



**37 Hicks Street Brooklyn, NY 11201** Tel 718 834 6740 Fax 718 834 7690

**Seth Phillips, *Principal***

**Bob Mikos, *Assistant Principal***

November 8, 2007

Dear Parent/ Guardians,

As many of you have been made aware the NYC Department of Education has just released their Progress Report Grades. As I intimated at the last PTA meeting that we received a mediocre grade and that was a “C.” Yes, I am disappointed. It is my professional and personal opinion that this grade does not reflect our school and the work that we do. In the following paragraphs I would like to share some of my thoughts on our grade and the methodology behind it.

It would be easy for me to point out how flawed the system currently is where schools that are slated to be closed are receiving grades of “A” and some of the most popular schools in New York City received “C”s and “D”s. I could also remind you that many of our families have chosen to come to PS 8 in lieu of their zoned schools which received higher grades. Instead I want to focus on the positive. Our test scores and population have doubled in the past four years. We have been designated one of New York City’s best elementary schools by Clara Hemphill, the founder of Inside Schools. Last year the Mayor and the Chancellor stood on our steps and sung the school’s praises. This grade will give us food for thought, but it will not change the way we move forward into the future or alter our core values. Many schools will be tempted to do more test preparation. I know that several of the “A” schools start test preparation the first week of school. We will not do this at PS 8. Test preparation will raise standardized test scores but it is not education. Some other schools would eliminate all enrichment activities. We will not do this either. Our enrichment programs are not enrichment, they are essentials. Schools should not be places where children work to get good test scores for their schools. It is the schools responsibility to service the students. Schools should be places where children discover the possibilities of their lives.

Although flawed, the thinking behind these report cards is not without merit. In the past schools were looked at only by their overall test scores without regard to the work needed to accomplish those scores. It is much harder to get students who enter schools only speaking another language to score well on tests than it is to teach a child who comes from an English speaking, literate family. Schools such as Public School 94 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, where I was an assistant principal, are finally being rewarded for their thoughtful and hard work. However, it is also statistically easier to move students or schools whose scores are low, than those who scores start at a high level. Last year we had five students who scored perfect scores in third grade. Unless those five students score a perfect score again this year, they will not be considered achieving a year's growth. I do believe that there is still much work to do at PS 8. The Progress Report both confirms some areas we are already working on and has made us aware of other areas that we need to address. The data that the DOE has given us access to will help us in goal to improve our practice to better meet the needs of all of our students. We are not a school that has ever rested on our laurels and we will not start now.

I believe that you are a savvy group of parents who did not send your children to this school without seeing the educational environment that we provide. These environments are even better now. If you need to be reassured, I suggest you contact your child's teacher to set up an appointment to observe the classroom during Open School week Tuesday, November 13 through Friday, November 16, 2007. You are always welcome to come to any of our Open Houses. The first one will be on Tuesday December 4, 2007. I have also set up a meeting on Tuesday November 13, at 8:00 am to answer any of your questions about this issue.

Sincerely,

Seth Phillips, Principal