

JANUARY 2015

PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

Latest News for Parents from the NYC Department of Education



The Right Call for Families

City Schools to Lift Cell Phone Ban

Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Fariña are taking a smart stance on smart phones.

After nearly a decade of prohibiting students from bringing their cell phones to school, the Department of Education is finally lifting the ban. The decision simply reflects the current reality in New York City public schools. The Chancellor said parents, unable to contact their children before and after school, have long voiced safety concerns. Enforcement in schools has been uneven, with metal

detectors at select schools better able to detect electronic devices. Students have been forced to either leave their cell phones at home or with private storage companies at an average cost of \$180 per year. Other schools have operated under a don't ask don't tell policy.

As of March 2, that will all change.

"We're bringing our schools into the modern era," Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña says. "Lifting the cell phone ban is about common sense."

The new policy empowers each

school and community to decide on an appropriate student cell phone policy. Principals and the School Leadership Team, made up of an equal number of teachers and parents, will meet to discuss issues such as when the use of a cell phone is permitted, whether students will be allowed to keep their phones during the school

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Students: Design Our Next High School Directory!

We are now accepting submissions for the 2015 Cover Design Competition! All public high school students have the opportunity to create a design that will be featured on the 2015-16 high school directory, which is given out to thousands of families across New York City. Winners will work with graphic design professionals and showcase their artistic skills and creativity. Submit a design at nyc.gov/schools/coverdesign. Submission deadline is **February 2**.



Continued from previous page

day, whether phones will be used for instructional purposes, and how students will be disciplined if the policy is violated, among various other issues. Schools will have a range of options for discipline in cases where cell phones are misused, including confiscation.

Waiting until March to lift the ban will provide schools with sufficient time to discuss proposals and develop rules that allow students to communicate with their parents, all while ensuring the safety and well-being of all. Schools will also increase training for identifying and preventing cyber-bullying.

One parent in Brooklyn, Rosemary Crowder, says the new policy offers ease of mind.

“Because I’m a parent, I worry. I worry from the time my children walk out the door, until they come home, because so many things can happen,” she says. “We need to know where our children are — cell phones have created that convenience.”

Because the current cell phone ban requires a change in the Chancellor’s Regulations, the Panel for Educational Policy will vote on the policy at their February 25 meeting.

Dates to Remember

**Monday, January 26 to
Thursday, January 29**

Regents Exams

Friday, January 30
**No School for High School
Students**

(District 75 Students are in
Attendance)

**Monday, February 16 – Friday,
February 20**

Mid-Winter Recess

Monday, February 23
School Resumes

New York City Department of Education
in collaboration with
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
presents the

2015
COVER DESIGN COMPETITION
YOUR DESIGN
COULD BE NEXT

HOME SUBMIT RESOURCES PREVIOUS WINNERS

Submission Deadline: 2/2/15

Overview

The Cover Design Competition encourages participants to reflect on their lives as public school students in New York City and express their ideas artistically in the form of a cover design. The winning designs will be featured on Department of Education school directories, which are distributed to thousands of students and their families across New York City. This competition is an opportunity for students to showcase their artistic talents and be recognized for their creativity.

Key Dates

Competition Open for Submissions	1/12
All Submissions Due	2/2
Finalists Notified	2/12 - 2/20
Workshops for Finalists (Required)	2/26; 3/5; 3/12; 3/19
Public Vote	4/1 - 4/6
Awards Ceremony	4/14

NYC Department of Education
COOPER HEWITT

CARMEN Q&A:



How does it feel to be starting your second year as New York City Schools Chancellor?

It's been an exciting and fast-paced first year, and I anticipate 2015 will be more of the same. Already this month, we've announced the lifting of an almost decade-old cell phone ban in our schools. Just last week, we committed to the opening and expansion of 40 dual-language programs across the City. Learning two languages will give our children a leg up in the global economy. We learned only a couple days ago that enrollment in our after-school middle school programs has reached 121 percent, and 49 new programs are set to be added, totaling more than 2,500 seats.

This Thursday, January 22 at the Association for a Better New York, I'm going to talk about my priorities for improving our public schools and ensuring better outcomes for all students.

For more information about the announcement, I encourage you to check the Department of Education's website on Thursday: schools.nyc.gov.

If students are able to bring their phones to school, won't they become a distraction?

Each school will be able to develop its own cell phone policy that meets the needs of its students. Because the cell phone ban won't be lifted until March, principals and their School Leadership Teams will be able to have robust conversations about when and how students will be allowed to use their phones. Some schools may have a collection point in the morning, so that students won't have phones during the school day. Other schools may allow students to keep them during the day but out of sight, while other schools may incorporate students' phones into classroom instruction.

I anticipate open parent and parent-teacher association meetings, as well as assemblies with students, to make sure the entire community understands the school policy. Students will know their rights, but they will also know the consequences. Schools will host trainings, including a

"Misuse It, You Lose It" policy.

What kind of parent would make a good Community or Citywide Education Council candidate for the spring election?

As a parent, you are already an excellent candidate. You don't need any particular or specialized skills or backgrounds. What's important is caring about education, our children, and making a real impact on your community and local schools.

What education issues are you passionate about? Helping families stay more informed? Reducing overcrowding? Building better arts or sports youth programs? Increasing technology in schools? Ensuring student safety?

If you've been active in your school's parent or parent-teacher association, or School Leadership Team, now is a great opportunity to continue your advocacy on a larger scale. Even if you haven't been active but have been thinking about getting involved, now is the right chance. By serving on your local Community Education Council, or one of the four Citywide Education Councils, you will have a voice for all the parents you represent, in your district or citywide. It's an opportunity to work hand in hand with your community, parents, elected officials, the Department of Education, and me to enact real change. I encourage you to learn more at NYCparentleaders.org.



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

Be the Education Voice In Your Community



A conversation with Isaac Carmignani, former member of District 30's Community Education Council

Isaac Carmignani has several children, the oldest of which just graduated last year from Cardozo High School. He's a former PTA president, and works in technology for the U.S. Postal Service.

All in all, you could describe him as a regular parent—which is exactly why he's been able to accomplish so much in the last seven years.

As a member and president of the Community Education Council (CEC) in District 30, Mr. Carmignani has helped prevent the closing of Long Island City High school, helped redraw zoning lines, open an accelerated middle school program for the district's gifted and talented elementary students, and much more.

"I wanted to be more involved, and make a positive difference on a bigger level," Mr. Carmignani says of his decision to serve on the CEC. "It's a pipeline to progress both personally and professionally, to look at [education] policy on a deeper level and learn why things are being done, and have input."

CEC elections are held every two years, and this February, the election cycle will open up for New York City parents interested in running. Although he left his CEC post at the end of 2014 to pursue a position on the Panel for Educational Policy, Mr. Carmignani is proud of his time serving District 30.

Each of the City's 32 school districts has a CEC, made up of 11 parents who help create and guide local education

policy, as well as serve as an advisory board to the Chancellor. Nine of the members are elected by local PTAs, and two are appointed by the borough president.

CEC members typically commit an average of 3-5 hours each week to their education work. Some members spend more, others a little less, but "everyone does their part, and we need them," Carmignani says. In District 30, each member serves as a liaison for a group of schools and their principal, parent coordinator, and PTAs.

Members are especially plugged in to their local communities. Advocating for crossing guards, writing letters to the Department of Transportation or local precinct, meeting with your legislature, or helping a PTA fundraise are a few examples of the CEC District 30's work.

"When I left there was far more involvement on a parent engagement level with our families. We did a lot to support schools that were in need," he says.

Mr. Carmignani encourages parents to run. To sum up a good candidate, he lists three qualities that could easily describe just about any regular parent.

"First and foremost, be positive. Inform yourself as much as possible, and listen. Parents have to feel that they can come to you and voice their concerns."

Parents who want to learn more about the CEC election process, important dates, and other information should visit NYCparentleaders.org.

Get informed about all of the latest school news, events and programs.

Visit schools.nyc.gov/subscribe to sign up to

PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

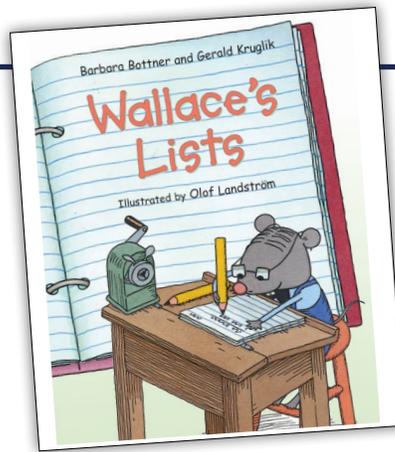
SIGN UP!

BOOK of the Month

Wallace's Lists

(Katherine Tegen Books, 2004)

Written by Barbara Bottner and Gerald Kruglik, illustrated by Olof Landstrom



Dear Readers,

For growing children and young adults often managing busy lifestyles—class assignments, extracurriculars, obligations at home—it's important to stress structure and order: staying organized, keeping a schedule, and maintaining a to-do list. But as the adage goes, it's possible to have too much of a good thing.

In this month's story, a wary, bespectacled mouse named Wallace lives a life ruled by lists. Lists of funny names, frightening experiences, clothes in his closet, pets he would like, tasks for the day, and more. His life is so structured that when his neighbor, Albert, introduces himself, Wallace doesn't even respond. Saying hello is not on his list.

So Wallace writes a new list:

1. Say hello to Albert.
2. Laundry.

After exchanging greetings, Albert invites his new friend to listen to music, but Wallace declines. He's got laundry to do. Albert paints pictures of ducks, while Wallace can only wish he'd included painting on his list. But when Albert leaves for the airport as a dangerous storm approaches, Wallace's concern pushes him out of his comfort zone. Searching for his friend, he endures rain, bumps along a baggage claim conveyor belt, pursuit by a cat, and splashes by a bus. He finds Albert safe, but sad because his flight to Glockamorra is cancelled due to the storm. In an affectionate display of friendship, Wallace takes Albert on a whirlwind adventure that's not on any of his to-do lists—and learns the value of letting go.

Wallace and Albert's unlikely friendship shows the importance of balancing structure with spontaneity. Organization can go a long way—being prepared ensures assignments get done—but students need to find time to put down their lists. While we prepare our children for the responsibilities and demands of adulthood, we must also remember the value of daydreaming, relaxing, and being open to the moment.

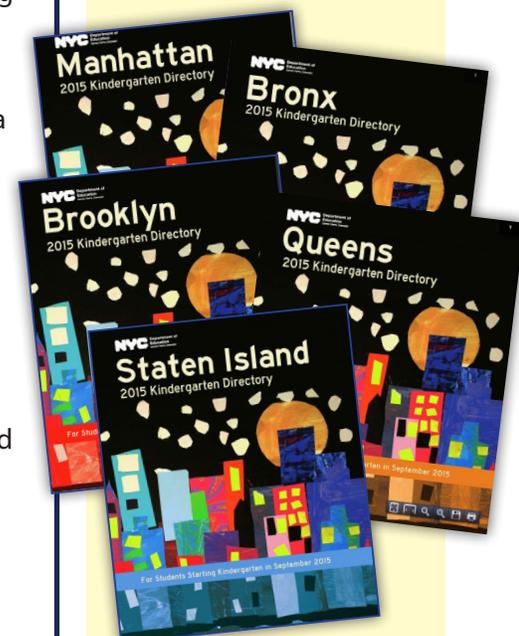
Warmly,

Carmen

Apply for Kindergarten

The kindergarten application period began **January 7 and runs 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.



PARENT TO PARENT

Dear Parent:

The campaign for the 2015 Community and Citywide Education Council elections has officially launched! Chancellor Fariña announced kick-off of this exciting campaign January 8. Beginning February 11, parents can begin submitting an application online to run for a council seat. Now is your chance to make a difference and ensure that the voices of your fellow parents are heard.

As a council member, your duties range from advising the Chancellor, to working directly with the district superintendent and reviewing district educational programs and needs. Parents interested in becoming members of a Community or Citywide Education Council should visit NYCParentLeaders.org for more information.

As a fellow parent with experience as a parent leader, I strongly encourage as many of you as possible to apply for a council seat. The more candidates to choose from, the more robust and representative these elections will be. Remember, this is a concrete way you can make a difference in your child's school district.

If you are unsure how to get involved, I invite you to attend our first information session, which will take place at

Tweed Courthouse, 52 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007, on January 26 from 6 to 8pm. More information sessions will follow during the campaign season.

After applications have been received, candidates will speak with parents and parent leaders at forums held between March 18 and April 18 in each respective district or borough. These are exciting opportunities to meet the candidates and understand their positions, and why have chosen to run. Shortly after these forums, the officers of each school's parent or parent-teacher association will be voting for their preferred candidates.

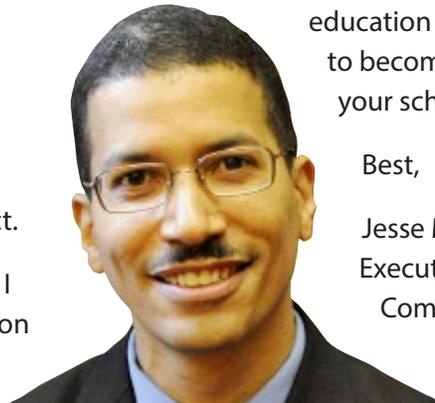
Please visit our website regularly for more information. We will also be sending timely e-mails to keep you up to date. Sign up for emails at schools.nyc.gov/Subscribe.

Your voice matters, and the more we come together as parents, the more we will ensure a first-rate education for all of our children. Raise your hand to become a transformative parent leader for your school district!

Best,

Jesse Mojica

Executive Director Division of Family and
Community Engagement



RAISE
YOUR HAND *for* OUR KIDS

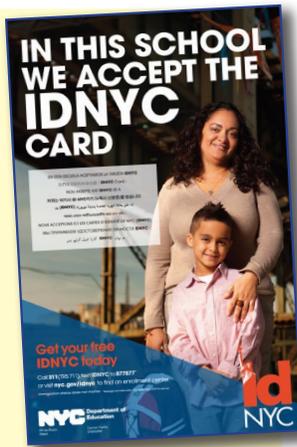
YOUR VOICE MATTERS

*Run for a New York City
Education Council*

TO LEARN MORE VISIT NYCParentLeaders.org or call 311

Please [CLICK HERE](#) to see video!

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. 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.



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](#).

IT'S TIME FOR THE 2014-2015 NYC SCHOOL SURVEY!

The **2014-2015 version of the NYC School Survey** has been revamped to align with the DOE's **Capacity Framework**. This year, the survey will collect vital information about a school's capacity to incorporate the six transformative elements to improve student achievement— rigorous instruction, supportive environment, collaborative teachers, effective school leadership, strong family and community ties, and trust—that drive school improvement and help develop students to compete in the 21st century. The revamped survey will be one of multiple measures used to help the DOE assess the six elements of the Capacity Framework.

The survey will be open for students and families from March 3 to April 2. Your responses are vitally important because the survey results will help inform the conversations principals and school communities have as they plan for the 2015-2016 school year. Families can complete the paper survey or provide responses online at www.nycschoolssurvey.org using the survey access code printed on their individual surveys. If you lose your survey or experience any technical difficulties with the online survey, you can call the Survey Hotline at 1-800-690-8603. The Survey Hotline will be able to provide you with survey access information to take the survey online. If you have additional questions about this year's survey, please review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) located [here](#).



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