



The Children's Aid Society

Community Schools and Early Education Fact Sheet

Community Schools

The Children's Aid Society partners with the New York City Department of Education in 15 community schools in Washington Heights, East Harlem, the Bronx and Staten Island. A community school is a public school that combines the best quality educational practices with a wide range of vital in-house health and social services to ensure that children are physically, emotionally and socially prepared to learn. Open early mornings, afternoons, evenings, weekends and summers, the community school serves as a true center of community life – a place where children attend classes, and can also receive medical and dental care, speak to a counselor about a problem and stay after school to build reading skills, play chess, work on a computer, take art and music lessons, get help with homework, practice sports and attend summer camp.

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to get involved in their children's education, as well as take adult education classes, get advice and support, learn how to help their children succeed in school, meet other parents and create their own programs, support groups and activities. Essential to a community school's success is a committed partnership among the school and school district, a community organization and parents – a partnership that shifts the ownership of the school and its facility to a shared ownership, making it possible to provide a “seamless” network of services.

The Children's Aid Society's community schools have been independently evaluated and proven successful. An evaluation conducted by Fordham University between 1993 and 1999 documented improved academic performance, higher attendance rates, a better school climate, improved school and community safety, increased parental involvement and improved student-teacher relationships. Another evaluation, the results of which were released in 2002, documented significant improvements in program quality, particularly in the areas of literacy enrichment and youth development. In June 2005, Children's Aid Society's analysis of Department of Education data on citywide standardized test scores showed that CAS community elementary and middle schools posted gains in reading and math scores that, on average, outpaced those in regular schools. On average, the number of children in CAS community schools meeting standards in reading increased 12.2%, compared to 10.7% citywide, and the number of CAS children meeting standards for math increased 8.2%, compared with 7.5% citywide. The Children's Aid Society's community school model has been adapted by over 1,500 organizations, school districts and governments, both nationally and internationally.

Early Education

The Children's Aid Society also offers early childhood programs that give children and families safe, nurturing and developmentally appropriate learning environments. The programs emphasize the interrelationships between cognitive, social, physical, emotional and language/literacy development and provide the foundations for children to reach their educational and social goals. Two Children's Aid community schools provide Early Head Start and Head Start programs. CAS community centers offer Head Start services and child care programs that utilize Children's Aid resources such as health, mental health and preventive services.

In addition to early learning opportunities, these early education programs provide young children and families with a wide range of services. Go!Kids is an early childhood obesity prevention program offered to children in the CAS Head Start programs at PS 5 and PS 8 and at the Bronx Early Childhood Center. Go!Kids seeks to establish healthy eating habits and increase physical activity in preschool children and their families in order to prevent the development of obesity and related health problems. The Doula program is a unique component of the Early Head Start program at PS 5 and PS 8. Doulas are professionally trained to provide physical and emotional assistance to women before, during and after labor. Doulas educate expectant mothers about their options, advocate for them in the hospital during labor and offer postpartum support and referrals. Once the child is born, he or she participates in the Early Head Start program, which focuses on children ages 0–3.

The Children's Aid Society was founded in 1853. It is one of the nation's largest and most innovative non-sectarian agencies, serving over 150,000 of New York's neediest children and their families with a network of services that includes community schools, neighborhood centers, camps, adoption and foster care services, teen pregnancy prevention, education, health and recreation. For additional information please call 212-949-4938 or visit www.childrengsociety.org.

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