

JUNE 2016

PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

Latest News for Parents from the NYC Department of Education



Summer is here; time to #CELEBRATE16

#CELEBRATE16

Student's name: Camilo Noesi
Age: 18
School attends: City as School
College: Queensborough Community College



How did you achieve your goal of attending college?

"When I got to City as School I didn't know if I wanted to go college. My counselor Ummi Modeste helped me. We talked about it a lot and she convinced me. I took trips to colleges, like 10 colleges in three days. I did a lot of research, trying to figure out if which college I should choose, and if what they had to offer was good for me."

Who at the school would you like to thank for helping you achieve your goal of attending colleges?

"Ummy was always on me about it. She just kept asking me what I wanted to do. My dad is always telling me he wants me to go to college. He doesn't want me working 75 hours a week like he does. My mom came with me to school and helped me choose my college. I'm going to study liberal arts, but I'm interested in culinary arts, criminal justice, and athletic training. I'm thinking about becoming a police officer or a chef. I'll be the first person in my family to go to college."

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June 28.

Over the last several months, New York City students, teachers, and parents alike have had this date circled on their calendars. For many, June 28 marks the end of the 2015–16 school year and the promising start of a joyous and adventure-filled summer season. To others, this date represents one of the last times they will be able

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students have been able to jumpstart their education;

- ▶ Launched 130 [Community Schools](#) across all five boroughs;
- ▶ Expanded language access services for parents across all five boroughs. Now, Field Language Access Coordinators will work with schools to ensure that parents who do not speak English are given access to translation and interpretation services;



- ▶ Created the [School Renewal Program](#) to improve struggling schools and convert them into Community Schools;
- ▶ Expanded the number of afterschool programs and enrichment activities available in our schools and cultural institutions throughout the City, and;
- ▶ Set a bold new vision for City schools with the Mayor's [Equity and Excellence](#) plan.

to see their friends and favorite teachers before they embark upon new challenges in college that will forever change their lives.

This past year has also brought significant achievements throughout City schools. For the first time, the four-year graduation rate has risen above 70 percent, and rates improved across the board for all ethnicities. At the same time, the dropout rates for all ethnic groups have decreased as well. Also, the number of NYC students participating in AP courses and sitting for the SAT increased over the last year, and NYC public school students continue to make steady gains on State test results.

The DOE has also continued to strengthen the bonds between our school communities, our students, and parents like you. Since 2014, we have:

- ▶ Implemented [Pre-K for All](#); since introducing universal pre-k to NYC in 2014, almost 150,000

To celebrate the end of the 2015–16 school year, the DOE has been asking parents, family members, educators, students, and others to commemorate their achievements and school experiences by posting photos, videos, and other memories using the **#Celebrate16** tag on Facebook and Twitter. Likewise, the DOE is using **#Celebrate16** to honor of some of our most inspiring and successful high school seniors who will be heading for college this fall.

Whether your children are graduating from City schools, moving up another grade, or boosting their educational development this summer, enjoy the end of the school year, and have a safe and glorious summer season.

NYC Disability Pride

Join the NYC Department of Education as we celebrate Disability Pride during the NYC Disability Pride Parade on Sunday, July 10. March alongside the DOE to promote the inclusion, awareness, and visibility

of people with disabilities, and celebrate the 26th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act!

For more information, including registration details, visit: schools.nyc.gov/Academics/SpecialEducation/Disability+Pride+NYC.

Parent to Parent with Yolanda Torres

Executive Superintendent of the Division of Family and Community Engagement

Dear Parents:

Now that this school year is quickly drawing to a close, let us take the time to look back at all of the successes we have to celebrate. As parents and caregivers, you are a guiding force in your children's education, and it is you who deserve the most applause thanks to your commitment and hard work in ensuring your children's success.



The other key contributors to your children's academic and social-emotional progress, day-in and day-out, are teachers, guidance counselors, and other support staff members. Together, they work to ensure that students stay on track and have a safe person to go to when they need extra help to meet the challenges they face.

Of course, it is our children who are raising the bar on student achievement. Let us give them time to relax and celebrate their accomplishments, but then, let's get them re-energized. We know as adults that the end of the school year (and even graduation) does not mark the end of learning. Learning is a lifelong pursuit; our fast-paced world never stops growing, and neither should our young people. Help them to make the most of this summer by encouraging them to keep reading and improving their minds. A terrific way to motivate your child is to suggest that they buddy-up with a younger student. Your child can set an example for the younger peer and guide him/her to follow in your child's footsteps. Teaching is often the best way to learn, and focusing on someone else's needs often builds self-esteem.

Another important way you can help your children is by talking with them about next steps. What opportunities can they take advantage of this summer to help them prepare for their next year in school, or their entry into the world at large?

Please enjoy this moment. It is precious.

Let's keep the conversation going, and on behalf of everyone at the Division of Family and Community Engagement, I wish you all a wonderful summer.

Best,

Yolanda Torres

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DOE Hosts First-Ever LGBTQ PRIDE! Celebration

This June, in recognition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) Pride Month, the DOE hosted its first-ever Pride Celebration. The event, which was held at the DOE's headquarters at the Tweed Courthouse in downtown Manhattan, drew about 200 students, family members, and DOE personnel for a night of speeches, music, and awards in honor of DOE students and staff members who have made outstanding contributions to the LGBTQ community.

During a speech she gave at the event, Chancellor Fariña remarked, "From starting student clubs to hosting parent workshops, I'm incredibly proud of the students, staff, and families across the City who are coming together to support and celebrate the LGBTQ community." Specifically addressing the staff members in the audience, she continued, "We each play a key role in providing students with the support they need to feel safe and included."

Among those honored included LGBTQ advocate and former DOE employee, Connie Cuttle, whose work at the DOE led to the development of the DOE's [Respect for All](#) initiative, as well as City Council Member Daniel Dromm for his leadership as Chair of the City Council's Education Committee. The DOE also honored the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) club at the Academy for Young Writers in Brooklyn for winning



LaGuardia High School students Christina Han, Mymoena Davids, and Matthew Crisson.



City Council Member Daniel Dromm and Chancellor Carmen Fariña.

the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) national GSA of the Year Award. Thanks to the GSA's work, the Academy for Young Writers created gender-neutral bathrooms, organized a Pride Month celebration, implemented an anti-bullying initiative, and worked with DOE offices to help create the [Chancellor's Guidelines on Transgender Students](#).

For many, the purpose of the event was beautifully summed up by Grace Zagoria, a fifth grade student at the Earth School in Manhattan who closed the event with a speech. "It all starts in the beginning, from the time where a person is born. To the dismay of many, a LGBTQ person is born a LGBTQ person. You don't get to choose it, like you don't get to choose your parents, or your skin color. It is something that comes to you, and unfortunately, this uniqueness, some people hate. And from this hate comes braveness, from people coming out, saying, and facing whoever it is and showing them that they are proud to be a LGBTQ person."

This celebration was part of a series of events hosted by the DOE in support of LGBTQ Pride Month. For more information about the DOE's month-long celebration, visit our [Pride website](#).



Teacher and GSA Advisor Devon Shanley, of the Brooklyn School for Collaborative Studies (BCS), M.S. 88 Teacher Don Curran, and teachers Maggie Chesnut and Taylor Block, also of BCS.

Congratulations to This Year's Big Apple Award Honorees



After thousands of nominations, hundreds of interviews, and hours of internal debates, the DOE announced this week the recipients of this year's fourth annual [Big Apple Awards](#)!

The Big Apple Awards (November 2015's Public School Press) is a recognition program that celebrates City teachers who inspire their students, demonstrate exceptional success in improving student learning, enrich their school communities, and serve as great model teachers for other educators throughout the City. This year, the DOE chose to surprise each of the 17 teachers in person; Chancellor Carmen Fariña, Senior Deputy Chancellor Dorita Gibson, and Deputy Chancellor Phil Weinberg each surprised the award recipients in their classrooms and offices with celebratory balloons and banners.

"It was as emotional for us as it was for the teachers," said Chancellor Fariña following the school visits. "The most joyful part of the classroom visits was

hearing from the students just how special they think their teachers are. All of the students—from pre-kindergartners to those who are overaged and incarcerated—said they appreciated that their teachers cared about them, saw them as individuals, held them to high standards, and supported their academic achievement."



Collectively, the 17 teachers work in elementary, middle, high, and adult education schools across all five boroughs, teach general education, special education, and dual language classrooms, and instruct students in math, social studies, English language arts, and science. Several awardees were career changers who took pay cuts to go into the teaching profession, and all are involved in some form of mentoring or teacher leadership in their schools and/or districts.

To learn more about 2016's Big Apple Award recipients, visit the DOE's [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

BOOK of the Month

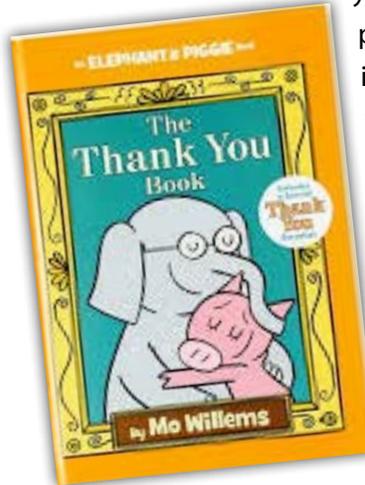
The Thank You Book

By Mo Willems

Hyperion Books for Children, 2016

In **The Thank You Book**, Piggie decides she is one lucky pig and sets out to thank everyone who is important to her. "Everyone?" asks best friend, Gerald the Elephant. "No way! You will forget someone." Undeterred, Piggie embarks on a "thank-o-rama." She thanks Squirrels for their great ideas, Snake for playing ball, and Pigeon for never giving up. She also thanks Mouse, Birdies, Rhino, Hippo's Big Sister, Barky Dog, Pelican, and others for being great friends. Still, Gerald is concerned that Piggie has forgotten someone, and she actually almost does. In a sweet twist at the end, we are reminded that we wouldn't be who we are without the wonderful people who grace our lives.

This book is the final installment in Mo Willems' popular Elephant and Piggie series. Whether you are longtime Elephant and Piggie fans or are reading this as a standalone book, this simple story will touch your heart.



This book was selected as June's Book of the Month because the end of the school year is the perfect time to thank the people who have made a difference in our lives. "Thank you" is something we don't say often enough. We assume that our colleagues, friends, and family members know how much we appreciate them, and too often, don't think to tell them. But as this book illustrates, "thank you" create energy and engage people. Thanking someone actually triggers "feel good" hormones in the brains of both

the person doing the thanking and the person receiving it.

With that said, take a page out of Elephant and Piggie's book and start a "thank-o-rama" in your child's school. Thank your child's teachers, counselors, aides (if any), administrators, lunch staff members, and volunteers who worked with your child over the past school year. Likewise, make the two words, "thank you" a regular part of your family's vocabulary, and encourage your child to thank his or her teacher.

And thank YOU for your readership and ongoing support of our schools. As Elephant says, speaking on behalf of himself and Piggie, "We could not be 'us' without you."

Join the online conversation:

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'Thank you for being involved in your children's education'

Closing Thoughts from Chancellor Carmen Fariña

Dear Parents:

What an eventful school year! Your children have worked hard and accomplished a lot, and I want to thank you for the excitement and energy that they have brought to our classrooms. I also want to thank you for being involved in your children's education; as parents, you are all essential to our ongoing efforts as we work to improve City schools and build stronger communities that support our children's overall growth.

As your children head off for summer break, please continue to support their learning. Provide your children with enriching educational activities during the summer that are fun and help them sharpen their academic skills. Students who incorporate daily learning into their summer routines are better prepared for success when the new school year begins in September.

Here are three simple ways to keep the learning going:

Reading: Have your children read at least 45 minutes each day over the summer and talk to them about what they've read. Setting aside 45 minutes a day for reading can preserve and build your child's language skills. Visit your local library to get age-appropriate books and reading tips, join the New York Public Library's Summer Reading

Challenge, or review the reading lists on our [NYC Reads 365 website](#).

Enjoy the City: Take your child to at least one museum, cultural institution, or live theater, dance, or music performance this summer. These experiences inspire children and cultivate high-level learning.

Also, consider applying for an IDNYC card; this free ID gives New York City residents a free one-year membership at many of the City's leading museums, zoos, concert halls, and botanical gardens. Learn more about IDNYC [here](#).

Giving Back. Set an example for your children, and get involved in community service. Giving back to the community is not only rewarding, it helps people become civic-minded citizens. Encourage your children to find service opportunities that you can perform together as a family.

To find ways to serve your fellow New Yorkers, visit [NYC Service](#).

Finally, please give your children time and space to just relax. As I tell my grandchildren, learning is important but it's equally important to enjoy being a kid.

On behalf of the DOE, I wish you all a safe and relaxing summer. See you all in September!

Warmly,

Carmen Fariña
Chancellor



Parent Leader Corner

If you have been reading PSP's Parent Leader Corner over the last few months, you have seen a number of updates we have made highlighting the need for proper Parent Association/Parent-Teacher Association (PA/PTA) elections during the spring.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the increasing number of you who have met this challenge. We are happy to report that over the last two years, the number of schools reporting their PA/PTA election results as of June 1 has gone up over 100 percent.

If you have not had your elections already, bear in mind that the three mandatory offices that must be filled for a PA/PTA to continue to function are the president, recording secretary, and treasurer. If you did not have your elections this month, you will have to wait to have an expedited election after school begins in September.

Friendly Reminder:

Once your elections are completed, the election results must be certified. Before the election meeting is adjourned, the new officers must enter their contact information onto an [Election Certification Form](#). The form must then be signed by your principal or the principal's designee. All newly elected officers' contact information must be provided to the principal/parent coordinator within five days of their election.

It is extremely important that the contact information entered on the Election Certification Form is accurate. The mandatory officers that are elected at each school for the coming year will be the selectors in next year's Community Education Council (CEC) elections in each district.

This information, and so much more, can always be found in the [Parent Leadership PA/PTA Election Guide](#).

Dates to Remember

June 28: Last Day of School

July 7: First Day of Summer School

Aug. 11: Last Day of Summer School (Elementary & Middle Schools)

Aug. 16: Last Day of Summer School (High School)

Aug. 17-18: Summer Regents Exams *

Sept. 5: Labor Day

Sept. 8: First Day of New School Year

*Learn more about New York State's Regents Exam schedule on the State's website: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/schedules/2016/regents816.pdf>.