

# CUNY & SYEP Collaborative Summer Bridge

## Work-Based Learning and College Readiness

A pilot initiative generously funded by The Pinkerton and Aronson Family Foundations

### Purpose

- Prevent summer melt by providing graduating high school seniors an orientation to CUNY, college credit, and relevant summer (and possibly academic year) employment.
- Introduce students to work-readiness skills and career pathways in youth development.
- Help incoming college students to see the linkages between academic learning and careers.

“Whatever we were learning, they went and applied immediately. During the class, they would debrief the activities they were doing at work. They were putting learning into practice.”

- Course Instructor

### Program Model

#### Participants

- 55 CUNY-bound recent NYC high school graduates

#### Course Credits through Lehman College Credit for Prior Learning

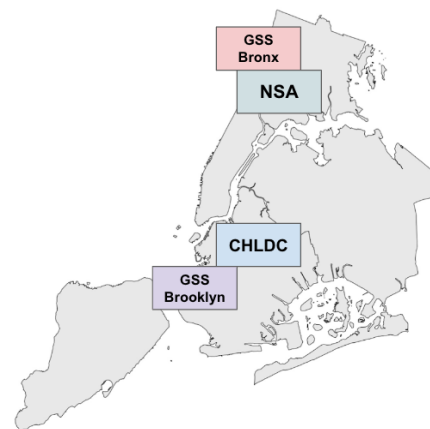
- CPR + First-Aid course (3 credits)
- CUNY SPS Youth Studies course (2 credits)
- CARA-designed CUNY navigational workshops, led by trained peer leaders, nested within Youth Studies course.

#### Navigational Workshop Topics

Orientation to campus vocab & resources  
 Navigating CUNYFirst  
 Understanding college syllabi  
 Communicating with professors  
 Course registration

#### CBO Partners & SYEP Youth-Serving Work Sites

- Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
- Good Shepherd Brooklyn Lifelink
- Good Shepherd Bronx Lifelink
- New Settlement



“It was great to have students experience college rigor - before even setting foot on a campus.”

- CBO Program Director

“Because of this experience, these students will have a foundation to work in after school programs, to be long term educators, to work in this field. Opportunities like this are formative.”- CBO Program Director

## Program Overview

---

The CUNY & SYEP Collaborative Summer Bridge program was piloted in summer 2022 with the intent of leveraging NYC’s SYEP program to address concerning trends coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. These trends were expected to further exacerbate summer melt for first-gen, low-income students:

- Precipitous declines in college enrollment, particularly at public colleges: since Fall 2019, aligned to national trends (Weissman, 2022), enrollment is down 30% at CUNY two-year campuses and 7% at 4-year campuses (CUNY, 2022).
- Academic under-preparedness for college courses;
- Reduced opportunities for graduating high school seniors to explore higher education;
- Lack of structured opportunities to explore the connection between interests and talents and career fields on the part of high school students.

The summer 2022 pilot brought together a set of organizations that have both shared and distinct expertise implementing programming that effectively addresses these trends. CARA and the work-site providers - Cypress Hills LDC, Good Shepherd Services, and New Settlement - all have structured training and supervision models that provide high school and college students with professional skill development that translates into work-readiness skills and increased college completion; and they also all implement programming that directly addresses increasing college enrollment and persistence for students served. Bringing in CUNY’s SPS Youth Studies program provided a new avenue to position high school graduates for college success by providing academic preparation, orientation to college, and helping students to see the connections between academic coursework and career preparation. The pilot also expanded access to pre-college credit accumulation for participating students, which research on dual enrollment programs has found to be a critical factor for ensuring successful high school to college transitions ([Community College Research Center, 2020](#)).

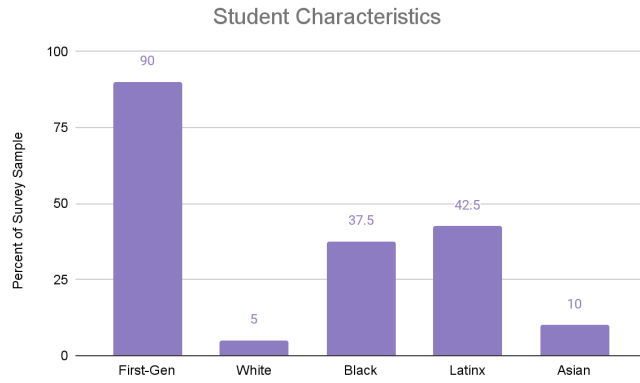
“The program addressed learning loss over the summer with students who were not college-ready. It’s going to give them confidence to know they can work, do some schoolwork, and be engaged. Credit for Prior Learning is a big movement in this country, but it ignores students who are underprepared or don’t speak English as a first language. This does a lot more than just give 5 credits, particularly for someone who is at risk of not meeting a momentum goal in their first year.”

- CUNY Administrator

While addressing immediate needs of NYC public high school graduates, the pilot also provided an important new type of opportunity to situate careers in education, youth development and counseling pathways as a part of the New York City Department of Education goal of ensuring “*all students attain rewarding and economically secure careers*”. In the long run, it will provide a second

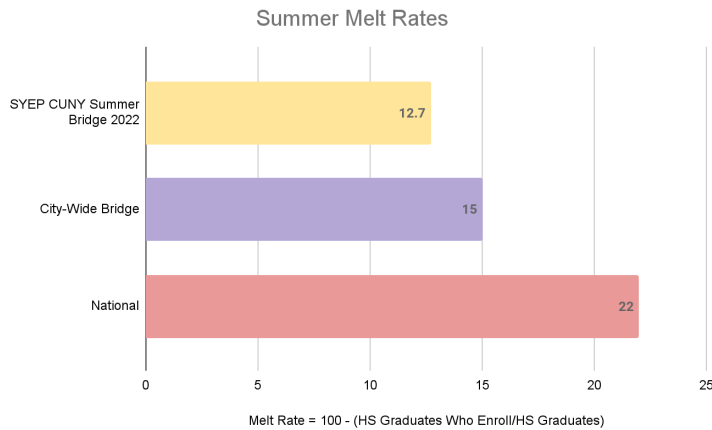
benefit to youth-serving fields by creating a steady pipeline of diverse candidates who have shared experiences with the students they serve.

## Student Characteristics



Most Commonly Attended High Schools
Bronx High School of Business
Bronx Collegiate Academy
Academy of Innovative Technology
Claremont International
Brooklyn Tech
Gotham Professional Arts Academy

## Outcomes



All 55 Summer Bridge participants <b>earned 5 college credits</b> . 48 successfully <b>enrolled in college</b> by September
Most Common College Destinations
Lehman College
City Tech
City College
LAGCC
York College
Brooklyn College
BMCC

## Bright Spots

This pilot demonstrated positive evidence for a community-based model of pre-college transition support that integrates work-based learning, academic preparation, and career exposure through engaging students in credit-bearing college coursework and SYEP summer employment placements. We identified two critical strengths of the model that created a mutually reinforcing connection for students between work-based learning and college readiness:

- Bringing together existing institutional and community-based structural assets to implement the program, as the CBO partners already have pre-college and persistence initiatives and staff who are experienced with helping students navigate the CUNY system and SYEP placements. In some cases, the CBO partner was also the SYEP worksite for students, further strengthening the connection between students' college and career learning experience.
- Creating career pathway role modeling by having instructors who are themselves professionals in a youth-serving or educational setting. The instructors delivered the course content in ways that created authentic discussions around, for example, what is involved in being a counselor day-to-day or what kinds of post-college education is needed for youth-serving professions.

Research with participating students showed they:

- Explored their varied feelings about going to college in a safe and supportive environment;
- Discussed “work dilemmas” from their SYEP placements in class and problem-solved with the support of course instructors who are themselves youth-serving professionals;
- Connected summer jobs to career pathways and established an understanding of youth development as a career pathway;
- Reflected on their own interests in working in a youth serving field;
- Practiced their advocacy, time management, and communications skills;
- Engaged in CUNY navigational workshops which would support their transition to college;
- Developed job and academic navigational skills.

## Next Steps

---

Secondary and postsecondary public education systems are rethinking how to more equitably distribute opportunities for college and career preparation within existing program and policy initiatives, such as dual enrollment ([CCRC, slide 24](#)). This pilot contributes a strong model to this movement by extending credit for prior learning through a combined pre-college and work-based experience during the summer after high school.

All participating organizations would like to continue this model and are interested in expanding it to double the number of student participants. As we move through this year, and plan for the next, we intend to do the following:

- Track participating students college retention and choice of major;
- Assess how many participating students continued to work in youth-serving roles during the academic year;
- Begin collaborative partnerships earlier, moving up the timeline for program implementation and course/credit registration;
- Provide more time for CUNY navigational workshops;
- Integrate peer leaders into course design and planning with instructors.
- 

We believe this model holds promise for occupational fields beyond youth-serving professions; with the expansion of SYEP and internships across NYC, CUNY offers valuable opportunities to couple job placements with academically relevant coursework and exposure to higher education.