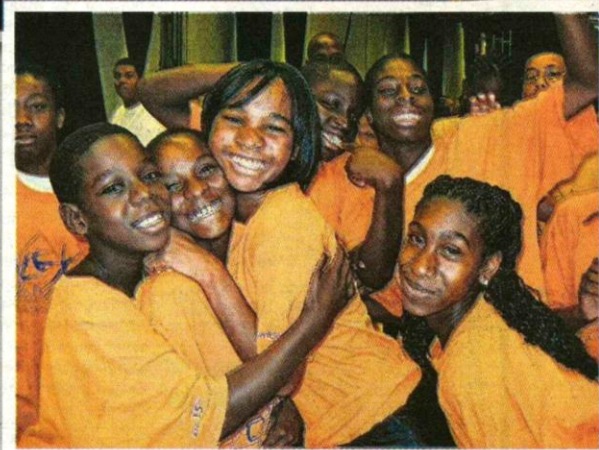
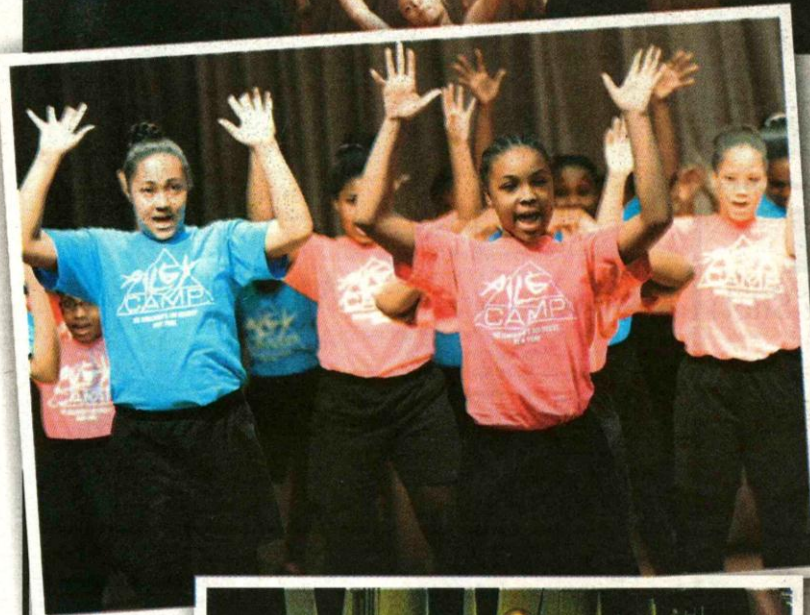
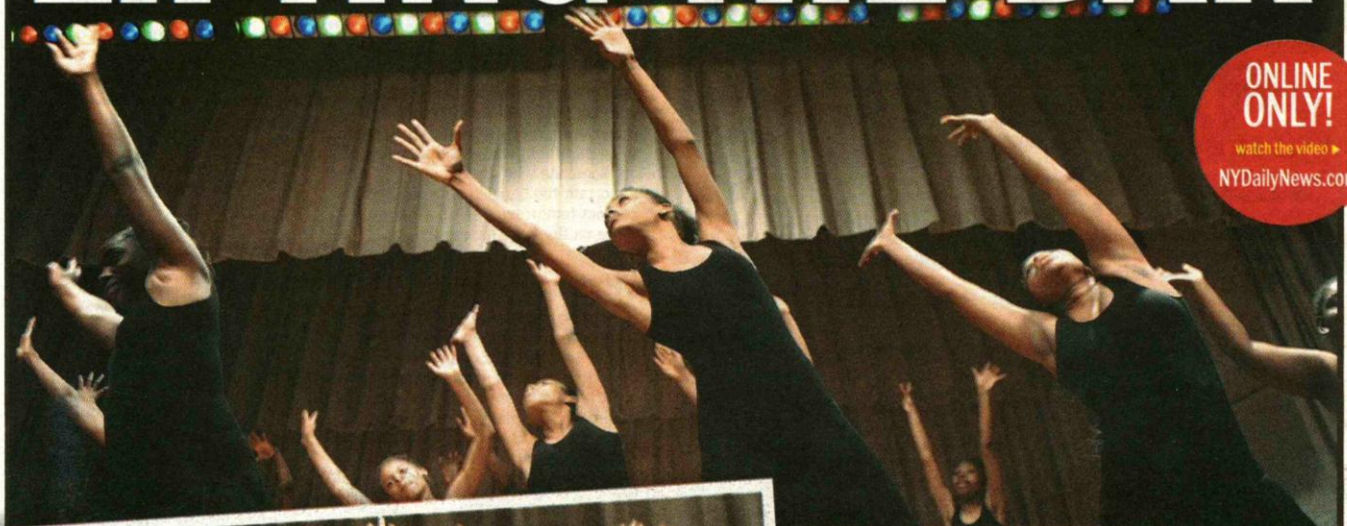


LIFTING THE BAR

ONLINE ONLY!
watch the video ▶
NYDailyNews.com



Students are in sync (top & above) during and in joyous mood (r.) following AileyCamp class at Intermediate School 90 on W. 168th St. in Washington Heights Tuesday. They're learning ballet, jazz, modern and West African dances. Photos by David Handschuh/Daily News

Ailey dancers teach city kids the moves

BY MICHAEL J. FEENEY
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

FOR SIX WEEKS this summer, more than 100 city kids will learn dance techniques in Washington Heights from some of the best trained dancers in the country.

AileyCamp, a program of the world-famous Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, kicked off last week, transforming IS 90 into a dancer's playground.

Jaleen Henderson, 12, of East Harlem, said she has been dancing since she was 3 and knows exactly what she wants to do.

"I want to be a contemporary dancer," said Henderson, who's in her second year at the free camp and describes herself as a "street dancer" who had little formal training before coming to AileyCamp.

"It's fun and educational," she told the Daily News. "Ailey-Camp is not like the other camps. I tell all my friends to come here."

The 112 campers — including 17 boys — are learning ballet as well as modern, jazz and West African dance through the program, which is taking place in 10 cities across the country this summer.

"High necks, long necks and smile a little bit," one instructor

called out during ballet class. In addition to executing dance moves, the campers have sessions in which they discuss everything from conflict resolution to nutrition.

During a visit to the camp on Tuesday, the boys played the drums, the girls displayed their *pas de bourrée* in ballet and showed off jazz and modern dance routines.

The campers also recited affirmations such as: "I will not use the word 'can't' to define my possibilities."

Jacqueline Martinez, 11, of Washington Heights, wasn't sure she'd be able to learn all of the dances. But she credited her instructors with making it easy.

"They teach you step by step," said Martinez, who started dancing when she was 8. "I like it because you get to follow your dreams."

Not everyone wants to be a dancer, of course; and that's okay, said Nasha Thomas-Schmitt, the national director of the camp.

"It's a program for inner-city kids who have not had access to the arts," she said of the camp, which partners with the Children's Aid Society.

"They can express themselves. They can be themselves. It's about building self-esteem." mfeeny@nydailynews.com