



Giving New York City Middle School Students a New View of Urban Landscapes

The Early College Academy aims to help middle school students get accepted to competitive New York City high schools.

Two graduates of the MAT Program at Bard College, mathematics teacher Ben Rubenstein '06 and English teacher Jennifer Minnen '07, spent the summer of 2006 teaching in a special enrichment program for middle school students known as the Early College Academy. Based at Bard High School Early College (BHSEC) in New York City and funded by a three-year grant from the Jacob K. Javits Program at the U.S. Department of Education, the Academy was developed by BHSEC as an academic enrichment program in the summer and after school for middle school students from Public

Schools 188, 140, and 34 on the Lower East Side. A primary goal of the program was to cultivate the students' academic skills to prepare them to apply successfully to competitive high schools in New York City. In connection with this goal, Neil Dorosin, New York City's director of high school placement for the Department of Education, met with the Academy students and offered advice about the high school admissions process.

Using the theme of urban landscapes, more than 38 students participated in the five-week program, investigating math, humanities, and science. They spent mornings in class and took afternoon field trips to complete assignments connected to the academic concepts presented in their classes. The field trips included close investigations of exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the gardens at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Weekly arts workshops were offered by BHSEC faculty, and neighborhood nonprofit organizations such as the Gorilla Press provided opportunities for students to write and illustrate handmade books.

Several of the instructors at the Early College Academy have close ties to Bard College, including Gabriel Rosenberg, currently a mentor teacher in mathematics for the MAT Program, who cotaught the mathematics classes with Ben Rubenstein; and Elizabeth Howort, Bard '05, who cotaught the humanities classes with Jennifer Minnen.



Ben Rubenstein, MAT graduate and BHSEC math teacher, participates in the Gorilla Press book-making workshop.



Evanellys Santos and Amber Velez, with BHSEC student mentor Diocelyn Batista, use a microscope to identify parts of a flower.



Nargis Akther observes tessellations exhibited in the border of an Islamic ceramic at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.



Austin Hua sketches a taffeta plant in the Tropical Pavilion at the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens.