

Partnering with Parents

By Karen B. Manahan



Yoidette Myles (front left) leads an interactive “Shake, Rattle, and Roll” music class for parents and kids at a local Brooklyn library.

During her corps years in the Bronx, Yoidette Myles (N.Y.C. '95) taught a third grader who was struggling to read and write. “I checked with my colleagues, who said his mother wasn’t interested in getting services,” Myles recalls. “I called her up, and she had a different perspective. She wanted to do what was best for her son, but

she was intimidated.” The two devised a plan for more one-to-one time in the classroom and catch-up work at home. By year’s end, he was reading in English and Spanish.

“There has to be a more conscientious approach to working with parents and having them feel like they have a significant role that’s manageable,” Myles says. “If you have parents well-versed on education standards and what they can do with

and for their children and how they can impact the school system, then we would have actual change and quality education for kids.”

Myles runs Parents As Primary Teachers, a New York nonprofit she founded in 2003 that provides training and support for parents who are home-schooling or complementing their children’s classroom education.

Myles created five education enrichment programs that are taught by volunteers at donated space in Brooklyn libraries. This past year, PAPT served more than 150 families with inventive programs like a creative writing class that culminated in a film festival, a field-trip-based

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history program, and entrepreneurial skill-based training for families who own their own businesses and home-school.

Tawnya Fay brings her two kids to PAPT’s “Shake, Rattle & Roll” class, a hands-on music program where students create instruments, compose rhythm patterns, and listen to and play music representing several cultures around the world. “There isn’t much in our neighborhood for kids that is free and has cultural opportunities,” Fay says. “It reintroduced the library as a public space for families.”

Myles is working with state senators and local assembly members to secure funding for expanding PAPT so that more parents can be advocates for their kids. Says Myles: “I want them equipped to be fighting for their kids’ future education.” ★