

**OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT REPORT  
OF THE 2009 CampUs SUMMER  
FLOCABULARY *Word Up*  
PROGRAM HELD  
AT  
ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY  
QUEENS, NY 11439**

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## Overview

This report reflects the results of the 13<sup>th</sup> consecutive summer of the CampUs Program held for children of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). A total of 1120 children between the ages of 7 to 13 registered for and/or attended some days of the year 2009 CampUs Program held at the Queens campus of St. John's University. Of that number, 830 students attended enough days to have their academic classroom and/or computer work evaluated. The children came from NYCHA public housing development sites. The borough of residence and the borough percentage of the 830 children completing the program are indicated in the table below.

<b>NYC Borough</b>	<b>Number of Children</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Bronx</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>26.5%</b>
<b>Manhattan</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>29.0%</b>
<b>Queens</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>4.8%</b>
<b>Brooklyn</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>39.6%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Of the total population, 32% reported that they had previously attended a summer CampUs program and 68% reported that the summer of 2009 was their first year of participation. The percentage of returning students to the CampUs program has increased over the previous year by 8 %.

## The Partners: Making It Happen

The CampUs Program was made possible through the contribution and efforts of major partners, namely: The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), St. John's

University (STJ), The After-School All-Stars of New York City, Inc. (ASASNY), and The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE).

NYCHA provides decent and affordable housing for low income residents of the City of New York as it manages and maintains 346 public housing developments for roughly 175,000 families. Over 180,000 of these family members are minors under the age of 21. NYCHA provided the major source of funding for CampUs Summer 2009.

ASASNY maintains its New York City office at St. John's University, provides leadership, direction, administration and additional financial support to operate the CampUs and year-round programs. ASASNY is one of 13 such chapters found in major cities of America all of which are chapters of a national foundation.

St. John's University provides its Queens Campus with the use of its classrooms, laboratories, athletic fields, and computer labs. The personnel, teachers, and coaches operating the CampUs 2009 were, for the most part, professors, students, coaches, athletes, and alumni of St. John's University. The university has a Vincentian mission inspired by St. Vincent DePaul's compassion and dedication for service. It strives to provide quality educational opportunities for all people, especially those lacking economic and social advantages and seeks out ways to assist and enhance community service programs.

The NYC Department of Education, which operates the largest public school system in America with over 1.1 million students, afforded two major services to the CampUs Program. Its Office of School Support Services provided the busing services to transport the children to the CampUs locales as well as a morning snack and lunch.

## **The Program Structure**

CampUs at St. John's was organized into two 10-day segments in which groups or cohorts of children from particular housing authority sites attended the program at the Queens Campus. The program began on July 6, 2009 and ended on July 31, 2009.

The curriculum and daily activities were the same for each cohort. The program offered three curriculum components: (1) the literacy 6Rs approach; (2) a mathematics and science- focused approach, and (3) a vocabulary-building approach, developed by Flocabulary ([www.flocabulary.com](http://www.flocabulary.com)).

This report will focus on the curriculum approach and evaluation results of the groups of children involved in the Flocabulary/*Word Up* Program, Green Level.

A group of 116 children from both 10-day cohorts and those who had generally completed grades four through eight, participated in the vocabulary *Word Up* development program. Over four major lessons from the Green book reading level of 6<sup>th</sup> grade, children had the opportunity to learn 60 new vocabulary words. Lessons numbered 7, 8, 11, and 13 were selected to be used with this population. The vocabulary words are advanced vocabulary words used by authors in literature and informational books and used in adult mature speech. Each of the four lessons had the following general sequence as suggested by the program developers in the *Teacher Resource Book*.

- (1) Participants listen to a rap song with 15 vocabulary words used in the context of the song. Each song tells a story based on a high-interest topic. The song is generally played two times.
- (2) Participants read along with the song lyrics and receive the correct pronunciation and correct spelling of each word.

- (3) Next, students study the definitions and how the new words were used in context.
- (4) In a student workbook, participants complete a number of exercises which provide additional exposure to the new words and engage children in critical thinking skills.
- (5) Students practice writing their own vocabulary rhymes and compose their own rap songs, using the new vocabulary of the green book lesson. Teachers assist in the revision process.
- (6) Students read their rap songs and vocabulary rhymes to other members of their class groups and receive positive reinforcement from their teachers and classmates.

### **Vocabulary Assessment**

To assess the effectiveness of the vocabulary program, the author of the Flocabulary Program designed a pre/post test procedure. Thirty words of the 60 taught were used in both tests, and two forms were generated for pre and post test purposes. Students had to understand how the word was used in context and choose synonyms and antonyms for the flocabulary words.

### **Flocabulary *Word Up* Implementation**

A staff of four (4) instructors implemented the Flocabulary *Word Up* Program to four groups of children in roughly two-hour periods. A lead, New York State certified

teacher, and an assistant served roughly 25 children twice a day in one designated classroom, and a second certified teacher and assistant served a second group of roughly 50 children in a second classroom. Each staff teacher conducted the program in the following way:

- Introduced the concept of flocabulary and played the first song for the children.
- Conducted the pre-test for flocabulary on the second day.
- Played the song again while the children followed along with the lyrics.
- Called on students to ask if any recognized boldface vocabulary words and if they knew the meanings.
- After hearing the different responses from the children, the instructors went through the song line by line, sometimes singing it in order to keep them engaged.
- The answers would be reviewed.
- Explained the concepts of writing rhymes through the use of *The Rappers Handbook*.
- Worked on the writing lesson where the children would begin to write their own rhymes, which included vocabulary words and their definitions in context.
- Began with a review of all the vocabulary words that had been covered up to that point at each new day's lesson.

## Results

The demographics of the Flocabulary participants are presented in Table 1.1, below, as available. Females outnumbered males somewhat in the participant group. The participants ranged in age from 8 to 13 years. The students had completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade levels, with the majority being enrolled in grades 4, 5, and 6. Approximately 12 % of students had been retained in their grade at least once, and 13.5% had received special education services in the past.

A majority of the participants were African American, with Hispanic Americans comprising the second largest group. Approximately 81% spoke English only, and 13.5% were Spanish-bilingual.

Table 1.1. Demographic Information On Participants.

DEMOGRAPHICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	48	42.1%
Female	66	57.9%
Total	114	100.00%
<b>Age</b>	Frequency	Percent
8 Years	2	1.7%
9 Years	6	5.2%
10 Years	49	42.2%
11 Years	29	25.0%
12 Years	25	21.6%
13 Years	5	4.3%
Total	116	100.00%
<b>Grade in June</b>	Frequency	Percent
Grade 2	3	2.7%
Grade 3	4	3.5%
Grade 4	28	24.8%
Grade 5	36	31.9%
Grade 6	31	27.4%
Grade 7	8	7.1%
Grade 8	3	2.7%
Grade 9	3	2.7%
Total	116	100.00%
<b>Grade Retention</b>	Frequency	Percent

Retained	13	11.8%
Not Retained	97	88.2%
Total	110	100.00%
<b>Special Education Identification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
In Special Ed.	15	13.5%
Not in Special Ed.	96	86.5%
Total	111	100.00%
<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Caucasian	2	1.8%
African-Am	84	75.7%
Asian	0	.0%
Hispanic	23	20.7%
Other	2	1.8%
Total	111	100.00%
<b>Language</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
English Only	90	81.1%
Spanish or Bilingual	15	13.5%
Asian Bilingual	0	.0%
Missing	6	5.4%
Total	111	100.00%

As is noted in Table 1.2, below, a high percentage of students for whom data were available attended 7 or more of the 10 day program (about 87%). This is a very high rate of participation, in consideration of the frequency of absenteeism of the target group in regular school programs.

Table 1.2. Attendance Records.

ATTENDANCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
1 Day		
2 Days		
3 Days	1	.9%
4 Days	2	1.8%
5 Days	5	4.5%
6 Days	2	1.8%
7 Days	15	13.5%
8 Days	23	20.7%

9 Days	32	28.8%
10 Days	31	27.9%
Total	111	100.00%

The students in the Flocabulary *Word Up* Program were given the Vocabulary test of 30 words as a pretest and posttest. A total of ninety-seven students completed both the pretest and posttest. A group of students within the same CampUs program who received a different intervention called TiViTz Math and science Robotics served as a comparison group for the Flocabulary participants.

Results of the intervention for the small group are presented below, along with results for the comparison group in Table 5.1, below.

Table 5.1. Pretest and Posttest Vocabulary Scores for Flocabulary Group.

		Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig.
Flocabulary Program	Vocabulary Pretest	13.64	5.12	97				
	Vocabulary Posttest	20.71	6.72	97	+7.07	14.93	96	.000**
Comparison Students	Vocabulary Pretest	11.89	4.79	44				
	Vocabulary Posttest	12.84	5.34	44	+0.95	1.58	43	.121

The within group analyses indicate that students participating in the Flocabulary program improved significantly in their responses on the Vocabulary test, while the comparison did not. It may be observed that the Flocabulary participants started out with slightly higher scores than the comparison group, and their gains were substantial. This outcome was further affirmed by an ANOVA comparing posttest scores of the two groups. The Flocabulary group scored significantly higher than the comparison group ( $F = 57.88$ ,  $df 1, 151$ ,  $p < .000^{**}$ ).

## Discussion

In a half-day Flocabulary *Word Up* program conducted over the 10-day period, participants were exposed to 60 mature vocabulary words. The 97 participants who completed the program were pre and post tested on 30 of the words. Since the 30 words were used in differing contexts on each of the tests, participants had to reveal competent understanding of the words' meanings by posttest time. The results indicated that

participants increased from a mean of 13.64 words to 20.71 words at an average increase of 7.07 vocabulary words.

The results of the 97 participants were compared to the results of 44 students who did not receive the Flocabulary Program. The 44 students took the 30 item vocabulary pre and posttest and participated in the TiViTz® and LEGO® robotics program. The posttest of the 44 comparison students showed that they did increase by .95 words, indicating that they learned on average one new word over the 10-day period. The Flocabulary students did learn substantially more new words than the comparison group children with significance at  $p > .000$ . This means that the statistical significance of the impact would have been due to chance 1 out of 100,000 times. This degree of significance meant once again in a short time period, a dedicated program that captures children's interest and motivation can yield highly positive results.

It was not the intent of the Project Director to involve 8 and 9-year olds in the *Word Up* program. This was because of the vocabulary learning demand and the 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. However, in an item analysis 8 and 9 year old results are as follows:

1. Of the two 8-year olds, one did not complete the program and the second scored 8 words correct on the pretest and 8 words on the posttest over 8 days.
2. Of the six 9-year olds, two did not complete the program, and the remaining four all increased in vocabulary knowledge. They increased by four to six new word meanings.

The majority of the children (92%) were between 10 and 13 years of age and had completed grades four through grade nine. These children were appropriately placed for the vocabulary program instruction.

## Student Comments

### **Flocabulary**

- Flocabulary helped me learn new vocabulary words easier than a school because the tactics were easy to understand.  
– Melinda M., Age 12
- I think it is fun to learn new vocabulary and see examples from real rappers like Cassidy, Lil Wayne and Jay-Z.  
– Sean B., Age 11
- I think that Flocabulary is interesting. It actually brought out the inner me. Before I came to Flocabulary I really didn't know most of the vocabulary words.  
– Tatyana K., Age 12
- The Flocabulary Program helped me learn vocabulary that I never heard of and I can enrich my writing and reading skills.  
– Erick H., Age 10
- The experience is signing up for Flocabulary. It helped me a lot because I just used to use 4<sup>th</sup> grade words in my writing but now I'm using bigger words.  
– Shanice H., Age 12
- Flocabulary really helped me be a better writer because I learned how to write rhymes and metaphors. I learned how to write poems and stories correctly.  
– Kayla T., Age 11
- Yes, the Flocabulary Program helped me increase my vocabulary. This program was very beneficial.  
– Lance B., Age 13
- I think the Flocabulary Program is very helpful because it taught me new words in a way that I will remember.  
– Glorymarie L., Age 13
- I think that the Flocabulary Program is a great educational but fun way to establish vocabulary learning tactics.  
– Janelle D., Age 11

- I believe the Flocabulary Program has enhanced my vocabulary skills “immensely.” The teachers actually care about our learning process.  
- Akeem G., Age 13

## Examples of Student Rap Poems

1.

Christopher was **arrogant**, it was always about him. His bad attitude didn't let him have friends.

He was a **hoaxer**; he would always have a trick. Every time you see him be careful he likes to hit.

If someone tries to stop him, he's not **cordial**, he's unfriendly. People think he acts mentally.

**Arrogant** and **hoax** from lesson 8; **cordial**, lesson 11.

2.

Miyah Harris

Cryin' your eyes out is not goin to work to solve your problems.

Don't act **arrogant** or all that on every dollar you make.

There is a difference between paying rent and politics

So stop acting like your not in the recession, you are not better than anyone else's kids.

You still gotta pay your bills

Still got to **cope** with your kids get up and face it, it's not a **hoax**, not a joke, it's just basic. Don't be in **awe** when their life is not that amazing.

**Cope** is from lesson 7; **arrogant**, **awe**, and **hoax** from lesson 8.

3.

I need some **leeway**, extra time to clean this **habitat** without earning a dime.

This makes me so upset the earth we live on we need to protect.

We need to pitch in and recycle forget the car, ride a bicycle.

But soon Antarctica will be **arid**, extremely dry, lets respect our earth so the polar bears don't die.

Back in NYC it's a **hoax**, it's a trick.

With all the pollution we'll get sick.

The earth will die because of all the gas spills.

Just like an addict always popping pills.  
We need some **refuge** from the rain, a shelter.  
To make us and the animals healthier.  
Our earth we need to respect and protect.  
Just like we did with our President Elect.

**Refuge** is from lesson 7; **hoax**, lesson 8; **arid** and **leeway**, lesson 11; and **habitat**, lesson 13.