
On the Block Outreach

The GO Project at St. Luke's, Why Do We Do This?

— Joanne Bartosik

All children deserve access to a quality education. Despite efforts to improve New York City public schools, many children, primarily from low-income neighborhoods, are left behind. Graduating from high school is a child's best chance to break the cycle of poverty. Today, half of New York City children living in poverty will not graduate from high school on time. ("What Is Poverty?|Robin Hood." Robinhood.org. May 2017)

The GO Families component empowers parents of participants to create positive learning environments at home

St. Luke's entered into a partnership with GO, because it is an effective poverty fighting program. We support students from under resourced families residing primarily in Chinatown, the East Village, and the Lower East Side. Over the course of a year, GO students attend a rigorous five week, full day academic and enrichment program and 21 Saturday sessions from October to April, adding an average of 2,000 instructional hours. As a result, 99% of GO students are



promoted on time, despite the fact that they enter the program 1-2 years behind. GO graduate Zebediah feels "If there was no GO, I would have probably been left back, to be honest. GO has really helped me with everything that I have ever struggled with."

Critical to student achievement is family engagement.

"Ongoing research shows that family engagement in schools improves student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents' confidence in their children's education. Students with involved parents or other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, and show improved behavior. (The Enduring Importance of Parental Involvement NEA Today, Apr. 2015, May 2017)

The GO Families component empowers parents of participants to create positive learning environments at home. GO social workers and educators equip parents with the information they need to ask the right questions, understand school assessments, and ensure that their public school is providing the right supports for their child.

St. Luke's is a GO host site because the highly trained and experienced teachers and volunteers make learning fun.

Knowledgeable and engaged parents can reach a larger community. The Parent Advocacy Leader (PAL) Program is a parent-driven training and advocacy initiative. PALS are parents in the GO community that have volunteered to become experts



in special education to help their own children and provide support for other parents. Fifty percent of GO students have a special education classification due to a learning disability, language impairment, or emotional disturbance.

Students with involved parents or other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, and show improved behavior.

An often understated, but no less important reason why St. Luke's is a GO host site is because the highly trained and experienced teachers and volunteers make learning fun. One GO parent could hardly contain her excitement. "My two boys always want to come. I have seen improvement



in their reading. One of my sons did geometry last week, and afterwards he came out feeling happy. The program has made such a difference."

For GO St. Luke's Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Janine Vaughn, the highlight of her morning is arrival time; students openly express how much they love coming to GO. Janine was touched when a young GO-getter told her "GO has helped me actually want to

go to school and get good grades." It doesn't get any better than that.

GO St. Luke's is working for children and families — that's why we do this!

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