

## What We Believe

### *About Young People*

We believe that all young people have the capacity to live fulfilling, productive lives and make positive contributions to their communities.

We believe that young people in the poorest neighborhoods should have the same kinds of opportunities to develop their potential that are available to children in better circumstances.

We believe that the years between middle school and early adulthood are a particularly vulnerable, often tumultuous period in a young person's life and yet critically important for academic, social and emotional development.

We believe that single-parent families and young people in foster care face enormous challenges, and we have a particular interest in helping to meet their needs.

We also have a special focus on youth justice. We believe that young people must be held accountable for their actions, but that incarceration is rarely the most effective tool.

As a result, we support a number of programs for court involved youth that build skills, a sense of responsibility and positive social networks.

### *About Youth Programs*

We believe the single most important element in a young person's life is often the consistent presence of a caring adult—and we believe the most successful programs serving young people establish and nurture those supportive relationships.

We believe the hours after school, on weekends and during the summer are critical times for growth, learning and change—and we support programs that use those times to provide a blend of cultural enrichment, recreation, work experience and continuing education.

We favor well-run programs that include engaging activities, high expectations for the participants and opportunities for young people to serve, learn and lead.

We find that the best programs grow out of organizations that have a clear mission, reasonable goals, accountable leadership and caring, well-trained staffs.

We believe that persistence, patience, self-discipline and resilience in the face of adversity—qualities popularly known as “grit”—are important predictors of success in school and life, and we strongly encourage programs to help develop those character traits in caring, supportive ways.

We believe that “credible messengers”—young people who have overcome daunting obstacles themselves—have an important role to play in helping others deal with similar challenges. In the process, these mentors develop critical skills and reinforce their own positive behavior.

We believe that young people should have early opportunities for meaningful work experience. As a result, we fund internships that allow high school students to explore a variety of careers and job readiness programs that work closely with potential employers.

We like inter-generational programs because of the benefits they offer to both generations.

We have a long history of supporting programs that involve young people from poor communities with the great cultural institutions of the city.

We have a strong and growing interest in programs that engage young people in high-quality science, technology, engineering and math activities. We favor programs that offer hands-on learning, creative role models and career exploration.

### *About the Foundation*

We focus on programs in New York City. But since one out of every 300 Americans is a New York public school student today, we are mindful that these programs often have national importance.

We respect the organizations we support and largely rely on them to develop and carry out their programs. We understand that success often takes time.

We thoughtfully consider a few central questions before making or renewing a grant: Are the funds we provide being used expressly for the reasons requested? How do the young participants benefit from the programs we support? Are those benefits worthy of the expenses involved?

When we find a program that works, we like to share that knowledge with others in the field and to support efforts to take good ideas to scale.

We believe in academic research, but we leave its support largely to others. We are open, however, to occasionally supporting community-based “laboratory” programs designed to validate promising theories, test new ones or help grantees monitor the efficacy of their programs.

We make a small number of capital grants, but only to organizations we know well and only for projects that will improve the quality or extend the reach of programs we believe in.

We recognize that not every initiative succeeds, but we applaud a spirit of innovation and believe that failure often teaches important lessons.

We take pride in our ability to quickly fill an unexpected need or explore a promising new idea.