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COLLABORATION THROUGH COLOCATION: BRONX CHARTER & DISTRICT EDUCATORS ALIGN FOR ONCE-IN-A LIFETIME TEACHING OPPORTUNITY

Charter & District Leaders Welcome Former Child Soldier to JFK Campus to Teach Valuable Lessons on Human Rights

March 28, 2014 (New York, NY)— Students from the seven New York City public high schools collocated on the John F. Kennedy High School campus will have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hear from human rights activist, author, and former Sierra Leonean child soldier, Ishmael Beah.

For the past few weeks, teachers at the New Visions Charter High School for the Humanities, New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science, Bronx Engineering and Tech Academy, Marble Hill International High School, Bronx School of Law and Finance, John F. Kennedy High School, and Bronx Theater High School, have closely read Beah’s memoir, *A Long Way Gone* with their students in grades 9-12. *A Long Way Gone* reveals Beah’s heartbreaking journey as a child soldier in Sierra Leone, where he was recruited when his parents and brothers were killed in the civil war that tore Sierra Leone apart for more than a decade in the 1990s.

“Regardless whether they’re charter or district students, we have an obligation to bring the best education to these public school students,” said **Jaclyn Leffel**, Director of NYC Collaborates. “NYC Collaborates is determined to highlight the collaborative, open, joint, and unified strategies that bring our students together. These collaborative strategies are inclusive and supportive of our common goal: educating children.”

Principals and administrators at the JFK High School campus have worked alongside teachers, parents, and students to find solutions for their shared seven-member-campus building. The co-location of the schools, accompanied with united professional development, sharp teamwork and commitment to student’s education resulted in the universal plan across the campus and the decision to team up and share a common curriculum for this unique learning experience.

“Our students will have the incredible opportunity to hear from a young author who has survived traumatic circumstances which he has not only overcome - but used to



motivate himself and others through his words and actions,” said **Kirsten Larsen**, Principal, Marble Hill School for International Studies.

“Bringing Ishmael Beah's memoir into our curriculum adds more authenticity to the hero's journey unit, and his presence on Friday will make everything we've read even more real,” said **Meaghan Mancini**, English Teacher at the New Visions Charter School for Advanced Math and Science. His story is a lesson they can carry for the rest of their lives. With hard work and perseverance, you can accomplish whatever you want in this life.”

“I believe that the larger conversation should not be about district versus charter schools – the conversation should be about creating great schools that best support the needs of the students they serve,” said **Julia Chun**, Principal, New Visions Charter High School for Advanced Math and Science.

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About NYC Collaborates

NYC Collaborates creates opportunities for educators from all types of public schools to come together to share information and collaborate to improve student achievement. Our members believe that public schools—whether district or charter—have a collective and mutual obligation to ensure that all students in the City graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college, work and life.

Spearheaded by the New York City Charter School Center and New York City's Department of Education, NYC Collaborates is funded in part by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. To learn more visit: <http://www.nyccollaborates.org>.