

## College PREP for Washington Heights, Bronx and Harlem Youth- Brings Together Voices from Atlanta, Bronx, Olympic Champion and Mexican Immigrant

*Saturday, October 12, 2019*

Columbia University's Center for Children's Environmental Health, (CCCEH) and the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center, (HICCC) partnered with PS 4, Duke Ellington to host a four-hour workshop to help local youth from Washington Heights and Harlem with the college application process. PS 4's Principal Stevens, enthusiastically kicked off the event by pointing to his two year old in the back room, stating, ***"It's never too early to start thinking about college..."***

Over 40 youth and parents attended the event on a holiday weekend. To connect with the youth, Columbia University, *first-generation* graduate and recipient of the Gates Millennium Foundation scholarship, Beatriz Duran-Becerra, shared her personal story of little support from her overburdened high school counselors and her Mexican parent's reaction to her college acceptance.

***"I decided to go to college and every weekend I scoured the internet for scholarships, I knew my parents did not have the funds."*** When I received my acceptance to Columbia, my father's response was, ***"why do you want to go to another country, and how much does it cost?"***

Her message conveyed that for first-generation college bound youth, college is an unfamiliar world to some immigrant parents and it becomes the job of the child to orient their parents.

A balanced mix of presentations, inspirational speakers and small group hands-on-activities kept the youth and parents engaged. Prior to initiating a draft of their personal essay, youth and parents were encouraged from surprise guest, Teresa Edwards, five time Olympic Champion and Harlem resident, she urged youth to -***"Create dreams not just goals...think about your dreams when you put that ink on that essay!"***



Promoting college dreams and making them commonplace is an important community goal. Educational attainment disparities are a challenge in our own Columbia University neighborhoods. Across the city as well as in the neighborhoods of Washington Heights, and Central Harlem, high school graduations rates among Blacks and Latinos

are significantly lower than among Whites and Asians living in the same neighborhoods, except for Whites residing in Washington Heights.

High School Graduation Rates	Latinos	Blacks	Whites	Asian
NYC <sup>1</sup>	60.4%	61.7%	80.1%	82.5%
Washington Heights <sup>2</sup>	60.8%	65.5%	60%	82.1%
Central Harlem <sup>3</sup>	62.6%	60.6%	89.5%	92.9%

There is a seven to twenty-five percent gap in high school graduation rates between females and males in Washington Heights, Central Harlem, and New York City overall. In Washington Heights, the female graduation rate is 70.7% compared to 54.5% for the males. In Central Harlem, there is a 70% graduation rate among females compared to a 62% graduation rate among males.<sup>1</sup> The gap between male and female high school graduation rates is worth noting. It is critical that we ensure that our young men continue to be encouraged to pursue high school degrees and college-level educational training. Improving educational opportunities and services to address educational disparities is doable.

**The Community Service Society** in New York City has noted improved educational attainment among Dominican women, in *New York City's Future Looks Latino, Policy Brief, Latino Youth in New York City, School, Work, and Income Trends for New York's Largest Group of Young People, October 2010*.

***“Dominican young people, particularly young women, do show particularly strong outcomes in terms of attending college, a gateway to the middle class. We should explore and encourage these pathways.”<sup>2</sup>***

Additionally, **NYC Department of Education**, *New York City Graduations Rates Class of 2018 (Cohort 2014)*, reports highest ever graduation rates and four year graduation rates increased across all ethnicities.

4- Year Graduation Rate <sup>3</sup>						Point Change	
	2014 August	2015 August	2016 August	2017 August	2018 August	Since 2017	Since 2014
<b>Asian</b>	82.6	85.0	85.8	87.5	<b>88.1</b>	+0.6 pts	+5.6 pts
<b>Black</b>	63.8	65.4	68.7	70.0	<b>72.1</b>	+2.1 pts	+8.3 pts
<b>Hispanic</b>	61.4	64.0	67.3	68.3	<b>70.0</b>	+1.6 pts	+8.5 pts
<b>White</b>	80.7	82.0	82.3	83.2	<b>84.2</b>	+1.0 pts	+3.6 pts
<b>All Students</b>	68.4	70.5	73.0	74.3	<b>75.9</b>	+1.7 pts	+7.5 pts

Indeed focusing on these improvements may shed light on successful pathways for appropriate and rigorous educational attainment interventions.

In youthful gratitude, a special **shout-out** to the volunteer college workshop trainers: Amy Durham and Julia Goehring from *Branching Out, Atlanta*, Wade Kline from *the High School for Math, Science and Engineering at City College*, and Maria Asayag, *Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Columbia University*, and Teresa Edwards, *Olympic Champion*. In closing, a **shout-out** to organizers Kim Burke of (HICCC) and Teresa Durham of (CCCEH) who tapped into their personal and professional connections for a successful and heartening event.

<sup>1</sup> IBID. High School Graduation Rates, male, female. 2017 S/Y

<sup>2</sup> [https://b3cdn.net/nycss/dce12723db36961dd4\\_lqm6b9jf3.pdf](https://b3cdn.net/nycss/dce12723db36961dd4_lqm6b9jf3.pdf), p.12 10/2010

<sup>3</sup> <file:///C:/Users/mu3/Desktop/2018-graduation-rates---webdeck--1-30-19.pdf> p.7