



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What happens to a dream deferred? We all know the answer to that poignant question posed by Langston Hughes, the Shakespeare of Harlem, more than 50 years ago. What happens is what happened in Harlem's recent past: soaring crime and declining employment rates, homes gutted and abandoned, the effect and emblem of the community's abandoned dreams.

Today, the Harlem Children's Zone's TRUCE program is trying to answer an updated, and considerably more upbeat, version of that prophetic question. What happens when a dream is encouraged, nurtured, and cultivated? What happens when the imaginations of our young people are nourished by exposure to the arts and humanities, focused through the acquisition of skills, harnessed to academic achievement, guided by a larger purpose?

What happens is what's happening at TRUCE right now: a vital, creative outpouring. At TRUCE, young people study an array of fine and media arts, including videography, journalism, graphic design, theater, photography, painting, poetry. They learn the skills that enable them to express themselves clearly and eloquently. And, most important, they come to understand how they can use their powers of expression in the service of a greater good: their personal development and academic achievement, leadership among their peers, service to their community, country, world.

The young people of TRUCE are given a great deal. Every day they work with some of the city's most accomplished artists and teachers, in a state-of-the-art media center, learning the most highly prized skills of the 21st century, communications skills. But much is expected of these young people in return: discipline, dedication, and hard work.

TRUCE's accomplishments have been nothing short of amazing. TRUCE students now write, design, advertise, and distribute a community newspaper published three times a year. They script, tape, and edit an award-winning weekly cable television show. They design and plant community gardens, beautify Harlem's public spaces with murals, and raise the level of community discourse through a host of public forums and events highlighting issues of common concern.

The statistics show that TRUCE students are also excelling in the classroom. Last year, 15 out of 16 TRUCE seniors graduated on time and were accepted into colleges. And that same year TRUCE students passed Regents exams at a rate one-third higher than the citywide average. But statistics are only the beginning. The whole story is in the way that the lives of young people have been transformed through TRUCE. That's the story that we've begun to tell in this issue of *A Look Inside*—the story of dreams realized. We hope you enjoy reading it.

GEOFFREY CANADA
President/CEO



TRUCE

On January 25th, the Harlem Children's Zone's TRUCE program received the prestigious Coming Up Taller award in a ceremony at the White House. TRUCE was one of 17 community arts groups nationwide recognized by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities as "an exemplary program fostering the creative and intellectual development of America's children through education and practical experience in the arts and humanities."

Ndeyedaba "Daba" Diakhate, a TRUCE student, accompanied Laura Vural, the program's founder and director, to Washington, D.C., to accept the award.

"It was really exciting," says Diakhate.

"I was very happy that TRUCE was honored for doing good for the community. I tried to make the most of the opportunity, to take in everything thoughtfully and carefully, the way we learn to look at things in TRUCE, to see not just the First Lady, Laura Bush, presenting the awards inside the White House, but the protestors behind the fence outside the White House.

"You need to see the whole picture. That's one of the most important things we learn at TRUCE: don't just accept things at face value—only what's put in front of you, only what's in your neighborhood or on your TV screen. Get out there and look for yourself and think for yourself and don't be afraid to get up and tell the rest of the world how things look to you. That's what matters. At TRUCE we learn a lot of skills: writing, research, graphic arts, poetry, video, drama. But we also learn why those skills are important: to be able to express what you really see and feel and think. And most important of all, to use your power of expression in the service of something worthwhile—for what you believe in, what you care about, for your ideals, for your community."



Here we work together with other HCZ programs to fuse art and youth development with literacy and toward academic success.

A Story of Purpose

The story of TRUCE (The Renaissance University for Community Education) begins more than two decades ago, when Laura Vural created the Poetry/Video Learning Project, a dropout prevention program launched in the English classes of several large, troubled New York City public schools. Through the project, students wrote poetry and then collaborated with established artists to create and film visual treatments of their work. The remarkable success of this experimental initiative in boosting school attendance rates led Vural to develop two ambitious new dropout-prevention programs: Rise & Shine Productions, established in 1985, which integrated media into the broader school curriculum, followed by the

Real Deal, a citywide after-school program in which students created their own cable television show.

“Working with these talented young people, I could see in their creative work that they were brilliant,” says Vural. “Then I’d look at their report cards and see 55s. There was a disconnect. We did some tutoring to help them improve their academic performance and get into college, but I could see that was not enough. We kept asking ourselves: How can we help young people to really grow? How can we work with them over time? We saw that we needed to broaden and deepen our operation with more and different kinds of support, more continuity, more family and school and community involvement. In a word, we needed to collaborate.

“That’s when I began meeting with [HCZ President and CEO] Geoff Canada. We were on the same wavelength. Talking with Geoff, I began to see the advantage of focusing on one community, Harlem, and making a lasting difference, of becoming community-based. I thought, the reason why I’m here is because of the kids. The reason why I’m here is because I really, really, really truly believe that art saved my life. And I believe I could do that for other people. Therefore I’m going to make this leap of faith and do this work with Geoff.”

In 1991, TRUCE became a program of the Harlem Children’s Zone, then called Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families. In 1998, TRUCE moved into an abandoned parochial school building on St. Nicholas Avenue and 118th Street and began renovating the interior to accommodate the programs and participants that would soon fill its halls and its rooms with creative and powerful and purposeful activities.

“That first summer when we moved in we renovated the space and started up our programs at the

same time,” says Vural. “Yes, we took on a great deal at once, but I think we had to. I believe these programs are not just important, they are critical for survival. These are life skills, and they are skills young people are not getting in most schools or in traditional arts programs. Here we work together with other HCZ programs to fuse art and youth development with literacy and toward academic success. And all of that is put in the context of purpose: what do I want to be in the world? That’s the most important question for young people. And we hope to help them pose and answer that question, and then give them some of the critical skills they need to live up to the purpose they have defined for themselves.”

Helping Teens Find Their Voice

TRUCE occupies three floors of the five-story former school building in which it is located, and there is no question which three floors those are. Visitors walking past the security desk at the front entrance and up the main staircase begin to see a change on the second floor, where the walls suddenly fill up with drawings and photos and posters and the quiet gives way to a low hum of activity. Up one more floor and past the hallway doors, the scene explodes in a burst of movement and color. There are young people everywhere: in front of computer screens, writing in journals, viewing video cuts; animated and voluble while brainstorming in small groups of five and six, blocking the actors’ gestures a new play or critiquing a documentary about AIDS. Murals painted by the students cover many of the brightly colored walls, and much of the remaining wall space is taken up with hand-printed work deadlines, messages, reminders, schedules, lesson breakdowns. Taped to the front of a bookcase in one large room is a sheet of unlined paper on which are written several definitions of the word *purpose*. The first definition is “an aim or goal.”

“We put up those definitions as food for thought,” says Yvette Russell, managing editor of TRUCE’s newspaper *Harlem Overheard*. “We want them to think about what *purpose* means in general and what it means to them in particular. Each year, we choose a theme around which we organize our very different efforts and projects. This year, the theme is purpose. But in a sense, purpose is our central theme every year.”

Harlem Overheard is produced entirely by the young people of TRUCE and is one of the five primary TRUCE programs. The others are the Real Deal media arts program; A Different Lens, which focuses on individual artistic development; the H.O.T Works theater program; and the Insight Center, which provides academic and personal support to TRUCE participants.

TRUCE operates five days a week (and sometimes on Saturdays), after school, over three cycles: fall, winter/spring, and summer. About 140 students, age 12-19, are enrolled in TRUCE currently, and most participate in all sessions throughout the year, often in more than one program. Average daily attendance during the school year is 65-75 students,





with the majority attending three days a week. The programs are labor intensive and have a high student/teacher ratio. TRUCE has eight full-time staff members, nine full-time and three part-time AmeriCorps members, and a network of freelance tutors and artists, about six of whom are working on TRUCE projects at any one time.

The different TRUCE programs are anchored in dedicated rooms equipped to meet specific programmatic requirements. Much of the work for *Harlem Overheard* is done in a bright room on the third floor filled with desks, chairs, and computers loaded with both word-processing and graphics software. As the winter session began this year, there were 34 students signed up to participate in *Harlem Overheard*.

"We start every session fresh," says Russell. "Even though some of our students have been with *Harlem Overheard* for more than one cycle, we begin with a clean slate, working together as one whole group, giving everyone the option to work on skills and projects that interest them: researching, journalistic reporting and writing, graphic design, advertising. Then we break up into teams, usually about 12 students working on graphic design and the rest on the journalistic and business end. Separately, each team works through various story ideas, columns, thematic approaches. Then we pair up, journalists with designers, and marry the words and images to create the final product, the paper. Throughout each production cycle, a small group of students works on marketing and promotion of the paper, and even the distribution is done by students."

Harlem Overheard is published three times a year, with a circulation of 25,000. A free paper, it is distributed to local public schools, libraries, community centers, and businesses, and through prominently placed neighborhood distribution bins. Content focuses on current events, community

issues, especially youth issues, sports, the arts, and entertainment. Since the paper was founded in 1996, its journalists have conducted interviews with many prominent leaders and celebrities, from former Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields to rapper Jay-Z, and written scores of tough investigative pieces on subjects relevant to young people's lives, such as crime, racism, police brutality, and teen pregnancy. The paper is run professionally, with strict deadlines and high standards. But the staff never lose sight of the long-term goal: the personal development of the young participants.

"Each session we organize around a concept (this session it's judgment) within the larger yearly theme (purpose)," says Russell. "We design the program so that students create work for the paper that they can also use as portfolio pieces, which they can present when they're interviewing with colleges or for jobs. We're always looking at the overarching goal here: how can this program, these skills, help our students to succeed academically, personally, professionally, as productive and caring members of their community."

Connecting By Communicating

To reach that goal, the staff of *Harlem Overheard*, like all TRUCE staff members, employ teaching methods that are innovative, engaging, and rigorous. The staff is equally demanding and supportive of students, and the work starts in earnest from the very first meeting.

"Today we're going to write a persuasive piece," says Pablo Wolfe, assistant managing editor of *Harlem Overheard*. Today is in fact the first day that the journalists group has met as a unit in the new winter session, and the young reporters and writers seem a little startled as Wolfe passes out pens and notepads for them to use immediately. "What is persuasion?" he asks.

"To make someone want something." "To convince them." "To win them to your side."

"All good definitions," Wolfe responds to the chorus of answers from the students. "And I'd like to add one more thing. Persuasion is an exchange. When you persuade, you want to get or achieve something, but you're offering something in return. So here's your assignment, for right now in class. Imagine you are a reporter with a very important youth publication and you are trying to get the interview of your dreams with anyone—choose a living person or some historical figure—that you really admire. You have already been turned down once by your interview subject, or by that subject's agent. They say you're too young, the interview would be a waste of time for them. Now you are going to write a letter that absolutely persuades them to let you have that interview. You've got fifteen minutes. Let's get started."

Groans, protests, laughter are quickly followed by the usual writers' excuses

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Improving Every Aspect of Young Lives

Most of the staff members and artists who work with TRUCE students are successful professionals in their fields. Laura Vural began her career as a writer and producer of television news and remains an active writer and artist. Yvette Russell was an editor at *Essence* magazine and director of Russell Simmons' online publishing venture before she became managing editor of *Harlem Overheard*. James Horton, coordinator of the Real Deal media arts program and H.O.T Works theater project, is a veteran actor and emerging playwright. These teachers model creative careers for the young people they work with. They also model creative lives illuminated by the purpose of community service.

"I always loved acting, and I had work as an actor from the moment I arrived in New York City in 1999," says Horton. "Soon I got involved in prop styling for the theater, where I was making a really good living. Then 9/11 happened, and I knew, right after the shock was over, that I needed to become involved in work that really meant something, that had the possibility to change lives for the better. I asked around, heard about HCZ, and joined up as Peacemaker in 2001. I never really looked back. In 2004 I was promoted to my current position, full time. I keep my hand in, acting Off-Broadway and now playwriting. But I've put my heart and soul into TRUCE. This program puts the arts to their ultimate good use: improving every aspect of young people's lives."

One reason TRUCE arts programs are so broadly effective is that they are integrated broadly, and seamlessly, into an array of protocols and programs promoting, among other things, academic achievement, youth development, community service, and leadership. Here's how that integration works in the Real Deal.

The craft taught in Real Deal is video production. At the beginning of each year, Real Deal students meet as a single group and study the video work of others, including documentaries produced by the program's teachers, all professional videographers, and by former Real Deal students. Media literacy, a component of all TRUCE work, helps students understand the basic principles of their craft. With that foundation, they are ready to begin learning the specific skills their craft entails. In the case of video, those skills include scriptwriting, camera work, editing, acting, production oversight, proposal writing, and budgeting.

Meeting three times a week, Real Deal students create at least four finished works, such as public service announcements, short films, documentary videos, and poetry videos, as well as producing an award-winning cable television show that appears weekly on Manhattan Neighborhood Network. The Real Deal's work has been highlighted in national arts festivals as well as on national and international media, including HBO and PBS. One Real Deal video, *Around My Block*, was prominently featured at a major Whitney Museum exhibition in New York.

"We get a lot out of our young people in part because we expect a lot," says Horton. "And we make

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from the 13 rookie journalists at the meeting: "There's not enough time," "I need to think about it first," "I have to do more research." Two staff members and two AmeriCorps workers counter those excuses with vigorous encouragement as they work the room, speaking quietly with each student. "Come on, you're great on your feet." "You've got a lot to say, I know, because I've heard you speak." "Take the lead; go ahead and show everyone how it's done."

The encouragement pays off. One by one, the young reporters start composing, then reading their letters of persuasion—to Tupac Shakur, to Leonardo daVinci, to Oprah, to Machiavelli. And as each reads a first draft, the others, guided by the staff, voice approval of good efforts along with constructive suggestions for improvements. Students revise their work as they listen to the comments of others. Damaris Patterson, one of the last students to read, acknowledges the assistance she's received from her peers and teachers.

"I've been listening to all of you, and I thank you for your help in composing this letter that's going to get me an interview with my idol, Alicia Keys," says Patterson. "And here it is: 'Alicia, you may think I'm too young, but when you sing about God and love, you can't believe how deeply I connect with your message. You have given me a lot, but I have a lot to offer you. In my newspaper, I speak to the youth who buy your CDs. I'm one of the young people who are your main audience, and I know what questions they want you to answer, because they're my questions too. You and I each have a lot to gain from talking to each other. And when we meet, when you see how enthusiastic I am about you and your words, you may just have to write a song about me.'"

Amid the cheers and clapping that follow her reading, Patterson makes a final point to the group: "And by the way, I don't have to imagine that I write for an important youth publication. I do write for an important youth publication—*Harlem Overheard*."





our expectations known from the moment they enter the program.” Once students are accepted into TRUCE, they are asked to review and sign the TRUCE Treaty. The document defines the program in four ways: a safe space, a place of respect and support, a place where we take responsibility for our actions, a professional work environment. The treaty also lays out strict rules of conduct, including these: there are no weapons, drugs, alcohol in or near TRUCE premises; we are committed to communicating honestly and professionally; we keep our appointments and commitments; we convey a positive professional image. The consequences of violating the treaty are spelled out starkly: immediate suspension from the program with the possibility of termination. But the rewards for honoring the treaty are considerable, and everyone seems to appreciate them.

“This is a positive, safe place, a good place to come and work and help out others and help yourself at the same time.” That’s how Trevis Funches describes TRUCE. Funches has been in the program for three years. Now 15 years old and in the tenth grade, he says he’s begun to understand the wider implications of his work with TRUCE as he grows up in the program.

“I heard about the program from friends,” says Funches, “and at first I thought it was just a place to hang out. But when I got here, they let me know right away, this is serious business. It’s fun, but it’s serious. The treaty tells you the rules, and you have to agree to the rules to stay in TRUCE. But the rules are good. You start out right. I began to understand that by following the rules, I put myself on a good road to be a successful person. I learned that I’m good at some things, and that I can use what I’m good at to be somebody. And to help others too.”

One of the things Funches is good at is acting. Soon after he joined TRUCE, he entered the Real Deal program and quickly discovered that he liked being in front of the camera. “Acting and basketball, two

things I love to death,” says Funches. “I sleep with my basketball. At TRUCE, I got to see that I could do more than just play basketball, I could make basketball part of a bigger plan to be a successful person.”

In a TRUCE-produced public service video broadcast, Funches is cast as a basketball player with severe asthma. In the video, he stages a realistic and frightening asthma attack on the court, and then shows how an inhaler is properly used to alleviate asthma symptoms. The video short is used as part of the HCZ Asthma Initiative, a program that aims to reduce childhood asthma morbidity in Central Harlem. TRUCE media projects are routinely used to advance HCZ goals and are incorporated into many HCZ programs, notably The Baby College parent education program and Community Pride neighborhood development initiative. Weaving TRUCE’s work into the broader aims of HCZ has given many young people, including Funches, a strong sense of dedication to, and pride in, community service.

“I now think of myself as a positive person and a leader,” says Funches. “Here’s what I learned at TRUCE. If you just play around all the time, with no discipline and no goals, you can never change anything, including your own life. But if you work hard and follow the rules, you can have fun, and you can not only change your life to be better, you can help change your whole community to be better.”

Collaborating for Unity Among Communities

One of the most ambitious TRUCE initiatives for community improvement is Umoja. Named for the Swahili word meaning “unity,” Umoja was developed in response to growing tensions in Harlem between African immigrants living in the neighborhood and local African-American residents. In part, the growing tensions seemed to parallel the growing numbers of immigrants. According to U.S. Census Bureau figures, the number of African immigrants living in Harlem jumped from 42,000 in 1990 to 92,000 in 2000. But the situation seemed to worsen dramatically after the events of September 11, 2001.

“One day not long after 9/11, walking to the train station I saw kids throwing things at people praying, taunting them, Muslim African immigrants,” says Laura Vural. “HCZ program staff was certainly aware of tensions between African Americans and African immigrants in Harlem. And, along with community leaders, we had been thinking of ways to address the issue. But 9/11 gave us a real sense of urgency. That inspired TRUCE to begin collaborating with Community Pride to develop Umoja, a youth-led initiative to promote understanding and harmony among these two Harlem populations.”

The project began as an initiative of the Real Deal, with a small group of about 14 students meeting twice weekly to discuss issues of identity and stereotypes. TRUCE students had first-hand experience of these issues. In school, the children of recent African immigrants are often teased and bullied because they are seen as different from their classmates.

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With the help of Community Pride, the TRUCE students expanded their conversation, meeting with the leaders of local immigrant groups, reaching out to different community constituencies to broaden their understanding of the issues. The students videotaped those conversations about culture, identity, and community, and soon began creating a documentary to use as part of a public forum on those issues in Harlem.

Kadidatou Magassa, now a 14-year-old ninth grader, started working on the project as a video editor in 2003, shortly after joining TRUCE. "Umoja changed me," says Magassa. "Examining stereotypes and seeing how people judge one another—all of us, including me—has helped to make me more open-minded. Now I accept people for what they are. I don't say, 'She's not smart. I don't have time for her.' Or, 'He's kind of a nerd. I'm staying away from him.' I've learned to get past that. You have to get past that if you want to get anything done. Because most work is done through teamwork. That's another thing I learned. Teamwork is really important. You can't shut people out because you have some issue with their personality. That destroys the team. All of us in Umoja were a team. We were all teenagers, and we all had our little irritating things about us. But we got past that, we worked together, and we produced some amazing stuff."

The Umoja group produced a full-length documentary about relations between African-American residents and African immigrants in Harlem, which they screened at two large youth summits held at Columbia Teachers College. They also showed trailers of the documentary at a host of public events in the community, facilitated public dialogues between African Americans and African immigrants, and involved parents and teachers in public discussions of the issue. The work of the Umoja group, done in collaboration with Community Pride, was featured

on radio and in various human rights panels held throughout New York City.

All of Umoja's work was conceived and carried out by TRUCE students themselves. Their accomplishments enhanced the skills and self-confidence of the student participants, and, as is often the case with TRUCE projects, those enhancements were then applied to other areas of personal development. Magassa explains. "Before I worked on Umoja, I always knew I had a lot to say, but I wouldn't always speak out," she says. "Instead of getting out and doing things, I'd stay at home, watch TV, and eat. But TRUCE lets us kids accomplish something, like we did in Umoja. It showed me what I could do if I put my mind to something and really worked at it. That motivated me to begin really applying myself in school and working much harder with the Insight Center at TRUCE."

Gaining Insight into Academic Skills

The Insight Center provides a wide range of academic and personal support to TRUCE students, improving their performance in high school and preparing them for success

in college and in their careers. That support includes academic skills development workshops; individual tutoring; preparation for eighth grade, Regents, and SAT examinations; assistance with the college application process, such as college site visits, essay writing, scholarships, and school selection; and, for students with special needs, individual and group counseling and social service referrals. The program also supports student internships in media organizations such as Showtime.

Insight takes a case management approach, treating every student's needs individually and holistically. At the beginning of each cycle, all TRUCE students and their parents are required to sign a form agreeing to bring to the Insight Center a progress report completed by each of their school teachers every two weeks; to meet with an Insight point person at least once during that two-week period to review school progress; to attend all mandatory tutoring sessions arranged jointly by them and their point person; to attend all standardized test preparation offered by Insight; and to be diligent in all phases of the college application process. All the staff art teachers work at the Insight Center one day a week, while, the academic tutors are assigned to different art units once a week. In that way, students begin to view the academic and arts components as a single program in which they are helped to succeed on many levels.

The results are impressive. In 2005, 15 of 16 TRUCE seniors (94 percent) graduated from high school, applied to college or technical school, and were accepted into at least one school. In addition, 41 TRUCE students from ninth through twelfth grade took 83 Regents exams in January and June, and altogether 66 exams, or 80 percent, were passed, a performance rate nearly one-third higher than the city average.

Magassa fits the TRUCE profile well. "I'm doing great in school," she says. "My last report card I got two



A's and the rest B's. I'm working with my Insight point person to keep improving, because I want to get into a good college. Right now, I'm thinking about Harvard because I think I might want to study law, or NYU because I could decide to become a teacher. There's also Smith, because I like science and might want to become a doctor. But I love to dance, so maybe it will be Juilliard. I'm in the ninth grade, and I'm interested in a lot of things. I know I'll have to narrow my choices eventually, but right now, I just want to do really well so that whatever I choose, I'll be able to do it."

With Responsibility Comes Empowerment

The sense of empowerment felt by most TRUCE students is fostered by the real authority they have in the program, authority in direct proportion to the responsibilities they are required to take on. "The young people completely run the show," says James Horton. "This is their program. Essentially, we're here to guide them. They tell us what they want to accomplish, we design a program that helps them to do that, within the broader goals of TRUCE, and they go out and do it."

In H.O.T. Works, the TRUCE theater program, students have chosen to write, stage, direct, design sets and costumes for, and act in plays. H.O.T Works students have produced plays performed at the National Black Theatre, Off Broadway, in venues throughout New York City and State, and for youth programs and colleges. They also produce theatrical events, sometimes designed to showcase their work and often to promote the overall goals of HCZ.

H.O.T Works students begin each cycle by studying scripts and attending live theatrical performances,

occasionally featuring the work of their teachers, all theater artists. They then break into two groups, experienced and new students, and develop scripts of their own. Everyone is encouraged to write, at least a script outline, so that they have a working knowledge of the core material of their craft. Then they learn about the many skills, on and behind stage, that theater work entails. And finally, they choose the specific areas they want to study in depth. For Donnell Van Duyne, those were playwrighting and acting.

"Theater is a blast," says Van Duyne. "You imagine

something, then you put it into words. When you act out those words, in front of an audience, they become so real. And they have power, they make the audience think."

Van Duyne has scripted and acted in numerous H.O.T Works productions, but his favorites are those with a clear social message aimed at his peers, particularly a theatrical piece about AIDS, staged for an HCZ-sponsored HIV Youth Summit, and the plays produced as part of the yearly TRUCE Kwanzaa event.

"I like my plays to give information," says Van Duyne. "At the HIV Youth Summit, we gave kids lots of information about the importance of using condoms. That could save your life. And in the last Kwanzaa play, *Things Given*, we gave information about family respect and peace. I was very proud to be part of that, because a lot of young children attended the performance at the TRUCE auditorium. Kids often see violence, and they think that's the way things have to be. But they don't have to be that way. You can choose respect, starting with your own family, and peace, starting with peace inside yourself. I think our play had a good influence on the kids who saw it. It's a really good feeling to be a good influence."

Van Duyne, 14 years old and a freshman in high school, is now in his fourth year with TRUCE. He comes to the program every day after school, and his enthusiasm and diligence have been noticed, and rewarded, by his peers and teachers. Last year, Van Duyne was appointed to the Teen Advisory Board, the student governing body, consisting of about a dozen student leaders, responsible for a variety of TRUCE functions.

Student applications to TRUCE are reviewed by the Teen Advisory Board, and applicants must appear in person before the board, which has the power to accept or reject them. Once students are accepted, it is board members that conduct their orientation to the program, and board members make very clear to new students that TRUCE demands commitment and dedication. All new teachers must conduct a workshop representative of their work for TAB members. And the board has a say in whether or not all new teachers and tutors are hired. The Teen Advisory Board also runs a number of TRUCE and HCZ events, including the yearly HCZ Annual Spring Ball to honor youth achievement.

"TRUCE has taught me to be a very responsible person," says Van Duyne. "And on the Teen Advisory Board, I have a lot of responsibility. It keeps me on top of my game. I always want to do my best now. In school, I have a 90 average. I love science. And I love kids. That's why I'm going to medical school, to become a pediatrician. Then I'll be able to do what I love and have a positive influence on kids at the same time, just like I do now with TRUCE."

A Long-term Commitment to Success

TRUCE has set for itself a most ambitious purpose: using the arts and humanities to encourage academic success and ensure that young people become responsible, caring, self-sufficient adults. All TRUCE

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Through TRUCE, I got a job at Broadway Video [pictured above], where I'm now assistant editor and client coordinator.

programs serve this purpose in their own way, and each uses different products as part of the process. For Harlem Overheard, it's the newspaper; for the Real Deal, video; H.O.T. Works uses theater; and the Insight Center, academic work. A Different Lens employs a variety of genres in the artistic and intellectual development of young people. Students create paintings, masks, sculptures, photos, and multimedia installations and employ these artworks in community arts and community improvement initiatives. Different Lens students also directly enhance their neighborhood environment by designing, planting, and maintaining community gardens and creating murals in public spaces.

TRUCE was designed to work intensively with young people over time. While the statistics used to measure its success are impressive—extraordinary high school graduation and college acceptance rates, excellent test scores—perhaps the best measure of success is in the quality of the lives of long-time TRUCE students. Loretta Wallace is one of those students.

Wallace signed up with TRUCE in 1993, when she was only 12 years old and the project, then called Rise & Shine Productions, was still located on 42nd Street, in Midtown Manhattan. "I'm a Truce Head," says Wallace. "I was raised in the program, I've participated in most TRUCE projects, and I think, next to my family, it's been the strongest, and best, influence on my life. I grew up in Harlem, but I led a very sheltered life. My mother was strict, and I didn't go out of the house much after school. When I first joined TRUCE, it was partly a way to get out of the house, but as soon as I discovered film editing, I was hooked. I was at TRUCE every afternoon, studying video and learning the ropes."

TRUCE students are paid a stipend when they participate in the program and meet all programmatic requirements. Today, the baseline stipend is \$45 paid every two weeks. Students with more

responsibility, or more experience, earn slightly more. The payments are a tool to accustom the students to the reward system of the workplace, but they also give the project a more professional feel for the students, and bolster students' sense of achievement and self-sufficiency.

"TRUCE was my first job," says Wallace. "And it made me love work. The projects I got to take part in were really exciting. As a sophomore in high school, I worked on a full-length documentary on the Somalian supermodel, Waris Dirie, who had started a campaign against female genital mutilation. TRUCE made the documentary and NHK, the Japanese broadcasting company, followed our crew around, covering us covering the story.

"TRUCE got me through high school. The high school kids seemed really superficial next to my TRUCE friends. At TRUCE, we were into social issues, trying to do something to make the world better. The high school kids would give me a funny look when I talked about those things, and say, 'What are you, some kind of activist?' As if that were a bad name.

"TRUCE, and the video work I learned there, helped me to see a much bigger picture of the world, and of my own life. When I applied for college, I already knew what I wanted to do: study film and work in the industry. When I got accepted at Bard College, I was absolutely determined to do well and finish on time. And I did. Many city kids who went to Bard when I went there dropped out. Life is different outside the city, and it was hard sometimes. But I had a goal, and no way I was not going to meet it. Not after all those years of TRUCE, with Laura and my other teachers saying over and over, 'You have to make your deadlines. You have to suck it up and meet your obligations.'

"I worked at TRUCE all through college, in the summers and on the long inter-session breaks. In my senior year, I got an internship at Showtime Networks, subsidized by HCZ. Last summer I graduated, on time and with very good grades. And through a mentor I got in high school through TRUCE, I got a job at [the television and film production company] Broadway Video, where I'm now assistant editor and client coordinator.

"When I first joined TRUCE, my mother had a hard time understanding why I spent so much time there. But she always wanted me to have big dreams. When I was little, I told her I wanted to be a secretary because I liked computers. She said maybe I should think about other things I could do with computers as well. The first time I saw my mother cry was when I gave her a birthday gift of a video I made especially for her. That's when I knew that she knew why I loved this work so much. My goal now is to own my own video production business one day. I'm thinking ahead and planning. Some day my mother may need me for support, the way she supported me all those years. And I want to be able to give back. Growing up, I got a lot of support from TRUCE, too. TRUCE is a second family to me. TRUCE showed me the need to give back and the way to give back: by trying your best, developing your talents, and using them for the best purposes you know."

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