

Teacher NOTES

Chancellor's Message

Dear Teachers,

As you prepare to close out the school year, I want to encourage you to look forward and think about your own continuing professional learning and growth.

In May, I shared [A Vision for School Improvement](#) with your principal at the Chancellor's Principals' Conference. The Vision honors the work you do every day, and I am asking you to use this document to guide your improvement and continued learning as an educator

As you explore the Vision below, you will find that much of it feels familiar and builds on the learning processes your community has engaged in over the past several years.

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Celebrating Teaching Excellence: Big Apple Fellowship Award Recipients

Earlier this week I had the honor and pleasure of celebrating this year's Big Apple Fellowship Award Finalists and the [Award Recipients](#) at an event at the grand New York County Supreme Courthouse in Manhattan. This annual event is the [culmination of a year-long process](#) that shines a spotlight on thousands of teachers across the City who are doing inspiring work in the classroom each day. Great work needs to be recognized. Every year I am thrilled by the increase in nominations of teachers by parents, students, and school community members. My spirit is touched each time I hear one of these stories. And I hope one day to hear your story.

I look forward to welcoming this year's Award Recipients as the 2015-16 Big Apple Fellows: **Lauren Bakian, Denise Clarke, Rhonda Corin, Margaret Diercks-Henfling, Joan Fiorillo, Nicole Kasbar,**



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Rick Ouimet, Shani Perez, Audrey Rabi Whitaker, Samantha Schwartz, Melisa Stoller, and Jonathan Young. I also invite you to see the inspiring work of the 2013-14 Big Apple Fellows through this ["Ed Talk" video series](#).



**Mayor Bill de Blasio, Big Apple Award Recipients
and Chancellor Carmen Fariña**
Photo Credit: Herman Van den Brandt

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who would make a
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Chancellor's Message (Continued)

THE VISION FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Below are the three steps of [The Vision for School Improvement](#). Work with your principal on these steps to improve your practice and your school:

As a community, develop a shared understanding of the *Framework for Great Schools*



Step One: As a community, develop a shared understanding of the *Framework for Great Schools*.

This means:

In small-group and whole-group conversations, discuss how each of the *Framework's* six elements, and the overall *Framework*, support student learning.

These activities and resources can support you in this step:

- [Guiding questions for Step One](#)
- [Exploring A Vision for School Improvement](#)
- [Exploring the Framework for Great Schools](#)
- [Exploring research: Organizing Schools for Improvement](#)
- [Connecting the Framework to NYC Case Studies](#)
- [Aligning across the DOE](#)

Assess needs and establish goals



Step Two: Assess needs and establish goals.

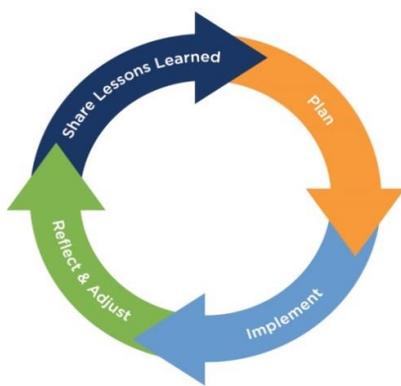
This means:

Every year, each school community engages in a comprehensive needs assessment and goal-setting process. Collaboratively agree on a small number of high-impact goals that span the *Framework* elements. Consider how your school community might build on its strengths to address *Framework* elements you want to develop further.

These activities and resources can support you in this step:

- [Guiding questions for Step Two](#)
- [Conducting a needs assessment](#)
- [Instructional Focus development tool](#)

Engage in cycles of learning



Step Three: Engage in cycles of learning

This means:

Aim to achieve each high-impact goal collaboratively by investigating root causes and identifying changes to target one aspect of the goal. As you try the change, collect evidence of success. Then reflect on the impact of the change and adjust plans. As a school community, ensure you capture your successes and failures in order to continuously learn.

These activities and resources can support you in this step:

- [Exploring research: Learning to Improve](#)

- [A Handbook for Professional Learning](#) and [accompanying activities](#)
- [Keynote from Dr. Louis Gomez at Chancellor's Principal Conference](#)

My hope is that this introduction to [A Vision for School Improvement](#), coupled with direction from your principal, will prepare you to be involved in the changes in your school community in the fall. Take the summer to rest and rejuvenate and use this document as a guide when you return and prepare for the 2015-16 school year. By engaging in these steps as a community of learners, together we can continue to strengthen instruction for all of our students.

Warmly,

Carmen

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Summer Reading List 2015: Teacher-to-Teacher Recommendations

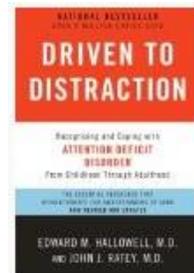
When I was teaching, at the end of every school year, I would make a list of the books I wanted to read that summer based on recommendations from colleagues, mentors, and my school leaders. We spoke with some of your colleagues across the City to hear what they have been reading and are looking forward to reading this summer. We hope you find one or two books you'd like to add to your summer reading list.

Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder (2011) Hallowell & Ratey

"I am looking forward to reading *Driven to Distraction* this summer because I have quite a few students who have been recently diagnosed with ADD or ADHD, and I'm excited to help them learn to work with their unique brains to create amazing things."

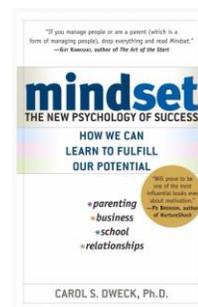


Nkomo Morris
Brooklyn Community Arts and Media High School
Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn
Grade 11, ELA, U.S. History, Computer Science



Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (2006) Dweck

"I am looking forward to reading Carol Dweck's book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, because I am interested in learning how to cultivate a growth mindset in my students."

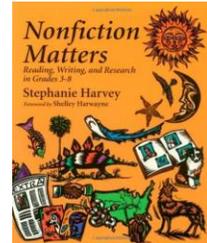




Nathalie De La Mota
M.S. 319, Manhattan
ESL Specialist, Literacy

Nonfiction Matters: Reading, Writing, and Research in Grades 3-8
(1998) Harvey

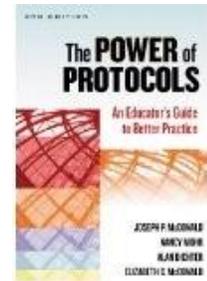
"*Nonfiction Matters* has provided me with engaging practices to help students deepen their comprehension with nonfiction text. I reference this book all the time to help me with my instructional strategies and share with teachers in my school."



Nicole Vairo
KAPPA III, The Bronx
Grade 6, Literacy
Peer Instructional Coach

The Power of Protocols: An Educator's Guide to Better Practice
(2013 edition) McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald

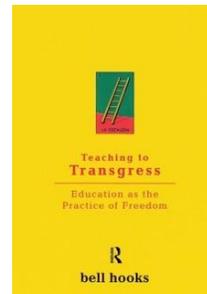
"I have incorporated many of the protocols from *The Power of Protocols* into my daily instructions. It increases student independence and makes them more accountable for their learning."



Emmanuela Remy
Renaissance School of the Arts, Manhattan
Grades 6 and 8, ELA
Model Teacher and Data Specialist

Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom
(1994 edition) Hooks

"*Teaching to Transgress* has inspired me to critically reflect on how I was taught as a New York City public school student and how I now facilitate learning for my students in my own classroom. Our students come to us with very diverse backgrounds and it is our job to create the conditions that foster learning for all students!"

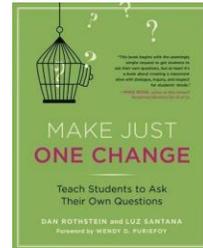




Karima Hughes Maurice
Bronx Writing Academy, The Bronx
Grade 8, ELA
Peer Instructional Coach

Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions
(2011) Rothstein & Santana

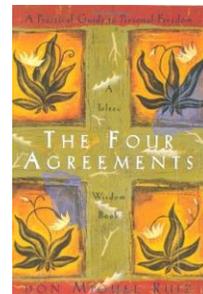
"In *Make Just One Change* I discovered smart ways to implement the Question Formulation Technique in our Humanities classroom. Our classroom environment has evolved and student-generated questioning has led to increased productivity and engagement."



Linda Fisher
Isaac Newton Middle School for Math and
Science, Manhattan
Grade 7, Humanities

The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom
(1997) Ruiz

"*The Four Agreements* has had a tremendous impact on my teaching by showing me that everyone I come in contact with has their own set of truths that is a result of their experiences and rearing. Being able to respect those truths, my interactions with everyone —from students to administrators —have become authentic and compassionate."



Dayniah Manderson
Urban Assembly Academy of Civic
Engagement, the Bronx
Grade 8 Teacher

Looking for more books to add to your summer reading list? The following websites and publications have compiled lists you might be interested in:

- ASCD's 2015 [Summer Reading List for Teachers](#)
- Edutopia's 2015 [Summer Reading List: 5 Books on Professional Development](#)
- [TED-Ed's super summer reading list: 40+ books recommended by our educators](#)

- [The Washington Post's 2014 Summer reading list for and by teachers](#)

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Curriculum Guides

Click [here](#) to see a list of publications and resources to support school leaders and teachers in providing high quality, standards based, rigorous curriculum that affords students opportunities to develop deep understanding.

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Summer 2015 Professional Development: Focus on Common Core Curriculum

As an educator, I've always used the summer months to reflect on the content areas and skills I develop over the course of the school year, and areas for continued growth. There are a wide variety of ways to grow your skills and content knowledge over the summer. I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight Core Curriculum PDs taking place during July and August for schools using the Core Curriculum programs: HMH, ReadyGen, Go Math! Code X, and CMP3.

- **Event Date(s) & Time:** Various from Monday, July 6 - Friday, August 28
- **Time:** 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- **Registration Deadline:** Rolling, closes 2 business days before the start date for each session.
- **For more information:** [Review the overview](#) or the per session vacancy [circular #557R](#)



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Pride Month

Help Students Be Themselves

New York City has the most diverse school system in the entire country. Students, families, and staff bring an incredibly wide range of backgrounds and cultures.

When we think of diversity, we often immediately think of religion, ethnicity, or language. But it's important to remember that this diversity includes the way that people-and students in particular-identify and see themselves.



This month is National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) Pride Month. This is a good time to remind your community that schools must be places that embrace all students for who they are, and ensure that they feel safe, comfortable, and supported.

However, the reality is that many young people feel afraid to share who they are or what they are feeling. In fact, nationally, over half of LGBTQ students feel unsafe at school because of how they identify. This leads to one out of every three students missing a day of school. Students may be afraid to express themselves because of a personal experience they had, or because of an experience they witnessed. But teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, and other school staff can serve as trusted adults for students to talk to, even if that just means being able to say out loud who they are and what they feel.

The Office of Safety and Youth Development and its program, Respect for All, helps support the diversity of students and schools. All members of our school communities need to know what kind of support is available to LGBTQ students at all schools. All schools should ensure the following:

- A Respect for All staff member in every public school who students can talk to. This person should be listed on Respect for All posters displayed throughout the school.
- Safe spaces for students to find support with LGBTQ issues.
- A parent- or parent-teacher organization that embraces same-sex families and transgender parents. Messages to students' homes should not assume "mom and dad" in their greeting.
- LGBTQ suicide prevention hot line number ([Trevor Project](#), 1-866-488-7386) and gay affirming resources visible for students at school without needing to ask a counselor.
- Access to the [Respect for All \(RFA\)](#) web site.

Additionally, there are [transgender student guidelines](#) to guide school policy and culture, and many schools encourage a Gay Straight Alliance organization. Professional development is also offered to dispel myths and guide staff in ways to support and protect their LGBTQ students.

We have a great responsibility to nurture the most inclusive and open-minded school culture. It is my hope that all students can be honest with their feelings and identities and can entrust their communities in receiving respect and acceptance.

I encourage you to become an advocate for students in your school. It all starts with listening.

For resources to support you as you include the experiences of the LGBTQ community in June, and year round, please click [here](#).

DOE's LGBTQ supports and guidance provided and administered by
the Office of Guidance and School Counseling.

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Welcoming New Teachers in September: How Will You Support Them?

On September 9, over 5,000 new teachers will open their classroom doors for the first time in a New York City public school. Some have taught in other districts or states. Some are career changers. And many have just graduated and are entering the classroom full-time for the first time. We have all been in their shoes, felt the same excitement, the same trepidation, and wondered who to go to with our many questions.

I have *Eight Golden Rules* for new teachers:

1. Be enthusiastic
2. Be energetic
3. Be empathetic
4. Be involved
5. Be engaged (and engage your students!)
6. Provide enrichment
7. Provide encouragement
8. Demonstrate your keen intellect at all times

Just as I hold new teachers to high standards, I also expect current teachers to support our new colleagues as they work to meet those high standards. Be welcoming and encouraging, especially new teachers need someone to talk to. As you get to know them —perhaps over coffee—you'll learn their different needs. You have many resources to offer: open your classrooms for inter-visitations, offer materials or advice, and work together to develop systems across your school to best to support your new colleagues.

There are a variety of supports for new teachers, including [school-based mentoring](#), and a new suite of online resources on the Teacher Page launching this fall. Formal mentors are just one crucial resource for new teachers; the entire school community needs to embrace them.

As a veteran teacher and part of an established learning community, you are a key part of the development and journey of the new teachers in your schools.

Who is better positioned to share how to make an impact than teachers currently finishing their first year? We spoke with two "new" teachers who shared their experiences of the past year.

"The teachers at P.S. 516 invited me into their classrooms, opened up their toolkits, modeled strategies during planning meetings, and constantly checked in with smiles and open arms to see how they could continue to support me.

Inter-visitations allowed me to envision how I could confidently merge my own style of instruction with my school's curricular expectations.

I spent a lot of time in the beginning of the year buried in work in my classroom. The veteran teachers in my school took it upon themselves to enter my classroom to chat about my day, share materials, or explain a new lesson."



Shari Kornblatt

P.S. 516

Kindergarten Teacher

Sunset Park, Brooklyn



Brian Andre

Bushwick Community High School
Transfer High School
Math (Integrated Algebra)
Bushwick, Brooklyn

"During those first few months, the biggest thing that stood out to me was just my colleagues' availability. Simply having other teachers be there, offering help with students, exchanging classroom ideas, and acting as sounding boards for my ideas, complaints, trials and successes.

Veteran teachers have such awe-inspiring power. I looked at the veteran teachers at Bushwick Community High School to gauge how I should act in the classroom, what I should teach, how I should communicate with administrators. My colleagues set a great example for me as an educator."

Your impact on the students in your school community extends beyond your classroom. When you make a difference in the growth and development of a new teacher, you make an impact in the education of his or her students. How will you support them in September?

Did you know that the recruitment of teachers continues through the end of June, with the [final application deadline](#) on June 29? Educators are the DOE's best source of [referrals of new teachers](#). Do you know someone who would make a strong teacher? Encourage them to apply by sharing the [link to the application](#).

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Spotlight on: STEM Institute and Teachers Amanda Solarsh and Gina Tesoriero

STEM and CTE programs give our students a solid educational foundation for college and careers, and equip them with the skills needed to compete successfully in the global economy. STEM education narrows the gap between our students' skills and the needs of the labor market.

This spring I announced an exciting [new partnership](#) with the GE Foundation and several New York City STEM businesses and organizations. These partnerships will expand and deepen the impact of STEM education across the City. The initial phase of these expanded efforts is the DOE's first-ever intensive, three-day citywide STEM Institute. Over 350 teachers from 100 schools attended the first institute in April; teachers and school leaders from up to an additional 100 schools will participate in STEM Institutes this summer and in spring 2016.



Amanda Solarsh

Gina Tesoriero

At the July STEM Institute, teachers and school leaders will have professional learning opportunities, and be able to work directly with experienced STEM partner organizations. We spoke with two teachers from Simon Baruch Middle School in Manhattan who will be co-leading a session at the Institute to learn about their background, the lessons learned through STEM education and what they are excited about as more funding is committed to STEM education in New York City. **Amanda Solarsh** is a 7th-grade Integrated Science and STEM teacher and **Gina Tesoriero** is a 7th-grade Special Education and 8th-grade STEM teacher.

Gina Tesoriero, you've been a Special Education teacher for 8 years. And you sought out a 3-year certificate in STEM from the New York Institute of Technology to deepen your content knowledge. How have you infused STEM into your Special Education classes?

Gina: *I started to use STEM as a reward in my special education class after participating in New York Hall of Science's [Design Lab Institute](#). I watched my students complete challenges that I didn't think were possible. These opportunities offered my most struggling learners time to shine. I watched my 12:1:1 group of all boys grow to be serious about their academics and persevere when given a challenge. One student in particular had a very hard time learning due to a borderline IQ. He won the first challenge and became a leader in the design classroom. This mindset also transferred into academics as he started to create strategies to help him succeed with his work just as he did with his designs.*

Amanda Solarsh, you have also been involved with the New York Hall of Science. What key piece of learning as an educator did you bring back and implement in your classes?

Amanda: *My key learning moment came during the introduction to the engineering design process; the notion that the key to a successful STEM lesson or project is that it needs to be grounded in a real-world problem. This mindshift from teaching science content to presenting students with an issue that requires them to apply their knowledge to solve the given problem was a profound revelation for me. I was pleasantly surprised to find that when I allowed my students to be creative and design their own solutions to a problem that was grounded in real-world issues, that not only were they more engaged but they were able to make connections with what they were learning about to their everyday lives.*

Gina, how have teaching practices you've learned through your STEM professional development impacted the role of student voice in your classroom?

Gina: *My 8th-grade classroom is completely student-centered. For example, I didn't want to buy materials for their STEM challenge until the students were able to design solutions because I did not want the materials I purchased to influence their thinking. I've put protocols into place so that feedback is led by the students instead of me. Being able to facilitate a student-centered flipped classroom offered me an opportunity to develop skills that are transferable to my role as a special education teacher.*

Amanda and Gina, you have co-facilitated STEM sessions at conferences across the country. What are you most excited about at the DOE's STEM Institute in July?

Amanda: *We are eager to share how we have implemented design-based learning in our classrooms and the teaching strategies we have developed to make this work a success for all of our students. The more teachers who embrace the STEM mindset, the more students who will be engaged in STEM-related fields, which will hopefully translate into more students pursuing STEM careers in their future.*

Gina: *We are leading the '[Strategies for STEM Success \(Grades 6-8\)](#)'* session at the STEM Institute. Sometimes just talking about your classroom with a teacher from another school can offer the insight needed to make positive changes. At the end of each presentation we have a discussion where we ask for solutions to problems we experience and encourage participants to give us their best practices.*

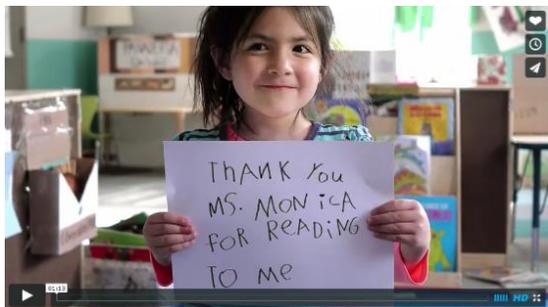
**Editor's Note: Registration for this session is full at the time of publication.*

Interested in attending the STEM Institute July 7-9 in Manhattan? Talk with your school leader about joining the teacher-team from your school. [Registration](#) closes on Friday, June 26.

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Teacher Appreciation 2015:

Celebrating Teachers Every Day



day, and I was excited to share my [video message](#) with you last month.

It has also been wonderful to see how our video to you sparked your creativity. **Maribeth Whitehouse**, a teacher from I.S. 190, sent me a heart-felt poem to "celebrate the hard work and contributions of [my colleagues]." Here is an excerpt:

Teacher Appreciation Week in May was one of the most energizing times this school year. I continue to be inspired by the culture of celebration in schools across the City.

I, along with the Deputy Chancellors, and most importantly your students, thank all of you for the hard work and dedication you show every

From: [Maribeth Whitehouse](#)
Subject: RE: Teacher Appreciation Week: A Message from Chancellor [Fariña](#)
Date: May 6, 2015
To: [Chancellor Carmen Fariña](#)

Thank you for the video message. To "celebrate the hard work and contributions of [my] colleagues" I wrote this salute:

*Here's to the teacher who paid the graduation dues for her poorest students.
Here's to the teacher who patiently reviewed how to line up in the hall for the 51st time.
Here's to the science teacher who set up a lab for 25 students in less than 5 minutes.
Here's to the teacher who marched in a rally to support public education.
Here's to the teacher who drove an hour in 6 inches of snow because city schools are never closed.
...
Here's to the art teacher who asked friends and neighbors for toilet and paper towel tubes.
Here's to the teacher who, through tear-filled eyes, told her students she was proud of them.*

Maribeth Whitehouse
I.S. 190, the Bronx

Your school leaders also shared celebrations that took place in your schools across the City during Teacher Appreciation Week. I was touched by the creativity, sentiment and joy these celebrations represent.



The Elm Tree Elementary School, Elmhurst



The Young Women's Leadership School of Queens



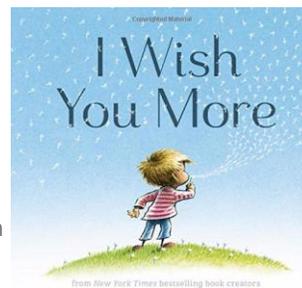
Hawtree Creek Middle School, South Ozone Park

I hope you know just how much your students, your school leaders, your Deputy Chancellors and I, and the entire City of New York, appreciate your dedication and commitment to the learning and growth of our children. Thank you.

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Book of the Season

I Wish You More (Chronicle Books, 2015)
By Amy Krouse Rosenthal, illustrated by Tom Lichtenheld
Recommended for Grades K - 3



Dear Reader,

This month's book, *I Wish You More*, is full of good wishes for a child's future—for curiosity and discovery, friendship and connection, strength and support, and quiet moments in which to reflect—qualities that enable all of us to live rich, rewarding lives.

As I read the book, I found myself making connections in the many small wishes for children to our work on behalf of our students. Here are ways they add relevance to my experiences:

I wish you more we than me.

I wish you more collaborative experiences where you are supported and assisted.

I wish you more hugs than ughs.

I wish you more positive encounters with students, colleagues, administrators, and staff.

I wish you more WOO-HOO! Than WHOA!

I wish you more celebrations that move you forward with your vision for your students rather than stall you mid-stream.

I wish you more pause than fast-forward.

I wish you more time for reflection, planning, and thoughtful conversations.

I wish you more treasures than pockets.

I wish you more parents who tell you what a great job you're doing, and more students who say they can't wait to get to school each day, and that your school has made them the best students they can be.

I wish all of this for you, because you are everything I could wish for...and more.

I wish you a perfect end to a challenging and rewarding school year.

Warmly,

Carmen

[Excerpts used with permission from Chronicle Books, San Francisco. Visit www.ChronicleBooks.com. Adapted from the May 2015 *Principal Notes* Book of the Month.]

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