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The Official Newsletter of PS 8 37 Hicks Street Brooklyn, NY 11201 Volume 4, Issue 1

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P.S. 8 recently celebrated the centennial of its school building and past students were on hand for the festivities.

DEAR P.S. 8 COMMUNITY,

This year has brought many changes to our school. We are filled beyond capacity, we are in our first year post magnet grant, the city recently announced budget cuts that affect all schools, and our wonderful school is hitting its stride.

When we were awarded the magnet grant we knew it would be paid out over three years and I budgeted that money carefully, setting aside funds for the future and for a rainy day. We are seeing the rainy day with the city's cuts to schools and we are prepared. We will have to see what next year brings. Another reason we are doing well is because of the tremendous amount of fundraising that happens thanks to our dedicated parents.

Funding issues aside, we are in the position of settling in for the long haul. Over the past four years, we have added programming that has made P.S. 8 a most sought after school. We have been able to see what works for our school and what does not. We have been working to make our school model a sustainable one and we are on our way. Our children are engaged and flourishing and I believe that will only get better as time goes on.

I am grateful for each and every member of our school community and the support that each of you provides – our wonderful teachers, school staff, the P.S. 8 families and, of course, the students themselves.

Sincerely,
Seth Phillips, Principal



ENRICHMENT at P.S. 8

By Amy Shire, Pre-K Parent and Georgie Stout, Kindergarten Parent

There are many ways that students get an enriching experience at P.S. 8. Students have ready access to a variety of powerful educational experiences which provide tools for a life of discovery and exploration. The regular curriculum is replete with art, music, drama and dance, with permanent specialized faculty in each of these areas who complement the school's standard curriculum through their activities.

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P.S. 8 also offers “enrichment programs” which augment the curriculum. These programs afford students the opportunity to enhance in equal measure their artistic skills and more general skills in focusing and self-discipline, creative thinking and problem-solving, group work, and just plain appreciation of the arts! There are several kinds of enrichment programs at P.S. 8: Residency Programs, Enrichment Clusters, and the Navigators Program.

Residency Programs: Enrichment with Visiting Artists

This is a highlight of life at P.S. 8 for all students, from Pre-K through fifth grade. Artists from a wide range of disciplines bring their expertise to P.S. 8, exposing children to a variety of art forms and expanding their perspectives. The visiting programs, which are “in residence” anywhere from 8-20 weeks, tailor their projects based on grade level and themes being studied in the classroom. The residency programs include: The Guggenheim Museum, Rotunda Gallery, Studio in a School, Marquis Studios, Bargemusic, Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, Chess for Children, and Mark Morris Dance Group. Activities range from creating complex cityscape murals, choreographing dance, imagining and building the Brooklyn landscape of 400 years ago, and quilt-making, to instrument-building, bookmaking, and learning how to play chess. Pre-K students have exposure to these visiting artists, through a program called “Great Masters,” which highlights influential artists as a way of teaching different visual techniques.

Bargemusic and Chess for Children are currently funded by the PTA. The other programs are financed through the Magnet Grant, which expired at the end of the 2006-07 school year. Thanks to careful budgeting, some of the magnet funds have been used to pay for this year’s programs. Next year all of the programs will need to be PTA-funded.



Enrichment Clusters: Collaborations with P.S. 8 Teachers

Essentially “mini-courses” of eight weeks each, clusters are student and teacher-initiated and taught in the classroom by the teachers. The clusters reinforce the school’s thematic approach to learning: exploration, research and design, and, in line with the Renzulli method, to find and encourage each child’s individual gifts. Students express interest in certain kinds of activities – for example, knitting, pirates or cartooning – and each classroom teacher determines three options for students to choose from, empowering them to make their own creative choices, and learn about areas often not available to them in a standard curriculum.

Navigators: Enrichment After School

Similar to the clusters programs, they are developed from within the school. Navigators are taught either by teachers or well-qualified parent volunteers and run for a ten-week period in the spring featuring a wide range of activities. In past years these have included drumming, origami, cooking, yoga, Chinese and Italian.

Below left: A classical music concert in the auditorium, part of the P.S. 8 Bargemusic program. **Below:** Students enjoying painting with resident artists from Rotunda Gallery.



Life After the Magnet Grant

By Wendy Azzouni, Kindergarten Parent

When P.S. 8 was awarded a federal magnet grant of nearly one million dollars in 2004 it was the beginning of a major turnaround for the school. The school population has more than doubled in the last four years and the grant allowed the school to bring innovative programs to our children.

P.S. 8 was also given a new identity to reflect its magnet school status: The Magnet School for Exploration, Research, and Design. It has become a place where out-of-zone parents clamor to get their children into a few spots. This is a far cry from where the school was just five years ago when it was only half full and the Department of Education was considering closing it down.

The grant was paid out over three years and the end of the 2006-07 school year marked the end of the grant payments. This has many parents wondering what will happen to the programs that were funded by the grant. According to Principal Seth Phillips, through careful budgeting there was money left that is currently being used for some enrichment programs, as well as continuing education on the Renzulli model of enrichment for teachers at the University of Connecticut.

The grant also funded the purchase of equipment, like the public address system in the auditorium, and supplies, such as robotics and science kits. The supplies and equipment will remain but going forward the PTA will have to fund the enrichment programs.

"The plan always was to have the PTA pay for the enrichment programs," said Phillips. Before the grant, the PTA raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year. The PTA expects to raise \$150,000 this year.

The grant helped create residencies for programs such as Marquis Studios, the Rotunda Gallery, and the Guggenheim Museum. The latter two programs feature our students' work in their museums. The studio programs are among those that the PTA has chosen to help pay for this year, according to Assistant Principal Bob Mikos. "The PTA enrichment committee looked at all of the programs and decided what worked, and now they are helping to keep those programs in the school," he said.

"The government wanted to see the school form a strong PTA, bring in children and parents, and see the test scores improve," said Bill Maxcy, who left the classroom for three years to function as P.S. 8's Magnet Grant Specialist and now teaches physical education. "They wanted to see diversity as well, and P.S. 8 is now very diverse. Those things have happened."

"Our magnet designation of exploration, research, and design is reflected in the way teachers approach subjects and what children in all grades do in the classroom every day," Maxcy said. For instance, the third-graders are learning tap dance and some Native American dance to enrich their social studies curriculum. He continued, "The grant is still in action, and will be for a long time, because it was used to train teachers, to build a knowledge base from which teachers can learn."

The most outstanding result of the grant, according to Phillips, is the joy our children exhibit while at school. "What kids love and what they are good at translates to a love of school," he said.

P.S. 8 will continue to be a magnet school, according to Phillips. "Although the lengthy magnet name may fade into the background in favor of the simple Robert Fulton School name, the ideals behind it will remain," Phillips said. "We are committed to this."

Raising FUNDS

By Todd Glass, Kindergarten Parent

The enrichment programs at P.S. 8 are an important part of our children's' education. These programs allow the school to enhance the core curriculum and demonstrate the value of a good education beyond report cards and standardized testing.

These programs are not free and, the money we receive from the city falls considerably short of what we need to pay for them. Initially, funding came from the magnet grant that P.S. 8 received in 2004, but that grant expired at the end of the 2006-07 school year. PS 8's PTA has stepped in to raise the funds needed to continue our enrichment programs. Thanks to last year's fundraising efforts, we were able to hire four new teaching assistants and keep our enrichment programs intact.

We need to raise \$150,000 in order to continue our enrichment programs and retain our teaching assistants next year. In a truly impressive display of school spirit, our children read for over 250,000 minutes during the fall Read-a-thon and raised close to \$30,000. It's a great start, but we still have a long way to go. Our goal is to have a contribution from every P.S. 8 family. To that end, we have planned a number of fundraising activities so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way.

The P.S. 8 Spring Auction Our major fundraising event allows our entire neighborhood community to show their support for P.S. 8 either by donating goods and services for the auction or by purchasing a ticket and bidding.

Loose Change Week This is a great way to show that every penny really does count. Start saving your loose change! Keep an eye out at drop-off and pick-up for our change collection table.

Box Tops Turn over that box of cereal at breakfast, or the box of tissue next time you have a cold, and cut out the special Box Top seal. Each seal is worth 10 cents to P.S. 8.

Restaurant Week During P.S. 8 Restaurant Week restaurants will contribute a portion of the proceeds from your meal to our school when you mention that you're from P.S. 8. So order dessert to support your child's education.

Support P.S. 8 While You Shop Support P.S. 8 when you shop on-line at sallyfoster.com or giveline.com. Select P.S. 8 as your designated recipient and, depending on what you buy, our school will receive anywhere from 10 to 50 percent of the purchase price.

General Appeal The easiest and most effective way to contribute to P.S. 8 is through a direct donation of cash, check or money order. All donations are tax deductible you can double your contribution if your workplace has a charitable matching giving program.

Mail your contribution to the PTA of P.S. 8 at 37 Hicks Street, Brooklyn New York, 11201. You can now also use your credit card at our Web site, www.ps8pta.org. Checks and money orders should be made out to the PTA of P.S. 8.

Remember:

Use www.goodsearch.com or www.searchandgive.com as your search engine. When you designate P.S. 8 as your charity of choice, we earn a little money every time you surf the Web!

Sentimental Journey

...to the **Present**

On September 29th, the Alumni Committee had the pleasure of hosting the Centennial Celebration of the P.S. 8 school building. As both an alumnus and a current P.S. 8 parent, I enjoyed the dual satisfaction of welcoming back old friends and neighbors as well as showcasing the wonderful improvements and enhancements that the school has undergone over the last few years.



There was a marvelous complement of alumni, with the oldest having attended in the 1940s, as well as former teachers and administrators, including Principal Roberta Bader. The years melted away as they swapped stories about their favorite teachers and remembered the classrooms in which they attended each particular grade and discussed who had what teacher for kindergarten. The hit of the tour had to have been the auditorium, where everyone was able to relive exactly which school production they were in or what instrument they learned from Mr. Hoffmann in preparation for the Spring recital. Another big memory prompter was the basement cafeteria, where so many rainy-day luncheons had been spent and so many friendships forged.

The follow-up reception that was held at Plymouth Church provided an additional opportunity for old classmates to catch up with each other and plumb their memories, while sipping and supping on an array of wines and foods that were graciously supplied by Blanc & Rouge and ICI restaurant. It also proved to be a perfect setting for Principal Seth Phillips to present our departing Parent Coordinator, Precious Jones-Walker, with a plaque of appreciation for her years of dedicated service on behalf of the students and families of P.S. 8 and to honor her for all her contributions in making the school the exciting and vibrant asset to the neighborhood that it is today.

All in all, it was a day marked by camaraderie and renewed friendships and a word of thanks is owed to all those who helped make it possible. The Committee members are endeavoring to spread these feelings as wide as possible and invite you to join our growing group. If you are an alumnus or the parent of one and would like to hear of future Committee events, please contact us at ps8alumni@gmail.com or write to the Alumni Committee c/o Robert Fulton School, 37 Hicks Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201.

Philip Wilentz

Alumni Committee Chair and First-Grade Parent

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