



the travel training newsletter

The Miraculous Journey of Class Y02

By Shannon Mahoney

A little over a year ago, a brave group of freshmen at The Hungerford School at New Dorp High School trusted their teacher enough to follow her onto the New York City Public Transportation System. They started simple: by walking to high interest areas in the community such as Shop Rite, Ralph's Ices, Boston Market and Applebee's. The next step was to take the Staten Island Railroad to the Huguenot Library and Blue Heron Park, then the city bus to Fort Wadsworth. Eventually, the students traveled to and from the Museum of the American Indian via city bus, ferry and train.

Behind the scenes, it was the teacher who was placing her trust in

the Mobility and Travel Training teachers Florence, Mike and Emma. Together they discussed details ranging from metro-cards to inclement weather. They discussed



appropriate destinations and timing. They worked

hard to map out bus or train routes and close-by restaurants for lunch. The amazing part of this miraculous journey was when the boys were introduced to the trainers. It was now out of the hands of their teacher; the boys were now in charge. Florence, Mike and Emma worked with the boys to begin the steps to independence. The boys learned how to read a bus/train schedule, time management and organizational skills. The Mobility Training Program worked with the boys as a class to agree on trip sites, calling to

book reservations, and traveling in the community.

The Mobility Training Program has been a great "middle step" for this class. As the group of boys began to grow into young men they became more independent. They began to take initiative and advocate for themselves. When planning a class trip, the young men always ask for the trainers. They look up the location and find bus and/or train lines to use. The young men now work monthly with the trainers to travel to the Center for Independent Living to attend cooking and computer classes.

As the teacher of this class, I would like to thank the Travel and Mobility Trainers for all of their hard work and dedication to my class.

I would also like to thank our wonderful principal, Dr. McInerney, for recommending our class for this program. Most importantly though, I would like to thank the young men. You have each taught me so many wonderful things and have given me a new view on life. Most of you are now ready to move on to the Travel Training Program. With all of your knowledge and the high confidence levels you have, I know you will be amazing!



Shannon Mahoney is a teacher at P 721R@ New Dorp H.S. Without her enthusiasm

this project wouldn't have been possible. Thanks Shannon! Thanks also to the classroom paraprofessionals.

Thoughts and Reflections

By Peggy Groce,
Director
Office of Travel Training

"First you put on a label and then you subject your thinking to that label, and it becomes a vicious circle."

Gunnar Dybwad

Gunnar Dybwad and his wife were great advocates for the rights of persons with developmental disabilities in the early years of the advocacy movement. They were leaders in the drive to end the practice of institutionalization with its separation from the community, and for promoting equal opportunity and inclusion in the commu-

nity for persons with disabilities. Dybwad's discomfort with labels is reflective of the fact that labels may impact a person's self-worth and society's view of that person; the consequences of labeling were real and primarily negative for individuals with disabilities and their families for many years. His concern with what happens when we practice labeling people is as valid today as it was when he gave voice to it in 1968.

"Labelling is definitive; once we say it then it holds meaning." Namka, L., (1997) as cited in Davis, K. "What's in a Name: Our Only Label Should Be Our Name," The Reporter 9(2), 2004.

Special points of interest:

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We have a tendency to use labels to identify, classify or categorize persons, objects or things. Labeling has become an essential part of our everyday life; it helps us create catalogues for the information we receive. We label produce, meat, clothing, neighborhoods, vehicles, institutions, anything and everything to help us take a shortcut to find what we want, what we value, and to avoid that which we do not value, want, or need. It works well when we are shopping for things that fit our budget: desired objects

or things to purchase or use. Labels frequently guide our choices and influence our decisions on what is acceptable or what is not acceptable. However, as often happens these days, labels are frequently misleading as to value. At times I find I have purchased a product that does not provide me with the quality associated with the label. Nevertheless, I go back and again purchase products with that same label. That is the power of a label to influence human behavior.

"Labelling is a process of creating descriptors to identify persons who differ from the norm. Normal is a broad, relative term. Everyone is different in some way from someone else." Darrow A. & White, G.W., (1998) as cited in Davis, K., 2004.

It can be disconcerting, though, when we label individuals, in particular those persons who may belong to a vulnerable group. The word vulnerable is in itself a label as it calls to mind persons who require special attention or care in one way or another. Special education, specific disability classifications, special needs are all labels that influence those who use the terminology and those who hear and respond

Thoughts and Reflections *(continued)*

to the labels.

When asking a service provider, teacher or caregiver to describe a young person, too often the first thing that is said about the individual is the disability classification. It is as if an educational or medical diagnosis is the only meaningful descriptor of the individual.



The person is no longer described by their interests, sense of humor, preferences for activities, dreams, personality characteristics or talents. With the tendency to view the person with a disability only through the lens of the disability lurks the danger of stereotyping, stigmatizing thinking that can negatively affect all of us, especially individuals with disabilities.

Professionals in education and employment need to be especially vigilant about the influence of labels on our thinking, decision-making, and expectations for our youth who have disabilities. Recognizing that a

label is necessary to receive federal funding, specialized equipment, reasonable accommodations and services required by the individual to function in the community, we should use the disability diagnosis as a tool to shape assistance rather than as a descriptor of a person. First, the focus should be on individual abilities, needs, and interests; then, on the equipment, services and accommodations necessary to support the person's functioning and

learning. An example of this is learning to use public transportation and travel independently. For too long it was thought by many professionals and caregivers that persons with significant developmental disabilities were not capable of traveling independently on public transportation. Their right to move freely and independently in their communities and throughout the city was compromised by what some considered the characteristics of a disability classification, including poor social and communication skills, problems with adaptive behavior, and difficulty with problem-solving and decision making.

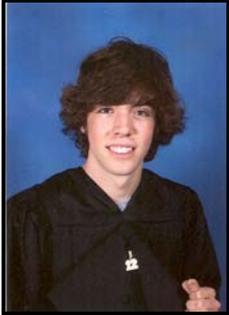
Yet, here in New York City, thousands and thousands of young adults with disabilities have defied those expectations to proudly claim the label of commuter.

It is important to remember that a label is like a utensil, to be used only when necessary, for a specific purpose. It is not the essence of an individual with a disability. If we define and label people by disability classifications, it can be easy to overlook their individual characteristics and abilities. We need to remember that a disability is only one aspect of a person, and not the sum of the individual.



Friendship Expressed

By Thomas Mc Inerney, Millennium High School, Class of 2012



At Millennium High School in Manhattan, we have a Best Buddy Club. I have known my best buddy for the 3 years I have been at my school. His name is Jeremy. I am honored to be involved with Jeremy and the other students in my school. Jeremy is a student from P. 226M which is a District 75 school.

This year as Juniors, we are encouraged to be independent, think about colleges, do our resumes and focus on where we want to be and go in life. It has been very hectic. I also have a photography class and in the class I partner with Jeremy. This is the only class we have together. It has been wonderful having Jeremy as a partner. He has no excuses and does the work. He likes some parts of our team work and I like others so it makes us a very strong team – actually complimenting each other.

Jeremy has taught me so much this year. He was selected for travel training and really put his heart and soul in to it. He passed travel training and now has become an independent traveler! I truly got to see the benefits of independent travel – something I take for granted that he learned, and now has freedom. I was so proud of Jeremy, I shared his success with my family. The highlight of this year for me was my birthday, which was recent. Jeremy remembered when it was and approached me about taking me to lunch for my birthday! I was so surprised. I spoke with my parents about it and said that I would be prepared and have money so that I could pay. The day came but as it turned out I was unable to go due to work I needed to complete. I asked Jeremy if we could postpone it for a day. He was so disappointed but agreed that the next day we would do it. Tuesday came and we went out to lunch, like friends do. This was never able to happen before because Jeremy was not travel trained and could not leave our school building. So we have had lunch together but not outside in the public. I had an opportunity to watch my friend order, use his money, count his change and enjoy the pleasure of eating out. This was the best Birthday gift ever, knowing that my friend was now independent like me. By the way, not everyone remembered my birthday nor did I get gifts or taken to lunch. Jeremy celebrated me!

When I reflected on it that night, I realized that if I was not fortunate enough to go to my school which has an inclusion program, I would not know the P. 226 students. More important than that is our friendship would never have happened. Friendships for all students need to have opportunities to be expressed in inclusive environments. Both of our lives are richer...and I have a lunch date on June 14. I will take my friend who is travel trained, Jeremy, to lunch for his birthday and I plan to celebrate him, us and our friendship!

Celebrate Inclusion!

Principal: Robert Rhodes
Email: RRhodes@schools.nyc.gov
Teacher: William LaMonte
Email: WLamonte@schools.nyc.gov

By Jeremy S. P 226M @ Millennium High School

I remember back to my friend, Thomas', birthday. He asked me if I can go out with him for his birthday lunch. I said "yes" to Thomas' offer for his birthday. Then we decided on the walk what we were having for lunch. We walked for ten minutes and decided that we would have Burger King for lunch. That year, my travel training experiences changed what I could do for lunch. So I traveled with Thomas for his birthday lunch. My social experiences also made me realize how much traveling with friends made me more secure and happy.



Jeremy S. from P 226M @ Millennium High School

"I truly got to see the benefits of independent travel – something I take for granted that he learned and now has freedom."

Thomas Mc Inerney,

Our Experience with Travel Training: A Letter for Andrea

By Huma Sherry and Omar R.

We had been hearing about travel training as an essential part to Omar's education at Francis Lewis High School for a few years, but it did not materialize until the new school term started this past September, 2011. Of course this was to be a totally new experience for us, and apart from the natural anxiety associated with this huge step, we didn't really know how it was going to be carried out. Knowing that in the beginning Omar was going to be accompanied by a travel trainer served to ease the anxiety a lot. At that point I wasn't even thinking about how it was going to be when he traveled by himself, taking two buses to get to school...I couldn't really deal with that! However, Ms. Andrea Collins, Omar's designated travel trainer, was the most thorough professional and a wonderful, caring person. She completely understood the concerns of a parent and the way she got to know Omar and his individual needs, strengths and weaknesses was really impressive. The training was extremely detailed and comprehensive; every scenario was covered and every direction was continuously reinforced so that Omar would be sure to remember it all. Getting lost, missing his stop, alternate routes were all included with their respective explanations and solutions, and practiced many times. My worries, no matter how small, were all taken into consideration by both Ms. Collins and Mr. Steven Garcia, and I was reassured every step of the way. The real anxiety came at the end of about three weeks when Omar was finally ready to go by himself! Everything has gone well since then; there were a couple of very minor situations but his training was so great that he was able to resolve these himself and reach his destination safely. It is still amazing to me that a child who was previously not allowed to go anywhere by himself can now travel half the length of Queens and be so confident! He is so proud of himself and loves his independence. As far as I am concerned, I have to admit that I am still getting used to having him go off by himself every day. Travel training is absolutely necessary for our children and is such a valuable tool for them so that they can achieve greater success in their path to self-sufficiency. I am so very grateful to Ms. Collins, and so appreciative of the services provided by Mr. Garcia and the Office of Travel Training for helping my son to accomplish this. Here are Omar's feelings that he wrote down in his own words: "Thank you for training me to take the city bus. In the beginning I was nervous, now I am not and I get to school on time at 8:02 am! I am happy to take the bus every day and my teachers are very proud of me that I go by myself. My Mom and Dad are happy too. And every day on the bus, I get a seat in the front of the bus. It is fun to go on the bus; also I stay awake for the bus ride!



Travel Trainer Andrea Collins with student Omar, learning to cross streets safely

Dear Peggy and Travel Training Staff: A Letter from Andrea

Dear Peggy and the Travel Training Staff,

I wanted to send this note to you and the Travel Training staff. Special thanks to you, Peggy, for all the kindness and interest you have shown in me. It has been 11 years and 1 month almost to the day since I began my odyssey, or as I sometimes refer to it as "the never ending tour bus and train ride" throughout the five boroughs of NYC and beyond. In reflecting back it seems to have gone by in a snap.

I have memories of so many students and I go to the rolodex and view-finder in my brain and see young faces initially filled with apprehension and some nervousness, but many times expressing pride and hopeful anticipation of what is to come. All Travel Trainers and Travel Training Teachers have thought time and again "What am I doing up at this hour of the morning? It's still dark, freezing cold, raining, snowing, any or all of the above and we have asked ourselves "Am I crazy for doing this job"? But then a little miracle happens, the student completes the program and a transformation has occurred, he or she is walking taller, smiling a lot and they have proven they are competent and knowledgeable enough to be independent travelers, like the commercial says PRICELESS! Those moments make us forget all about what hour of the morning we got up or what the weather was like. We have often told our parents that the Travel Trainers and Travel Training teachers are just the road maps that safely guide their children, the students are the ones that do all the hard work expanding their minds, learning and retaining new information and skills. As some of you already know I have a health issue that is preventing me from performing my travel training duties up to the standards that I expect from myself. It is for this reason that Friday Feb.17, 2012 will be my last day with Travel Training. Starting on Feb. 27, 2012, I will begin working as a classroom para in Queens. It has been a privilege for me to be a part of this elite and dedicated group of educators. I will be forever grateful for all the encouragement, guidance and support that I received from you while I was learning this job and working towards my goal of earning a college degree. I could not have done it without you, thank you.

With Love and Respect for you Always,
Andrea Collins

The Travel Training

Safety Tips By Katrell L. P 721R



This safety tip is about strangers.

There is a young teenage girl Cindy that doesn't know how to get to school. She asks a person standing on the street "How can I get to school?" Cindy did not know the man. He was a stranger to her. The stranger asked if he knew her. The stranger told Cindy that her school was around the corner. When she got home from school that day Cindy told her Mom what had happened. Her Mom said that it is never a good idea to talk to a person you don't know. The advice Cindy's Mom gave is to call Mom on the cell phone; or ask a friend, or ask a person in a uniform or a worker in a store. Cindy thought that Mom was right and she would remember it for the next time she needed help.



***By Gerald R.
P 811x @ Bronx High
School for the Visual Arts***

Bulletin Board 2012



**By Joshua G. P 36K @
International Arts & Business School**



My name is Elliot S.

I was travel trained when I was 15 years old. I was trained to get places by myself.

I was taught to travel to different schools and home using buses and trains.

I learned that I was able to take buses and trains to other places. I go to my own medical appointments, I help at a school, I go to friends houses on my own.

I have taken the train to Connecticut to visit family, I go downtown Manhattan by myself, and a few weeks ago I went to San Francisco with my mom.

While she was in a meeting I went on the trolley and cable car by myself because I knew where to go.

I also go to other cities with my Mom and when I am there I can walk around by myself because I know how to find my way back.

I learned how to do these things when I was travel trained.

***"I learned how
to do these
things when I
was travel
trained."***



**Elliot on the
trolley in San
Francisco**

Applause and Appreciation

To whom it may concern:

My name is Charlene Carroll H. and my son's name is Trae J. H. Trae attends QHST and is in the 11th grade. I would like to applaud and express my appreciation towards two of your employees, Mr. Garcia and Ms. Mercedes.

Over the summer Trae started travel training. This was an exciting time not only for him but for me as well. Before he actually started travel training I received a phone call from Mr. Garcia explaining the travel training process, and to speak with me about any concerns or questions I may have had. On Trae's first day, the travel trainer assigned to him, Ms. Mercedes, introduced herself and spoke with me about her role in the travel training process. I have to say, after speaking with her, I felt even more at ease about this new independent chapter of Trae's life. By the time Trae left the house; I actually had a smile on my face. Trae has now completed travel training and the joy I see on his face for this new found independence when he leaves in the morning cannot be described.



Trae and Travel Trainer Mercedes Chaviano

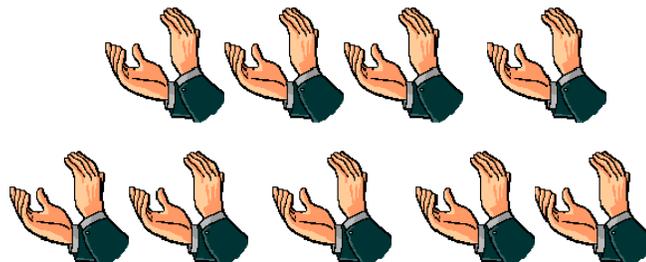
Sometimes you meet people who just do their jobs and sometimes you meet people who will give that little bit extra. Mr. Garcia and Ms. Mercedes gave that little bit extra.

I do not worry about my son Trae traveling to school. (OK, just a little.) I know Ms. Mercedes taught him all the skills he needed to accomplish this new chapter in his life. We (parents) should have more people such as Mr. Garcia and Ms. Mercedes, looking out for our children. Both of them are valued employees and should be looked upon as an example by her colleagues. As Hilary Clinton will say "It takes a village to raise a child".

"the joy I see on his face for this new found independence when he leaves in the morning cannot be described."

Thank you for allowing me to have Mr. Garcia and Ms. Mercedes as a part of my village.

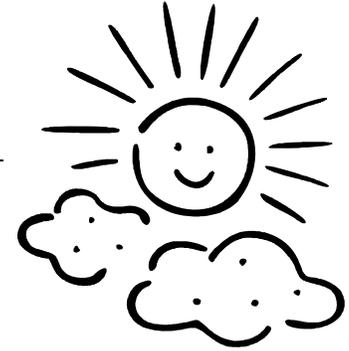
Sincerely,
Charlene Carroll-H.



Starting My Day With A Smile

By Florence Shomer, Travel Training Teacher

Before entering P721M this morning I never realized what was the best way to start my day in a great mood. I've had a lot on my mind lately as we all do when it comes to how to find the time in a day to complete all the things we need to do: for our job, our families and ourselves. Today in particular I had not slept well, every part of me ached, and, yes, I was in a cranky mood. After the 45 minutes ride on the F train, and the walk in the rain from the train station, I entered P721M. It was about 7:30 in the morning. Greeting me at the door was Klarence, who completed Travel Training a few days ago, Waldo, Lorenzo and Alex. They travel from different areas in Manhattan on busses and trains, get here early in the morning, greet me with a smile and tell me about their morning travels. The amazing thing is they don't do it with a single complaint; they are excited about every accomplishment and problem they encounter. Klarence told me his #1 train went express and then went local again. I asked him what he would do if it had continued to go express. He said "I'd ask you". I in turn replied "I wasn't with you today"; and he easily responded "I'd ask the conductor". I discussed with this group of young men another peer who is reluctant to begin travel training; and asked if they could share their experiences to help him reconsider and address his fears. Without a moment's hesitation they said yes.



The attitude of our students who have successfully completed travel training is not evident just at P721M, but we see it in all our schools and in all our boroughs. When we speak to travel trainers in other states at an annual ATI conference, the same feeling is universal. It is not achieved through meditation, yoga, therapy, massage or retreats. The simple answer is the feeling travel trainers have about their role in the students' feeling of independence once they begin to travel.

As we are getting ready to enter the winter season in New York City, I have no doubt that these smiles and greetings will continue in the midst of February in 8 inches of snow. Thanks to all our travel trained students who help the trainers and teachers feel so great about the job we do!!!

We Welcome Your Words

Parent comments from Queens:

"We thank the program for everything. It's a great program" Lilia G., parent of Edgar P 721Q, JFK

"At first I said no but then...I got up the nerve and signed her up. I'd just like to thank Ms. Ross and Naresa. Thank you guys and God Bless." Yolanda B. parent of Zaida B. P 721Q @ Queens College

"I am proud of him. That's about all. Thanks again. Yvette R, parent of Dashawn R. P 721Q JFK

"Travel training has been an awesome experience." Parent of Melvin L. P 721Q

"We feel happy that this office (Office of Travel Training) has made possible what was once thought of as impossible. Thank you." Parent of Mohammad C. P 721Q

"I never could have believed that my son will be out there traveling on his own. What a wonderful experience." Parent of Lukaw L. P 721Q

“My Travel Training Experience”: From Around the City

By Klarence B. P 721M

When I first started Travel Training I was always in a rush. I was nervous and scared. My trainer Ms Judy said to slow down, count to 10 and take a deep breath. This worked for me! Now I travel on my own to school. Sometimes I am still in a rush but I stop, and then go again. I get to meet my friends on the train in the morning sometimes and ride home with them in the afternoon. I also get to go outside by myself when school is out. I walk around my neighborhood. I am more independent.

(Klarence completed Travel Training at the end of October)



Klarence and Chris at P 721M

By Chris B. P 721M

When I started Travel Training, I was scared at first to cross the street. I didn't want to get hit by a car. Now I look both ways **before** crossing the street, and when I am walking across the street. I also wait for the signal to allow me to walk. Now I feel safe. I also know that if I am lost I can ask the train conductor for directions. When I finish Travel Training, I would like to go shopping alone.

(Chris completed Travel Training at the end of November)



By Luis H. P 721X

My travel training experience was great because I learned how to travel to school independently. Sandra taught me different ways to get to school by city bus or train through the travel training program. When I took the school bus to school before I felt comfortable, but now taking the city bus I feel like it gives me a sense of freedom and responsibility.



From my travel training experience I learned which routes to take to go to school and to home. I also learned how important it is to be careful and safe when I am traveling alone. Sandra taught me to sit in the front of the bus so that if I have a question I can ask the driver.

My travel training experience has been awesome because I learned so much and now I am able to get to school and go home independently and safely.

Forward with Confidence

By Yariel R. P 226M @ JREC

My first day of travel training, I started to travel with Tola. I knew her from when we met in the main office on the third floor the day before I started to get travel trained. I was excited and prepared for this process. It was the perfect time for my opportunity to be independent.

The next day, I got kind of frustrated with some rules of the process. I thought it depended on my merit but I honestly realized that the process takes time to make sure that I get through all of the training.

Further along in the travel training process, the travel trainer and I discussed alternate ways to get from home to school by taking the M100 and M15 buses. I had taken the same route in the morning and the afternoon on the train, so I complained a little about taking the bus. I took the M15 to E 124 Street. After that I crossed five blocks to take the M100 to Dyckman Street at E. 125 Street. I had to wait for two M60 buses to pass as I waited for my bus patiently. It took a half an hour to get to my station and I crossed two blocks towards my home. The next day, I decided to take the original route of the train.



Yariel and travel trainer Tola Eleckusi

“I started to feel like a responsible, independent, free and emancipated individual who is committed to move forward with confidence”

Sometimes I followed many prompts during the same old process until I got better and better at taking responsibility on the subway, as well as on the street. I continued to take the same original route as always. When I got home I read the positive news about my progress in the daily notes until I read that I did not need a travel trainer anymore! Three different people from travel training had supervised me to make sure that I had followed exact directions. Finally I started to feel like a responsible, independent, free and emancipated individual who is committed to move forward with confidence.

A Note From Mariana

My name is Mariana R. I go to Queens Transition Center. I used to take the school bus. Now that I go to Work Study at Parker Jewish Institute I can take the City Bus. Mr. David Abrahams and Ms. Deborah Walker taught me how to travel from home to Parker. I learned fast and am very happy about this. Thank you for the opportunity.

Mariana R



A Travel Trainer Near You!

There is a Travel Training Office in every borough in New York City. We accept referrals from community high schools and District 75 schools. Information about student eligibility and the Travel Training Referral Process and Forms are on the Office of Travel Training website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/District75/Departments/TravelTraining/default.htm>

Below is a list of our offices with each address, telephone number and name of the Travel Training Teacher. We welcome your questions, comments, and /or requests for information about the program, including bus demonstrations, trips to Safety City, parent and staff development workshops, and of course students who might benefit from our services. We look forward to hearing from you.

<i>The Bronx</i>	<i>Brooklyn</i>	<i>Queens</i>	<i>Manhattan</i>	<i>Staten Island</i>
<p><i>Michele Buto</i> PS 721X 2697 Westchester Ave Bronx, NY 10461 (718) 822-2881 ext. 1232</p>	<p><i>Phillipe Jean Louis</i> PS 373K 185 Ellery Street Brooklyn, NY 11206 (718) 782-6800</p>	<p><i>Joan Ross</i> PS 721Q 57-12 94th Street Elmhurst, NY 11373 (718) 760-2931 ext. 1055</p>	<p><i>Gerard Grillo</i> PS 751M 113 E. 4th Street New York, NY 10003 (212) 477-2454</p>	<p><i>Florence Shomer</i> PS 721R 155 Tompkins Street Staten Island, NY 10301 (718) 273=8622 ext. 2243</p>
<p><i>Steve Gallo</i> PS 754X 470 Jackson Ave Bronx, NY 10455 (718) 993-5581 ext. 1030</p>	<p><i>Gus Chaviano</i> PS 721K 64 Ave X Brooklyn, NY 11223 (718) 266-0085</p>	<p><i>David Abrahams</i> PS 752Q 142-10 Linden Blvd Jamaica, NY 11436 (718) 659-5772</p>	<p><i>Florence Shomer</i> PS 721M 250 W. Houston Street New York, NY 10013 (212) 924-8825</p>	<p><i>High Schools</i> <i>Steve Garcia</i> Queens High School for Teaching 74-20 Commonwealth Blvd. Bellrose, NY (718) 776-3052 ext. 1126</p>

New York City Department of Education
District 75

Chancellor
Dennis Walcott

District 75 Citywide Programs
Superintendent
Gary Hecht

Deputy Superintendent
Barbara Joseph

Director
Office of Travel Training
Margaret M. Groce



**Department of
Education**

Layout/Graphics by Steve Gallo, Office of Travel Training
Edit by Peggy Groce, Office of Travel Training