



ACDS Celebrates 2013 Graduation with Two-Day Event *School Advances Its Largest Group of Students into Public Schools*

PLAINVIEW, JUNE 17, 2013 — ACDS is proudly awarding diplomas to 78 graduates throughout a two-day moving up ceremony held at its school in Plainview. The June 18th and June 19th event will celebrate and commemorate the school's largest graduating class to transition from ACDS into the public school system.

“The foundation has been set – now our children are ready to use their wings and fly into kindergarten,” said ACDS Principal, Cecilia Barry. “Our 2013 graduating class represents a diverse group of learners, including those with and without special needs, who reside in Nassau, Suffolk and Queens.”

“I am so honored and proud to be able to introduce this year's graduating class,” said Barry, who has been ACDS' principal for five years. ACDS students come from various cultures, different learning capacities and familial demographics.” ACDS' graduating class includes students with Down syndrome, autism, neuromuscular disorders, visual and/or hearing impairments, communication delays, and sensory processing dysfunction. Preschoolers without disabilities also attend the school's vibrant pre-kindergarten and daycare programs.

ACDS' school community is truly inclusive and is a place where children are recognized as children first and foremost. Teachers acknowledge each child's unique personality, temperament, and learning style.

“Emphasis is always placed on ability rather than disability, with each success recognized and celebrated,” Barry said.

Weeks of preparation have gone into this graduation ceremony. “The educational staff has worked hard in practicing with our children, encouraging them to be confident and enjoy the success of their special day,” Barry said. “For example, some of the children because of behavioral characteristics related to their diagnoses, initially were apprehensive participating in a large group or unsettled because of anxieties related to certain aspects of the graduation program. ACDS' behavioral consultants have worked closely with these children, using positive support, desensitization training, and repetitious experience and now to see their smiling faces, active enjoyment and determined engagement has brought tears of delight to all who know them.”

Among the many success stories that will take center stage this graduation include one little boy who is visually impaired. “During our practices, it has been just awesome

watching him independently walk across the stage to receive his diploma, orienting to the voice of his teacher, smiling and confident,” Barry said.

The support of ACDS’ families has not gone unappreciated. “We thank our parents for entrusting their children to us,” Barry noted. “Working collaboratively as a team has enabled each and every one of our graduates to obtain their full potential of ability and, most importantly, to leave here feeling confident, capable, secure and loved.”

Graduation is truly a bittersweet day, Barry explained. “We know our days of learning together are over but we are extremely happy to let our children soar within their families, new schools and home community. Our students leave us as an integral part of the ACDS family, each child adding a special dimension to this cherished community — Congratulations to all.”

ABOUT ACDS

ACDS, located in Plainview, New York is dedicated to providing lifetime resources of exceptional quality, innovation and inclusion for individuals with Down syndrome, autism and other developmental disabilities and their families. ACDS has been providing programs and services in and around Long Island since 1966. ACDS currently serves more than 900 children and adults, providing services that include Early Intervention and preschool special education programs, respite and recreation programs for children, teens and adults, adult Medicaid service coordination, day habilitation and eight supervised group homes in Nassau County.