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Latest News for Parents from the NYC Department of Education

PHOTOS BY: MAYORAL PHOTOGRAPHY OFFICE



SAT For All

Free SAT Access Beginning in Spring 2017

Last month, Chancellor Carmen Fariña announced that all New York City public high schools will soon offer the SAT exam free of charge to all high school juniors. Called SAT School Day, this new initiative is part of Mayor Bill de Blasio's previously announced College Access for All reforms. SAT School

Day will start in the spring of the 2016-17 school year, and will provide all of the City's juniors with access to the SAT test at their own schools during a designated school day.

This initiative is intended to remove equity and access barriers that research has shown to affect certain students. Studies

demonstrate that offering the SAT during school days helps to broaden opportunities for all students, particularly black and Latino students. Other school systems that have implemented programs similar to SAT School Day have seen higher four-year college attendance rates, particularly among first-

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“The opportunity to go to college should never be decided by students’ backgrounds or zip codes”

– Chancellor Carmen Fariña

generation, college-bound students.

“The new SAT School Day demonstrates our commitment to providing all of our students with the support and resources they need to pursue college,” said the Chancellor when announcing this initiative. “I only became the first person in my family to go to college because a teacher let me know it was an option; she supported me through the application and enrollment process so I could follow my dreams of becoming a teacher. All across NYC, our schools must offer students the College Access for All opportunities that can help them make good decisions and reach their potential.”

In addition to providing free SAT exams, the DOE will provide students with personalized SAT practice accounts on [Khan Academy](#), as well as college application fee waivers should they require them. While juniors

are taking SATs on SAT School Day, sophomores will take the PSAT, which will continue to be offered free of charge. The DOE will also work with high schools to implement other college access activities for students during SAT School Day, including trips to colleges for freshmen and college transition workshops for seniors.

The DOE piloted SAT School Day in spring 2015 by providing SAT exams to 6,000 students during

school days. In spring 2016, the DOE plans to have 15,000 high school juniors across 92 schools participate in another SAT School Day pilot. Together, these pilots will pave the way for a smooth and complete implementation of SAT School Day in spring 2017.

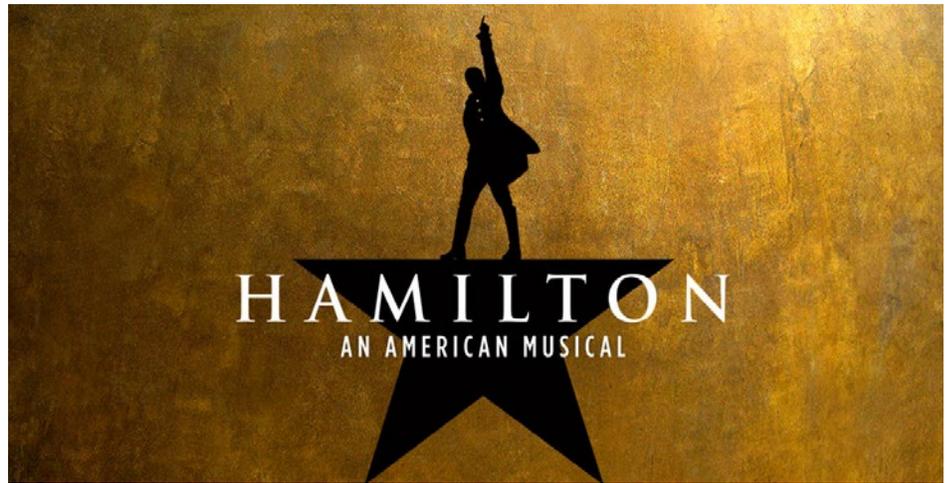
For more information about this new initiative, please see our [press release](#), and look out for updates in future editions of Public School Press.



20,000 Students to See Smash Broadway Hit, *Hamilton*

Next spring, 20,000 New York City public high school students will have the opportunity to see the critically acclaimed Broadway production, *Hamilton*. Written and directed by Tony Award winner Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton* is a hip-hop/R&B-infused biographical musical about Alexander Hamilton, one of the nation's most important Founding Fathers. This rousing and contemporary take on the American Revolution and the birth of the United States will provide our students with the opportunity to witness the infancy of our democracy while learning more about the major personalities that helped shape it.

Thanks to an educational partnership between the DOE, The Rockefeller Foundation, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and *Hamilton's* producers, tickets will cost only \$10 for students. Each ticket will provide admission to the play's Wednesday matinees some session will also be able to interact with members of the cast.



In addition to overseeing the distribution of tickets to school groups, Gilder Lehrman will develop the *Hamilton Study & Performance Guide*, an educational programming tool designed around the *Hamilton* experience for students and teachers. This guide will include an online *Hamilton* portal for students and teachers containing classroom materials that students can use to develop their own history-infused poems, raps, songs, theatrical scenes, and other works.

"Social studies has always been my passion, and this partnership will be

transformational for New York City kids," said Chancellor Carmen Fariña. "This musical will ignite curiosity and give teachers and students the opportunity to experience American history in a unique way while connecting to their class curricula and cultivating a deep love of learning."

The DOE is in the process of selecting the first group of participating high schools, including programs across the five boroughs with large numbers of students who are eligible for free/reduced lunch. The first exclusive student matinee will take place on April 13, 2016.

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PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

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DOE Kicks Off Major Literacy Initiative

On November 2, Chancellor Carmen Fariña [announced](#) a new multiyear citywide literacy effort called [NYC Reads 365](#). Building on the City's universal grade 2 literacy plan, as outlined in the Mayor's [Equity and Excellence speech](#), NYC Reads 365 will help foster students' enthusiasm for daily reading and drive momentum for the hiring and support of school-based reading experts. These reading experts will be identified and trained by the DOE this spring and placed in high-needs high schools beginning in fall 2016. They will be assigned to all elementary schools by fall 2018.

Through NYC Reads 365, schools are receiving citywide reading lists for pre-kindergarten through grade 12 that have been updated for the first time since 2008. These reading lists will continue to be updated every school year, and all schools will receive materials that celebrate the joy of reading for display throughout their buildings. Additionally, schools will be able to obtain resources through our NYC Reads 365 [webpage](#) that can help them integrate this literacy effort into their classrooms and encourage parents to promote and develop literacy at home. To power this initiative, the DOE is working



with the New York, Brooklyn, and Queens Public Libraries to ensure that the books we include on the reading lists are available to families throughout their branches across the City.

"Reading opens doors and expands opportunities for our children, in and out of the classroom," said Chancellor Fariña. "As we give New York City students and families resources to make daily reading a reality in their lives, I know that we are going to be a better City for it."

Parents will be important partners in this work, and they can expect further communications about this initiative during their November parent-teacher conferences and the [NYC Reads 365 website](#).

Parent to Parent with Yolanda Torres

Executive Director of the Division of Family and Community Engagement

Dear Parents:

Earlier this month, Chancellor Fariña announced the launch of [NYC Reads 365](#) to encourage all City students to read every day both inside and outside school. As a parent and grandparent myself, I cannot emphasize enough how important this initiative is for serving as an active partner in your child's education.



NYC Reads 365 provides you the chance to help your child become a lifelong learner while living up to this title yourself. Right now, students and families can easily review updated book lists and extensive resources that promote daily reading on our NYC Reads 365 [webpage](#). In addition, all City schools will receive ongoing literacy resources and training over the coming weeks and months. This will include new and age-appropriate reading lists, engaging posters and bookmarks, and developmental opportunities and supports for school staff members and parents.

Getting your children to read every day is exciting, but it can also be a bit daunting. I suggest that you start this transition by creating a space in your home that is cozy, welcoming to all family members, and provides a safe and warm place where a love of reading can be nurtured. Reading together in these kinds of settings promotes not just literacy, but it also provides you and your children the opportunity to slow down, disconnect from electronic devices, and discuss what you have read with minimal interruptions. Every day does not have to be perfect, but try to be consistent with your efforts. Create a routine where reading time is held at the same time and in the same space in your home every day to create a sense of security and structure.

Also, do not let language be a barrier to you or your children's love for literacy. You can read to your child in your native language; you can read picture books together; or, let your child read to you. Whichever approach you take, keep in mind that the most important thing about improving literacy is practice. You should consider your bilingualism an asset; you have every reason to be proud of your heritage and your first language! To make sure you pass these positive habits on to your children, make reading a priority for you and your children all year. Setting aside time to read together gives your child the opportunity to ask open-ended questions, share thoughts and feelings, and experience those precious unexpected moments when you laugh or learn something new about each other.

Finally, keep in mind that *you* are your child's first teacher, and you have so much to offer. Make space for literacy, create new routines, and ensure that family togetherness is a priority for all of you.

Let's keep the lines of communication open.

Best,

Yolanda Torres

Flight School

Written and illustrated by Lita Judge (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2014)

The penguin at the center of this charming story arrives at a flight school for birds, convinced he “was hatched to fly.” Teacher and Flamingo are skeptical—after all, everyone knows that penguins are flightless—but they allow him to stay for practice. Through perseverance, Penguin proves that while he may not be built to fly, thanks to “a little help with the technical parts,” he can soar on the wind—just not in the exact way he imagined.

After weeks of practice, Penguin’s big moment arrives. Through beautiful watercolor and pencil illustrations, we watch Penguin’s classmates take to the sky and then root for Penguin to do the same. However, instead of going up, Penguin falls into the ocean. Heartbroken, Penguin wonders how this can be. “In my heart, I live on the wind,” he thinks. And so, the flightless bird with “the soul of an eagle” heads home in defeat.



Suddenly, Flamingo has an idea and calls Penguin back to the flight school. He and Teacher tie strings of feathers around their pupil, and Flamingo pulls him into the sky. Before long, Penguin is soaring above the sea and the clouds, just as he did in his dreams.

Penguin doesn’t stay aloft long—after all, he still has the small, round body of a penguin. He does prove, however, that he does have the soul of an eagle.

His experience shows readers of all ages what can be accomplished with determination, support, and an unwavering belief in oneself.

This theme is easily relatable to our children and speaks to the importance of building confidence. Together, it is our job as parents and educators to help all of our young

people to fly. Instead of focusing on their limitations, we must listen to what is in their hearts and offer them the support they need to achieve their dreams.

Ultimately, we all have a responsibility to teach our young penguins to “live on the wind.” Given this powerful message, I trust that you and your children will love this book.

Warmly,

Carmen

Dates to Remember

Nov. 19 -20

High School: EVENING Parent Teacher Conference

Nov. 26 - Nov. 27

Thanksgiving Holiday (Schools closed)

Dec. 03

Pre-K Non-attendance Day

Dec. 07

Kindergarten application opens



Time to Nominate Excellent Teachers for the 2016 Big Apple Awards

In honor of all the hardworking teachers who inspire our students, strengthen their school communities, and serve as examples of great teaching, we are proud to announce the fourth annual Big Apple Awards.

Beginning this week, students, families, educators, and community members may nominate teachers on the Big Apple Awards [website](#) to be recognized for their work, passion, and dedication to their students and schools. Nominees for the Big Apple Awards must be current, full-time City public school teachers who have great teaching practices, improved their students' learning, and worked to make their schools better for students and their families. We are especially interested in recognizing teachers who work with grades 2, 7, and 10, as well as with students with special needs and English Language Learners.



Once the nomination period has ended, we will invite a select group of up to 1,000 nominees to complete applications for the awards. After reviewing applications, we will select 250 teachers to interview and visit their classrooms, and by June 2016, we will select up to 15 Big Apple Award winners. Teachers who are selected for the award will represent their colleagues citywide during the 2016-17 school year as Big Apple Fellows and members of the [Chancellor's Advisory Group](#).

"I encourage all of our students, families, and educators to nominate teachers who are making an impact in their schools and celebrate them with this well-deserved recognition," said Chancellor Carmen Fariña when announcing this year's awards.

Teachers can be nominated through January 18, 2016. Please visit our [Big Apple Awards website](#) to learn more and to submit your nominations.

City's First "Net-Zero" Energy School Opens in Staten Island

Earlier this year, the DOE opened one of the most technologically-advanced elementary schools ever constructed in the United States right on Staten Island's South Shore. The Kathleen Grimm School for Leadership and Sustainability at Sandy Ground, or P.S. 62, is New York City's first ever "net-zero" energy school. This means it has been designed to produce as much energy as it consumes. The 68,000 square foot facility generates energy with solar panels, geothermal wells, and a wind turbine while serving as a hands-on laboratory where students can learn about sustainability, environmental innovation, and natural food production.

Named after the late former DOE deputy chancellor of operations, P.S. 62 will serve as template for future building design as the City seeks an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

"What a wonderful way to honor Kathleen's legacy, her tremendous leadership, and her unwavering commitment to the students she served," said Chancellor Fariña during the school's official dedication ceremony on October 22. "Everything is a teachable moment, and with this net-zero energy building, students will have a hands-on opportunity to learn about sustainability and to draw lessons that will serve them their whole lives."

To learn more about this innovative school, please visit P.S. 62's official website [here](#).

Parent Leader Corner

Parent/Parent-Teacher Associations (PA/PTA) & Presidents' Councils

As you begin planning and arranging fundraising activities this year, please keep in mind the following guidelines:

Complete a [Fundraising Activity Report](#) no more than five school days after each fundraising activity and file it with the principal (for PA/PTA) or superintendent (for Presidents' Council). Financial records documenting all income and expenses related to fundraising activities should always be maintained by the PA/PTA and be available for inspection by members upon request.

Follow these financial practices, which should be spelled out in your PA/PTA bylaws:

- ▶ At least two PA/PTA members must count funds on the same day they are received.
- ▶ PA/PTA members who are counting/handling funds cannot be related by blood/marriage.
- ▶ PA/PTA financial records should display the total amount of funds and signatures of all counters.
- ▶ Documentation such as cancelled checks and deposit receipts should be kept at school.
- ▶ Do not collect fundraiser proceeds from any student without principal's written approval.
- ▶ Make sure bank deposits are authorized by at least two members.
- ▶ Keep un-deposited funds in a locked location at school only.

Also, please remember that per [Chancellor's Regulation A-660](#), "proceeds from fundraisers

must be used to supplement or complement the educational, social and cultural programs of schools, districts, or boroughs."

Community/Citywide Education Councils (CCECs)

Have you scheduled your quarterly joint-meeting? Community Education Councils and Presidents' Councils should meet once per quarter to discuss engagement and potential challenges in their districts.

CCEC Resources

Are you looking for CCEC meeting templates, the CCEC Orientation Guide or translated meeting notices? Please visit the [2015 CCEC Resource Materials page](#) to find everything you need.

CCEC Website Survey

Take this quick survey [here](#) to let us know about your council's web presence or needs for creating a website.

CCEC Meetings

To learn when your district's Community or Citywide Education Council meets, [contact](#) your council or [email](#) FACE.

GET INVOLVED!

Want to get involved in your school community as a parent leader? Have suggestions for Parent Leader Corner? Contact FACE at (212) 374-4118 or CCECinfo@schools.nyc.gov.