This fall, Columbia’s Teachers College opened its doors on the Upper West Side. In partnership, the Teachers College Community School, “a university-assisted, non-selective, community school,” admitted the first crop of kindergartners into what the principal, Jeanene Worrell-Breeden, called “the school of my dreams.”

“The resources we have just by virtue of our connection to the university make this school unique,” said Worrell-Breeden. “We have access to everything Teachers College has to offer. So if I need help with anything—from social work to counseling—I can rely on TC to support me in those ventures.”

The college, for example, sponsors all of the elementary school’s after-school programs, which run every day from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. During that time, students can participate in workshops on topics such as music, nutrition, physical education—even robotics.

Their “plethora of resources” means the school is shielded from many of the budget stresses that often plague public schools.

The school is comprised of 50 kindergartners in two classrooms with four adults present in each class—a certified classroom teacher, a paraprofessional, a student teacher and an intern. “That gives us the ability to give children who need it specialized attention,” Worrell-Breeden said.
Next year, the school is moving from 130th Street to Morningside Avenue, where it will eventually expand to cover through the 8th grade.

Worrell-Breeden said the school received 125 applications for its first 50 seats, despite late approval from the Department of Education.

Teachers College students, who all hail from Districts 5 and 6, “reflect the diversity of the Upper West Side,” said the principal, a former Wall Street portfolio manager who has lived in Harlem for 20 years.

Ultimately, she said, the school’s success will depend on the commitment of both the staff and parents.

“We didn’t just want to say, ‘Here’s your school, take it or leave it,’” she said. “We wanted them to feel like they were a part of the process as well.”

Overall, Worrell-Breeden is happy with how the school has fared so far and is excited about next year’s move.

“We’re building the foundation this year,” she said. “We want to be a resource for other schools and for the Harlem community. We want to share the wealth.”