

CUNY Preparatory Transitional High School

CUNY Prep is a model program that offers out-of-school youth between the ages of 16 and 18 with an opportunity for full-time study in order to qualify for admission to college by obtaining a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). A new, part-time evening program serves older students and working adults.

<i>Agency</i>	<i>Start Date</i>	<i>Number Served per year</i>	<i>CEO Budget (City FY 08)</i>	<i>Total Budget (City FY 08)</i>
The City University of New York	January 2007	200 seats (day program); 175 seats (evening program)	\$3,500,000	\$3,500,000

Problem Statement

There are approximately 165,000 New Yorkers between 16 and 24 years of age who are neither in school, working nor looking for work. Half of these disconnected youth have less than a high school diploma.¹

Research and Evidence

CUNY Prep is now in its fourth year of operation. The program started early in 2003 as a pilot demonstration project by the City University of New York. It offers a new educational model for out-of-school youth and young adults. The program focuses on college readiness, and passing the GED with a high score. Hallmarks of the model include high expectations, quality instruction, and support services. Between fall 2003 and spring 2006, 978 students attended CUNY Prep. Forty-one percent of these students took the General Equivalency exam. Of the students who took the exam, 71.9% passed.² More than 140 of its graduates have gone on to college, while others have enrolled in trade schools.³ All students who graduate the program receive follow-up services, such as support from the staff, alumni meetings, and assistance with college life.

Although CUNY Prep has achieved considerable successes in preparing students for the GED, graduates confront hurdles upon reaching college. Attrition rates for CUNY Prep students who enter college vary, but over 50% leave college within the first year.⁴ Even though this pattern is consistent with the general persistence problems of GED recipients who attend community college, CUNY Prep is assessing the causes and hopes to improve its graduates' successes at the post-secondary level.⁵

CUNY Prep has served as a model for the Department of Education's new full-time GED programs.

Program Description

CUNY Prep is a full-time academic program. The day program serves 200 students at any given time and accepts new students four times per year. Most students attend the program for six months to one year. Instruction emphasizes college preparation in humanities, math and science. In addition to the three subject-area classes students also take a literacy enhancement course to build the skills they will need for college and work.

The program also teaches college survival skills and provides social supports such as counseling, career advising, and referrals to health care centers and part-time job opportunities. Trained guidance counselors provide case management to address students' personal challenges and needs. After successfully completing their GEDs, students attend college courses at Hostos Community College taught by CUNY Prep and college faculty.

The program sets high expectations. Students are permitted no more than six absences from CUNY Prep per cycle. Students are dropped from the program at the seventh absence and encouraged to return at the beginning of the next cycle.

The new evening program extends the CUNY Prep model to older students. In January of 2007 CEO funding enabled CUNY Prep to double the number of slots available to older and working adults in the evening program. The program is part-time but still maintains its focus on college preparation, in addition to the GED. The evening program serves 175 students at any given time and admits new students four times per year.

Target Population

The CUNY Prep day program serves young adults citywide who meet the minimum age requirements, and who also have the reading skills necessary to prepare for the GED Tests within one year. The evening program serves adults of all ages.

Expected Outcomes

- Students achieve 90% attendance
- 85% of students will pass the GED
- At least 50% of students will enroll in college
- At least 50% of students will remain in college for at least two semesters

¹ Levitan, Mark. *Out of School, Out of Work...Out of Luck? New York City's Disconnected Youth*. New York: Community Service Society, 2005.

² CUNY Preparatory Transitional High School, 2004 – 2006: A Comprehensive School Report & History of the Project: 24.

³ Information listed on the CUNY Prep website. <http://cunyprep.org/subsections/AboutUs/visionandvalues.htm>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.