

Expectation, Choice and a Path to College

*DY Prep's first class of 75 seniors will graduate in June 2010 in a ceremony at Lehman College. We caught up with the Principal of DY Prep, **Rod Bowen**, to discuss the school's progress since it opened in 2006, to reflect on challenges and successes and to congratulate our seniors for their accomplishments.*

How do you feel about the school's progress?

Next year I can say we're established. We're in a good place, particularly because we now have an Assistant Principal. I'm clear on what needs to be done, and there aren't a lot of blind spots that will surprise us as we move toward June.

What is one significant challenge in getting students to college?

You can't take space and resources for granted. When I went to a prep school from 10th to 12th grade through a scholarship, we had an on-staff college adviser, equipped with a private office and a library of college resources. I was responsible for my choices, and that made college real for me.

In contrast, DY Prep's adviser has a desk in a shared office. New Settlement's College Access Center [a Bronx-based college preparatory center] is helping us create a thoughtful college prep process; however, our budget



Principal Rod Bowen



DY Prep dance majors performing at The Public Theater for the Spring Dance and Theater Festival.

has been slashed, and we don't have the resources for students to explore college independently. I am grateful for College Access and that DreamYard's Board is building a support network—from helping kids prepare college essays to knowing someone at a university and writing a recommendation.

What motivates you to walk in the door every day?

I made this choice because I had the experience of attending an overpopulated, low-income, unsafe middle and high school. When I returned to visit, I realized that the bar was set so low for my friends. The healthy sense of entitlement that peers in my prep school were bathed in was in stark contrast to the public school expectations—from SAT scores to choices of colleges.

It's important that DY Prep increase the likelihood that kids have as many options as possible. They don't have to settle for less than they deserve. It's all about healthy entitlement and options. I tell my students, 'I don't want to feel like you ended up someplace. I want you to choose where you end up.'

What are some of the more personal victories that resonate with you?

We have one student that came to DY Prep with no more creative writing skills than a typical 8th grader in the Bronx. She is now a published writer.* That is amazing to me. Another young man came to us with maturity and learning issues. He is now a full-fledged senior, a theater major, and is being seriously considered by the Posse Foundation for a full scholarship and four-year mentorship program. We have these victories every day, and that makes me very proud of our school.

DY Prep seniors are working on their college applications with the assistance of College Access Center.

*Haydil Henriquez's "I Don't Want to Slam" was published in Best Teen Writing as part of the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards.

Dear DreamYard Community:



With the opening of the DreamYard Art Center at 1085 Washington Avenue, DreamYard has taken root in the Bronx. The Art Center is a home to hundreds of students through after-school and Saturday programs, as well as to hundreds of artists and public school teachers through professional development. The Art Center is an institutional investment that boldly states our belief that the arts are an essential part of the social, cultural and educational landscape of our neighborhoods.

During the past 15 years, DreamYard has worked with more than 100,000 children in over 80 public schools. In June 2010, we will

celebrate the graduation of our first class of inspired students from the DY Prep public high school. They will leave DY Prep with the skills needed to succeed in college and in the workforce and to make the innovative choices that will shape our communities.

Rod Bowen, DY Prep Principal, states simply what we want for our students: "I tell my kids, 'I don't want to feel like you ended up someplace. I want you to choose where you end up.'" We strive to put children in the position to take advantage of the opportunities afforded to them by their schools, DreamYard and our community.

Our greatest challenge today is dealing with the continuing effects of the economic crisis in the Bronx. Rates of unemployment and homelessness are at 20-year highs. The Bronx is the poorest urban county in the nation with 28 percent of its residents living at or below the poverty level. Public schools have reduced budgets by more than 20 percent since 2007. We anticipate more cuts in 2010.

It is imperative that we continue to invest in education. DreamYard's schools are united in the belief that the arts are essential, non-negotiable ingredients in education:

We use teacher time wisely; we address a school's immediate needs; we share art supplies and use space effectively; we leverage funders for the greater good of the community. These investments are paying off.

Anyone who visits a DreamYard class, either in a school or at the Art Center, understands the sense of hope that is manifest in our young people, each motivated by a passion to reimagine the world. This newsletter highlights how 2009 marked new paths of educational and cultural opportunities for our schools and students.

We can't ensure that every Bronx child gets the high-quality education that they deserve, but we can create the conditions that will make a solution possible by partnering with committed schools and individuals, corporations, nonprofits, government agencies and other institutions. DreamYard is a powerful catalyst for change. It is needed now, more than ever.


Jason Duchin


Tim Lord
Co-Executive Directors

A Model Partnership, Expanding Arts Programs Across Bronx Schools

In 2007, DreamYard and 14 K-12th grade Bronx public schools formed the Bronx Arts Learning Community with the goal of reaching every one of the 11,000 students in those schools with a quality arts education every year. We share a belief that the arts are fundamental to a child's learning, and that united together, our collective knowledge and experience can be leveraged to impart a significant impact on our children.

Our research shows that our work is impacting school culture, teacher practice and student learning. We have learned that in 2008, BALC expanded the breadth and depth of school-wide programs. In all schools, the amount of arts programs increased and services were redistributed to serve more students.

In contrast to sharp reductions in arts services citywide, DreamYard artist residencies have remained a valuable part of our schools. These residencies have run in 300 classrooms to directly impact 7,800 students. Our annual BALC Arts Festival showcases 750 student artists—from riveting performances on the Lehman College Stage to beautiful and powerful artwork professionally hung in Lehman's Art Gallery. An audience of 1,500 students, parents, friends and family attend this event. We attract funding from a variety of public

and private sources, including the Ford Foundation, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, JPMorgan Chase Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation.

Here's how we do it: DreamYard trains school leaders called Arts Coordinators to collect and analyze program data (e.g., who is receiving the arts and for how long). Arts Coordinators manage a school-based Arts Leadership Team (composed of art teachers, school administrators, classroom teachers). Together they advocate for and build their school's arts programs. For example, the Arts Leadership Team at PS 33 learned that their special needs students were receiving fewer arts programs than their peers. The programming was adjusted, and today these students' needs are being met.

Each school represents a community that is physically close; however, schools rarely have the opportunity to network in ways to support their needs. BALC hosts retreats and communication structures that support school collaboration. For example, BALC Middle School 118 wants to transition effectively their incoming 6th grade students. Providing a smooth transition from elementary to middle school is a great concern of our city's public school educators. BALC elementary schools, PS 32 and PS 159, are the largest feeders into MS 118. These schools have created a mentor program to introduce 5th graders to life in middle

school. MS 118 "arts mentors," trained 7th and 8th grade students, will be paired with PS 32 and 159 students to share their stories and experiences in middle school—from their own transitions to their growth as artists and learners.

As pressure increases for schools to do more with less, we are proud to offer an affordable model that is unique to New York City and has the power to be replicated elsewhere in the Bronx and in other communities beyond New York.



A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Founded in June 2009, the DreamYard Art Center is a dynamic 21st century education hub that offers multidisciplinary programs for public school students, educators and artists. During the 2009-2010 school year, the DreamYard Art Center will house:

- ★ A yearlong series of out of school programs in theater, visual arts, poetry and social activism for 75 students.
- ★ After-school arts programs for 40 elementary students.
- ★ Community events for more than 300 K-12th grade students and families, including monthly poetry slams, an HIV/AIDS awareness party and theater performances.
- ★ Innovative teacher and artist training programs for more than 200 adults, focused on ways to develop quality arts programs in classrooms and throughout schools.

Located in Morrisania, the DreamYard Art Center represents one of the only cultural facilities in this Bronx neighborhood. The building that houses the Art Center was built by Bronx Pro Real Estate and serves as a mixed-use, 90-unit residential facility that features a green roof certified as a natural habitat and solar paneling that provides electricity to public areas and domestic hot water. Included below are details of our incredible new space.

A BLACK BOX THEATER AND DANCE STUDIO, with wooden dance floors and simple, unadorned walls is a flexible performance and



The DreamYard Art Center ribbon cutting featured a presentation by Diana Perea, our Bronx Arts Collective participant, to showcase student ideas for a mural painting at 1085 Washington Avenue.

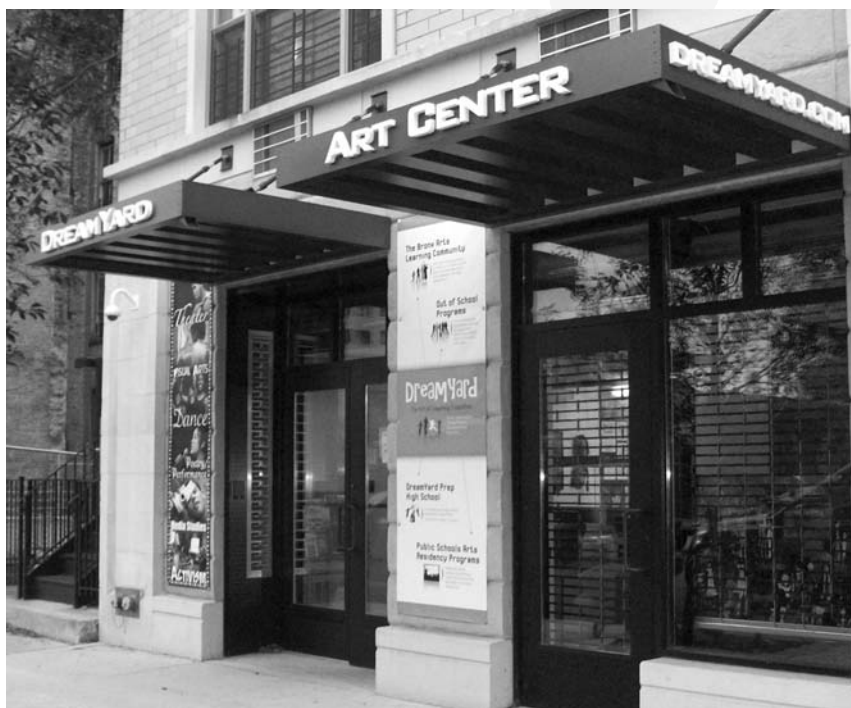
rehearsal space. It can fit an audience of 75 people for lectures; video conferencing; and live music, dance and slam poetry.

Two **VISUAL ART ROOMS** provide students with professional working spaces in which to explore a variety of media, including drawing, painting, sculpture and mixed media.

An open-area **EXHIBITION GALLERY AND COMMUNITY LOUNGE** is beautifully lit by skylights, which open to an outside courtyard. The gallery is a flexible exhibition space for student and artist curating. The lounge includes a kitchen and café seating.

The **LIBRARY/RESOURCE CENTER** provides students and teachers with recommended novels and critical works from the arts education field. It is also a quiet study area.

A **WRITING LAB** will be a working space for our Bronx Poetry Project students. Our media study students will develop and edit film/video projects. We are working to equip the Lab with computer and media technology.



The ACTION Project participants recently developed theater, film and poetry pieces and conducted street outreach to call attention to HIV/AIDS infection in the Bronx and Washington D.C. The participants interviewed HIV positive youth and turned their stories into poems and monologues that they performed on the streets of D.C. and the Bronx. They continue to spread awareness in the Bronx and will host The Red Party for young people ages 14-19, including an open mic, their documentary premiere and free HIV testing onsite.

Several ACTION students gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Christian Toro at far left.



A Return to ACTION

Christian Toro, graduate of the ACTION Project, interned for ACTION's summer intensive this past July.

You just finished your first year of college at Stony Brook University. How did your participation in ACTION influence your choices?

I learned to take risks. ACTION increased my self-confidence. It gave me the chance to perform in front of large groups, travel to many states and collaborate with people with different ideals and philosophies. At college, I'm now involved in clubs, and I have good relationships with my professors, as I had with my DreamYard mentors.

What was it like to return this summer as an ACTION intern?

It was refreshing and fun. I worked with some of the students in [ACTION's senior class] the Revolution, so it was great to see everyone. Continuing to affiliate myself with DreamYard has, and will always be, a goal of mine.

What was it like to work in the new DreamYard Art Center?

The Art Center is what DreamYard needed—a place to call home!

Experiencing College Life, Bonding with Others

Anthony Burton, DY Prep Senior, traveled to Shenandoah University this summer for a two-week pre-professional arts training program. We asked Anthony to discuss his experience.

We were given the opportunity to audition for a summer dance program at Shenandoah last spring. They came to our school and taught everyone a routine, and we had to perform the dance. It was exciting, because out of 24 students, four of us were chosen.

When we arrived at Shenandoah, I was nervous because I didn't know anyone else except those of us from DY Prep. Our first night, the staff [Shenandoah students] began to connect with us. They asked us about plans for college and wanted to see if we had the same likes or dislikes.

One of the staff found out that I want to do musical theater, so she took me to a rehearsal for the school's *Beauty and the Beast* production. When I saw the lights and the moves, I became so excited. I am certain that's what I want to do.

The greatest thing I learned from the experience was coping with people I don't know. I used to find that I couldn't bond with someone if we didn't have much in common. But being in this place, with so many different people, forced me to talk to people who were different from me.

There were people from different countries. We had a brother and sister

from Germany, whose style was different from mine, and I was able to pick up things from what they did and adopt it into my own routine.

Experiencing college life opened my mind. Living in the dorm and having a stricter and more focused dance routine helped me learn so much about the fundamentals of dance, especially ballet.



Portrait of Anthony Burton, at the Dance and Theater Festival in 2009.

DreamYard Welcomes These Amazing People

New Board Member

Ned Moulton received a B.A. in government at Dartmouth College. Ned is a Managing Director of Guggenheim Investment Advisors, a registered investment advisor and an affiliate of Guggenheim Partners; he has been integral in building its wealth advisory platform over the past five years. Ned was previously the managing partner for EAM Investment Corp., which structured and arranged more than \$100 million in equity transactions for early venture-staged companies. He was the COO and CFO of Bottle Rocket, an Internet-based game developer and distributor, which was sold to a publicly traded technology company in 2000.

New Staff

Cydney Gray (*Out of School Programs Associate*) received her B.A. in visual and environmental studies from Harvard University. During college, she worked with children in the Greater Boston area through Summer Urban Program. She also worked as a freelance video and design artist for on-campus organizations.

How To Love Life

By **Yacine Diop**
Seventh Grade, CIS 313

An Excerpt

The river is floating,
and the moon is rising.
Your eyes are looking for
something you can believe in,
and your heart is beating
like the winter wind
blowing the trees hitting my window.
You're asking me how to find it!
Will you find the blue fires
or will that flame find you?



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Rod Bowen
Principal, DY Prep

Jason Duchin
Co-Executive Director

Cydney Gray
Out School Programs Associate

Nancy Kleaver
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Life Now Without You

By **Marianna Suso**
Seventh Grade, CIS 313

An Excerpt

Nine thirty in the morning
writing in the room of education.

Season of whiteness has come.

New York is full
of sleeping scrawny trees.

The professor is giving her speech.

The song you once loved is
repeating in my mind over and
over again and your quilt of
symbols is being cared for by me.

No one will take it away.

I will protect it forever.

Funders

Voices Rising

By **Jesica Blandon, Destiny Campbell, Miosoty Castillo, Denisse Cotto** and **Chris Taylor**,
DY Prep Slam Team

Select Excerpts

They say,
"Life and Death are in the power of the tongue."

And if this is so,
Our words are oxygen.

Listen.
Do you hear that sound?
That is the sound of a million voices rising.

Our voices rise
For Oscar Grant.
For The Black Friday Massacre.

For my abuelo y abuela.
For little girls and boys.

For my mother.
My uncle.
We speak for the ones who have been silenced
by fear.

By choice. By ignorance. Shame. Death.
Listen.

Oscar Grant,
My voice rises for the fight you never put up.
Tell that burning steel, "You don't belong here
beneath my flesh.

Leave. Go. Don't come back. My skin
is not a crime."

Poets have been pregnant with change
for centuries.
We push out revolutions in prose and poems.
Planted word-seeds sowed a long time ago
are just now coming into harvest.

So listen.
This is for the future.
For tomorrow.
Our very breath is the ink that will write future
history books.

Our vignettes collect voices of today
So tomorrow can survive the future.
Listen.
Can you spare me your eardrum?
Keep your change. I don't want you're money.
Just your heart. Just want your ears.

Listen.
Listen and speak. Speak your story.
Tell someone else's.
And if you can't find enough words to plant,
Sow these.

Upcoming Events

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

Annual Benefit

Tuesday, May 4, 2010
583 Park Avenue (btwn. 63rd and 64th Streets)
New York, NY 10065

Teaching Artist Exhibit

Week of December 8-10, 2009
DreamYard Art Center
1085 Washington Avenue (btwn. 165th and 166th Streets)
Bronx, NY 10456

Spoken Word Festival

Thursday, March 4, 2010
6:30 to 8:00 pm
**Schomburg Center for Research
in Black Culture**
515 Malcolm X Boulevard (at 135th Street)
New York, NY 10037

Visual Arts Exhibition

March 2010
Bronx Museum of Art
1040 Grand Concourse (at 165th Street)
Bronx, NY 10456

Dance, Theater & Music Festival

Friday, April 16, 2010
French Institute Alliance
22 East 60th Street (btwn. Park and Madison Ave.)
New York, NY 10022

BALC Arts Festival

Week of June 2010
Lehman College
250 Bedford Park Boulevard West
Bronx, NY 10468

Please check website for details of events



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The Ambrose Monell Foundation
The Annenberg Foundation
Arthur Dubow Foundation
The Arthur Loeb Foundation
Banfi Vintners Foundation
The Barker Welfare Foundation
The Bay and Paul Foundations
The Belsky-Doyle-Polikoff Family Fund
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The Marks Family Foundation
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The Robert Lehman Foundation
Rodgers Family Foundation
The Ruggles Family Foundation
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Speranza Theater Company
Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation
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