THE CENTER FOR URBAN PEDAGOGY

For Immediate Release

Contact: Clara Amenyo
The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)
(718) 596-7721
welcometocup.org
clara@welcometocup.org

Student-produced *Old School New School* website aims to make high school application process easier to navigate for NYC youth

New York City has public high schools with every imaginable theme, a dizzying array of different application requirements, and charter schools galore. For middle school students and their families, choosing from one of NYC's over 400 public high schools can be overwhelming. It's even more daunting for recent immigrants, and parents that can't take time off of work to go through the massive school directory or chaperone high school visits. But middle school students have no choice but to make a choice.

This past spring, the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP), teaching artist Douglas Paulson, the Resilience Advocacy Project (RAP), and a group of NYC public high school students investigated the high school application process. To get to the bottom of it, they interviewed the Department of Education, guidance counselors, parents, Inside Schools, advocates, and each other. Together, they created a website with videos and animations to help break it down for middle school students: *welcometocup.org/oldschoolnewschool*
The website features accessible graphics, playful animations, and friendly guidance from high school students who have already gone through it all. They also crafted a printed version of their findings: a 'giant bookmark' with a visual timeline of the application process.
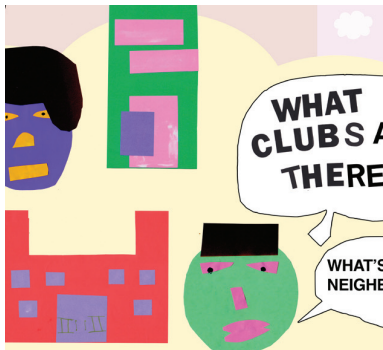
The students wanted *Old School New School* to reach middle schoolers in a way speaks to them. While the High School Directory has the approachability of an encyclopedia, the website features videos and colorful graphics. From an animation of McJagger, a bird who is unpleasantly surprised when he finds out the theme of his school is not quite as he imagined, to a skit that compares choosing a school to choosing a dish from a menu, the videos showcase the students' ability to make tedious subjects fun and funny. The website makes the steps in the application process concise, and features downloadable print-outs with a personal school visit organizer, questions students can ask on visits, and questions they can ask themselves to narrow down their choices.

The tool has already been picked up by middle schools, guidance counselors, and community organizations throughout the city, including Partnership for the Homeless, NYC's Administration for Children's Services, and the Brooklyn Public Library. At a workshop organized by CUP and RAP, one parent said, "I worry a lot. How do I help my daughter choose a school? What you've made is so clear. It will help her get the essence of how you choose a high school." Copies of the giant bookmark are being distributed free of charge (in limited quantities) to schools and organizations by the Center for Urban Pedagogy.

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement. *Old School New School* is one of CUP's Urban Investigations – experiential afterschool programs that give young people the tools to investigate their communities, and use art and design to create educational tools based on their research. To learn more, visit: *welcometocup. org*

The Resilience Advocacy Project (RAP) develops and implements innovative youth empowerment and system-level advocacy models that build the capacity of youth to break cycles of poverty in their lives and communities. To learn more, visit: *resiliencelaw.org*

video still, *Old School New School*

bookmark detail, *Old School New School*

animation still, *Old School New School*

Resilience Advocacy Project

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