



## BACKGROUND

Computers for Youth (CFY)—[www.cfy.org](http://www.cfy.org)—began with a meeting in the late 1990s of two New Yorkers—Dan Dolgin, a lawyer and private investor, and Elisabeth Stock, a former White House Fellow and MIT graduate. Independently, they became convinced that the home holds the greatest *untapped* potential for improving school children’s academic and life-long success. Compared to the classroom or the after-school center, the home has received the least attention from policy makers and educators. It is where children spend the greatest amount of time (only 13% is spent in the classroom) and where children interact with the adults most interested in their success—their parents or guardians. The pair realized that a home computer packed with engaging educational software not only offered children an important tool for discovery and understanding, it also drew their parents into what they were learning. They joined forces and began CFY’s operations in 1999, with Mr. Dolgin serving as its board chair and Ms. Stock as its President.

Headquartered in New York, with offices in Philadelphia, Atlanta and the San Francisco Bay Area, CFY partners with public schools in high poverty areas to improve the educational resources available in children’s homes, enhance parent-child interaction around learning, and help teachers connect classroom learning with the home. CFY’s computer-based *home learning centers* are designed by software experts and tested by students and education executives from around the country. CFY’s Family Learning Workshops are designed to improve parents’ confidence in helping their children learn and increase student engagement in core academic subject areas.

CFY focuses on children in the sixth grade because research shows that this is when there is the steepest decline in academic achievement, and also when parents begin to feel less capable of helping with increasingly complex homework assignments. Up to 25 percent of the achievement differences between higher and lower performing students may be attributed to parental involvement. As such, during its required family training session, CFY has families review more than a dozen specially created Family Together Time activities (FATT). These are engaging mini-projects families can do on the computer to spend quality time together, have fun and improve children’s academic skills as well as parents’ confidence in helping children learn.

CFY’s research demonstrates impact in the following areas: academic achievement (as measured by test scores), student engagement (such as class effort) and parental involvement in children’s learning at home.

CFY is supported by donations of computer systems (30 at a time to equip an entire classroom of families at once), software, and funds from government, foundations, corporations and individuals. CFY hosts an annual fundraising event, the Tech Leadership Awards, which recognizes the best family learning software of the year, innovation in digital leadership, and social responsibility among IT executives. CFY is 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

## CFY PROGRAMS

CFY offers a number of programs that benefit students and parents:

- **Take IT Home** is the umbrella program that unites low income sixth graders and parents with a free computer-based *home learning center*, Internet access at a reduced rate and bilingual content at [MyHomeLearning.com](http://MyHomeLearning.com).
- **Family Learning Workshops** teach parents and children how to use their CFY computer to strengthen core academic skills. All participating families must attend a half-day Saturday workshop where they learn on the CFY computer they then take home.
- **Family Tech Nights** provide *Take IT Home* program participants with additional hands-on experience using computers. Held weekday evenings at the school and designed in collaboration with teachers to ensure they fit with school curriculum, these sessions focus on improving children's reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- **Research** serves to help us better understand the benefits that low-income families derive from our programs. CFY's research instruments include intake and follow-up surveys, focus group and interview protocols. CFY's research department develops and administers the instruments, analyzes the data collected using statistical methods, and publishes reports. CFY's research department is currently conducting a rigorous multi-year study with our research partner, ETS, to determine our program's impact on student academic achievement. CFY has published research findings in numerous papers and has presented them at conferences including the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference and the Consortium of School Networking (CoSN) conference.
- **Teacher Training and Professional Development** CFY trains teachers on how to incorporate technology into their instruction and create powerful links between in-school and at-home learning. For example, CFY has taught teachers how to create a biology class lesson using PowerPoint, and how to build a weblog about the Revolutionary War.
- **Student Software Team/Education Executives Day** Children from CFY's New York City partner schools meet on Saturday afternoons for six months to test software and identify applications to install on donated computers. Following specifications and metrics set by CFY's Research team, students are trained to evaluate software, participate in team-building activities, learn to make public presentations about the software and receive coaching from industry mentors. After training, they attend CFY's Education Executives Day, where they demonstrate and discuss the software with education executives from across the country.

*For more information about Computers for Youth please visit [www.cfy.org](http://www.cfy.org)*