

**PS261 SLT Candidate Statements – November 13, 2008**  
Statements are listed in random order, with Candidate's name: child(ren)'s grade(s)

**Rachel Peterson-Reeves: K**

I am Rachel Peterson-Reeves. I am currently employed with the NYC Board of Education as a substitute teacher. Many of my assignments are carried out at PS261. I am currently seeking two Master's Degrees in Education – General Ed. / Special Ed., and Religious Ed. I attend theological Seminary where I am a senior and will begin with Touro again in January. My interest in the SLT derives from my care and concern for children and how to better equip them for the tasks that lie ahead. Education plays a pertinent role in how these tasks are approached and dealt with. My goal is to assist in developing an education plan that will allow the education rendered to be efficient and effective for all students. This makes for a greater society / community.

**Vanesia Smith-Dias: 1**

I am the proud parent of Nya & Nyah Dias, 1<sup>st</sup> year students at PS261. I am an alternative education teacher in District 79. I actually served on the SLT of PS54 last school term. It was my first experience and it was quite rewarding – it provided me an opportunity to meet with parents and administrators to learn about the school environment and policies.

**Audrey Churchill-Smith: 4**

My daughter Nicole has attended PS261 since Kindergarten. I spent the first two years as a quasi active member of the General PTA, and the next 2 years as a member of the PTA Board, serving as Treasurer. Serving as the Treasurer for the past two years has allowed me to see where and how the funds raised by the PTA have been spent in the school. In addition to this, with the surprise budget cuts imposed by the DOE last year, there were specific cuts which would have had an impact on the quality of the education within our school. I am interested in serving on the SLT so that I might work in collaboration with the Administration and all of the other members of the SLT to make sure that the funds available within the DOE budget, the funds raised by both the General PTA and the After School Program are considered holistically with respect to enabling PS261 to reach its educational goals. I believe that we have a tremendous amount of resources within the school as well as in our surrounding community and I would like to continue to work towards matching these resources to the needs of the school. I have to admit that having had one child grow up through the public school system already, I am concerned about PS261's school report card grade showing for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, that we need to improve in the area of getting our kids to the next level on the standardized tests. My interests lie in providing more opportunities for academic enrichment programs within the school. For example, I don't see why we can't have an Afterschool Science Program for kids to sign up for. There is currently a Science Program being run by one of the teachers offsite, at a considerably higher cost than what the ASP charges and there is always a long waiting list of parents each semester who are willing to pay for these classes. There obviously is a need for this program. I'd like to see more such programs inside the walls of the school.

**Devonna L. Cousins: 3**

I am a 261 parent, my son Nicholas Cousins has been a part of the 261 family since 1<sup>st</sup> Grade. I have been observing and lending a hand in a few things since my son has been here. I feel that I am ready now to get more involved as my son is now in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade. I am interested in learning more about how and why things are done within the school system.

**Milady Hartmann: 3, Pre-K**

I am a parent of two children currently attending P.S. 261. I am a Designer and Market Analyst by profession. I have always been involved in Education. I have a love and passion for the ARTS. By being a part of the SLT team this would allow me an opportunity to be a part of the educational decision making process that my children are a part of. I simply want to be a part of the SLT team that evaluates the quality of the school's educational program and strongly highlight the Arts in all aspects of the curriculum.

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**Lisa Cowan: 2, Pre-K**

I am a life-long New Yorker, I went to public elementary school and private high school in Manhattan and the Bronx, and then to a private liberal arts college in Connecticut. Professionally I ran a school-based health clinic in Massachusetts for five years after college, and I am currently a Senior Consultant at a management consulting firm that works with NYC community-based organizations. My son Jacob started at P.S. 261 in Kindergarten, and my daughter Tessa started Pre-K this year. We have been thrilled with our experience at P.S. 261. Professionally, I spend much of my time helping organizations figure out how to work better and stay true to their mission. I care very much about P.S. 261 in particular and public education in general, and I would like to find a way to bring my skills to bear in helping 261 continue to grow and thrive. I was a class parent for two years, but would like to find a different way of being involved with the school, learning more about it, and giving back to the school that is giving so much to my children.

**Jonathan Saul: K**

Formerly a lawyer, I am now working in education. I work at Legal Outreach, Inc., a four year college bound program for public high school students from underserved communities in Brooklyn, Harlem, Queens and the Bronx. Legal Outreach provides a law related education program and a myriad of academic enrichment programs designed to prepare students for college. I oversee the law related education program in Brooklyn and teach constitutional law to 75 students. In my position, I am constantly evaluating our law program to ensure that the students are becoming more analytical, better writers, better orators, more confident, etc. I evaluate our instructors to ensure that they are following our teaching methodology and engaging the students. Also, I create lessons and am frequently updating or amending the curriculum to better serve the students. Aside from my responsibilities as in the law related education program, I advise students on plans / strategies to achieve academic success. I am passionate about education. I have dedicated my career to closing the achievement gap. With my experience evaluating educational programs at Legal Outreach and teaching, I believe that I would be an asset to the SLT. Also, I enjoy working with others as a team. It would be fulfilling for me to use my expertise to assist my daughter's school and education.

**Chris Saganich: K**

I work as a Physicist in Environmental and Occupational Health for Weill Medical College of Cornell University/New York Hospital. My specific area of interest professionally is radioactive material safety in biological research and cancer treatment. I also work on the hazardous materials committee which manages policy for both New York Hospital and Columbia Presbyterian Hospitals. I am currently board secretary of my condominium in Bedford-Stuyvesant. I have experience conducting core public health and environmental research as well in public health program design and evaluation. My interest in the SLT branches from my desire to have the best education for my children which I can afford. So naturally I'm interested in the content of the curriculum and the applied methodology. I personally believe that elementary school should be a rich and diverse environment for learning and is a critical period in which children form the academic skills necessary for success in our world. I believe PS261 is a unique and successful school that has the talent necessary from students, teachers, and parents to sustain and improve this environment. I would like to offer my talents towards these ends.

**Rose Beau: 5, 2, Pre-K**

My name is Rose Beau, I'm Chair of Picture Day and the Book Fair. I served as Co-PTA President in 2006-2007 and also on the SLT from 2004, 2005, 2006.

**Amille Harris: 2, 1**

I just want to be as involved as I can be in helping better not only the academic education, but the social and mental education of not only my children, but all of our kids. I love interacting and getting to know all of the kids as individuals with individual needs that differ, and I think I can bring positive and progressive ideas. I want our kids to have the best quality education and I think that starts with a powerful support team not only fighting for them but listening to the heartbeat of the student' needs and tuning in to address each one intently and specifically. I want to be a part of that team. I have been an involved Class Parent since my kids started here in Kindergarten as well as a parent helper when they attended Open House Nursery School. My kids' education and livelihood is my sole purpose as a parent. There is no higher responsibility that I have. Helping them to learn in the best environment, with the best teachers, and a loving student body is the least I can do to jump start their lives in the right direction. Plus I am one of the younger parents, I am self-employed so I have the time and energy to devote to such an office. But I will support whomever is chosen because I trust the judgment of those already in charge.