



CFY-National
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Dear New York Education Reform Commission,

Since 1999, CFY-New York City has served more than 80 high-poverty middle schools and 25,000 families to provide our direct-service Digital Learning Program (DLP). Our work has been recognized with significant support from the U.S. Department of Commerce,* the NYC Department of Education, and the largest education funders in the U.S. including major grants in from the Gates, Broad, Kellogg, and Robin Hood Foundation.

As the Executive Director of CFY-New York City, I want to share our experiences with the ability that blended learning and family involvement has to boost student achievement and bring families, teachers, and principals together in transforming education.

At CFY, we believe that every child can achieve success in middle school when given the right support by their families, teachers, and principals. By harnessing the power of digital learning in the classroom and at home, CFY-NYC partners with schools to improve educational outcomes and positions students to succeed through middle school, high school and enrollment into college.

With digital learning, CFY offers the access, training, and necessary tools to low income schools in New York City to:

- Empower students to take charge of their learning
- Equip teachers to make learning more engaging within the classroom and extend learning beyond the classroom
- Engage families in becoming more powerful learning partners for their children

The DLP has demonstrated proven results in academic achievement, including a study by the Educational Testing Service. Our unique mix of services enables the key influencers in a child's academic success to support students to own their learning and engage in their education – critical factors in student achievement and college readiness. To do this, we offer:

1. **Support for school leaders** in driving new instructional approaches and developing deeper school-home connections;
2. **Professional development for educators**, consisting of workshops and in-school consulting to help them adopt blended learning within the classroom and extend learning beyond the classroom;
3. **Family engagement support** for schools that includes developing customized, consultative plans for family engagement and implementing a series of Family Learning Workshops where families and children learn together and experience a learning partnership model that they can continue in the home; and
4. **Home technology support** for families, consisting of a home learning center (a free, refurbished home computer loaded with educational software), free online subscriptions to additional educational software, access to PowerMyLearning.com (CFY's free digital learning platform), 24×7 bilingual help desk support, and free or reduced access to broadband (provided through our partnership with Time Warner Cable and Cablevision).



As part of the Digital Learning Program, CFY leverages its free digital learning platform, PowerMyLearning.com (PML). This platform offers more than 1,000 of the best digital learning activities from all over the web tagged by subject, grade, and the Common Core. The innovative features found on PowerMyLearning enable educators to use these activities to meet the specific learning needs of their students and to help students and families discover fun and engaging activities that reinforce classroom learning and spark new areas of interest.

By supporting teachers to utilize technology in the classroom and supporting schools to engage families during out-of-school learning time, we have found that the Digital Learning Program has been increasingly successful in its ability to bridge the achievement gap for low-income students.

- ***CFY improved student academic achievement in math:*** A study with ETS found that CFY's program had a positive and statistically significant impact on student math test scores. More specifically, this study, which used logistic regression, found that students' engagement and computer use, particularly their home Internet use and computer use for self-regulated learning, explained 14% of the variance in their 2006 math test scores over and above 2005 scores.
- ***CFY improved math performance for LD students:*** At one of our case study high-poverty NYC schools, the percentage of 2011-12 sixth graders with learning disabilities (LD) who met or exceeded standards in math (testing at level 3 or 4) increased by 36%. This 36% increase was nine times the city-wide increase of 4%. In addition, the percentage of sixth graders with learning disabilities who had been far below standard (testing at level 1) decreased by 23% (from 23% to zero).
- ***CFY improved student writing performance:*** A comparison study found that CFY's program arrests the typical performance slide in seventh grade writing. This study used pre- and post-writing prompts similar to those used in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Scoring was done by independent teachers. Overall, writing scores for CFY students decreased less over time than did scores for comparison students.
- ***CFY enabled student ownership of learning:*** At one of our case study high-poverty NYC schools, CFY's program found that students displayed increasing ownership over their learning throughout the school year. For example, students worked with their teachers to review their standardized test results and then create playlists on PowerMyLearning to address weaknesses. Critical to this "ownership" outcome was students' ability to work on PML independently at home. In fact, 86% of the sixth grade students in the study said they continued to use PML at home after they completed the work assigned by their teachers.

By working with parents, students, and teachers, CFY is able to truly transform whole schools with training, technology and digital learning resources to help kids succeed. I want to urge this commission to make recommendations to ensure initiatives like the Digital Learning Program and nonprofits like CFY become a cornerstone for education reform. It is vital that the commission recognizes the power of integrating blended learning and supporting family engagement for student achievement so it is not lost in New York's schools.

Sincerely,

Cindy Menz-Erb, Executive Director
CFY-New York City



* CFY-New York City is a lead partner of New York City Connected Learning, a city-wide initiative managed by the NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, and the NYC Department of Education, funded by a grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's Broadband Technology Opportunity Program (BTOP) under the U.S. Department of Commerce.