

# Travel Training Newsletter



Volume 8

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## Special points of interest:

**Manhattan School for Career Development & Travel Training**

**Trips with Travel Training in The Bronx**

**A Student's Story**

**Quotes and Notes From our Students**

## Travel Training and the Manhattan School for Career Development

*By Jeff Rothchild*

*Principal, Manhattan School for Career Development*

One might see the topic of this article and ask how much travel training can a school like this require? Not much is the answer. Being located in Manhattan we deal with mostly students who know more about the train system than most of the staff, but we have a small population of students who either never traveled independently or whose parents refuse to believe that their child is capable of traveling independently. That is where the experts, and I do mean experts step in. When my staff finally convinces the parent that it is in the best interest of their child to be travel trained, the travel training teacher assigned to our school, Mr. Gerard Grillo meets with the child and evaluates whether the child is appropriate for Travel Training. If the answer is yes than he and his staff of compassionate paraprofessionals contact the parent to set up a pick up at home. Thus begins a new phase in the lives of our student. After the student is travel trained to the school she/he is purposely lost and approached by a stranger (another travel trainer that the student does not recognize to make sure that they know what is expected of them.



*Jeff Rothchild, principal of Manhattan School for Career Development*

In many cases the student comes to our school at a time in their life when they should be at a work site, so after a few weeks of independent travel the student is again picked up by Travel Training and rerouted to their work site.

This may sound as a small step, but let me be the first to tell you that this makes a BIG difference in the way a student feels about him/herself. Many a student comes into our school as someone who the parent has not given any responsibility to while at the same time given responsibility to younger siblings. Now,

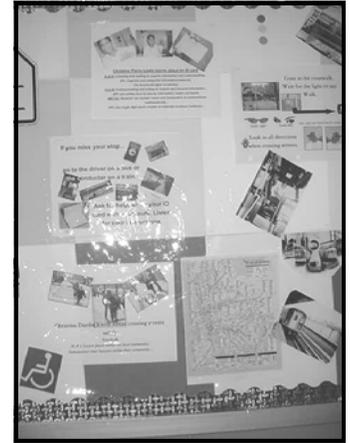
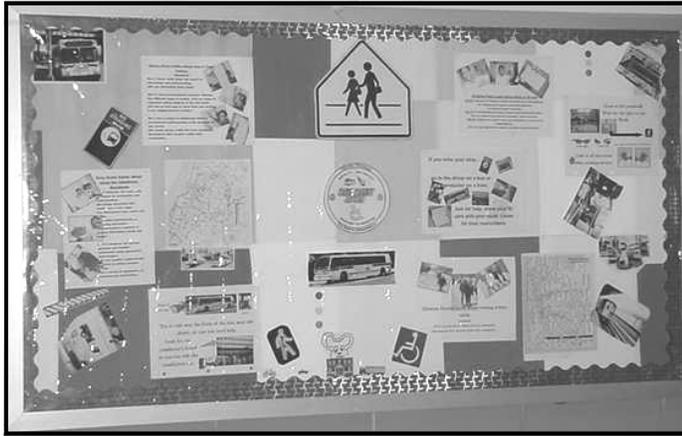
for the first time in his/her life our student sees him/herself as having succeeded in something that he/she had always been told he/she could not do.

I have seen many students walk off the bus at the beginning of their stay at MSCD and I have seen the same students walk down the aisle at graduation time as mature, independent young adults who have an independent life ahead of them.

This would not have occurred if it were not for the dedicated Travel Training staff that serves our school. They make a difference and I want them to know how much they are appreciated and respected.

Thank you for a job well done.

## Travel Training Bulletin Boards Around the City



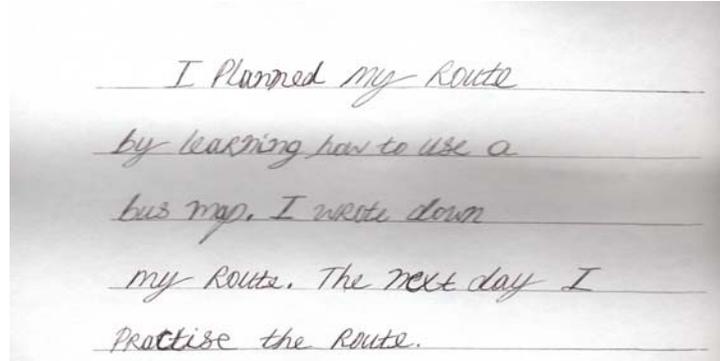
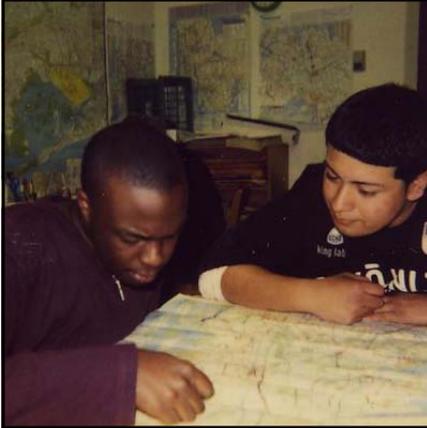
From PS 754X (Jeffrey M. Rapport School for Career Development): Details include common signage from New York City streets, NYC buses and subway trains, conductors, bus operators, and photographs of students learning travel they reflect. Bright background attract students, staff and visitors.



PS 721X (Stephen D. McSweeney Occupational Training Center) has a focus on student created work and photographs, skills related to independent travel and familiar travel related objects and devices (metrocards and farebox). Standards are highlighted.

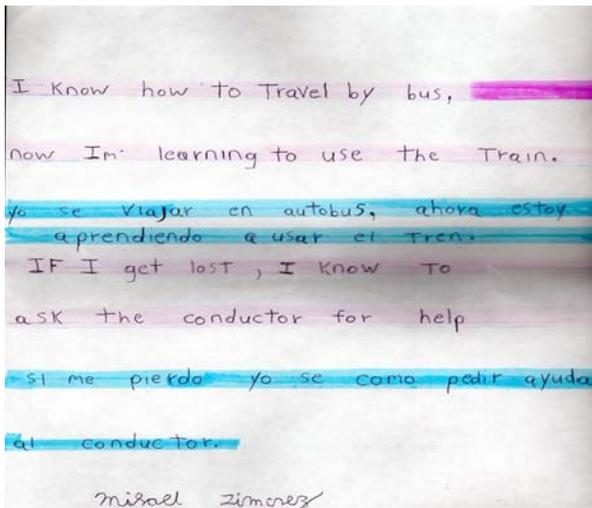


The bulletin board at PS 721Q has incorporated student photos, written work and standards.



*Antione Harris*

Integrated learning encourages students to use essential academic concepts, facts and procedures in applications related to life skills.



*Misael Jimenez*



*Millard Tracey*

*I'm happy I have the opportunity for the first time in my life to learn to travel. It's going to be important to learn basic rules and be aware of what I'm doing. If the bus doesn't stop I have to get up and go ask him to stop. I have to be a gentleman when I go outside. I have to change, it's another world outside. I have to leave my fooling around in school.*

*Millard Tracey*

## Letter From a Student's Parents

It is extremely difficult for us to express the overwhelming feelings we have received since entering our son, Marcel, into the Travel Training Program. Not only has it given our son a chance to finally be independent but it has granted us a sense of relief we never knew could exist.

In the past we have tried to teach Marcel to cross the street. It seemed no matter how much effort we all made towards working at it we were always unsuccessful. This simple task that most of us take for granted seemed an impossibility until we entered him into the Travel Training Program.

We had heard about the program and wondered if it would work for our child. While having our doubts, we enrolled him into the program. For 4 weeks Marcel, with his instructor Joan Ross, began to learn and understand the many responsibilities of traveling alone. Between Joan's professionalism and Marcel's dedication we had an instant success. Marcel learned not only to be aware of his surroundings but what steps to take in any given situation.

Marcel, now having completed the program is not only crossing the street but traveling to school on his own. This program has given our son a sense of independence and self assurance. While changing the scope of his life, it has also allowed him to function as most teenagers would. It is with deepest sincerity and joy that we say thank you. This has not only changed Marcel's life but it has changed ours as well.

Mr. & Mrs. Gutierrez

Parents of Marcel



*Marcel Gutierrez from Murrow HS in Brooklyn, learning to travel*

## A Student's Story

*By Joshua Robinson*

*Student, PS 721X*



**Joshua Robinson**

**PS 721X**

A couple of years ago I asked Michele Buto if I could be travel trained. The school bus is no place for me. It is very noisy and the kids are nasty. Also I want to be more independent and responsible. My mother and brother travel on their own so I think I can too. I would like to have a job some day. I can't have a job if I do not travel.

I began my travel training on January 31, 2005. I was a little scared at first. Natajia, my travel trainer helped me. She taught me how to concentrate on the road. When I practiced more I felt less scared. I learned how to cross streets safely. I learned not to pick up money in the middle of the street. I also learned how to look very carefully for cars.

One day Natajia and I took the number 6 train to 23rd street all the way in Manhattan. I found the way there by myself. I met Peggy Groce. I showed her my spider man comic book. She was very proud of me. Then I found the way back to the OTC in the Bronx.

Now I am in the real world. I travel to school on the number 6 train and I take the number 4 bus home. I think other students should learn how to travel on their own. I feel very proud of myself. But I still need to get a job.



Peggy Groce

Instructional Support Specialist

Office of Transition/Travel Training

Dear Friends of Travel Training:

As this newsletter will reach you at the end of the 2004-2005 school year, I would like to take the opportunity to wish all of you a wonderful summer and express my appreciation for all your work and support during the year.

First, I want to shout CONGRATULATIONS to all our 2005 graduates and their families! It is an exciting time in your lives – leaving the world of school and entering the world of adults. There is much to look forward to even while looking back at the time in school with your friends and teachers. Some of us feel a little sad at leaving our familiar surroundings where we had so many experiences and opportunities to learn and grow. But entering the adult world is not about leaving new experiences and opportunities behind you. Rather, it is about moving on to the next step in life, facing new challenges and creating new possibilities. I am confident in your ability to be as successful in the adult world as you have been in school. You have certainly demonstrated a will to succeed through your determined efforts. We will be following-up on the 2005 graduates during the next school year and will be sending you a short survey. Please take the time to complete and return the survey to us. It is very important for us to know how you are doing after you leave us.

It is impossible to speak of transition into adult life and achievements in school without commenting on the success of so many of our students with disabilities in travel training. Learning to travel independently requires hard work and courage. Those of us who do travel training are constantly impressed by how hard a young person will work to acquire travel skills and behaviors. When I think of this past school year I am reminded of the harsh winter – cold, wet and snowy. Many mornings this year I'd come to the office expecting a number of student absences due to bad weather but was consistently surprised at the students who were present and out there, learning to travel and handle all weather conditions. It's obvious how much independent travel means to these young people.

It is not just the students who work hard. Their families also work very hard in supporting their sons and daughters and in having confidence in the travel training team as the time for independent travel becomes a reality. It is somewhat humbling to be given the opportunity to participate in this joint venture with our students and their families and to share in their success. An example of this unique relationship was expressed by a family as their son completed travel training this year: *It is extremely difficult for us to express the overwhelming feelings we have received since entering our son into the Travel Training Program. Not only has it given our son a chance to finally be independent but it has granted us a sense of relief we never knew could exist. It is with deepest sincerity and joy that we say "thank you". This has not only changed M's life but it has changed ours as well.* These comments from this family express the meaning of learning to travel in the life of a young person with a disability and his/her family. And all of us who do travel training have been given the opportunity to be included in a family's pride and success. It is a gift we are given and so we say "Thank you" to the families and students who allow us to be a part of their lives.

Let me share with you a few other highlights of the 2004-2005 school year. The magazine, Community Transportation, featured District 75 travel training in the issue that was published and distributed in the fall 2004. Community Transportation is a magazine that is distributed nationally to transit agencies and other organizations interested in public transportation. An unexpected result of this publication was that the young man, Alfred, a 2004 graduate featured in the article, found the article on the internet by doing a Google search for his name. Alfred promptly sent a few emails proudly asserting that he could be found online. *(continued on page 6)*

In recognition of exemplary collaboration with agencies to provide transition services and supports to students P721Q was awarded the NYS Rehabilitation Association 2004 Regional Partnership with Schools Certificate of Recognition. Madelaine Hassell, Principal, accepted the award recognizing her efforts and the collaborative work of Rosanne Bopp, Travel Training teacher with Charlie Cohen, Job Developer and Jerry Weismann, Transition Linkage Coordinator. The award and recognition is well deserved for the work the team does in making sure that the students at P721Q have an opportunity to be successful and productive as adults.

We are now preparing to begin our Chapter 683 program. Summers are a wonderful time for travel training staff to get to know other students and work with school personnel in a way that is different from the regular school year. We have the opportunity to include a variety of students in what we consider comprehensive travel instruction that differs from the one-to-one travel training on public transit. Comprehensive travel instruction includes teaching students basic mobility and travel-related skills to negotiate environments more independently and safely. Emphasis is placed on working with school staff to become comfortable with teaching transportation-related skills and using public transit for some class trips. The summer program allows students who may be fearful of travel to gradually overcome their anxiety and possibly prepare themselves for future travel training. We have learned that this frequently happens and during every school year our summer program is credited with helping a student be ready for travel training.

Finally, I'll say just a few words about the future. There is much talk and emphasis placed on self-determination and transition services for students with disabilities. With the reauthorization of IDEA 2004 we will probably hear more on these topics. It should be noted that choosing goals, expressing goals, decision-making, problem-solving, self-awareness and self-advocacy are essential for self-determination and for having a strong voice in transition planning. These are the same skills necessary for independent travel and are emphasized in travel training. It is amazing the number of students who walk into a travel training office in a school and ask to be "travel trained." It is obvious that these young people have chosen and expressed a goal - independent travel - and advocate for themselves to have the opportunity to learn to travel. Decision-making, problem-solving, self-awareness, social skills and safety skills are also essential for safe and independent travel. The desire for independence is quite strong in our youth with disabilities just as it is with all young people. We are encouraged by the way so many of you support the students in achieving this goal through travel training and your understanding of the role transportation plays in the lives of persons with disabilities.

I hope you enjoy the summer and this newsletter. If you have any questions or want more information, please contact us. We want to stay in touch with all our friends. It is very important to us. Again, just a reminder to complete and return surveys we send to you to find out how you are doing and what recommendations, if any, you have for us.

Sincerely,

*Peggy Groce*

## From Our Students: Quotes and Notes

"I used to walk from the Ferry Terminal to school and now I can use the S42."

*Joel Miller, McKee High School Staten Island*

"I liked the part that we went to 103 Street. Then I went to school. I talked to the conductor. I followed his instructions. Took the 6 train to 149 Street."

*Jesus Rosario, PS 754X Bronx*

"I learned to take the 6 train to 149 Street."

*Michael Hernandez, PS 754X Bronx*



"To Gerard

On Wednesday, March 16, at 8:49 am I had to get off the 5 train at 125 Street and Lenox Ave because the train stopped running. I called my mother on my cell phone to tell her to call the school to say that I would be late. I knew that I had to walk to Lexington Ave to get on the bus. Then I got off at 68 street".

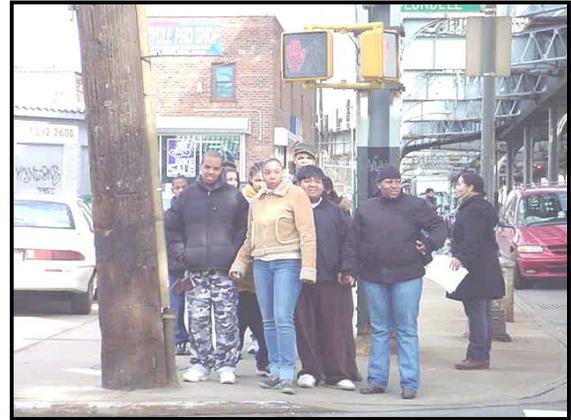
*Benny Sackar, Inclusion PS 226M*



By Ms. Sydney Green

Teacher, PS 721X

In efforts to be safe while out in the community it is important to be aware of and understand the safety signs, so Y38 began by learning the safety signs of STOP, Don't Walk and Walk. While learning the signs, our class planned a METRO bus trip to the East Tremont Buffet. This was our first trip of the year, and we planned to use our knowledge of the safety signs to get us to and from the bus stop. I thought this would be a good chance to bring in the expertise of the Travel Training Team. I informed Ms. Michele (Buto) of the trip and she was elated to work with us. Ms. Michele and the Travel Training Team enriched our learning experience with numerous lessons of how to cross the street, how to identify a city bus, how to identify and be cautious of cars, how to use a Metro Card and how to ride appropriately on the city bus. During our time with the Travel Training Team: we saw many slide photos of people crossing the street, practiced using the Metro Card on an in school bus demo, and took a walk to the bus stop to prepare us for our Metro bus trip to the East Tremont Buffet. Finally, we successfully made our trip. Working with the Travel Training Team was a wonderful learning experience for our class.



Travel trainers Natajia Sullivan and Shawndell Riddick show Ms. Green's class the fine points of safe street crossings on a trip to East Tremont Buffet.



## The "Art" of Travel Training

By Celia Jones

Office of Transition/Travel Training



Daimar Harrison, Queens School for Career Development, likes art and Travel Training. Self Portrait below.



Daimar Harrison is a 15-year-old student with autism in a 12:1:1 program at the Queens School for Career Development. He was referred to Travel Training due to problems on the school bus with some of the other students. Since Daimar lived near the school he was able to walk to school crossing streets, some with lights and some without. To expand Daimar's skills, David Abrahams (Travel Training teacher) and I did some advance training on the public bus and train. One day we went to McDonalds for lunch by using the Q40 bus. Another time we took a trip on the bus and train to the Queens Occupational Training Center to deliver messages between schools. For each trip he was given cue cards and prompts to ask for help. We even did some role-playing and reviewed the route on the bus and train maps.

Daimar completed the Travel Training program and is showing an improvement in his social development and self-esteem. Daimar is a very talented young man with many interests. He loves movies and actors such as Tom Cruise, LL Cool J and Vin Diesel. He is also a great artist-check out his self-portrait!

# There is a Travel Trainer Near You!

## Getting in touch with the Office of Travel Training

There is a Travel Training Office in every borough in New York City. We accept referrals from any District 75 school and many High Schools. We work with students at varied off-sites, worksites, and often to the agencies or facilities that students will attend after transition.

Below is a list of our main offices, with their addresses, telephone numbers, and the names of the Travel Training Coordinators. We welcome your questions, your comments, requests for information about the program and its activities. You can discuss and arrange bus demonstrations, trips to Safety City, parent and staff development workshops and of course refer students whom you believe would benefit from our services. We look forward to hearing from you.

<u>The Bronx</u>	<u>Brooklyn</u>	<u>Queens</u>	<u>Manhattan</u>	<u>Staten Island</u>
<b>Michele Buto</b> <b>PS 721 X</b> <b>2697 Westchester Av</b> <b>Bronx, NY 10461</b> <b>(718) 822-2881</b>	<b>Mike Sohtz</b> <b>PS 721K</b> <b>64 Avenue X</b> <b>Brooklyn, NY 11223</b> <b>(718) 266-0085</b>	<b>Roseanne Bopp</b> <b>PS 721Q</b> <b>57-12 94 Street</b> <b>Elmhurst, NY 11373</b> <b>(718) 760-2931</b>	<b>Gerard Grillo</b> <b>PS 751M</b> <b>113 E. 4th Street</b> <b>New York, NY 10003</b> <b>(212) 477-2454</b>	<b>Florence Tuchman</b> <b>PS 721R</b> <b>155 Tompkins Ave</b> <b>Staten Island, NY 10301</b> <b>(718) 727-4938</b>
<b>Steve Gallo</b> <b>PS 754X</b> <b>470 Jackson Av</b> <b>Bronx, NY 10455</b> <b>(718) 993-5581</b> <b>Ext. 103</b>	<b>Phillipe Jean Louis</b> <b>PS 373K</b> <b>185 Ellery Street</b> <b>Brooklyn, NY 11206</b> <b>(718) 782-6800</b>	<b>David Abrahams</b> <b>PS 752Q</b> <b>142-10 Linden Blvd.</b> <b>Jamaica, NY 11436</b> <b>(718) 322-3500</b> <b>Ext. 1071</b>	<b>Florence Tuchman</b> <b>PS 721M</b> <b>250 W. Houston St.</b> <b>New York, NY 10013</b> <b>(212) 924-8825</b>	<b><u>High Schools</u></b> <b>Steve Garcia</b> <b>PS 811Q @ Queens High</b> <b>School of Teaching</b> <b>74-03 Commonwealth Blvd.</b> <b>Bellrose, NY 11428</b> <b>(718) 776-3097 Ext. 3077</b>

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*Edited by Steve Gallo*

