

Chancellor's Message

Dear Colleagues,

During this season of giving and thanks I am reflecting on how grateful I am for your service in support of our students. As I look back at my first year as Chancellor, I have been continually impressed by the generosity of spirit you have shown me, your colleagues, and most importantly our students. When I think of your work in classrooms across the City, I am reminded of this quote:

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit." - Aristotle

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Tips for Engaging Families

Discover new ideas to build and strengthen relationships with parents during the 40 minutes of dedicated parent engagement time each week.

[Read More](#)

Showcase School Visits

Hear from your colleagues in their own words about this new professional learning opportunity.

[Read More](#)

Students & Winter Break

Discover ways to keep your students engaged over the break and ideas from your colleagues to re-engage after they return to the classroom.

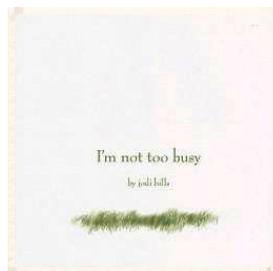
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Talking about Current Events

Current events often make their way into our classrooms; in light of recent events, I want to reiterate that our goal is to help students learn and grow.

[Read More](#)

Spotlight



I'm Not Too Busy

(Tristan Publishing, 2007)

Written and illustrated by Jodi Hills

As the holidays approach, we are often puzzled by what presents we should give, and sometimes, what we'd like to receive. This season's book, *I'm Not Too Busy*, reminds us that the most important gift we can give to others and even ourselves is time: time to spend together, time to be joyful, time to reminisce, and time to reflect on our accomplishments and what we hope to achieve in the coming year.

[Read More](#)

Barbara Freeman, Superintendent of Community School District 13, discusses her new role and why it's great for our kids.

[Read More](#)

IDNYC

New government-issued photo ID launches in January.

[Read More](#)

Inspired by a Great Teacher? Nominate a Colleague for the Big Apple Awards

The [Big Apple Awards](#) celebrate the hard work and dedication of all New York City public school teachers. When I first started my teaching career, my fellow teachers at P.S. 29 had a tremendous impact on my professional growth and development. I encourage you to [nominate](#) a colleague who has made a significant impact on your career for this prestigious opportunity.



Big Apple recipients receive a classroom grant and serve on my advisory group. I've been meeting with this year's group of educators and have greatly enjoyed speaking with them about what is going on in their schools and in our City.

For more information, [visit](#) the Big Apple Awards webpage, or [email](#) the Teacher Excellence team. Nominations must be submitted by January 19.



Chancellor's Message

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"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit." - Aristotle

Your excellence is demonstrated every day, throughout the year. I am thankful for your dedication to our students, to your practice, and to your growth. Without your commitment and excellence we would not have had this transformative year. I am proud of our expansion of high-quality, full-day [pre-k to more than 53,000 children](#). I am thrilled that we are opening [new Community Schools](#) with wrap-around services for students, families, and the community. And I am committed to the [new approach to school improvement](#) that supports schools and sees closing them as a last resort. You have also embraced [new professional learning](#) opportunities and shown an inspiring combination of commitment and creativity when [engaging with our families](#).

These system-wide accomplishments represent all of your accomplishments - in classrooms and within your school communities - throughout the year. Thank you for your excellence this year. I encourage you take a moment to celebrate these achievements within your school communities and [write](#) to share what you are most proud of this year.

Together we work every day to meet the whole needs of every child, engage parents and families, and grow and collaborate as educators and leaders within our communities in order to raise student achievement.

Let's look ahead to a new year full of possibility and opportunities to continue to make a meaningful impact on our students' lives.

"If you get, give. If you learn, teach." - Maya Angelou

With thanks,

Carmen

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Tips for 40 Minutes: Engaging Families Every Week

Every Tuesday, of every week, teachers are deepening their relationships with families. The 40 minutes of parent engagement time is a crucial element of our [Capacity Framework](#), and there's no question that our parents and educators are invested in its purpose.

The examples highlighted below to utilize this time are proof of the strong and creative practices in our schools.



HOMWORK DINER

P.S. 69 Journey Prep School, Bronx * Grades PK-5

During **Homework Diner**, the entire school staff meets with parents to offer guidance and strategies for making sure kids complete their homework. Afterwards, parents, students, teachers, and staff all share a healthy dinner prepared by the school's wellness chef.



P.S. 29 COMMITTEES

P.S. 29 John M. Harrigan, Brooklyn * Grades PK-5

Members of the P.S. 29 community have a wide variety of interests, so the school created a **network of committees** around meaningful themes. Staff members and parents may join any of the 20 committees - including the Green Committee and the Technology Committee - to deepen their participation in improving or addressing the needs of the school community. Committees

welcome their members at the start of the year with an annual fair and continue to grow together throughout the year.



THE HOUSE LEAGUE PROGRAM

J.H.S. 67 Louis Pasteur, Queens * Grades 6-8

Every Tuesday afternoon, J.H.S. 67 gives parents an opportunity to meet with all of their child's teachers at once. These individualized meetings between a parent and what is referred to as their child's "**house**" last 20 minutes. As the meeting is taking place, one teacher takes notes and provides them to parents upon departure to assist with their child's academic progress and achievement.



PARENT-TEACHER HOME VISITS

J.H.S. 50 John D. Wells, Brooklyn * Grades 6-8

Through a new **home visits program**, incoming parents at six middle schools had the opportunity to welcome their 6th graders' new teachers into their homes. Teachers, in turn, personally welcomed their new students and families into their classrooms and addressed their questions and concerns.



CURRICULUM PROJECT

The Highbridge Green School, Bronx * Grades 6-8

Parents at the new Highbridge Green School are directly involved in deciding what their children learn. Departments invite parents to **curriculum planning meetings** for the school year and encourage them to offer feedback to their children's teachers.



BILINGUAL PARENT BREAKFAST

P.S. 79 Horan School, Manhattan * Grades 7-12

English Language Learner families at P.S. 79 are welcomed into the school community through **breakfasts held in their native languages**. These predominantly Spanish-speaking families are introduced to school staff with the help of interpreters and are included in the school's future planning and goal setting.



SIP AND SHARE

The Michael J. Petrides School, Staten Island * Grades PK-12

Every Tuesday, the **Sip and Share** program brings parents together over coffee to hear from a featured guest. Guests have included members of the faculty and staff as well as community leaders, who offer classes, workshops, and talks based on interests expressed by parents.

Share your success!

* Let us know if one of these ideas worked for you and how you made it your own.

* Your ideas may be featured in the next quarterly *Teacher Notes*, on the [40 Minutes](#) webpage, or in the handbook of best practices we are preparing.

* Send your practices and ideas to 40Minutes@schools.nyc.gov.

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Showcase School Visits

Throughout my career, when I visit a classroom and see something great happening, my first instinct is to tell as many people as I can about what I observed and discovered. As a teacher, that often meant walking across the hall and talking to share with a colleague, introducing my discovery in a grade-team meeting, or even calling up a teacher friend who taught in another district. As a principal, I put a high value on inter-visitations for my teachers and carved out time for them to visit other classrooms both within my school and with teachers across the City.

As Chancellor, I created the [Showcase School](#) initiative to ensure any teacher in the City has the opportunity and time to observe really interesting and powerful work in one of our 17 Showcase schools. The concept of Showcase Schools represents a key element of the [Capacity Framework](#) - **Collaborative Teachers** - the idea that our students succeed when our teachers have opportunities to develop, grow, and learn from peers and experts. This is one of the many ways we are putting the focus on what is happening into the classroom, and how we are transforming teaching and learning for every student in New York City.

The first round of Showcase School visits took place this fall. I was excited to kick off the visits at the [Dual Language Middle School](#) in Manhattan. Principal Caitlin Caldwell and her school community showed us how collaborative planning and careful data analysis lead to support for all students. I saw collaboration first hand, as educators exchanged ideas and learned from one another, and I was grateful to hear from those who attended.

Three teachers who visited Showcase Schools this fall took time after their school days to share their experiences:

Denyse Greenidge Visits East Side Community High School (Manhattan)

Learning Focus Area: Teacher Development through School Culture



Denyse Greenidge
Special Education Teacher
7th grade ELA (ICT setting)
4 years teaching
M.S. 267 Math, Science & Technology, Bedford-Stuyesant, Brooklyn

What did you notice?

*The visit really highlighted for me that reading is a **social activity** and that there is value in building relationships around reading. I learned how important it is to match students to the right books and to **offer the students choice**. It's also important to give students time to read, which is done daily at East Side during their reading workshop.*

Next steps?

*I was inspired to return to my home school and work tirelessly to ensure that we became a community of readers...**we are a tight-knit community at MS 267**, so it was easy to have daily conversations expressing to them the urgency of matching students to books and ensuring that it is across content areas.*

*I also started **matching students to books** in which characters faced similar situations as my students. For example, I encouraged one of my male students to read the book ['Locomotion'](#) by Jacqueline Woodson because a gang was targeting him. He was able to relate to the book and find strategies to deal with and discuss the issues he faced. I am also in the process of working with the after-school program to access additional high interest books for our students.*

Want to visit [East Side Community High School](#)?
Their next Showcase Schools visit is on February 4; [register here!](#)

Lauren Donner Visits P.S. 69 Vincent D. Grippo School (Brooklyn)

Learning Focus Area: Robust Arts Program



Lauren Donner

Visual Arts Specialist
All elementary grade levels
25 years teaching
P.S. 245, Ditmas Park, Brooklyn

What did you notice?

*In a kindergarten class, I noticed children drawing on a shared mural using oil pastels as a way to deepen their understanding of non-fiction books. We also visited a fourth-grade class where a teacher was using collage as a way to explore a medieval stained glass window about the life of Richard the Third. This project was done to help students bring to life a person they had studied in their readings. This was a very challenging project for the students and the teacher. I thought that both of these classrooms offered models for **learning opportunities that could be shared** with the teachers in my school.*

Next steps?

*We are defining the role of arts in our school community. At P.S. 69, visual arts, music, and musical theater are all integrated into the school community and many of the things that I saw today would be useful in our school. As a visual art specialist myself, I was able to see how the arts specialist can become an advocate, as well as a supporter, of arts instruction throughout the school ... **I'm bringing what I learned back to my school** through an upcoming PD Monday presentation on integrating arts into social studies.*

Want to visit [P.S. 69](#)? Their next Showcase Schools visit is on January 14; [register here!](#)

Christine Ordonez Visits P.S. 71 Rose E. Scala (Bronx)

Learning Focus Area: Middle School Social Studies



Christine Ordonez
Humanities Teacher
Grades 6, 7 & 8
2 years teaching
P.S./I.S. 262 Ocean Hill, Brooklyn

What did you notice?

*In their social studies classes, they push **understanding the concept and going for a deeper analysis**, similar to what we are trying to do. However, they are doing something I didn't think of in terms of pushing kids - promoting ELA in a social studies classroom. For example, the students examine texts in social studies and intertwine those with content from other classes. It's helping me make the relationship between multiple subjects in my school as well ... **[The visit] made me love my job even more.***

Next steps?

*I gave our ELA teacher - I'm the only social studies teacher in this middle school - the resources on [visual thinking strategies](#) and said, **'We can spin it in a way for ELA** and co-teach and co-lesson plan. This way the students can get the concepts twice, in both ELA and social studies.'*

*I've already introduced the **vocabulary graffiti walls**. I assign each student a different word from the unit and they draw an image that represents the vocabulary word and provides the definition. This gives us the word, a definition, and an image. Their drawing pushes what they are learning. It has gone wonderfully. The students asked as why we haven't been doing this all along. I said, 'Don't worry, we are going to!'*

Want to visit [P.S. 71](#)? Their next Showcase Schools visit is on January 29; [register here!](#)

The next round of [Showcase School](#) visits will begin in January. There are 17 Showcase Schools. I encourage you to find one that is a match for your learning interests and [sign up](#) for an upcoming visit.

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Students & Winter Break

While we know that school breaks present challenges in the continuity of learning, we also recognize that time with families and time for celebration are just as important. I encourage students and families to take this opportunity to learn together and enjoy the wonderful resources that our City has to offer.

The Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning has prepared some engaging

activities that will help promote children's learning over winter break. Click [here](#) for more on the following topics:

- * Fun Family Activities for Young Children
- * More Opportunities to Take Advantage of New York City
- * Activities to Support Reading and Information Literacy
- * Ways to Help Children Develop and Strengthen Their Math Skills at Home
- * Science Family Activities
- * Social Studies Activities

To minimize the challenges to transitioning back to classroom learning after a long break, in the September issue of [Teacher Notes](#) I asked you to share your most effective strategies for engaging and managing students after winter break. Here are some of the strategies you shared:

Elementary I **celebrate that my students are back**; speaking one-on-one with them, I tell them at least one thing I missed about them. - Michelle D., Brooklyn

A **"chat show"** in which one student is the host and the other is the guest. We practice "good audience behavior" through turn-taking and I learn what motivates each student. - Lynn M., Manhattan

Middle Before we go on break, I **remind students of my expectations** for the first day back. Some may come unprepared for class, but I always have enough supplies to meet their needs - pencils, notebooks, etc. - so that it is business as usual. - Wendy G., Brooklyn

When I return from a break of any kind, I spend about **10 minutes talking with my students** about how they spent their time off. It shows I care, provides me with insight into their lives and interests and helps transition us into a sharing/caring community again. - Maribeth W., the Bronx

High School I feel it is important for the teacher to **review where you have been and preview where you are going**. - Joseph Z., Queens

A game modeled on speed dating that we call **speed learning!** The students go through their previous notes and create one question to pose to their fellow students. Students pair up and answer each other's prepared question. - David D., Manhattan

Talking About Current Events

Current events often make their way into our classrooms; in light of recent events, I want to reiterate that our goal is to help students learn and grow. I recently wrote to principals to share suggestions for working with young adults around positive ways of expressing themselves during this time. I know many of your school leaders have already shared the teacher-led strategies and additional resources they have found effective in the past. I want to take the time to also provide you with resources to ensure we are all prepared to support our young adult students during difficult times.

Below are some suggestions for working with young adults around positive ways of expressing themselves during this time:

- Prepare lessons to engage students in rich discussions and critical analysis, allowing students to express their concerns and emotions in a respectful manner.
- Use the parent engagement time on Tuesdays to help parents answer questions their children may raise and discuss coping strategies to use at home.
- Share the [U.N.'s Human Rights Day website](#) with your students as a resource to provide context and community for global, national, and local events as well as issues that have impact close to home.
- To ensure students' safety, ask your school staff to be extra vigilant throughout the day.
- For more information on how to talk to students, please see the Family Resources section on the [Guidance Portal Crisis Support Resources page](#).

If you need more specific resources or to talk privately, I encourage you to reach out to your school leader.

As adults, we know that there are many positive ways to respond to complex situations that result in greater insight and understanding; current events can be a great learning experience for the entire school community.

Thank you for your commitment to the academic, social, and emotional well-being of our students.

Spotlight on: Superintendent Barbara Freeman

Superintendents play a critical role in our schools and communities. They work collaboratively with network leaders and district staff to ensure that their district's instructional, operational, and parental needs are met. In July, all superintendents were required to go through a new, more rigorous application process. In October, I was delighted to welcome 42 new and continuing superintendents, including Barbara Freeman, who answered some questions about her role.



This is Ms. Freeman's fourth year as a superintendent of District 13, which covers Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn Heights, Clinton Hill, Fort Greene, Park Slope and Prospect Heights in Brooklyn. Prior to holding this position, she was an early childhood teacher, assistant principal, and principal of P.S./M.S. 161 in Harlem for 12 years. The school was awarded the National School Change Award in 2007.

How is the role of superintendent changing? How will teachers feel the impact of those changes?

There is a sense of community that provides the structures that make stronger relationships possible. I feel that we are aligned with all of central's big initiatives, such as implementation of full-day pre-kindergarten. We also have the opportunity to strengthen geographical ties with the schools in different networks that have not had the opportunity to build relationships with neighboring schools. Teachers will experience a more visible superintendent who will be part of the larger school communities that makeup the district. They will experience cross-school collaborations and professional development as well as district focused support for social-emotional and behavioral initiatives.

During your school visits this year, what are some examples of strong teacher practices you have had the chance to observe?

I have seen some incredible work in schools. For example, teachers are really increasing opportunities for students to talk and discuss big ideas, even in our kindergarten and first grade classes. Teachers are also asking questions that require students to respond in more complex and detailed ways. It has also been great to see that teachers are building classrooms in which students support each other as learners.

What do you consider your most important successes as a superintendent?

Our schools are located in Brooklyn's technology mecca and we want to take full advantage of those resources. We are in the midst of a great partnership with the New York University Polytechnical School of Engineering, which provides after-school services to our middle school students in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and we are working with other partners on computer science curriculum and coding.

What are your biggest challenges?

As with everything, we would love to add more hours to the day. We are now looking at ways the district can provide more options for our families. I am also collaborating with my superintendent counterpart Karen Watts for the high school to build a K-12 pipeline for students interested in pursuing such areas as STEM, dual language, and the performing arts.

Having walked in the shoes of a teacher, and as a career educator, what words of wisdom or lessons learned would you like to share with teachers across the City?

It is very important to remain a learner throughout your career. I have found that keeping an open mind has been a huge asset. As systems change we also have to be flexible and reflective on how we adapt to new situations. All situations are learning opportunities - take from them what makes you a better educator and before you know it you have a wealth of expertise unique to you.

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IDNYC: A Valuable Resource for Your Students

The new government-issued photo identification card will give New Yorkers access to City services and programs, including many cultural and educational benefits. [The IDNYC card](#), for example, can be used as a library card at the Brooklyn, New York, and Queens library systems.

Cardholders also will get a free one-year membership at 33 of the City's leading museums, zoos, concert halls, and botanical gardens, including the [Museum of Natural History](#), [the Bronx Zoo](#), the [Brooklyn Academy of Music](#), and the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#). (For a complete list of cultural institutions and benefits, please [visit this searchable section of the IDNYC website](#).) This card offers all New Yorkers a great way to explore the arts, history, and social studies outside the classroom.

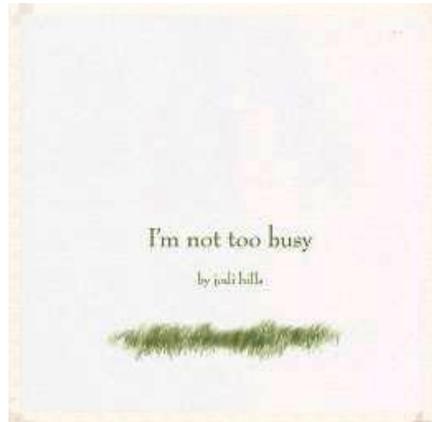


I share [Mayor Bill de Blasio's](#) enthusiasm for this program as it brings much-needed services and programs to the most vulnerable New Yorkers. The ID is available to the homeless, youth, the elderly, undocumented immigrants, the formerly incarcerated, and others who may have difficulty obtaining other government-issued ID.

To get an ID, New York City residents age 14 and older can simply submit an application with proof of identity and residency in person at an IDNYC Enrollment Center. Many types of documents are accepted, all of which are listed [here](#). Acceptable documents include DOE transcripts, DOE student ID cards, and letters from the DOE for proof of residency in New York City for students or parents. The application process will be accessible to people with limited English proficiency and people with disabilities. For more information, you may refer families [here](#).

Book of the Season

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



Dear Readers,

During the holidays, we are often puzzled by what presents we should give, and sometimes, what we'd like to receive. This season's book, ***I'm Not Too Busy***, reminds us that the most important gift we can give to others and even ourselves is time: time to spend together, time to be joyful, time to reminisce, and time to reflect on our accomplishments and what we hope to achieve in the coming year.

As author Jodi Hills notes, time isn't speeding up; we are, and our urgency to get there first has consequences.

She laments:

I could have gone for coffee with the same friends I've cancelled on three previous times...

...lives are penciled in, easily erased by the next big event...

Birthdays are belated.

Hearts and families are replaced with 'we'd really love to stay, but...'

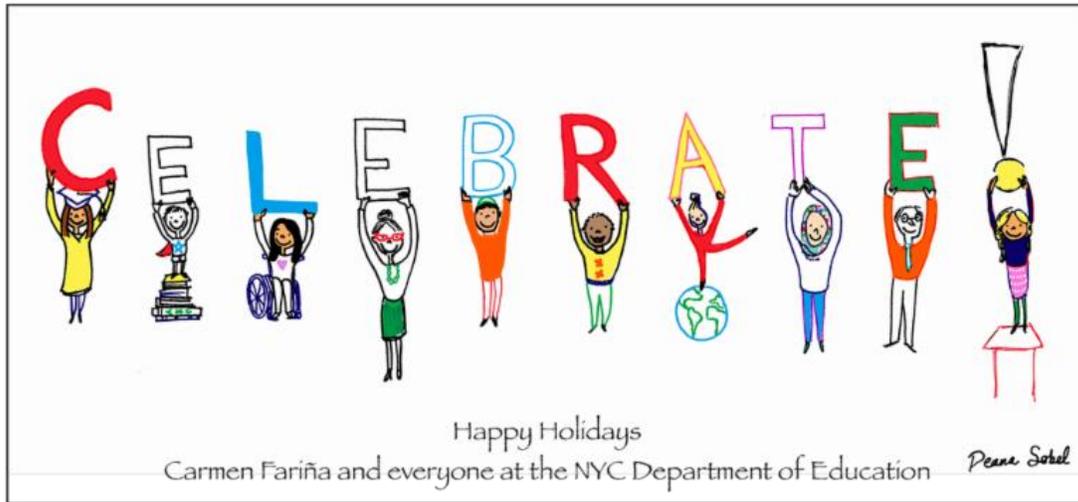
These are statements I have made many times in my life; I imagine you have as well. It is far too easy to put off those who are dearest to us, and it is something we almost always regret.

This holiday season, I am giving the gift of time to myself and the people who are important to me: my husband, children, grandchildren, and close friends. As this heart-tugging book states, "We have to choose to slow down, to actually see the time and space we're in...to truly see people and accept them in their priceless moments."

This holiday and throughout the year, let us remember to take time for those we love.

Warmly,

Carmen



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