Portraits of Youth Programs

Education After-School

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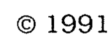

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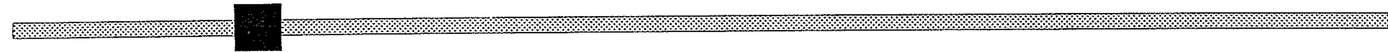
Contents

Introduction	1
Acknowledgments	5
Books 'n' Things	6
Center for Family Life	13
Center for Puerto Rican Studies Children's After-School Program	28
Early Adolescent Helper Program	42
East Harlem Tutorial Program	49
Interfaith Neighbors	61
North Bronx Family Service Center	70
Project Reach Youth	80
A Perspective on Introducing Change	87
List of Programs and Resources	101



INTRODUCTION

The Robert Bowne Foundation is a small family foundation that since 1968 has funded New York City organizations serving disadvantaged populations. While the foundation always has had a special interest in young people, in 1987 it decided to narrow its focus and concentrate entirely on youth literacy.

The foundation recognized that after-school youth programs face enormous difficulties. One problem is that the young people they attract are often drawn not by the educational services they offer, but by their recreational opportunities. Thus, programs that provide educational services as well as recreational ones face the challenge of developing learning activities that will be appealing to their clientele. Another problem is that funds are often short, making it difficult for administrators to employ full-time staff to develop and refine a program, and staff turnover is frequently high as a result. Given such funding shortages, and the strong demand for after-school programs, the programs that do survive are sometimes oversupplied with clients and usually undersupplied with resources. In addition, many after-school program administrators and staff are isolated from recent developments in literacy education and thus conduct programs which mirror schooling at its worst, with a heavy emphasis on workbook exercises, and few opportunities for young people to learn to read and write in meaningful ways.

The Bowne Foundation was aware, however, of particular after-school programs in which children were encouraged to become interested in books, investigate community issues, put on plays, and work actively on projects; the trustees wanted to support programs that were not yet oriented toward such activities to begin incorporating them. As a result, the foundation board decided to direct its funding to youth programs that were willing to take risks, and that aspired to make reading and writing an integral part of their work.

In order to promote change in the after-school programs it funded, the foundation asked three groups to provide technical help to these programs: the American Reading Council, the Literacy Assistance Center, and the Institute for Literacy Studies at Lehman College. The groups conduct workshops for prospective grantees and provide follow-up assis-

tance to a number of Bowne-funded agencies.

After leading a number of workshops for prospective grantees, the staff of the Bowne technical assistance project at the Institute for Literacy Studies noticed that prospective grantees often were eager to know more about the kinds of programs the foundation funds and to learn further details about the kinds of educational changes the foundation promotes. Aside from technical reports of past initiatives, detailed descriptions of out-of-school programs for youth were largely missing from the educational literature, and program administrators had no resources for inspiration, perspective, or even images of possibility. These concerns led us to propose to the foundation the idea of developing a collection of case studies of youth programs. We thought that projects which had made substantial, innovative changes in their program design would prove useful to a wide spectrum of people working in this field, and we decided to focus the case studies on the process of educational change. Those organizations considering changes in their programs could thus gain a better sense of what educational change looks like, and could learn about both the benefits and the problems that others have encountered in the process.

Our inquiry was driven by two overarching questions. First, we knew that many of the programs we wanted to focus on shared common principles of language development and pedagogy, derived to some extent from the educational philosophy known as "whole language." Primary among these principles were the following:

- Reading and writing are social and contextual; they are done with and for others in everyday life. Educational programs that are designed to employ reading and writing in this way build upon and extend young people's literacy use in their homes and communities.
- Engaging in meaningful literacy activities with interesting and challenging material is critical for young people, and helps develop incentive and purpose for reading and writing.
- Reading and writing should be used in ways that enhance other parts of a program (such as counseling), and should be integrated throughout a program, rather than being relegated only to an isolated component.
- Young people can benefit from rich and varied opportunities to use both spoken and written language through activities that range from writing stories, reading books, working on

publications, and writing and producing plays, to conducting interviews and engaging in other investigative reporting.

- Young people can thrive on opportunities to direct their own learning. Having options and making choices about what and how to read and write helps people become more knowledgeable about how they learn best and what most appeals to them.
- Observing adults using reading and writing for their own purposes can encourage young people to do the same.

How, we wondered, were these principles enacted in different program contexts?

Our second guiding question focused on the process of change. Since change in an organization can be initiated in a variety of ways, we were interested in what caused the agencies in our case studies to decide to make a change in their programs. What inspires an organization to change the way they do things? And what obstacles might an agency encounter while making changes in its educational program? As a first step in constructing the case studies, we asked Dianne Kangisser, the Bowne Foundation's vice president and executive director, to recommend programs that had made significant changes in the past, or which were currently altering the design of their educational offerings. We then called either the education director or the executive director of these programs to find out if they were willing to have their programs included as case studies. All agreed, and during the months that followed, researchers on our staff visited the programs twice or more to observe their activities and to interview both staff and children. When the initial drafts of the studies were completed, we sent copies to the directors and asked them to correct inaccuracies and supply missing information. Once the drafts had been revised to include this information, the writers of the individual case studies responded to each other's work and identified some of the common themes and issues which emerged from them.

This collection contains eight case studies of youth literacy programs. Each study includes a short history of the program, a vignette that attempts to capture the flavor of the program, and a description of how the process of initiating and carrying out the respective educational changes had unfolded.

Each of the eight programs we visited is unique in the way it configures its mission and services:

Books 'n' Things is a reading program within the Edenwald-Gun

Hill Neighborhood Center, a multi-service agency located in a northeast Bronx housing project.

The Center for Family Life, in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, offers many programs for children and their families, including the School-Aged Childcare Program, an after-school program for elementary school children.

The Children's After-School Program is a program of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, which provides services to children as part of its "advocacy research" focus, and seeks to understand and change community conditions.

The Early Adolescent Helper Program, which operates within the Center for Advanced Study in Education at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, works with the schools to involve young people in community service projects located in day care centers, senior citizen centers, and other community sites.

East Harlem Tutorial Program operates a tutoring program and other educational activities, including drama and puppetry, for both younger children and adolescents.

Interfaith Neighbors, a counseling agency based in the Yorkville section of Manhattan, operates programs for adolescents and children which have as one goal enabling young people to explore issues which concern them.

North Bronx Family Service Center is a multi-service agency providing counseling, education, and recreation to youth and their families. Its educational program relies on college work-study students to tutor younger children one-to-one.

Project Reach Youth, in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, operates "Creative Learning Centers" which provide a theme-based approach to reading and writing as well as homework help.

If the kind of evolution we observed and learned about is any indication, it is likely that these programs today have changed still further from the way they were when we visited them. What follows are descriptions of the programs as they were at the time we observed in 1990.

The final chapter of the collection describes the process of development and change across programs, and examines the issues and trends that emerge from the studies.

This collection was a collaborative effort which involved six researchers and writers. The introduction was written by Karen Griswold, project director for the Institute's Bowne Foundation technical assistance project.

The case studies of Books 'n' Things, the Early Adolescent Helper Program, and Project Reach Youth were written by Melanie Hammer, teacher-consultant with the Institute's New York City Writing Project. Azi Ellowitch, associate director of the Institute's Adult Learning Center at the time, wrote the case study of East Harlem Tutorial Program. Lena Townsend, staff associate and technical assistance specialist at the Institute, wrote the studies of North Bronx Family Service Center and Interfaith Neighbors. Deborah Shelton, staff associate and adult educator at the Institute, wrote the studies of the Children's After-School Program and the Center for Family Life. Marcie Wolfe, Director of Adult Programs at the Institute, coordinated the project and wrote the concluding chapter.

We hope that the collection will be useful both to organizations which are starting youth programs as well as to those currently operating them and contemplating educational change. Although it is clear from the studies that the process of change differs from place to place, we are convinced that learning about the experience of others can give programs a broader conception about what to anticipate and a vision of what might be possible. We also hope that readers will find the struggles and achievements of the agencies inspiring, as we did, and that the studies themselves will serve as catalysts for change.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the youth and staff at the programs we visited, who led us on tours, welcomed us into their classrooms and offices, and spent countless hours answering questions and describing their work. Taking time out of a busy schedule to talk to outsiders is not easy, and the staff of the programs we worked with were extremely generous with their time.

We are very grateful to Dianne Kangisser of the Robert Bowne Foundation. In this era of increasing standardized testing and worksheets, it is heartening to have a funder ask, "What do you have for kids to read?" "Are people learning something here?" and "Are they enjoying it?" Her spirit, insight, and support have encouraged many youth agencies to rethink and redesign their current programs.

Books 'n' Things

Building a Community of Readers

An Afternoon at Books 'n' Things

On a hot summer day in June, the twenty-five children at Books 'n' Things were in revolt. The children, who ranged in age from five to about twelve, were too warm in the small blue and green room lined with bookshelves. They wanted to go outside, where they knew the other kids from the Edenwald-Gun Hill Neighborhood Center across the street were playing. Helen Sinclair, who supervises the program, suggested to the children that they take paper and pencils and write out their frustrations while she went across the street to pick up a visitor. She left them under the supervision of Vaughan Jackson, a City College student who works part-time for the program, and Richard Bailey, a student volunteer.

When she returned with the visitor, the children had finished writing, and Vaughan began reading aloud from their papers. They listened intently, and as Richard collected the papers, two of the younger children climbed into Vaughan's lap.

"We want to go to the park," Vaughan read from the anonymous notes. "We want more time outside. I don't like Vaughan. Richard is ugly."

One note read, "I hate reading. My favorite books are adventures and mysteries."

"If you hate reading so much, how do you know what your favorite books are?" Ms. Sinclair asked, and the children giggled.

Vaughan finished reading the notes calmly. Each message was greeted with shouts and applause as the children heard their words read aloud to the entire group.

"Okay, I'll try to be prettier," Richard said at the end. "And we'll try for more nature walks."

"It's just that we're older than you," Vaughan said. "We think different from you. This program's going to raise your reading grades."

After the comments had been read, children got up, drifted over to Vaughan and Richard, gave them hugs, asked to see the papers, and read them themselves. Helen Sinclair watched for a few minutes, talking to the children around her, and then collected all the papers.

"I'll take these across the street to Ms. Collins later," she said, "so she can see what you think about the program."

The children cheered.

Program History

Books 'n' Things is a special reading program conceived and developed over the past two years by Jessie M. Williams-Collins, Executive Director of the Edenwald-Gun Hill Neighborhood Center, located on the grounds of the Edenwald Public Houses in the northeast Bronx. According to the center's brochure, more than 7,000 people reside in the Edenwald Houses, 4,000 of whom are twenty-one years old or younger. Founded in 1974, the center is a multi-service agency providing educational, cultural, recreational and social service programs to as many as 400 community residents each day, most of whom are African American. It has a variety of programs, ranging from those that serve young children to projects designed for the needs of senior citizens. In addition to Books 'n' Things, the center houses three other educational programs: 1) after-school child-care—in which children are offered homework assistance and arts activities, 2) the after-school center—which offers reading instruction and recreational activities, and 3) a computer project—in which children use Commodore computers to work with simple programs and improve basic math and reading skills.

Jessie Collins joined the Edenwald-Gun Hill Neighborhood Center in 1975 and soon after became its executive director. She is responsible for raising money for its programs through various grant and funding agencies. Through an informal networking process, she has been able to institute programs that reflect the needs of the community. A member of the community herself (she lives a half-mile from the center), Ms. Collins has made a point of trying to talk personally with anyone who comes in ever since the center was founded. When she begins to hear a pattern in what people are talking about, she attempts to devise a program that answers that need. For example, the center's homework helpers program evolved out of a number of inquiries she received from parents asking whether she knew of anyone who did babysitting after school hours.

"If we did a formal survey, we might come up with other needs, but we would still be doing everything we've been doing," Ms. Collins says, referring to her programs. "Attendance shows us that these programs are needed. If a program isn't working, people don't come."

The range of programs at the center also reflects her own personality, Ms. Collins says. "I don't know how enthused I would be raising money for something that didn't excite me. You won't see too much on sports around here."

Books 'n' Things had its start as an idea for a computer-based, drill-oriented reading program. The center had acquired computers through the Heckscher Foundation for Children, and Ms. Collins had thought of using them for math and reading practice, since scores in the district were down. She sent a proposal to Dianne Kangisser at the Robert Bowne Foundation for a program that would have used computers for reading drills. However, as the result of subsequent talks with Ms. Kangisser, Ms. Collins began to wonder whether she should move in a different direction. After attending some workshops sponsored by the Bowne Foundation, she came to see a connection between her own early, enthusiastic experiences as a reader, current research about how children learn to read, and her evolving vision of a reading program.

At one workshop for potential grantees sponsored by the Bowne Foundation, Jessie Collins found herself talking about her own childhood as a reader. She remembered that as soon as she could say a few words, she wanted to read. Her whole family read, and they also read aloud to the younger children. She grew up in a small town, and cherished books as widening the range of her experience. "That Bowne workshop," Ms. Collins says, "let me know that in a way I had been on the right track without even thinking about it."

With the help of a pamphlet called "How to Start and Run a Book and Game Club," and other information from the American Reading Council, Ms. Collins began to devise a program that she hoped would give the children in the Edenwald-Gun Hill development the advantages that she herself had had as a young reader, and the lifelong love for reading that grew out of it. She visited a model program, the Friendly Place, originally associated with the American Reading Council, and thought about how she might create a similar comfortable environment for children, where they could read for fun and share that experience with others. In its homework helpers component, the center already had a place where students could receive help with the kinds of assignments they were given in school. But in Books 'n' Things, Ms. Collins wanted to create a place where they could have a different kind of experience with books.

Basically, Ms. Collins had three objectives in mind. She wanted children to read books for enjoyment. She hoped that this would lead to

a habit of reading in adulthood that would then be passed on to the next generation of children, as had happened in her own family. And she wanted children to have an opportunity to start their own personal libraries, as well as to have a safe, comfortable place where they could read and talk about books.

The opportunities for children in the area to be exposed to books had been limited for some time. The Edenwald Public Library closed at 6:00 pm, before many children's parents got home from work, and it had not been open on Saturdays for several years. The local elementary school, PS 112, had a library, but the staff had been cut back, and it no longer had a full-time librarian who was readily accessible to the children, nor were new books being ordered. This had long been a source of frustration to Ms. Collins and parents in the area, and she thought that Books 'n' Things would once more expand local children's access to books as well as to people who love books.

The Program Now

Ms. Collins found space in a small room across the street from the Community Center, and obtained donations of bookshelves, books, and paint for the walls. It took her a little over a year from the time of her idea for the program to the day it actually began. Ms. Helen Sinclair, a former branch manager for a commercial bank, was recruited to run the program, and Books 'n' Things opened its doors in December 1988. Ms. Sinclair describes herself as an enthusiastic reader, who tries to read a book a day.

Although the program had been operating for only nine months at the time of this study, word had been spreading. At least twenty-five children attended Books 'n' Things every day, ranging in age from five to about twelve, and more than fifty different children were being served by the center each week. The center is open from two to six every Monday through Friday. Some children choose to attend Books 'n' Things themselves; others are signed up by their parents. Adult escorts, drawn from the center staff, pick up the children from the local elementary school and bring them to the Edenwald-Gun Hill Neighborhood Center. On any day at Books 'n' Things, a visitor might find children reading silently, playing educational games involving numbers and words, reading aloud to a volunteer or to large groups, reading together in small groups, being read to, or talking about a book they have read.

While the program offers a variety of activities, not all the time at Books 'n' Things is closely structured. It is not a place where children feel pressure to perform a particular activity at a specific time. Ms. Collins, Ms. Sinclair, and the rest of the staff have managed to create an environment where children can walk in, see other kids enjoying themselves at an activity, and decide they'd like to do it, too. A cry of "He don't know how to play!" is likely to be answered with, "Well, you teach him how, then," and the children are obviously accustomed to working together and helping each other. Most of the children also have library cards, and the staff takes them on regular visits to the public library.

The children routinely get the chance to read out loud one-to-one with Ms. Sinclair or one of the other staff members, and they are very proud of this ability, which they have gained in the program. This activity also gives the staff a chance to pick up on a child who may be having a reading problem. Ms. Sinclair talks about one second-grade girl who could read all the words of a story but without understanding it. In being helped to talk about what she had read, the little girl gradually improved in understanding. In another instance, the atmosphere of reading for pleasure drew in a group of five-year-olds who originally said that they couldn't read. They now read in various ways and to varying degrees, and are excited about the prospect of being in the first grade, where they expect to be reading "lots of words."

Future Plans

Ms. Collins would like to expand the program's hours, and to offer it on Saturdays as well. She hopes to be able to buy more books in September, and eventually increase the program's library to the point where children can sign books out to take home. Last spring, Books 'n' Things held a well-attended Book Fair in the Neighborhood Center, and Ms. Collins hopes to be able to add more activities that will involve the community, and get adults involved in reading books with children.

Both Ms. Collins and Ms. Sinclair speak of the need for greater adult participation. Originally, they envisioned Books 'n' Things as a place where parents would come in and read to their children, building a community of readers. This hasn't happened as much as they would like, partly because most parents have had long days and are tired and in a hurry when they come to pick up their children. Over the summer, Books 'n' Things ran a parenting program that reached a population of ten to

fifteen children under the age of five, and their mothers. Ms. Sinclair worked with the mothers and children, modeling reading to the children—when they would sit still—and encouraging the children to walk around and familiarize themselves with the books.

Ms. Collins also notes the need for a wider base of support. She would like to work with some of the consultants from the Institute for Literacy Studies at Lehman College, some of whom she has seen present at Bowne Foundation workshops. She also speculates about establishing a system of volunteers, using students from Evander Childs High School, which is the local high school for the district. While in some ways Books 'n' Things has been "a dream come true," Ms. Collins also acknowledges that it hasn't taken off as she had hoped, and is going to take more time to develop. Strategies about how to make the program appeal more widely to the community need to be tailored to the concerns of particular parents. "I don't want it to be a good idea that dies," she says. She would like to be better connected to recent research, and to new models and techniques that might be applied to the northeast Bronx community's needs.

Ms. Collins identifies two particular problems that need to be addressed for the future success of the program. Securing ongoing funding has been the most difficult one thus far; she has noticed that "even though people say they want kids to read, it's hard to find the money for this kind of thing." It has also been difficult to find staff with special expertise in children's literature. Ms. Collins knows the kind of program she wants, but among the pool of elementary school teachers and others willing to work part-time after school, few people know a range of children's books and can make them come alive for children.

Ms. Collins knows that "...a lot of times, children just like to emulate adults. They're curious when they see you reading when you don't *have* to. Kids are surprised by that. I'd like Books 'n' Things eventually to get to be a place where they see a lot of that going on. Ideally, parents could come in and read to their children. I know there's a population for that."

The Center for Family Life School-Aged Childcare Program

Service to the Whole Family

An Afternoon at the Center for Family Life

The two hundred and fifty children, a bubbling mass of youngsters in blue and white school uniforms, have just finished their snack of milk and cereal and have left the school cafeteria in their groups, going off to paint or act or study. Suddenly the vast cafeteria is empty. A group of children gather red milk cartons and pile up plastic bowls as others hold open a large black bag for them to throw in the remains of snack time. In another corner of the cafeteria, a group of teenaged girls lean on the library—a large wooden box on wheels. Lisa Catapano begins to speak to the five girls as they leaf through a magazine together. It's time to organize today's plan for "Stories, Games and Writing."

"First, we have the third-grade boys, and we're going to do the dragon story with them."

"Again! Oh no, how many times are we going to read that?"

"You're not going to read it, I am," replies Lisa. Though she is only about twenty years old, her voice commands a gentle adult authority over her younger assistants. They are Counselors in Training (CITs), and range in age from thirteen to seventeen. Catapano is a junior at Dartmouth College, where she studies physics. She has taken the semester off and works as a full-time intern at the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

"So this is the one where the kids have to guess how the story ends, right?" asks another young woman.

"You guessed it. After that, we have the kindergartners. They want to do more games, so after we do a crossword puzzle with them, they'll play educational games." Lisa checks her CIT attendance sheet and asks the teens if they know the whereabouts of some missing team members. Just as she does so, a pair of concerned latecomers runs down the hall. Panting, a girl with a ponytail and bangs tells Lisa, "I knew we had the third-grade boys today. Sorry I'm late."

"That's okay. Are we ready to roll?" At that, the young women put away the teen magazine, grab the sides of this big box on wheels, and roll

the library into the classroom, where about twenty-five third-grade boys sit around desks in groups of four. Today's school lessons and homework are still fresh on the blackboard. Seated in the back is the group leader's assistant, Freddie. He will be responsible for keeping order today, as the group leader is out sick.

Lisa opens the mysterious-looking mobile library, exposing its bookshelves and games to view. Once opened to a full ninety-degree angle, it invitingly displays the program's collection of children's books in English and Spanish. Box games are stored on the bottom shelf, and a variety of softballs and rubber balls are thrown in among them. In the past this library had been stationed in the cafeteria, on a rug where children could sit and choose their own books or games. They would use the library independently after doing their homework, or instead of doing homework if they had forgotten to bring it in. This year, the library is taken into classrooms instead. Lisa, the eleven CITs, and the developer of "Stories, Games and Writing," Jennifer Zanger, bring it with them to children's groups and engage in reading, writing, and arts activities with them.

As Lisa distributes photocopies of an illustrated story, a boy wearing a baseball cap and jacket starts talking to his neighbor. "Are you gonna read today? I don't want to read. I want to play games." His neighbor doesn't have time to respond because Lisa has just begun to read the story aloud. The boys quiet down and follow the words together as she reads. Some boys hold the photocopy too close to them for others at their table to be able to see, so a few just listen. Some of the CITs who sit one-to-a-table are following along on the page, while others seem just to be listening. After all, they've heard the story before, when their team visited the third- and second-grade girls last week.

After reading the first page, Lisa invites volunteers to continue reading aloud. Frankie, who had run up to Lisa earlier in the cafeteria to ask if he "had reading today," raises his hand. He stumbles over quite a few words in the story, and Lisa and two boys sitting with him quickly provide him with these words. He seems to accept their help without shame or embarrassment.

Lisa stops and asks for someone to describe what fencing is. Then she reads the next page and again stops and asks for readers. More children volunteer to read than before. The boy in the baseball cap, Alby, raises his hand to read, but his effort goes unanswered as Lisa calls on a child sitting closer to her.

Alby raises his hand once more to read at the next opportunity, and again, someone else is selected. He looks frustrated, and turns to ask Freddie for permission to go to the bathroom. He's had it with reading. Freddie tells him to wait a little while. Lisa asks again for readers, and this time Alby gets chosen. He settles into his chair, and begins to read about the princess, the prince, and the dragon.

But Alby reads the wrong page, because while Lisa had told the group to turn the page, he had been so anxious to escape to the bathroom that he hadn't heard her instructions. Lisa gently reminds him to turn the page, and off he goes. Lisa stops him to make sure the boys know what a banquet is. One kid defines it as a big party with a dinner. Assured that the boys are still understanding the story, Lisa tells Alby to continue reading. When he's finished, Alby is thanked for the good job he did.

Now Lisa asks the boys to guess if, indeed, the prince will be able to slay the dragon. Boys shout yes and no, and Lisa asks them to write down on a piece of white paper what they think will happen, and to draw a picture of the action. The CITs hand out paper and crayons, and slowly, detailed drawings of the dragon and the prince emerge. Some boys focus almost exclusively on the drawing, while others produce short texts predicting and describing how the prince will defeat his foe. Most efforts, though, combine drawing and writing together. Some pretty ferocious-looking dragons emerge on the page, many of which are extremely well-drawn.

After about ten minutes, some of the boys are finished and show their drawings to Lisa. Then they go over to the library and select one of the many educational games to play. One pair of kids chooses "Connect Four," and they get very excited about the "championship championship" game they are about to play. Other boys take longer to finish their drawing and writing, but after about twenty minutes, all are playing games, including checkers, Monopoly, Chinese checkers, and Clue. They play their games together in small groups of three and four, and in one corner, a CIT and a child are having their own championship checkers playoff. About ten minutes later, Lisa tells the boys to hand their drawings in to her and to return their games to the library. "Next week, stay tuned for the end of the story, when we'll compare what you drew and wrote to what happens." "Stories, Games and Writing" is over for today.

Program History

The Center for Family Life (CFL), sponsored by St. Christopher-Ottilie Church, is a haven for families in this low-income, primarily Hispanic immigrant community. The comprehensive services offered to children, youth, and adults support the stability and well-being of the family. Since its inception in 1978, CFL's programs have helped family members to confront sometimes inter-related series of problems: unemployment, substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, immigration difficulties, and a lack of educational attainment. Yet, while the list of problems plaguing many of the residents of this community is substantial, the area is also home to a large and strong working-class population, who live in modest, aluminum-sided homes or small brick buildings, and work in local factories. Statistically, this working population comprises fully half of the area's residents; nevertheless, the streets of Sunset Park seem more like those of poorer neighborhoods. Gangs of youth hang out and unemployed men sit on stoops in front of buildings, drinking. Piles of garbage fill the empty lots and sidewalks around the abandoned apartment buildings and sealed-up churches. Though the neighborhood streets teem with people, there is at the same time a desolate feeling to the area.

The founders of CFL chose this neighborhood as the site for their work precisely because, in 1978, it was considered "a neighborhood in transition," one which could be "turned around." Thus, while CFL's services help families to cope in very direct ways with the daily demands and pressures of life, the programs are also designed as catalysts for the more long-term goal of halting the processes of community decay and family disruption which continue to trouble Sunset Park as it teeters on the brink of the poverty line.

By addressing the needs of families as units, and by creating programs which assist all age groups, CFL's programs form a web of support that weaves through many institutions in the community and back through the home. While the focus of CFL's services is clinical social work, the center also runs programs which help families with a variety of needs, such as acquiring affordable and decent housing, securing educational credentials, obtaining emergency food and clothing, and finding employment.

CFL's directors, Sister Mary Paul and Sister Geraldine, believe that as the community residents grow and have positive experiences partici-

pating in group life and utilizing community resources, the community itself is strengthened. As family units are increasingly successful in countering the forces which marginalize and alienate them, the community gains strength and begins to "turn around." But if the positive changes which families and individuals make are to be permanent, the directors believe, institutions must change as well.

The local schools have always been one of the key institutions with which CFL has worked. The center's own community assessment in 1977 showed that the neighborhood's elementary schools (there are no high schools in Sunset Park) generated the kinds of educational statistics that are characteristic of poorer neighborhoods: low reading scores, poor attendance rates, high percentages of children eligible for free lunch programs, and overcrowding. But more importantly for their own work in Sunset Park, CFL's staff believe that the family and the community must work with the school in order for the latter to achieve its own ends—educating the neighborhood's children. The staff is convinced that in order to counter the prevailing negative experience of school which neighborhood children have, and to maximize what children can learn in school, parents and community organizations must be involved in the educational process. For the last twelve years, CFL has worked to forge links between families, schools, and the community by basing their programs in public elementary and junior high schools.

The Structure of the School-Aged Childcare Program

In operation since 1983, the School-Aged Child Care Program, for children aged five through twelve, now operates out of both PS 314 and PS 1 five afternoons a week, from 2:45 until 6:00 PM. These schools were chosen as program sites because they are located in areas of Sunset Park that have the highest concentration of poor families. The directors developed the program to meet three pressing needs. First, working and studying parents, especially single mothers, needed quality, affordable child care during after-school hours. Second, children needed to have positive experiences and relationships to balance often negative experiences in the home and school. But the Center for Family Life also initiated the program to provide sorely needed linkages between parents and schools. The program has provided a kind of vortex where parents, children, teachers, and the community converge and negotiate their needs.

This large after-school program is modeled on the settlement houses of the past, and is organized much like today's day camps. Children are grouped by age, and each group of about twenty children names itself and is headed by a group leader. The twelve paid staff members are generally between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. All of them are community residents and many of them have been connected with the center for a number of years as either assistant group leaders or as Counselors in Training. The assistants are young adults, about eighteen years old, who have had two or three years of prior experience working in the School-Aged Child Care Program as Counselors in Training. The CITs range in age from thirteen to seventeen, and they volunteer to assist group leaders in carrying out the many activities which the program offers.

The afternoon is divided into three time periods. After eating their snack, the children go off in their groups to a variety of different activities, including arts and crafts, theater, sports, study time, tutoring and the new group activity called "Stories, Games and Writing." Some activities take place on a daily basis, such as study time, while others, like sports and "Stories, Games and Writing," are scheduled for each group only once a week. Some of the children also receive tutoring from peers or adults, generally offered twice weekly. All children in the program also contribute to its monthly newsletter, for which the staff selects for publication pieces written during "Stories, Games and Writing." And all of the children who attend the program are incorporated into an annual theater production, which draws on the children's weekly activities and integrates them into preparing for and performing a play.

Program Philosophy and the Commitment to Fostering Literacy

Both the Director of the School-Aged Childcare Program at P.S. 314, John Kixmiller, and the head of the Stories, Games and Writing Program, Jennifer Zanger, are social workers by training. In organizing meaningful social and recreational activities for children after school, the program staff also organizes activities which, in direct and indirect ways, are more intentionally "educational" in nature. They help children to do their homework, for example, and organize tutoring for younger children by older children. While one of the program's goals is to help children develop a variety of skills, including study habits, the activities the staff organizes to enhance the cognitive, emotional, and social development of the children are designed from the perspective of social group work principles

and methods. This perspective emphasizes child development through participation in meaningful activities together with peers and elders. While the program has addressed issues related to literacy and schooling throughout the years, the staff is quick to emphasize that they do not view their program as primarily an educational one, nor do they view themselves as educators. Rather, they aim to provide an environment in which the whole child will be stimulated and nurtured.

CFL's explicit philosophy about learning guides all of the activities in the School-Aged Childcare Program. It is a developmental perspective that defines four types of learning. CFL's 1987 Progress Report outlines these areas of growth as "the inculcation of knowledge, skills, dispositions, and feelings." Within this perspective, in order for real child development to occur, these four areas of learning must be addressed simultaneously. The staff emphatically stresses that learning not be conceived in the narrow sense that schools, and often parents, take for granted; instead, the directors conceive of development as a "lasting change in the way in which a person perceives and deals with his environment." CFL defines its broadest mission in the community much in the same way. Individuals, families, institutions, and the community as a whole all will have to engage in this kind of learning if Sunset Park is to develop into the kind of neighborhood envisioned by CFL and its current residents.

Homework Help and the Evolution of "Stories, Games and Writing"

For years, literacy has been a "hot issue" for parents in the community, a concern that has been most visible—and most controversial—in the program's experience of offering homework help. John Kixmiller talked animatedly and carefully about "the edge" which homework has for parents and their children, for, as he explained, "our approach to reading and writing evolved out of our struggle over homework help."

> It's always been a tradition that children don't want to do their homework. That's obvious. But at this particular historical stage, and in this community, there seems to be a real edge to it. It's not just that the normal, average boy would rather be out playing baseball or something. One aspect is that schools just aren't making the work interesting for children. Now, I'm not an educational expert, but I think that content has become increasingly workbook-oriented. All of the meaning has been bled out of the things that children are asked to read. Another area is that in this community, parents panic that their children are not going to have the means of

> advancement. They see fewer jobs available and more educational requirements for the ones that are around. The parents' panic about their kids' future creates a negative kind of cycle. The more they panic and try to make their children do the work, the less the children want to do it. Six-year-olds will not understand how reading today will affect their ability to get a job when they grow up.

Since the program opened its doors, it has been under pressure to help children get their homework done. Kixmiller described the first aspect of the problem as parents' expectation that their children will come home from the program with their homework totally completed. He added that many parents used to enroll their children in the program primarily so that their homework would be "taken care of" by six o'clock. "Parents thought that they would somehow be relieved of the responsibility to get their children to do their homework. But we expect the children to have some independent initiative in taking their homework out, and doing it. It *can't* be our responsibility."

Another problem which occurred often during homework help time was that children claimed to have no homework, and others simply "forgot" to bring their books with them from school. In response to this predicament, the staff created a library in the corner of the cafeteria, equipped with a rug and cushions, for these children to use while others were working on their homework. The area was also available to children once they finished their homework. The Robert Bowne Foundation provided monies for equipping the library with books and educational games. As time went on, this ingenious effort at avoiding disruption and providing children with a positive activity while others finished their homework taught the staff a good deal about literacy and the kinds of reading and writing activities which the children in their program really seemed to need.

In letting children use the library independently, staff observed that the kids would generally flip through a few pages of a book, pretending to read, and would soon be playing an educational game or horsing around with peers. This created a new behavior management problem. During their weekly meetings, the staff began to analyze what they were observing. John remembers:

> We realized that we weren't doing anything to create bonding between children and books. We looked at what we are successful at doing, which is to get the children to bond with an activity by making it a group activity and presenting it to them in a certain way. We realized that we weren't doing that with the library, and we were actually asking too much of

> many children, who really didn't have the kind of relationship to reading which could support independent reading. We realized that you can't just hand a child a book, or invite them to choose a book, and expect it to work. The children had no background in reading; they hadn't been introduced to children's literature. They had no notion of reading more than one book by the same author, or even of what they liked to read about. We understood then that we had to provide them with that background. We needed to *make* reading an experience for them.
>
> We decided to try approaching reading just as we would any other group activity here, like sports or drama or creative art. We realized that we don't just give children materials in an arts class and ask them to make something out of them. They'd be lost! Well, we were essentially asking the kids in the library to do just that. We started to think that if we put the same thoughtfulness and support into presenting an activity relating to reading, we might get the same positive results as we'd had in dance and other activities.

At about the same time that John and the group leaders were coming to this understanding about the reading process and the library, Jennifer Zanger, a social work intern, created the Teen Tutoring Program, so that youths of twelve through fourteen, who were too old to be enrolled as participants in the afterschool program and too young to be CITs, could remain connected to the program. The dozen or so teens, along with Jennifer, would work with a group of younger children on homework help. Jennifer liked experimenting with ways that groups could read for fun as well as do homework. Then, over the summer, when the center runs a day camp and no homework needs to be done, Jennifer began to experiment further with group and "buddy" reading. Groups followed stories in print while fellow students took turns reading aloud. Jennifer and John found that, indeed, reading could stand on its own as a meaningful and enjoyable activity for children if it was presented much in the same way as drama or dance or arts and crafts. The children not only bonded with the literature and each other, but began to really enjoy reading and to look forward to it.

Following their experiences with the library and the summer's reading groups, Jennifer and John developed "Stories, Games and Writing." Though still quite new and in experimental form, the program has a philosophy, very specific goals, and a basic methodology. Jennifer explained that the chief goal of the new program is to make reading fun for kids and to offer the kinds of reading that are associated with reading in the home. She added that changing children's attitudes towards reading has been a long-term objective at the after-school center:

> Even at the young age of six or seven, many children here have a very negative experience of reading. Children just turn off at the mere sight of something that might involve reading and writing. We want "Stories, Games and Writing" to be an experience which shows the children that reading can be something other than that to them. They see a lot of adults and teens around them involved in it, and they begin to have a whole new experience of reading.

Because the staff has found that the books, articles, and stories must be interesting to the children if they are to enjoy them, Jennifer chooses children's literature to read with younger kids, and also uses articles and stories about issues such as drug abuse, crime, and child abuse to read with older children. Equally as important to children bonding with reading materials is the fact that reading and the activities which follow it are always done in a group. Generally, Jennifer or Lisa will read a story or article aloud as all of the children follow along in small groups around a photocopy of it. In this way, the children experience the story both aurally and visually.

Perhaps most important in the program's new approach to reading are the post-reading activities which Jennifer organizes, in which the children respond to the reading by participating in role plays, arts and crafts projects, or writing, usually in small groups of four to five and aided by a CIT. John explained that "translating what they have just read into another medium, like art, writing, or acting, makes what they've read take on more meaning. We have found not only that kids like to come out of reading with a tangible product, but that literature is more meaningful when it has references within other mediums."

The children's production of meaningful and creative writing and artwork began to occur only when reading and writing at the after-school program were separated from the pressure around homework help. This year, John decided to try further separating reading and writing from homework help by renaming homework help "study time." He explained that some people were doubtful about offering two different reading activities to children, one of which would be unrelated to homework.

> The comment is made in lots of places, including by some of our staff in the past, that kids just don't want to read. But it's not that kids don't like reading—it's that they don't like reading books in certain atmospheres and in certain ways. We have found that the kids like coming to "Stories, Games, and Writing," and there was not the kind of resistance to it which people expected.

Jennifer senses that the children's attitudes toward reading and writing are changing as well. "A lot of times they'll groan and complain and

all that. But in the end, they enjoy it... . Every day I'm here, a child will run up to me in the cafeteria and ask, 'Do I get you today?'"

Parent Tutoring Program

Some of the same pressures which led John and Jennifer to develop "Stories, Games and Writing" prompted John to experiment with creating a parent tutoring program last year. He thought that if parents could tutor children, they would not only be helping their kids, but themselves as well. Perhaps taking this kind of supported action toward their child's success in school would lessen their own anxiety, and structure a way for them to keep abreast of their child's homework and to have the information needed for on-going dialogue with their child's teachers.

The immediate catalyst for the creation of the program was a kind of crisis situation, which came about when PS 314 appeared on a list of the city's worst schools, published in a New York daily newspaper. The rating was based on low reading scores of second-graders. Though some parents in the area took the scores with a grain of salt, many parents and teachers began to scapegoat and blame each other for the school's "failure." John described the situation at the time as "destructive and demoralizing." He set out to have some impact on the ways in which parents and teachers were relating to one another, and decided that a parent tutoring program, even a small one, could provide a beginning to a more productive relationship between the two groups, and could conceivably help them to form an alliance with one another.

The program ran last year for about two and a half months. John notes that he did not really have the proper time to dedicate to it then, but believes that it was still a modest success; he decided to continue developing the program this year. Jackie Glick, a second-year social work student at the Hunter College School of Social Work, is now running the still-fledgling program.

John views the project as part of a long-term effort not only to aid the parent/teacher alliance so necessary for education, but also to intervene in the cycle of panic around homework and learning that has done so much to undermine the school experience. "We want to avoid some of the areas which have been rubbed raw in the past. If parents can give good attention to children getting their homework done, it will help children to see that homework must be important. And we will be structuring a way for parents to directly help their children succeed in school."

Though Jackie and the parents are still struggling to define some basic ground rules, logistics, and roles in the project, the overall plan is for parents with children enrolled in the after-school program to meet their monthly required volunteer time through doing tutoring. Other current options for volunteer time available to parents include sewing costumes for the program's play, helping with the bookfair and fundraising activities, and attending the monthly Parents' Council meeting for all parents whose children attend the School-Aged Childcare Program.

Parents who participate in the tutoring program do not tutor their own children; the program operates much like a cooperative, although John and Jackie also hope to eventually attract parent tutors whose own children will not receive tutoring from other parents. Tutoring takes place on Mondays and Wednesdays, and parents meet for about a half-hour after the tutoring on Wednesday to share and analyze their tutoring experiences, and to continue the planning process. At the present time, there are five regular parent tutors, and a number of parents who come inconsistently. All the parent tutors are women. Jackie also tutors children, when needed.

Children who have been observed by their group leaders as having the most difficulty during study time are those chosen for parent tutoring. At this time the program serves first-, fourth-, and fifth-graders. Jackie circulates to the children's groups to collect and escort the children to the room where the tutors and children work together. One parent functions as a child-care provider for tutoring parents whose children are of pre-school age, while the other parents tutor children. These parents usually work on homework with one or two children at a time.

Although the idea of parent-tutoring seems relatively straightforward, Jackie explained that there have been a number of snags in getting the program started. Together with the parents who tutor, Jackie is feeling her own way through a delicate process and some very difficult issues. Like the other tutoring programs at the center in which community members do the tutoring, this program is also designed to serve the needs of the tutors. Though teen and pre-teen tutors also meet together after tutoring sessions to share their tutoring experiences and to devise strategies together, the nature of the process which the parents have embarked on is a bit different.

Jackie views her own position as that of being a facilitator in the process of the parents organizing their own program:

> I am a stranger coming on the scene, an outsider really. People don't know me, or may not necessarily trust me right away. It

> is the mothers who can really go out there and talk to their friends and neighbors and bring more mothers into participating in the program.
>
> One of my roles is to listen to what the mothers say to one another in meetings as someone not directly involved in these difficult issues, and to be a sounding board for their ideas. I am here to help clarify with them where we are going to go. I don't have my own agenda, and that helps at times, because I can take unpopular stands on issues, and have nothing to lose in the community. But the way we are approaching this is complicated. In effect, we've said to the mothers that the center is willing to take on homework help, but only if they participate in bringing it about. Some mothers are still unsure about or uncomfortable with the way I play my role. They don't understand yet that I want things to come from them.

Besides some logistical problems of space in the center, there seem to be three major issues for the parent tutors at the present time. The first is the issue which originally gave rise to the program: the habit of mutual blaming between parents and teachers for children's low school achievement. Jackie sees herself and the program in the middle of the two groups.

> My stance is to say with my actions, "Okay guys, let's stop blaming. Let's do what we can together and get on with our job." I feel that the work we do might make parents feel more comfortable at home, and it will certainly lessen the pressure of feeling angry at schools and children for things that are not being done.

Another problem which has surfaced in these early phases of the project is the difficulty of bringing in more parents to volunteer their time and energy. The mothers who already participate are angry at parents who are not putting in their own volunteer time. They feel that these parents don't care, and they don't know how to change the situation. Some of the mothers have been very active in the after-school program and in the school in the past, and can often be very attacking in the way they speak to parents who are not actively involved at this time. Though the program has been advertised through letters and announcements, these, too, have been unsuccessful in attracting other parents.

Besides the obvious obstacles to participation caused by single parenthood, working hours, and the low self-esteem of many mothers, Jackie and John believe that one reason for the lack of response is parents' feeling that they are not welcome in the school. The team of social workers suspects that parents feel unwelcome because professionals working in the school, including themselves, habitually "talk at" them. John explained, "While it's important for parents to be informed, it's boring to be in that position. After a long day of work and a night ahead of washing

dishes and getting things ready for the next day, who needs it?"

Jackie, John, and the parent tutors have decided to organize a pot luck dinner after this month's Parent Council Meeting as a way to begin addressing these problems. They see this event as potentially fun, participatory, and as breaking the routine in everyone's lives. The mothers will be the main speakers at the dinner and will explain the program's goals and procedures, as well as talking about their own experiences as tutors. One mother will give a formal presentation, while another has volunteered to "work the crowd" during and after dinner, to give more personal attention and encouragement to mothers who might want to join the program. Jackie hopes that this format for addressing parents will circumvent the tendency which some mothers have of being judgmental or otherwise critical towards non-participating parents.

Jackie's vision of what the parent tutoring program could become this year continues CFL's tradition of regarding relationships as a principal vehicle for learning. Because of the small numbers of parents and children currently involved in the program, there is an intimate atmosphere in the classroom.

> Kids are getting attention here, and by that I mean a smile, a touch on the shoulder. There is warmth and support. I want children to get strength from this, so that by the end of the year, they will have absorbed enough to feel confident in themselves and their abilities.

It seems as though the program has already had some positive impact on the participating mothers and their families. One parent tutor has begun to use the counseling services at CFL, and has decided to attend adult basic education classes as a way to address her own reading difficulties and to help her son with his. Another, a mother of four and a very active member of the PTA, said to Jackie, "I go home and the program makes such a difference. I have three kids who have to do homework. Now with the program, I go home, and I'm free."

Future Plans

As of the time of this study, the School-Aged Childcare Program had just hired a full-time educational consultant, Dr. Dream Klailat. A grant from the Robert Bowne Foundation enabled CFL to take her on board. Dream seems to be joining the staff at a critical time, especially for "Stories, Games and Writing." Lisa Catapano will be leaving to return to college, which leaves a large gap in staffing, and Jennifer, who is available

only to run the specialty class two afternoons a week, was deeply concerned about the program's future, especially given the after-school center's long-standing commitment to literacy and its success to date.

John Kixmiller believes that Dream will offer "Stories, Games and Writing" the kind of high-quality content and expertise which the staff that now conducts the center's other specialty activities, such as theater and creative arts, provide. "Before last summer, we were utter novices. Three years ago we hadn't even thought of giving out copies of something so that all of the kids could read silently while someone else read aloud. That's a really big thing, and it makes all the difference between kids getting involved in a story or not. With Dream, who knows what we'll be able to get into doing."

Jackie Glick also regards Dream Klailat's arrival as a valuable opportunity for the parent tutoring program to acquire some specific skills and activities. Dream will be able to evaluate and offer advice about children who seem to be having difficulty learning. Jackie believes that Dream also has a great deal to teach the parents about reading and writing with their children and hopes that she will be able to give workshops to the parents who participate in the tutoring project, and perhaps to all the parents with children enrolled in the program. Some workshop themes Jackie has already identified include picking out books with one's children, how to read books aloud with children, and how to help them do homework. Jackie also believes that Dream can be invaluable in helping to train and supervise the parents who are now tutoring children, as well as in providing the tutoring program with its own collection of reading and writing materials. While there may be some push and pull between the educational professionals and the social work professionals, Jackie notes, she is confident that their roles will be complementary in supporting the learning which parents and children need to engage in as they struggle to survive and prosper in the difficult environment of Sunset Park.

Center for Puerto Rican Studies Children's After-School Program

Developing Critical Thinking in the Community

An Afternoon at the Children's After-School Program

Today the students in the Children's After-School Program, a project of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College, have been invited to gather around the bar graph they constructed during their previous computer class. The graph compares the population, educational attainment, employment, and income in their community of East Harlem to those in Manhattan as a whole. Leaning over the large graph mounted on thick paper, they review the meaning of the words, and the process of data collection and analysis which they used in constructing the graph. This afternoon they were to develop their work further by comparing this data to information they were to have brought in with them today about employment and income within their own households, but some of the "researchers," who range from seven to eleven years of age, had been unable to gather the information.

As a result, the teacher spontaneously alters her approach. "We can estimate this information, make educated guesses, and then later change our graphs to include the real data you'll bring in from home next time. How can we make an educated guess as to the number of people we're working with in our class as a sample?" Karen Navarro leads her students to the answer by beginning to count the people seated around the work table in the center of the room. The group of twelve children and adults count aloud along with her, some in Spanish, and others in English.

"How many families do we have here in class?"

"Eleven," answers one girl. "Jakwana and Karine are sisters."

"Good. Can our graph show eleven families?"

"No. It's in thousands. That's too much."

"So what will need to change to have our new graph show a much smaller number of families?" asks Karen.

"We can change the thousands to ones," answers a very small boy, who has been looking very intently at the large graph in front of him.

"Good. That's what we'll do. Each thousand will just become a one. Will you fill in the graph to show that we have eleven families?"

The boy looks back at the original graph comparing East Harlem with Manhattan. He chooses a crayon to fill in the bar for population on the class's new graph—the same color that represents population on the original. As he makes this choice and colors in the bar, some students use the momentary lull in group activity to explore less serious matters than employment and population statistics. The after-school computer class has been extended into the middle of May this year, and the students seem eager for summer to begin. Gabriel is poking his neighbor in the side and laughing.

"We are doing work like a lot of people do in college," says Karen.

Suddenly, Gabriel's head pops up. "So we're in college?" he asks.

"Yeah, but *you're* not if you're not concentrating!" Karen emits one of her friendly and infectious laughs, letting everyone know that while their work is serious and difficult, there is always room for joking, affection, and fun. Once Gabriel is finished being momentarily embarrassed, Karen continues her questioning.

"How did the census people count educational attainment?"

Gabriel eagerly shouts, "By who finished high school!"

"So how many people here have finished high school?"

Gabriel looks around the room and counts five adults. Then he, too, chooses the same color that was used on the original graph to fill in the bar representing educational attainment. Karen continues posing questions to the children. "What about income? What does that mean to us?"

"Money! Who makes money!" Gabriel quickly responds. He has been drawn back into the challenge of translating his world into figures and charts. Now Navarro begins to fill in the bar for employment, as she wants to leave time for the kids to draw on the computers today. She colors the bar up to the number five. A young girl who looks about eight years old pipes up, "But I work at home doing cleaning. Why did you only count five people?" Another girl adds, "And I live on my allowance. That's income."

"Okay, then. Who's your boss?"

"My father."

Suddenly the children all report at once about the different kinds of work they do at home, like babysitting and vacuuming, and the consequent significance of their personal income. While a little bit of summer rebellion is evident in this group outpouring of information, it is also clear that the students feel able to challenge their teacher's assumption about what counts as work in their households. Their point of view about the investigative projects they do with Karen is taken seriously here. The

children seem eager to see their own experience of work on this graph, which is, after all, about employment and income in their own households.

"Do you think the census takers went around counting children when they counted the number of people who are employed in this neighborhood?" Navarro asks. Her question breaks the group consensus, and the matter finally is settled by the testimony of a girl who says, "The census taker counted my fifteen year old brother as being employed."

Karen responds, "Okay. For our purposes, we'll include the work done by children. For their purposes, the census takers usually didn't count children." The graph is filled out accordingly. Both the children and Karen Navarro seemed to win in this negotiation process. The children feel valued and proud of themselves and their skills; Karen succeeds in continuing to engage the children in critical thinking about themselves and their community in ways which simultaneously develop and strengthen their literacy and their math and science abilities.

Early Program History

The Center for Puerto Rican Studies is a research institute of Hunter College, and part of its commitment to Puerto Rican culture is to provide educational programs concerned with literacy. In 1985 the center team established in East Harlem both a basic education program for adults and an after-school program for children to foster literacy in this primarily Latino community. An integral component of the after-school program from its inception was the center's commitment to developing what its team members call "advocacy research," an approach to investigation that seeks to both understand and change reality. The center's researchers believe that basic research can be carried out in the process of serving the needs of people in their communities, in taking action with people to solve the concrete problems which they face. Their efforts in setting up the after-school program, then, aimed to help children learn to read and write better, and at the same time, to work on the development of a new paradigm of research for understanding and facilitating language acquisition in the school and the community.

The small group of children who participate in the program did not always use computers as a tool for understanding themselves and their community better. The program's curriculum and methodology are products of an evolutionary process which began in 1985. Director Pedro

Pedraza had several goals in mind when he inaugurated the program. The prime goal was to foster and enhance the literacy ability of East Harlem youth, who tend to have higher drop-out rates and lower reading and writing skills than youth in many other city communities. Second, Pedraza was interested in the possibility of working with public school teachers to develop a pedagogical alternative to include what East Harlem children should have been learning in school, but weren't. In response to the massive "school failure" of Latino youth, Pedro believed that one strategy for educational reform worth trying was involving public school teachers in experimenting with ways to use computers to raise the literacy levels of what the schools had defined as "underachievers." The hope was that teachers might be influenced by the Hunter team's alternative approach to content and pedagogy, and might try using these methods during regular school classes. Pedraza hoped, too, that the Hunter-based team and the teachers could develop a model after-school program which others might adopt in the future.

Pedro Pedraza and a staff of teachers and other researchers established a program that utilized the computer lab in a local elementary school. At that time the school's principal was directly involved in the new effort, but Pedro remembers that the team's approaches to teaching and to using computers were "diametrically opposed" to those of the school's computer lab teacher. Because the team was therefore unable to connect instruction in the after-school program to what teachers were doing with students during regular classes, their effort to develop a new approach to computer-assisted education which teachers might try in their classrooms was greatly inhibited.

This environment thwarted both their attempts to influence teachers and to develop an alternative curriculum. At the time, there was a general misunderstanding and lack of support for what the Hunter team wanted to do, Pedraza recalls. "It was difficult enough in and of itself to develop the kind of model program we had in mind, without external obstacles." Finally, after two years, the team felt that they could no longer work around the barriers which the school had created, and Pedro and the team decided to leave in order to develop their program on their own. This was the first in a series of moves which, over the last four years, have defined the nature and course of the after-school project's curriculum, methodology, and strategy for educational reform. With each successive change in locale and sponsorship, the Hunter team has altered and refined its own vision of computer-assisted literacy education in an after-school program.

After leaving the public school, Pedraza was able to get funding to continue their efforts from Apple Computers and the Carnegie Foundation. The team was to participate in an already established international telecommunications project to develop the literacy skills of elementary school students by working on content in math and science. The children who participated in the project sent letters to their participating counterparts in the Soviet Union and Puerto Rico, and played a variety of computer games involving literacy and science. But after taking part in this program for six months, the staff became disillusioned with its philosophy and its approach. As Pedraza explained:

> We stopped in mid-year because we felt that we were in a crisis situation. We felt there was no cohesion to what we were doing with the kids. The children were working on disparate and unconnected activities. We had to ask ourselves, "What do we want to do with kids, and what kind of little person do we want to help form?" We want them to develop strong self-esteem and confidence, and to become critical thinkers. We started to ask ourselves what we were *not* doing with the kids at that time in order to get ideas for new ways to enhance literacy, math, and science skills.

Through these discussions the staff was able to clarify for themselves some basic characteristics and goals which the program lacked. They believed that providing children with a strong knowledge base about their community, culture, and history was a priority in developing their self-esteem. They also realized that children generally become turned off to math and science—which the staff now considered as content equally important as "literacy"—before they reach junior high school. As a way to try to reverse this trend, they decided to work with elementary-school-aged children.

Along with these decisions, the staff also determined to employ an entirely new approach to using computers, dedicated to educating the whole child, and to using the computer holistically as only one element of a comprehensive learning experience. Motivating the children to use computers would not be based in the attraction of the computers themselves, but in the subject matter being studied, and the ways in which the teacher and students would use the computer as one means to work with it. Pedro explained:

> We wanted to use the computer as a means to an end, and not as end unto itself. The unconnected activities the children were doing with the computers were keeping the children unconnected to each other. We wanted them to learn how to work together and to feel responsible for everyone's advancement. We thought this might augment the sense of cohesion and provide values which we found lacking.

In searching for a way to organize these broad changes, the staff decided to design its own curriculum. They chose to center their instruction on the theme of community, so that whatever the literacy, math, and science content addressed, it would be linked to providing the children with a socio-historical sense of themselves, and it would help them to develop a strong sense of self-esteem. The children would not only use computers as a tool for learning to think critically about themselves and their environment, but they would also use social science and mathematical concepts to ask questions and so understand themselves and their world.

The Casita Maria Years

Casita Maria is a community service agency in East Harlem which took on the Hunter program in 1987 and integrated it into their own after-school program. The after-school program operates out of a low-income housing project in the neighborhood. The majority of children who attend are African American and Puerto Rican, speak English as their first language, and are from working-class households. In the Casita Maria Center, the Hunter College team's program became known as "computer class," and it served about fifteen children at a time, for two and a half years.

With "the change," as Pedro refers to the shift from a school-based to a community-based setting, his own thinking about strategies for educational reform changed as well:

> Unlike most after-school programs, which do just what the schools do, we felt at that time that we should work to supplement and complement what children learn from the Board of Education. We know that, in general, the problem isn't the kids. It's in the social process which should engage and support children to do the kinds of abstract and conceptual thinking involved in literacy and science. One of my goals is for the program to help the community develop to a point where it can say, "if the school system can't help our children to learn, we can do it for ourselves."

The team set out in 1987 to implement its new curriculum and to create a learning environment which would support the development of the children's self-esteem and literacy, math and science, and critical thinking abilities. The Robert Bowne Foundation provided funding for hiring a teacher, Karen Navarro, who works a few blocks away at a local elementary school teaching bilingual language arts. Navarro, who had

been using computers in her class, thought she might deepen her understanding about how to extend their use by working with the Hunter team. At the same time, Bowne funded the hiring of two para-professionals to assist her in the after-school program. Also present at each class meeting was at least one member of the Hunter team, who both participated in class sessions and took detailed notes of what was said and done.

Meeting weekly, Pedro and the other researchers reviewed what had happened in class and created the next week's lesson plans. Karen was asked to give her feedback about how the lessons went, but was not directly or formally involved in developing the curriculum during the first year of the program.

As the program began, Karen and her assistants worked with the children to investigate different aspects of their neighborhood as a way of exploring the concept of community. The class visited workplaces and interviewed adults about their jobs. They learned about how math, science, reading, and writing were used by adults at work. In visiting the local pharmacy, they saw how adults use measurement, and in the grocery store they learned about refrigeration. One project was the charting of local traffic flow, which taught the students about how scientific categories are designed and how important accuracy is in counting. It wasn't easy to decide if bicycles and motorcycles should be included in the count, for example, and even after they defined their categories, the class came up with inconsistent counts. But the children worked through these common research issues with the help of one of the Hunter researchers. After defining their terms, the team hit the streets again to count traffic, and this time they produced a more accurate count by comparing the totals of a number of student researchers with that of the Hunter researcher. Once confident that their data was an accurate reflection of a slice of life, the group made a chart of traffic flow.

This chart is still displayed on the walls of the computer room, where every available inch of space is used to display the visual products of the children's research about community. Charts, graphs, drawings, and photo exhibits dominate the room; in its center is a table around which the children and Karen sit and discuss their investigations. Above this table hangs a kind of guide, made by Karen, to the use of the scientific method. Sixteen Macintosh computers line the periphery of the room. The classroom's physical organization reflects the program's philosophy about the use of computers: who the children are and what they want to know are at the center of the program's efforts, not the computers.

During this first year of implementing their own curriculum, the research team became sensitive to the nature of the relationship between teacher and students. "We felt that to develop young critical thinkers, attention had to be paid to interactional skills and values, as well as content," Pedro explained. He went on to describe how they had decided to eliminate the practice of having children raise their hands to speak, and instead encouraged the students to learn to listen to one another and respect each other's points of view and contributions. The team also began to foster a more egalitarian relationship between the teacher and students by asking the students to take part in the daily responsibilities of classroom activity, ranging from distributing and collecting materials and organizing and presenting exhibits of their work to taking notes and writing summaries of their activities together with a member of the Hunter research team. Pedro noted that after a year of participation in the program, the students themselves often conducted the daily review of the prior class session and the note-taking and summary components of class meetings.

As a result of sitting in on classes and listening to the students, the research team decided to follow the children's lead in designing the curriculum for the second year of the project. In beginning to explore the concept of community, the children showed a lot of spontaneous interest in issues associated with work, such as pay, relationships between co-workers and supervisors, and whether adults really enjoyed their jobs. Consequently, the team decided to organize study of the children's socio-cultural background around the theme of work and society.

The children again went out to investigate their community. They charted the number and kinds of businesses on a local business strip, and compared their local area with a similar block in another neighborhood. During the course of conducting this study of local businesses, the students also learned about the relationship between income and employment.

The third-year curriculum built on the previous year's experience of focusing on work and community. Having already looked at some basic elements of neighborhood life, the team wanted to extend the concepts explored to include the family and living conditions. The curriculum which they designed became a comparative study of life in Puerto Rico prior to migration to East Harlem, and life in their community today. The children began by interviewing relatives and neighbors who had lived in Puerto Rico before coming to New York. They saw videotapes about Puerto

Rico and the migration, and compiled a photographic display of living conditions and society. From these, they constructed a chart of the characteristics of living conditions and society "during the old days" in Puerto Rico. Finally, the students made a time-line with their teacher of the migration and the beginning stages of the Puerto Rican experience as they know it from their own lives in East Harlem.

It is interesting to note that in conducting their research, the students generated new data and materials about the migration of Puerto Ricans to New York City. Pedro explained that because so very few historical materials are available about this topic, the children actually were pioneers in documenting the history of their community. He also noted that the students were highly aware of the contribution which their work makes, and of the fact that they were performing genuine social science research in much the way adult professionals do.

After their exploration of earlier life in Puerto Rico, the students analyzed what they had learned about life there in a way that led them to arrive at underlying concepts about work and society. This was accomplished through the process of teacher questioning. Together, the students and teacher found that the basic components of work and society in pre-migration Puerto Rico were family, living conditions, places of work, needs, and resources. They then set out to see what these factors might be like in their own time and place. Using these five concepts as guides in their exploration, the students found examples of living conditions, needs, places of work, resources, and families in East Harlem, and drew illustrations of them on the computer. They also constructed graphs and charts about such factors in the relationship between work and society as employment, education, and population distribution. As the number of illustrated texts and charts grew, Karen Navarro and the children concluded their investigation by constructing a model of work and society. Illustrations of each concept were arranged around a circle, with arrows pointing to how each factor influences the others.

Model-building and the visual representation of concepts are central to the Hunter team's philosophy and methodology. During the 1988-89 program year the team came into contact with the work of Marianne Hedegaard, a Danish educator whose socio-historical approach to curriculum development based on children's cultural experience seemed especially relevant to the kind of teaching and learning they wished to bring about. After a member of the research team met her at a conference and expressed interest in learning more about her approach, Hedegaard

agreed to work with them during her sabbatical. As a result, major elements of her perspective have been incorporated into the after-school program's curriculum and pedagogy.

Hedegaard believes that children understand the relationships between things, and that they incorporate that understanding into their consciousness, when they can visualize relationships. Pedro Pedraza explained that math, science, and critical thinking all involve theoretical and conceptual thought:

> In our program, we start with children's concrete experience and ask them to see relationships in it. We use their understanding of their own experience as the basis for building a model. Then, we apply their concepts to other concrete cases which are also a part of the kids' social and cultural world. By doing a lot of comparative/contrastive work, we eventually build the model. The children get to think about everyday reality in new ways as a result of going back and forth between the concrete and the abstract. In the end, the kids come to a new understanding of what they already knew.

Hedegaard's ideas about the visual representation of concepts were well-suited to the Hunter team's basic approach to pedagogy and curriculum development. From the time of their move to Casita Maria, the researchers also had been using and testing the theory of a Soviet educator, Lev Vygotsky. Briefly stated, Vygotsky's activity theory posits that children are motivated to learn through their curiosity about their environment. Within this construct, teaching should begin with the children's own questions about their daily experience of the cultural world of which they are a part. Much as Paulo Freire posits in his philosophy of adult education, Vygotsky proposes that children learn best when they actively participate in defining the content and process of the learning project, and that they learn as much from the social relations in which they engage during learning as they do from working with the content itself.

While implementing the team's approach to pedagogy and curriculum has been a challenging and creative process that has yielded interesting results for students and staff, it also has been problematic in some ways. Several issues have arisen, for example, around the difficulty of maintaining consistent attendance. The research team and the teacher have had to walk a tightrope between presenting the curricular activities to the children as a serious venture in real science, while also framing the work as a project that's fun to do during after-school hours. As one researcher put it, "the kids know that this isn't 'fun,' but we have to try

to make it fun for them." One strategy which Karen Navarro and the Hunter team have employed to make the learning process more appealing is to ensure that the children engage in a wide variety of activities, including taking field trips and viewing videos. Another way in which the staff tries to increase motivation is by involving students in the decision-making process about what topics they will investigate as a group.

In addition to competing with the lure of the street in maintaining consistent student attendance and attention, the team also has encountered some objections from parents who would like to see the program offer homework help for their children after school, rather than providing an additional, though enriching, curriculum. Although the staff learned early in the program how important it was to meet with parents before classes begin to discuss the program's goals and their child's commitment to them, Pedraza explained that some parents have withdrawn their children because they felt that their child's participation was detracting from their ability to complete their homework.

> Children are under a lot of pressure to do their homework. The schools expect a lot from them, and their parents expect them to get the work done. Sometimes children will show up late to [after-school] class because they spent time doing their homework first. This can put a child in a bad position because they may *want* to be with us, but they can't come to class because of the pressure to get their homework done.

In response to parents' concerns about homework, the team decided to reduce class meetings from three to two times a week. While the extra day this has created for meetings among the staff has turned out to be helpful, Pedraza regrets that this compromise reached between staff and parents has cut into the amount of program time available to work with the children.

Pedro added that the advantage of the program's earlier location in a school was that it had been given the asset of a captive after-school audience. The community-based setting of Casita Maria has not afforded any such guarantees about attendance, nor has the new setting assured them of always being open for business. Pedraza noted that twice in one year the program had been forced to close down because the entire housing project was scheduled to be painted, and they lost three weeks of instructional time to freshly painted walls. All in all, Pedraza has found that a school setting, rather than a community-based one, provides more overall stability for a program. And though the team had expected to gain considerably more control over the operation of their program by moving

to a community-based setting, they found that they have had to give up some control and stability in unexpected ways.

During the third program year at Casita Maria, the researchers seemed to pull together and integrate the many elements of their philosophy, curriculum and pedagogical methods. Karen Navarro began to attend the weekly staff meetings when the class schedule was reduced to two days per week, allowing her to contribute in an on-going way to the development of curriculum. In addition to enhancing her own motivation as a teacher, her participation produced an even closer attention to the children's own questions, which then became the focus of the year's curriculum.

In this, the project's fourth year, Navarro and the Hunter team decided to continue examining work and society with the students, but from a slightly different perspective. The children have expressed concern over the issues of homelessness and drug abuse, and the adults have come to see that they are basically asking three related questions in their discussion of these problems: "Who are we, where do we come from, and why do we live as we do?" The team has decided to focus study around the concept of change. By extending the work done during the previous year about community, work, and society, and by incorporating the children's interest in drug abuse and homelessness, Karen Navarro and the Hunter team have designed new activities for the children based on the notion of personal and social change. They hope that the children will apply their learning of previous years in order to take actions. One way in which the children have already taken actions is by writing letters on the computer to the Mayor voicing their concerns about homelessness.

Pedraza believes that the coherence and quality of the program improved during its third year, and that the weekly meetings were key in making this come about. With all staff members present, they were better able to evaluate the effectiveness of both the lesson plans they devised and the educational theory guiding them. Reviewing their daily observation record also allowed them to identify practical needs, such as offering the children a diverse range of activities to ensure that they find their participation fun and stimulating.

The staff has also used the weekly meetings as a place to evaluate the long-range effects of participation in the program for students. They have already ruled out the use of some alternative assessment options, such as performance-based assessment, because, as Pedro says, "We're not really a school system, and we don't have to justify ourselves to an

educational bureaucracy. What we care about is not quantifiable—it's self-esteem." He believes that a small number of in-depth case studies of students will tell far more than performance testing about what students retain on a long-term basis from their participation, and how what they learn and experience in the after-school program relates to their experience in school and at home.

Future Plans: Having the Community Take Over

During the program's third year at Casita Maria, the small "computer class" of twelve to fifteen students began accepting students from the Youth Action Program (YAP), another community-based organization in the neighborhood. The Hunter team began to develop a relationship with YAP and discussed whether it should take over the program in the future. Pedraza's main goal for passing the program on to YAP's Young People's Resource Center is to help empower the community itself to meet the educational needs of its youth. Passing the program over to an organization that also provides educational services to adolescents is an extension of the strategy for educational reform that the Hunter team adopted in 1987, when it left the school system and based itself in the community. At that time the researchers believed that their best approach would be to target and strengthen an already existing community-based organization that was seeking to supplement the kinds of education offered in the schools, and to provide their program as a model to it.

This year is a transitional one in that process. The YAP staff members are working along with Karen Navarro and the children in class, and attend the program's weekly planning and evaluation meetings. Its Resource Center supervisor also observes classes every week. Pedraza plans to hand the actual classes over to the Resource Center next year, and the Hunter researchers will continue to work with them on improving the curriculum and the pedagogical approach, and on evaluating the project over time.

Ultimately, Pedro Pedraza and Youth Action hope to develop the project into a lab to which after-school program practitioners can come for training. As Pedraza described it, "community-based after-school programs in poor and minority communities will be able to come here for training and assistance in setting up programs. This should be in the hands of people from the community." He also hopes that as parents see the superiority of the kind of education which the community can provide,

they will begin to demand the same quality education from the public schools.

Ironically enough for a project which abandoned its hope to effect educational change by working with schools directly, Pedro added that the principal of the school in which Karen Navarro teaches has become interested in the after-school program. The principal told her that she was very impressed with what she saw when she observed Navarro's bilingual language arts class, and Navarro told her that she had learned a lot of the techniques and activities she uses in the class by working with Pedro Pedraza's program. The principal expressed interest in the possibility of incorporating the curriculum into an after-school program which the elementary school runs, and she is presently investigating with the district superintendent the possibility of including the project in the bilingual after-school program. Should the idea be accepted, Navarro would spend next year training one or more of the school's teachers in the project's curriculum and pedagogical practice.

Perhaps after five years the program has come full circle. Or perhaps the curriculum and pedagogy which the Hunter researchers have developed will move in two simultaneous directions from the small computer room at Casita Maria: to Youth Action and to the schools. Wherever it is adopted, its foundation in using computers holistically as tools to help children become critical thinkers armed with knowledge about themselves and their social world will remain the central elements of the program. Pedro Pedraza again:

> We've been trying to show the kids through the curriculum that social problems have social causes. They have studied, for example, how far the minimum wage goes for a family of four. They understand how hard it is to survive on that in this environment. I hope that some of what they have learned with us has penetrated into their minds: that *we're* not at fault, that the problems they see in the community are not the result of cultural, linguistic, or racial characteristics of the people around them. We want them to see that there is a system set up, that they live in that system and they are a part of it. Why should we wait until children are in graduate school to learn this? Then, it's already too late!

The Early Adolescent Helper Program

Literacy through Service Learning

An Afternoon in the Early Adolescent Helper Program

At a low table in a back room of the Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club in the Bronx, three or four junior high school students sit with open story books, two or three younger children clustered around each of them. Jaheem, a junior high school student about twelve years old, reads Frank Asch's *Happy Birthday, Moon,* the story of a bear who goes into the mountains to find out what the moon wants for its birthday. As she reads, the younger children comment, or Jaheem gently directs their attention to something on the page.

"See the hat?" she asks. The younger children nod. "That's a nice hat, right?" They smile, and nod again.

When the book is finished, Jaheem asks, "Did the moon really talk back?"

The little girls smile, shyly shaking their heads.

"Well, what happened, then?" Jaheem asks them, encouraging them to talk about what they already know. "Why did the bear think that the moon was talking to him?"

"Because, you know, the mountains?" one little girl says, "They repeat after you."

"Yes," Jaheem says. "The echo, right?"

The little girls nod happily and Jaheem reaches for another book.

This interchange was typical of the activities going on in the Early Adolescent Helper Program at the Kips Bay Boys and Girls Club. Under the supervision of Program Leader Milt Waltzer, a guidance counselor at IS 174 in the Bronx, approximately twenty students from the school come to the center four days a week to work with younger children from local elementary schools. The older students help the youngsters with home-work, supervise them in games and outdoor activities, and read to them.

The Helpers, most of whom are girls, are obviously comfortable working together. They divide tasks and share responsibilities easily, as if they know what to expect from each other. Out on the playground, a group of boys stand together, commenting as they watch the younger children play. Inside, a group of girls divides other children into groups, letting them decide for themselves if they want story time, help with

homework, or to go outside. Later in the afternoon, the student Helpers will rotate between the rooms, or go outside to the playground. The younger children are greeted by name, and often with hugs, as they come in. All look happy to be here.

Program History

The IS 174 program is one of more than a dozen sites of the Early Adolescent Helper Program. The Helper Program operates under the aegis of the Center for Advanced Study in Education (CASE), based at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York. Under the directorship of Joan Schine, the program provides training, materials, and guidance for schools interested in setting up service learning programs for their students.

The Early Adolescent Helper Program had its origins with the National Commission on Resources for Youth, an independent not-for-profit agency established in the early 1960s. The Commission promoted "youth participation" programs in which students assumed active and constructive roles in the community, had a voice in decision-making, took responsibility for the impact of their activities, and worked collegially with peers and adults. A key component of these programs was time for students to reflect on the work they were doing. The Early Adolescent Helper Program developed as a program of the Commission in the early 1980s, and under Joan Schine's leadership was established as a pilot project in three New York City schools in 1982. The Commission was dissolved in 1982, and in 1983 CASE assumed sponsorship of the Helper Program. As an arm of the City University committed to working with New York City schools, CASE's interests dovetailed nicely with those of the Helper Program.

In its early years, junior high and intermediate school students participating in the Helper Program were placed in Head Start types of programs after the school day. Helpers are still placed in daycare centers, but now they work in after-school programs and in senior citizens centers, where they might write letters for residents, help them translate and fill out forms, work with them on oral histories, or spend time reading or talking with them.

In 1987, following a series of conversations between Joan Schine and Dianne Kangisser of the Robert Bowne Foundation, the Helper Program

began to develop a read-aloud component. Joan remembers:

> Dianne Kangisser had known the Helper Program prior to this, and the Bowne Foundation had supported it. We already had experience with youth tutoring youth through the National Commission on Resources for Youth, and Dianne thought there was an adaptation to be made for early literacy. I thought we could do something more innovative. Our own feeling is that this generation of adolescents, particularly the urban students we work with, has had little experience of books as friends; their relationship to books has been more as something adults, usually teachers, thrust at them. To see books as a personal resource would be a different perspective for them.

Since Helper Program staff believed in the importance of adolescents and young children developing a love for books, they sought to develop an "imaginative" approach to literacy education.

According to Diana Bianco, Assistant Director of the Helper Program, two questions propelled the "Helpers Promoting Literacy" project: how to make reading enjoyable for adolescents and younger children, and how "to help adolescents see that reading is something they can understand and enjoy—rather than something they're bad at and have deficits in—and then help others in doing the same." Having the students read to younger children, enabling the adolescent Helpers to feel more at home with and responsible for experiences with books, and encouraging them to use their knowledge of reading to help younger children enjoy books, seemed a useful and effective approach.

Later, the title of the project was changed from "Helpers Promoting Literacy" to "Helpers Promoting Reading," since the word "literacy" evoked particular associations for program staff. They felt it suggested that Helpers would be *teaching* reading, when in fact they were reading to young children and *encouraging* reading.

The Program Now

The Early Adolescent Helper Program provides training, program materials, and assistance for schools whose representatives contact them and want to start a program. They help the school find an organization to work with, as program leader Milt Waltzer's students work with the children who come to Kips Bay. The project's program leaders, usually a teacher or a guidance counselor from the participating school, attend the training programs run by the Helper Program.

Schools find the Helper Program mainly through word-of-mouth. A

teacher, guidance counselor, or principal interested in community service often hears about the program through others interested in the same thing. Most of the time, the schools are immediately able to identify who its program leader will be; often it is the person from the school who makes the first contact. Diana characterizes the program leaders as "terrific teachers who want to do something extra with their students and believe in the concept of community service as part of education." Program leaders handle the day-to-day logistics of setting up the program at the school, run weekly seminars for students, and generally coordinate the program. Depending on school policy, program leaders may accompany Helpers to their placement sites. Diana helps program leaders identify sites and occasionally makes the first contact with them; she also stays in touch with them throughout the course of the program.

The Helper Program provides printed program leader's guides that outline the weekly discussion meetings—or "seminars"—held in each school. While the Helper Program staff recommends this basic framework, at the same time they encourage program leaders to adapt it to the needs of their individual school, and the guides are in looseleaf form to facilitate rearranging the order of the seminars and exercises. Program leaders in turn prepare the Helpers for their roles, giving them some background on child development, anticipating with them methods they can use as "homework helpers," and clarifying the young adolescents' understanding of discipline as it relates to working with younger children, or their concept of aging in preparation for their work with older adults. For the read-aloud program, for example, students attend workshops in how to read to young children, lead discussions, and write book reviews.

The "Helpers Promoting Reading" project is now in its third year. Over the three years, this project has operated in fifteen schools, functioning essentially as a component of the larger Helper Program in each. Through Bowne Foundation support, each site received a "starter set" of books to be used in the reading project. The Helper Program has found ways to supplement these starter sets and to provide Helpers and children with more of a choice for reading.

As the years have passed, Helper Program staff have wrestled with the problem of how "to wean ourselves" from close involvement with the schools, so that the project can expand without intense staff participation. The program is now testing two strategies for accomplishing this: using *Reading, Writing, and Reviewing: Helpers Promoting Reading*—a training guide for the reading project, piloted this year—and promoting

the involvement of Helpers in the training of other students. Diana has begun to encourage program leaders to have students lead sessions of the training seminar held at each school.

Starting the Helpers Promoting Reading project for participating schools has required a great deal of time on the part of the project's staff. Originally, staff wanted to hold workshops devoted to the reading project at CASE. While these would have brought everyone together and certainly would have been less draining on staff, Diana believed that the workshops are more effective when they take place at the schools. Consequently, she, along with Pat Campbell, a consultant, visited each school last year and conducted workshops for the Helpers on reading to children.

Joan and Diana also realized that they needed to do a better job of orienting supervisors at placement sites. "Sometimes the staff [at a placement site] misunderstands," Diana explained. "Sometimes they don't want Helpers to read—they want them to do other things—and in some places they only want Helpers to read." During the first year, for example, although supervisors at daycare sites were brought to CASE for an orientation to the reading component of the program, some were under the impression that Helpers would function only in the capacity of reading to children. Since the amount of time Helpers spend with the children can be as much as four hours, they clearly need to participate in a range of activities. *Reading, Writing, and Reviewing* addresses this issue, and makes it clear that reading is only one of many activities Helpers may engage in.

The Program's Impact on Students

While the Helper Program does not control how a school selects who is to participate in it, or exactly how a program will be run, the program staff do let a school know what works. For example, while schools often pick the "stars," the best kids, to be in the program, Joan always recommends a mix of students, with a special effort to include those who might otherwise be overlooked. In this regard, bilingual students, for example, can bring special skills to helping roles, and often feel more valued as a result of receiving recognition.

As a guidance counselor at IS 174, program leader Milt Waltzer doesn't need to advertise for volunteers, but can hand-pick the ones he wants. For their time and effort, students are rewarded with sweatshirts, a pizza party, an occasional movie or show, and an annual Convention of

Helpers at the CUNY Graduate Center, when all the Helpers in the city attend a ceremony in their honor, sponsored by the Early Adolescent Helper Program.

These "perks," however, are not the reason that the volunteers invest so many hours of their time and energy. What does attract them to the program, then? Some of the students do well in school, and say they want to be teachers; one or two are already bound for the Richard Green High School for students interested in teaching. Another student reveals in a casual conversation that he is in a special education program at school. In a school that only picked "stars" for its program, this student might not have had a chance to demonstrate his competence and abilities. The same student adds that working as a Helper enables him to stay out of trouble: "there's not much to do around the block." Many of the Helpers talk about the personal satisfaction they get from helping younger children to do better in school; they mention particularly the pleasure they take in sharing their enjoyment of reading, and their gratification about the way the young children respond to them.

During the weekly meetings, ideally held in the school during the school day, the students in the Helper Program get time for the reflection that is considered so important to its process. They talk about the problems and rewards of the service, do problem-solving exercises, and consider what they have written in their journals. Getting regular meetings scheduled into the school day has been one of the more difficult tasks of the Helper Program—lunch periods are used in some schools—but it is an essential part of the program, providing continuity and opportunities for shared learning.

As students in the Helper Program assume responsibility, they see a change in the young children they work with. And through helping young children on an individual basis, the Helpers come to realize that they are having a positive effect on the community. In this way, they see how one person can work to effect change, starting in a small way, and that change need not have an immediate and global effect to matter.

In the beginning, the student volunteers are sometimes viewed with suspicion by the agencies they are sent to, due to their age, or to previous experiences the agency has had with other volunteers. That reaction changes rapidly. The agencies are assured that the Helpers have been trained, and the young people are prepared for their responsibilities.

The volunteers' training helps dispel stereotypes and inform students about early childhood development or about aging. Students who

will be working with the elderly, for example, often express the desire for older people to understand "our clothes and our music," and their training helps the students attain an understanding that will enable them to view older people as more approachable. Oral history projects often become an important component of positive relationships between older people and their adolescent Helpers. Agencies invariably express their satisfaction with the program.

The Helper Program has little hard data yet on how it is perceived by parents, or by the staff at the Helpers' schools. Most parents appear to see the program as positive for their children. Occasionally a parent feels that a youngster's grades are suffering because of the time required for the volunteer sessions and pulls the student out. Joan views such a reaction as counterproductive, because she believes that service learning supports academic goals. (Most school staff respond favorably to the program.) While the Helper Program has tried to collect information on how the Helpers themselves change over time, so far the information gathered has been only anecdotal and difficult to analyze.

Helper Program staff speculate that the program actually enhances school performance; the student participants begin to gain confidence by perceiving themselves as skilled individuals who are having a visible impact. The staff has never tested or tried to quantify a connection between the program and school performance, as that would be testing for outcomes other than the stated objectives of the program.

As the Helper Program stays with a school, its staff does less training, because there is no need to re-train school staff. But the staff does try to pick up on problems and issues that arise, and to address these in further workshops and investigations. And each year the project expands to other schools where there is someone to spark interest in community service. The program staff is also in the process of establishing a national data base of service learning projects for early adolescents. They expect this data base to contain information useful to administrators, practitioners, community agencies, and others interested in community service for this age group.

Early Adolescent Helper Program sites are now operating in seven cities. In New York City alone, more than 3,000 students have participated since the program began, at more than twenty sites. Joan Schine would like to see every middle school provide service learning as part of its curriculum, recognizing that learning as a legitimate part of education which both complements and enhances academic goals.

East Harlem Tutorial Program

Literacy, the Arts, and the Community

> I wake up on Sunday mornings, my first day off from work, and I find myself worrying, "Did Danny Flores get his science book about the stars for his session tomorrow?"—millions of little tiny things like that.
>
> —Susan Ingalls, Education Coordinator, EHTP

Many of the adults and young adults who work at the East Harlem Tutorial Program (EHTP) are likely to be thinking often about the 150 children and teenagers, ages 7-17, who attend the program. They include Carmen Vega-Rivera, the Executive Director; Susan Ingalls, the Education Coordinator; Wahn Yoon, the Afterschool/Volunteer Coordinator; 5 other full and part-time paid staff; 24 board members; and approximately 240 volunteer tutors.

The program is located in East Harlem, a culturally mixed neighborhood that is predominantly Latino (now more than 50%) and African American. East Harlem is a neighborhood which has suffered the economic hardship experienced by poor communities throughout the United States during the Reagan years. The neighborhood has a high rate of unemployment (especially for young adults), increasing numbers of teen parents, and a serious shortage of decent and affordable housing.

EHTP operates a one-to-one tutoring program six days a week within its five-storied royal blue building. The afternoon sessions are mainly for elementary school children, while the 14-17 year olds usually come to be tutored in the evening. One Saturday each month, the program sponsors a special event, often a trip, such as the one in November 1989 when approximately 80 children attended the Big Apple Circus. One fourth-grader said she liked EHTP because "Nobody's mean. Nobody says, 'Shut up.' Nobody hits nobody. And I learn. I learn how to read. I learn different stuff. And we go places."

An Afternoon at East Harlem Tutorial Program

On a typical weekday afternoon, the program's teenaged tutors work in a variety of ways with small children. Each afternoon, tutors and tutees begin by working out their "pie." The pie is an EHTP innovation, which was begun by Susan Ingalls but has evolved through diverse staff contribu-

tions. Filling out a form that contains a big circle, and dividing it into slices that represent percentages of their session, each tutor-tutee pair decide as partners how to allot their two-hour time period. Each pie is filled out differently, with a combination of activities. On the form's reverse side is space for an informal evaluation of the session, labeled, "student journal" and "tutor journal." These comments (young tutees can dictate theirs) are kept in folders, and read and responded to by staff.

Children and tutors usually spend some of their time in the reading room, which is a large but cozy space, painted bright blue, with a bright green rug. Its walls are lined with books and lounging chairs, and there is an especially inviting loft in the middle of the room where the children can read and survey the surroundings below. The second floor has a quiet, comfortable room with tables, typewriters, computers, and reference books to help with schoolwork. But these are only some of many resources and activities from which tutors and tutees can choose in order to decide how to spend their two-hour block of time together. Tutors and tutees can use the computers for writing or for playing educational games. They are also encouraged to use the facilities to develop their own activities; during one tutoring session, for example, a ten-year-old girl typed and addressed a letter to her aunt. It was the first "real" letter she had ever written, and she was delighted with her accomplishment, excitedly asking about finding a stamp and mailing her letter.

Now there is also the enrichment center, a room which contains educational games, a puppet theater, and art supplies, and where Susan Ingalls leads workshops during weekdays for groups of tutors and tutees. These workshops combine reading and writing with art and theater. The children might read several pieces—fiction and/or poetry—about a topic, and then both paint and write about it on large sheets of paper, often dictating the writing to their tutors. Through this technique, one version of the language experience approach, the young children's lack of technical skills need not limit the extent to which they can express themselves through writing. The workshops might also include dramatic improvisations, which are sometimes videotaped, viewed, and then later discussed. Improvised scriptwriting has been another follow-up activity.

Afterschool/Volunteer Coordinator Wahn Yoon has observed, "It's amazing what comes out in the workshops. You can find out what a kid is really worried about, what's going on at home, at school, any personal conflicts which can inhibit learning. We can also learn about their interests. It's information that is not quantifiable, but that has improved the tutoring."

In fact, these group activities combining art and literacy are consciously designed to encourage children to express matters of importance to them. Susan Ingalls explains that she wants to "make the kids feel protected so that they can talk about whatever they need to talk about." For example, Susan took Polaroid photographs of each child wearing a mask. She used a sequinned party mask that was simple enough to be interpreted in many different ways. The photograph was then glued to a large piece of white paper on which the child wrote or dictated a story about "The Person Behind the Mask." This provided an extremely effective context for giving the children a safe way to talk about themselves and their concerns. One child wrote about a tiger named Peter, who got shot and went to the hospital, using the exercise as a way of talking about her anxiety about shootings in her neighborhood.

Susan designed a similar exercise in which pairs of tutors and tutees were photographed wearing the masks of the animals of their choice, selecting from about ten different animals. The tutees then dictated and illustrated stories about the relationships betweeen the animals in the picture. In the following dictated story, Susan believes that one child explains something about the evolution of his relationship with his teenage tutor:

> The lion and the tiger were in a big forest. They had an argument about who was fiercer. And the lion said, "You look pretty fierce." Then the tiger said, "You look like a wimp, wimp face." And the lion said, "Don't mess with me or I'll eat you up." The tiger said, "Let's stop arguing and be friends." Then they took a picture of each other.

Program History

Since its founding more than thirty years ago, EHTP has had only five directors. Each has left a distinct mark on the organization and influenced its direction in significant ways.

The East Harlem Tutorial Program began with the support and influence of the East Harlem Protestant Parish, a movement in the late 1940s and 1950s of religious leaders who believed that missionary work should begin at home. In 1958, Helen Webber, who was married to a minister in the community and lived in the nearby housing project, started reading books to her children and invited other youngsters from the neighborhood to join them. Soon children began coming to her apartment for a study group after school. Thr group grew in size, and after a short while it moved to a small room on the second floor of the building

that EHTP now occupies.

The first paid director of EHTP was Fay Edwards, who had read a human interest story about the program in a religious magazine while she was working in Egypt. She wrote to say that she would be interested in directing the program, and was subsequently hired. That was in the early sixties. Fay was a proponent of the open classroom movement, which she had observed in Great Britain. In addition to bringing in tutors to help kids with their homework, Fay Edwards introduced carpentry classes, where children learned math, and instruction in other endeavors, such as weaving and dyeing.

The Lindsay family had been involved in EHTP for some time, on the board and as volunteer tutors, and Libby Lindsay, whose brother-in-law was former New York mayor John Lindsay, became the next director of EHTP, a position she held from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. Libby Lindsay was an educator who had worked in a private school on Long Island. Under her, the program grew, and so did the board. She also developed good relationships with some of the neighborhood schools. Lindsay believed in setting specific goals that could be fulfilled, and she wanted tutors to teach certain skills. She also strongly believed in phonics as the best approach to teaching reading, and she trained two community women on EHTP's staff according to her philosophy. The program embraced phonics to such an extent that it became widely known for its outstanding work in this area.

When Lindsay left, Audrey Miller became the program's director. Her energy was devoted to administration more than it was to education, and she not only managed the program well but had special expertise in promoting the public image of EHTP. The program's education component was still being run by the staff whom Libby Lindsay had trained, however, and they felt the absence of her leadership. When Audrey left after two years, Libby returned as the program's interim director for four months.

Each director left her mark. Both Fay Edwards and Libby Lindsay gave EHTP distinct educational legacies. In what follows, we can see that the two most recent leaders of EHTP also have had an enormous impact on the educational direction of the organization. Susan Ingalls was hired as the director of EHTP in March 1987, and Carmen Vega-Rivera, the current executive director, took over in September 1988. Each also has devoted considerable thought to what it means to be "of" this community.

In hindsight, Susan Ingalls believes that she served as a transition person. Her background was in children's theater rather than education, and in hiring her, she thinks the board may have hoped to recapture the more creative educational approach which Fay Edwards had brought to EHTP.

Ingalls became the program's Executive Director in March 1987, and within her first two weeks, invited Dianne Kangisser, of the Robert Bowne Foundation, and Linda Gilles, of the Astor Foundation, to visit EHTP. What they saw was the legacy of Libby Lindsay's vision: phonics, workbooks, homework. Susan had anticipated that this visit would be positive. She was wrong. Dianne Kangisser was not happy with what she saw and told her that, frankly, as EHTP was then being run, the foundation would not support the program. At first, Susan had no idea what Dianne meant. The staff believed so strongly in their phonics approach that they could not imagine it as a source of controversy or disapproval. Susan says, "I didn't even know there was another way you could help children learn to read." Dianne and Linda explained to her that, indeed, there were other ways. They recognized that Susan was new to the organization and let her know that if she wanted to make changes, they would support her. Susan Ingalls telephoned Dianne a few days later, and Dianne gave her a long list of people to contact. The first person she went to see was Julia Palmer of the American Reading Council, who explained her belief that reading good literature is the best approach for motivating children to read. Susan began to understand what Dianne had been talking about, and soon afterward, Susan went to see the Friendly Place, a reading program originally run by the Council, which is also located in East Harlem. She remembers, "It was a beautiful setting for reading. It had a feel, a personality. Ours had linoleum floors, painted walls, and no environment."

Susan began visiting other programs and talking to "lots of people." At a series of Youth Program Exchange meetings at the Literacy Assistance Center, she listened to people from other community-based organizations discussing issues related to literacy. She was struck with how deeply involved she had been in theater and how much she didn't know—and wanted to learn—about current educational thought. Susan recalls:

> Once I went to see the Friendly Place, and once I talked to Mrs. Palmer, I knew that the program had to go in a radically

different direction. I felt that it had to do so for the sake of the children, but also for the sake of the organization.

> The first thing I thought of was an area—not even a room—for books. I thought it should be painted a bright color. There had been tutoring down on the first floor, so I imagined a little part of the tutoring area as a reading area. I decided to put up a wall, and once I put up the wall, I had a room. Then I wanted to decorate the room and make it a reading room. I wanted to put a puppet theater next to the reading room, and that's when I got the idea of an enrichment center. The same room could be used to play games, and do animation, art, and video. You could do a whole lot of different things.
>
> That was my first year—this "opening up."

In the process of helping to create "something new" at EHTP, Susan learned about a variety of approaches to teaching reading and writing. Nevertheless, whether phonics is the best approach to teaching reading still persists as a controversial issue for many parents and board members. If their children aren't doing well in the phonics they so often are taught in school, parents become concerned and want the EHTP tutors to help them succeed in that type of learning. Susan tries to explain that if phonics isn't working with the child in school, trying another approach might make sense. If the child is doing well in phonics, she explains that "we won't do anything to remove that skill." What children do get at EHTP are many other ways to expand their proficiency and interest in reading, writing, and other academic subjects. Susan now finds that it's unusual for parents not to be flexible about exposing their children to a variety of approaches which might enhance their reading and writing skills.

Meanwhile, Susan's own attitude towards phonics has been altered substantially:

> My personal opinion is that phonics chops up everything into such little tiny pieces that it's hard to concentrate, and you lose the meaning. ...We used to have SRAs [skills-based, color-coded, programmed reading kits], which were something that tutors could understand how to use. But one day I came across a child who was reading one of those passages, and it was about how you put asphalt on a road. She could read it well enough. But I began to think that these little sections of readings on these cards couldn't make as much sense as reading a good book. Here you had this peculiar piece of information being given to this kid, and that was meant to strengthen her reading. I found it extremely boring.

In April 1988, the program's reading room was ready, and it was immediately popular with the children and their tutors. But the transition from phonics to whole-language teaching was not smooth. Julia Palmer

and another staff person from the American Reading Council had come to EHTP during the previous month and actually had thrown away many of the instructional materials the program had been using, yet nothing was in place to substitute for them. And Susan remembers that the staff went through a period where they were not certain what they were doing:

> We didn't know what to tell the tutors to do. We'd tell them, "You're not going to use workbooks." And they'd say, "Well, what *am* I going to do?" And we'd tell them to go down to the reading room and read. But the tutor couldn't maintain a child's interest in a book, regardless of how good it was, for a tutoring session that lasted two hours. So it was a bad time, between when we had thrown out the workbooks and phonics [and were] really building up to something new.

In the spring of 1988, Susan Ingalls resigned as Executive Director of EHTP. She had become involved in working directly with training and instruction, but believed that she lacked some of the administrative skills that were necessary for the job. In addition, Susan comes from outside the community, and she didn't believe, as many in the East Harlem Protestant Parish had, that moving to East Harlem would change this fact. She felt strongly that because the program's service population is Latino and African American, the executive director should represent one of these groups. (A task force appointed by the board meanwhile had evaluated the program and suggested that the EHTP include on its staff an education coordinator, which would later become Susan's position.)

In September 1988, Carmen Vega-Rivera became the Executive Director of EHTP. Carmen had previously worked for a number of major city museums and other cultural institutions as both an administrator and a management and educational consultant, and she brings an array of skills and affinities which suit her extremely well to the position. She describes herself as "an advocate for the arts," strongly committed to "infusing the arts into the curriculum." From her perspective, "Susan took the first step by making some changes, and that's what interested me in coming to EHTP. I don't think that if this had just been a tutoring program I would have been as receptive."

Carmen's first year (1988-1989) marked a second transitional phase for EHTP. During that time, she initiated changes in three main areas: stabilizing the organization administratively; building in new structures for tutor-training; and involving parents in the program, as well as providing leadership-training for parents in the community. In addition to the normal challenges in directing an organization such as EHTP, Carmen also faced a crisis that year. In April the building next door

collapsed, and EHTP was without a home base for two months.

Administratively, Carmen was concerned with setting up structures that could support the educational program, instituting personnel policies and record-keeping systems, hiring new staff, and working with staff whose educational ideas needed to be updated. One of the most painful tasks during Carmen's first year was letting a senior staffperson go, because the person found it impossible to adjust to the changes that had taken place in the program's educational philosophy. From March to September 1989, EHTP operated without an afterschool coordinator, and Carmen assumed responsibility for the position.

Before they began the search to fill the position, Carmen negotiated with the board to make the salary for it competitive with the salaries of teachers working in the public schools. Even with the higher salary, several months passed before the right person was found. Carmen remembers:

> Quite a few teachers applied, but I was looking for someone with a little bit more than just an education background. I was looking for someone who would be flexible, comfortable with evening hours; creative, someone who would have an invisible bag of magic tricks, so that if a tutor got stuck during a session, he or she could pull something out of this bag and say, "Here. This is what you can be doing." And I was looking for someone who would know how to work with parents.

Wahn Yoon finally came on board in September 1989.

In May 1989, Carmen began to meet with active tutors whose concerns ranged from administration and recruitment to program and curriculum. During these meetings, which continued weekly throughout the summer, the tutors raised a number of questions. They wanted to know more about the children, the parents, and the community. And they wanted advice about what to do during their tutoring sessions.

Based on their concerns, Carmen arranged an orientation program, which consisted of two sessions for tutors and an open house for families and tutors. These took place during the fall of 1989, before the new academic year began at EHTP. Attendance was excellent, with sixty to eighty tutors present at the various sessions. While the series was enormously successful, the program still finds it virtually impossible to achieve uniformity in tutor-training, because the fact that the tutors are volunteers means that not all are willing to devote much additional time to training.

Carmen Vega-Rivera has also given a lot of thought to the question of assessment, and she has initiated informal measures instead of

employing standardized ones. She believes that the children are given enough tests in school and that EHTP needs to use other methods to evaluate the kind of work they should be doing with youngsters. "If we assess from the parents their children's strengths and areas that may need improvement—what they *like* doing in their homes, from watching TV to reading magazines to playing with other games— then we have more than enough information to work with that youngster," she says. EHTP also asks teachers to fill out applications in which subjective and qualitative information is solicited. At this time, EHTP is working with a self-esteem assessment currently being developed at Teachers College.

Tutor Training

Tutor-training is an area that EHTP staff believe can always be developed further. The tutors are extremely diverse. Many of those who tutor the younger children are teenagers, including forty private school students—as young as eighth-graders—and twenty teenagers from the neighborhood.

Under Carmen's leadership, EHTP began to develop its series of orientation sessions for tutors. The initial format included three workshops. The first, "Understanding the Community," was aimed at sensitizing the tutors about who the tutees and their families are. The follow-up workshop posed the question: how do you motivate the child? Tutors toured the facilities and learned how to use them. A panel of tutors talked about their experiences. Staff members explained how the program had changed, having once primarily centered around homework help, and now aimed to make its educational focus larger than that.

The purpose of the third orientation session—the open house—was three-fold. Tutors were matched with tutees, and could then meet and talk with parents. Ideally, as Carmen explains, "we wanted to have the tutee, parent, and tutor sit down together with a staff person, and set goals for that youngster."

Another innovation during 1989 was to identify "senior tutors" who, instead of tutoring, volunteer their time to assist other tutors and work with the staff.

As it is difficult to make rigid training demands on volunteers, a noticeable disparity exists in the extent of the initial training that tutors receive. Of three tutors who were interviewed for this study, for example, the first, a student at Columbia University, had attended two of the

intensive four-hour Saturday morning orientation sessions. The second, an eighth-grader who goes to a local private school, had attended only one two-hour afternoon training session, which had been held at his school. The third, a high school student from the neighborhood, is a member of EHTP's Tutorial Internship Program, which meets twice a week throughout the academic year for ongoing support and guidance.

Despite this disparity, for the most part, the tutor-tutee pairs seem to be getting the support they need in order to have a productive and mutually enriching experience. One of the younger tutors remarked that, although he does not have a lot of training, "Things move smoothly. There are always a lot of things to do."

All the tutors interviewed for this study stressed the importance of their relationships with the tutees. Each spoke about how their friendships had developed over time and how important these relationships had become to the tutors themselves. One tutee explained, "I have two older sisters. They talk private, to each other. I have a little sister who doesn't talk yet. Now I have someone to talk to."

One major goal for EHTP now is to recruit more minority tutors. During 1989, Carmen initiated a number of activities to facilitate this process. EHTP staff went to various colleges to recruit potential trainees; they also met with the ten Latino and African American tutors already in the program and asked them for assistance. Carmen says, "The number of minority tutors has begun to increase slowly, but the word is spreading. Many people don't know that we exist. Also, it's difficult to recruit minority tutors because we're not taught at a very young age to see community service as valuable. I used to think, 'who would do volunteer work? They must be crazy.' I learned about the value of community service in my adult life."

As she works with neighborhood teenagers in the Tutor Internship Program, Carmen notices the familiar attitude, "I've got to get paid for my work." She explains to the teen interns that in the process of looking toward college and toward a career, they may want to gain experiences for which they won't always get paid. Carmen says, "I especially enjoy working with the teenagers in this neighborhood. I feel that I can provide them with a role-model. Being here in this position gives me the opportunity to give something back to the community."

Another primary area of activity for EHTP, which Carmen has initiated, is parent involvement. She believes that if the program is to provide assistance to young people, parents must be included. Carmen recalls:

> Parents were not involved in the program. They felt intimidated. They aren't accustomed to questioning authority. If you are "the director" or "the teacher," whatever you say is what goes. I wanted to change that. I told them, "Please question me. Please go upstairs, do a spot check, and spend fifteen minutes with your youngster. Question us, because we're here to provide you with a service."

The first step was to develop trust. Now EHTP has regular parents' committee meetings. At the first one, in October 1989, only a handful of parents attended. But Carmen wasn't discouraged. "It's just the beginning," she said. "We'll learn." She then scheduled a meeting on "Schools of Choice." Parents in the community need to know that "they're in a district where they can choose from various types of schools—alternative, bilingual, traditional," she says. The turn-out for that meeting was so large, that the room wasn't big enough to contain everyone who attended. That two-hour session has led to monthly workshops on topics requested by parents, including special education, dyslexia, and identifying adolescent problems, as well as classes for parents on topics such as how to identify child abuse before it happens.

As a parent herself, Carmen provides an example of the kind of learning-supportive parenting that is possible. She explains:

> I'm involved in my children's educational experiences. I make sure they get to their extra-curricular activities. We sit down and do homework in the evening. We read together. And I want to tell parents in this community, "You too can do it. It's not impossible." ... Sometimes a parent will say to me, "My child is having a difficult time with math." I ask, "Do you make it fun? Do you invite him to cook? Do you do the grocery list together?" I know it takes longer. But this way, he can be measuring and reading the labels. And they say, "Are you kidding?" And I say, "No. Try it." And they ask me, "Do *you* do this at home?" And I say, "Yes, I do."

Carmen is highly sensitive to the fact that such fundamental changes take time. "You have to deal with parents very slowly. You can suggest and do, and you can show them. But you have to respect parents for who they are."

The changes that have taken place at EHTP did not happen quickly. It took one year from the time that Susan Ingalls began to learn about new possibilities for helping children with reading and writing until the reading room was ready, nearly another year for the enrichment center to get off the ground, and another six months for it to become a strong part of the program.

Similarly, Carmen had to focus on administrative stability for a solid year, creating a foundation on which to build innovations in tutor training and parent involvement.

Involving parents in the educational process and recruiting Latino and African American volunteers and staff are the kinds of concerns that require attention over time. Issues with such deep historical and cultural roots cannot be solved instantly and superficially. Likewise, EHTP's recent history illustrates how educational approaches and overall philosophy also need time to evolve.

Fortunately, Carmen and Susan have worked well together, although Carmen observes that it probably took about two years for them to be clear about their different jobs. But they share many sensibilities in common, including a great interest in the arts. Each has always respected the other and learned from her. Susan began to make educational changes which Carmen was able to build on, expand, and stabilize. And Carmen says, "Now we both network. We are both looking to bring new ideas back to the program and enhance what we already have."

Interfaith Neighbors

Enhancing Emotional Growth Through Literacy and Social Work

An Afternoon at Interfaith Neighbors

The meeting place for youngsters in Interfaith Neighbors' programs feels like a large, comfortable living room: it is spacious and airy, and decorated with light-colored furniture and jazz posters. On October 22, 1990, it was filled with twenty-six youngsters, aged twelve to fourteen, sitting in a circle and ready to begin their second "Challenge" session of the year. They introduced themselves to the group by giving their names, grades, the schools they attend, and how they came to join the program. Many were in the program last year and have returned; several have been newly invited by Eileen Lyons, Interfaith's director, during one of her school visits; and many others have been brought in by friends who like the program and think they will, too.

"Challenge" is the early adolescent component of the Interfaith Neighbors' program. The youngsters in the Challenge program come from public, private, and parochial schools in the Yorkville area of Manhattan—New York City Lab JHS, JHS 167 (Robert Wagner), Our Lady of Good Council School, and St. Joseph of Yorkville School. In addition to being invited by Eileen and other staff during one of their school visits, or by a friend who attends the program, teachers, counselors, principals, and other key personnel from these schools also refer youngsters who have been held over, are failing in school, or are otherwise not achieving at their full potential. Challenge sessions explore issues that are relevant to adolescents: the transition from junior high school to high school, dating, peer pressure, sex, using drugs, and relationships with parents and other family members.

During the introductions at this Challenge meeting, some youthful competition is in the air. When two youngsters say they are from NYC Lab Junior High School, some kids on the other side of the circle boo—Lab and Wagner JHS are apparently adversaries at the moment. Eileen points out that there are many differences within the group—people from different schools and different ethnic backgrounds, for example, and she stresses that everyone must learn to respect each other, and that this will be one of the issues that they will work on during the year. Juan is the next child who speaks, and the group applauds him. He had arrived from Mexico just

last year, Eileen says, and spoke no English. They applaud him for how well he speaks English now. Almost everyone in the group finds it funny when Chris Miller, a case manager and social work graduate student at Hunter College, mentions his age—thirty-three—which seems incredibly old to them.

After the introductions and announcements are over, the large group is divided into two smaller groups. In the group led by Brenda Robinson, Family/School Liaison and a case manager, and Marcella Erskine, case manager and social work graduate student at Hunter College, the role of the case managers is a major topic of discussion. New group members have questions about case managers which returning members answer; case managers are there to talk with them about things that bother them, they explain. One boy says that he wouldn't tell his case manager anything that might get him in trouble with his parents, and there is lots of discussion around this. Brenda reminds him then that previously they have talked about the kinds of things that the case managers would share with parents, and asks the group to recall what those things are. Some children answer that if they are about to get hurt or about to hurt someone else, or to hurt themselves, or if drugs or alcohol are involved, the parents would have to be notified—but not before the caseworkers had talked with the child about the situation.

"Would you tell if a girl said she was pregnant?" a boy named John asks.

Brenda replies that that hasn't happened yet in this program, but that before parents would be told, the case manager and the Challenge member would talk about the situation.

Confused about how often he will be able to spend time with his case manager, John comments, "If I can only see her two times a month, if I have a problem, by the time I see her the problem might be gone."

The youngsters are assured that each of them can see the case manager as often as they like; what the program requires is that they see the case manager at least twice a month. They are also reminded that case managers must see their report cards, and that they can talk to their case managers about the good things that happen to them as well as the bad.

Brenda and Marcella then introduce the idea of keeping journals. They tell the youngsters that they can write anything in them—poetry, stories, jokes, or descriptions of their concerns. About five youngsters say they had kept journals in school; some say they began doing so as early as first grade. They also question the privacy of the journals, wondering

who will read them, whether they will be kept in a locked place, and whether their parents might be told about what they have written in them.

The Challenge program also uses art to explore issues, and after the discussions about case managers and journals, members of the group find comfortable spaces in either the room where the meeting has taken place or in the cozy library; their assigned project to create a picture of their homes. While the youngsters draw, Marcella takes photographs of each child which will later be placed on their finished pictures.

Most of the children are quite willing to talk about their pictures. Susan, a program member since last year, has brought two friends to Challenge this week. The three girls work together and also have their photos taken as a group. The trio is working together on only two homes. "I don't have a home," says one of the girls who has just joined Challenge.

Among the drawings produced are several pictures of graffiti-covered apartment buildings with stores beneath them. Michael draws his building and almost everyone in the group "tags" the building (writes their names or nicknames) in his picture. Juan draws a beautiful structure that looks very much like an office building with stained glass windows. Several children put cotton balls on their pictures to represent clouds. John colors his clouds with brown streaks. "This is the pollution in the air," he says.

The pictures, with the photos of the artists, will be displayed on the walls, and other activities and discussions will be generated from them during future meetings.

Program History

Interfaith's overall program, which includes tutoring and counseling for different age groups, has changed as the neighborhood and the city it serves have changed.

The agency was founded in 1954 by a group of women who represented some of the churches and synagogues in the Yorkville section of Manhattan to address the proliferation of street gangs in the area. Its workers aggressively went out into the streets—onto street corners—of what was then a predominantly Irish and German community of tenement buildings, to reach young people who were in danger of becoming what were then referred to as juvenile delinquents and who resisted involvement in mainstream organizations like the YMCA.

While their outreach is still aggressive, instead of going out onto the

street corners to reach youngsters, Interfaith now goes into the neighborhood schools. Through improvisational theater or through talks with the children in their classes, its staff introduces Interfaith's programs to more than 1500 youngsters annually. The approximately 300 children they serve each year represent the ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity of the city and the neighborhood as it is now. Since most of these eight-to-eighteen year-olds attend schools in Yorkville but live outside of the area, they also represent a broadening of the area that the agency serves. Some youngsters come from as far away as Washington Heights and East Flatbush. Most are from poor and working-class families, and more than 75% are from single-parent families. The agency's program membership is also ethnically diverse: approximately 30% of the youngsters are African or Caribbean American, 30% Latino, 30% Caucasian, and about 10% are Asian American.

The problems faced by young people and their families have also changed dramatically in the thirty-six years since the agency's founding. Problems related to drug addiction, the AIDS crisis, chronic unemployment, violence, and the pressures on single-parent families are rampant, and schools are often unable to address these problems. This is where Interfaith Neighbors steps in. Their contemporary mission, developed by Eileen Lyons, has been to "promote the mental health, social competence and literacy of its youthful clientele, as well as to support and strengthen the family unit surrounding each child."

In September 1990 Interfaith Neighbors moved from a church basement on East 88th Street to a space in the New York Psychoanalytic Institute on East 82nd Street; this is their second move since spring 1987, when Eileen Lyons was hired as director. Changes in staff have taken place as well since then, which reflect changes in the focus of the program. Under the former director(s), the program was centered around street work counseling. The agency was primarily a drop-in center offering informal counseling and some traditional tutoring. Its atmosphere was clearly adolescent-centered, and, according to Eileen, while the staff knew the parents, they weren't an integral part of the program; some staff regarded parents as their youngsters' adversaries. Moreover, very few youngsters were coming to the program at this point because the population that the agency had served traditionally, local white ethnic working-class youth, was declining, probably due to neighborhood gentrification. It was clearly time for a change.

During the late summer and fall of 1987, in the midst of a move from

the third floor to the basement of Holy Trinity Church on East 88th Street, Eileen and the now former staff began to develop and implement structured programs with a definite social work focus to help children cope with such concerns as school and peer pressures. They also designed an outreach program to the local schools, using improvisational theater followed by an on-site open house, where the children met the staff members, had their questions answered, and signed up for programs. The outreach worked, and the number of children attending programs at Interfaith increased dramatically.

Many of the youngsters were still failing in school, however, and it was the staff's belief that attending the after-school program as it was then designed wouldn't help build their self-esteem if other areas of their lives were still problematic. Because Eileen had always believed that parents' participation in the program was vital to its success, the agency invited parents to join, an invitation that took place about halfway through the 1987-88 school year. The response on the part of the youngsters was immediate: they felt betrayed.

The agency's response to this situation was to invite parents to attend the September 1988 intake sessions with their children. Parents would thus be involved from the start of the program, and youngsters would share this expectation. At this point the agency also began to include "learning, growth-enhancing" activities with the ongoing "social skills" activities. The purpose was to help increase children's self-esteem by engaging them in reading and writing experiences in which they could be successful—ones that wouldn't replicate their negative school experiences.

Integrating these learning activities with those that promoted social skills was a real challenge for the staff, for it was difficult to find activities that met both of those goals and kept youngsters excited about life and learning at the same time. In the typical Interfaith style, the staff debated, discussed, and explored the problems, their options, and potential solutions. They hated homework help time, for example, but they were convinced that it was important to fulfill the parents' expectations that they would provide this service. Eileen, on the other hand, thought that they should drop the homework help time and replace it with creative activities. She attended a Robert Bowne Foundation whole-language workshop that confirmed her thinking that learning activities could be integrated with social skills activities in a way that would be exciting, and at the same time increase the children's academic skills. Nevertheless, the

staff was still left with the question of how they could accomplish this: what activities they would use, how they might develop a curriculum, and what such a program would be like in practice.

By this time the staff itself also had begun to change, reflecting the evolving program. Brenda Robinson had been hired as Family/School Liaison and Case Manager and she succeeded in building a solid relationship with parents and with school personnel. But there was little or no communication among the parents, the schools, and the agency, and the children were not improving. Parents, who were now more involved in the program, shared the feelings of helplessness they experienced when they had to go into the schools and speak with their children's teachers and principals, and sought out the agency's assistance with these problems. Teachers indicated that children's social behavior affected their schoolwork, that the children were having difficulty with the basics of reading and writing, that they were bored, and that their creativity was being stifled because they were reluctant to take risks. Children told the staff that they were tired of failing; that they were trying as hard as they could in school and that they were frustrated. And, perhaps most importantly, says Brenda, the staff understood that "it is next to impossible to deal with a child without the parents' cooperation—the child is a part of a family unit that must be considered."

In attempting to design a program that met the need for school-home-agency connections, the staff talked extensively to parents, children, and teachers. They began doing intake interviews involving parents and children and assigning case workers to each child/family. During the intake interview, youngster, parent, and counselor develop a service plan based on the family's and youngster's needs. It specifies both the goals of the plan as well as the agency services and programs in which the youngster will take part, and all three parties to the agreement consent to it in contractual terms.

Interfaith also wanted to develop activities that would tap into developmental needs and facilitate communications skills, and that integrated reading and writing at the same time. The Bowne Foundation provided the initial funding to hire the staff and buy the materials for developing this program and other funding was forthcoming thereafter.

The first program the staff designed was "Witches, Monsters, and Goofy Grandmas," a reading and writing program for third- and fourth-graders, where they are read stories from books in the Interfaith library (also partially funded by the Bowne Foundation) and write stories of their own which appear in Witches, Monsters, and Goofy Grandmas Magazine. Almost from the start, this program demonstrated to Interfaith staff that they were on the right track to helping children become more excited about learning.

Parents and teachers began telling staff members that the youngsters were reading more and that their writing style had changed. The children were also really trying to write more, their parents said. Teachers said the writing was more descriptive, that the new writers were using more adjectives. Interfaith staff saw that the program was stimulating the children—letting their imaginations run free and at the same time, increasing their self-esteem because they were succeeding at something that was related to school. Yes, they still needed help with spelling and grammar, but they were excited about reading and writing. Parents weren't dissatisfied that their children still needed help with spelling and grammar or that they weren't doing homework at the program because the program philosophy had been explained clearly to them, and they had agreed to it when the service contract was created.

Reading and writing have been successfully integrated into "Witches, Monsters, and Goofy Grandmas," the program for third- and fourth-graders, and "Write Through the Arts," a program for ninth- and tenth-graders taught by artist and educational coordinator Clayton Evans, which integrates acting, drawing, dancing, singing, painting, rapping, sculpting, and writing. When Interfaith staff realized the enthusiasm that was being generated by these two programs, they wondered how they could create a similar enthusiasm in the twelve-to-fourteen year-olds. There is now an emphasis on integrating reading and writing into the Challenge program, and one way the staff pursues this is by the use of the journal-writing initiated on the recommendation of a consultant from the Bowne Foundation.

While Eileen and Brenda were excited about working with journals in the Challenge program, they also expressed reservations about certain problems that might make using them difficult. Because the Challenge program explores issues that are relevant to adolescents—dating, peer

pressure, sex, drugs—Eileen and Brenda were concerned that occasions might arise when the journal process created some tension between their maintaining the confidentiality of the youngsters, on one hand, and on the other hand, their responsibility to alert parents if their children were engaging in potentially harmful behavior. For example, if youngsters wrote in their journals that they were thinking of hurting themselves or injuring someone else and then actually did so, and the parent had not been notified that there was a possibility of this happening, the agency could be held liable. In addition, the children were concerned about whether their journal writing would be critiqued in terms of format and grammar, and how free they really could feel to write frankly and creatively.

The agency solved the dilemma by meeting together and soliciting the contributions of all staff members. The staff decided that the journal entries would be treated as all other counseling information is treated; they would tell parents about an entry only if drugs or alcohol were involved, or if the youngsters expressed the intention of hurting themselves or someone else. They also decided, with the assistance of another Bowne Foundation consultant, that the journal entries could be made in any form that the children liked—writing, drawing—and that case managers would engage in dialogue with the youngsters about the issues raised in the journals by writing back to them. Once the youngsters read their first responses from their case managers and were told that they could write or draw in any way and about anything they wished, they began to enjoy making entries in their journals. The Interfaith staff wants to continue to use such creative activities to encourage the youngsters to take risks and to address real skills and issues.

Interfaith Neighbors Staff

One reason for the Interfaith program's strength is the diversity of its staff. Each of the staff members, which include Brenda Robinson (Family/School Liaison and Case Manager), Clayton Evans (Educational Coordinator and teacher), Robin Lichtenfeld (teacher), Lisa Smith (social worker), and two interns from the Hunter College Social Work program each year, plays a part in providing children and their families with the social and educational services that they need. The literacy projects are a result of a collaboration among these staff members, and in particular, of the special art and education expertise of Clayton Evans and Robin Lichtenfeld.

A psychiatric intern from Payne Whitney provides consultation for certain cases.

Interfaith's over-riding commitment to case management assures comprehensive and relevant support as families' needs dictate. Each child has a case manager—a social worker who helps the child and family receive needed services such as tutoring, medical care, and counseling. Case managers work very closely with the parents and youngsters, providing or arranging services as needed. Parents might participate, for example, in the program's Single Parent Group, which meets every other week to help parents with their own personal needs and also seeks to integrate parents more fully into the program. While parental involvement previously had centered around children's needs and not parents' needs, this program, which has been a "remarkable success" according to Brenda, involves parents very personally. Case managers also work closely with many of the children's teachers and principals.

Future Plans

In the near future Eileen Lyons hopes to start a group for children who don't speak English, as they are becoming a larger population in the program, as well as a group for sixth-grade girls. This latter group, for which the focus has not yet been fully determined, was requested by the girls themselves. She would also like to begin to document the work that the agency has been doing, particularly their programs with junior high school-age youth, which have been particularly comprehensive in integrating a social work focus which offers support for parents with a focus on literacy.

Interfaith Neighbors is still looking for other forums in which reading and writing can be successfully integrated with the kinds of social service programs the agency has been so flexible in creating. Their commitment and their creativity make it very likely that they will succeed in this endeavor as well.

North Bronx Family Service Center

A Process Approach to Reading and Writing

An Afternoon at North Bronx Family Service Center

On an October afternoon, the blue-trimmed red brick building housing North Bronx Family Service Center (NBFSC) is filled with the sounds of youth. The comfortably worn building sits on a hill, and its cozy rooms look out on the sunny, green campus of Bronx Community College across the street. Today some youngsters are gathered together in the reception area, talking to one another, while others sit alone. From a room off to the right, excited voices indicate that games and other activities are going on. Up on the third floor, a sign that reads "Welcome to Tutoring" greets children and visitors, along with a neatly mounted exhibition of drawings and poems by many of the sixty youngsters in the program. Beneath it, Nikki Giovanni's *Spin A Soft Black Song* and Shel Silverstein's *Where The Sidewalk Ends* are among the poetry books displayed. Other writing adorns the walls: responses to folk stories told to the children at NBFSC and at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, where they had attended an event presented by the National Black Storytellers Association.

Tutors and children are now engaged in a variety of activities. All of the children had met in the center's library with their tutors for the first ten minutes of their session, where they had a snack from the snack table dubbed "The Candy Corner Express," and had worked, as a group, on a word puzzle. After this each child and tutor went off to work. Several tutors are conducting orientation interviews with their new students, designed to help tutors and students get to know one another better. Some of the children are talking with their tutors, and others are writing the answers to the interview questions. Still other tutors and tutees have completed the interview and are involved in other activities. One tutor, Nabiel, is explaining fractions to his student. Kaeve, a student who is writing a story about her grandfather, says she has gotten the idea because she and her tutor, Katrina, have read a story about a grandmother. Karen, a tutor, and Chrissie have just read a story together, and now Chrissie is writing about the story that they have read.

Program History

The tutoring center at NBFSC is one of many services provided by Pius XII Youth and Family Services. Pius XII was founded in Warwick, New York thirty-two years ago to develop alternatives for incarcerated youth. Over the years it expanded to twelve sites, most of which serve youthful offenders. In the late 1970s, North Bronx Family Service Center was set up in two locations as one of the Pius XII sites in the Bronx. It originated as a program for "at-risk" youth and families, and focused primarily on counseling; educational and recreational services soon followed. Eventually, through the Job Training Partnership Act, an employment program was also established. NBFSC also operates drop-out prevention programs at Morris and Roosevelt high schools, as well as an after-school program for youngsters who have no one at home when they come from school.

These agency services are integrated, which means that when it is evident that a person needs one or a combination of them, the person is referred accordingly and fully served within the agency. Priority for each service is given to families who already are receiving at least one other agency service. NBFSC prefers serving the entire family, if possible. In the past, to respond to the request of some parents, there had been a family literacy program, and a parents' rap group. These groups aren't meeting at present, but if the need is identified by parents again they could resume.

The tutoring center serves approximately sixty youngsters at a time, aged seven to thirteen. Students are divided into groups of fifteen that meet on Mondays and Wednesdays, or on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for one hour: from 3:30 to 4:30, or from 4:30 to 5:30. When the children are not involved in their work at the tutoring center, they may be attending any of the other programs that NBFSC offers, including counseling or the recreation program, in which students write and perform plays, among other activities.

Children are referred to NBFSC in a number of ways. Some come through the Court Diversion Program, in which families of juvenile offenders are referred to agencies for a variety of services. Most, however, are referred by their schools. Ninety percent of the children come from schools within walking distance of the program: PS 91, PS 294, Holy Spirit School, and St. Nicholas of Tolentine. Some also come from Roosevelt and Walton high schools, and still others are "walk-ins" who have learned of the program through word-of-mouth.

Training the Tutors

The tutoring in the center has been done primarily on a one-to-one basis. But this is changing as the center's education coordinator, Jonathan Shevin, integrates his own vision of education with the current activities. The program is moving toward more group work, particularly in the area of writing. Tutors will still be very important, but their roles may change. More and more, they will be facilitators of group activities. Jonathan believes that writing can be taught more easily in a group, and that small groups enable children to learn from each other.

Each September the program begins tutor-training sessions with about fifteen to eighteen Bronx Community College students who are either in the college's work-study program or who are doing field work for programs leading to the Associate Degree in education, health education, or human services. Students from other colleges in the area have also served as tutors in the past, but those from neighboring Bronx Community tend to stay longer—"probably," says Jonathan Shevin, "because it's so convenient." The tutors range in age from the late teens to the mid-thirties, and many are parents. Some tutors are compensated for their time through payments from the Bronx Community College Work Study Program. Others are fulfilling a field work requirement and receiving college credit.

Because the tutors don't usually have a background in education, they are given two weeks of initial training, led by Shevin. The training emphasizes child development so that the tutors will be aware of social and emotional issues as they relate to children in the tutoring situation. Shevin wants tutors to understand, for example, that even though a child may be reading far below grade level, the child is still an eleven- year-old with the emotional and social needs of an eleven-year-old. The training sessions also present educational theory and offer some instruction in practical aspects of teaching, such as developing lessons.

Jonathan Shevin holds an MS degree in early childhood education and brings to his work at North Bronx Family Service Center a variety of teaching and writing experiences. A writer himself, he was originally a classroom teacher, and later worked as literacy assistant and tutor trainer at the New York Public Library Centers For Reading and Writing, an adult literacy program which uses a whole-language, student-centered approach to teaching. The NYPL program also is devoted to the concept of modeling—teaching tutors in the same way that they are to teach their students.

These experiences are evident in Shevin's training techniques. "I teach the tutors in the way that I want them to teach the students. I want them to follow my example." Accordingly, before tutors read an article about child development, for example, the trainers will have them engage in a pre-reading activity, perhaps a discussion about what they already know about child development. Then they will read the article, and then a post-reading activity will take place, perhaps some writing and discussion. Trainers expect tutors to conduct similar activities related to reading with the children. The tutors-to-be also keep journals for the two weeks that they are being trained; these journals contain both an ongoing dialogue with Jonathan and as an initiative added this year, their personal writing. The journals serve several purposes. Because the tutors are required to use dialogue journals with students, they provide a form of modeling. Their journal-keeping also helps Jonathan get to know the tutors in a short time and to become acquainted with their own specific reading and writing abilities.

During the first week of tutor training this past September, the tutors were involved in many activities which helped them reflect on their own experiences as learners, explore their attitudes and beliefs about the roles of students and teachers, and identify the qualities that make teachers effective. They had also been keeping journals and exploring writing as a process by choosing individual topics and beginning to write about them. The trainees were learning instructional approaches such as language experience, gaining strategies for choosing appropriate books for children, and exploring the question, "what is literacy for?"

On the fifth day of training (the first day of their second week) the group participated in a writing workshop. Jonathan and perhaps six of the tutors shared pieces of writing that they had been working on during the past week. The range of topics reflected the many interests in the group. Some read their entire pieces, while others read only a part that they wanted help with. Prior to this first reading, Shevin instructed tutors to begin their responses by telling the writer what they liked about the piece—what was strongest and/or most effective. Venus had written about and shared her concerns about whether she would be able to really help her students, and her reservations elicited many questions from the rest of the group about her own experiences in school and how they might have influenced her. Venus remembered, "I had a teacher in junior high school who supported me whether I was good or bad." Then she added, "I was a tomboy, and I was often bad." Even though the teacher had

believed that she wasn't listening to him, she said, she really had listened: "His advice went in one ear and stayed up there," she said, pointing to her head. As a result of this teacher's advice that she would be better off where none of her junior high school friends could influence her, Venus had gone on to attend a special high school on a boat docked in lower Manhattan.

Lori had written a piece about the many interests that children enjoy: physical activities, cooking, video games. This prompted Venus to ask, "How can we use children's interests to make the tutoring session more interesting to them?" Other tutors commented on the importance of listening to children talk about their interests.

The other writing was equally diverse. Tamora wrote about how her son's father drives all the way from Delaware to spend a day with him. Another tutor wrote about her love for drawing, and another about memories of her home, Jamaica, W.I.; still another wrote about space—how it is used and ignored, but very necessary. At first this piece was met by silence in the group, but soon some perceptive comments were made about how people also need space in their lives. The writing reflected an enormous range of experiences, and great concern about children, as well as the kind of serious thought that had gone into the group's work during the past week.

This workshop, and the experiences during the previous week leading to it, were models for the kind of work that the tutors are expected to do with the children. Jonathan talked about the connections between the group's own experiences choosing topics, writing, sharing, and so forth, and how they can help the children through this process.

This approach to writing, which takes writers (tutors and students) through writing as a process—topic selection, writing, sharing with peers, revision, editing—rather than focusing exclusively on the writing product, is new to the program this year and reflects a change. In the past tutors had been trained to use writing activities with the children, but they had encountered considerable difficulty in helping children to choose topics, revise, and share their work when they worked together on a one-to-one basis. The changes in tutor training, as well as the movement from one-to-one tutoring to small groups, were responses to this difficulty. Based on his own writing and tutoring experiences, Jonathan believes that working in groups will give tutors and students the opportunity to learn from one another and from others in the group. The training sessions offered evidence of the success of this process and also a model for how it could unfold.

This year, tutors, children, and Jonathan will meet as needed in the newly formed writing workshop to share and revise their work. Tutors will continue to work one-to-one, but many more group activities will be available than in the past. These activities—reading, writing, and discussion about a theme such as pollution, for example—will give tutors and children the opportunity to share possible topics, stories, and experiences as a group. The group activities are somewhat more structured than the one-to-one tutoring because they involve having everyone together at a specific time. This, too, is a change in the program away from individual lessons, and Jonathan believes that it was necessary to better integrate the writing process into the tutoring. Students have the opportunity to choose their own topics, or to select a topic related to a theme, and the new structure gives them the support they need to do this well.

Ongoing tutor support includes a half-hour each day of preparation time or staff meetings. During that time, Jonathan and the program's part-time teacher, Shirley Prioleau, assist tutors with their questions. The tutors apparently feel free to stop in to talk; Jonathan's door seems always to be open for staff and students alike. He also observes tutors as they work, and sees them for individual conferences in which he and they look back together over students' work and discuss their progress.

Shevin says that the training is successful in providing tutors with a common knowledge base and experience, but he also finds that some tutors are more naturally effective than others: "Some tutors develop a real sensitivity to the children, and others never do." He finds, too, that it is difficult for some tutors to become comfortable with the program's approach to writing. "Most of the tutors have only experienced writing as something that's done for assignments and is graded, so even with the training it's difficult for them to change this perception," he says. A few tutors, however, have come to like writing so much after the training that they continue to write themselves, and have a much easier time teaching students to do it. "These," Shevin says, "are some of the strongest tutors."

Most tutors find reading much "less threatening" to teach than writing though this can be a difficult area as well. A large segment of the training is designed to help tutors look at the reading process and to help them recognize that different children are going to learn to read in different ways—that some may benefit more from being read to, others from silent reading, some from whole-word instruction, others from phonics. One training session focused on looking at reading strategies and beginning to relate the strategies that students use in figuring out new words to

assessing their skills. He began this part of the workshop by asking everyone (in small groups) to "read" a story from *A Primer for Parents*, in which conventional illustrations appeared but the words were based on an entirely different alphabet. Some words were "translated" into English to help the group get started. When they finished "reading," he asked, "how did you know the words that weren't translated?" The responses indicated that the group had used a combination of strategies. They had recognized that each symbol represented a letter, they looked at the shape of a word to guess what it was, they referred back to what they'd previously read, they recognized some words because of the repetition, they looked at the pictures for clues, and they used the context of the story as a reference. After this activity, Jonathan pointed out that no one had said they used phonics, that misreading a few words was fine as long as the meaning was intact, that a sight word vocabulary was beginning to be built through repetition, and how important appropriate pictures were to a text. He then related these points to the tutors' work with the children.

Shirley Prioleau continued this part of the workshop by talking about various reading skills and about how tutors could assess those skills. She instructed the trainees to use "Word Recognition Grade Placement" tests—lists of words from preprimer to level 10. On these tests, students are asked to pronounce a list of words as quickly as possible. Students receive credit for each grade level at which they pronounce at least five of the ten words. The trainees were also given a sample of standardized reading test lessons and told to use this informally to get a sense of the child's reading level.

Shirley and Jonathan had agreed that this type of skills-based assessment provides tutors with some initial information, but they soon discovered that their tutors needed a lot of support from them in using the information to plan their instruction. For one thing, tutors were not sure what to do with the results of miscue analyses and other assessments. And even though the tutors liked the idea of using diagnostic tests because they believed the tests would give them concrete information about the students' reading, they found that the information derived from the tests was difficult to relate to their teaching.

Shevin says that assessment is an area that he'd like to develop more fully in the program. Assessment is important to him because he wants the children to be able to see their own progress, as well as for the tutors to be able to use the information in designing lessons. He also hopes the assessment information will be useful to him in further developing tutor

training and in describing the program to funders and visitors.

The program is just beginning to implement such assessment alternatives as writing portfolios, a method of collecting student writing over time. Jonathan says that this way of accumulating the student's writing history helps the child and the tutor see changes, such as increased length of pieces, progress in grammar and punctuation, and growing independence in choosing topics.

Jonathan and Shirley are also concerned that while tutors learn a great deal about students during tutoring sessions, this kind of anecdotal information about a child's reading and writing is never recorded. In an attempt to rectify this, Jonathan has been sitting in on the tutoring sessions to record this descriptive information, and is beginning to get a picture of tutor-tutee interaction as well as changes in a student's performance.

Keeping Tutors

How to keep the tutors in the program once they have been trained has been a challenge since the beginning. Because most of the tutors have children of their own, and have trouble finding consistent, quality childcare, tutor attrition is very high. The tutors often have other family responsibilities as well, such as taking family members to doctors' appointments, or acting as interpreters for others. During the spring 1990 semester, the eighteen potential tutors became sixteen tutors after training, and by May, eleven tutors. The following September, all the tutors except two were new.

The program's part-time teacher, Shirley Prioleau, whose position is paid through a grant from the Robert Bowne Foundation, provides some stability. In addition to her program responsibilities, Shirley teaches a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) class at NBFSC, supervises tutors, and coordinates curriculum development. The program now has two educational aides, Katrina Vandiver and Diane Johnston, who were originally tutors in the program, as well as assistance from other experienced tutors who have become skilled at developing lessons, and their presence, along with Shirley's teaching, has enabled the program to begin developing curricula. Lessons which are based on themes or special events or occasions provide an opportunity for the children to work together in groups and for teachers to model teaching techniques for tutors. In October, for example, they began a unit on the theme of "trash."

First the children and their tutors met as a group in the library where Jonathan led a discussion—about when something becomes trash, what landfill is, where garbage comes from, and other such matters. Then he read the beginning of a story, "Trash Trek," from *Ranger Rick* magazine, and after a group discussion about what they thought might happen to this character who was in the middle of a toxic waste dump, asked the youngsters to go back with their tutors and finish reading the story. The students were also asked to bring in a piece of trash; Jonathan plans to have them write a story about what they bring from the perspective of the particular trash itself as narrator. In addition to the story, some other books about garbage and the environment were made available including *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, *Fat Men From Space* by Daniel Pinkwater, and *Going Green: A Kid's Handbook to Saving The Planet* by John Elkington, Julia Hailes, Douglas Hill, and Joel Makower. Lessons like these provide opportunities for integrating reading, writing, art, and sometimes music, and Jonathan Shevin tells tutors, "You should always give kids all the freedom you can handle."

Some of the units that the program has developed have been centered on Latina women, Martin Luther King, Jr., stories told by families, and various holiday themes. Jonathan says that finding books at the reading levels of some of the children has been difficult, particularly material about Latina women, but he has found that Chelsea House publishes some very good books and is looking forward to their forthcoming series on Latin Americans.

So it was that North Bronx Family Service Center has come to house an evolving, changing program that began as a traditional one-to-one homework help/tutoring service. When Shevin, the program's first full-time education coordinator, took over, he began to shape a program based on his training and his educational philosophy. In addition to the activities described he has also focused the program around reading for pleasure. Expanding the program's professional staff would allow the tutoring program to become integrated with the center's ongoing recreation program including workshops in theater, crafts, cooking, and chocolate-making, which are not yet linked to enhancing literacy. The current lack of space for these programs is another problem that Shevin is grappling with. Despite these obstacles, the families—in some instances, two generations of families—in this predominantly Caribbean and African American neighborhood seem to have found in North Bronx Family Service Center a place they can depend on for many of the support,

advocacy, and recreational services that they need. Linking some of these services to the kind of reading and writing program that Jonathan Shevin and his colleagues are conducting might produce a further dividend of new tutors who want to pass on the benefits they've received.

AN AFTERNOON AT PROJECT REACH YOUTH

"So, I bought some popcorn," Anthony explains to his fellow tutors. "The little kids had already had lunch, but I didn't have mine. Then one of the kids asked me for some, so I gave him a little. The next thing I knew, they were all over me, grabbing, asking for some."

"Yeah," says Richard, the six-footer sitting next to him. "Man, it was scary. I got out of the way."

"They all had some," Anthony says, into the laughter. "Even the teacher came over and got some of my popcorn."

"Well," Linda Vereline says when Anthony has finished his description of what it was like for him to go along as an escort for some second-graders on a field trip, "They seem to be always hungry, don't they? And I guess if you said yes to one of them...."

"I won't do that again," Anthony says.

The ten high school tutors for Project Reach Youth (PRY) meet once a week, on Thursday afternoons, to share their experiences and to plan with each other and with Linda Vereline, Director of PRY's Creative Learning Centers. At these meetings, they talk about their role in the center and exchange ideas and reactions to the week's events. The atmosphere is open and the students, who come from two different high schools and receive credit for their work at the centers for one semester, have a lively exchange with each other. They are encouraged, not to simply look to Linda as the "expert" for direction, but to share and develop their own ideas.

When Yadette and Gabriel talk about their plan to read aloud Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, and to have the students write their own monster stories, Linda asks Jeanette to talk about her previous experience reading out loud to the children.

"It took a lot longer than I thought," Jeanette said. "I knew they'd have questions, but they had a lot more to say about it than I thought they would."

Gabriel and Yadette acknowledge her point, and that they may have to look again at how much time they've allowed for the activity.

When Anthony describes his plan, for one session, to read all the story beginnings from Chris Van Allsburg's *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, Linda asks, "Do you think it will be overwhelming to hear them all at once?"

"No," Anthony says. "It'll be fine."

"Okay," Linda says. It is obvious that she thinks it might be too much for the children, but that she is there as adviser. The high school tutors are devising their own lessons the way they make sense to them, not the way that Linda herself would do it. The tutors are regarded as people who already have gained a certain level of knowledge and are expected to develop their own activities with the children; the enthusiasm and the level of personal investment that they feel for their jobs as a result can be felt throughout the meeting. Linda continues gently questioning as the tutors present their project ideas, supporting them and asking questions in places where she anticipates problems or where she perceives something that is not clearly thought out. Then she reminds the tutors that she needs to know what materials they'll need, ranging from pads of paper to Legos.

The group winds up the meeting by writing and then talking about something positive that has happened during the week. It's early in the term, and one or two of the tutors have had a hard week, insisting that nothing "positive" has happened. They're partly joking, but partly serious as well. This last part of the meeting is the time for talking about how to work with young children, how tutors react when they feel they're being tested, how to make sure they aren't considered by the children as "another fifth-grader" in the classroom. When the meeting breaks up, everyone has had a say, and today, as on other days, the tutors linger to talk long after the meeting is over and they've put in their required time.

Program History

Project Reach Youth began in Park Slope, Brooklyn in 1968, founded by three local ministers and students from a local college, in an area described at the time as "a neighborhood in transition." The founders had noted that there were "a great number of children with no place to go and little to do spend[ing] far too much time on the streets." PRY began as a recreational program, and the board of directors added the Creative Learning Centers component in 1970. The mission of the agency now, according to PRY's Executive Director, Janet Kelly, is "to provide a whole

group of services for youth: academic skills, employability, personal support, and counseling. We'd like to improve the skills of young people, and increase their self-esteem through counseling and enrichment." In addition to the Learning Centers, Project Reach Youth sponsors several other programs where young people serve an important function in the community. These include an intergenerational program in which high school students work with senior citizens, and a peer-training AIDS awareness program. In addition, there is a program that helps young recent immigrants make the transition to life in the United States, paralleling some of the same services the Learning Centers provide. PRY also runs a summer camp that offers both recreation and learning activities.

The Creative Learning Centers were originally a homework-helper type of program with an approach based in phonics. Over time, however, the centers began to reflect other educational philosophies held by their directors. Lauri Paulson, Linda Vereline's predecessor as director, worked with Dianne Kangisser at the Robert Bowne Foundation and with other PRY staff to develop ways of incorporating the whole-language approach into the centers' after-school activities. This work resulted in Bowne's funding the Centers for the last three years, and when Paulson had a baby and shifted to working part-time in one of the centers, the board of directors searched for a new Learning Centers director who would continue with the whole-language model. Linda Vereline is now in her second year as director.

The members of PRY's board of directors are, of course, involved in the policy planning for the Learning Centers, and some of them volunteer time at various sites. Jerry Ewing, the board's chairman, volunteers his time every week and could be seen by a recent visitor working one-to-one with a student on an ecology homework assignment.

The Program Now

The Creative Learning Centers operate out of four sites. At one, a junior high school, it serves thirty students, and operates three afternoons a week. The other three sites are in elementary schools; each serves thirty students, ten in a classroom, and meets either on a schedule of Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday. On Fridays, children from all three elementary school sites meet together for a program of art, folk tales, and music from various cultures. The program's volunteer tutors, high

school students, are assigned as assistants in the centers' classes for a semester at a time. They work in a classroom on site one afternoon per week, on Monday, Tuesday, or Wednesday, and on Thursday afternoons they meet as a group with Linda Vereline.

The children who attend PRY's Learning Centers are children who are considered "at risk" educationally. Flyers advertising the Centers are mailed over Labor Day weekend, and some children are referred by their parents. Project Reach Youth staff also talk to school counselors, teachers, and principals to reach students who seem to be having trouble keeping up in school. In addition to the after-school activities it provides for the children, PRY supplies a counseling service that offers support to parents as well as to individual children. There is a constant waiting list for the centers' services.

In assessing the needs of the students, the centers have begun to move away from a reliance on standardized tests. The staff collects writing samples from each student, and tries to construct a reading profile for each, through oral reading and interviews, as well as looking at report cards and using the WRAT test to determine math ability. At midyear, they will arrange formal conferences with parents and students to discuss progress and see if needs are being met. In this way, they hope to get a better picture of what students can actually do as readers and writers. Janet Kelly says that PRY staff know, from this range of assessment approaches, that "kids are doing better... that some kids have been turned around."

Homework assistance is still a part of the Creative Learning Centers schedule, because PRY is committed to helping students succeed in school, and because homework remains a concern of both parents and children. Nevertheless, PRY staff have worked with both parents and children to create an understanding that homework help is only a part of the after-school program; other learning activities are given equal importance in the centers. PRY staff also work to educate parents, many of whom do not feel qualified to help their children with schoolwork, to be active participants in the homework help process. Workshops for parents have focused on ways to help their children with homework, encouraging parents not to detach themselves from their children's school experiences. Parental assistance can begin with something as basic as helping the child find a comfortable place and a regular time to do homework, and by having the child clarify her understanding of the assignment by explaining the task to the parent. At the PRY after-school centers,

students get a snack, and then prioritize their homework, sorting out the assignments they can do on their own from the assignments they need help with. Homework is not always completed at the centers, however, because of the attention devoted to other ongoing activities.

On a typical afternoon at the PS 39 site, where Amanda O'Shaughnessy is site supervisor, the three classrooms are full of activity. The classrooms themselves are inviting, with plenty of bulletin board decorations and books, and desks arranged in contiguous semicircles or groups, not in rows. Escorting a visitor to the center, Linda Vereline stops to say hello to many of the children, each of whom she addresses by name.

In Amanda's room, a half-dozen children are sitting around a table. They are working on an autobiographical writing activity with Joyce Watson, the supervisor at another site and one of those staff people who was interested from the beginning in using a whole-language approach. The students have a set of six frames on a sheet of paper, and they have filled them in with illustrations of important events in their lives. These include pictures of airplanes, tents, cakes with candles, toys, animals, and people. Joyce and Amanda work, too, relying on memories before the age of ten. After drawing, they all begin to write out the story that explains one of the pictures.

"Let's do it once, and then we'll go through later for the spelling," Joyce says in response to a question about spelling. When one student is finished, she reads his paper back to him, and he stops her in places, changing words that don't seem now to be what he meant.

When everyone is finished writing, they prepare to listen to each other's stories. Amanda speaks kindly but firmly to Jose and gets Anavey to stop writing, even though she is still struggling with her work; it's clear that reading aloud what they have written is an important part of their regular classroom routine. As the students read, other students say what they liked, pointing to specific incidents or phrases that they enjoyed. After Nicole reads, Amanda tells her that she herself wrote about something similar. When Amanda reads, Nicole nods her head afterwards and says, "That was good," with the respect of one writer for another, even though Amanda is the teacher in the room and Nicole is only ten. After Anavey reads, Amanda asks her some questions about her story. As the student having the most difficulty writing, Anavey hasn't had a chance to finish writing what she wanted to say, but Amanda's questions allow her to tell the entire story—about a fall that knocked out some teeth—and to enjoy her classmates' reactions.

In the next room, Ann Manwell, a former working scientist who now teaches science on the junior high level and volunteers to come in to the centers one day a week, holds up some of the world's biggest socks. Some are orange and some are black, and as the students hold them up together and watch to see if the socks are drawn together or pushed apart, they are learning about static electricity and positive and negative charges. Ann asks them to make predictions about what will happen next with the socks, and the students' own subsequent experiences allow them to prove or disprove their own hypotheses. Off to one side of the room, Jerry Ewing, chairman of PRY's board of directors, helps a student with his homework. There are no children sitting passively, waiting to be filled up with knowledge. Everyone is involved in the activities, and everyone is sharing ideas.

Future Plans

The consistency of approach so striking to a visitor to the Creative Learning Centers is something Linda Vereline is constantly working towards. It is not an easy thing to achieve with a program scattered over four sites, and a very wide variety of personnel. She tries to convey to people who work in the centers the sense that, wherever they are located, "...we're one thing, one group...with a goal to provide a place where kids can feel good about themselves and learn." Nevertheless, there is a constant struggle against fragmentation.

The high school students, for example, often become invested in the program as they get caught up in the excitement of working as tutors with the children. They usually move on, however, once they have completed their required time, often to work, or to fulfill other school obligations. Consequently, each semester, the Learning Centers lose a group of people in whom time and resources have been invested, and who had begun to develop into seasoned contributors to the program. Linda would like to find additional funding so she can hire the best of them to stay on.

In the future, Linda Vereline hopes to see better outreach, improved coordination, and the opportunity to build on what the Learning Centers have created so far. Beyond the funding she hopes to secure for the high school tutors, she hopes to get funding to support an advisory staff for parents of the children who speak another language at home, as a way of helping to get those parents involved in their children's education. She also would like to be able to expand those programs that have worked well,

such as reading partners and pen-pal programs between students. A great deal of Learning Centers curriculum comes from its staff sharing successful ideas from their own classrooms, and Linda hopes to be able to get more of their materials and training techniques on paper, to make them easier to pass along. She would also like to start programs with local colleges, so that some of their students can become involved in programs at the LearningCenters, but all of this will require precious time for writing grant applications as well as time for Linda to devote to mentoring and other activities that take place outside the classroom. In the meantime, the Project Reach Youth Learning Centers program represents an agency with a coherent whole-child, whole-language approach, a model for enriching and enhancing children's educational experience at a remarkable range of levels.

A Perspective on Introducing Change

Introduction

We undertook this project in order to profile examples of innovative education in after-school literacy programs and describe the process of educational change within them. Our work has confirmed for us that productive, engaging activities are going on throughout New York City in agencies which serve children and youth after the school day ends: among them, theater workshops, story-telling, writing, and art. While it is possible to categorize the eight programs—those serving younger or older children, those which emphasize tutoring, those which see themselves primarily as reading programs—we are more struck by the great diversity among them. Although East Harlem Tutorial Program (EHTP) and North Bronx Family Service Center both rely on tutors in their education programs, for example, they are quite different from each other in their missions, their student and tutor populations, and the educational strategies they employ. Indeed, we have come to see that in many ways, no two programs are alike. How program leaders think about education and how educational activities actually play themselves out depend to a large extent on context: how the program approaches its other services, its work with children, and its place in the community.

Each of the programs demonstrates complex relationships among its education offerings, its involvement with parents, and its coordination with local schools. Any one of these aspects could function as a lens through which to examine the other two. In our discussions of the case study data and of the themes and issues that would be mentioned in this chapter, we sometimes found ourselves shifting lenses, veering off into each of these different directions. Certainly much more could have been written about the relationships between after-school programs and the schools, for example, or about agencies' successes and problems with encouraging authentic parent and community involvement. We agreed, however, that since our focus was on educational programs and educational change, we would address such other aspects only insofar as they influenced that central subject.

This final chapter, then, has two purposes: to note the nature of the educational changes made in the programs, and to examine the factors that seemed to serve as enablers of and/or barriers to change.

What were these programs actually engaged in doing? We have identified eight specific features characteristic of education offerings at the programs at the time we visited them, many of them congruent with the principles of whole-language teaching described in the introduction to this book. We chose them as features because they appeared to be prominent in at least half of the programs; some are common to almost all of them. Following is a description of each, with specific illustrations as space permits.

1. Activity Orientation to Reading and Writing

Rather than viewing reading and writing as isolated skills for children to practice, all eight programs engaged children in meaningful activities or projects involving reading and writing. The Early Adolescent Helper Program, among others, encouraged some kind of story time: the reading of books to young children by older kids. In the Helper Program, these readings and discussions often led to a further project: the writing of book reviews—with a by-line for child and Helper—for a program-wide publication, "The Helper Review of Books." In other programs these activities or projects often extended across disciplines as well. East Harlem Tutorial, for example, connects reading and writing with the arts, as does the Center for Family Life (CFL) and Interfaith Neighbors. At the Center for Puerto Rican Studies Children's After-School Program, the emphasis is on conducting community inquiry projects with children. These incorporate reading, writing, math, science, and computer work, as well as research techniques and visual representations. The projects at this after-school program do not focus on reading and writing as ends in themselves; rather they are the means by which children come to understand complex concepts and community issues.

2. Reading and Writing as Comfortable and Pleasurable

For Jessie Collins, the turning point in her development of a reading program at Edenwald-Gun Hill Neighborhood Center was remembering her own childhood as a reader. As a result, she decided to emphasize reading for pleasure in Books 'n' Things. A number of program directors, some of whom attended Bowne workshops or visited programs such as the Friendly Place, have developed education activities from their own personal convictions about the joy of reading. In reflecting on the develop-

ment of the story-reading component at the Early Adolescent Helper Program, Joan Schine commented, "... this generation of adolescents, particularly the urban students we work with, has had little experience of books as friends; their relationship to books has been more as something adults, usually teachers, thrust at them." The Early Adolescent Helper Program designed its story-reading component specifically to promote reading for enjoyment; books are chosen by sites and tutors with this in mind. Both Books 'n' Things and East Harlem Tutorial, for example, have designated spaces that have been decorated and organized to encourage a view of reading as something that is engaged in for pleasure. The staff and tutors in these programs see themselves as enthusiastic readers, and place a priority on communicating their love of reading to the children.

3. Reading and Writing Combined with Other Agency Emphases

While a number of the programs promoted similar activities (such as story-reading or journal writing), when these activities became integrated with the goals and mission of the agency they became uniquely appropriate to that agency. A number of the groups are committed to esteem-building and to the development of the whole child, for example, proposing that through their programs, children will come to know more about themselves and their connections to family, school, and community. When negative school experiences have been identified as a reason why children lack confidence, these agencies have attempted to use "schoolwork" as a strategy to contribute to their goal of promoting self-esteem, rather than working against it.

At the Early Adolescent Helper Program, the story-reading component, whose specific goal is to promote in young children and Helpers an enjoyment of reading, also contributes to the program's greater mission of building confidence and a sense of contribution among adolescents through service learning. At Interfaith Neighbors, staff of various programs combine literacy activities—such as journal writing—with art and social service approaches that tap into children's developmental needs and communication skills.

4. Children as Planners and Decision-Makers

Educational offerings occasion another kind of teaching at many programs: cooperative planning and decision-making. Some programs regard this as a necessity for instilling in children a sense of responsibility

for and ownership of their own work time. Others view it as a means of shifting power relationships in the classroom; when children decide how to spend their time, they are learning to be less passive about what they take in.

At Project Reach Youth (PRY), children offer suggestions for projects, and for the homework help part of the day they are encouraged to prioritize their assignments and focus only on those they think will require assistance at the Center. Children and tutors at East Harlem Tutorial spend some time each day on "the pie," their method of planning sessions (and teaching fractions as well). At the Center for Puerto Rican Studies Children's After-School Program, the children now play a role in activities that were formerly the province of only the teacher and the program's researchers. Children take part in assuming the daily responsibilities of classroom activity, organize and present exhibits of their work, and often run the daily review and summary components of class meetings. This program further reinforces children's roles as planners and decision-makers by shifting its curriculum to focus on the theme of "work," an interest which emerged from concerns the children raised during the process of researching their community.

5. Reading and Writing as Social and Collaborative Activities

Although a few of the programs emphasized individualized work at the time we observed them, most were engaging their participants in activities which demonstrated the more current notion that outside of school, a good deal of literacy activity is social, carried out with and for other people. This assumption is evident in the number of programs which encourage staff and tutors to read aloud to groups of children, emphasize collaborative learning strategies, or embed reading and writing activities in group play. At the Center for Puerto Rican Studies Children's After-School Program, a belief in the social nature of literacy permeates the atmosphere. As Pedro Pedraza says, "We wanted [the children] to learn how to work together and to feel responsible for everyone's advancement." Children collaborate at the computers, for example, and work together to construct charts and graphs. The purpose of education in this program is an explicitly social one—to explore and ultimately act on issues related to life in the community of East Harlem.

6. Older Youth as Literacy Partners

It was fairly common for us to encounter older youth serving a critical

role in many programs. These adolescents and young adults—students in junior high or high school or, in some cases, in college—served as role models and literacy "partners." They assisted staff or conducted activities on their own, such as "Stories, Games and Writing" at the Center for Family Life. They read to children and discussed books with them. In at least four programs, these literacy partners are considered to play such an important role that staff have invested heavily in training them in specific techniques such as responding to student writing, or in teaching them other skills to enhance their interaction with the children. As the Early Adolescent Helper Program can attest, such training, combined with opportunities to work closely with children, often results in benefits to the tutors as well as to the children.

7. Literacy Assessment

While many schools use standardized test scores and other skill-based assessments to measure and report achievement, these after-school programs did not narrowly define progress as gains in test scores. In those places which still employ some skill assessment, such as North Bronx Family Service Center, tutors and staff commented that these assessments rarely provide them with information that is useful in planning their sessions with students. This program, among others, is experimenting with some alternative means of assessing its impact on children. Most of the program leaders said that they rely on informal observations by staff or accounts of changes that teachers and parents notice. And most expressed interest in changes in the child as well as changes in children's comfort and proficiency with literacy tasks. Both North Bronx and Project Reach Youth are experimenting with multiple ways to assess children's progress. PRY collects children's writing samples and constructs a reading profile for each student through oral readings and interviews. Staff there also look at children's report cards and test them in math ability. They also hold conferences with parents and children to discuss progress and determine whether needs are being met. At North Bronx, staff are experimenting with using writing portfolios and with documenting some of the anecdotal information which previously has never been recorded.

8. Working from Children's Strengths

A particularly telling characteristic, shared to at least some degree by all eight programs, is that none seems to operate from the notion that the

children they serve are deficient and require fixing through remediation. Strengths, rather than weaknesses, are the focus of their efforts. The essential question, regardless of the mission or the particular student population of the program, seems to be how students' abilities can be recognized and enhanced.

The Process of Change

The studies of these eight diverse projects describe how their educational programs changed—and continue to change—over time. Generally, the changes have centered on providing literacy education which conforms to the agency's overall mission, or to the program leaders' vision—also evolving—of what "good education" for children might include. In none of the programs has change been an easy or quick process. Rather, the studies demonstrate that the development of educational programs took place gradually and over time. Certain programs, like East Harlem Tutorial or Interfaith Neighbors, for example, have a thirty- or forty-year history in which the one constant is change, with the past two or three years showing dramatic shifts undertaken to integrate reading and writing with other agency goals. Other programs are "younger"; our study of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies program, for example, describes its history from its inception in 1985 until 1990; in those five years, its content, its approach to computers, and its physical setting all have undergone a transformation. It is true that in some programs, one change has occasionally been made fairly quickly, such as the creation of a library within an agency. Yet the studies of Books 'n' Things, the Center for Family Life, and East Harlem Tutorial show that while such an innovation suffices initially, it often leads to further challenges and further changes.

A number of factors have figured prominently in the educational change process for these groups. We explore them below, in order to pose the problems other programs might encounter in making change, and to analyze how these particular programs addressed them.

Attention to staffing and structure. Executive directors and, in larger agencies, education directors, have played critical roles in the change process. While the impetus for some changes may have come as a result of opportunities for additional funding, this has not been true in every case. What has been constant, however, is that these program

leaders made themselves familiar with current educational practice, sought out and attended workshops, visited other programs, and restructured time and staffing in the interest of achieving educational goals. While youth programs often suffer a wide gap between the fund-raising priorities of their top management and the staff's actual day-to-day work with children, these particular programs are distinguished by the fact that in almost all of them, the leaders maintain direct contact with children and tutors. This kind of contact contributes to a common understanding, shared at all levels, of what children need and respond to.

In some of the programs, hiring a new executive and/or revising program activities was not supported by members of the staff. At East Harlem Tutorial and Interfaith Neighbors, changes in leadership created such dissonance that many staff felt they had to move on—a phenomenon which may be interpreted as a necessary step for a program's growth. These changes "cleared the air" in some cases and allowed programs to hire new staff whose ideas were more congruent with program goals, and who could be involved in re-examining old ways of tutor training, or in creating new activities. It should be mentioned, however, that limited funding and the part-time nature of most of the work in after-school youth programs contribute to staff turnover almost everywhere. Without consistent staff, even the most carefully built educational program can be eroded.

Currently, most of the programs place a priority on open communication and shared goals among staff. In larger agencies, the key people are often the education directors, such as Linda Vereline at PRY, and those who run subprograms, like Jennifer Zanger at CFL. These staff members serve to some degree as liaisons between central administrators and tutors/participants, and are often the people responsible for tutor training, or for leading staff development sessions for tutors and others. The staff development they provide is also key to the process of creating shared goals, methodology, and philosophy throughout the program.

The experience of these projects indicates that it may not be necessary for every such program to hire an education specialist. One of the most exciting characteristics of these programs is that people who would not have defined themselves as educators have developed as such, and are providing powerful alternatives to the standard forms of literacy education for children. These people, who often came from a social service background, have shown a refreshing willingness to learn about literacy education—with assistance, when appropriate—and to develop activities

which integrate literacy into other program functions, therefore fulfilling their social service mission in ways that differ substantially from the usual casework models.

Contact with educational ideas. Isolation from colleagues and from new ideas has been a fairly common experience for those of us with backgrounds teaching in the schools and in adult literacy programs. We think it is safe to say, however, that those who work in many after-school youth programs experience even less contact. Often operating with scarce resources, tutors receive little training, and staff frequently rush in to teach or provide recreation only after having already spent an exhausting day working in a school. One consequence of these conditions is that without time for reflection and input from others, after-school programs often replicate uncritically the traditional practices of schools—precisely the skill-based work least likely to make learning interesting and relevant to young people. In the face of this general dilemma, each of these eight programs nevertheless has managed to seek out information and resources which have enabled it to build and nourish its educational offerings.

Most of the programs, through the process of educational change, have developed some point of reference, or methodology, or philosophical orientation which guides their activities. We perceived a philosophical orientation—a commitment to a set of beliefs about what education is and should be for—most strongly in the program run by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies. A strong methodology (that is, a coherent set of practices, such as a whole-language approach) is most visible at PRY and North Bronx, and is due mainly to the hiring of education directors with expertise in this area. Other programs—some with strong philosophical orientations in fields other than education—are operating simply from good instincts, or from applications to education of what their leaders and staff know "works" in other fields.

Through diverse means, staff from these programs have come into contact with innovative educational ideas that have set them on the road or bolstered their desire to change. These means have included visits to "model" programs like the Friendly Place, technical assistance from consultants provided by the Bowne Foundation, workshops led by staff from the Institute for Literacy Studies, the American Reading Council, and the Literacy Assistance Center, or discussions with knowledgeable funders such as Dianne Kangisser. In some instances, the hiring of a staff

member with expertise in education, such as Linda Vereline at PRY, Jonathan Shevin at North Bronx, or Clayton Evans at Interfaith Neighbors, has led to significant changes in the program, substantially broadening the definitions of literacy and of education enacted there.

Reflection on the process of change. Susan Ingalls, reflecting on her initial vision of change at East Harlem Tutorial—a vision which included a brightly painted room for reading, a puppet theater, and "a whole lot of different things"—muses, "This was my first year—this opening up." Her phrase exemplifies the sense of possibility that many of these programs' leaders felt as they embarked on a new direction. But what typically transpired after the initial "opening up" were long periods of disappointment, problems, and additional hard work to determine what steps should be taken.

For example, many program directors responded to the invitation from the Bowne Foundation to propose a new project. They attended workshops or received some form of technical assistance to get things going, and many were exhilarated at the prospect of the change they sought. What they found was that such an experience provides only the initial spark; what happens when the ideas gleaned from technical assistance come into contact with the specific conditions of a program is difficult to predict. John Kixmiller describes how staff at CFL came to recognize that the library space they had succeeded in creating was not on its own going to interest children in reading: "We realized that we don't just give children materials in an arts class and ask them to make something out of them .... We needed to make reading an experience for them." At Books 'n' Things, the activities initiated by Jessie Collins have led her to see how much more she needs to know to build a better program and therefore to seek out further expertise. Often an initial program change affects the ways in which staff think about literacy, or the way they relate to other staff members, or respond to children and their parents; substantive program changes can follow later.

Disruption and further problems arose from other sources as well. At East Harlem Tutorial, the educational changes of the previous three years led to broader organizational change, including shifts in the roles of program leaders. In a few programs, change led to conflict with parents, who expressed concern and anxiety about programs' turning away from homework help. While such difficulties are certainly frustrating to live through, we have found that they may be a necessary part of the process

of change, indicating perhaps that agencies are not simply adding on another activity or program, but rather searching to integrate the new in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to specific program conditions. That these organizations responded and were able to develop solutions to such problems indicates that reflection on the changes was also a necessary part of the process. We have learned the importance of not taking this reflection for granted, but at the same time, of not focusing on it either too narrowly or elaborately. For example, while the Center for Puerto Rican Studies deployed a team of researchers to study the development of their after-school program, in other programs such reflection took the more modest form of staff meetings and discussions. The point is to allow for such reflection, rather than becoming diverted by what form it should take.

Partnerships with schools and the community. In the neighborhoods we visited, the community-based organizations that house after-school programs function as a critical link—for parents and children—between home and school, and the relationships they maintain with the schools are complex. Many programs are dependent on local schools for space, referrals, and tutors. Yet some program staff are disheartened by the type of work children seem to be doing in school. Some staff have attempted closer links to the schools, with greater or lesser success—sharing information about students, suggesting activities children might do in class, or seeking to have an impact on a school's computer use through developing a model program. Because such attempts have so often been rejected, the resulting frustration has led some programs to define themselves in opposition to what happens to children in schools.

This oppositional stance has often led to problems with parents, most of whom are deeply concerned that after-school programs help their children to do better in school, in particular by providing "homework help" as a major feature. According to staff in many of the programs we visited, parents voice a number of reasons for being concerned about homework help. As working parents, some feel that they do not have proper time to help their children with schoolwork; others see themselves as lacking the expertise. For still others, the concern for homework help is related to their own dissatisfaction with the schools' ability to educate their children, and their consequent feelings of alienation from the local schools. They nevertheless recognize that their children have to do homework successfully to get promoted, and they perceive the after-school program

as being able to help them convince the schools that their children can succeed.

While program staff share this view, they are faced with a real conflict. In helping children, they see what typically passes for homework. As John Kixmiller observes, "... I think that content has become increasingly workbook-oriented. All of the meaning has been bled out of the things that children are asked to read." Often children are assigned to write lists of words, or fill in blanks, or do other such "busy work." As a result, staff question whether they are indeed fulfilling their responsibility to parents or children if they do not create specific educational opportunities that invite children to use language in more active and challenging ways. Yet assuming such a position, which places a program at odds with its constituency, is difficult, to say the least, especially in a community context.

Most of the eight programs devote some time to homework help, but not as the central or main activity. At PRY and at East Harlem Tutorial, for example, homework help is one of a number of options for how to spend some time each day. Children and tutors decide on the amount of homework help they need each day, and how much time will be devoted to it. The Early Adolescent Helper Program functions in a similar way; it is, however, somewhat immune from the parent conflict because it is a city-wide program and is thus not identified with the communities it serves. At the Edenwald-Gun Hill Neighborhood Center, children receive homework help, but not during the time they spend at Books 'n' Things. CFL likewise detaches homework help from its other educational offerings. Both CFL and PRY have struggled to respond to parents' concerns about homework without sacrificing their other educational goals. In different ways, both programs have involved and trained parents and community members to provide homework help themselves, either at home or at the program. Jackie Glick describes how the parent tutoring program began at CFL: "We said to the mothers that the Center is willing to take on homework help, but only if they participate in bringing it about."

Both Interfaith Neighbors and North Bronx Family Service Center discontinued formal homework help sessions in the last few years, although tutors at both programs provide some informal homework assistance. Only the Center for Puerto Rican Studies program has staunchly refused to provide homework help, but it has struggled with the community about this decision, and has occasionally lost students whose parents are worried that the extra work and time involved in attending the

program will make their children less able to do their homework.

The evolution of many programs' educational offerings has been mirrored by the development of closer relationships with parents and community, which demonstrate a deepening respect for parental concerns. Some programs' original focus on involving parents in dialogue about homework help has expanded to include a wider range of activities involving parents; their aim is to reinforce the notion of education as a family responsibility. In addition to PRY and CFL, Interfaith Neighbors, for example, involves parents in intake interviews and orientation sessions with their children, where they learn what they can expect from the program and have the opportunity to raise questions and concerns. Under Carmen Rivera's leadership, East Harlem Tutorial has initiated parent workshops on a variety of the educational and social issues which parents themselves have identified as being of some concern.

These successful efforts at involving parents have required far more than sincerely extended invitations to come down to the program and participate. At CFL, parents must commit to monthly volunteer time at the agency if their children are to participate in the after-school program. Having parents on site then enables staff to communicate with them more effectively. One option parents now have for fulfilling this volunteer time is to become a tutor. While this strategy for involving parents is somewhat successful, it has attracted only a few steady participants. Letters and announcements have not succeeded in attracting many more, so the agency plans to use participating parents to recruit others through such activities as parent council meetings. At East Harlem Tutorial, Carmen Rivera's first workshop was devoted to what she knew was a critical issue for parents in her district: "schools of choice." The well-attended meetings that followed centered on topics requested by parents at that first meeting. Interfaith Neighbors now requires parents to attend the initial intake session for their children. In this way, parents become familiar with the program at the outset and are more easily called upon later on.

In some cases educational changes have been effected in easy collaboration with parents and community; in other cases negotiation and debate with parents about the goals and activities of the program have been a necessary part of the process. In both instances, we have seen that a history of established relationships with parents permits responsive program development to occur; building a foundation of trust is crucial in order to withstand a program shift that parents might not at first understand or agree with.

Our case studies "freeze" programs at particular moments in 1990, and therefore are incomplete. Given the nature of educational change, and of funding, staffing, and community ties in after-school programs, by now each may already be quite different from how it is described in these pages. Every program we visited identified future aspirations and needs. Some focused on community involvement: Jessie Collins looks forward to the time when Books 'n' Things can involve parents in reading to children, and invite members of the community to borrow books from its library. The leaders at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies believe that their program would achieve its goals best if it were run by a community agency. At East Harlem Tutorial, staff would like to attract more minority tutors who reflect the cultures and identities of the children and provide role models for them. Eileen Lyons has observed that Interfaith Neighbors is attracting new populations of students—for example, speakers of other languages—and would like to design programs specifically for them.

Other programs have as a future goal creating a more cohesive set of offerings: CFL has hired an education consultant whom they hope will formalize some of their innovations, provide training to parents, order materials, and work with children who have difficulty learning. Jonathan Shevin would like his program at North Bronx Family Service Center to acquire more space and an expanded professional staff, both of which would help him integrate literacy activities with such current recreational offerings as theater, crafts, and cooking. According to Linda Vereline, more funding for PRY would help them keep tutors longer, expand successful programs, and encourage more parent involvement.

Still other programs see themselves as disseminating their work in the future: Eileen Lyons would like to begin documenting Interfaith's work, both to determine precisely where they have been successful as well as to share these successes with others. Linda Vereline, too, hopes to have PRY's successful lessons documented so others can benefit. And the Early Adolescent Helper Program hopes to become a national information clearinghouse for educators interested in service learning for young adolescents.

Conclusion

We offer this publication as an alternative to a handbook. In presenting the eight case studies and the discussion that follows them, we make a particular assumption about program development in education.

We believe that program philosophies or components cannot be prescribed by or for others, since they evolve in a complex environment which includes the communities, schools, and families being served, as well as the agency's history, mission, and expertise. Following this belief, we would argue that perhaps the best way to identify ideas that others might wish to try is to present them in the contexts where they developed. We have therefore undertaken to tell a set of stories illustrating ideas and issues for others to consider. While handbooks typically tend toward the global, we have, instead, tried to be as specific as possible; we offer the experiences of these programs as information worth having for those considering education reform in youth programs.

List of Programs and Resources

Programs

Books 'n' Things
Edenwald-Gun Hill Neighborhood Center
1150 East 229th Street
Bronx, New York 10466
Executive Director: Jessie M. Williams-Collins
(212) 652-2232

Center for Family Life
345 43rd Street
Brooklyn, New York 11215
Executive Director: Sister Mary Geraldine
(718) 788-3500

Center for Puerto Rican Studies
Children's After-School Program
Hunter College, City University of New York
695 Park Avenue, Suite 1403
New York, New York 10021
Research Director: Pedro Pedraza
(212) 772-5711

Early Adolescent Helper Program
Center for Advanced Study in Education
Graduate Center of the City University of New York
25 West 43 Street
New York, New York 10036
Executive Director: Joan Schine
Associate Director: Diana Bianco
(212) 642-2947

East Harlem Tutorial Program
2050 Second Avenue
New York, New York 10029
Executive Director: Carmen Vega-Rivera
Coordinator of Education: Susan Ingalls
(212) 831-0650

Interfaith Neighbors
247 East 82nd Street
New York, New York 10028
Executive Director: Eileen Lyons
(212) 472-3567

North Bronx Family Service Center
135 Hall of Fame Terrace
Bronx, New York 10453
Executive Director: James Marley
Director of Education: Jonathan Shevin
(212) 365-1400

Project Reach Youth
421 Seventh Street
Brooklyn, New York 11215
Executive Director: Janet Kelly
(718) 768-0778

Resources

Institute for Literacy Studies
Lehman College, City University of New York
Bronx, New York 10468
(212) 960-8758
Contact: Karen Griswold, Lena Townsend

Literacy Assistance Center
15 Dutch Street
New York, New York 10038
(212) 267-5309
Contact: Sara Hill

The Robert Bowne Foundation
345 Hudson Street
New York, New York 10014
(212) 924-5500
Contact: Dianne Kangisser

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