

Getting Children to and through College



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Giving her daughter what she didn't have

The HCZ pathway to success starts with hard-working new parents like Priscilla Rumnit, who was handed a Baby College brochure one day on the street, unaware that it was a ticket to get her baby girl into a support system that would stay with her all the way through college.

When Priscilla was growing up, she helped raise her siblings and thought “I got this” when she was pregnant. But when little Ari arrived, she recalled, “I realized there was a difference between being a sibling and a parent.”

Through our early-childhood programs, Priscilla learned how to parent when she was low on patience, developed an important network of other parents, and saw her daughter learn to socialize with peers.

“I’m getting to see her flourish,” Priscilla said, noting she visits Ari’s pre-k class often and even reads to the children. During the one-month summer break, Priscilla said with a laugh, “She asked me every single day why she wasn’t in school.”

Because she did not go to college, Priscilla said, “I want her to have the experiences I didn’t have.” With her daughter one year away from our K-12 charter school, Priscilla knows Ari’s journey to and through college is well under way.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Scoring a musical scholarship

As part of our approach of nurturing the entire child, we round out the education of our Promise Academy charter-school students with regular musical instruction. In these classes we discovered fifth-grader Mansour’s talent.

To make sure he could reach his potential, we provided him with more-intensive clarinet instruction. The extra work helped him win a competitive scholarship for a year of free lessons at the prestigious Manhattan School of Music. The lessons will prepare Mansour for auditions for the conservatory’s precollege program, which would give him professional training.

“When I don’t have a lot of homework, I practice every day,” he said. “My dad helps me - we play together in the mornings before school.”

Mansour said he is very excited to pursue music composition as he works toward his other goal of studying engineering in college.



MIDDLE SCHOOL

Competing nationally in math

Abdou was struggling in math when he enrolled at HCZ’s A Cut Above after-school program, so we made sure he began working with a tutor. The staff then introduced him to NBA Math Hoops, helping to build his skills while having fun with the basketball strategy board game, which combines math, logic and statistics.

The combination worked and then some. The formerly struggling math student mastered the game and placed in the top four teams in New York City. That made him a finalist among 35,000 students nationwide and earned him a trip to the national championship in Detroit.

The Detroit Pistons hosted Abdoul among the 20 middle-school finalists and though he didn’t place in the second round, he learned a lot, and had fun cheering on other competitors from the sidelines.

“I think a lot of people don’t like math because it is complicated,” he said. “But I love math and can’t wait to compete again.”



HIGH SCHOOL

Scholar earns two diplomas

Tailoring our efforts to the individual needs of each student led to a unique and happy outcome for Aminata this past June: She earned *both* a high-school diploma and an associate’s degree.

Raised in Africa and Harlem, Aminata was a determined student and graduated from Promise Academy II as salutatorian. Having gained college credits at Promise through the school’s innovative partnership with Bard Early College, she decided to take her senior-year courses remotely while attending Bard College at Simon’s Rock in Massachusetts. “I like a challenge,” she said.

Now she is a political science major at the University at Albany, heading for a bachelor’s degree and working with our College Success Office. “It’s very important to me to do something I love,” she said, and hopes to embark on a career to improve education, particularly in developing countries.

COLLEGE

Looking to Change the World

“I am passionate about the education of women and children,” said Fama. “I am looking for the most effective way to do it, even if I have to create my own organization.”

That passion comes from her own life experiences and the opportunities she was given through the Harlem Children’s Zone.

At 11 years old, Fama immigrated to America with her mom, and both had little knowledge of English. A year later, Fama was enrolled in an HCZ after-school program, where she became comfortable enough to practice her conversational skills and was able to sharpen her English, fueled by her love of reading.

Today, Fama is a CUNY Geoffrey Canada Scholar and a senior at City College of New York majoring in international studies. Because HCZ staff knew of Fama’s aspirations, we helped her get a valuable internship at UNICEF. She also earned a Public Policy & International Affairs Fellowship through the University of California, Berkeley. Last summer, she conducted research on illiteracy among Senegalese women.



With the support of our College Success Office, Fama is applying to graduate schools to get her closer to her dream of giving back to others just as she was helped by HCZ.



Enajia, PA II High School Senior

College 101

Exposing high schoolers to the next step

“You develop as a person, learn more about college life and learn how to be more responsible,” said James of a transformational few weeks he spent at Cornell University as a rising high-school senior.

Now an information systems major at Stony Brook University, James said the experience was about way more than just taking a college course and that it was instrumental in his being able to hit the ground running his freshman year.

James’ eye-opening experience and those of other HCZ high-school seniors is why HCZ sends many to college campuses during the summer. These college exposures allow rising seniors to get acclimated to college-level coursework and independence, to meet a diverse array of students, and to get a real understanding of the new challenges they are going to face next year.

Even though our seniors were nervous about being far from home, not all of them went as far as Enajia, who studied in Senegal this summer. In her post-colonial urbanism course, Enajia focused on energy sustainability projects.

“I was excited to be around things that were different than what I see every day,” said Enajia. After this experience, she is now considering studying international affairs in conjunction with marketing and creative writing.

“I became a harder worker,” said Enajia. “The kids around me spoke four languages and worked so hard!”

Students were also exposed to the demands

that will be made of them in college classrooms. Darius attended Syracuse University and was immediately taken aback by the self-discipline he needed to keep up with the coursework. He learned that being late for class in college was not an option.

“My professor was stern, but fun,” said Darius. “I learned how to stop procrastinating and how to be on top of time management.”

At Syracuse, Darius studied media literacy and writing. He believes his college exposure helped him focus on how to reach his dream of a career in sports media. Eager to apply to a dozen prestigious schools, Darius said he feels as if he transitioned from a “high-school mindset to a college mindset.”

Mercedes, who took pre-medical studies at the University of California, Berkeley, had never been to California before. She surprised herself by how easily she connected with new people. “I’m really an introvert and this opened me up to making friends more,” said Mercedes.

Mercedes was excited to begin studies in the medical field. She even learned suturing techniques and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. She aspires to go into obstetrics and gynecology.

“I feel like I’m ready now that I have seen what’s in store,” said Mercedes.

All the students said they learned more about themselves and their options for college. After their experiences, they are even more excited to start their college journeys and get another step closer to their future careers.



MARCHING FOR PEACE

Defining Our Values

To ensure that 2,100 employees across 30+ programs are aligned in how we get all our children to and through college, HCZ has articulated six core HCZ Values to guide us.

The HCZ Values are *Children First*, *Strategic Relentlessness*, *Excellence*, *Army of Love*, *Respect*, and *Best Selves to Best Serve*.

“Just as we have personal values that guide our decision-making and daily actions, organizational values guide our work,” said CEO Anne Williams-Isom. “This campaign is a way to be clear about who we are as an organization and help us be consistent.”

The HCZ Values *Strategic Relentlessness* and *Army of Love* were perfectly illustrated by the work that was done over time at our award-winning TRUCE after-school program with one

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3,000 children participated in HCZ's Summer Games tournament in July. ▶

BY THE NUMBERS



6,388
Baby College Graduates Since 2000

13,500+
Children Served



98%
Harlem Gems Pre-k Students “School Ready”

97%
High-School Seniors Accepted to College



9,000+
Children in the Healthy Harlem Program



Our 24th annual March for Peace drew 4,000 children. The march was followed by student performances, which showed what children can do when given the opportunity to channel their energy in positive ways.

Creating a Culture of Health



“Have you ever heard of a kid telling the owner at their local deli to get more fruits and healthy options?” asked Sheriff, a participant in our Healthy Harlem program. He hadn’t only seen this - he himself became an advocate. “Healthy Harlem has really helped me grow into a healthy young man who is able to influence his peers’ eating habits.”

When he first started the program, Sheriff was in poor health. Now a college freshman, he is adhering to a strict regimen of exercise and healthy foods.

“I started to learn that a lot of my health issues were caused by what foods I was putting and not putting into my body,” said Sheriff. “Because of Healthy Harlem, I started looking at ads differently and learned how to read food labels to see what I was really eating.”

When HCZ found that 44% of our students were overweight or obese, we created a large-scale program to change the culture and teach lifelong healthy habits. Today, the Healthy Harlem program is showing unprecedented progress among the 9,000 children and 3,000 adults engaged in regular physical activity and nutrition education.

“I found a home in the Countee Cullen

Beacon kitchen, where I learned how to bake with whole wheat flour and honey, instead of white flour and sugar,” said Equanna, who has been in the program for six years and replicates recipes for her family.

In fact, Healthy Harlem is designed to make wellness a family affair, offering adult fitness and cooking classes and holding monthly farmers markets that give residents thousands of pounds of fresh produce free.

“If my children were going to be healthy, I had to learn about it as well,” said HCZ parent Ramata Sackho, whose four-year-old started a boycott when her school gave out juice instead of water.

Ramata has helped the Healthy Harlem message ripple out to other families in the community. “We love oil,” she said, “so I teach them about how much healthier olive oil is. I have helped them learn what I learned.”

In the past year, there have been significant results across the program. Students maintained healthy body mass indexes and increased their fitness levels. Results have shown that the longer that students were in the program, the healthier they became and the more they learned about nutrition.

“When I first was introduced to Healthy Harlem, I thought veggies were nasty,” said Zhanina, a high-school student. “I learned that veggies and fruits were Go Foods, and there were Slow foods like grains and Whoa foods like chips and cookies.”

“I started to learn that my health should not be determined by my ZIP code,” continued Zhanina, who was disappointed with the lack of healthy food in the neighborhood.

With solid, unprecedented results that we are publishing for the field, Healthy Harlem will be a model for other communities to improve the health of their children and families.

Defining Our Values continued

special-needs student. Jerome came to us as a seventh grader reading at a third-grade level and facing social and academic challenges. HCZ staff, working as a team with his mother, teachers and school counselors, developed a plan to nurture his talents as an artist and poet as well as assist with his academics.

At the same time, his mother asked staff to support her at hearings to make sure Jerome was getting all his mandated services. She became involved in HCZ’s Answer Seekers, a consortium of parents of students with special needs that brings in professionals who can address parents’ concerns.

Jerome graduated high school on time and went on to Hudson Valley Community College, with the ongoing support of our College Success Office. He earned an associate’s degree and got a job that he loves at the Salvation Army.



Where Are They Now? *HCZ alumni take on the world*

Student Returns as Teacher



The first day of school this year was not the first time that teacher Julia Daniels walked into a Promise Academy classroom, but the last time she did she was a student.

HCZ's mission is to send students off to college and have them return to give back to the community.

A Harlem native, Julia did just that with her first job after getting her master's - teaching U.S. history to our middle-school students at the school that set her on her career path. She entered Promise as a 10th grader and graduated in 2013.

"It was a close-knit kind of family - every

teacher knew every student," she recalled, adding she wanted to bring that sense of belonging and commitment to her students.

"Even though I am close to their age," she observed, "I see how far they have to go. It feels far for them, but I know they can do it."

"Once we get into the rhythm of things," Julia continued, "students will get excited to learn and I really hope I can help them with their writing and push them farther. By the end of this year it will be beautiful...students will know so much."

Vetting Multimillion-Dollar Deals



As an associate compliance officer at Goldman Sachs, former HCZ student Dorinda Foster has bankers, traders and lawyers calling her to make sure every detail of their multimillion-dollar deals complies with regulations and company guidelines. That might be a surprise to the principal of her local public middle school, who told a preteen Dorinda that she wouldn't amount to anything.

When that same middle schooler came to an HCZ after-school program, our staff recognized her strengths and potential. Dorinda remembered that they always supported and believed in her. "That motivates

you," she said. "It really goes a long way." Today, she pays it forward by talking to HCZ students about college and careers.

HCZ staff helped her get a financial-aid package at Franklin & Marshall College and to make the transition to the school's quiet setting in Pennsylvania. "I was scared to just hear crickets at night," she recalled.

The first person in her family to graduate from college, Dorinda said that HCZ helped her with lifelong skills, such as writing precisely and time management. "I'm still reaping the benefits as an adult," Dorinda said of her work with HCZ. "They really gave me an opportunity at life."

From Harlem to High Tech



The first in his family to graduate from college, Juan Cerda has gone on to work in California's high-tech industry, creating code to test new applications.

On his way to becoming a senior associate automation engineer with Workday, a leading software company, Juan began with HCZ as a high-school sophomore at one of our after-school programs. He would come almost every day, he recalled, getting homework help, learning computer-based design programs and taking free SAT prep classes on Saturdays. He said he also got help with his writing and "developing myself as a student."

He went on to St. Joseph's College in Brooklyn, majoring in information systems

after taking a class that sparked a new passion. During college, he checked in regularly with his College Success Office advisors and would attend special HCZ workshops where professionals talk to students about their own career paths. He said that as a young person about to enter the new environment of the corporate workplace, "To see how people have gone from Point A to Point B is really quite helpful."

HCZ, in fact, helped him get an internship with Workday, where he impressed company managers enough that he was offered a full-time job in the same department upon graduation, launching him into a promising career.