

Bridging the Gaps



Through Their Eyes: Caring for the Next Generation of Camden

Student Interns: *Cassandra Yap, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University*
Theresa Coutinho, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University

Academic Preceptors: *Dr. Anthony L. Rostain MD, MA Cooper University Healthcare; Dr. Mara Gordon, MD Cooper University Healthcare; Dr. Daniel Hyman, DO Cooper University Healthcare; Dr. Esther Malave Cooper University Healthcare*

Community Preceptors: *Jameka McGraw-Byrd, Executive Director of Catholic Partnership Schools*
Teresa Casañas, Dual-Language Preschool Teacher



COMMUNITY PARTNER

Catholic Partnership Schools is a formally recognized 501 ©(3) network of 4 schools and a Community Learning Center that aims to provide a safe, loving, achieving environment for its students. They are a single non-profit entity that centralizes financial, academic and operational management and oversight.

<https://www.catholicpartnershipschools.org/>

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

- The initiative to centralize resources into one nonprofit was prompted by the threat of school closures from a city that could not afford them.
- CPS was created based on extensive research and analysis about how best to retain Catholic education's cultural and academic strengths, and best practices.
- The four schools and Community Learning Campus at St. Anthony's are anchors of stability for their respective communities, some for as long as 100 years.
- They aim to cultivate schools that will have financial stability, cutting-edge educational resources and practices, all supported by excellent faculty and a strong business model that will sustain the CPS for decades to come.

TEAM'S EXPERIENCE

Cassandra assisted in CPS's Mars Exploration Program where students coded robots to complete a variety challenges; she really enjoyed creating games and "missions" for the students and seeing them learn from one another.

Theresa worked in CPS's dual language preschool where students participated in crafts, nature projects, games, and language skills; she loved improving her Spanish and learning how to work with young children including students on the Autism spectrum.

Together, Cassandra and Theresa led a healthcare program for 3rd and 4th graders which served as an excellent opportunity to integrate science, healthcare careers, and fun activities into the students' summers. The program covered topics on cardiovascular health, oral health, and looked into various medical fields. They enjoyed presenting complex scientific and medical information in a fun and kid-friendly way and hope to have inspired their students to consider pursuing a healthcare field.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ CHALLENGES/JOYS

- Learning how to communicate in problem solving with children was a challenge very much worth enduring
- Watching the students successfully program their robots after many trials and errors through difficult challenges
- Getting to play a role in the learning progress in these young children from the beginning of the pre-k program until the end, such as a solely Spanish speaking three-year-old say their first English words and a majority non-verbal student on the Autism spectrum come out of their shell to communicate more
- Seeing how excited the kids were to have me in the classroom each day
- Seeing the children take their own pulse and hear their own heartbeat with stethoscopes brought joy and wonder to their faces that was amazing to see.

REFLECTION

While Camden is considered a disadvantaged area, we see the passion and determination from CPS to ensure that the students are given the same opportunities as any other community and provide families with good quality childcare. As physicians, we hope to model the same ideals and provide our patients with comprehensive and the best resources for their overall health, no matter their background or where they come from. Being a part of this program and learning from other students who have dedicated their time at different organizations has been extremely educational. The site recognized what was missing from Camden, which is a safe community for families dedicated to the betterment of children's education.

