



Folio 4: Family Participation

This folio is one in a series of four designed to capture, discuss, and provide evidence of exemplary implementation of the Urban Advantage Middle School Science Initiative as documented by NCREST, (The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University) in a sample of Urban Advantage Demonstration Schools. The focus of this folio is **Family Participation**.

What is Urban Advantage (UA)?

Started in 2004, the Urban Advantage Middle School Science Exit Project Initiative, (UA), is a science education initiative that partners eight New York City science-rich cultural institutions with the New York City Department of Education and many of its middle schools across the city. In addition to the American Museum of Natural History, which houses Urban Advantage Administration, partners include the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, New York Botanical Garden, New York Hall of Science, Queens Botanical Garden, Staten Island Zoo, Wildlife Conservation Society-Bronx Zoo, and the Wildlife Conservation Society New York Aquarium. Middle school students, particularly 8th graders, enrolled in NYC public schools, are the focus of this alliance and benefit directly from its efforts.

Funded by the New York City Council and a private donor, Urban Advantage captures, celebrates, and shares the wonder and excitement of scientific discovery by engaging learners in authentic inquiry-driven contexts. The teaching and learning experiences of adults and children participating in Urban Advantage are enriched through high quality teacher professional development, direct access to scientific knowledge through firsthand experiences at UA Partner institutions, classroom resources chosen for their value in promoting scientific inquiry, family participation, and direct support of students throughout the Exit Project process.

Urban Advantage is a fluid mosaic consisting of six components, each essential to maximizing the partnership between the NYC Department of Education and science-rich institutions to benefit the science education of NYC middle school students. These six components include: UA Administration, UA Partners, UA Principals, UA Lead Teachers, UA Teachers, and UA Parent Coordinators. The success of Urban Advantage is achieved through the effective and ongoing communication among these essential supports, *each* with its primary area of focus, yet *all* members of a learning community committed to continuous improvement.

Who are Urban Advantage Partners?



What structures and opportunities are in place to maximize family participation in the Urban Advantage Middle School Science Exit Project Initiative?

All components of the Urban Advantage mosaic promote family participation. The Parent Coordinator position, mandated for every NYC school by Mayor Bloomberg, provides support and assistance to families to enhance parent involvement in their child's education. With support from UA Administration (insert Carol's position title here), UA Parent Coordinators focus on involving parents in their child's science education, growing parent awareness and understanding of the UA Exit Project, and increasing family access to and participation and interaction with scientific exploration and discovery, in particular by encouraging family visits to partner institutions. UA Parent Coordinators are integral in the success and implementation of the Urban Advantage initiative through their direct and ongoing contact with parents and their outreach efforts. UA Parent Coordinators organize Family Science Fieldtrips to UA Partner institutions; assist in Student Science Fieldtrips, co-plan Family Science Nights, Science Fairs, and offer Exit Project Workshops. UA Parent Coordinators participate in UA Parent Coordinator Meetings organized and facilitated by Carol Abrahams, Senior Coordinator of UA Communications, American Museum of Natural History, and hosted at each of the UA Partner institutions. The agenda for these meetings includes review and explanation of voucher-use, trip planning and logistics, recommendations for outreach efforts, opportunities for networking with other UA Parent Coordinators and an interactive science experience specific to the hosting UA Partner. These hands-on experiences build science-confidence and provide background information for UA Parent Coordinators to share with parents during Family Science Fieldtrips, and Exit Project Workshops.



Images from UA Parent Coordinators' meeting at New York Aquarium.

“UA Parent Coordinators were immediately engaged by the sheer size and beauty of the reef tank. The instructor invited Parent Coordinators to surface prior experiences when she directed them to interact with the exhibit as they ordinarily would. Parent Coordinators commented enthusiastically, posed a variety of questions, supported their peers and encourage each other to participate. After several minutes of ‘usual viewing,’ Parent Coordinators were directed to focus on one specific type of organism (species) and to observe and record their behaviors. Several minutes later, Parent Coordinators were directed to attend to one organism (individual) as they continued to observe and record their findings. After these three different viewing strategies, the instructor challenged parents to reflect and explain how this process was different from their usual visit to the NY Aquarium.

UA Parent Coordinators explored the Aquarium, engaged in activities and used the same tools and techniques that UA students use for their Exit Projects. As a result of this experience, Parent Coordinators are better able to support middle school student and their parents when they lead trips Family Science Trips to the Aquarium.”

Excerpt from documentation of UA Parent Coordinator Meeting, NY Aquarium, 2007.

How do UA Parent Coordinators Engage Parents?

UA Parent Coordinators designed and administered surveys to determine parent interest, availability, and obstacles that might preclude them from participating in School Sponsored UA Family Science Events. UA Parent Coordinators, UA Principals and UA Teachers use survey results to inform scheduling decisions for Family Science Fieldtrips, Family Science Nights, Exit Project Workshops, and Science Fairs.

“Our school has been chosen to participate in the Urban Advantage Middle School Exit Project Initiative. One of the great benefits provided by this program is **FREE Admission** to one of eight science-rich cultural institutions. In order to develop a partnership between parents, students and our school that promotes student success, our science department has developed a Family Science Night to explain how your family can take advantage of this great opportunity. We need your help to determine the best days and times to coordinate our family workshops and trips.

We will be conducting a Family Science Night to do fun science activities together, explain the Exit Project process and to promote our **FREE** family trips that can serve as a resource to both parents and students. Please keep in mind that **completion of a Science Exit Project is a mandatory graduation requirement for all 8th grade students.** Please complete the survey and return...”

UA Parent Coordinator Parent Survey, Urban Advantage Demonstration School

Survey questions include:

1. What are the best days and times for you to attend a workshop?
2. When are the best days and times for you to attend a Family Fieldtrip?
3. Which of our New York City science-rich cultural institutions is your family interested in visiting?
4. What might keep you from attending a workshop/event and/or Family Fieldtrip?

What are Exemplary School Sponsored UA Family Science Events?

Family Science Fieldtrips

Family Science Fieldtrips may be scheduled at any one of the Urban Advantage Partner institutions by the UA Parent Coordinator. These fieldtrips, usually scheduled on weekends or school holidays, are fully funded by UA through the voucher system. Parent Coordinators use their survey of parents to determine their interest, availability and partner institution preference to inform their fieldtrip planning.



“The UA Parent Coordinator works with the science teachers to plan family trips using Urban Advantage vouchers and funds. Last year we went to the Brooklyn Botanical Garden; quite a few families went. This year, there will be a trip, but were not sure where. The Parent Coordinator is great and gets many parents to come to meetings by effective advertising, and providing a warm, inviting environment. She has invited teachers to PTA meetings to talk to parents about Urban Advantage and set up a workshop for parents who wanted to learn how to help their kids with their Exit Projects. They had a really good turn-out.”

Science Teacher Interview, Urban Advantage Demonstration School

“Come spend some time with the fishes or maybe a penguin or two at the New York Aquarium on our *Urban Advantage Family Outing* on Saturday, May 5, 2007. The bus will be leaving from in front of the school at 9:30 AM and returning to the school at 1:00 PM...if you have any questions please contact the Parent Coordinator...”

Parent Coordinator’s flyer announcing a Family Fieldtrip,
Urban Advantage Demonstration School

“There have been two family trips each of the past two years. Both times we have gone to the New York Hall of Science and the WCS Bronx Zoo. Last year we had about twenty people go to the Hall of Science and about fifty to the Bronx Zoo. These are opportunities for parents and children to have time together and to see and try new things. Many families seldom leave the immediate neighborhood... The New York Aquarium came to school with models and exhibits and sponsored a free night for families. Also there was an Open School Night when families got to see their kids’ school work, including their exit projects.”

Parent Coordinator Interview, Urban Advantage Demonstration School

“On Saturday, December 26th, in keeping up the momentum of science exploration, 50 participants including teachers, parents and students, loaded onto two buses and ventured on a Family Science Trip to the NY Hall of Science in Queens. The Hall is NYC’s hands-on science and technology center featuring over 400 hands-on exhibits where families can explore the wonder and excitement of biology, chemistry and physics and the ‘gross side of science’ watching a real cow eye dissection! Don’t miss our next Family Science Trip coming up in February...”

Parent Newsletter,
Urban Advantage Demonstration School

Family Science Night

Family Science Nights are another exemplary school sponsored way to involve parents in the science education of their children. These evenings include a review of the Exit Project requirements coupled with opportunities for children and parents to participate in side-by-side, inquiry-based, hands-on investigations.



“You are invited to a fabulous Family Science Event! Every student must bring a parent...Come for the fun of it! Do lots of cool activities and take home the stuff you make!”

School Flyer Announcing Family Science Night,
Urban Advantage Demonstration School

“More than two dozen students and their parents attended the first annual Family Science Night on December 14 from 6-8 PM...The Family Science Night is geared toward helping parents to understand what their children need to do in order to complete their Science Exit Project...The evening included hand-on activities which parents and their children performed together...”

Promotional Materials, Urban Advantage Demonstration School

In October, all of the Urban Advantage Partners host **Family Science Sunday**. This day is informally structured to invite families explore an Urban Advantage Partner of their choice. Families receive an additional voucher specific for this day and are invited to participate in hands-on activities.

INVITATION
INVITACIÓN

Welcome to the Urban Advantage Family Day!

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urban advantage middle school exit project initiative
www.urbandadvantagenyc.org

What?	¿Qué?	When?	¿Cuándo?	Where?	¿Dónde?
A grant day for NYC "Urban Advantage" students and their families. Un gran día para los estudiantes en el programa de "Urban Advantage" y sus familias. Each institution will offer refreshments and special programs that include some of the following activities: Cada institución ofrecerá refrescos y programas especiales que incluyen algunas de estas actividades: • Hands on investigations • "Eco-buster" scavenger hunt • Cow's eye dissections • Touch tanks • Other findings • Microscopes • Special tours • Telescopes VERY IMPORTANT!! ¡MUY IMPORTANTE!! This invitation is also your admissions voucher to "Urban Advantage Family Day." Please bring it with you and use for admission. Please complete information printed on the reverse of this invitation. Esta invitación es también su boleto de entrada al "Urban Advantage Family Day." Por favor bájela y entréguela a la entrada. Por favor complete la información impresa al reverso de esta invitación.		Sunday, October 14, 2007 From 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM at: Bronx Zoo/ Wildlife Conservation Society. Phone: 1-718-360-3310 www.bronxzoo.org American Museum of Natural History Phone: 212-764-5100 www.amnh.org Sunday, October 21, 2007 From 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at: New York Botanical Garden Phone: 212-646-3474 www.nybg.org Brooklyn Botanic Garden Phone: 718-623-7208 www.bbg.org New York Hall of Science Phone: 718-688-8888 www.nysscience.org Queens Botanical Garden Phone: 718-896-3896 www.queensbotanicgarden.org New York Aquarium/ Wildlife Conservation Society. Phone: 718-345-3474 www.nyaquarium.org Staten Island Zoo Phone: 718-442-2100 www.statenislandzoo.org For directions and other information visit the Urban Advantage partner institutions, please call or visit their web sites. Para las direcciones y la otra información visite las instituciones y el Urban Advantage, llame o visite por Internet sus sitios Web.			

"During Family Science Sunday, we offered a variety of hands-on activities for families, parents and children to explore. Each station was staffed by an Urban Advantage staff member. One station was devoted to microscopy where parents and children used microscopes to observe insects...at another station we had UV sensitive beads where parents and children made bracelets and learned the science behind why the beads changed colors."

Carol Abrahams, *Senior Coordinator of UA Communications American Museum of Natural History*, American Museum of Natural History

Annual Science EXPO

The Annual 8th Grade Science EXPO is sponsored by Urban Advantage and hosted by the American Museum of Natural History. This culminating event is a celebration of students and their Exit Projects. Student select from one of four different types of Exit Project options which include: Field Research, Controlled Experiment, Design Research and Secondary Research. Driven by their own questions, guided by the GROW rubric and supported by their teachers and all UA components, students share their investigations, experience, and findings publicly. The EXPO invitation provides free admission to the American Museum of Natural History for up to four people for the day.

urban advantage

You're Invited
to the 3rd Annual Citywide

8th Grade Science EXPO

www.urbandadvantagenyc.org

Date: Saturday, June 9, 2007
Time: 1:00 to 4:00 pm
Place: American Museum of Natural History
Misteen Hall of Ocean Life

2:00 to 3:00 Welcome & Greetings: NY City Council, NYC DOE, Guest Scientist

Present this flyer
For **FREE ADMISSION**

Valid for general admission for up to 4 members on June 9th, 2007 ONLY!
Does not include special exhibitions, IMAX or Special Shows

Urban Advantage Partners:

1 2 3 4
Please Circle
No. of Visitors

Public support of the Urban Advantage Middle School Science Exit Project Initiative is provided by the Speaker and Council of the City of New York, and the New York City Department of Education. Additional support for Urban Advantage has been provided by the American Museum of Natural History in a generous arrangement.



How is Family Access to UA Partner Institutions Maximized?

Urban Advantage provides vouchers to students and their families, teachers, parent coordinators, and UA classes. Vouchers can be exchanged for free admission to UA partner institutions. UA also provides one free bus per school for family trip. There are four types of vouchers valid for free admission to UA Partner Institutions.

Student/Family Vouchers: Each UA student receives two vouchers. Each voucher is valid for the student and up to three additional visitors. Student/Family vouchers for visits that the student takes with his/her family.

Family Science Sunday Voucher: These vouchers are to be used on in October for the Family Science Sunday event.

Family Field Trip Vouchers: Each UA Parent Coordinator receives three vouchers for school-organized family visits on weekends or school holidays. Each voucher is valid for up to 40 people.

EXPO Vouchers: The EXPO invitation provides free admission to the UA EXPO hosted the American Museum of Natural History for up to four people for the day.



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No. _____

**TEACHER/PARENT COORDINATOR
ADMISSION VOUCHER**

Date of Visit: _____

Region: _____ School Name: _____

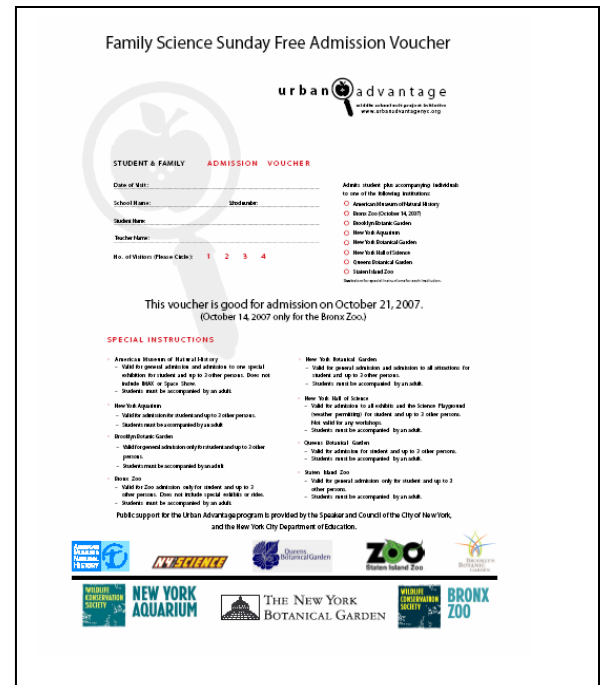
Name: _____

Expires August 1 - No Cash Value
WWW.URBANADVANTAGENYC.ORG

Admits one adult to one of the following institutions:

- ☐ American Museum of Natural History
- ☐ Bronx Zoo
- ☐ Brooklyn Botanic Garden
- ☐ New York Aquarium
- ☐ New York Botanical Garden
- ☐ New York Hall of Science
- ☐ Queens Botanical Garden
- ☐ Staten Island Zoo

See reverse side for special instructions for each institution.



Family Science Sunday Free Admission Voucher

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www.urbanadvantagenyc.org

**STUDENT & FAMILY
ADMISSION VOUCHER**

Date of Visit: _____

School Name: _____ Student: _____

Student Name: _____

Teacher Name: _____

No. of Visitors (Please Circle): 1 2 3 4

Admits student plus accompanying individual to one of the following institutions:

- ☐ American Museum of Natural History
- ☐ Bronx Zoo (October 14, 2007)
- ☐ Brooklyn Botanic Garden
- ☐ New York Aquarium
- ☐ New York Botanical Garden
- ☐ New York Hall of Science
- ☐ Queens Botanical Garden
- ☐ Staten Island Zoo

Expires October 14, 2007 only for the Bronx Zoo.

This voucher is good for admission on October 21, 2007.
(October 14, 2007 only for the Bronx Zoo)

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

American Museum of Natural History

- Valid for general admission and admission to one special exhibition for students and up to 3 other persons. Does not include IMAX or Space Station.
- Students must be accompanied by an adult.

New York Aquarium

- Valid for admission for students and up to 3 other persons.
- Students must be accompanied by an adult.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden

- Valid for general admission only for students and up to 3 other persons.
- Students must be accompanied by an adult.

Bronx Zoo

- Valid for admission only for student and up to 3 other persons. Does not include special exhibits or rides.
- Students must be accompanied by an adult.

New York Botanical Garden

- Valid for general admission and admission to all attractions for students and up to 3 other persons.
- Students must be accompanied by an adult.

New York Hall of Science

- Valid for admission to all exhibits and the Science Playground.
- Students must be accompanied by an adult.

Queens Botanical Garden

- Valid for admission for student and up to 3 other persons.
- Students must be accompanied by an adult.

Staten Island Zoo

- Valid for general admission only for student and up to 3 other persons.
- Students must be accompanied by an adult.

Public support for the Urban Advantage program is provided by the Speaker and Council of the City of New York, and the New York City Department of Education.

Logos for partner institutions: American Museum of Natural History, New York Aquarium, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Bronx Zoo, New York Botanical Garden, Queens Botanical Garden, Staten Island Zoo.



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No. _____

STUDENT/FAMILY ADMISSION VOUCHER

Date of Visit: _____

Region: _____ School Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Student: _____

No. of Visitors (Please Circle): 2 3 4

Expires August 1 - No Cash Value
WWW.URBANADVANTAGENYC.ORG

Admits student plus accompanying individuals to one of the following institutions:

- ☐ American Museum of Natural History
- ☐ Bronx Zoo
- ☐ Brooklyn Botanic Garden
- ☐ New York Aquarium
- ☐ New York Botanical Garden
- ☐ New York Hall of Science
- ☐ Queens Botanical Garden
- ☐ Staten Island Zoo

See reverse side for special instructions for each institution.