

PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

Latest News for Parents from the NYC Department of Education



Welcome
to our new
redesigned
Public School
Press

MORE THAN A TEST SCORE

Even as the school year begins to wind down and summer weather draws near, Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña announced proposed changes to New York City's promotion policy for students in grades three through eight that will "take the temperature down" when it comes to standardized testing.

For the past decade, policy has dictated that a single test score be used to determine whether a student should advance to the next grade. That approach, while intended to raise expectations for all students, at times led to teachers feeling pressured to "teach to the test" and caused anxiety in school communities. It did not incorporate other import-

ant measures of learning, like classroom work.

Since taking office, the schools chancellor has been vocal about the power of an effective curriculum and reducing the reliance on high-stakes exams. So last month, Chancellor Fariña introduced a new promotion policy for students in grades three through eight that, in aligning the City's policy with a new State law, also addresses those priorities.

The Department consulted with families, teachers, principals, and education advocates. Many felt that it was unacceptable for a year's worth of student work to be overlooked in favor of a single exam. Several changes in the new promotion policy will

Chancellor Carmen Fariña highlights new promotion policy

address this concern.

The new approach will use multiple measures, including test results and an in-depth review of classwork, to determine if students are prepared to advance to the next grade. This will give teachers and principals more discretion to decide if students are at risk of falling behind, while maintaining consistent, rigorous standards. The proposed new policy, set to go to the

Panel for Educational Policy at the end of this month for approval, would go into effect this school year.

As in past years, students who are not academically ready for the next grade will be recommended for summer school. But this year, student work from summer school will be a part of promotion decisions, instead of another standardized exam. Principals will review students' portfolios in August, and superintendents will continue to review promotion appeals if a parent disagrees with the principal's decision.

"This new way forward lowers the stakes without lowering standards," said Chancellor Fariña. "Our new policy will expand opportunities for all students."

Q&A WITH CARMEN



This year's State English exam scores resulted in a lot of stress for both students and parents. How are you planning to confront this issue so that other measures of my child's performance and ability are reflected in their evaluations?

I am listening carefully to parents', teachers', and principals' concerns about the State exams and setting up a meeting with principals to gather recommendations that we will share with the State addressing how the tests can be improved.

Last year, many criticized State tests for being too long. In response, this year the New York State Education Department shortened the math and English tests for grades three through eight. I will make sure that our feedback on the exams is taken seriously.

What are the implications of the new, preliminary nine-year contract agreed upon between Mayor de Blasio and the teachers' union?

This landmark agreement will bolster classroom innovation, retain good teachers, save more than \$1 billion in health care costs, and empower parents. This city's success begins in our schools, and by restoring the dignity and respect to the people who teach our children, we are cultivating great educators—now and for generations to come.



With summer less than two months away, what are your priorities for the end of the school year?

I'd like to see schools holding events that draw parents to schools to celebrate the great work that their kids have done and get a preview of what's in store for next year. Publishing parties, debates, character skits and book drives give students an opportunity to shine and parents an opportunity to engage with the school in a positive way. I encourage you to contact your parent coordinator or principal to learn more about activities at your child's school.

What new projects can we expect to see from the DOE?

The Learning Partners Program that launched this spring is a city-wide initiative that supports sharing best practices, and it will help to elevate many of our schools from good to great. The

program encourages communication among paired schools to share different methods so that we can enable collaboration to learn from each other. Twenty-one schools are participating this Spring, and the program will expand to 72 schools in September.

Look for other initiatives in the coming months!

With this school year wrapping up, what are the major priorities for NYC schools moving forward?

Last week, Mayor de Blasio released his City budget for the next fiscal year, which includes the 2014-15 school year. The funding that has been set aside will allow progress toward education goals that will push our schools and students to new heights.

Next school year, families will have expanded access to a new, high-quality and universal standard of pre-k. We'll have 53,000 full-day pre-k seats in programs across all boroughs. The Mayor has also set aside crucial funds for middle school afterschool programs.

Through the Mayor's Vision Zero initiative, there will be more school speed bumps and traffic cameras, and neighborhood "slow zones." You can rest assured that your child's safety is one of our highest priorities.



Have a question for the Chancellor? Send it to AskCarmen@schools.nyc.gov

PARENT COORDINATOR PROFILE

KEVIN BURKE works at P.S. 115 in Queens as a parent coordinator, a position that women mostly fill in City schools. Given his prior career in the retail food industry, he places great value on customer service and satisfaction in his work with the families of P.S.115 in Glen Oaks, Queens.

What is your approach to family outreach?

My priority has been to create and sustain a welcoming environment for parents within our school. Parents have busy lives and in order to reach our families, I make myself visible and approachable at arrival and dismissal times every day. I attend all school-wide functions and events. This hands-on approach allows all parents the opportunity to have their questions and concerns addressed in an informal manner.

How have you engaged parents?

In our changing society, social media is a powerful tool for communicating informative, useful and educational material. I make use of this through my e-mail distribution list. Monthly updates include school calendars, PTA events and Common Core library resources. Community based events, district workshops and community partnership notices are also sent to parents to encourage their support of the school community.

Student recognition is another key factor in engaging parents. All parents are proud when their children perform academically, athletically and artistically. I coordinate a "Student of the Month" program at each monthly PTA meeting, incorporating student and parent awards along with photo opportunities. Parents are always invited to attend sports events, both practices and games. We also regularly hold a performance in our auditorium featuring music,



dance and student artwork where each grade, from pre-k through grade five, can showcase their talents. All of these programs are very well attended by families and this recognition is always appreciated by parents.

How do you think your role as a male Parent Coordinator influences families?

Dads supported my efforts very quickly by expressing their eagerness to help and become involved with school-wide events. They have assisted with photography, health and wellness workshops, science lessons in the classroom, financial literacy programs, martial arts demonstrations and basketball team training. I have facilitated "For Dads Only" workshops on their important role at home and school, for learning and sharing techniques and school engagement. I have also worked to provide dads with access to community-based youth sports programs such as baseball, basketball, soccer and tennis. More dads are arriving at school with their children and I am elated about this form of involvement.

In my opinion, increased parent engagement will not be accomplished by a single event. A welcoming school culture needs to be created and sustained. That has been my goal for the past eight years and I will continue to serve parents with this goal in mind.

THE CHANCELLOR'S



WHAT DO YOU DO WITH AN IDEA?

(Compendium, 2007) Written by Kobi Yamada, illustrated by Mae Besom

Dear Readers,

This month's book, "What Do You Do With an Idea," tells the tale of a young boy who has an idea that's different, daring, and perhaps, a little wild. His dilemma: what to do? Should he keep the idea to himself? Ignore it? Pretend it isn't his?



As he ponders these questions, something amazing happens. His idea grows larger and changes right before his eyes—spreading its wings, taking flight, and bursting into the sky. Until, one day, he realizes what you do with a good idea. You share it, and "change the world."

During my school visits, I hear many wonderful ideas that are too good to be kept secret. I want to foster a spirit of collaboration and inspiration, and a culture in which educators and parents share their bright ideas with each other. As in this month's book, we must celebrate those good ideas, give them room to grow—and then give them away.

This is a reminder about the power of creativity. Please embrace your bold, inspired ideas and we will help them take flight and burst into the sky. Together, we can change the world.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carmen

PARENT ACADEMY CORNER SUMMER LEARNING TIPS

At Parent Academy we've found that parents are often concerned as they try to figure out how to keep their children active during summer vacation. Learning doesn't only have to take place in the classroom—the summer is a great chance to learn life skills, like using social media responsibly or staying physically active. It's also a wonderful time to take on something new—such as a sport or a musical instrument. Here in the Big Apple, there are so many opportunities for your child to have fun, imagine and learn. Here's a list of some of our favorites:



1 Visit a museum—From American history, to modern art, to mathematics,

nearly every subject and topic is at your disposal. Many are free on select days or have a suggested donation.

2 Participate in an advocacy event— Find a local event, run or walk for a cause. Talk to your child about the issue, encourage age-appropriate research, and get involved!

3 Talk to your child about using social media responsibly— Social media, like Facebook and Twitter, is a powerful and constructive tool if used thoughtfully and with awareness.

Social Media Guidelines for children 13 and older is available [here](#).

4 Public Libraries—Grab a book! One of the biggest collections of books in the entire world is right here in the City, and you should encourage your child to get lost in a book. The City's libraries hold all kind of free events as well. Find out more: www.nypl.org, www.bklyn-publiclibrary.org, and www.queenslibrary.org.

5 NYC parks—A great place to explore nature, the outdoors, and everything green. Organized sports are offered as well. Visit NYCparks.org and search for "Youth Sports."

6 Check out free or low-cost summer camps— Registration is usually early, so on't wait any longer. Both day camp and sleepaway cover everything from chess and digital coding to theater.

7 Go to a concert or show—Sit back, relax, and enjoy great, free music or theatre at Lincoln Center or in parks across the City: Central Park Summerstage in Manhattan or the Celebrate Brooklyn series in Prospect Park. Find nearly any genre of music—New York is a music mecca!

8 Encourage your child to cook and learn about healthy eating—Eating at home is delicious, saves money, and is an important skill to have as an adult. Get your hands dirty together in the kitchen!

9 Spend time together—Whether it be at home lounging or exercising vigorously, bond with your child and let him or her know you're there for support.

Find more tips and information on how your child can learn on our website.

PARENT TO PARENT

with Jesse Mojica



Dear Parent,

As the summer approaches, Schools Chancellor Fariña continues to make parent engagement one of her top priorities. In that spirit, we are in the midst of offering citywide parent conferences, in collaboration with the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ).

The goal is to create a space where parents can come together and learn more about skills that will help support their child's academic achievement. These workshops aim to provide parents with tangible tools for advocating for their

children, and creative ways to forge effective partnerships inside and outside their school community. The Chancellor sees these conferences and our partnership with CEJ as an opportunity to make sure that school is a welcoming place for parents.

The conferences are individualized according to school level, so that they are focused directly on parents' particular needs. On May 3 we held a high school conference in Manhattan. On Saturday, May 31, we will have our Elementary School Conference in Queens, and then on June 7 our Middle

School Conference will take place in Brooklyn. To sign up or for more information, visit our Chancellors Parent Conference Series webpage: schools.nyc.gov/ParentsFamilies/welcomeslider/Chancellor-ParentConferences. We hope you can make it!

In addition, I am very pleased to share that we recently held a Professional Development Day for Parent Coordinators. The event drew an historic turnout of over 600 Parent Coordinators, many of whom led the day's workshops. If you are unsure how to get the help you need at your school, one

of the first (and best) steps you can take is to get to know your Parent Coordinator.

If you have any questions about how to connect with your Parent Coordinator, or anything else we can assist you with please don't hesitate to contact the FACE office at (212) 374-4118 or FACE@schools.nyc.gov.

Best,

Jesse Mojica, Executive Director
Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE)



Mark Your Calendar

Date	Event	Time	Location	Address
Monday, May 19	District 2 Town Hall with Chancellor Fariña		P.S. 59 Beekman Hill International	231-249 E. 56th St. New York, NY 10019.
Wednesday, May 21	NYC Parent Academy	8 am-9 am	P.S. 184	Cherry St. New York, NY 10002
Thursday, May 27	District 24 Town Hall with Chancellor Fariña	Please contact your school's Parent Coordinator for information regarding the time and location of this event		
Saturday, May 31	Elementary School Parents Conference	5 pm-8 pm	LIU-Brooklyn, Health and Science Bldg.	1 University Pl. Brooklyn, NY 11201
Tuesday, June 3	New York State Regents	Algebra 1 & English Language Arts Grades 9-12 & Eligible Gr. 8 students		
Saturday, June 7	Middle School Parents Conference	8 am-1pm	Van Siclen Community Middle School	800 Van Siclen Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11207
Thursday, June 5	Chancellor's Conference Day (Students not in Attendance. Professional development for staff.)			

The 2014-2015 School Calendar is now available. Visit schools.nyc.gov/calendar for more info.



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