

WJCS Parent-Child Home Program Graduates Kids Ready for School Success, Bridges Academic Achievement Gap

Hundreds, if not thousands, of young people graduated from elementary and high school, colleges and universities in May and June. Among them will be some unique graduates who count their experience and skills learned in a pre-school program for their success.

The program, WJCS Parent-Child Home Program, helps prepare young children from low-income families with the skills to enter school ready to learn and succeed academically. These preschoolers bridge the achievement gap that poverty helps create and stay on track during the summer months when kids typically fall back.

Briana Mosquera is one

such student. At two years old, while her mother was out working, her grandmother, unable to speak much English, enrolled her in the WJCS Parent-Child Home Program. With the skills her grandmother learned: reading to Briana, engaging her in play, stimulating her curiosity about and appreciation for books and learning, Briana was able arrive at elementary school speaking English and ready to excel. She earned a BA in Psychology at Syracuse University and has just graduated with a Master's in Clinical Social Work from Fordham University. Briana's academic performance is complemented with an impressive array of volunteer and in-

ternship activities. View Briana's story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBLMHKKfZbA>.

There's also Yasmin Cisneros. Arriving from Mexico as an infant with a mother who spoke no English, the Parent-Child Home program was her ticket to success. She not began to understand English, but she learned literacy skills that prepared her for kindergarten. Her talent and interest in fashion design was piqued when her mother began teaching her to sew. Now, as Yasmin is about to graduate from New Rochelle High School and enter Westchester Community College, she has won accolades, including a bronze medal in a New York State fashion design

competition. Naturally, she plans to pursue a career in that field.

Briana and Yasmin are but two of the hundreds of youth that have enjoyed the Parent-Child program over the years and have achieved academic success.

Education, both in parenting and for young children, as many of the two-year studies have documented, is the single strongest preventative measure against long-term poverty. The WJCS Parent-Child Home Program helps pre-school children get on track to meet educational standards by coaching parents to be their child's first and best teachers.

The WJCS program has several components based on the research-proven National Parent-Child Home Program model. These components in-



Patrice Cuddy, PCHP director

clude a certified replication of the national PCHP home-based literacy program in which trained home visitors model cognitive enrichment with children through verbal interaction, reading, music and games. Parents begin to use these skills independently over the course of

the two-year program. The WJCS New Rochelle Parent-Child Center is a drop-in playgroup with predominantly Hispanic parents and preschoolers involving early childhood play activities, parent education, family literacy and connection to community resources. The Child Care Home Program, a WJCS innovation to the model that has been nationally recognized, supports family day care providers in maintaining a strong culture of learning

and literacy in their child care sites. In addition, a cool "Summer Fun in Hartley Park" playgroup for parents/caregivers and their young children in Mt. Vernon extends the literacy and parenting skills to a time of the year when kids tend to fall back in their academic achievement.

The WJCS program - the only prototype of the National Parent-Child Home Program in Westchester - has been paying dividends to many students and parents not only in the early years, but also later in life.

WJCS has helped launch thousands of young children on the road to success in the more than 40 years of the program's existence and again marks this year with another bright-eyed group of eager learners and their parents who will be celebrating graduation and reunions. The program has proven results of serving some of the most promising, yet at-risk children and families in White Plains, New Rochelle, Port Chester, Greenburgh, Mamaroneck and Mount Vernon.