

New York Institute for Special Education

Spotlight

January 2016

Fast Facts

- NYISE has a 90 percent daily attendance rate for students.
- 80 percent of graduates receive a New York State Regents Diploma.
- Enrollment for the 2016-17 school year is 178 school year (40 are residential students).



The New York Institute for Special Education has a long and distinguished history dating back to 1831.

Founded when social activists sought to provide rights and opportunities for blind people, the school underwent several name changes – the final time in 1986, when the school was changed to NYISE and its charter to accept children with visual impairments and emotional needs.

In 1986, NYISE changed its charter to accept not only children with visual impairments but also children with emotional/learning needs, as well as preschool children with developmental disabilities.

Today, NYISE categorizes its curriculum into four major programs: The Readiness Program, which serves 3- to 5-year olds with developmental delays; and the Schermerhorn Program, which is for 5- to 21-year olds with visual impairments; the Van Cleve Program for 5- to 13-year olds with emotional disabilities; and Camp Wanaqua – a summer day camp for 5- to 13-year olds with visual impairments.



Notable Alumni

Among NYISE’s distinguished alumni is Frances Jane “Aunt Fanny” Crosby (1820 to 1915) was an American poet and hymn writer who attended NY Institute as a teenager and taught English and History there. In all, she spent 35 years at the institute. Crosby advocated for equality in education, becoming the first woman to speak in the U.S. Senate.

She recited this poem at the time:

O ye, who here from every state convene,
Illustrious band! may we not hope the scene
You now behold will prove to every mind
Instruction hath a ray to cheer the blind.

[Ed Lucas](#), who organized a school baseball club, prompted baseball Hall of Famer Jackie Robinson to visit the school to talk baseball and to read the sports pages to the students. Lucas was one of the first blind students in the country to regularly attend classes with a seeing-eye dog. He was a broadcaster, columnist and author, and he was the first person to be married at home plate in Yankee Stadium.

John Boyer, who graduated salutatorian of his class in the 1950s, worked to develop computer software that would advance the cause of Braille literacy.

His company Abilitiessoft is partnered with ViewPlus Technologies in the development of a project called BrailleBlaster – a free, open-source, multi-platform Braille transcription software package. He was honored in 2000 for his pioneering work at the Annual International Technology & Persons with Disabilities Conference (CSUN), which is sponsored by California State University at Northridge.

[Diandra Forrest](#), right, who graduated from NYISE in 2007, is a top rated African American fashion model. She has albinism.

She has been in numerous national and international fashion shows and graced the cover of several magazines, including a recent issue of Ebony. She has appeared on the [Tyra Banks Show](#) and in a [TED](#) talk presentation in which she discussed her personal experiences of growing up in the Bronx. She has appeared in several music videos, including [Beyonce's Pretty Hurts](#) and [Kanye West's Power](#).

More about NYISE

- NYISE serves students from 14 school districts, including New York City.
- The poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” – also known as “Twas the Night Before Christmas” – was written by Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863), who for 10 years served on the board of NYISE’s predecessor school, New York Institute for the Blind.
- Twenty years ago, NYISE created a museum to preserve, catalog and disseminate documents and artifacts. The school welcomes researchers to study the history of special education in America.



