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The Official Newsletter of PS 8 37 Hicks Street Brooklyn, NY 11201 Volume 1, Issue 2

Spring 2005

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Dear PS 8 Community,

In early June I attended the opening of the *A Year With Children* exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum. A smile spread across my face at the thought that after just two short years our fifth-graders' artwork was hanging in one of the most prestigious art museums in the world. And this is only the beginning.

While this year we have folded many arts enrichment programs into the mix, next year's focus is science. Each classroom will have its own science center stocked with materials including microscopes, electrical circuit units and a host of live creatures. The school will continue its partnership with the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment and will look for opportunities to partner with the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the American Museum of Natural History.

I would like to acknowledge the great success, both in terms of fund-raising and pure enjoyment, of this year's Paddlewheeler and the first opening in our art gallery on the third floor. I also want to thank all the parent volunteers who make a true difference in our community.

Have a wonderful, peaceful summer.

Sincerely,
Seth Phillips, Principal



The arts are in full swing at PS 8.

Above: Incredible student work on display in the new PS 8 art gallery. (See related article on page 2.)

Right: Ms. Saffady's first-grade class' amazing cityscape.



OUR MAGNET GRANT AT WORK

By **Suzanne Tokarsky**, First-Grade Parent

When the U.S. Department of Education awarded PS 8 a magnet grant last summer, the school suddenly had money to fund quality enrichment programs for our children. This feature begins a series of in-depth looks at the programs the magnet grant has brought to our school.

The Guggenheim Museum's Learning Through Art (LTA) program is a unique arts program that supports the fourth- and fifth-grade social studies curriculum. PS 8 parent Suzanne Tokarsky sat down with Jenny Bevill, the Guggenheim's resident artist for PS 8, to find out more about how the program works.

Q. What is your background?

I have a BFA in Illustration from Parsons School of Design, an MA in Art Education from Teachers College and I've taught art in the NYC public schools for the past 12 years. From 1996–2001 I taught at PS 8 through an Annenberg grant from the Center for Arts Education. I actually taught our current fifth-graders when they were in kindergarten!

Q. How does the program support the social studies curriculum?

We are focusing on immigration, and more specifically journeys and cultural identity. The fourth- and fifth-graders are doing two 10-week projects. The first was a 3-D project in which each student designed his or her own headdress. We used memories, cultural artifacts, special people, feelings, wishes, and aspirations to get our ideas.

For the second project, the fourth-graders will create large-scale non-traditional group maps, which will incorporate drawing, collage and painting to show different kinds of journeys we take during our lives, both literal and figurative. The fifth-graders will create painted and collaged suitcases, which will contain items they would bring with them on an imaginary journey out of Brooklyn to someplace real or imaginary.

Q. What are the benefits of the program?

It's now commonly accepted that students have different styles of learning. The LTA program is good at opening doors for kids who learn visually and kinesthetically. We offer hands-on engagement, which is beneficial for kids who have trouble staying focused while sitting still and listening. Our most active students are most engaged with paint or papier-mâché, which are very messy media and require a lot of concentration to master. I can't count the number of times teachers have said to me that students who never spoke up in class become motormouths when discussing art. I think art benefits all kids but especially reaches kids who are not always able to shine through other modes of teaching and learning.

Q. How do you work with kids (and teachers) who are convinced they're not good at art?

I start small and let their successes sneak up on them. We do a lot of work in bits and pieces and we play drawing games where it's hard for them to tell if they're good or not. We do group and partner work so that the piece isn't just about one person's success or failure. Abstract work is a favorite of mine because it's harder for the kids to say what's good and what isn't. And we share and reflect constantly. I stop them and hold up examples of good work maybe four or five times a class and I try to be sure the kids who are struggling get this positive reinforcement.

Q. What is the greatest challenge you have teaching art?

There are lots of challenges in terms of money, space and time. I struggle most with helping kids learn how to get ideas that are not influenced or overshadowed by animated movies and TV shows. Learning how to get an idea, deciding if it's worth exploring, developing it, then evaluating it and sharing the idea with others is the essence of art. If you can't get Sponge Bob or Cinderella out of your mind there's no room for your own ideas to emerge. It's a challenge to explain to kids why I don't want them to draw their beloved characters. They get very insulted.

Congratulations! The fifth-graders' masks were on display at the Guggenheim during June.

To read more, go to our Web site: www.ps8pta.org

GALLERY OPENING

By **Melissa Milgrom**, First-Grade Parent

In May, PS 8, along with Rotunda Gallery, held its first opening to raise funds for a permanent exhibition space adjacent to the school. Mingling while they read wall text were more than 50 guests, including Leslie Schultz and Meredith McNeal of Rotunda, Liz Koch (Arts Advisor to Borough President Marty Markowitz), David Marquis, Justine Stokes, and Judy Stanton of the Brooklyn Heights Association.

"I love the Cinderella shoes, the socks made into puppets, and the ceremonial headdresses. It's all the art you can wear and it's full of personality," enthused illustrator Paul O. Zelinsky as he scanned student work done with Rotunda Gallery, Marquis Studios, and the Guggenheim Museum, respectively. At one point, Olivia Ellis introduced Miyako Yoshinaga, director of M.Y. Art gallery in Chelsea and Chizuko T. Korn. The women recently donated one of Taro Chiezo's mythical landscapes to PS 8. After the opening, Lizanne Fontaine hosted a cocktail reception at her home.

Tax-deductible donations for PS 8's new art gallery can be made to:

Rotunda Gallery, 33 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Below: Guests mingle at the PS 8 art gallery opening. The temporary gallery space is located on the third floor.



Diane Nathaniel Has Got Your Back!

By Jane Pook, First-Grade Parent



You may not know it, but PS 8 parent Diane Nathaniel has been looking out for you. As our elected representative to the new Community Education Council of District 13, she gives voice and presence to our opinions children's education.

In July 2004 Community School Boards were replaced by 32 Community Education Councils (CECs). The CECs serve as a liaison between parents and the NYC Department of Education (DOE). They assess the needs of schools in their district then advocate on behalf of their schools to the DOE and, on occasion, create needed programs. For example, the CEC will be running a full-day grant-writing workshop so that all schools will have the opportunity to take advantage of funding that is available from various sources.

A paralegal for the NYC Department of Design and Construction, Diane and her husband George live in Bedford Stuyvesant. They have two daughters at PS 8, Jazmyn, a fifth-grader, and Jaelyn, a second-grader, along with two-year old Joshua. Diane has always been active at PS 8 and viewed participation in the CEC as a natural next step. She notes "In many ways, PS 8 is a model for other schools in our district of what can be achieved with a committed parent body and school leadership." Diane says that the most important thing for parents to know is "we do have a voice – the CEC is here to make the voices of the parents and the needs of the students known to the DOE."

If you have further questions about the CECs, go to www.nycenet.edu/councils or call the district's office at 718 636 3212 or CEC@district13.org.

Free Summer Camp at PS 8

From July 5–August 5, PS 8 will offer a **free** summer camp with Marquis Studios at the school from 8:30–11:30 am, Monday through Thursday. The camp will feature sports clinics run by our favorite Spanish teacher, Mr. "G," and arts and crafts led by none other than Mr. "B." Sign up in the Parent Room.

Arrangements can be made to extend the day at the newly opened Dodge YMCA.

How Can You Help at PS 8?

Ah, let us count the ways! We are always in need of generous donations of time, materials, expertise, etc., etc. Here are just a few ways you can help:

- Donate a new high-quality hardcover book to the library
- Teach a Friday afternoon enrichment cluster
- Help publish our poetry magazine
- Assist Ms. Kravitz with the calendar murals in September
- Ask PS 8 alumni to be in touch with the school
- Contribute to *Currents*, the PS 8 newsletter
- Join a committee, volunteer in the library, attend PTA meetings
- Forge school relationships with museums and universities
- GET INVOLVED!



Farewell to PS 8 Science Teacher Deborah Hallen

Ms. Hallen is retiring after 18 years of dedicated service to the PS 8 community. We love you and we'll miss you!

PS 8's UNSUNG HEROES

They're not classroom teachers but they keep our school running ship-shape, protect our children, feed them, engage them in afterschool activities, supervise them during lunch and act as librarians. They are PS 8's staff, afterschool counselors and parent volunteers. We thank each and every one of you on behalf of the parents and children of our school.

Secretaries

Deborah Priestler
Shawn Powell

Safety Agents

Cynthia Dyke
Sandra Neal

School Aides

Tracey Briggman
Lucy Duque
Ascucion Seda
Annie Tatum

Cafeteria Staff

Theresa Robinson
Louise Crite
Joseph Francois

Nurse

Desiree James

Maintenance

Anthony Snyder
Louis Otero
Francisco Jimenez
Jean Merisier

Crossing Guards

Sonia Torres
Katherina Thomas

Virtual Y Afterschool Counselors

Mike Dogan
Judy Samuels
Bill Maxcy
Pat Douglas
LaShanda Harris
Tanya Louis
Adriana Martinez

Jennifer Kabacinski
Elizabeth Lewis-John
Frank Wilbeck
Lucy Halas

Sheldon Andrews
Heather Kabacinski
Wayne Brown
Melissa Brassfield-Ayers
Marva Flash
Monique Jerry
Michelle Derosier
Dionne Marville
Akil Johnson-Daley

Adesuwa Osagie
Chris Williams
Chesley Ollivierre
Jon Garber
Hugh Augustine

And all parents who volunteered throughout the year!

Paddlewheeler Becomes a Heights Tradition

By **Nathan Ward**, First-Grade Parent



This year's Paddlewheeler Festival on April 2nd not only lived up to last year's debut but kicked it up a notch. Last year's festival was our maiden voyage; a chance for the curious to scope out the school and have a good time. This year, with the cafeteria again festooned with dangling sea creatures, and the auditorium decked with long-tailed mermaids and stubbly pirates, the festival earned its place as an ongoing Heights tradition like the Pierrepont Playground Easter Egg hunt or the Cranberry Street Festival.

The daylong drizzle did not prevent some 130 volunteers from devoting much of their Saturday to the school, filling over 200 job slots. "I thought it was a fantastic community day," said parent-volunteer Laura Mardiks, noting that at this year's book fair, "of the \$5,000 sold in books, \$1,100 was in wish list books that are already in the teachers' classrooms. From the profits from the book fair, the classroom teachers will receive \$100 vouchers to purchase more books! I call that a successful day." From the whole festival, after expenses, PS 8's PTA earned \$12,000 for enrichment programs and supplies – and our community gained a vibrant new tradition.

To read more, go to our Web site: www.ps8pta.org



currents

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