

# currenTs

The Official Newsletter of PS 8 37 Hicks Street Brooklyn, NY 11201 Volume 1, Issue 1

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THE MAGNET SCHOOL  
FOR EXPLORATION,  
RESEARCH AND DESIGN

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Dear Members of the PS 8 Community,

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope you were all able to have a joyful and restful week off.

It has been a pleasure to watch our community continue to grow this year. There have been so many "firsts" or "new beginnings." Here, I would like to introduce the premier issue of **Currents**, PS 8's newsletter, produced by school parents. *Currents* will be published twice this year and will cover topics that are of interest to the members of our school community.

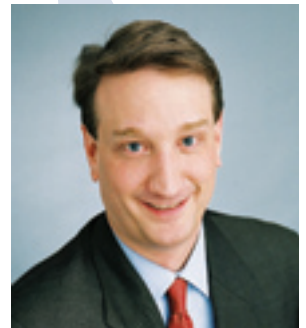
As you know, PS 8 has been made a magnet school, we have received a substantial grant, and "The Magnet School for Exploration, Research and Design" has been added to our already long name. You will find an article explaining the particulars of our new status in this issue.

Our Web site [www.ps8pta.org](http://www.ps8pta.org) is up and running strong. You will find the whole story on Mayor Bloomberg's visit to our school to roll out the new Crayola crayon line as well as details about the Halloween piece *Good Morning America* did at PS 8 along with some terrific photographs. There are excerpts of these stories in this issue of *Currents*. I encourage each of you to visit our Web site often. We will be using the site to keep you updated on news around the school and events that are important to you and your children.

This year's **Paddlewheeler** will be on March 5. We need volunteers for a wide variety of things—publicity, the Scholastic book fair, and more. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Christina Kretschmer at [vze34nqa@verizon.net](mailto:vze34nqa@verizon.net).

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Currents*. If you have comments, questions, or story ideas please contact our editor, Jane Pook, at 718 643 1625 or [jane@rsch.com](mailto:jane@rsch.com).

Sincerely,  
**Seth Phillips**, Principal



[www.ps8pta.org](http://www.ps8pta.org)



around  
school



For more info and updates on future events, visit our Web site at:

[www.ps8pta.org](http://www.ps8pta.org)

## PS 8 in CyBeRsp@Ce! Excerpts from our Web site...

### **With help from students, the mayor introduces new Crayola crayon set, giving a special welcome to New York's "Lady Liberty" green**

Fifty PS 8 students carrying giant crayons paraded into the school's auditorium on Tuesday, October 26, as part of a new product launch by Crayola, a pull-out-all-the-stops media event that culminated in an appearance by Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

To kick off the assembly, fourth-grader Kiana sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" accompanied by music teacher Pearla Martin on the piano. Then the 50 new "State Your Color" hues – one for each state in the U.S. – were introduced, from Arizona Grand Tanyon to Maryland's Francis Scott Kiwi, Virginia's Williamsburgundy to Sweet Georgia Peach. Crayola donated a box of the new crayons to every PS 8 student and to art teachers at all the city's public elementary schools.

To read more, go to our Web site: [www.ps8pta.org](http://www.ps8pta.org)

### **"What do you want to be for Halloween?" PS 8 students tape Good Morning America spot**

Fifteen PS 8 students spent nearly an hour on October 25 sharing their Halloween plans with a correspondent from *Good Morning America* for a segment that aired on Thursday, October 28. The kids, a diverse group representing grades one through five, knelt on the carpet in classroom 305 while a two-man camera crew filmed from all angles and held a boom mike over their heads.

Somewhat shy at first, most students raised their hands and waited patiently to be called upon before describing the costume they had in mind for Sunday trick-or-treating. At least two girls said they would be witches, one an angel, another a fortune-teller; surprisingly, only one of the seven boys present said he planned to dress up as Spider-Man.

To read more, go to our Web site: [www.ps8pta.org](http://www.ps8pta.org)

## Coming Attractions

Here's a quick look at what students at PS 8 will be studying in the months ahead. Details about specific projects and programs will be posted periodically on our Web site, [www.ps8pta.org](http://www.ps8pta.org).

**Pre-K:** Friendship; Gardening

**Kindergarten:** Fairy Tales; Weather and Climate

**First Grade:** Animal Skeletons; Magnets; Collage Art

**Second Grade:** Environments (Air, Land, Sea); History of NYC

**Third Grade:** Electricity; the Solar System; Japanese Culture

**Fourth Grade:** Circuits; Native American Culture and Traditions

**Fifth Grade:** Mixtures and Solutions; History of Dance

And in the spring, everybody will study butterflies in Ms. Hallen's science room!

## What's Happening After School?

The Brooklyn Central YMCA after school program at PS 8 has already accomplished many things. In addition to homework, chess, and having a rollicking good time, the kids (and their parents) donated over 150 pounds of canned food and bottled water for hurricane disaster relief for Grenada. Mike Dogan, Site Director of the Y's program, said, "The response really exceeded our expectations." The Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce will deliver the donations to Grenada. Dogan added: "We have also collected over 400 books to support a school in Grenada. I want to thank the PS 8 community for helping to make this project such a success. It will mean so much to so many people."

This spring, look for information about Running Partners, a running program created in collaboration with the New York Road Runners Foundation. The team will consist of third- through fifth-grade students; kindergarten through second grade will receive instruction, too. Also, our after school soccer team – associated with TASC (The After School Corporation) and Metro Soccer – will travel to away games.

# PS 8 AWARDED MAGNET GRANT

By **Victoria Olsen**, First-Grade Parent



This year, the U.S. Department of Education awarded PS 8 a grant of nearly one million dollars, to be paid out over the next three years, and a new identity: *The Magnet School for Exploration, Research, and Design*. The grant check was presented in a ceremony, attended by U.S. Representative Nydia Velazquez, on November 8, 2004. As a magnet school, PS 8 will begin accepting applications from new students living outside its neighborhood zone, but what does this money mean for the children who are already here? I recently sat down with Principal Seth Phillips and Instructional Specialist Olivia Ellis to find out.

Phillips explained that the grant allows the school to implement a school-wide enrichment program based

on the ideas and research of Dr. Joseph Renzulli. Our magnet school designation – Exploration, Research, and Design – corresponds with Renzulli's three stages of learning:

1. Students identify and EXPLORE their own interests and discover what they are passionate about.
2. They RESEARCH those interests through sustained immersion in the material.
3. They then DESIGN and complete a service or object for a real audience.

"Students will see a result and produce something tangible with their knowledge," Phillips pointed out.

Ellis expanded on the details. Beginning in January, third- through fifth-graders will be offered a menu of enrichment clusters, which are like clubs or mini-courses, ranging from knitting to photography to a school newspaper. William Maxcy, PS 8's Magnet Grant Specialist, surveyed students to determine their collective interests. Each student will choose three clusters and be assigned to one of them for 8–10 weeks, meeting every Friday from 1:30–3 pm. Each course will have 8–10 students of mixed ages and abilities, led by a teacher, staff member, or even a parent. First- and second-graders will have a similar program within their own grades. First-graders, for example, will spend that period working in "rooms" devoted to construction projects, game strategies, or crafts such as jewelry-making and pottery.

"The program makes learning fun for students, and allows us to tap into our teachers' personal talents, skills and expertise," said Ellis. She encourages parents who are interested in leading a cluster to contact her. The clusters are designed to be student-driven: "If the members of a Spanish club decide, for example, that they are

more interested in Spanish food than in language, they will go with food," said Phillips. After the first 8–10 week "term" of clusters students will move on to another.

While the enrichment clusters may be the most noticeable change in the curriculum this year, Phillips emphasized that the grant allows the school to integrate its enrichment program across the curriculum, through unit planning: "Part of the grant is earmarked for staff development, so we can recognize the teachers' hard work on new programs by paying them to design and revise materials." Ellis added: "We can bring in outside support from the Guggenheim Museum, the Brooklyn Center for Urban Education (BCUE), the Rotunda Gallery, Lincoln Center, the Mark Morris Dance Group, and Marquis Studios and we can pay for supplies, an art gallery, and a new sound system." BCUE is already working with first-graders on a unit on snails. Third-grade social studies will benefit from the Rotunda Gallery's help modeling the Brooklyn Bridge and Lincoln Center is coming to work with fifth-graders on the history of jazz and the blues.

Ellis continued to sketch future projects: a summer theater program, violin instruction after school, and weekend courses modeled on the Saturday Scholars program she developed at PS 321. Where Ellis is visionary, Phillips is practical: "If we roll out the clusters and make progress rethinking the curriculum that will be a lot for the first year." With money and energy flowing into the school, the dreams are already becoming reality.

## SCHOOL CALENDAR winter/spring 2005

<b>Jan 17</b>	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
<b>Feb 21–25</b>	Midwinter Recess
<b>Mar 15–16</b>	Parent/Teacher Conferences
<b>Mar 25</b>	Good Friday
<b>Apr 25–29</b>	Spring Recess
<b>May 4 &amp; 10–12</b>	Fourth-grade Evaluation Tests
<b>May 30</b>	Memorial Day
<b>Jun 9</b>	Anniversary Day
<b>Jun 28</b>	Last Day of School

# The **abc**s of Renzulli

The Renzulli school-wide enrichment model is based on the ideas and research of Dr. Joseph Renzulli, Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Connecticut and Director of the National Research Center for the Gifted and Talented there. Here are some useful terms.

**Community:** For Renzulli, giftedness emerges dynamically from within a community in response to challenges, new situations, and developing interests. It is not solely a matter of a bright student mastering specific material. Each school must create its own unique plan to maximize its students' talents.

**Creativity:** Renzulli defines this as original thinking, ingenuity, and flexibility in solving problems. He believes that creativity is a better predictor of future success than "schoolhouse giftedness" based on conventional test-taking. His model of giftedness values and encourages creativity in students.

**Enrichment Clusters:** These are periods when students in small, mixed-age groups are exposed to real-life problem solving where they can participate at their own individual levels.

**Giftedness:** Renzulli believes giftedness is not innate, but that people exhibit gifted behaviors in different circumstances. One goal of a school is to inculcate gifted behaviors.

**Learning:** For Renzulli, learning should be collaborative, fun, and uniquely adapted to the styles and abilities of each student. It should be based on real-world situations and address a real audience.

**Schoolhouse Giftedness:** This is Renzulli's term for the kind of intelligence that most traditional tests measure. He sometimes refers to it as "test-taking" or "lesson-learning" intelligence, but it is only one factor in his concept of giftedness.

**Task Commitment:** This is the energy a student brings to bear on a particular task or problem. Renzulli believes this is a key, and undervalued, element in identifying and encouraging gifted behaviors.

**Three-Ring Concept of Giftedness:** Renzulli argues that gifted behaviors come from the interaction of three elements: above-average abilities (often identified through "schoolhouse giftedness"), creativity, and task commitment.

## currents

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