**
Sixth Grade, PS 315

Dreams and hopes are inside of me.
I am the queen of a beehive.
Stick my hands in sticky honey,
Create a world I have always dreamed,
My fingers never numb for scribbling
all day long.

I always have something in my mind,
Thoughts of places, people, or things
Caring for my baby cub,
Somedays I live in a dark cave or a
pathway full of light,

I am everywhere here and there,
Shiny diamonds glow inside of me,
I am the smooth cold wind who passes
right through you,
Night or Daylight,
I am alive,
Nothing can keep me down,
Not even a mallet, hammer, or a saw,
I am the future not the past.

Dear DreamYard Community:



Since 1994, DreamYard has been dedicated to reforming public education through the arts. **We are now the largest provider of arts education services in the Bronx.**

DreamYard is making a significant contribution to the Bronx. We believe that innovation and the power of an individual's imagination can create meaningful opportunities for future generations. Our progress is marked by a history of working with more than 100,000 students in 100 public schools. In 2006, we opened the DreamYard Preparatory School, a public high school founded on the beliefs of scholarship, artistry and character. We recently joined forces with the Ford Foundation to create a school reform model with a network of 15 partner schools.

One of the great strengths of DreamYard has been the support of our donors, community members and families. We hope you will join us at events throughout the year, to celebrate our students' achievements.

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★ **Be a part of the audience at Pregones Theater**, where Anthony Steward, a Bronx Acting Ensemble student, was inspired to pursue college.

★ **Join a neighborhood environmental block party** with poet Patty Dukes and her ACTION participants. This unique event, initiated last summer, encouraged a Hunts Point resident to say, "The block party brings people together and informs people about healthy and alternative choices."

★ **Come to Sotheby's**, see our incredible exhibition of visual art, and let one student know why her work is special to you.

★ **Join 75 BALC teachers and researchers** from Metis Associates and Brown University's Annenberg Institute as they explore ways to teach more effectively.

A key to DreamYard's success has been our collaborators. DreamYard has grown into an organization that reflects the needs and passions of our community: We are Johaney's poetry slam team; Anthony's theater company; Ama Coodjoe's dance department; Mrs. Schwartz's arts partner, helping her create programs for all 829 of her K-5th

grade students. DreamYard is the face of children and educators in the Bronx.

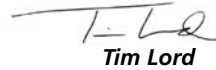
In January 2009, we will open the **DreamYard Art Center**. We have been able to move boldly ahead with this vision thanks to investments by the Annenberg and Reed Foundations, as well as strategic, cost-effective relationships with government and for-profit partners. The **DreamYard Art Center** is an affordable, long-term solution for providing a home for our students and our teachers, where learning and creativity are fostered and championed.

This newsletter is about opportunity as a catalyst for growth. Please read these interviews, stories and poems and think about the people and experiences that helped you become who you are today. And then join us this winter and help us celebrate the Grand Opening of the **DreamYard Art Center**—a place that represents our community's vision for change.



Jason Duchin

Co-Executive Directors



Tim Lord

Bronx Arts Learning Community: Year 1

BALC is a consortium of DreamYard partnering public schools dedicated to using the arts to impact school culture, teacher practice and student success. BALC is being researched and documented through funding from the Ford Foundation. DY Prep and DreamYard Out of School Programs recruit from BALC schools. Highlighted below are accomplishments of school year 2007-2008, the first of a four-year project.

- ★ **More than 100 yearlong artist residencies** transformed classroom learning in 15 schools.
- ★ **3,000 students received direct services**—from a poet in an elementary English class to an actor in a high school elective—and shared their work with their peers and school communities.
- ★ **700 students and 75 teachers participated in the BALC Arts Festival at Lehman College in June 2008.** The Arts Festival celebrated our students' work through visual art exhibitions and performances of theater, music, dance and poetry.
- ★ **Each school developed an Arts Leadership Team** to plan and assess the arts in their building and advise school leadership on ways to build continuous arts opportunities for all students.

★ **15-member Advisory Committee**, composed of ALT members, is guiding the research project and organizing the Arts Festival.

The BALC schools are PS 32, PS 33, PS 51, PS 54, PS 85, PS/MS 95, PS 159, PS/MS 218, PS 246, PS 291, MS 45, MS 118, MS 331, DY Prep and Marble Hill High School for International Studies.

Our survey of 250 teachers in K-12th grade BALC classrooms reveals incredible support for the arts and its impact on student achievement:

- ★ 96% agree that students learn valuable lessons from their arts experiences.
- ★ 91% agree that students in their school who excel in the arts are respected by their peers.
- ★ 82% agree that students closely involved in the arts have made significant academic improvements.

"Art allows children the possibility to believe there is something greater than whatever the devastation in their life...the exposure is groundbreaking. You never forget that you are dealing with inner-city kids. Art can give them a different perspective on life."

—BALC Teacher

What our school partners are saying:

- ★ "There was definitely a lot of teamwork. The children saw that the teacher and artist had one vision, and that made it so successful. We were strong and united in our thoughts and ideas."
- ★ "Parental involvement really changed because of the arts festival. Parents came up to teachers and the principal and were very impressed. That will make them more supportive in the future."
- ★ "I think BALC was the best move they could have made. I think it will be culture changing."



What do DreamYard's Out of School Programs mean to our kids? We asked two of our OSP participants—**Anthony Steward**, *Bronx Acting Ensemble* (BAE), and **Jocelyn Collado**, *ACTION Project*—to talk about their experiences and explain why the **DreamYard Art Center** will be a gift for all Bronx kids.

How did you get involved with DreamYard's OSP?

Jocelyn: I had DreamYard in the fifth grade. A teaching artist incorporated poetry into my social studies class. Because of that, I joined a DreamYard after-school theater program and met **Robyne**, the OSP Director. I really wanted to be in ACTION, because my friends, who had been through the summer intensive, said it was great.

Anthony: **Khalid Hill**, the After School Coordinator, came to my eighth-grade class and told us about BAE. Once I got there, I was hooked. You get to meet

What would you do with your free time if you were not involved with the OSP?

Anthony: If I were not involved in BAE, I wouldn't have anything to do on Saturdays.

Jocelyn: Socially, I would be a different person. ACTION gives me something to do on Saturdays. Even if a class is not scheduled, the teachers suggest different places to check out. ACTION is a positive outlet. I cannot picture myself without it.

How have the OSP influenced you?

Anthony: I have the inspiration to become

EMPOWERING TEENS TO SUCCEED



DY Prep student Alysha Mack practicing during a dance elective.

different people and do things you might never get to do otherwise.

Have the OSP helped you grow?

Anthony: BAE has taught me how to act, literally, in terms of theater. It has also helped me learn how to act in life, ethically. When you're acting, you get to be different people in wildly different situations. But you also take things from each character, good qualities you can learn from and instill in yourself.

Also, we took a trip to Juilliard for mock auditions. I'd never been to Juilliard, and I always wanted to go. Then there are the role models—**Blair, JaMario**, and **Khalid**—who always come to us with the highest level of professionalism and respect.

Jocelyn: ACTION has made me change my perception of the world. I am learning about education reform, and it has made me realize what I want to change in school. I never knew exactly how to demand change. I now understand how much I can do and how to go about things more positively.

an actor. Before BAE, I was confused about what I wanted to do after high school. After performing in different places, in front of lots of crowds, I know I want to be an actor and to major in theater at college.

Jocelyn: In ACTION, we do things, we work to change our situations. When you only talk, nothing happens, nothing gets better. Sometimes you have to take action.

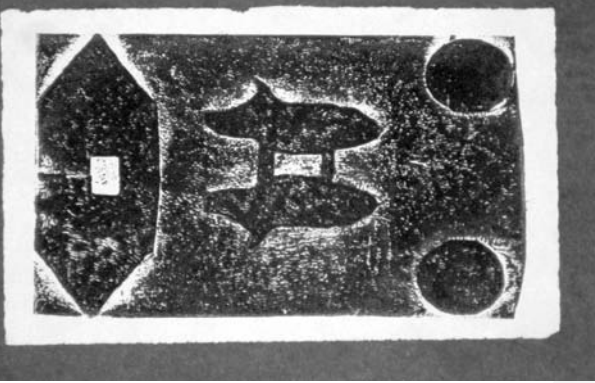
Why is the DreamYard Art Center important to you?

Anthony: I am excited about the new theater space. I think I can speak for the other kids—it will be nice to know we always have space for practice, a real home for BAE.

Also, I like the idea of a Bronx arts center and the potential for creativity. It lets artists in the borough work with one another—musicians, actors, painters, writers, poets, everyone.

Jocelyn: We need our own space. A place we can decorate with our own art, a home for us. The Bronx needs this. For kids like me, this is huge. It gives us something to do, something positive. It's a gift.

Editor's Note: DreamYard's OSP are the ACTION Project, arts and civic engagement; Bronx Acting Ensemble, acting and theater writing; and Bronx Art Collective, visual arts and curating.



DY Prep: Educating Minds, Changing Lives

“Principal [Rod Bowen] has guided the improvement and expansion of the school effectively over the past year. This vision, of motivating students through exposure to the arts to build their capacity to learn, is reflected well in the wide range of arts opportunities in the weekly schedule and in after-school activities. The DreamYard Project provides strong support to the school in delivering these opportunities.”

—Excerpt from the 2008 New York City Department of Education Quality Review Report.

DY Prep is now in its third year, serving 300 students in the 9th–11th grades. We wanted to hear about the progress of our juniors and spoke with **Alicia Wargo**, Director of Arts Programming, and 11th grade students **Jay Julien** and **Tahiana Urena**. Both students hail from a BALC partner school, PS 51 and PS 218, respectively.

How does the 11th-12th grade majors program prepare students for entry to college and beyond?

Alicia: Our goal is to prepare students to succeed in any field. For instance, students choose an arts major in junior year—either visual arts, music, creative writing, dance or theater—and they are required to write two research papers and present a portfolio accompanied by an artist’s statement. The requirements are in line with the expectations that they will encounter in college and are designed to develop confidence and strong communication skills.

Each arts major will formally partner with a cultural organization to provide students with rich, diverse experiences. For instance, we have a partnership with LABYrith Theater and are planning internships for a select group of theater students.

How is DY Prep helping you define a vision for your future?

Jay: DY Prep is giving us diversity in our studies by connecting the material we are learning now to college and the next step in life. We don’t just practice theater—we learn the history of theater.

It wasn’t until I took an integrated English-theater class with **Jay Rhoderick**—I worked with him and DreamYard at my elementary school—that I realized I really like theater. I joined the after-school theater company and now am a theater major.

Tahiana: When I started DY Prep, I felt like I couldn’t write; it was something other people are good at it. But I am picking up skills that I never thought I would have. I am even thinking about being a creative writing major in college.

What is one way the arts programs influence the culture of DY Prep?

Alicia: Biannual sharings are an opportunity for students to perform, explain and exhibit their artwork. When I’m at these sharings, I feel, in a positive way, like I’m at a sporting event. The events are our most highly attended. Students cheer for each other and feel a deep sense of pride in themselves, each other and their school community.

Do you see yourself as being a leader in your community?

Tahiana: We have a student leadership council to serve as role models for students. Over the summer, we made a freshman handbook for the incoming class to help them succeed and feel comfortable in our community. When they came back to DY Prep in September, they knew our faces,

and recognized each other. We still talk to one another and support what we’re doing in the classrooms.

How do you envision giving back to your community now or in the future?

Jay: I would like to have an opportunity to teach at DreamYard. I’ve been with the organization since I was little, and I like the way teachers and students are trying to work toward this common goal of the arts preparing you for college.

How is DY Prep making our students’ lives richer?

Alicia: Colleges are expressing interest in recruiting our students, and we are developing those relationships. We will host a college fair next semester. We are partnering with Shenandoah University to offer scholarships for a summer program. Shenandoah has an excellent arts program and is interested in recruiting our kids.

I am excited about the DreamYard Art Center. We simply don’t have enough facilities for all the disciplines in the current building, and this will give us the space to provide students with a high-quality, professional arts experience.



Jay Julien, Ms. Alicia Wargo and Tahiana Urena (L to R)

Funders

Ode to First Steps

By **Haydil Henriquez**
Eleventh Grade, DY Prep

An Excerpt

You are the heroes of yesterdays and you
will be embraced tomorrow

Guaranteed

Now I need you to engrave these names
into the back of your hands

Trace your taste buds with a red pen as
you combine letters

Now here I go

Listen and worship

Che Guevara

Nazim Hikmet—heart attack, recognized
after death

Malcolm X—assassinated

Frieda Kahlo—pulmonary embolism

Salome Henriquez Urena—Tuberculosis

Still pacing through journeys

Majora Carter—environmental justice here!

Nelson Mandela—fight against apartheid present!

Mumia Abu Jamal—Black Panther party activist

Aracelis Girmay—helping children find
their true selves through poetry

Presente aqui

We kill our heroes with depreciated thoughts

Now I need you

We, futile minorities, need you

Heroes of today

Sitting silently in those cushioned chairs

To be the painters that draw bright blue arrows

To where swollen feet find masseuses

And bleeding hands find red cloth

We need you to tape the cracks in between
the roads of china

To glue the falling pieces of the AIDS devastation

To change these myrmidon mawkish minds
who are afraid to paint their true murals

We

Kids growing up today

Watching terrorist attacks

Natural disasters

Political mistakes

And the economy slowly going down

I am afraid

And I bet you are too

*Editor's Note: We are proud to count
Aracelis Girmay as one of DreamYard's poets.*

Upcoming Events

For more information, contact Hannah Stein,
hstein@dreamyard.com, 718-588-8007, ext. 207

DreamYard Annual Benefit

Monday, May 4, 2009

583 Park Avenue

(btwn. 63rd and 64th Streets)

New York, NY 10065

DreamYard Art Center Grand Opening!

Coming soon in early 2009

1085 Washington Avenue

Bronx, NY 10456

The DreamYard Poetry and Theater Festival at Scholastic

Friday, March 13, 2009

6:30 to 8:00 P.M.

The Theater at Scholastic

557 Broadway (btwn. Prince and Spring Streets)

New York, NY 10012

DreamYard Visual Arts Exhibition

Opening Reception

March 2009

Sotheby's Second Floor

1334 York Avenue (btwn. 71st and 72nd Streets)

New York, NY 10021

BALC Arts Festival

Week of June 1-7, 2009

Lehman College

Performances June 1-3, at the Lovinger Theater

Art Exhibition on view June 1-7 in the Art Gallery

Please check website for details of events.



Special thanks to:

- Agnes Gund Charitable Trust
- Altman Foundation
- The Annenberg Foundation
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- Arthur Loeb Foundation
- Barker Welfare Foundation
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- Eliot Street Fund
- Ford Foundation
- Guggenheim Partners
- The Heckscher Foundation for Children
- HILO Foundation
- Honorable Helen D. Foster, New York City Council
- Honorable G. Oliver Koppel, New York City Council
- Ivor Foundation
- Jean R. Rosomer Charitable Trust
- Jewish Communal Fund
- Jockey Hollow Foundation
- JPMorgan Chase Foundation
- Lehman Brothers Foundation
- Levin Family Fund
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- Luce Charitable Trust
- Marks Family Foundation
- Minneapolis Foundation
- Moore Charitable Foundation
- National Endowment for the Arts
- New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
- Newman's Own Foundation
- New Visions for Public Schools
- New York Community Trust
- New York Department of Youth
& Community Development
- New York State Council on the Arts
- New York Times Company Foundation
- New York Yankees Community Council
- Overbrook Foundation
- Polikoff Family Trust
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