

Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling helps fill in education gaps

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Leveling the playing field through art and story-telling (Sugar Hill Museum, used with permission)

This past October, members of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus of the New York City Council urged more Black and Latino parents to request Gifted and Talented (G&T) testing for their children in order to increase minority participation in the program.

Of course, they did this when there were only a few weeks left to sign up for a testing slot (some parents had been ready to request their preferred time and location, not to mention calculate what date would be optimal based on their child's age since the form went live). And they didn't address the fact that many more NYC children

test gifted than there are seats in schools for them all, and that the majority of those seats are located in more affluent neighborhoods, so that even if a child living in Harlem, Washington Heights or the Bronx qualified, they might be faced with an onerous commute. (Their press conference also took place prior to the release of a study that showed Black children are less likely to be identified as gifted by white teachers.)

Finally, they said nothing about the fact that many children are prepped for the G&T test, and that at least a basic familiarity with the format, if not the questions, is

vital prior to taking it. You can help parents sign up, you can even push for more G&T programs uptown. But you can't have more minority kids qualify unless you face the fact that there is a preparation deficit.

Parents, of course, have options. Everything from private tutors, to specialty test-prep centers, to workbooks you can buy and exercises you can do at home. (To learn more, listen to this podcast.) But the fact remains that some parents have - and can afford - more options than others.

To level the playing field, comes The Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling on 898 St Nicholas Avenue at 155th Street. Part of a development built by Broadway Housing Communities designed to leverage the synergies of housing, education and art to improve outcomes for undeserved children, adults and entire communities, the Museum is well-positioned to address things like literacy, self-expression and immersive learning, all elements that provide significant support to the developing child.

And although Jennifer Ifil-Ryan, Associate Director of Education & Community Engagement, clarifies, "The Museum's aim is not so much to fill a specific void created by other institutions and organizations, but instead to create an oasis where children and families with limited access to artistic opportunities can develop a sense of inclusion and agency for their creativity and voices. The programs that are available to visitors are grounded in these same elements, so that visitors can enjoy experiential settings that encourage these outcomes. The Midwinter Recess Camp at Sugar Hill features a component of creating story books, encouraging young people to design their worlds, their characters and their visions, and to share it with others - the epitome of self-determination."

It's also the epitome of the sort of skills that are tested prior to admission to NYC public and private school gifted programs. The exams favor the verbal child who

can understand complex thoughts and elaborate in great detail when asked a question. A child with experience in world-building, story-telling and creative expression is always at an advantage.

For parents interested in having their child attend the above-mentioned camp, it runs Monday-Friday, February 15 - 19, from 9am - 12pm for 3 - 5 year-olds, and 2 - 5pm for 6 - 8 year-old. Sugar Hill Children's Museum Teaching Artists will guide children in a process of telling their stories as they create books out of their own imaginations and in their own voices, using a rich array of colorful and textural materials. Healthy snacks included. Cost is \$200 per child, with a 15% sibling discount available.

And if you would like to check the place out, first, consider dropping by on:

February 13

2:00 - 4:00 PM

Story Time: Tales on Sugar Hill

Celebrate the Museum's Legacy Gallery Exhibition entitled People, Places, Things. Selections from The Studio Museum in Harlem paired with a selection of stories and poetry as well as a jazz trio. Images by the exhibition's artists Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, Benny Andrews and Elizabeth Catlett will also be included. Art making inspired by the exhibition, music and stories will occur directly after the trio performance. Storytime programming takes place twice a month on Saturday afternoons.

Free with Museum admission:

Children:

Ages 0 to 8 FREE

Ages 9 to 17 \$4

Seniors (65+) \$4

Students (with ID) \$4

Adults \$7

