



Creative Arts Team • The City University of New York

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# **FISCAL 2007 YEAR END REPORT**

## **NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL ALLOCATIONS**

### **CUNY/CREATIVE ARTS TEAM**



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## **BACKGROUND**

Founded in 1974, the Creative Arts Team (CAT) is a pioneering leader in the field of educational drama. In 2004, CAT became a university-wide initiative of the Office of Academic Affairs at The City University of New York (CUNY), and has since partnered with a number of CUNY's projects such as College Now, Middle Grades Initiative (MGI), CUNY Preparatory High School, Gear-Up and Young Adult Learning Academy (YALA), signaling the university's willingness to embrace CAT's programs and mission. The Creative Arts Team's mission is *to challenge at-risk young people with participatory drama workshops and residencies that foster important learning skills and positive social development*. This *raison d'être* clearly compliments CUNY's role as the country's largest public university system and its commitment to grooming underprivileged students, such as those who are educationally and/or economically disadvantaged, so that they can attain success in college.

For over 30 years CAT has provided exciting, pedagogically sound programs designed to foster pro-social behavior for public school students in New York City. Featuring resiliency building activities, CAT has led the way in the development of participant-centered methodologies that enrich educational experiences for both children and adults. Annually, CAT provides workshops and residency programs to more than 14,000 young people and serves a variety of student populations in general, special education, alternative, and Head Start programs. Age-appropriate programs are offered at every grade level, from pre-kindergarten through high school. CAT has also brought innovative programs to young people in detention facilities, including service delivery to juvenile justice sites managed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) as well as 15 years of direct services at Rikers Island Correctional Facilities.

Understanding that conflicts and obstacles are a part of life, CAT has devised strategies to help children and adults resolve conflicts peacefully and cope with or overcome obstacles. Drama is an ideal medium for helping young people to identify and positively cope with pressing social and personal issues and to build *resiliency* — the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity. When CAT participants received assistance in the process of acquiring characteristics of resiliency it brought them closer to reaching their goals for having healthy, productive futures. Because conflict, communication and personal understanding are at the core of drama activities, drama-in-education can be viewed as a way of learning, as a means of self-expression, as a socialization activity, and as an art form. In CAT workshops students honed their skills through active participation. Educational drama was used to motivate participants both *affectively* and *cognitively* since students were required to simultaneously think, feel, and take action. Drama activities provided children with the opportunity to build the practical life skills they need to become responsible adults.

The Creative Arts Team operates a group of age-specific program units that render activities for children and adults. Each unit conducted workshops during this report period and their descriptions follow.

- **The Early Learning through the Arts Program (ELTA)** promotes socialization and emergent literacy skills for children just beginning their education at the Head Start and pre-kindergarten level with interactive drama workshop residencies. Within the context of specially designed story lines, CAT's actor/teachers play a variety of characters that

enlist the children's help to develop the story. Issues explored include understanding others' feelings, friendship, family relationships, and developing literacy and communication skills. This year, Head Start sites were selected with high percentages of immigrant children.

- **The Elementary and Junior High School Program** incorporates drama-in-education as a means to foster the development of critical thinking and communication skills in support of the New York State Learning Standards in English Language Arts, Math Science and Technology, and Social Studies (Civics, Citizenship and Government). Working alongside CAT's professionally trained actor/teachers and their own classroom teachers, students enter imagined worlds in which they can explore challenging themes and issues. Recent examples include cooperation, bullying, coping with crisis, conflict mediation, tolerance, leadership, cultural differences and community.
- **The High School Program** uses theatre performances and participatory drama workshops to enhance the critical-thinking skills of junior and senior high school populations. This program maintains three separate projects that focus on violence prevention, literacy skills, and promoting healthy choices. In addition, curricula were designed to address issues identified by DOE personnel as critical such as harassment, cultural literacy and bullying. As with CAT's Elementary and Junior High School Program, CAT's workshops for high school students contribute to attainment of New York State Learning Standards and New York City Department of Education Promotional Standards.
- **The Parent Outreach Program** uses educational drama techniques to help parents improve communication with their children, mediate family conflicts, and support their children's success academically and socially. Through role-play and discussion, parents learn to set clear behavioral expectations, monitor and supervise their children, reinforce pro-social behavior, and create opportunities for family involvement in their children's lives. By acquiring and using these skills, parents can strengthen their children's ability to cope with adversity.
- **CAT's Youth Theatre Program** has three divisions – the Youth Theatre for high school students, the Junior Youth Theatre for young people at the middle school level, and the Ensemble, a training and performing company of former Youth Theatre members aged 18-25. Each unit functions as a youth-centered theatre company that meets weekly after-school. There is no charge for participation and no audition requirement; students who apply for membership are admitted on a first-come first-served basis. Youth Theatre sessions are designed to promote an exploration of creativity and to build communication and performance skills. CAT's Youth Theatre companies create and perform original shows each year.
- **The Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama** offers in-service professional development training for teachers and other youth serving professionals, and pre-service courses for graduate students in the effective use of educational drama. Through the Kaplan Center, CAT offers a range of professional development opportunities for New York City Department of Education teachers, parent coordinators, guidance counselors

and other school staff both *on site* in school settings and *at* CUNY. These opportunities include:

- *Multi-session mentoring/modeling experiences;*
- *On site professional development workshops for teachers and other school staff on a variety of subjects including literacy, conflict resolution through drama, and integrating the arts across the curriculum;*
- *Graduate level courses and certificates at the Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama, CAT's program of practical academic courses in educational theatre methodologies offered at The City University of New York.*

Language is at the core of drama and all of CAT's programs promote the enhancement of literacy skills including, but not limited to listening, speaking, interpreting, reading and writing. Some projects were created to highlight a particular issue or explore a specific theme such as violence or bullying prevention, coping with crisis and English language fluency. CAT tailors programs to address the needs of specific populations with stimulating, age-appropriate, interactive workshops. The following projects illustrate CAT's success in responding to critical issues that confront New York City's children and their families.

## Early Childhood Literacy Project: Drama for English Acquisition & Early Literacy

As the United States continues to become more culturally and linguistically diverse, the nation's classrooms acutely reflect this change. Recent statistics have shown that the number of English language learners in pre-K-12 classrooms has increased as much as 95% since 1991 (TESOL Position Statement 2003). As the number of English language learners has grown, schools and teachers are challenged to provide all students an appropriate, effective, and meaningful education. Emerging research on English acquisition and early literacy suggests the following:

- Demographic trends indicate that in the 21st century, second-language issues in early literacy development will remain a pressing concern.
- In terms of school enrollment data reported by the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (NCBE), in the decade 1990 - 2000, the number of limited-English-proficient (LEP) students is projected to have grown 104.3% compared to projected growth of 13.6% in overall K - 12 student enrollment (NCBE, 1999).



CAT continued its ongoing relationship with the Administration for Children's Services/Head Start to boost English language acquisition in the early child classroom. Many studies have cited the benefits of addressing literacy education with very young children, so CAT and Head Start partnered to implement a program focused on helping pre-schoolers attain the language skills that will be critical to their success in school. CAT's **Early Learning Through the Arts (ELTA) Program** devised and implemented a process drama selection called, *The Alphabet Keepers*, a story rich in literacy enhancing activities. Additionally, CAT provided a program of

intensive professional development for teachers that focused on their storytelling and drama skills, and had them develop and lead literacy-rich drama curriculum for children. CAT's unique interactive storytelling techniques help teachers access children's suggestions and ideas, enabling some of the most important and effective strategies for developing children's oral language skills. Storytelling also assists teachers in targeting curriculum objectives, as well as providing practice, follow-up and assessment activities that can lead English language learners to develop native-like levels of English proficiency. For students who speak a language other than English, interactive storytelling offers avenues to begin to develop, in English, the content area abilities that they will need to become literate, English-proficient adults.

### **Four Head Start Centers hosted CAT workshops and a total of 200 children participated.**

The Head Start Centers involved were the ABC Head Start in Manhattan, the Whedco Head Start in the Bronx, the B' Above Head Start in Queens and the Queens Childhood Guidance center. In addition to offering direct services to the students and training to the teachers, CAT also led six on-site parent involvement workshops addressing early literacy and reading.

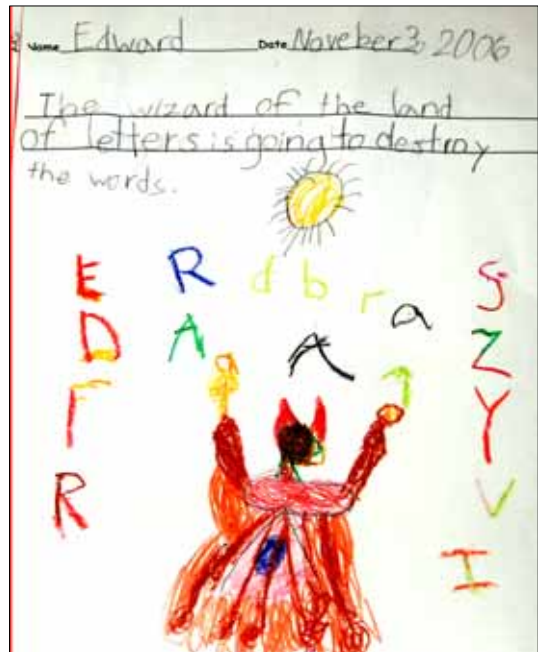
These centers, located in neighborhoods where many residents are foreign born and/or speak a language other than English in their homes, were selected collaboratively by CAT and Head

Start personnel. Specific skills were targeted and evaluated such as letter recognition, vocabulary, speaking fluency, recognizing written language media (books, signs, letters, newspapers, email, etc), communication and distinguishing English words/alphabet. As in previous residencies, a pre and post-survey will assess the growth of the student's literacy skills in 2 categories – *Listening and Speaking* and *Reading and Writing*. End-of-the-residency evaluations provided the following observations from teachers and education directors:

*The children are singing songs from the drama throughout the day. The non-English speakers are also singing and repeating the English words.*

*The children with some English skills have progressed and are using more varied vocabulary – words that they got from the drama.*

*My children are showing excitement about letters. They are making connections between what is in the story and the letters they see around the classroom. They are pointing to letters. Some of them cannot identify, but they are pointing and saying letters (in Spanish).*



Reflecting on their professional development and curriculum they developed, teachers said:

*The children really enjoyed the activity. It expands their attention span and vocabulary, as well as allowing the children to use their imagination.*

*This gave me an opportunity to learn to be bigger with my voice and more direct with the children. Sometimes they need this. I find that I am always quiet and indirect. With drama you have to be clear and direct.*

These comments illustrate the efficacy of CAT's interactive, educational drama practices when used to stimulate learning among children and to scaffold teachers' instructional competencies.

## Comprehensive School Reform – PS 15

CAT has been recognized by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) as a Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Model Developer in connection with the grant awarded to PS 15 in District 15, Region 8, Brooklyn. In that capacity, **CAT has completed 3 successful years of Comprehensive School Reform** implementation, evidenced by positive evaluations, improved test scores and notable changes in teachers' practices. Two separate program models were used during this culminating year. CAT's **ELTA Program** worked with and trained Pre-K, Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Special Ed teachers in the use of interactive storytelling and character work to aid early learners in reading and comprehension. CAT's **Elementary School Program** worked with PS 15's entire 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade population and 16 teachers, focusing on teaching, learning and applying reading and comprehension skills along with NYS ELA Standardized Exam preparation.



ELTA completed three 10-day residencies at PS 15, basing each residency on the amount of prior training each group of teachers had had with CAT. Those with the most “CAT experience” were given more advanced and more detailed training to create a character that would reinforce existing curricula and introduce new curricular subject matter to their students. Each of these teachers received one-on-one time with CAT staff, developing a lesson plan and then implementing the plan in the classroom with CAT actor-teachers observing. Those with no prior knowledge of CAT's methodologies began their residency with a 5-day drama curriculum presented by the ELTA team as an introduction to CAT's interactive drama, student-centered questioning techniques and the “Points of Participation,” in preparation for their own interactive storytelling training and observed implementation. All of the teachers involved shared genuine appreciation for not only the training itself, but for the chance to share their hopes and fears, and, subsequently, their successes and failures, with their peers in a truly constructive manner.

CAT's Elementary School Program completed five 10-day residencies with the entire 2-5<sup>th</sup> grade population, working with students to develop skills in listening, questioning, predicting, sequencing, making inferences, summarizing and synthesizing content. Older students also were encouraged to understand key concepts and themes in the drama, and apply them to other subject areas; to identify “Point of View” as an element of narration; and to develop their own writing through journaling activities such as character portraits, dramatic retellings, and personal reflections, both in and out of role. An important focus of the partnership model was for the drama-work to enhance and support the curricular goals established by PS 15 teachers and administrators. CAT's drama curricula addressed and encouraged the same skills that Elementary English-Language Arts teachers impart unto their students. Through educational theatre techniques such as image theatre, scene-work, characterization, and role play, the young people interpreted and “read” the events of the drama, developing their listening, comprehension, writing, and oral expression skills. In addition, numerous opportunities were made throughout the workshops for students to express themselves artistically - through in-role character work, song, movement, dance, and creative writing.

The Professional Development aspect consisted of four 1-hour sessions with 16 teachers, focused on implementation of the Read-Aloud portion of the NYS ELA Standardized Exam, specifically *Building Skills of Note-Taking Elements, Exploration & Identification of Read-Aloud Strategies for Non-Fictional Text v. Fictional Text*, and *Continuing the Identification & Exploration of Read-Aloud Strategies for Cold Readings*. The most successful aspect of this component was the opportunity for teachers to participate in peer collaboration, small group work, and debriefs with their fellow teachers. The teachers all, in fact, noted that along with benefiting from the practical application aspect of the workshop, they found it beneficial to have a chance to talk frankly about their own successes, fears, short-comings, and hopes for their students with regard to the ELA Exams. In addition, the participating teachers noted the benefit of the collective educational checklists developed through the strategy “Graffiti Board” during the 4-week period.



Changes in instructional practice resulting from CAT’s overall work as a CSR Model Developer have included an increase in the use of interactive teaching strategies such as role-play, dramatic storytelling and educational activities; a shift in the balance of *telling* and *asking* on the part of teachers through the use of enhanced questioning techniques that utilize more open-ended questions that require speculation, inference or problem-solving as well as eliciting creative thinking or connection-making analysis. Another significant

change has been adoption of child-centered approaches to teaching that result in more collaborative and less authoritarian styles of classroom management. CAT also worked with PS 15 teachers to develop rubrics and questionnaires that facilitated ongoing assessment of student progress.

**CAT was gratified to see that 2007 results of the ELA tests for grades 3-5 showed 57.3% had met or exceeded the standards for their grade as compared to just 33% in 2004, prior to the implementation of CAT’s CSR model.**

## 911 Recovery for Youth – Building Resiliency for Change

Because many residents of New York City continue to experience stress and evidence problems related to the trauma of 9/11, the American Red Cross provided support for projects that would facilitate the recovery process. CAT engaged Dr Lynn Howell, Professor and Assistant Director of Counselor Education at Queens College, to implement pre and post mental health assessments. Dr Howell explained,

*We are continuing to discover that children who are traumatized in early formative years process the pain of the trauma for a much longer time than do many adults. The reason for this is that whatever they are unable to process at the time of the trauma because they have not reached a stage of development where such awareness is possible often gets postponed until they become mature enough to conceptualize what happened to them.*

*The drama forms used by the Creative Arts Team focus elegantly on those specific processes. By portraying people coping with tough situations, the actors give children in the class the opportunity to experience feelings such as fear and anger in a safe place and learn coping mechanisms for those feelings. ...**I believe that this program is among the most effective that I have seen for dealing with childhood trauma.***



CAT's 9/11 Recovery for Youth project assisted children and their families with the aim of helping them develop the critical thinking, resiliency and coping skills needed to deal productively with 9/11 stress; and due to the continuity of work with the faculty, administrators and students, the final year of this resiliency-building project allowed the CAT team to fully realize the intent of the post-9/11 services this partnership has made possible over the last two years. CAT provided drama workshops in designated schools via 15-day classroom residencies

for students, conducted mental health evaluations through pre and post self-assessments supervised by Dr. Howell, and offered professional development sessions and parent workshops at each of the following sites: PS 19, PS 188 and PS 315 (District 1 – lower Manhattan). These schools were selected based on proximity to the World Trade Center; proximity and/or connection to first responders (such as a nearby firehouse) and connections to the plane crash in Belle Harbor, which occurred just 2 months after 9/11.

Of the **240 diverse young people and their classroom teachers that CAT worked with during the 06-07 year**, 43% displayed characteristics that placed them in *high priority* categories as defined by the American Red Cross (which includes family and other dependents of deceased; physically injured survivors and their families; rescue, recovery and reconstruction workers and their families; affected residents; evacuees; displaced workers, students and their families; etc.) – demonstrating CAT's ability to reach targeted populations. This exceeded the expectation that just 15-25% of the students that CAT engaged would be among the *high priority* participants.

All of the teachers whose students attended CAT workshops were asked to complete evaluation forms regarding the impact of CAT's 911 Recovery for Youth residencies, and a vast majority reported that the following resiliency building strategies were successfully incorporated within CAT workshops:

Presented concrete challenges	90%
Encouraged students to contribute their ideas	80%
Presented opportunities for problem solving	80%

The workshops that CAT developed for this project were designed to bolster and strengthen skills that would aid participants in overcoming trauma, adopting pro-social attitudes and acquiring protective factors that could better equip them to handle the hazards and adversities that may confront them in the future. Feedback from teachers indicated that CAT workshops enhanced the following skills that were cited by more than half of the respondents.

Listening	89%
Self-Expression	89%
Problem-solving skills	67%
Decision-making skills	67%
Communication skills	89%
Cooperation	100%
Coping skills	79%
Tolerance	57%

Not only do those skills contribute to building resiliency, but they also support academic achievement and help to foster the development of healthy relationships. Below are a few of the teachers' responses when asked to comment on the workshops.

*The CAT workshops enabled my students to view each other in a "different light." They were less afraid to express themselves in front of each other as time went on.*

*The children participated in and witnessed a smoothly functioning program in which they were able to make decisions and implement choices. I believe that they now believe that they can repeatedly experience this as they continue to grow and experience the choices that life brings.*

*Preparing for and performing the pageant parade was special. They knew they weren't just presenting someone else's work, but their own from start to finish.*

*The overall effect the students were left with was that drama can be used as a positive tool to enhance our knowledge of how important self-expression and awareness of others is. When faced with a conflict, students now tend to communicate verbally instead of physically, demonstrating self-control and good decision-making skills.*

*The workshop is absolutely beneficial to the class as a group and to the individual student.*

## CUNY Middle Grades Initiative

As a university-wide initiative of CUNY's Office of Academic Affairs, CAT has made connections with other collaborative programs at the university. The CUNY Middle Grades Initiative (MGI) was created to provide academic enhancements for middle grade students (grades 5 through 8) with the aim of helping them prepare for success in college. CAT partnered with MGI to offer curriculum-based arts activities that would elicit enthusiasm about school, help students overcome setbacks by building resiliency, promote pro-social behavior and strengthen literacy and thinking skills. **CAT delivered residencies at 10 schools including locations in the Bronx, Manhattan and Queens where 943 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students participated in enriching interactive workshops.**



Understanding that, by the time they reach middle school, students may be *turned off* to school – thinking that educational success is unattainable, CAT presented characters that either apathetic or motivated students would recognize and with whom they could connect. Then those characters were placed in situations that the students faced in their daily lives, which drew them into the scenarios and thereby elicited dynamic analysis of the designated topics. Students, endowed with a heroic purpose, created imaginary sub-cultures where people come together to address and problem-solve such issues as poverty, violence, and prejudice; CAT challenged the young people to re-interpret many of the negative messages they receive about their potential.

As a teacher from the Henry Street School in lower Manhattan wrote:

*I began this residency with much hesitation. My students are often difficult to work with and show negative social behaviors as a group. I was delighted to see that CAT was exactly the type of learning activity my students need most. They were activated and engaged. They related to the characters personally. The conversations about the drama always continued after the performers left. I'm hoping the issues explored resonate in my classroom. It was an extremely positive experience for me and my students.*

A teacher from one of the sites in the Bronx (Hostos/Lincoln Academy) offered this feedback,

*My favorite part about the program was that it gave me a chance to see students who are usually turned off, engaged and successful.*

Another teacher from East Bronx noted that the poetry writing activities drew in the students who were classified as being disrespectful and below average. These comments highlight one of the many benefits of CAT's work that is a sort of bonus to the impact on students, which is the effect on the perception of students by their teachers. This aspect of CAT's work serves to

energize both educators and students and create and an optimal learning environment. A teacher from the Thurgood Marshall Academy in Harlem commented,

*Thanks you very much for bringing something different to the classroom and allowing our children to dream and think.*

According to the teachers who completed evaluation forms on CAT's residencies in association with MGI, the workshops contributed to improving literacy skills and social competencies that evidence the characteristics of resiliency; for instance, 25% of teachers in the South Bronx saw an increase in students' written work and a Henry Street teacher noted a continuation effect as students referenced the CAT drama during ELA classes, long after CAT's actor-teachers had departed.

## Center for Arts Education – IS 259

Under a Center for Arts Education’s Partnerships for Arts Education grant, CAT was engaged by IS 259 in Brooklyn to provide educational drama activities in support of academic achievement and to train classroom teachers in the use of creative, interactive strategies in their ELA (English Language Arts) curricula. CAT’s response to the school’s needs combined substantive professional development workshops with in-class demonstrations. The approach adopted addressed the following obstacles often encountered in professional development models: inadequate time for consultation and reflection; discomfort and lack of familiarity with teaching artists’ instructional methods; and lack of knowledge of school curriculum requirements on the part of teaching artists.

To ensure that those obstacles were removed from the IS 259 model, CAT designed service packages through a collaborative planning process that incorporated input from school personnel and committed resources to enable one-on-one or small group sessions with teachers. For this year’s collaboration with IS 259, under Center for Arts Education’s Leadership in Practice Grant, CAT developed a 10-day Teacher Training Model. This year’s Teacher Training Model introduced 3 sixth grade Language Arts classroom teachers to basic drama strategies that would support their ELA Unit. A new component of this year’s model was the collaborative efforts in the practical implementation of these strategies with the students by the teachers and the CAT facilitator.

As a result, response from teachers at IS 259 has been very enthusiastic. Two thirds or more felt that there was improvement in students’ literacy and/or social skills in the following areas:

Listening	100%
Interpreting	67%
Writing	67%
Group work	100%
Communication skills	67%
Cooperation	100%
Self-control	67%



The following comments from teachers, collected when they completed evaluation surveys, speak to CAT’s capacity for rendering activities that complement and support academic objectives.

*I feel that the students really enjoyed the activities. It promoted cooperative learning among the students, they had to listen to and accept classmates’ ideas. I also think these strategies were good motivators – I didn’t have students tell me that they didn’t know what to write about.*

*The CAT sessions supported my own and the school’s standards and objectives by engaging kids in higher thinking skills and group skills, oral/speaking skills and so on.*

*As we make connections, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world we live in today. Students tapped into their own resources, thinking critically, analyzing information and tied it together with their Social Studies and Art Studies. This meets many standards and is in line with our Making Instructional Connections Curricula.*

## **Adolescent Literacy Project**

CAT was selected this year to receive a DYCD Adolescent Literacy Services grant to develop and implement a detailed after-school literacy program in three schools where CUNY and CAT have already established a presence, via the Gear Up and/or Middle Grades Initiative (MGI) programs. For this purpose, CAT's Elementary/Junior High School Program developed a program called *Literacy for Life: From the Page to the Stage*, designed to build students' reading and writing skills through the use of English Language Arts (ELA) tutoring and educational drama workshops, with particular focus on improving performance on New York State assessments, specifically the ELA Exam. The three participating schools were Frederick Douglass Academy II in Manhattan, Renaissance Charter School in Queens, and IN-Tech Academy in the Bronx.



To reach the goals of the program, students at each facility were grouped into five groups of five students each and presented with an alternating schedule of “explicit literacy instruction” and “supplemental literacy instruction”, Monday through Thursday over the course of the entire 06-07 school year. During this time, students were given the opportunity to write journals, scripts and letters as well as to build confidence in their communication skills by participating in drama games and activities. They worked with tutors to apply their growing literacy skills to homework assignments and prepared at length for ELA testing. Students were also presented with Oral Reading Fluency and Reader's Self-Perception Surveys via the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills assessment during the fall, winter and spring, in order to evaluate their progress as well as the program's effectiveness. The assessments proved authentic and accurate, directly influencing the planning of sessions to address the students' changing needs throughout the year.

In all three sites, CAT staff worked in four phases: “Phase One” curriculum was structured around the stories of 2 adolescents dealing with the social, familial, and educational challenges of middle school. Each week, the characters revealed more about their lives as well as their own academic struggles. The Actor-Teachers often participated in literacy activities in role with students. They encouraged students to examine these characters, think critically about their strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately relate their experiences to students' own lives. “Phase Two” addressed specific test-preparation strategies and skills. The schedule remained the same throughout Phase Two although the curriculum focus had shifted to test preparation. During “Phase Three”, curriculum focused on application of literacy skills. As a phase-long project, students created, edited, and illustrated an original magazine utilizing these skills. “Phase Four” saw a major schedule shift to in-school workshops in collaboration with Literacy Skills Class. The new curriculum revolved around an exploration of the novel, The House on Mango Street, for Frederick Douglass Academy and a completely original episodic drama for IN-Tech and Renaissance, serving as the raw material for interactive literacy activities focusing on individual

skills, long-term understanding, and growth in all areas of literacy: emotional, cultural, as well as the raw skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Many students approached the Actor-Teachers on a daily basis in the hallways to ask them about the drama and communicate their excitement. In the sessions, themselves, they were motivated to participate and lead warm-up activities. Several specific literacy activities were extremely popular with the students, evidenced by their focus and hard work. These activities included: Role in the Bag creative writing prompt, the “Zine” project, the “Life Map” Project, the “Dream Dictionary” interpretation, the “Tornado” broadcast creation, and The House on Mango Street reading (FDA) and group presentation activities. The classroom teacher was impressed by the power of the CAT ADL workshops, saying:

*“This is a very tough group but they were interested in the activities. The group broadcast with student reporters was great.”*

*“Students, especially the ESL students, were able to participate and engage in interpreting the drama.”*

During the in-school phase at Renaissance, CAT worked with the 6<sup>th</sup> grade Science classes, and we tailored a 6 week curriculum to their existing, project-based curriculum. The classroom teacher observed that her students enjoyed the drama, and found that they were able to connect the CAT dramatizations with their Science curriculum. The teacher also noted an improvement in literacy skills such as speaking, comparison, expression, viewing, and observation, as well as social and academic skills, such as participation, cooperation, understanding of assignments, ability to work well in groups and decision-making, communication, conflict-resolution, and critical thinking skills, as a result of the CAT ADL program. She remarked: *“I see how a small scene can be integrated into a lesson to further students’ interpretation and understanding.”*

## Anti-Bullying Project

After the success of CAT's work in public schools where anti-bullying residencies were rendered during the last two years, the New York City Department of Education engaged CAT to continue that work. This year 2 storylines were used that emphasized means of developing and maintaining healthy relationships while navigating within various environments such as school, neighborhood and home. Friendships, dating, jealousy and prejudice were some of the key subject matter woven into dramatizations to which students related and through which they explored ways of defusing conflict and resolving differences without violence.

**During the 06-07 school year, CAT delivered anti-bullying residencies at 5 schools, where 60 classes were involved and 1,577 students participated in 5-day residencies.** Over the course of the residencies students were engaged in a drama that depicted conditions that lead to feelings of alienation, oppression and anger in young people. The power of educational theatre as both an aesthetic activity and a powerful medium for learning bolsters the impact the actor teachers had in the classrooms. They presented interactive scenarios that engaged students to connect those conditions with attitudes of inferiority and superiority that could manifest in themselves and/or in their peers when bullying occurs. Students were led through activities that allowed them to see that *targets* are not the only ones affected when being bullied, and that they can do something positive about it. As the students journeyed with the characters, their input was solicited to identify conflicts and to counsel characters on ways to resolve and de-escalate tensions without violence. With the focus on reinforcing critical thinking, conflict resolution, tolerance and communication skills, CAT aims to equip students with skills to deter bullying and violence and with protective factors to cope with adversity.



In addition to observing scenarios, discussion and role-plays students were engaged in writing activities to bolster their communication skills and thereby strengthen their ability to advocate for themselves, to articulate their feelings and to impact messages as intended.

Because these workshops took place in classrooms the school teachers' involvement to reinforce CAT's work and to provide feedback on students' response was critical. Data collected from the evaluation questionnaires that teachers completed attests to the effectiveness of the strategies that CAT employed. The following reflects their responses to questions related to the overall objectives of the Anti-Bullying residencies.

*Workshops were effective in helping students to:*

Increase awareness of other people's feelings/emotions	100%
Improve understanding of constructive ways to respond to differences/conflicts	95%
Increase motivation to adopt alternatives to verbal abuse or harassment	95%
Identify bullying behavior and explore consequences	100%

In terms of CAT's ability to impact attitudes and enhance skills, more than 60% of teachers who responded found that the following attitudes were influenced and skills were strengthened.

Listening Skills	64%
Problem-solving Skills	72%
Communication Skills	72%
Decision-making Skills	83%
Critical-thinking Skills	89%
Group Work/Participation	94%
Attitudes of Tolerance	89%
Sense of Personal Responsibility	61%
Mediation Skills	67%

The feedback from students and classroom teachers clearly indicates CAT's success in imparting anti-bullying messages and influencing the behavior of young people.

#### Student Responses:

*I learned that treating someone mean can lead to drastic actions. You should get to know someone before you judge them.*

*I've changed in ways like, I don't tease anyone that may seem out of the ordinary to me and I treat others the same way I like to be treated.*

*This program changed the way I think about bullying by showing me how you never know what someone might be going through or their backgrounds, so now I'll think twice about bullying someone.*

*This program changed the way I think because I learned about different alternatives, and how to prevent certain situations*

*I am going to think about what I say and how it will affect other people.*

#### Classroom Teacher Responses:

*I have noticed that the students have been able to express their ideas and settle their differences without using me as a mediator.*

*I realized that my students have strong decision-making skills and even though they don't always make the appropriate choices, they do understand what's right and wrong.*

*Hearing them talk about the characters proved that and they have begun to reflect on their own thinking/actions.*

*I thought this workshop was beneficial to my students and extremely engaging. They looked forward to the program every day and they truly felt comfortable opening up and sharing their thoughts and ideas. I hope this program can continue next year in my classroom.*

*There was a tremendous amount of interaction between the actors and the students. I especially enjoyed watching the students engage in acting and cooperative grouping. They definitely fostered the students' creativity!*

*There are certain groups in my class who like to solve their problems by fighting; they walked around and talked to each other discussing peaceful resolutions! The actors who attended my classroom really connected well with the students. They really sent a positive message.*

*The workshops allowed students to explore the effects of discrimination, hurtful words/actions and lack of tolerance on people's lives. Overall, the workshops were a great way to engage students in activities that they are grappling with all the time.*

*The "labels" activity elicited the best response from the students. They learned what it was like to walk in someone else's shoes.*

*Here the students were encouraged and challenged to explain their decisions. I believe the students enjoyed sharing their voice.*

*Your program is so helpful and needed by these young children as they face such issues as harassment and bullying and how to address and cope with situations they have faced or will face. On behalf of our faculty and administration I want to commend Andrea and Miebaka [CAT actor/teachers] and you for all you have done for our students at Saint Elizabeth. (William G. Ferguson, Principal, Saint Elizabeth School)*

## Lafayette High School – Anti-Harassment Project

This year the New York City Department of Education (DOE) asked CAT to return to Lafayette High School and conduct *A Ray of Hope* residencies for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade classes. The workshops were scheduled for the fall semester to help instill a sense of tolerance and appreciation of diversity in students beginning their high school experience. As reported last year, this school has suffered from pervasive conflicts among students, fuelled by various types of bias. Because too often the disputes became violent Lafayette High School developed the “Respect for All: Anti-discrimination/Anti-harassment Policy” and selected outside organizations including CAT to provide programs that would promote healthy interaction among students. **In 2006 a total of 9 classes consisting of 236 students participated between October and December.**



This year, CAT worked in 5-day residencies, enabling more time for students to discuss and reflect on the issues addressed in CAT’s workshops. The objectives were the same as the prior year based on the goal of raising awareness associated with cultural sensitivities and fostering respect. In addition to observing scenarios, discussions and role-plays students were engaged in writing activities to bolster their communication skills and thereby strengthen their ability to advocate for themselves, to articulate their feelings and to impart messages as intended. Feedback from classroom teachers

at Lafayette High School affirmed that students increased their knowledge and strengthened both social competencies and academic skills through participation in CAT workshops. Specifically the majority of teachers cited CAT’s positive impact in connection with the following topics and skills.

Tolerance	86%
Sense of personal responsibility	100%
Causes of violence	86%
Understanding of cultural differences	95%
Types of bias	86%
Listening skills	100%
Thinking skills	100%
Ability to work in groups	100%
Analyzing & Problem-solving skills	71%
Participation	100%

Comments from teachers also affirmed the effectiveness of *A Ray of Hope* workshops:

*Students were able to identify their own behaviors from the presentations and identify their possible solutions. Students were more able, and felt free, to express their opinions, even if unpopular. The workshops were very well organized and well run. This should be expanded to all grades, not just freshmen.*

*The material of the dialogue and the scenes presented help the students discover themselves and see other people's reactions on certain actions. They're beginning to appreciate one another's differences better.*

*They better understand the cause and effect relationship.*

*They realize that there must be tolerance. It helped to bring them closer. It helped them understand that their feelings and experiences are not unique.*

*This is an excellent program that truly does a great deal of good for our students.*

This is the last year of CAT's Anti-Harassment Project at Lafayette High School, due to the school's scheduled closing. It is expected that CAT will continue to work with students and faculty in other high-risk schools to reinforce healthy attitudes towards peers, promote understanding throughout the school's community and to help establish and maintain an environment that is conducive to educational and personal achievement.

## Healthy Choices

CAT's *Healthy Choices* program, which examines risky behaviors and their consequences, has become a staple residency among CAT's repertoire of educational drama programs. **Residencies were rendered in 7 high schools where 1,443 students attended CAT workshops. Workshops were also conducted at 2 Homes for the Homeless sites – Saratoga Family Inn and Springfield Inn both in Queens and 44 people participated in the sessions at those facilities. Young people detained on Rikers Island attended *Healthy Choices* workshops there and 356 students participated. The total number of *Healthy Choices* participants reached this year came to 1,815 adolescents and adults.**

**This project involved 2 of CAT's programs – the Parent Outreach Program and the High School Program.** For *Healthy Choices*, the Parent Program rendered Young Adult Life Skills workshops for students at Rikers Island and Parent Skills workshops for parents (predominantly young single mothers) who reside in temporary housing facilities managed by HFH. A description of the work at Rikers Island is highlighted on page 22 of this report. The workshops at Springfield Inn and Saratoga Family Inn in Queens reached families characterized by Homes for the Homeless in this way, *"Ninety-five percent of the families are single mothers with children. The average age of the mother is 19, and most of the children are under six years of age. Most of the women have experienced domestic violence, substance abuse and/or inadequate health care."* CAT's Parent Education Program was brought in to assist the staff of HFH in meeting the DYCD Family Literacy Program goals by presenting literacy through new media, engaging the participants with exciting topics and materials, and offering essential information on parenting, including child development, nutrition, and discipline techniques.



CAT's Parent team used two different designs and models for the two sites involved; the first integrated typical Parent team subjects, including discipline, stress management, talking to their kids about sex, and conflict resolution. The second called for the actor-teachers to recreate the curriculum in a way that would allow them to teach our methodology to empower the residents without the CAT staff actually being there. They formatted workshops to show the HFH residents how to use certain educational theatre tools, such as tableau work and role play, to deal with any aspect of their lives. Most of the workshops dealt with the problems the residents face; the purpose of this was to use those problems to determine how the residents can deal with them productively as a group.

The great success of this new project was the feeling of network that formed within the residential group. CAT's staff was welcomed graciously and residents and staff participated without question. Participants were asked to complete questionnaires about CAT's work; when asked, *"Did the workshops help you feel more prepared to talk to your child about sensitive issues or discover better ways of solving problems at home?"* and, *"Do you feel that the scenes presented by the actor-teachers helped you to better understand your child/children's development?"* 100% of respondents answered both questions in the affirmative attesting to

CAT's ability to impart strategies that aid parents in maintaining healthy communication with children and in understanding developmental stages. Effective communication skills are key for establishing a level of trust and understanding that enhances parents' ability to influence children to adopt healthy life styles and for addressing sensitive issues such as those associated with sexual activity, use of controlled substances and/or relationship violence. Comments from the participants exemplify their willingness to work on these critical issues.

Parent comments from Saratoga Family Inn:

*"It has helped me how to talk and listen to my son"*

*"Communication is important when disciplining a child. Issues like sex and drugs are real for kids at a young age and were addressed by allowing parents to role play. This should be done often"*

*"Getting to see present problems and future problems acted, helped me feel better prepared"*

*"They focused on real life issues and offered resolutions!"*

Parent comments from Springfield Inn:

*"By taking part in some of the scenes and the A/T's talking about problems I can relate to, it showed me how to prepare myself just in case my son wants to talk"*

*"Workshops helped me to listen to my child before acting out"*

*"I feel more prepared and safe to answer the questions at hand, whatever the question may be"*

An HFH representative commented:

*The students loved the Parent Time component, and the CAT workshops were the best attended of any Family Literacy classes. Almost all of the parents contributed to the subsequent discussions and requested that CAT staff help them in facilitating their own discussions on parenting issues, so that once the workshops ended, the dramatic activities and discussions could continue. By helping the parents and Homes for the Homeless staff in facilitating and leading their own workshops, CAT has enabled HFH to continue CAT's important work after the sessions were over. The leadership and energy of the CAT team gave HFH staff new program ideas, and new ideas for group discussions. Not only are CAT workshops effective as workshops, they are effective professional development tools that serve as inspiration for our on-site HFH staff.*

Workshops in the **high schools** were welcomed by students and teachers. Comments from teacher evaluations exemplify this connection:

*The students told me outside the class how much they enjoyed the [workshops] and that they wished there were other topics that were covered. They wanted the CAT workshops to come back several more times throughout the semester. – Health Ed Teacher, A.P. Randolph HS, Manhattan*

*My students walked away with a wealth of knowledge which will, I believe, help them make better and more well informed judgments. They have developed a sense of how to think critically about life threatening/changing decisions. They walked away knowing that NO means NO and I loved that. – 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, STAR HS, Brooklyn*

*I think having a bilingual actor was very helpful. The students felt comfortable speaking out in class. They seemed to be very opinionated and proud of their knowledge. They really listened to each other – there was respect for the opinion of others. – PE Teacher, Martin Luther King Arts & Tech HS, Manhattan*

*Through questioning after the skits, students were very vocal and vociferous in their own opinions on how one should behave and the kind of responsibilities that should be displayed during relationships. The level of discussion and communication skills conveyed during the workshops was evident that students did not only display peripheral questions and answers, plus responses, but also some deep critical questioning. — 9<sup>th</sup> grade Teacher, STAR HS, Brooklyn*

*They gave students the opportunity to actively participate in every “sense of the way”, students shared thoughts and talents, received new information and were tested informally, encouraged to openly question and respond, empowered them with knowledge to make healthy choices. – English Teacher, Fordham HS, Bronx*

At Washington Irving High School in Manhattan students were inspired to write letters to CAT to express their appreciation for the *Healthy Choices* workshops. Many adolescents do not have opportunities to have frank discussions about sexual health and to get accurate up-to-date information. CAT’s workshops provided a safe forum and participants were able to write down any questions they had anonymously and get answers from the Health Educator. In addition the dramatizations caught the attention of students and they connected with the characters who were faced with a party where alcohol was being served, a relationship between a high school student and an adult as well as various types of peer pressure. Excerpts from some of their letters appear below and exemplify the impact of the *Healthy Choices* residencies.



*“I really learned some things that will help me make better decisions in life. You didn’t have to come, but you did and it makes a world of difference to me. Thanks for being there for us. Now I can keep myself safe and healthy.” (male student)*

*“I learned a lot from the four days we spent together. For one, I learned that you don’t have to do anything if you don’t want to – it’s alright to say no.” (female student)*

*“I was able to learn things that I didn’t know before. I was also able to ask questions about STIs (STDs) that I wasn’t comfortable asking before.” (female student)*

*“You definitely helped me learn by teaching in a new and more exciting way than a regular teacher. You have really helped me fill in the blanks that were in my head about: protected sex, STDs and AIDS.” (male student)*

*“I really appreciate what you’re doing to spread the word of being safe in engaging in life. Though your scenes dealt with drinking and sex and just being a teenager out in the world, I think your message was really about life in general. I learned to take precautions not just in a party or with a partner or friend, but also on my daily grind.”*  
(male student)

*“CHOICES, DECISIONS, CONSEQUENCES – I will always keep this in mind. All of our choices and decisions have consequences. As a result of this workshop I will make my choices and decisions more responsibly.”* (female student)

## HIV/AIDS Peer Education Project –NYC DOE/DOH, & NYS DOH

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s Bureau of HIV Prevention and Control and the Department of Education’s Office of Health and Family Living in partnership with the NYS Department of Health’s AIDS Institute designed this project to support implementation of the DOE’s updated HIV/AIDS Curriculum through peer education programs facilitated by community based organizations (CBOs) in 11 high schools throughout the City. Because of its successful track record for designing youth-centered HIV Prevention programs for adolescents, CAT was chosen to work on this pilot program. It was a natural complement to CAT’s *Healthy Choices* program.

CAT partnered with Washington Irving High School in Manhattan and provided 17 after-school training/rehearsal sessions for 11 volunteer peer educators. These sessions served to increase the peer educators’ knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention, strengthen their leadership skills and create a presentation to promote the updated HIV/AIDS Curriculum, encourage healthy behavior and impart critical information to their peers. These peer educators then took what they had learned and led workshops for hundreds of other students in their school, with CAT’s Health Educator in attendance to answer tough or clinical questions and support students interested in being tested. Their work was shared again during the NYC School-Based HIV Prevention Peer Education Project Culminating Event, held at Washington Irving on June 7<sup>th</sup>, for all of the participating students, CBOs and government agencies involved in the project.



Students were asked to answer a few questions to give feedback on their experiences during this pilot program. Their responses below are representative.

Q. Why did you volunteer to become a peer educator?

*I volunteered because I felt that only the teenagers can really make a difference on their lives because we just experienced or are continuing to experience the same things around the same time.*

*I volunteered to educate myself and to be able to educate others.*

*I volunteered to be a peer educator because I feel and believe that teenagers should know what’s out there such as HIV/AIDS.*

Q. What did you enjoy most about the training?

*I enjoyed the presentation because I was introduced to new ways of expressing important situations. I liked that we, the senior peer educators, were able to talk to teens and hopefully change, encourage, and support their ideas about HIV/AIDS.*

*What I enjoyed the most about the training was being able to meet new people and learn new things.*

*The audience was very engaging and hyper – it's like they were eager for knowledge.*

Classroom teachers who had the peer educators visit their classes were also asked to comment on the student-led workshops.

*The presentation was entertaining, informative and creative. Great work! I look forward to more presentations next year and hope to be involved! Thank you! Students suggested similar workshops about gangs, guns, drinking, smoking, teen pregnancy and drugs.*

*I think they've heard all the facts before to some degree, but the information packets given out were very helpful resources. The student actors were great. I've had some of them in class and they were quiet, but they were all confident on stage and did a great job.*

All of the teachers felt that the presentation engaged their students and said the peer educators would be a useful addition to assist with their HIV/AIDS lessons.

The NYC School-Based HIV Prevention Peer Education Project has bolstered the aims of the HIV/AIDS Curriculum by providing comprehensive and up-to-date information concerning the nature of HIV/AIDS, modes of transmitting the disease, and methods of prevention in youth-friendly ways. The students involved have demonstrated what a valuable resource student peer educators can be and their accomplishments attest to the many benefits of youth-adult partnerships. This project would not have been possible without the funding provided by the New York City Council.

## Neighborhood Development Area (NDA) Grants

The Creative Arts Team responded to a request for proposals issued by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) to address the *self identified needs and priorities of low income communities*. DYCD approved CAT's proposals to render violence prevention and leadership programs for youth in 3 of the targeted low income communities. In the neighborhoods where CAT proposed the implementation of the 3-year *Peacemaker Projects* – educational drama residency programs designed to foster non-violence and enhance critical thinking and decision-making skills – linkages were established with local high schools. Two of the approved proposals funded programs in the Bronx, one at the CUNY Preparatory High School and one at University Heights High School and a third award was provided that funded CAT's work at August Martin High School in Queens. Each of the sites had a connection to CUNY via College Now Programs at Bronx Community College (University Heights HS) and York College (August Martin HS) and as a school operated by CUNY in the case of CUNY Prep.

CAT staff met with representatives of the high schools and the colleges to obtain their input regarding the kinds of issues in terms of violence prevention and life skills that were of a critical nature for students at the participating schools. Based on the stipulations of the awards and the concerns identified by the schools, CAT continued the 20-day residencies to prepare high school students to adopt pro-social attitudes and behavior so they could take on leadership roles as productive and caring members of their communities. Each residency included a violence prevention module as well as workshops on higher education, employment readiness, healthy relationships, sexual activity and personal responsibility. **Though the terms of the contracts required CAT to reach just 135 students at all 3 sites, CAT was able to enroll 211 new 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, for this second of three years, in resiliency building activities that strengthened both social and academic skills.**



Students were asked to answer a few questions to give feedback on their experiences in the workshops. The comments below are representative.

Q. What did you learn about how violence affects people in the CAT workshops?

*“I really learned a lot on how violence affects people. Me myself, I used to be a bully. I was bullying people all the time, but now thanks to Ben and Dominique [CAT actor/teachers] I learned how that affects people so I stopped.”*

*“I learned that violence can come in different forms, even by people that claim they love you.”*

Q. How has this program changed the way you think about establishing and maintaining healthy relationships?

*“It helped me learn that I have to think about things more.”*

*“This program made me understand that my partner has feelings too, and not to take advantage of someone because they’re being nice to you.”*

Teachers from the 3 participating schools completed evaluation forms to share their impressions of how CAT workshops impacted their students. Two thirds or more thought that students’ knowledge, competencies and/or skills were increased, improved or strengthened in the following areas:

Causes of violence	100%
Tolerance	67%
Positive peer interaction	67%
Conflict resolution	100%
Understanding of cultural differences	80%
Sense of personal responsibility	100%
Listening & Communication skills	100%
Thinking & analyzing skills	100%
Decision-making skills	100%
Problem-solving skills	100%
Participation	100%

Classroom teachers also expressed appreciation for the *Peacemaker* residencies, citing benefits of CAT’s participatory learning activities. Some of their comments are shown here:

*I honestly felt that each activity effectively elicited strong responses which was a testament to the actor/teachers’ ability to engage my students in meaningful, informative discussion on a variety of important topics affecting youth.*

CUNY Preparatory HS, Bronx

*There were some students that were very reserved prior to CTA entering the classroom. Now the very same students are actively involved with the role plays and becoming more engaged in classroom discussions. The CAT Peacemakers Project is an excellent resource for teens.*

University Heights HS, Bronx

*The group activities and the discussions before and after the scenes were fun, informative and enlightening, but I think the class was almost always mesmerized by the acting – the storylines, the actors, the set up! The scenes made them think, which is the single greatest task, next to getting them to act on their words.*

August Martin HS, Queens

From Eve Bois, Assistant Director, CUNY Preparatory Transitional High School:

*One of the most significant outcomes we have seen for students who participate in the CAT residency is their ability to dialogue respectfully and thoughtfully with one another around the issues the actors bring to the classroom. Students engaged in meaningful conversations around issues of teen sex, diseases, and decision-making. I think they learned a great deal about their own values and actions, which was evident in the way they interacted with one another after each class period was over. Often, their conversations continued into their lunch period and throughout the day. This can perhaps be attributed to the comfort level Ben and Dominique [CAT actor-teachers] were able to establish in the classroom through their unique style of communication.*

## Young Adult Life Skills Project – Riker’s Island

In its seventh year of this initiative, CAT provided workshops at three facilities on Riker’s Island – Rosewood High School at the Rose M. Singer Center, and the Anna M. Kross Center (AMKC) and George Motchan Detention Center (GMDC) in the Horizon Academy. During 06-07, 12 dates of service were rendered at the Rose M. Singer site where female students participated and 12 dates were provided for male students at AMKC (6 dates) and GMDC (6 dates). **Total student participation was 356 for CAT’s Young Adult Life Skills workshops this year.**

This year, CAT redoubled efforts to influence workshop participants to refrain from engaging in risky behaviors. In addition to guiding young people through explorations of causes and consequences of violence, substance abuse and relationship abuse CAT workshops included an examination of sexual activity and related risks. In association with that topic actor/teachers reminded student participants that free and confidential HIV counseling and testing as well as STD screening was available on request at the Rikers Island clinic. Continuing themes also included communication, money and power (financial literacy), job interviews and parenting young children. The second residency focused on enabling students to create their own dramatic pieces on subject matter close to them – such as perceptions/opinions of others, self-image and identity, healthy choices, and so on – by using educational theatre tools shared in the first residency.



As always, CAT asked participating teachers to complete evaluation questionnaires on the workshops they observed. Obtaining feedback is an important part of maintaining our partnership with the Department of Correction and the Department of Education. Site staff who are with student participants on a daily basis have valuable insights on the impact of CAT’s participatory activities. Teachers were asked to check off competencies such as social and/or academic skills that they gauged to have been increased, improved or strengthened through CAT workshops. 100% of the teachers said their students recognized the consequences of behavior depicted in the dramas and strengthened not only their problem-solving skills, but also their understanding of their own and other people’s feelings/emotions. Additional skills or competencies cited by 67% or more of the respondents follow.

Interpersonal skills	100%
Patience	78%
Critical thinking skills	67%
Listening skills	67%
Personal responsibility	89%
Decision-making skills	89%
Interpretation skills	67%

Teachers were also asked evaluative questions regarding parenting skills developed and/or strengthened by applicable CAT workshops. More than 50% noted an increase in understanding of pertinent issues such as healthcare, discipline and children's developmental needs. 100% said the workshops encouraged or helped prepare students to participate in their children's education. Below are some of the comments from Rikers facility teachers, discussing the skills and issues addressed during the residencies.

*The students were asked to actively participate by acting, role playing, sharing information, and take notes. Some students spoke about changes they would make in actual life situations—upon release. —Teacher, AMKC*

*Workshops stimulated discussion of moral obligations and difficulties of “making it” as a productive member of society. —Teacher, AMKC*

*For those who have participated in acting, I think the workshops have strengthened their self-esteem. Some have participated in other classroom activities. —Teacher, Rose M. Singer*

*Perhaps the most important thing they learned was how to watch something to completion, form and opinion and share with others. —Teacher, GMDC*

*Students enjoyed having CUNY/CAT here very much. We all think it's very beneficial for parenting skills, conflict resolution, and anger management. —Teacher, Rose M. Singer*

*It is a wonderful program. Our students enjoy it very much. Keep it coming. —Asst. Principal, GMDC*

## Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama

The Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama was created in 1993 to promote the interactive educational drama methodologies developed and honed by the Creative Arts Team. The purpose of the Center is to foster a community of educators, youth workers, and artists who use interactive, arts-based methods to invigorate teaching, learning, and social change. Now a part of CUNY's School of Professional Studies (SPS), the Kaplan Center offers courses and certificates for which qualified participants can earn graduate credit. In addition, the Kaplan Center administers on-site staff development sessions at public schools. Known for combining theory with practical, hands-on strategies, Kaplan Center courses and workshops have been embraced by educators and other youth-serving professionals.

A major long-term goal that was established during CAT's institutional alignment with CUNY was to affect educational systemic change by disseminating knowledge of CAT's unique student-centered methodologies to current and future educators. The approval of three certificate programs at SPS was fundamental to realizing that goal. The



graduate-level certificate programs, *Creating Theatre with Young People*, *The Theatre Teaching Artist* and *Drama in the Classroom*, have been included among the courses offered as part of CAT's Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama at CUNY's School of Professional Studies. Recognizing the importance of this effort, CUNY agreed to support CAT's proposal to offer a new Master's Degree in Applied Theatre, currently in development.

During the 06-07 year, the Kaplan Center conducted 13 courses, supported the continued work of the Youth Theatre Program, and produced the annual New York City Student Shakespeare Festival. In addition, staff development workshops were conducted at Head Start Centers, schools and other Department of Education facilities. Including special projects, courses and outreach, the Kaplan Center reaches approximately 1,000 participants annually.

## Youth Theatre

CAT's Youth Theatre Program has had a big year in that there are now three working divisions: the **Youth Theatre** (YT) for high school students, the **Junior Youth Theatre** (JYT) for young people at the middle, intermediate or junior high school level, and **the Ensemble**, a training and performing company of former YT members aged 18-25. Members in all three divisions have actively participated in devising, rehearsing and performing their own work in a professional theatre setting, and older members of the YT and the Ensemble have worked as technical and backstage help to the YT Program staff. For the first time ever, two YT alumni were a part of the staff directing team. One was a member from 1999-2002 and recently graduated from Marymount where she studied theatre, the other joined in 2000 and was still in the group last

year when they performed *Shelter from the Storm*; both are also current members of the Ensemble. Together they were responsible for developing and directing four scenes in this year's YT show, as well as working as Assistant Directors of the JYT show in May. Additionally, members of the Ensemble have also taken part in Youth Theatre recruitment sessions in several junior high and high schools connected to us via the American Red Cross and other residency programs.

Often CAT's Youth Theatre members are influenced by current events when they come together to devise theatre productions, and this year was no different. The main Youth Theatre production this year, titled *WAR ZONES*, explored both literal and metaphorical war from a young person's perspective. Some of the questions explored were: *What is it about human nature that drives us to war? What is worth fighting for? How do we make peace?* **There were 24 young performers in "War Zones" and a total of 844 audience members who saw the show during February and March.** In addition, roughly half of the production was reassembled and performed for the 2007 American Alliance for Theatre & Education (AATE) Youth Theatre Conference, which took place here in New York City this past April.



This year's Youth Theatre members included students from all 5 of New York City's boroughs. As always the cast reflected the diverse make up of New York City's population. Their approach to each topic was creative and dynamic; for instance, war was shown quite literally by the young people as children who, after losing their homes and families, band together to survive and move through the journey from fear and denial to acceptance, awareness and willingness to participate. However, as is the YT's forte, they not only gave this literal picture of war, they

gave us scenes depicting gang violence, classroom power struggles, the fight against AIDS, self-image and the media; all examples drawn directly from the young people's lives as different "war zones." The young people were extremely proud of this work: *"This year the show was so thought provoking, I really felt that you can change the world one audience at a time."*

The Junior Youth Theatre produced a successful show this spring as well. *EMPOWERED* was a theme play, devised by the young people, exploring the theme of POWER. The three main scenes discussed who in the young people's immediate lives has power (they focused on their teachers and principals); who in the wider world has power (the group chose the President of the United States); and what in the world has power (they chose money). Some of the questions they explored were: *Who and what has power over you, and what can you do about it? Who and what do you have power over, and how do you use it?* **A total of 21 adolescents with an age range of 11 to 14 participated and 136 attended their performances.** Members of the Senior Youth Theatre and Ensemble supported and encouraged the JYT, taking on responsibilities such

as directing some scenes, operating sound, lights and video as well as acting as ushers, assisting with box office and helping backstage.

During their first year in existence, the Ensemble participated in every aspect of the YT Program, including, notably, their first show. Titled, *All's Fair in Love*, the production was an exploration of adult relationships, examining the questions: *what are the games we play with each other?* and, *how do we learn to form lasting, fulfilling relationships?* Using popular games intertwined with scenes between couples, the production was set in a “tennis-style” layout, with audience on either side of the action, so all actors were “on” at all times. Audience members were enthralled by the format and the intimacy it created: *“When you walk by a couple arguing on the street, you avert your eyes, you know you’re not supposed to witness it. This show was like that – except you were insisting we look. It was very intimate, and hit very close to home.”* **A total of 9 young adults were in the performance, two others provided technical and front of house support, and 181 attended the show.**

The activities of all three Youth Theatre groups have demonstrated CAT’s success with implementing community building and cultivating critical thinking while strengthening communication skills. At the end of the season, Youth Theatre members shared their thoughts and memories in relation to being part of CAT’s Youth Theatre. The comments below were generated at the 10 year reunion with past members, the annual Retreat to the YMCA’s Lake Fairview in New Jersey, after the performances and/or during the final workshop which included all three branches of the YT Program.

*After the show, someone asked me what my favorite thing at CAT was. It’s everyone coming together as a community. So many different ages, and we wouldn’t know one another outside CAT. CAT brings people together.*

*Before I joined, everywhere I went I was so insecure of myself. CAT is the first place that I have ever felt completely confident and sure of who I am. I am so lucky to be able to say that I’m a Youth Theatre member.*

*This is a great school – here they teach you how to be a leader, how to work together, how to talk in front of a crowd and even accept people for who they are, and don’t forget the acting.*

*Many people from CAT have told me all about how they have found themselves in CAT. CAT also comes to mean ‘respect.’ People are different. People come to CAT with their differences, they do not lose them, but rather come to accept and love the differences.*

*The CAT Youth Theatre is a community of electricity, energy and anxiety, music and laughter, fear and hope. The directors of this company are honest; they do not lie, but they also do not crush. There is expectation, both real and ideal. There exists an acceptance of who and where young people are, but with an encouragement to become and travel beyond what they imagined they could be.*

## The New York City Student Shakespeare Festival

With continued success, CAT's Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama has produced the *New York City Student Shakespeare Festival* since its founding in 1994. The *Festival* project featured professional development for teachers on how to devise student-centered scenes using Shakespeare's words and culminated in student performances. CAT's intent was not only to enrich student learning in language arts and drama but also to advance teaching pedagogy and methodology in those areas. In this way, the *Festival's* impact was extended far beyond the actual performances; teachers who participated are now able to implement this student-centered, devising work throughout their careers.

The **14<sup>th</sup> annual NYC Student Shakespeare Festival** took place at the Lucille Lortel Theatre on Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, Monday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. It was unequivocally a hit! **During the three Festival days, CAT hosted 24 school groups, 500 students, and 30 teachers.** We were excited to welcome 7 new schools to the Festival who came not only from Manhattan and the surrounding boroughs, but also from outlying tri-state areas such as Deer Park, Long Island; Princeton, New Jersey; and even Nyack, New York. The Festival's commitment to hosting students from as young as 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to as old as 12<sup>th</sup> grade, who are from a variety of socio-economic neighborhoods and linguistic and cultural backgrounds, has continued to ensure that the Festival remains an accurate reflection of New York's diverse student population.

While this year some teachers revisited Shakespearean classics *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, frequently melding Elizabethan costumes and props with contemporary accoutrement representative of students' socio-cultural backgrounds, we were excited to see scenes from some less common plays performed, such as *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. It was inspiring to see so many performances driven by the ideas of



the participating young people showing that Shakespearean themes truly resonate in their lives. The performances boldly asked audiences to consider a range of issues related to war and violence, bullying, sexual harassment in schools, the misuse of power, interracial relationships, and hip hop culture.

Veteran teacher Lynda Hodges worked with her ninth grade students at Chinatown's IS 131 Dr. Sun Yet Sen to incorporate Chinese music, costumes, and ceremonial traditions into their exploration of *The Tempest*. Their presentation also demonstrated the effectiveness of drama as a medium for building literacy and English language acquisition, as many of Ms. Hodges' students are first generation Americans and ESL students. New teacher Marlene May, from Fordham High School for the Arts in the Bronx, led her students in an inventive exploration of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Incorporating soundscape, choral speaking, and lyrical,

synchronized movement, her students, believing that true love does not exist, used their theatre piece to engage with the idea that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* might be a tragedy rather than a comedy. When asked about her experience participating in the Festival program, Ms. May said:

*My students went through a maturation process during the performance preparation. They started out as undisciplined, poor listeners, and ended up fully committed.*

Another teacher, Valerie Matthews from Nyack High School, wrote:

*The Festival is a wonderful experience for both students and teachers. The students had several authentic learning experiences. Not only did they read, rehearse and perform, but they had a chance to discuss and evaluate their work.... As an educator, I realize that students learn more effectively when they realize their efforts have ramification in the "real world." For my students, the Festival gave them a "real world" experience that validated their talents, and showed how their school knowledge could be appreciated and celebrated in the professional community.*

The young people felt very positive about their Festival experiences, and they enjoyed talking with one another about the work and the process of creating it during small group discussions at the end of each of the performance days. One 5<sup>th</sup> grade student, Tobias Campbell from PS 295 The Studio School of Arts in Culture in Brooklyn, offered:

*I feel excited about Shakespeare. He has such great plays and philosophy and I can't imagine someone my age not finding it all intriguing. Watching my peers perform and seeing their improvement from the start to the performance was exciting.*

As is evident by these comments, our teachers and students brought engaging performances to the Lucille Lortel's stage, had a fantastic time learning from one another's work, and enjoyed their opportunities for community building. The Creative Arts Team/Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama, the participating Festival teachers and their young people, are grateful for the continued support of the Festival and look forward to future years of collaboration on this important teacher training and student performance project.

## **CONCLUSION**

CAT rendered many more workshops and residencies during the 2006-07 school year than those highlighted in this report. For more than 30 years CAT has been collaborating with a wide variety of educational, cultural and artistic organizations and initiatives to enrich learning, to foster pro-social development and to encourage creativity. Additional CAT partners include the Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, TASC (The After School Corporation), United Way of NYC and YALA (CUNY's Young Adult Literacy Academy). The New York City Department of Education has worked closely with CAT to support the expansion of certain projects (Anti-Bullying) and the continuation of other projects (Comprehensive School Reform) while developing contracts with CAT to ensure that mechanisms are in place to enable schools to obtain CAT's services. Government agencies such as the NYS Department of Health (DOH) and the NYS Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) have sustained support for CAT's work. Locally, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) increased support by awarding CAT 3 new contracts for Adolescent Literacy in addition to 3 existing contracts for violence prevention programs in Neighborhood Development Areas (NDAs).

Funds earmarked for CAT by the New York City Council subsidized the cost of a broad array of innovative and educationally sound activities that engaged over 14,000 children and adults throughout the five boroughs during FY 2007. Those allocations made it possible for CAT to reach thousands of children and families whose economic, personal and/or educational limitations would have otherwise precluded their ability to participate in a CAT workshop. CAT applauds elected officials for supporting the use of educational drama as a tool for strengthening academic achievement, for increasing resiliency and for bolstering pro-social attitudes such as tolerance and respect.