

BRONX NEW CENTURY HIGH SCHOOLS STUDENT VOICES

On May 2, 2003 approximately 200 students and 50 adults met for a day-long “summit” at the East Side Settlement House in Bronx, NY to discuss issues that concerned them deeply: improving their schools and communities, fighting against inequities and for social justice. The students were all participants in the small schools “movement” in the Bronx, part of New York City’s larger New Century High Schools initiative supported by the Carnegie Corporation and coordinated by New Visions, Inc.. Most of the students attended one of the 11 small schools represented; some had also helped design other soon-to-open small schools in the district. The adults included teachers, district administrators, funders, community partners, and youth advocates.

The summit, which had been planned over several months by a steering committee made up of students and adults, had a number of goals. One was to show the community—both youth and adults, in and outside schools—the critical thinking and thoughtful action young people are capable of when given the opportunities and supports adults can provide. Eight workshops, led by students with their adult partners, were a centerpiece of the summit; they provided hands-on instruction on topics ranging from portfolio assessment, team building, and advisories to student research on the achievement gap. A second goal was to foster cross-school conversation and networking. Taking seriously the concerns students had—most especially about what’s working and what needs improving in the new small schools they attend—was a third goal. Turning these concerns into research questions that students and teachers could explore together back at their schools was a fourth.

On the pages that follow, we present highlights from this important gathering.

The photos and text included here come from the Educational Video Center’s video documentation of the meeting, led by EVC staff intern Kellon Innocent. Dan Cervone, student intern with What Kids Can Do, transcribed the audio portions of the video to create these excerpts.

YOUTH SUMMIT — 2003

STUDENTS AS PARTNERS IN EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

AGENDA

Date: Friday, May 02, 2003
Time: 8:30 AM to 2:00 PM
Location: East Side House Settlement – Mitchell Community Center
210 Alexander Ave. at 137th Street, Bronx, New York

8:30 Informal gathering, sign-in, breakfast

9:00 Welcome: Olivia Ifill-Lynch, *Director*, Bronx New Century High Schools
Sharis Wingfield, *Student*, The Academy for Careers in Sports

9:15 Opening remarks: Dr. Michelle Fine, *Professor*, CUNY Graduate Center

9:35 Plenary: Richard Gray Jr., *Senior Project Director*, NYU Institute of
Education and Social Policy
Rosa Fernandez, *Student*, Manhattan International High School
Fernando Carlo, *Student*, member of Sistas and Brothas United
Pardeice Powell-McGoy, *Project Director*, Youth/Adult Capacity
Initiative Fund for the City of New York.
Steve Goodman, *Director*, Educational Video Center
Vance Allen Rawles, *Student Author*, Fires in the Bathroom

10:35 Presentation: Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from High School Students
(by Kathleen Cushman and the Students of What Kids Can Do, New Press, May, 2003)
and The Schools We Need: Creating Small High Schools that Work for Us (by Bronx
public high school students with What Kids Can Do, May, 2003)

10:45 Introduction to Workshops

11:00 Workshops (Choose One)

- Youth Organizing and Policy – Sistas and Brothas United
- Student Portfolio Presentations – Bronx International HS
- Teaming and Team Building – Bronx Aerospace Academy
- Advisory as Youth Empowerment – Bronx Leadership Academy II
- Advisory, Town Hall & The Student Voice – Mott Haven Village HS
- *Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers* – Students of What Kids Can Do
- Students as Researchers in Closing the Gap – CUNY Graduate Center & HS Students
- Mamaroneck H.S. Documentary Team – Mamaroneck HS & Educational Video Center

12:00 Lunch

12:40 -Reports from the workshops (provided to large group by youth-adult pairs)
-Feedback

1:00 In groups of adults and young people discuss and develop research questions that you would like to explore within your school and/or community.

1:40 -Share
-Next Steps

2:00 Closing

CO-SPONSORED BY

The NYC Department of Education
Office of the Bronx High Schools Superintendent
New Visions, Inc.
The Fund for the City of New York
What Kids Can Do, Inc.

Bronx New Century High School Youth Summit: Students As Partners In Educational Change

May 2, 2003 • Bronx, New York

Meeting Excerpts

Welcome: Olivia Ifill-Lynch, Director, Bronx New Century High Schools and Sharis Wingfield, Student, The Academy for Careers in Sports

Olivia: I'd like to welcome you to the first annual Bronx New Century High School Youth Summit. What's great about today is that we have come together to celebrate *you*, and you have asked us, the adults, to be included in that celebration, emphasizing the fact that your achievements have been made with the support of caring adults. One of the things I really want us to come away with today is knowing, seeing, and believing that young people can and are doing great things to transform their education—and to transform this world. As the adults, our job is to get in there and support them...



And to the young people here today, I just want to say to you that *we are aware*. We are aware that we haven't stepped up to the plate for children the many times we should have. We are aware that what you've noticed that needs doing *does need* doing, that what you've noticed that needs to be different *does need* to be different. We want you to continue to share what you notice with each other and with us. We want you to think of ways that we can be better and ways that we can improve things for you first, because you are the future. And by improving education for you, by improving living conditions for you, we also get a chance to create a better world for us all.

Sharis: Good morning, everyone. My name is Sharis Wingfield, and I attend The Academy for Careers in Sports, which is located inside South Bronx High School building. The Academy for Careers in Sports is a very well organized school, classes are terrific, and teachers are devoted. Before I even came to the school, the teachers knew my name, where I lived, my phone number, all about me—they knew more about me than I knew about myself. So, as you can tell, I go to a school with an atmosphere that is cool, calm, and collected.

I want to say thank you to the organization that founded the idea to open up small schools. It has changed my life, and I have a new perspective on New York City high schools. I never knew I could go into a school and feel this safe or feel this comfortable with anyone—especially teachers. In bigger high schools, you go there and you're just a number. You have no say and no right. In my school they know you inside out. In my school, your opinion is appreciated. In my school, they love us. And I'm sure in every other small school in New Century, teachers love the students just as much.

Yes, thank you New Century for giving me this special opportunity. Who would have thought that I would actually want to go to school? I never used to like school. Now, I'm thinking, "Oh yeah, let me get up and go to school." I'm eager, I'll run to school. It's good to know that New York City has high schools that you can feel this good about....

Let me close it out with a reminder: without students there would be no schools, and great students make up great schools.

Opening remarks: Dr. Michelle Fine, Professor, CUNY Graduate Center

Michelle: Thank you, Sharis. I'm Michelle Fine. Let me say up front that I feel these are hard times. Right now we live in a country that is spending a lot of money on war, a lot of money on prisons, and not that much money on public education. I worry that communities like the Bronx have been asked to pay a big share of the war and then get hit when it comes to education.

So it feels as though our generation owes your generation an apology, because we're leaving you with some tough circumstances. You all know that better than we do. You might even be a little pissed about it. Well, today is a day where we're going to ask you to think seriously about the stuff that upsets you in your schools, in your community, in America, and in turn, to think "What can we do about it?" We understand that if we don't take up sure goals for better schools and better communities, nobody will.



First, though, I want to find out who you are. Please raise your hand if the question applies to you.

- *How many of you are high school students in new small high schools in the Bronx?*
- *How many of you speak more than one language? [Dialects count.]*
- *Okay, how many of you were born in another country?*
- *How many of you have somebody you love serving in the military abroad? [Our prayers.]*
- *How many of you wish we left you a different world? [Sorry.]*
- *How many of you went to a different high school before the high school you go to now?*
- *How many feel like you made a good choice...in your new high school?*
- *How many of you really believe that young people have the power to change things? I think that should be our work for today.*

Now I'm going to give you some examples of the ways in which I've worked with young people all over the country—where they have taken social problems and turned them into action.

There's a small middle school in Manhattan called Crossroads, and there was a group of students there who felt that every time they went to the local Woolworth's, if they were African-American or Latino, they were followed around in the store. They also noticed that their white friends weren't followed around and they weren't asked a thousand questions, like "Can I help you?" "Have you got what you need?" "Are you ready to go?" So they decided to do an experiment—these middle school kids with their teachers. First, they had a group of all black kids go in the store, while somebody took notes on whether they were being followed, what

questions they were asked, whether they were asked to leave. Then a group of white kids went in and again someone took notes. Then they had a mixed group—white kids and black kids and biracial kids—with a white teacher go in, and finally they sent in a mixed group with a black teacher.

What do you think the results were? Who was followed the most? The blacks. Who was followed second most? The mixed group with the black teacher. Who was followed least? The white kids. So what did they do, did they get pissed off? Yes, but then they also wrote a letter to the head of Woolworth's, they wrote a letter to the local newspaper, they invited the Commissioner of Human Rights for New York City into their school along with the head of Woolworth's. They didn't just confront, they also pushed for new store policies that would treat customers equally.

Then there was a group of young women in Philadelphia who worried about sexual harassment and asked me to come talk to them. I stupidly thought that they were worried about sexual harassment from boyfriends, so I brought all these orders of protection and started explaining them. Finally one of the young women said, "No, no, no, no. We've all had orders of protection—they aren't very helpful. We don't want to talk to you about our boyfriends, we want to talk about the police."

So they explained that the police in their neighborhood often hit on them. Then one young woman said, "you know, when I call police if something's wrong, they don't even come to my neighborhood." Another young woman said, "Oh, you have to call them and say that a policeman is being mugged on the corner, and then they do come." Before long, the group was developing a whole set of strategies to work with the local police and the guards in their school about sexual harassment—and lots of other issues. They saw a problem that felt like a personal problem and turned it into an organizing strategy.

Those are just a couple examples. There have been other ways young people have chosen to take up issues and challenge them. Poetry, performances, writing short stories, writing op-ed pieces, doing research. There are as many possibilities for action as there are problems needing solutions...

Before I pass you to our panelists, I want to say, once again, that today is the day where you all get to think about the questions that you're worried about in America, in New York, in your schools, in your communities, in the Bronx. And you get to figure out "What do I want to do about it? Do I want to write poetry? Do I do want to write a piece of research? Do I want to study it? Do I want to work with other people and change things?"

Finally, I'd like you all to hear a poem about America from a young student I know.
(Students in different parts of the auditorium take turns standing and reading a verse from the poem.)

The future is in your hands America.
NO Place else for me to go but there America.
College where, not where I live America.
All I see is jail America, but I'm free, right America?
More likely to look through glass talking on the phone
to my mom than to get an education.
Why America?
Becoming cheap labor for AT&T and Victoria Secrets.
Getting paid only a quarter a week, but slavery over
right.

High school with no books but jails with cable.
Where do we stand America?
My future in your hands America.
Do you see me America, do you feel me!
Lucky to be where I be America.
Don't use and abuse me.
Let me become the pioneer that opens your eyes.
Let me become the actor that opens your heart.
Let me be the student in your land America, not a
number.
Think of me as a healer of the mind and body.

Do you really think I want to be the one with the
blur over my face on COPS?
Can my children have books and desks in their
schools, America?
Can my nieces and nephews have a basketball
team and music lessons, America?
I want to be the Future and not a repeat of the
past.
I seen the chains on my people America.
You're choking me America.

Let me have a future America.
Let me be the voice for all that can't speak.
My future in your hands America, it is time
to give it back.
I am the truth teller, I speak to you America,
land of the free but not for me.

— *Future* by Malan Bullock, pre-college
student now at Saint Peter's College

Plenary Panel

Richard Gray, Jr., Senior Project Director, NYU Institute of Education and Social Policy

My name is Richard Gray, and I work at New York University in a place called the Institute for Education and Social Policy. We do research on what works in public high schools, and I was asked to come here to speak about some of the work that we do. I'll give one example.

I'm working in Boston with a group of high school students who have done surveys in all of the comprehensive high schools in Boston. And they're focusing on what high school students want in the schools that are being created. So they're going to have an agenda that's based on the ideas and principles of young people. And they're taking that information, first, not to the schools, but to the community. They're talking with their parents, and they're saying "This is our vision, how are you going to help us make this happen?"

We're talking about schools, but this is really about social justice. So while this is a forum about changing how students participate in changing schools, I think it is also preparation for how you can participate in changing your world. And unless you take an active step in changing your



world, learning the skills you need to learn, speaking your voice, the world is going to go on around you. And you are not going to be a participant; you're just going to be riding along.

But I will say this to you, and I think Michelle mentioned it earlier. We've done you a disservice. I grew up in a time where I was expected to say, "What is my future going to be?" And I learned at a very early age that I needed to prepare for the life that I wanted, that there was no easy ride. But I was surrounded with people who were talking about changing the world and how to do it. Voices like Shirley Chisholm, Malcolm and Martin, Cesar Chavez. You're not surrounded with those voices, and that's a disservice that we've done to you.

You all are faced with many things that we were not faced with, but you have tools that we did not have. And I'm going to tell you right now: I don't need young people as my partners; I need young people with ideas who can be my leader. You are going to be the leaders of changing your school. You have to be. I'm depending on you to be that, and this is a forum not just about your ideas and questions, but it is about what are you going to do? What are you prepared to demand from me? What are you prepared to be accountable for in changing your schools? That way we can work together, not as young peoples and adults, but as partners in changing the world. That's my challenge to you, and I'm going to stay here to see if you will accept it and offer a challenge to me.

Rosa Fernandez, Student, Manhattan International High School

My name is Rosa Fernandez, and I am a senior at Manhattan International High School, a small school located in Manhattan. I am from the Dominican Republic, and I've been in the United States three years. When I came here, I didn't know what school I should go to. I didn't know any English, I was lost, and my mom, who was here a couple years before I came to this country, didn't know anything either. My counselor told me that I had no choice but to go to school in the Bronx, because I live in the Bronx. So I had no voice in my education and choosing where I had to go, even though I think that students should have a choice—they should know what their choices are and pick the one that's best for them.



Luckily, I ended up at a small school—and somehow not in the Bronx. Now I'm a senior at Manhattan International High School and from there moving on to college. My school is for immigrant students, so I was able to learn the English language with my other friends who came from various parts of the world. And there's so much support in small high schools for students like me. You can always find someone to talk to—I knew my counselor fast, in a couple of weeks. They knew I was there and that I might be lost and that I needed some help. In a small school, there's more time for you, there are not that many students, so you're able to communicate with your teachers any time you want.

I also had a lot of help searching for college, and this fall I will be attending Wellesley. I chose Wellesley because it is a small college—a liberal arts school—and I will continue going to these small places for the support they give.

Now I am on a planning team for a small school, it's called Discovery High School, and since September, we have been meeting to learn how to change education in the Bronx. I feel as a resident of the Bronx, I am responding and adding my voice. I think you, too, should get involved, make sure that your voice is heard, and have some role in changing the education system in the Bronx and the community in which we live.

Fernando Carlo, Student, member of Sistas and Brothas United

My name is Fernando Carlo, I attend Walton High School, one of the big schools in the Bronx. I'm part of Sistas and Brothas United, which is a youth-based organization. And what SB does is concentrate on community issues—such as traffic, safe streets, parks—and on high schools, working on facilities and any other problems students may feel happen in their school.

One project SB has worked on is Mosholu Parkway. First we met with a lot of community residents to hear from them what the problems were. They told us there's not enough police patrol and there's not enough lighting at night, that people have actually been robbed, shot, stabbed around the area, and girls getting raped. So we met with the parks commissioner and a police captain. And we've gotten the broken lights fixed, we've gotten brand new lights put in, we've gotten the pathways into the park cleared up, and we've gotten more police patrolling the parkway.

On the education side, SB is actually designing our own small high school. The point of the high school is to be based on the work that SB does, which is community organizing—talking to people, figuring out problems within our schools and community, and meeting with the individuals who have the power to fix what's wrong and get things done.

Pardeice Powell-McGoy, Project Director, Youth/Adult Capacity Initiative, Fund for the City of New York

My name is Pardeice, and I work for the Youth Development Institute for the Fund for the City of New York. One of the things I do is a lot of trainings for adults who work with young people. And one of the first things I say when I walk into the room is that the expertise is in the room. I'll start my comments here the same way, because you young people know what you need: you know that you want a voice, you know the things young people can do. You know how to draft budgets, make change, write beautiful poetry, and do beautiful artwork. But what must we adults do to insure that you're well supported, that you have the services that you need, that you have the opportunities you require to succeed? Those are the things that we need to talk about and think about together.

As young people, you need to tell the adults what you need. Tell them that just giving you a service and allowing you to do only certain things are not enough. Tell them you need real support and resources. And that once you have them, you also need opportunities to share with your peers, opportunities to make good things happen for other young people. Let the adults know what your needs are. Make sure that you have that voice. Hold yourselves and us accountable for these things.

You've made the first step, by coming to this meeting, by caring about your schools. Social justice and change are your responsibility. This is your world, it's my nephew's world who is fighting overseas, and it's everybody's responsibility. Don't let things happen to you, make sure change happens *through* you.

Steve Goodman, Director, Educational Video Center

Hi, my name is Steve Goodman, and I'm from the Educational Video Center. I've been working with students and helping them make video documentaries for the past 20 year—about issues in their schools and their communities.

I think that when we talk about school, it's also important that we think about another "school," another set of "teachers" and "curriculum"—one where students learn a lot and where in fact they spend more time than they do in school. And that's the school of the media—TV, the Internet, movies, CDs, all other kinds of mass media. And one of the things that folks in the mass media spend a whole lot of time thinking about is teenagers. What do they look like, they ask? How do they act, how do they sound, what do they think about? And why do they want answers to these questions? They are studying all of you so that they can then sell products to you, selling your image back to yourself.

This is where youth-created media comes in. It's really important to think about what messages and stories we're getting from the media about teenagers. Or maybe it's that the stories of young people like you aren't being told at all, and you're invisible. So we have to realize the power of the media, *for ourselves*. There's power when you take a camera and put it in your hands, when you take a microphone and start asking your neighbors questions—about why one school system gets more money than another, or why we're spending more money on building prisons than schools, or why there's a different kind of education for students of color than for white students. These are crucial questions, and your voices need to be heard.

And it's happening. The youth media movement has grown over the past decade. There are groups of students around New York City and nationally who are making a difference, who are making documentaries and video poems, and who are having their voices heard and expressing themselves in very, very powerful ways. The power is in asking the questions, in capturing stories, but also in having dialogue and talking about those issues, and in getting the tapes out. So I encourage you all to do this kind of work—whether it's in video, radio, or magazines or books or research projects. I encourage you to be the ones who are asking the questions and making sense of the community around you.

Vance Allen Rawles, Student Author, *Fires in the Bathroom*

I have a story. I've been to two high schools. The first one was big. There, I don't know, the teachers didn't seem to care—or maybe they couldn't care—because all we did was read a big book or study for citywide tests and high-stakes tests. There was really no time to actually learn anything. Instead it seemed like we spent all of our time memorizing to make sure that we knew the "right" answers, or the "right" way to take the test, or the tricks on how to beat a test. Needless to say, I didn't really like that school, so I stopped going. I started cutting, and for some reason—maybe because I didn't go—they thought I was slow, so they suggested a school called Urban Academy.

That's my second school. Urban Academy was a lot different from the first school, because there are only 120 kids in it. You call teachers by their first names. They know your name. They expect you to really read the books. Half the time they don't even use the books because they actually know what they're talking about.

I'm happy to say that I'm a product of Urban Academy. I'm just thankful that I managed to find a place like that, where people cared about me and helped me find my talent. They helped me realize I *had* talent. And they gave my story a happy ending: next fall I'm going to college.

Workshop sessions

After the plenary panel, the summit broke into eight workshops, led by small student teams along with adult partners.

- Youth Organizing and Policy – Sistas and Brothas United
- Student Portfolio Presentations – Bronx International HS
- Teaming and Team Building – Bronx Aerospace Academy
- Advisory as Youth Empowerment – Bronx Leadership Academy II
- Advisory, Town Hall & The Student Voice – Mott Haven Village HS
- *Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers* – Students of What Kids Can Do
- Students as Researchers in Closing the Gap – CUNY Graduate Center & HS Students
- Mamaroneck H.S. Documentary Team – Mamaroneck HS & Educational Video Center

Research questions developed by students in afternoon small groups

Marble Hill/School for Excellence

- How can we improve learning in the classrooms?
- How do you create a safe learning environment?

Dress codes

- Are they good?
- Will it prevent snags about money?
- Can kids still express individuality?
- Why do we have to dress for school?
- Does it help get ready for careers?
- What other uniforms could there be?
- How is it embarrassing to wear uniforms?

Marble Hill High School

- How can we focus on inequities of resources instead of population control?
- How can the existing larger high schools and the smaller new schools learn to share and work together in the change and school reform process?
- How should teachers treat students?
- How should teachers treat students?
- How does racism play a role in why school reform is needed

Metal Detectors

- Why do we have them?
- Is it for protection?
- Is it stereotyping?
- Is it because of over population?

Why does school lunch have to be nasty?



Mott Haven Preparatory

- How can we achieve these goals for our school?
 - More days of dress down
 - Foreign language classes
 - Talent classes—dance, music, etc.
 - More space
 - Athletic competitions
 - Out to lunch
 - Variety of colors—dress code
 - Karate classes, gymnastics
 - More exhibitions, labs, experiments (science)
 - Students create lesson plans
 - Garden for the school
 - Wood shop, culinary art classes, and sewing
 - Poetry classes
 - Internship, driver's ed class, poetry class
 - An aquarium



Teaching and Professions/Pelham Prep

- How does advisory enhance student work?
- Would having enrichment classes improve student and teacher relationships?

Rebels with a Cause/Sistas & Brothas United

- What can be a motivating focus for children/students of color who want to change in schools?
- How could we make up a process that will address young people's feelings?
- How can we enhance community in our schools/workplaces with the use of community meetings?
- How do we collect all the resources from the workshops and what is the next step?

Bronx Leadership Academy II

- How can we get the students and administration to agree on how to deal with dress code issues?
- How can we add extra curricular activities to our school?
- Why is it that teachers have favorite students?

Marble Hill and Social Justice

- How is the money being spent on us students? How does the way money is spent affect grades?
- What makes a school successful and what makes that success visible?
- Where is the \$ to support my school coming from? Will it be there in the future?
- Metal detectors: Why for my school (and not others)? Why the disrespect among security for students? Why do I still not feel safe?



Bronx Guild

- How could we improve our schools?
 - Uniforms
 - More field trips
 - More space in Stevenson
 - Use of laptops
 - An intercom system
 - Internship preparation
 - Creating a community council

New Explorers HS

- What can we do now to close the achievement gap?
- How does a school environment affect your education on success?
- How do people's impressions affect education?
- Do you think it is right that people judge others just because of their looks?
- How can we change the way people think about youth in the Bronx?
- How can we take control of our education?
- How can families be more involved in their kids' education?

The Academy of Careers in Sports

- Better lunch please
 - Same food every day: hamburger/cheeseburger/pizza, fish, fake chicken
 - Food undercooked/frozen
 - Food spoiled
 - Cafeteria staff do not wear gloves
 - Need more nutritious food and drinks like juice
 - Some students allergic to milk
 - Students getting sick from school food
- How can we improve the situation?
 - Research situation at other schools
 - Write a letter to food services
 - Should we ask for help



We are a sports school—athletes need nutritious food.

Bronx Aerospace Academy

- How can we stop violence in our larger school?
- What can we do about stealing?
- How can we stop false fire alarms?

The Learning Tree

- How can the teachers interact with students better?
- Why can't the school lunch have more nutrients?
- Why can't we have dress down once a week or so?
- How can teachers make learning better for students?
- How can students influence their teachers' performance or learning ability?
- How can small schools have an impact on the community or world?

Some student reflections on summit

- ❖ I was happy to see a lot of kids who were interested in changing things, and I'm not the only one—I didn't feel like a freak for wanting to make things better. It made me feel good.
- ❖ We came here because we wanted to hear experiences and stuff from inner schools that we rarely experience in the suburban area where we live. It opened us to knowing what's really going on in communities like the Bronx and what we should really be focused on in our own school.
- ❖ Well, we got to learn a lot of things first-hand. You always hear stories about what happens at inner-city schools, but hearing it first-hand was a really good experience.
- ❖ We learned how to get together with the parents and the students and bring them all together in order to solve problems, looking at each other's points of view.
- ❖ I was in the documentary workshop—how to make films, how to interview teachers, principals, students, and how they think they can help make the school better, or change it and make it how they want it to be.
- ❖ I think it [the summit] was good. It gave us new ideas on how to get more involved in our school and how to solve more problems, how to get the kids and the parents both involved and interact together.
- ❖ It helped us a lot. I'm in student council, and it gave me more things to talk about, things to ask people, and it gave me awareness about how students can help teachers make decisions.
- ❖ I attend Marble Hill High School, and what I learned today was the different social injustices that occur in many minority schools and possible solutions that students can take to solve these problems. I also learned how to communicate better with other students. I really felt that it was good, and hopefully in four or more years, the new schools that are starting now will be even more successful. The reason new schools are better comes down to one thing: there's more individual attention from the teacher. I'm in a small school now, this is my first one. I love my school, Marble Hill.
- ❖ I learned that in Westchester we're minorities, and we have to solve that problem, because we get discriminated—Blacks and Latinos in Westchester—and we need to solve that because the US is supposed to be the land of the free and it's not.
- ❖ I got to meet a lot of different people, share ideas, and talk. I made a lot of connections, and there's going to be a lot of networking going on as a result of bringing the youth together like this.
- ❖ Yeah, I think it [the summit] was good, because there's a lot of people that's around the Bronx and they don't think the Bronx is doing well because of all the budget cuts and it's pretty much the ghetto, and nobody thinks there's any good schools in the ghetto. But as you see, all the new small schools are actually trying to do well, and they're doing what they can do, and there are a lot of good kids in the small schools. I'm not from one of the small schools, but my little sister goes to a small school and you've got kids from the big schools and the small schools who got to meet and share ideas and to make things work and happen. I think that's some of the things that need to happen more often.

Closing thoughts

Olivia Ifill-Lynch, Director, Bronx New Century High Schools

I think today's forum was a success, because success is counted by whether you meet your goals, and the first goal we had was to show to the community—both the children and adult community—that kids are doing wondrous things, intelligent things, thoughtful things to change and improve education. Secondly, we wanted to demonstrate that children and adults collaborating together can achieve a lot, and adults are available to support kids, and we achieved that. Third, we wanted to foster cross-school conversation, and we had some of the best cross-school conversation I've ever heard. Fourth, we wanted to make sure that the questions that kids had were taken seriously and could become research questions back at their school sites for them to work on, and we did that. So, all in all, it's been great. Really great. Thank you, thank you, everyone.