



ESPI CITY SMART SCHOLARS 2018 PROGRESS REPORT



2018-19 8th Grade: SHSAT Prep, Academic Enrichment, Participation in external, highly acclaimed, programs

20 students took SHSAT practice tests with us in spring and 15 prepared further for that test and other high school applications through the summer and into the fall, while also participating in classroom work to prepare them for high school writing and Algebra. A group of our students were accepted into highly acclaimed summer programs: John Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth (CTY) and Bridge to Enter Advanced Mathematics (BEAM). Other students did their SHSAT prep with the New York City Dream program, at locations closer to their homes. Students reported continued high grades on their end of year 7th grade report cards and we are excited to learn of their high school acceptances when these come out in March. In addition to the specialized high schools, students applied to other highly selective public high schools, including Bard High School Early College, Townsend Harris and LaGuardia High School. While they are attending high school we will keep in touch with our alums and also bring them back to City Smart Scholars as near-peer mentors for younger students.

2018-19 7th Grade: A year of accelerated math, problem solving, literature and essay writing taught by excellent teachers.

24 7th graders have returned for a year-long Saturday program studying Geometry and pre-Algebra with Dr. Robert Mason, an innovative Math teacher who recently retired from a long

career at the Dalton School and, before that, Hunter College Elementary School. They are also studying literature with Michelle Smalls, a dynamic young English teacher who holds an MFA in poetry and is also an accomplished writer.

Some of these students also participated in our half-day City Smart Scholars summer program, while four others did a five-week summer math day camp with Bridge to Enter Advanced Mathematics. About half of these students, however, had been away from our programs since at least winter, when they completed preparations with us for the Hunter College High School Admissions Test, or even earlier the previous year, when they had participated in the spring 5th grade program. This strong retention rate is a great step forward for us, and we are delighted with the 7th graders' progress through a year of challenging Math and English without a focus on preparing for a particular test.

2018-2019 6th Grade: Hunter College High School test prep, academic enrichment with a focus on building foundations for critical thinking in Math and English.

20 students have spent the fall preparing for the Hunter College High School Admissions test, which will be given on January 11, 2019. 16 of these students had worked with us last spring in 5th grade and during the summer before they started 6th. Their qualifying to take the Hunter test puts them in the top 5% of NYC public school students, and our increasing numbers of students qualifying after completing the 5th grade program is a source of satisfaction and pride. Students spend Saturday mornings solving multi-step Math problems led by Anh-Tho Pong, a mathematician who for years has successfully prepared students for Hunter's unusual Math questions. Also during the morning, they have been working on personal essays (which are a feature of the Hunter test) with Michelle Smalls. Afternoons, they do more specific test preparation. Meanwhile, about 20 other 6th graders have returned to work beside the "Hunter preppers," doing similar creative writing and Math problem-solving but working on early preparation for the SHSAT rather than intensive Hunter prep in the afternoons. Their continued commitment to learning, even after the disappointment of not qualifying to take the Hunter test (six missed by only one math question), models for all students, teachers and staff that the work we are doing is long-term and of value regardless of how the chips fall on any particular test or through any particular admissions process.

2018 Organization update.

With the arrival of Francesca Bacon as Consulting Director of Operations for City Smart Scholars, we have begun to professionalize the work that previously has been done by volunteer board members, a highly necessary step as our universe of students expands, both in terms of numbers and grade level. Additionally, in the hiring of English teacher Michelle Smalls, we have an emerging leader for the educational development of our students across their middle school years.

Our staff is assisted by two college or recent graduate interns and a growing group of high

school "near-peer mentors" from schools like Hunter College High School, Bronx High School of Science and Stuyvesant High School.

Going forward 2019: Building partnerships with the schools our students come from and external high level academic programs in which our students participate; creating support around our students lives.

All of our 6th graders will take the "BEAM Challenge," which is Bridge to Enter Advanced Mathematics' innovative talent identification method, in mid-January and students from all grades will test for the CTY summer and online programs in February. Both these programs are great "fits" for City Smart Scholars, in that our students can spin off to do the BEAM Math camp or a CTY program and then bring back their experience to City Smart Scholars during the school year. Many students will also apply to year-round programs like the TEAK Fellowship or Prep for Prep's Prep 9 program. When they succeed, as many have in previous years, they will not be able to also participate in our programs, but we know they are in good hands in well established and highly successful academic development and placement organizations, and that their work with us has prepared them to thrive in other demanding academic environments.

We will soon take in a new class of 5th graders, and our recruitment is increasingly focused on building partnerships with individual schools, where the school's support can amplify student success and small cohorts of classmates can bring their learning with City Smart Scholars back to their home classrooms in the Bronx, Upper Manhattan and other low income and racially isolated neighborhoods. Now that we have completed a full cycle of 5th through 8th grade classes, we will be all the more confident of the road map we present to new families on February 2, 2019.

Benchmarks.

By fall of 2019, we will have collected multi-year report card grades, state test scores, qualitative survey reports, admissions test results and talent search findings, and will be able to accurately quantify outcomes for our program across several dimensions. We hope these results will also be broadly useful to others working to address the "excellence gap" in the academic achievement and admissions results of the many extremely bright students from the most underserved communities in New York City and across the country. We think City Smart Scholars will have a lot to be proud of in these results, as well as a lot to learn about how to live up to the high standards we seek to develop in our students and in ourselves.

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