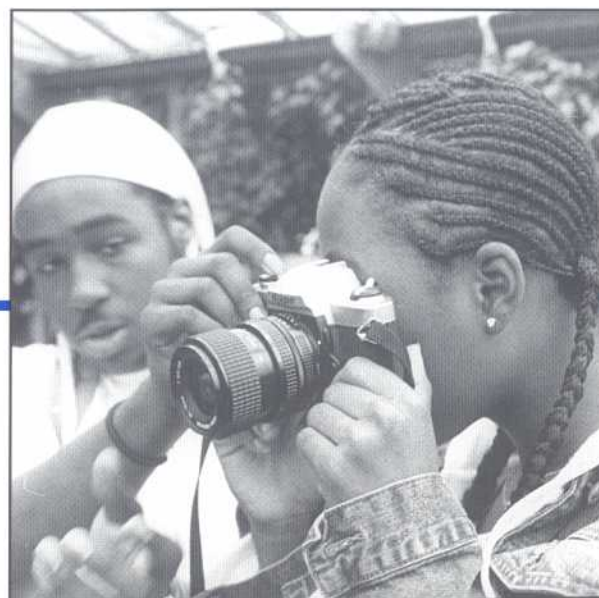




Roslyn Smith, CCPP teacher, talks with students about important issues happening in their lives during the daily "Unity Circle."

A high school student from Cleveland School of the Arts helps steady the camera for a CCPP student who is learning about photography through the mentorship program.



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'family community' so they can then go on and be functional throughout the school day."

Monday through Thursday the students' schedules are filled with academic coursework. Fridays are reserved for special enrichment activities, individual project work, computer lab time, community service, and field trips. During the past two years, the students have been partnering with high school photography students at the Cleveland School of the Arts (CSA). The partnership acts as an art and literacy enrichment curriculum that allows the CCPP students to learn about photography from the older students while engaging in mutually beneficial social experiences. Together, the groups are reading a novel, Touching Spirit Bear, by Ben Mikaelson, which focuses on Circle Justice, a Native American system of beliefs and traditions that provide healing for the offender, the victim, and the community. The classes meet periodically to read and discuss the book and to participate in various activities meant to develop social awareness, as well as a sense of purpose and identity with one another.

"This has been the most wonderful educational experience I have ever been a part of," remarks Toni Starinsky, CSA photography instructor. "Working with (the younger) students allows my students to become 'heroes.' Because of this experience, I think a third of them want to become teachers."

The CCPP students also learn how to mentor others through their experiences with visually-impaired preschoolers at the Cleveland Sight Center. In the past, they have created tactile books to help the little ones learn their letters, shapes, and numbers, and they have accompanied them on outings and field trips.

A critical component of the Carroll-Cleveland Philosopher's Program is its emphasis on fostering individual talents and skills. Each year, students are required to

complete a special project related to a personal interest. This year, because there are many strong writers in the class, each student is penning a "position paper" on a topic of interest to them. Their choices: *Do Animals Have Souls? Is Hair Design an Art Form? What Do Dreams Mean?* The papers will be compiled in a magazine and shared with students at other schools.

"This is a teaching philosophy that our kids really respond to," comments Ms. Smith. "It's very powerful. They love the whole exploration process where they can explore their own individual passions."

During the program's second year, evaluators with the University of Virginia's National Research Center for the Education of Gifted and Talented Children conducted a quantitative study that noted a statistically significant positive gain in over all achievement for CCPP students. Those involved with these kids on a day-to-day basis are thrilled with these results, yet they view success in other ways as well.

"Attendance is phenomenal," says Ms. Smith, citing one example. But she also notes the change she sees in their mentality over time: "When they interview with me, they have never even thought about going to college. But once we get them here, you see these shackles thrown off, and they begin to articulate goals for their future. They can visualize themselves on a college campus. It's something that's now real for them. And that awakening is beautiful."

"We've been pretty optimistic, saying, 'Yes, we *can* do this,'" adds Dr. Merritt. "And with the small number of students and the individual attention, it has become a very personal and positive experience for both the students and the staff."