

PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

Latest News for Parents from the NYC Department of Education

SCHOOL QUALITY SNAPSHOT: Picture Perfect

It's impossible to capture a student's talents and abilities in a single letter grade.

That's why for years, parents and education advocates have clamored for a new method of measuring New York City public schools' performance. Since 2007, schools have been graded on an A to F scale through Progress Reports: yearly summaries that overemphasized standardized tests and painted an oversimplified picture of school quality.

Schools were being pinned by a standard unfit for the very students they educate: a single letter grade.

This year, the Progress Reports have been replaced by the School Quality Snapshot. The Snapshot more completely and accurately reviews each school by using multiple kinds of information. The design is based on months of development and input from over 1,000 school leaders, parents, education advocates, and experts from across the country.

"The School Quality Snapshot gives our school communities deep and thoughtful information so they can have meaningful conversations about every aspect of their school," Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña said.

While the Snapshot was announced in October, the first individual reports were unveiled this month for elementary, middle, and high schools using the most recent data available. The Snapshot better reflects the dynamic learning in schools by considering factors such as a school visit from an experienced educator, or Quality Review; student, teacher, and parent feedback from the NYC School Survey; and students' achievement and progress in academic courses, on State exams, and toward graduation.

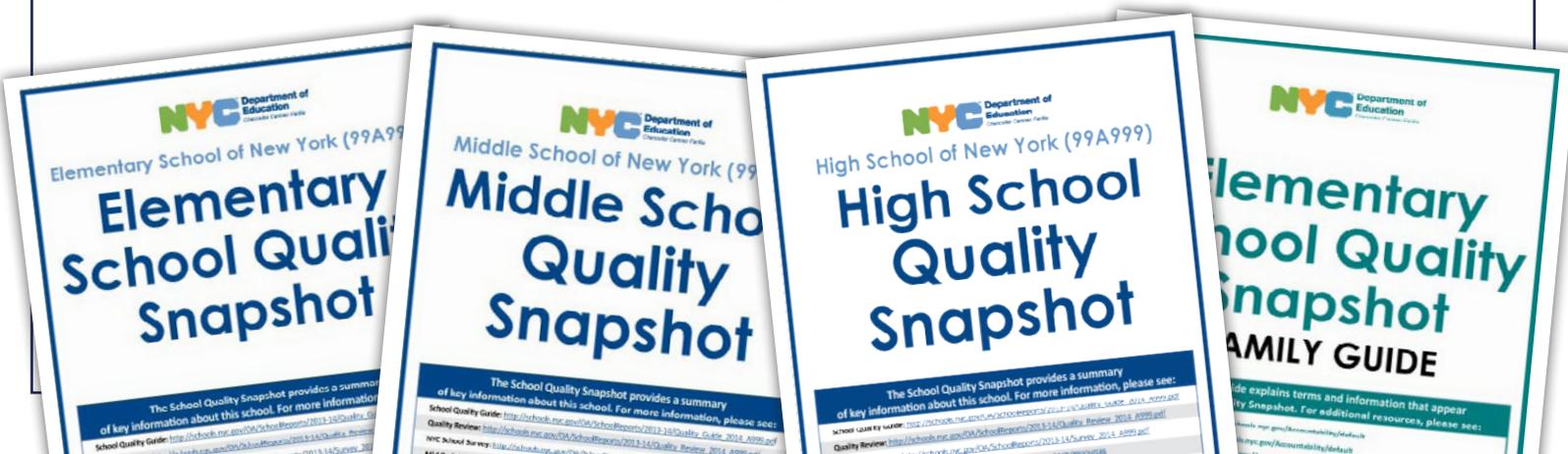
Along with the Snapshot, the Department of Education also released the School Quality Guide, a report that includes a more robust set of information, including multiple years of data so that schools' progress can be tracked

over time. This guide is available to families who want to delve deeper into their school's performance.

Already, Department officials have led training sessions for parent coordinators, parent leaders, and families about the Snapshot, and will continue to hold workshops in the upcoming weeks to ensure families are informed. The Department is also beginning to solicit feedback about how to improve the reports, and will continue to do so through the spring.

"We're far past due giving families clear and concise information," Chancellor Fariña added. "With the Snapshot and Guide, no longer will families have to second guess the quality of their child's school."

Families can find their school's School Quality Snapshot and School Quality Guide, along with additional resources on using the reports, by visiting <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report>.



**Mark your
calendars!**

**Thanksgiving
Recess**
November 27-28

**High School
Application
Deadline**
December 2

**Middle School
Application
Deadline**
December 2

**Chancellor's
Conference
for Middle
School
Parents**
December 6

**Click here
for the full
year school
calendar**

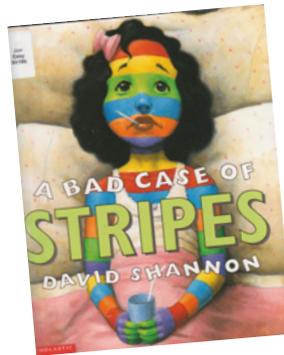


A Bad Case of Stripes
(Scholastic Bookshelf, 2004)
Written and illustrated
by David Shannon

Dear Families,

A Bad Case of Stripes tells the story of Camilla Cream, a little girl who loves lima beans, but never eats them because all of her friends hate lima beans—and she desperately wants to fit in. Like so many of our students, Camilla worries about her reputation. She frets over what clothes will impress her friends, what other kids will say about her, and whether her peers will laugh at her.

On the first day of school, Camilla worries so much that she breaks out in a bad case of stripes, which continues to worsen until a kind old woman, as plump and sweet as strawberries, knocks on her door with the cure: a heaping plate of lima beans. Despite wanting to devour the beans more than anything, Camilla hesitates, still too afraid to appear



different. The old woman sadly turns to leave when Camilla realizes that being true to yourself, even if it causes others to perceive you as weird and laugh, is more important than fitting in. "Wait!" she cries to the old woman. "The truth is... I really love lima beans." She then eats the beans, revealing her true self.

I chose this story to emphasize the importance of creating communities that reveal, respect, and celebrate the uniqueness of each of our students. We know that each of our students brings with them diverse cultures, stories to share about their lives, and hopes and dreams. We want to give them safe and nurturing environments, with classrooms where student discussion is valued, interactive learning is practiced, and individualized support is provided.

Sometimes, adults are afraid to be different, too. We become the chorus rather than the solo singers aiming for the high notes. We need to stand up for our beliefs and become models of excellence. I count on you to be leaders who offer the cures our students need to be true to who they are today—so that they can grow into the leaders we need for tomorrow.

Warmly,
Carmen

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UP!**

Q&A WITH CARMEN

What do the School Quality Snapshots and School Quality Guides tell us about how our schools are performing?

For one, the Snapshots and Guides offer us so much more insight than the old Progress Reports, which were presented in a difficult format and painted inaccurate pictures of schools based on State test scores.

The new Snapshot and Guide were created specifically for parents, designed to give more complete information about schools. They now include an expert review of the school, feedback on the NYC School Survey, and student achievement and progress data. The quality of a child's education isn't measured by a standardized exam—it's about coursework, safety, feeling supported, and

college and career readiness.

These are the kinds of benchmarks we need to be able to measure our school system.

Are there other major education changes being introduced across the City?

Earlier this month, we announced the School Renewal Program, a short-and long-term plan that will transform 94 of the City's chronically low-performing schools into Community Schools and provide other critical services. This means that families and the community will work together to decide what services the school will provide, such as dental, tutoring, job training, health, and counseling programs, to name a few. Together, these programs will target the needs of students and the entire school community, and these schools will be held accountable for rapid improvement. The services will be provided by a non-profit that must

demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs of the community, have a comprehensive plan to provide the services, and have a proven track record in providing these services.

I'm also excited about the recent agreement with the New York State Education Department that will better support our English Language Learners.

Can you talk a little bit more about this agreement with the State education department? What does it mean for English Language Learner students?

Boosting supports for our students learning English is a top priority of mine. I grew up a native Spanish speaker, and it's very much a personal issue. This agreement with the State, signed two weeks ago, sets a higher standard for the services we provide to our English Language Learners, or ELLs.

These supports range from how we identify ELLs, to what programs we provide, and to how teachers are certified. Teachers must not only know how to speak the languages; they must know how to teach in the languages. As a City, we are finally working hand-in-hand with the State to get our ELL students on track to graduate, ready for college and the jobs of today and tomorrow.

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

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I recently attended my child's parent-teacher conference. Do you have any advice to share around parent engagement?

Parental involvement can change everything in a child's education. While attending parent-teacher conferences is certainly important, it's what parents do in between that makes the difference. Don't limit communication with your child's teacher to just these sessions. Teachers now have 40 minutes every week dedicated to communicating with families, which is brand new this year. This time can be used in a number

of ways, such as a class newsletter, email, clubs for parents, or music and dance fairs. Talk with your child's teacher about how this time might be spent.

Also, check in with your child every day. Ask specific questions about the day, like "What did you learn in math today?" or "Who did you sit next to at lunch?" Parents need to ask the academic questions, but also know what's going on with their child socially as well.

Finally, your child's teachers are your primary resource, but remember other school staff—the parent coordinator and guidance counselor can offer you even more information.

PARENT ACADEMY CORNER

The Art of Visiting a Museum

In recent months, a large number of our parent coordinators took part in our Professional Development Series. Since arts education in schools is one of Chancellor Fariña's major commitments, we decided to team up with some of the City's most prestigious museums to offer this extra-curricular, special training for our parent coordinators.

The Transit Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Bronx Museum of Art, The Queens Museum, the New York Historical Society, and the Staten Island Children's Museum all graciously hosted our Arts and Culture Parent Coordinator Professional Development workshops last month. A particular highlight included a day at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where Visual Art and Support Coordinator Karen Rosner asked parent coordinators to share their earliest experiences with the arts. Many offered their own personal stories, and it was clear that a great majority felt a deep connection to the arts—



be it through painting, music, or theater.

However, it also became clear that it can be difficult for parents to find the time to be involved in the arts. In response, parent coordinators were encouraged to discuss what might hold parents back from bringing their children to museums. This included issues like being intimidated because of the "unknown" factor, or concerns about money, time, transportation, and their child's behavior. The parent coordinators were able to brainstorm ways to help set parents at ease and encourage them to explore all the City has to offer.

Parent coordinators left these trainings with the skills to help coordinate and assist in family visits to museums and other cultural institutions throughout the City. Families are encouraged to contact their parent coordinator for tips, ideas, and guidance on how to plan a trip to the museum or cultural center. You and your child will enjoy the experience, and who knows, you may once again feel just like a kid yourself.

CHANCELLOR'S HIGH SCHOOL PARENT CONFERENCE RECAP

An Interview with parent Dervie Mapp Daughter, Nadia, attends Brooklyn High School for the Arts

What message did you take away from the Chancellor's address to parents?

The approach of including parents. That's what this conference is about, and I've been advocating for more parental involvement for nearly 18 years.

When I hear her speak, I feel like I'm looking in a mirror: she gets it, she's experienced it. Things are transparent, and parents are kept informed. It's a breath of fresh air.

What kind of advice did the Chancellor offer?

Get your children acquainted with New York City. Take them to museums, cultural places, and let them explore.

Also, make children more responsible. When they are coming of age, see about having them get a job, and become independent. But also continue to be a parent and ensure they are on track.



Which of the high school workshops did you attend?

I attended the CUNY presentation, which was full of information. My daughter's in 11th grade at Brooklyn High School of the Arts, and it was right on time to hear about CUNY's admissions process, what my daughter needs to do and maintain, and all the many options available. It was relevant for parents of students in 9th grade and up, and gave families a much better idea about what lies ahead in the admissions process. The CUNY representative was attentive, and even provided parents with her contact

information. There were well over 25 parents in the workshop.

What was most valuable part of the conference?

What I heard throughout the day was a reinforcement that I need to keep my daughter on her current track. That when it comes to academics, you can't just do the minimum, but go beyond. I think a lot of parents took notes on that approach, and it was refreshing to have a standard that students need to hit: an 85 average and above.

A lot of parents really enjoyed the workshop on bullying—one parent said that she now knows who she can contact and how she can speak to her child about preventing and responding to bullying.

What would you tell other parents who didn't attend the conferences?

I would tell parents to get involved in their parent or parent-teacher association—five times a year, every other month, however much you can. Don't just assume your child is on track, or that the school will figure it out. Contact the teacher and exchange e-mail addresses. That message was also really emphasized during the Chancellor's speech.



PARENT TO PARENT

Dear Parent,

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge two very special parent leaders, Martha Kessler and Alim Gafar, who served as the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Committee (CPAC) co-chairs for the past two years. During their tenure, Martha and Alim excelled in their roles, and established a high bar of expectations by working diligently to ensure parents' voices were consistently heard within the DOE. Because of their remarkable commitment and integrity, parents could trust that their input was included in key DOE decisions.

I offer my thanks to Martha and Alim. I am pleased to welcome our newly elected CPAC co-chairs for the 2014-15 school year: former Co-Chair Yvette Small and Recording Secretary Nancy Northrop. Yvette and Nancy are already respected parent leaders who were voted into the co-chair roles by their peers last month, and they have proven themselves to be dedicated team members. We have always enjoyed a strong collaborative relationship with them. Yvette and Nancy worked effectively to keep CPAC and Presidents' Council members well-informed, and ensured that parents were given a voice in the Department. We are greatly looking forward to all the positive ways we can collaborate, and I know that we will accomplish meaningful things together.

I want to again encourage parents to get involved in school leadership. Those who serve on CPAC have the power to provide direct input to the Chancellor, on the issues that matter most to parents.

CPAC members have the capability to be game-changers and truly affect policy. But there are many other ways to get involved, starting with your Parent Association/Parent-Teacher Association (PA/PTA) or your School Leadership Team (SLT).

Finally, CEC elections are right around the corner, and now more than ever, we need parents like you to get involved and change the education system for the better. By running for a New York City Community or Citywide Education Council, you will have the chance to be a powerful voice in shaping the policies and priorities of New York City schools. We welcome your participation.

All my best,

Jesse Mojica

