

## A Brief History

Contributed by Administrator  
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Creating a supportive academic home for out-of-school high school students in New York City was the vision of John Garvey, CUNY Dean of the Teacher Academy and Collaborative Programs. Like many other educators at CUNY and in the Department of Education, Garvey was deeply concerned by the dropout rates in city high schools.

“There was, and still is, a pressing need to support the tens of thousands of kids who haven’t finished high school,” said Garvey. “Their prospects and futures are quite limited, as is their participation in the life of our city.”

Recent statistics released by the state Department of Education show that only 44% of New York City high school students graduated in four years, a whopping 20% lower than the overall 64% state average. Only 37% of New York City boys graduated in four years, while half of all girls did.

The graduation statistics are even more alarming with regard to race. While about 80% of white students statewide graduated in four years, only roughly half that percentage of black and Latino students graduated on time. These alarming statistics were at about the same levels four years ago, when Garvey began conceiving a new kind of school and he and CUNY Dean John Mogulescu hired Derrick Griffith to be CUNY Prep’s principal and director.

Garvey said that he is pleased at the way in which teachers create a rich environment for students at CUNY Prep. “They need to be challenged academically,” he said. “Not to make it any less friendly or supportive, but to make it very rigorous.” In addition to CUNY Prep’s strong academic side, Garvey said he is also pleased by how quickly the school’s sense of community and extra-curricular activities have developed.

“When you have a school newspaper, or a blood drive, a poetry slam, a fashion show, you are celebrating the students for their accomplishments,” he said. “Those are fond recollections that students will have about being in high school.”

“I had the basic framework for what our house could look like, but I had no idea what it was going to look like when the furniture arrived and people started moving in,” he said. Garvey gives much of the credit for CUNY Prep’s success to Griffith and the school’s teachers and counselors.

“I’ll take credit for creating the blueprint, but very little credit for building the house.”