

CHARACTER *matters*



The Wims Family: Growth and Pride

By Cindy Warnick, Director of the Family Learning Center

Ask anyone at Hyde-Bronx about the Wims brothers and the first thing you hear is: “Wow, they’ve come a long way.” The next thing you’re likely to hear is that they’re dedicated athletes—basketball is their main game—who also do well academically. Peers describe these high school sophomores, now in their fifth year at Hyde-Bronx, as energetic, caring, smart, funny, creative. In short, they’re leaders.

What you might not hear, except from the boys themselves, is how much their mother inspires their success and growth.

Levon and Leron Wims, identical twins (although they work at looking different and being individuals), are part of the founding class at Hyde-Bronx. Enrolled as 6th graders, they were known then more for their explosive tempers than their above-average grades.

“One of my biggest challenges is still to keep my attitude in check and express how I feel the right way by using words and staying calm,” says Levon.

Leron sees his biggest challenge in a similar way. “I get angry so easily. How do I manage it? Now if I feel my temper coming on, I’ve learned to take a walk or talk to friends. Better yet, I’ll go outside and play basketball.

Felecia Wims, mother of the twins, says that enrolling Levon and Leron at Hyde “was one of the best decisions I ever made. The Hyde community is like a wonderful extended family. They care about you.”

Asked to share a challenge she has experienced, Felecia says, “I learned to overcome my fear of being in a group. At first with the Parent Discovery meetings, I was always pulling back and was

the last one to speak.” But over time that changed. “Once I opened up, it was a relief! Now I like the meetings. I share, and I like hearing other parents’ issues and relating to them.”

One of Felecia’s proudest moments was when she conquered her fear of heights. “I went on a Hyde retreat with the twins, and knew I’d have to do the high ropes climb—even if my back wasn’t quite right. I was determined, and I mastered it.”

Levon and Leron are proud of their mother, and grateful for her support and for how hard she pushes them.

Leron says, “She’s always been hard on me—like making sure if I’m not doing the right thing that I do it. She helps me get the right mind set. I love her for that.”

Levon puts it this way: “My mother was always paying attention and pushing me to work harder and do better in class. What’s changed since being at Hyde is how I see all that she does. She’s tough, but she also cares so much. And she taught me how to cook, and I love to cook.”

How has Hyde impacted the Wims family?

Levon says it changed the way they treat each other. “We always used to argue because we didn’t have trust. Now we have trust and show each other concern.”

Leron agrees. “We talk to each other more—about everything. We also show our feelings more.”

Felecia believes Hyde “has brought us closer together. We do the activities the Family Learning Center sends home and every one of us takes our turn. We speak our minds. We give feedback and we help each other where we can.” ■



Above: Felecia Wims gets hugs from Hyde students after successfully completing her high ropes climb. Upper left: Identical twins Leron and Levon Wims share a happy moment together.

In This Issue

The Wims Family: Growth and Pride	1
A Message from Our Head of School	2
Character First	3
Inspirational Heroes	4
News Briefs	5
College Bound	6
Our Donors	7
Change a Life	7
New High School Building Continues to Grow	8

Character Matters

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A Message from Our Head of School



Dear Friends and Supporters,

I recently stumbled upon a new documentary, *A Small Act*. This film tells the story of Chris Mburu, a Kenyan child who was able to attend high school, then college, then Harvard Law School, all because of the “small act” of one Swedish woman he’d never met. As a Holocaust survivor allowed refugee status in Sweden at a young age, Hilde Back thought it crucial to help out cultures other than her own. Her small act was to donate \$15 a month to sponsor a Kenyan child’s education. This small donation made the difference between Mburu becoming an unschooled coffee fields laborer like his fellow classmates or an educated U.N. humanitarian who has spent the last 20 years devoting his life to human rights and reciprocating Back’s philanthropy by starting a scholarship fund of his own.

This film made me think about the impact of all the small acts that I see every day at Hyde-Bronx. I see our Dean playing catch in the hallway with a student at 5:30 p.m.; it is their treat after working on homework together. I see a teacher spending his lunch hour with students to go over math concepts they didn’t understand in class. I see a parent volunteering to prepare materials for a parent retreat. I see a student helping another student catch up on work she missed while out sick. I see a board member’s wife coming every week to tutor a student. I see people giving of themselves in any way they can. As with Hilde, they may not see any immediate results, but they continue to give because they feel a moral imperative to help others and to leave the world better than they found it.

These small acts help our students prepare for college and for life, but they also contribute to the monumental effort we are part of: to give *all* students in our country access to a high quality education. Currently, there are great disparities, and we can generally look at a child’s zip code to determine whether that child is receiving a good education. If Hyde-Bronx can improve this situation for the hundreds of lives we touch every year, then we are part of something much larger, part of the quest for a more equal society. I believe deeply that the cumulative effect of all our small acts are making a dent in this important endeavor and that our emphasis on developing students’ character will have our children “paying it forward” for years to come.

Sincerely,

Betsy Olney
Head of School

Register your e-mail now!

All you have to do is go to www.HydeBronxNY.org, register your e-mail and we’ll keep you up to date on Hyde-Bronx happenings. The link is found under “Spotlight News” on the right hand side of the home page.

The Power of Words

By Jenifer Burns, Hyde Family Learning Center

I remember a time when someone who had recently met me said, “You are so creative,” and I thought, “I am?” Moments later, I thought, “I AM!” He saw my creativity in my work and named it. I had been timid about thinking of myself as a creative person, and gained confidence when he saw that quality in me.

As parents we have opportunities to do something similar for our children. While we shouldn’t make up qualities that aren’t there, we can help our children understand what we do see.

Be Specific

The next time you feel proud of your child, be specific about why. Instead of just saying, “I am so proud of you,” add what you are seeing. “I am really proud of the way you played basketball today because you showed leadership in the way you encouraged your teammates and kept the team energy high.” That gives your child information about the qualities that you value and like to see in her. Say that basketball game did not end well, and your child’s team lost and she is feeling lousy. If you say, “You did a good job!” she may not believe you as she

thinks about the times she lost the ball. But she will believe you if you say: “You did a good job getting the ball to the basket. Coach has been saying you need to be less afraid of shooting, and it looked like you worked to improve that.”

When we compliment our children’s learning process, we are letting them know that improvement and growth are positive, even if we don’t always get the result we want. Through our words we reinforce our belief in “Set High Expectations and Let Go of the Outcome.”

Be Careful About Your Tone

The tone of our words makes a difference too. Think of someone saying to you, “Well, that’s just great.” The tone of voice sends the real message. If I am enthusiastic with the phrase, then it is clear I’m giving a compliment or feel excited. If my tone is sarcastic, or harsh, then the same words carry a very different meaning.

Our children can hear the meaning behind our words, and know if we are operating out of frustration rather than concern. As parents, when we correct or direct our children we need to be aware of the tone we are using. So many times our kids say, “Stop yelling at me,” even

though we haven’t spoken any louder. What they notice though is the tone of our voice. If we are angry our tone may be particularly harsh and that makes them feel “yelled at.”

Keep Clear and Calm

Realistically, we are going to be angry sometimes and use a tone that does not feel very loving to our kids, but generally we want to use a tone that is calm and clear even when we are correcting them.

When I remember that my job as a parent is to help my children find their role in the world, I can be less annoyed that they don’t always learn it the first time; I know I may need to repeat myself. Keeping myself clear and calm gives my children an opportunity to react the same way. When we are approached in anger or tension, it is natural to respond defensively; children are not different than adults in this. A calm, direct approach gives children the opportunity to choose to change their behavior before trouble begins. ■

The Hyde Philosophy of Character: The Five Words

A few years ago, the president of one of America’s most selective liberal arts colleges described many of today’s college freshmen as “ethically unformed.” He did not claim that they lacked ethics or that they were unethical. Rather, he stressed that they did not seem very certain about what their ethics were.

Hyde provides students with their own *Go To* ethical framework. It is delivered in the form of the Five Words that represent the backbone of the Hyde philosophy.

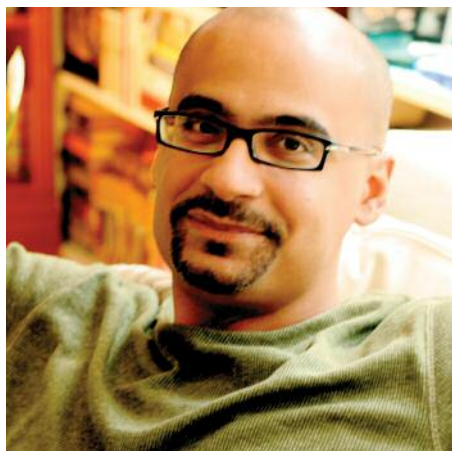
1. **COURAGE:** When I’m in a rut or facing a big challenge, I need to muster the **Courage** to risk that first step.
2. **INTEGRITY:** My life will not work very well if I do not have **Integrity** at its core.
3. **LEADERSHIP:** I need to prepare for those times when circumstances will call upon me to step up and provide **Leadership**.
4. **CURIOSITY:** I can only be a lifelong learner by exhibiting **Curiosity**.
5. **CONCERN:** As much as I might like to try, I cannot be the person I want to be as an island. I need to extend **Concern** to others and value those who extend it toward me.

Character is *not* a vague notion for anyone at Hyde. ■



10th Graders Meet Their Hero — Junot Diaz

By Mark Fusco, 10th grade English teacher



Pulitzer-prize winning author Junot Diaz surrounded by his Hyde-Bronx admirers, from left to right: Crystal, Rosemary, Reniece, Frank, Johanny, Ms. Sypien, Mylee, and Mr. Fusco.

On the evening of February 9th, six 10th grade students, Ms. Troy, Ms. Sypien, and I ventured to midtown Manhattan to hear a lecture by Junot Diaz, the author of one of our curriculum novels, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

“Let’s hurry, let’s go,” Frank Olea, our fearless student leader, urged us. Frank had read the novel cover-to-cover and had fallen in love with the writing of Junot Diaz, a Dominican writer who, when he’s not creating Pulitzer Prize works of fiction is a creative writing professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Diaz was in town appearing at the Community Church of New York.

With all my heart I wanted the students to actually meet and speak with Diaz. However, considering this author’s huge New York City following, I was not sure we would be so lucky.

Yet almost immediately after we walked through the doors of the Community Church, we saw Junot

socializing with a few of his admirers. “There he is,” Frank whispered excitedly.

I introduced myself and stepped aside so he could speak to our somewhat star-struck Hyde-Bronx students. He asked the group questions and encouraged them to pose their own. He was tickled when he found out that all of the students had Caribbean backgrounds. Rosemary Gomez grilled him in Spanish, while Frank, in the most touching moment of the night, told Mr. Diaz that reading *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* was what inspired him to love books and reading.

Junot graciously posed with us for the camera and he even gave us a shout-out from the podium as he addressed the crowd of more than 200 people.

It was an evening of excitement, learning and pride for our Hyde-Bronx students and for me. Meeting our heroes can be overwhelming and sometimes disappointing, but on this night, meeting Junot Diaz was a gift that all of us won’t soon forget. ■

George Medina: An Inspiration in the Hyde-Bronx Tradition

George Medina, a 37 year-old entrepreneur of Puerto Rican descent, has never been intimidated by hard work. Medina was born and raised in Hunts Point and that is where his business—CTG Athletics—grows and thrives.

Recently, Medina was kind enough to share his interesting life story with 26 members of the Hyde-Bronx varsity and junior varsity baseball teams. Our Hyde-Bronx athletes took a trip to Medina’s offices, about ten minutes away from school. Medina’s CTG Athletics (which he founded) manufactures bats, gloves, cleats, and accessories under the Verdero brand name. His products are used by over 200 Major League players on 18 teams. And CTG is the only

Hispanic-owned company licensed to sell its wares to Major League Baseball.

As a young boy, George’s dream was to play baseball professionally, but a severe injury in college stopped that dream in its tracks. In the true Hyde-Bronx tradition (though he did not attend Hyde-Bronx), he realized that his destiny was defined by love—in this case, sports. He combined his love of sports and his entrepreneurial talents to focus on targeting professional and aspiring athletes, especially Latino athletes.

In addition to exposing our Hyde-Bronx students to local leaders who have worked hard to become a success, the visit also taught our students that opportunities are out there for everyone if you have a dream and the determination

to make that dream come true.

Thank you Mr. Medina for sharing your inspiring story—and for sharing your terrific Verdero products with us! ■



George Medina with some of our varsity and junior varsity baseball players and Coach Matt Hittenmark.

City National Bank— We Love You!

Our friends from City National Bank—Robin Balding, Carolyn Rodriguez, Debra Braganza, and Nicole Joseph—gave Hyde-Bronx an incredible gift. In addition to 1,000 new books to add to our new library, they presented us with a Barnes & Noble gift certificate for \$6,675 so we can purchase even more books!

Valarie Hunsinger, Hyde-Bronx's beloved librarian, is planning trips to Barnes & Noble for her students who will personally choose their favorite titles to add to our collection.

Words cannot express the enormous gratitude we have for City National Bank's continuing support of Hyde-Bronx. (You can check out the award video on www.HydeBronxNY.org) ■



Hyde-Bronx students celebrate City National Bank's generous gift: (top row, left to right) Emely N., Maria, our librarian Valarie Hunsinger, Nashelle, head of school Betsy Olney, City National Bank's Debra Braganza, Michael F., City National Bank's Nicole Joseph. (bottom row, left to right) Justin, Nia, Michael O., Kudirat, Emely I.



Hyde-Bronx Speaks Out at Albany Advocacy Day

Thirty of our students, parents and teachers departed Hunts Point in the wee morning hours of February 7th for the three-hour bus ride to Albany. Our goal was to make our presence known at the Annual Advocacy Day and urge our legislators to support charter schools. Hyde-Bronx students met with our friend and supporter State Senator Rubén Diaz and the pep-rally atmosphere was an experience we'll never forget. ■

Above, State Senator Rubén Diaz and the enthusiastic Hyde-Bronx representatives.



Our Athletes Visit GMA

Members of Hyde-Bronx's many outstanding sports teams were invited as VIPs to attend a live broadcast of Good Morning America in early February. They were treated to a special tour of the ABC studios and had a blast. ■



Top, Hyde-Bronx athletes with Coach Hittenmark at the GMA studio. At right, Richie channels the GMA weatherman—a star is born!

College Bound

By Laura Troy, 10th grade math teacher

My alarm clock went off at 3:15 a.m. It was still dark, I was still tired, but I shot out of bed because I knew that today was the day we were going to Syracuse University! This was a further step to reinforce our students' beliefs that they can indeed go to college if they work hard and graduate.

The BX19 bus wasn't running so I hopped in a cab and arrived at school at 4:55 a.m., expecting to be the first one there. Was I surprised—waiting for me were more than 20 Hyde-Bronx students, a group of sleepy parents, and dean of the high school, Marion Holley, who had organized the trip. Everyone was enthusiastic and ready to go.

After a five hour bus ride, we arrived at the Syracuse campus. Eyes were glowing in awe. My parents, who live in nearby Cortland, were there to greet us. They were thrilled to finally meet my colleagues and all the students I had been bragging about for the past three years.

We all walked to a lecture hall where we were given a presentation and had an opportunity to speak with some of Syracuse's undergraduates. I was impressed with our students' questions—they were curious about



10th grader Tristan Chavys takes a stand next to the Saltine Warrior on the Syracuse University campus.

the application process, scholarship possibilities, race relations at Syracuse, sports programs, etc. We then took a tour of the campus, visited the bookstore, had something to eat in the dining hall, and finally jumped back on the bus for the five hour trek home.

Things were not perfect—they never are—but I could see the Hyde-Bronx process at work. Our students showed critical thinking, leadership, concern, and curiosity. Parents who dropped their kids off at 5:00 a.m. that morning were there again to retrieve them well

after 9:00 p.m. They couldn't wait to hear about the day.

While entering my apartment a little before 10:00 p.m., I re-read a text message my parents sent me earlier in the day. To quote my mom: "Laura, just wanted to let you know how great it was to meet everyone. You and the other staff should be so proud of your students. They were kind, mature and inquisitive. Your dad and I were impressed. Congratulations on such a worthwhile field trip." ■

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH SOME OF OUR TEACHERS

In August, **Jade Caines**, 7th grade English Language Arts teacher, will complete her PhD in Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation from Emory University in Atlanta. Jade has a BA from Stanford and an MA from Brooklyn College.

Mark Fusco, 10th grade English teacher and recent graduate of the Harvard School of Education, organized a successful original poetry performance at The Point Theater featuring Hyde-Bronx 10th grade poets and teachers. The Point, a prominent local center helping Bronx youth to develop academically, civically and artistically, is one of our important community partners.

Librarian **Valarie Hunsinger**, has developed Project LEAP (Literacy Empowering All the Point), a huge collaborative school library project that will work to improve literacy and learning throughout the entire Hunts Point community. LEAP will promote the love of reading and will help all Hyde-Bronx students, their families, and our Hunts Point neighbors.

John Swader, our elementary school performing arts teacher, who possesses a fantastic spirit that lifts us all, is sharing his enthusiasm, creativity and skill with student teacher, Ilana Meredith Schickler, who will graduate from City College in May with a Masters in Educational Theater.

GREAT NEWS!

The new Hyde-Bronx High School will be ready for occupancy in September! *See photos on page 8.*

Hyde-Bronx was selected by Civic Builders (our high school facility partner) from numerous worthy New York City charter schools because of our compelling character message.

We now have major responsibilities—we need desks and chairs, book cases, file cabinets, computers—all the things to make a high school. Will you help us? Please contact Lupita Alvarez, Development Officer, malvarez@hydebronxny.org or use the enclosed donor envelope.

Our Donors

Hyde-Bronx recognizes with sincere thanks the kindness of our important donors. Your generosity provides us with the financial resources to ensure that each and every one of our Hyde-Bronx students will become responsible, ethical, and contributing adults. We are proud to have so many devoted friends and are deeply grateful for your support.

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Contributions were made from July 1, 2010 through February 28, 2011.

What Is A Hyde Education?

Cher's son, Elijah Blue, (yes, that Cher) attended the Hyde boarding school in Bath, Maine. Below is an excerpt from Cher's forward to Hyde founder Joe Gauld's book, Character First.

Hyde does what a school is meant to do: It teaches young people how to think and question. It helps them to develop their CHARACTER and discover their potential. It prepares them to become responsible, ethical, fulfilled adults. This is education in the deepest sense. Every student is challenged to grow, not just intellectually, but emotionally and spiritually as well.

Hyde parents participate in retreats and workshops and take part in the school's Family Learning Center programs, where they explore their own behavior, values, goals and relationships. It is a true family-student partnership which is a hallmark of a Hyde education.

The integration of fundamental values in Hyde's CHARACTER-based education helps each student fulfill his or her own unique potential and become the best each one can be. Young people respond enthusiastically when they are rewarded for effort, not just results—and they begin to work harder. ■

CHANGE A LIFE

The Hyde experience is truly unique and often transformative. Our character-based learning environment and extensive family education program provide a first-class education **and** change the lives of our students and families.

Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to Hyde Leadership Charter School. By doing so you will be contributing to the well-being and happiness of hundreds of deserving school children who might not otherwise have a chance. A donor envelope is enclosed.



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WHO WE ARE

Hyde Leadership Charter School is the only K–12 college preparatory school located in the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx. We're a school that was founded on a simple premise: developing a child's character is as important as developing a child's mind.

We develop socially responsible leaders because of our distinctive character-based curriculum. While our academic program is rigorous, academics is only part of what we teach. At Hyde-Bronx, we focus on helping our students find their unique character and develop the confidence they need to become responsible, ethical and fulfilled human beings.

The way we teach is different too. We involve parents, students, faculty—indeed the entire school community—in helping our students begin to discover their unique potential. As a result, Hyde-Bronx students and their families are well prepared to navigate the tough choices they face in everyday life.

Our New High School Building Continues to Grow

Although the enormous winter snow storms might have slowed down work on our new high school building for a number of days, the steadfast building crew is determined to have our high school students move into the new building when school starts in September 2011. ■



Top: Street view of our new 31,500-square foot high school building which will host 300 students when it opens on Hunts Point Avenue. It's just around the corner from our Bryant Avenue location which will continue to house our elementary and middle schools when the new high school building opens.



Left: Windows go up for the new classrooms which will include two state-of-the-art science labs, a roof-top recreation area and an oversized, highly functional, multi-purpose room that will serve as the school's cafeteria, gym and lecture hall.

Below: Side view of the school with scaffolding and remnants of the winter snow storms.

