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The Roger Lehecka Double Discovery Center

Getting community youth to, through, and beyond college



Photo: Brainstorming at The Atlantic.

**This semester DDC delivered 568 course hours in the
Humanities - STEM - the Arts - Public Health - College Prep - Tutoring**

**We could not do it without you!
This Holiday Season, [Give the Gift of Education!](#)**

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DDC, *The Atlantic* and Hewlett-Packard!!!

DDC students are learning about journalism, digital media, and advertising from professionals at *The Atlantic*, one of the oldest and most-respected magazines in the United States. *The Atlantic* was founded in 1857 by fierce opponents of slavery and with the participation of some of our nation's literary greats, from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Nathaniel Hawthorne to Herman Melville.

Through DDC's collaboration with Young Audiences New York (YANY), students are participating in a yearlong digital media class that is partnered with *The Atlantic* and Hewlett Packard Enterprise. Students receive regular mentoring from professional storytellers, editors, designers, and content developers who work at *Re:think, The Atlantic* – an in-house award-winning creative studio that produces documentaries, interactive public artworks, podcasts, magazines, and articles to position clients at the forefront of the conversation in their field. *It is all about good storytelling* says Trevor Davis, YANY Creative Artist and the class instructor. *Students do not just learn graphic design, they also learn how to come up with ideas and concepts and how to translate those ideas into a compelling and engaging narrative. It is also about creative thinking, I encourage students to trust their ideas and opinions. This project is really about self-discovery.*

After several thoughtful discussions around different topics of interest, the students decided that their class project would address the issue of police brutality. Now that they have selected their area of focus, they must decide who their audience is, the message, and what media they will use – video, article with digital elements, billboard, etc. – to communicate their message. Through the mentoring sessions, students get actionable feedback and tools to help them further develop their project. Students will present their work in May at *The Atlantic* in a culminating event that will include mentors and other industry professionals.

This class is one of the ways in which DDC builds students' readiness for College & Career Success. It provides students with professional training and access to experts in the field while helping corporate leaders with diversifying workforce pipelines.

DDC students showcase their fall semester accomplishments

On December 6th, DDC celebrated students' fall semester accomplishments with a "Showcase" event in the Lerner Hall Broadway Room, which was transformed into a gallery walk of learning with class posters, PowerPoint presentations, and interactive displays – all designed by our students. They proudly highlighted what they learned over the fall semester as they discussed their final class projects with an audience of parents and peers.

DDC students deserve to show off, they come every day, they work hard and this is our way to recognize and reward their efforts, said Marlin Santana, Talent Search Assistant Director. The Showcase is an important part of every semester at DDC because it gives students an opportunity to creatively present their academic growth to others in their own voice; and it allows us to honor their determination and persistence with their postsecondary goals. An enthusiastic group of peers, families, friends, tutors, mentors, and instructors came to learn from the students; and to applaud and encourage them on their journey to college and beyond.

The Showcase also was a wonderful opportunity for DDC students to network with each other and get a firsthand account of DDC's diverse classes to build their academic readiness for college. *I really loved this event, I learned about DDC classes I did not even know existed. I am really interested in the new classes for this spring* commented a student. For Fall 2019, DDC offered students 8 classes in the Humanities (e.g. *Gendered Justice, The 1619 Project, Decolonizing History*, and *Oral History*), 6 classes in STEM (e.g. *Calculus* and *Physics*), and 1 class in the Arts (*Digital Media with YANY & The Atlantic*). In addition, there were 6 college preparation classes and 1 Healthy Minds & Bodies class (*Public Health & You*).

Given that students are busy between their school and DDC activities, it is easy for them to not know all that their peers are doing across the different DDC opportunities. The Showcase allowed anyone who wanted to know more about a class to simply visit that station and ask the students about their experiences. DDC is a learning community where students motivate other students.

As we approach the spring semester when students will again register for their DDC classes, those who attended the Showcase will have a better understanding of what they can accomplish as they explore a new subject or dive deeper into an emergent lifelong passion. It is all about investigating, discovering, and trying out options.

DDC hosts a student showcase at the end of every semester so stay tuned for the next one at the end of Spring Semester!

DDC Student Spotlight: Nahid Uddin, Social Entrepreneur and DDC student since 2018

I do not have money but I have grit and I love to plan out strategies that identify solutions for real-world problems! In 8th grade, I worked with a friend to launch a startup to offer players of Minecraft – the popular sandbox-style game that operates like a virtual Lego world – the use of a server that would not charge high fees for special perks. I only had \$10 in a PayPal account at the time and the cost of a server is over \$100, but that did not stop me, I taught myself how to build the server! We ended up charging 50% less than other server hosts, and we reinvested all of the profits into upgrading the services and growing the community. Our accomplishments included increasing the amount of storage, adding features that most other servers did not offer, and expanding our advertising to attract more players.

Everyone was thrilled! Four years later, we had outgrown the game so we decided to sell the server. We did not look for the highest bidder, we wanted someone who would continue to make it thrive by constantly building the community and providing additional services at affordable rates. We selected a buyer who actually cared and the sale price enabled me to start my college fund! The whole experience was awesome because I learned how to communicate effectively with suppliers and customers; and I developed a valuable understanding of how to manage a business.

Despite this success and good grades at school, I realized that I needed a lot more to get into a college that would be a best fit for my skills and career goals. When you are a first-generation student from a low-income background, you face overwhelming obstacles at every turn. For example, when I did my research for DDC's Piper Scholarship competition last year I learned that rates are as high as \$1,000 an hour for SAT tutoring; application fees to competitive schools are in the hundreds of dollars; and the ratio of school counselor to students in New York is 635:1. In addition, you think the best schools are out of your reach so you do not even consider applying. In fact, a 2012 study found that more than half of the most talented potential applicants from low-income families never apply to a competitive college! All of these circumstances can undermine one of the most important life decisions a young person must make.

I am so glad I joined DDC! My life has changed so much and for the better. My counselor made the college application process much easier by breaking it down and showing me the best way to highlight my accomplishments in the personal essay. Before working with her, I did not know what to cover in this essay. For example, I had no idea that my project with the

Minecraft server was a valuable business experience that I should absolutely include. I have applied to several prestigious schools with strong programs in business – Babson College, Fordham University and NYU. I know I am totally qualified to attend a top college because I am well prepared for the academic rigor of higher education and I have gained the self-confidence I need to persist through the challenges.

In addition to supporting me with the college application process, DDC helped me achieve two other important milestones. First, they connected me with a competition for young people interested in business and entrepreneurship; and second, they helped me access an internship opportunity in business that exposed me to the corporate world.

When my DDC Counselor learned about my Minecraft server, she advised me to apply to Young Entrepreneurz Solutions (YES), which is a business plan competition open to students in Harlem who are interested in business and entrepreneurship. With a team, I developed a business plan for a reusable bottle that filters water and can be operated with a smartphone. We won 1st place! That boosted my confidence and gave me additional materials for my college application portfolio.

Through DDC's partnership with Macquarie, students have the opportunity to apply for the Macquarie LEADS paid summer internship. Macquarie is a multinational independent investment bank and financial services company. I was selected for the internship and it was immensely valuable to me! Before the internship, I knew I wanted to go into business, but I had no idea how to start. I never had the opportunity to work or interact with staff in a global business environment. I was so nervous during my first two weeks! Now I can say that this experience has confirmed for me that my choice of a career in business is the right one. I learned how to make powerful presentations, ask for advice on how to improve my work, and network with colleagues.

Overall, DDC has prepared me for college AND life after college. Now, I want to give back. Last summer, DDC launched its Ambassador Program to create leadership roles for students who wish to advance DDC's recruitment efforts in the partner schools. I immediately volunteered because I want to encourage my peers to join the Center and benefit from the same wide-ranging support that has helped me at every step in this difficult process and allowed me to get to this point. I have built knowledge, skills and self-confidence. I tell them they will work with an awesome team of professionals committed to students' success and they will get top internship opportunities and comprehensive support. I am so thankful for DDC because it opened so many doors for me – it made my world so much bigger!

Calling all DDC Alumni and Former Volunteers!
We want to hear from you!

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