

PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

Latest News for Parents from the NYC Department of Education

Fariña's First Year: A Look Back and What Lies Ahead

Twelve months ago, at a middle school in Brooklyn, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the appointment of Carmen Fariña as Schools Chancellor, saying:

"For years, I've watched her innovate new ways to reach students, transform troubled schools, and fight against wrongheaded policies that hurt our kids...she will deliver progressive change that lifts up children in every neighborhood."

Those words have translated into action.

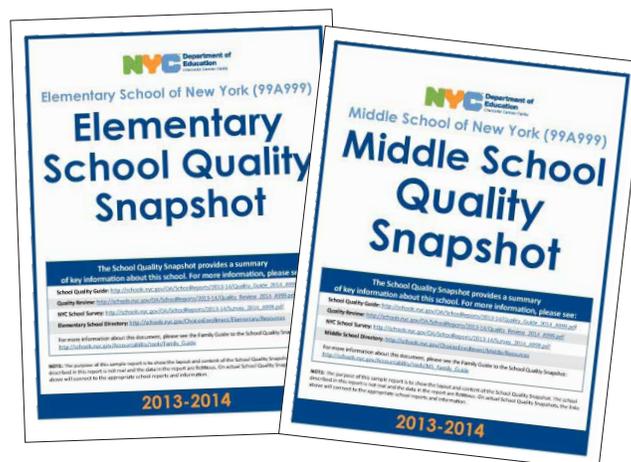
A veteran educator with 49 years' experience, Chancellor Fariña has made it her mission to transfer the focus of the New York City school system back to students and families. From the classroom to the senior-level cabinet, the Department of Education's agenda has spurred opportunities for children all across the City, and reflects a renewed emphasis on student needs and support for schools. But what's truly unique about this administration has been the philosophy of inclusiveness:

feedback and input from parents, educators, and school communities has helped shape policy every step of the way.

From expanding pre-kindergarten to more than 53,000 four-year-olds, to increasing minimum qualifications for principals and superintendents, to setting aside \$23 million for arts education, it's clear from Chancellor Fariña's first year that she is an educator, inside and out, who understands what tools and support students and schools need to succeed.

Major Initiatives and Policies

School Quality Snapshots and Guides – Release of a new, simplified family-facing Snapshot and Guide measuring each school's performance. It replaces the old letter grades, and parents now have a better picture of the quality of their school.



Nov. 10

School Renewal Program – A new approach to school improvement that supports struggling schools, instead of closing them. Renewal Schools receive extra funding and training, extended learning time, and provide community services for students and families.

Nov. 3

2014 Initiatives: Student Needs, Support for Schools, and Community Engagement

53,000
children
prepared to enter
kindergarten.



PRE-K FOR ALL

Pre-K For All—Oversaw historic pre-k expansion across NYC; more than 53,000 4-year-olds now learning in high-quality, full-day programs.

40

More dual-language
programs

Improved Services for English Language Learners

— Created a stand-alone, cabinet-level English Language Learners (ELL) Department reporting directly to the Chancellor. Also: expanded professional development for teachers serving ELL students, more bilingual and dual-language programs, increased translation services and parent workshops, and support for unaccompanied child migrants.

\$23 Million in Arts Funding

— Hired new arts teachers for underserved middle and high schools, improved arts facilities across NYC, and fostered new partnerships with some of the City's renowned cultural institutions.

250 New Guidance Counselors

— Substantial increase in the number of guidance counselors in schools who serve students' emotional and academic needs.

**\$23
Million**
in arts funding



Capacity Framework— A research-based vision for improving every school, based on six transformative elements that guide all of our work.

Oct. 1

Sept. 4

Aug. 27

July 8

July 1



Launch of Learning Partners – Based on the Chancellor’s emphasis on collaboration, Learning Partners program pairs schools together to share best practices that support students and school culture.



New Promotion Policy for Students in Grades 3-8 – New policy deemphasizes standardized tests, and includes measures like classwork and a full portfolio of assignments.

Creation of School Space Working Group – A group of educators and stakeholders review how co-located schools share space, and emphasize engaging families in decisions.

After-School Programs Expansion in Middle Schools – 271 new after-school providers will serve 170% more students. Programs range from STEM to dance and everything in between.

Ratification of New Teachers’ Contract – Historic agreement expands and emphasizes professional development and designates at least 40 minutes every Tuesday for parent and teacher communication.

Launch 45 Community Schools – Schools will be turned into Community Schools, offering wrap-around services for students and families based on their needs.

Chancellor’s Parent Conferences – Chancellor Fariña begins holding separate conferences for elementary, middle, and high school parents over the spring and fall. Over 1,000+ parents have attended so far.



June 17

June 4

May 5

April 9

April 7

April 4

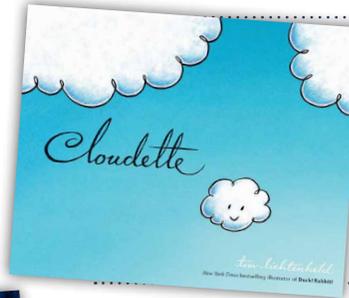
A Full Year of Book of the Month

Each of Chancellor Fariña's Books of the Month captures the heart-warming, creative, and adventurous side of children's picture books. Each story is as unique as the next, often meshing life lessons with touches of humor and wonder. Families are encouraged to strengthen their children's literacy through the joy of reading.



December

I'm Not Too Busy
(Tristan Publishing, 2007)
Written by Jodi Hills

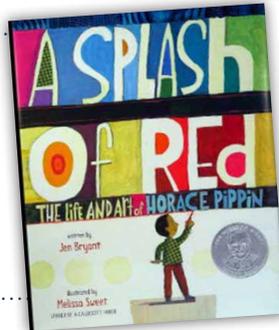


June

Cloulette
(Henry Holt and Co., 2011)
Written and illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld

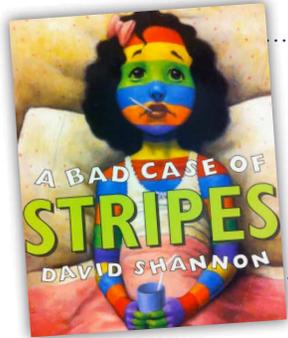
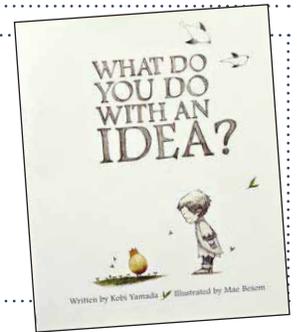
November

A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin
(Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2013)
Written by Jen Bryant, illustrated by Melissa Sweet



May

What Do You Do With an Idea?
(Compendium, 2014)
Written by Kobi Yamada, illustrated by Mae Besom



October

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

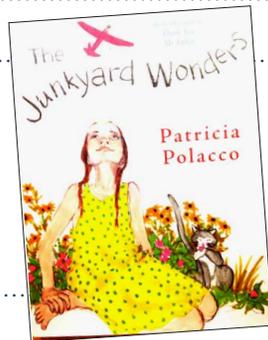


April

Two eggs, please
(Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2007)
Written by Sarah Weeks, illustrated by Betsy Lewin

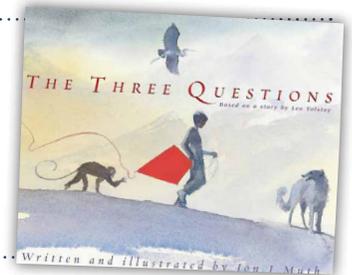
September

The Junkyard Wonders
(Philomel, 2010)
Written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco



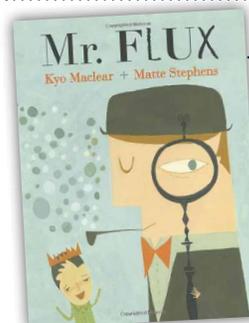
March

The Three Questions
(Scholastic Press, 2002)
Written and illustrated by Jon J. Muth



August

Miss Rumphius
(Puffin Books, 1985)
Written and illustrated by Barbara Cooney

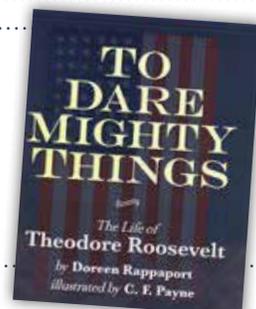


February

Mr. Flux
(Kids Can Press, 2013)
Written by Kyo Maclear, illustrated by Matte Stephens

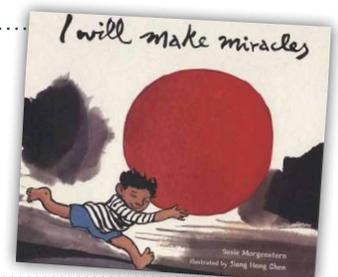
July

To Dare Mighty Things
(Hyperion Books, 2013)
Written by Doreen Rappaport, illustrated by C.F. Payne



January

I will make miracles
(Bloomsbury, 2008)
Written by Susie Morgenstern, illustrated by Jiang Hong Chen



CARMEN Q&A: SPECIAL EDITION

This month, I've asked members of the New York City school community to share their best education moments from this year, as well as what they're looking forward to most in 2015.

"The memories are numerous. In our lives, we all have a small moment for inspiration. Chancellor Fariña's visit to P.S. 149 during September's Family Night served as that inspiration, for children, parents, and teachers. Meeting the Queen of Spain, and becoming a model dual-language school. As a result, these experiences have afforded a smooth transition for implementing the Capacity Framework with trust being the guiding light."

Principal Esther Salorio
P.S. 149, Queens

"We are looking forward to the continued involvement of parents at our school. We've continued to cultivate a culture where parents are welcomed into the school to be a 'partner in educating the hearts and minds' of our students!"

Principal Sheila Durant
P.S. 69, Journey Prep School, Bronx

"My favorite education memory from 2014 is the look on my students' faces when they walked into the brand new library at P.S. 18. Wide-eyed, slack-jawed expressions on each and every one of them!

I am awaiting, with bated breath, the results of three grants I wrote for

the library. I will get the results of two of these in early 2015 and one in May. Fingers crossed!"

Ciro Scardina, library media specialist
P.S. 18, Staten Island

"I can stress that I'm happy with the amount of attention and feedback I get from my daughter's teacher. It's great to show children to step up and stand out with things like student of the month at an early age. When my daughter told her mother and I she was the student of the month she was able to explain what she's done right to get recognized.

We're glad she's spot reading and her math work is a little ahead of when I was in kindergarten—so it can only help her future math classes be easier."

Pedro Lopez, Parent
P.S. 340, Bronx

"The strongest memory I have is giving my acceptance speech alongside Mayor de Blasio and thinking how proud my dad would have been at that moment.

Without a doubt, what I look forward to most is raising the bar for students, teachers, and administrators in every borough of the city."

Carmen Fariña
Chancellor

"My favorite memory was learning that my students State test scores increased significantly. I'm looking forward to continually working with my staff toward our goal of ensuring that every student at our school receives an excellent education."

Principal Nakia Haskins
Brooklyn Brownstone School

"My favorite education memory was watching over 100 kids and fathers come together for the [I.S.] 339 father forum, where Mr. Bowers from the New York Knicks Community Affairs office talked and motivated fathers to keep striving to be better dads. In 2015, I look forward to growing the program and getting more athletes involved."

Derrick Daniels, Teacher
I.S. 339, Bronx

"I enjoyed crossing the Brooklyn Bridge with my classmates and teachers as a social studies class experiment. We experienced what Native American felt crossing the Bering Strait. It wasn't the same, but we experienced how tired they might have felt at that time. I am looking forward to more experiments like this, and dissecting more frogs in science class."

Justin, 7th grader
The Equity Project (TEP) Charter
Manhattan

"Hands-down the highlight of my first year has been the school visits. Recently, I visited P.S. 503 in Brooklyn. I saw an interconnected, collaborative school community, focused on knowing their students well. The best part is P.S. 503 is a Learning Partners school, so they share their expertise with other schools.

I have a 2015 New Year's resolution: I am going to continually make connections to trace all of our work back to the Capacity Framework, and I encourage everyone to do the same. If in 2015, we all commit to making connections to our shared vision, I'm confident we can take big steps to transform our public schools."

Phil Weinberg, Deputy Chancellor
Teaching & Learning



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

Of the People, by the People, for the People: The Community School Model

Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña have dedicated \$52 million to help create the most Community Schools of any school district in the country. These schools are partnering with community organizations and non-profits to provide services needed by students, their families, and the entire community.

A small school nestled close to the East River on 4th Street in Manhattan, P.S. 15 serves less than 200 kids in grades pre-k through five. Every student qualifies for free lunch, more than one in three receive special education services, and many live in temporary housing.

So when Irene Sanchez took over as principal for the 2010-2011 school year, she envisioned a school offering more than just academics. She recognized that students' needs extend far beyond just classroom instruction.



“School is seen as a place of more than education”

During her first year, Principal Sanchez organized a grant committee that applied for, and won, a grant for a washer and dryer. It may seem like a small addition, but families in fluctuating situations found it difficult to ensure kids' clothes were washed regularly. Laundry access filled this essential need.

And with it, the P.S. 15 community school model was launched.

Since then, P.S. 15 has worked with numerous community partners to offer services and programs such as swimming, creative arts programs, mental health services, cooking classes for parents, and gardening clubs. One partner organization ensures students have meals to eat over the weekend, while another will ensure kids receive gifts this holiday season. As a result of this work, the school hit its highest attendance rate in years, above the city average. Individual

students and their families' lives have been stabilized, and parents are now much more willing to open up about issues at home.

This year, P.S. 15 was selected by Mayor de Blasio to be part of a Community School citywide initiative. Selected schools receive a portion of the City's Attendance Improvement and Dropout Intervention (AIDP) grant and partner with a community organization to offer wrap-around services. As a pre-existing Community School, P.S. 15 will build upon its current services by partnering with the organization Pathways to Leadership to provide services like one-on-one mentoring, more after-school programs, finance management for families, and more. A dedicated Resource Coordinator, funded through the AIDP grant, will handle all of the logistics, organization, and planning of the partnerships and services.

“School is seen as a place of more than education,” Principal Sanchez says. “It's a center of resourcefulness.”

And after being chosen as one of the mayor's Community Schools, that legacy will continue to strengthen.

Learn more about the Community School initiative at schools.nyc.gov/CommunitySchools.

PARENT TO PARENT

Even during the busy holiday season, we are still working hard to provide trainings to parent leaders to help them better advocate for the parents they represent. I'm happy to announce that the 2014-15 school year inaugural Parent Council Leadership Institute is off the ground with great energy and going strong. Some history: just before the new school year began, FACE met with Paula Gavin, Chief Service Officer, and David Mensah, leadership trainer and executive coach, both of NYC Service, to plan a series of sessions that would allow us to invest in Community Education Council and Parent Council presidents' leadership skills. They have proven themselves to be incredible leaders in bringing this endeavor to life.

The Parent Council Leadership Institute is designed to build presidents' leadership capacity and improve their ability to lead their councils. Combining professional training with executive coaching, the institute provides practical and long-lasting solutions to the most common council challenges, such as lack of participation and conflict issues.

The objective of Parent Council Leadership Institute is to invest in the professional skills necessary for council leaders to effectively

manage the responsibilities of their councils, and to expand their own professional leadership capacities. The topic of the first session, which took place in late October, was team building; the December topic, empowering volunteer leaders; January's topic is motivation and participation; and the final topic in February will be conflict resolution.

Each session will also include training on leadership coaching as a professional skill. Every participant will be asked to practice peer coaching with another participant between sessions to further develop their techniques.

We are very grateful to the participants of the inaugural class. For all other parents, there are still many opportunities to get involved on a leadership level and influence educational policy. One such opportunity is right around the corner: the bi-annual Citywide and Community Education Council elections. For details on how to run for a council seat, visit schools.nyc.gov/Offices/FACE.

I wish you and your family a happy, healthy holiday season.

Jesse Mojica, Executive Director
Office of Family & Community Engagement



Happy Holidays
Carmen and the entire DOE family

Peana Sobel

ATTENDANCE: A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

Healthy eating. Frequenting the gym. Staying in better touch with friends.

Like any New Year, 2015 brings with it an age-old annual tradition—New Year's resolutions. People pledge to correct poor habits, or create valuable new ones, which can lead to lasting positive effects for weeks, months, maybe years to come.

One education resolution will benefit your child for a lifetime: Attendance.

Increasing science grades, working through tough math equations, and learning to sound out long words can be achieved simply by being in class. The school day lasts roughly five and a half hours. While a day missed here and there—whatever the reason may be—can seem like no big deal, those missed hours of instruction begin to add up quickly.

In middle school, for example, a child's attendance is one of the most important—if not the most important—factors in determining whether he or she is on track to graduate high school. Lessons often build upon each other, and missing instruction can severely set a student back. Just two days of missed school a

month adds up to 20 days by the end of the school year: that's a month of instruction. Sixth graders who miss at least 20 days are three times more likely to drop out in high school.

There are certainly days when children are ill and should stay home for their own well-being and that of others. But reserve those days for when kids really need them, and be sure to ask how to make up missed work. Make doctor and dentist appointments for after school hours. If there are other reasons your child is absent, talk about these reasons with your school. They can help.

Attendance is one of the most significant factors in school performance, graduation, and eventually, college and career opportunities. So make a New Year's resolution that will benefit your child through the remainder of his or her education, and lifetime. It's been said that it takes 30 days for a habit to form. Every day counts.

Additional Information on Combatting Absenteeism:

NYC DOE Attendance Resources for Families -

schools.nyc.gov/StudentSupport/StudentAttendance

Attendance Works - www.attendanceworks.org



“ Incorporating parent and family involvement into the classroom supports learning and adds value to the entire school community. Your child's teachers are probably already discussing innovative ways to use the new contract's 40-minute block each week for parent engagement. Below are a few ideas your school may be considering: ”

- Potluck dinners that celebrate foods from different cultures
- Club programs led by parents
- Computer, English as a second language and other courses
- Career day
- Community service programs
- School beautification projects
- Music and dance fairs



HAVE AN IDEA?

Please share it with your school!
or contact us at 40minutes@schools.nyc.gov

MUNICIPAL IDS AVAILABLE IN JANUARY

All New Yorkers are encouraged to apply for IDNYC, the City of New York's new photo identification card for all residents age 14 and older. The municipal ID grants New Yorkers access to the City's important services and programs. ID holders will also receive a free one-year membership to 33 of the City's leading museums, zoos, concert halls, and botanical gardens. Students can use the ID to explore the arts, history, and social studies outside the classroom. Parents can also use the ID for access their child's school.

This program provides much-needed services and programs to the most vulnerable New Yorkers: the homeless, elderly, undocumented immigrants, the formerly incarcerated, and others who may have difficulty obtaining other government-issued IDs.

Individuals will be able to get the IDNYC card at no cost in 2015. They just have to submit an application and proof of identity and residency in person at an IDNYC Enrollment Center. The application process will be accessible to people with limited English proficiency and people with disabilities. More information for families is available [here](#).

Dates to Remember

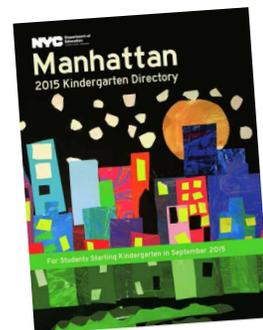
Winter Recess
December 24 – January 2

School resumes
January 5

KINDERGARTEN ADMISSIONS

The kindergarten application period begins January 7 and lasts through February 13. Families have three ways to apply: online, over the phone, or in person at a Family Welcome Center. For a list of required registration information and application tips, please visit schools.nyc.gov/kindergarten.

Families can pick up a printed copy of the kindergarten directory from their local elementary school or Borough Enrollment Office. Use the kindergarten link above to view the directories online.



2015 Big Apple Awards

Do you know an outstanding teacher? Submit a nomination for the 3rd annual Big Apple Awards, which celebrate New York City's best educators who inspire students, model great instruction, and lead their school community. Big Apple Award recipients will receive classroom grants and serve on the Chancellor's Advisory Group for the 2015-16 school year, representing all teachers citywide. Any student, parent, educator, or member of the community may submit a nomination. Visit schools.nyc.gov/BigAppleAwards.

