

PS 261

Parent Handbook

2007 - 08

school policies, programs, routines



PS 261
MAGNET SCHOOL FOR INTEGRATING THE ARTS
314 PACIFIC STREET, BROOKLYN, NY
11201

718-330-9275
718-875-9503 (FAX)

www.PS261.org

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Si necesita
ayuda con tra-
ducción, llame a
Carmen Perez.

للشريعة باللغة
العربية
بإعداد
فني المدرسة

From the Principal

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and your children to PS 261. Ours is a school where students develop a love for learning in a nurturing and enriched educational environment. At PS 261 learning is interrelated around a particular theme. Your child will then be able to see connections and relevance to different academic areas of study. We appreciate children's natural curiosity and allow it to be the driving force of their learning. Your child will encounter the best in children's literature and develop a love for reading. Our students will become writers, going through a process similar to that of professional writers. Social studies, mathematics and science are learned through a variety of teaching approaches, including research, investigative projects, field trips, and hands-on activities.

We are equally concerned about young people's social and emotional development. The independence acquired as problem solvers in their studies is also encouraged in their personal and social lives. The school works toward creating an atmosphere of mutual respect. We value the good relationship between home and school and welcome your involvement. I look forward to sharing the many joys of watching your children grow, learn new skills, and make new friends throughout their education at PS 261.

Welcome!

Zipporah Mills, Principal



Zipporah Mills

Contact Information

School Administration

Main Number: 718-330-9275

Principal Zipporah Mills, ZMills@schools.nyc.gov

Assistant Principal Lena Barbera, ext. 431

Guidance Counselor Kate Grow 718-875-9504

Parent Coordinator Carmen Perez, ext. 430 & 347-563-5376 (cell)

Intervention Team Leader TBD

Math Coach Marcy Mattera

Literacy Coach Karen Kaz

Comprehensive Pupil Support Services & School-Based

Support Team: Amy Kassen

Renee McLaurin 718-875-9525, ext. 220

Busing Coordinator Nancy Storms

Secretaries Janet Pappas, ext. 141 & Barbara Steike, ext. 143

Custodian David Tatum, 718-855-3257

Nurse Mary Ellen Bontempo-Singer, 718-596-4531

Cook Cheryl Darbouze, 718-875-9732

District 15

**The District 15 office is located at
131 Livingston Street, Brooklyn
11201, 718-935-3900**

Rosemary Stuart

District 15 Community Superintendent

Elaine Goldberg

Member of Community Learning
Support Organization CEO

Margarita Nell

Community Academic Officer

DEPARTMENT OF

EDUCATION

PARENT HOTLINE

718-482-3777

School Email ListSrvs

ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT PS 261 AND D.O.E. ISSUES ONLY

To subscribe: PS261Calendar-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

To post, send an email to PS261calendar-owner@yahoogroups.com

EXECUTIVE BOARD DISCUSSION (all welcome)

To subscribe: PS261Board-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

To post: PS261Board@yahoogroups.com

PS 261 PTA AfterSchool Program

web: www.ps261.org/afterschool

phone: 646-982-8725

listserv: PS261afterschool-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

snail mail: 42 Schermerhorn Street, #187, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Thanks go to Zip Mills, Carmen Perez, Gerald Piper, and George Sanchez for their help with this publication. Please contact Jessica Tolliver at jessicatolliver@nyc.rr.com or call 718-624-1414 with questions and corrections

School Mission

PS 261 Magnet School for Integrating the Arts expects all students, staff and parents to continuously grow as learners and have high expectations of conduct for the entire school community. We have a magnet theme of infusing the arts into our curriculum with a variety of art forms, including visual arts, movement, photography and music. We focus on students' cognitive, social, emotional, artistic and physical development. We believe that all members of our school community learn best in a nurturing learning environment that accepts and celebrates diversity and is humane and collaborative. We use standards-based instruction (*see page 10*) to develop students who are concerned, respectful citizens, critical thinkers and lifelong learners.

About PS 261

PS 261 focuses on integrating the arts throughout the educational life of our students. Our school is racially, ethnically, and academically diverse, reflecting the cultural diversity that makes up the local community. We recognize and value parent partnerships in the education of our students and encourage involvement in the classroom, and participation in school management, including schoolwide decision-making. Our staff works together to align curriculum to Department of Education standards, to ensure consistent instruction across each grade, and from grade to grade, and to monitor each student's progress.

The school uses EveryDay Math (also known as Chicago Math) in grades kindergarten through five. We use Balanced Literacy instruction and have readers' and writers' workshops in each of our classrooms. Our school has a close partnership with the Columbia University Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Each class has a rich and diverse classroom library where students are exposed to wonderful literature and read books on their own level. Students in grades three through five participate in enrichment clusters. Our science and social studies instruction is hands-on and is designed to promote understanding. The school's Comprehensive Pupil Personnel Support Team works with teachers to identify at-risk students in order to provide services that will allow each child to learn successfully in the classroom. PS 261 is committed to an enriching curriculum that looks at the talents, interests, and gifts of all of our students as a means of a quality education.

School Procedures

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance at school is critical to your child's understanding classroom work in sequence and keeping up with curriculum. Attendance is recorded on the child's cumulative record card and is taken into account when considering promotion to the next grade. Parents can support the work of the school by stressing good attendance habits. Regular attendance also aids teacher evaluation, allowing for early detection if your child needs special help in any area. A note is required when a child returns to school after a significant absence. Communicable diseases, such as measles, chicken pox, conjunctivitis (pinkeye), head lice and ringworm, must be reported to the school office. After three unexcused absences a letter is sent home and/or a call is made; after 20 days an attendance teacher visits the home. The guidance counselor works with families who have frequent absences.

PUNCTUALITY

The school day begins at 8:30 A.M. when children line up to go into the classrooms. Parents should assist their children in developing the habit of arriving at school before that time so as to be ready for the morning lineup. Since reading is normally the first class of each day, students need to be prepared to begin schoolwork promptly. As a safety precaution, parents of children in grades one through five may not accompany their children to the classroom. Pre-kindergartners may always be escorted to their classrooms by their parents. Until November, kindergarten children may be escorted to the classroom by their parents from 8:30 - 8:40 A.M. Children who arrive after 8:30 A.M. must obtain a late pass from the late desk in the main lobby before going to class.

DAILY SCHEDULE *note that these procedures may change from time to time*

Arrival

The school building opens at 7:45 A.M. Breakfast is available for all children in the cafeteria from 7:45-8:20 A.M. All other children should arrive prior to the start of school with enough time to greet friends and be ready to begin the day promptly. Pre-kindergarten students are dropped off directly in their classrooms. Kindergarten through second grade children sit at assigned tables in the school cafeteria until their teacher picks them up. Third through fifth grade children line up with their class in the main schoolyard and walk in at 8:30 A.M. In case of rain or snow, children in grades three through five report to the auditorium.

Dismissal

Children who ride a school bus will be dismissed at 2:45 P.M. An adult will escort the children to their designated buses. Please make sure that you have written down your child's bus company and bus route number. Complaints about busing issues should be directed to the Bus Hotline at 718-784-3313, extension 245. School administrator Nancy Storms addresses bus issues.

Dismissal is at 2:50 P.M. Children who attend the PTA AfterSchool Program (*see Afterschool Programs, below*) at the school are led to the cafeteria. Children who attend area daycare centers are led to the auditorium to await pick up by the center. For all children being picked up by a parent or caregiver:

- ▶ Pre-kindergartners are picked up at their classrooms.
- ▶ Kindergartners are picked up from their teacher in the small schoolyard on Dean Street. The teacher will inform you where to look for your child's class.
- ▶ First and second graders are picked up in the gymnasium.
- ▶ Third through fifth graders are dismissed through the Pacific Street door and picked up from their teacher in the main schoolyard.

Please note: Kindergartners and grades three through five are dismissed outside, rain or shine. To ensure safe dismissal proceedings, children may not be picked up early. Children who are to be escorted home must be picked up promptly. Children may only be picked up by a person 18 years or older who is listed on the blue Home Emergency Contact Card (*see page 6*). Please notify your child's teacher in writing if a different person is picking up your child on a particular day. Arrangements need to be made prior to the school day. **Do not call the office.**

Children in pre-kindergarten through second grade who are not picked up by 2:50 P.M. will be asked to wait in the lobby on the main floor. The School Safety Officers may not supervise students. There is no official supervision of children left in the yard after pick-up time. Students will not be allowed to use the school phone. Please tell your children that if, due to an emergency, they are not picked up on time, they should report to the main office.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Early Morning Jumpstart (<i>see p. 7</i>)	8:00 - 8:30 A.M.
Period 1	8:30 - 9:20 A.M.
Period 2	9:25 - 10:15 A.M.
Period 3	10:20 - 11:10 A.M.
Period 4	11:15 - 12:05 A.M.
	Lunch (K & grade 1)
Period 5	12:10 - 1:00 P.M.
	Lunch (grades 2&3)
Period 6	1:05 - 1:55 P.M.
	Lunch (grades 4&5)
Period 7	2:00 - 2:50 P.M.
Dismissal	2:50 P.M.

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Information about the PS 261 PTA AfterSchool Program, which offers enrichment classes for kindergarten through grade five students, will be sent home in September. There is also a separate program for pre-K students, held in the trailer. AfterSchool runs from dismissal until 6:00 P.M. sharp each day. Sign-up for classes is held three times a year but registration is ongoing, space permitting. Speak with the director, Michael Jasmin, whose office is located next to the nurse on the main floor, or go online to www.ps261.org/afterschool for more information.

In addition, teachers from the following centers pick up children at PS 261 each day at dismissal time and escort them to their respective centers to participate in afterschool programs. Arrangements must be made directly with each center:

- Bethel Daycare Center, 242 Hoyt Street, 718-834-9292
- Jules D. Michaels Daycare Center, 343 Warren Street, 718-237-9576
- The Montessori Day School of Brooklyn, 787A Washington Avenue, 718-398-2322 (up to six years old)
- Open House Nursery School, 318 Warren Street, 718-625-5252
- YWCA After School Program, 30 Third Avenue at Atlantic Avenue, 718-875-1190

COMMUNITY STANDARDS

The Community Standards, also known as the Partnership Code of Behavior, is a way of making sure that PS 261 is a place where all children feel that they are safe and cared for. It is meant to help bring about greater respect for ourselves, for all the children in our school, and for all the adults who help us to learn and grow. It is also meant to make sure that our building is a place where everyone is able to feel comfortable and where we show respect for the work that people do in the building—and for the building itself. Every child receives a copy of the code at the beginning of each school year, with a tear-off for parental signature. See page 6 for the complete Community Standards.

DRESS CODE

Children are expected to be properly dressed when they come to school. Clothing must not display images of weapons, violence or other inappropriate content. Head coverings of any kind—hats, do-rags—are not allowed except for religious purposes.

FLYERS HOME

All students have a notebook or folder that goes home every day in their backpacks. In addition to their homework, this folder is also the primary way the school and the PTA communicate with parents. Parents are asked to read everything promptly and return whatever is requested. Handouts that are not specifically for PTA events and information must be approved by the administration prior to distribution.

HEALTH & FITNESS

ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Under provisions of Public Health Law, Section 2164, all children must be immunized against the following diseases: diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus (DPT)—three doses required; measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR); chicken pox; TB testing and polio inoculation—three doses required. Each child must also have a medical examination. When registering a child, a parent must bring the child, a birth certificate, proof of address, and a record of immunization.

GENERAL HEALTH

The school checks each child's eyes and hearing. If there is a problem the parent will be asked to follow-up with a doctor. A note from a dentist, as evidence of a dental checkup, is required once a year. You will be informed if the school doesn't have an updated medical form for your child.

Do not send your child to school with a fever or if your child does not feel well. If your child becomes ill at school, you will be contacted to come and take your child home. It is important that parents and guardians supply the school with their current telephone number and two emergency telephone numbers where someone can be reached in your absence. It is your responsibility to update this information on a regular basis. (*See Home Emergency Contact Card below*).

LICE

If a student shows symptoms of head lice, she will be sent to the main office to be checked by a trained staff member. A member of the family will be contacted. The child must be picked up and cannot return to school until the lice and nits are gone.

MEDICATION

Students who have medication to be used at school must have a Form 504 on file at school. This form can be obtained from the guidance counselor's office and must be completed by your child's doctor. The school nurse is the only person who can administer medication, including painkillers and other non-prescription medications.

HOME EMERGENCY CONTACT CARD

This blue card is sent home each September for parents to complete. The school depends on this information for contacting the parents of a child who is ill or injured. Children will only be released to friends or relatives whose names appear on the Home Emergency Contact Card. If any information changes, please inform both your child's teacher and school secretary Janet Pappas.

LOST & FOUND

The Lost and Found is located in the cafeteria. School lunch boxes, book bags, sweaters, jackets, etc. should be labeled to help in the return of lost articles. After a month, unclaimed articles will be donated to a shelter.

LUNCH (AND OTHER MEALS)

A professional dietician who manages the kitchen runs the school's lunch program. Hot lunches provide one third of a child's daily food requirements. The menu is prepared a month in advance and is posted in the cafeteria. If you need more information, please contact the school cook, Cheryl Darbouze (*see Contact Information on page 3*).

Breakfast is available in the cafeteria for all children. Free or reduced-cost lunch is provided for eligible children. A Department of Education survey form is sent home at the beginning of each school year to determine eligibility. **It is essential that all parents complete this form, even if your family is ineligible for free lunch.** Both the *number* of forms returned, as well as the *information* on the form, affect the school's funding status. Teachers will arrange a snack schedule with parents. The pending lunch schedule is:

Pre-kindergarten	11:30 A.M. in their classroom with their teacher
Kindergarten & first grade	11:15 A.M. - 12:05 P.M. in the cafeteria
Grades two & three	12:10 P.M. - 1:00 P.M. in the cafeteria
Grades four & five	1:05 P.M. - 1:55 P.M. in the cafeteria

PS 261 Community Standards

WITH YOUR VOICE

- ▶ Be careful with other people's feelings. Don't tease or insult or threaten, or call anyone an unkind name.
- ▶ Tell the truth. Don't lie.
- ▶ Use appropriate language. Don't use bad words or gestures.
- ▶ Respect other people's conversations. Don't interrupt when people are talking. Don't bother people when they are working or learning. Don't barge into a classroom.

WITH YOUR BODY

- ▶ Be careful with other people's bodies. Don't hit or bite or fight. Don't make anyone feel uncomfortable.
- ▶ Be careful with other people's things. Don't steal or break or damage anyone's property.
- ▶ Be careful with school property. Don't destroy things and don't write on desks or walls.

WITH YOUR MIND

- ▶ Always ask this question: "Would you like it if someone did that to you?"

AND ALSO...

- ▶ Be quiet in the halls. Classes should walk quietly and not disturb others working in their classrooms. Listen to and follow directions given by any staff member. Be on time. Walk. Do not run. Work quietly in your classroom so that other people can think. Don't fool around in the bathroom. Don't chew gum in the classroom. Eat only in the cafeteria or during designated times in your classroom.

MONEY

All money sent to school for school events, lunch, etc., should be placed in envelopes marked with your child's name and the purpose. Although some children may bring money to school for an after-school snack, large sums of money are discouraged.

PARENT COORDINATOR

Carmen Perez is the school's parent coordinator. (See *Contact Information on page 3.*) The parent coordinator works to engage and involve parents in the school community, along with the administration, staff, PTA and outside community groups. Her office is in the main office.



Parent Coordinator
Carmen Perez

PHOTO RELEASES

Parents must return the signed photo release form in the fall that says their child's picture may *not* be published in print or electronic format. Otherwise photographs of the children may be published.

PLAYDATES

Parents are reminded that it is their responsibility to make all arrangements for playdates. Please do not call the school for this reason. Your child's teacher should be notified in writing about any arrangement that requires a different dismissal procedure.

SCHOOL TRIPS

At the beginning of the school year, parents are requested to sign a general permission slip allowing students to take neighborhood walks. A separate signed permission slip is required for each class field trip that requires transportation. It is the responsibility of the student to bring home and return this signed note. A child will not be permitted to go on a trip without a permission slip. Children are not allowed to call parents for permission on the day of the trip.

SNACKS

Teachers will arrange a snack schedule with parents. Snapple juice and water are available for purchase in the cafeteria. Snacks are sold during lunch. Funds raised go to support instruction.

TOYS & OTHER PERSONAL BELONGINGS

With the exception of items to share during the appropriate period of the class day, children are discouraged from bringing personal items to school. Electronic items (Game Boys, PSPs, iPods, etc.) will be taken away and returned only to parents.

TRANSPORTATION

If you have questions regarding bus transportation service, please contact school administrator Nancy Storms (See *Contact Information on page 3.*)

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL

For the safety and security of our children, all visitors to the school—including parents—must sign in at the Pacific Street entrance with the safety officer, parent or school aide who is posted there. Visitors are required to provide photo identification and will receive a visitor's pass. Please cooperate with the staff; they are there for the safety of our children.

Academic Procedures

CURRICULUM NIGHT

Curriculum Night occurs each September or early October. The word "curriculum" means "what will be studied." Join your child's teacher in the classroom for an informative and important meeting. This is the opportunity to know specifically what your child's teacher has planned for the year, what methods she or he will be using to teach, and how your child's progress will be assessed. It's also a time to meet other parents of children in the same class, ask questions and spend some time in the room that will define your child's year. This is an important meeting that parents should make every attempt to attend.

EARLY MORNING JUMPSTART

The day of some students starts early at 8 A.M. so that they may receive extra academic help. Early Morning Jumpstart is by invitation only and the school will notify parents whose children need to receive this additional service.

GRADE-LEVEL MEETINGS

The principal holds grade meetings in the late spring in order to give parents an overview about what's ahead for their children. This is a good time to ask questions and hear updates about school news.

HOMWORK

The purpose of homework is to extend and reinforce learning and to develop self-discipline, personal responsibility and independent thinking. Our teachers try to make homework assignments purposeful and related to class activities, as well as tailor assignments to individual children's interests, needs and abilities. Parents can offer help in the following ways:

- ▶ Check homework daily—see that all assignments are complete, accurate, and neat.
- ▶ Answer questions—but please allow your child to do the assignment him or herself.
- ▶ Listen to your child.
- ▶ Read to your child daily.
- ▶ Have your child read daily.

INTERVENTION

Students who are identified as needing extra academic instruction are provided with intervention either in small groups during the day, before school, or on Saturdays. We have an intervention team consisting of specialists who assist in: identifying students who need extra academic support; delivering these services; and monitoring student progress.

OPEN SCHOOL WEEK

This is a citywide event held at every school every year in November. Parents are invited to visit classrooms during school hours. Each grade has a suggested day of the week, but you may visit on any day convenient to you.

PARENT CONCERNS

Parents should first bring any concerns to their child's teacher or Carmen Perez, the parent coordinator (*see p. 7*). Parents can also fill out the Parent Concern Form available in the main office. You will receive a prompt reply. Grade-level concerns may also be raised with grade representatives and class parents. The principal has an open-door policy and all are welcome.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences are held in November and March; the dates are set by the Department of Education. Parents sign up with the child's teacher for a time slot; afternoon and evening times are available. To arrange a conference with a teacher at a different time, please speak to the teacher, send a note, or leave a message in the office.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued twice a year for students in kindergarten and three times a year for grades one through five.

SCHOOL COMMITTEES & PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents' energy and effort are essential for our school to work smoothly and provide the maximal educational experience for all our children. **All parents are encouraged to participate** and should speak with the principal about how to get involved. In addition to the various PTA committees (*see pages 11 and 16*), school committees consist of teachers and parents, generally headed by a teacher volunteer. School committees include:

- ▶ AfterSchool (*p. 5*)
- ▶ Class Parents (*p. 11*)
- ▶ Cultural Arts (*p. 9*)
- ▶ Grants
- ▶ Invention Convention (*p. 9*)
- ▶ Enrichment (*p. 9*)
- ▶ School-Based Options Personnel
- ▶ School Leadership Team (*p. 10*)
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Volunteer Coordination

STUDENT PLACEMENT

All decisions on which classroom a child is placed in are based on the best interests of the child. The school does not honor requests for a specific teacher, nor does it automatically place students with an older sibling's former teacher. Generally, students are divided anonymously into classrooms balanced by race, gender, social skills, and academic ability. Twins are separated unless there is a compelling reason for the children to be placed together. Questions may be directed to the principal.

STUDENT RECORDS

Parents can have access to all of their children's records. If you wish to see your child's records, request an appointment with the school guidance counselor. A member of the staff will assist you in understanding the records. Ask for a translator if one is needed.

VISITING THE CLASSROOM

Your classroom teacher will provide opportunities throughout the year for you to visit your child's classroom to see work in progress. It may be possible to arrange a visit during the school day; speak to your child's teacher. See also Open School Week (*p. 8*).

Special Programs & Events

THE ARTS

PS 261 offers visual arts, photography, theater arts, architecture, and music programs. These programs include a school band, a show chorus and a second-grade bells group, all of which perform during the school year. Many groups perform at the annual **CULTURAL ARTS DAY**. In addition, the entire school participates weekly in a community sing led by their classroom teachers. Thanks to PTA funds, PS 261 has long been a member of the **METROPOLITAN OPERA GUILD EDUCATION PROGRAM**, which enables 200 upper-graders to see a final dress rehearsal at the famed opera house each year. Outside arts organizations—including **LINCOLN CENTER**, the **MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP** and **ARTS CONNECTION**—and individual parent volunteers work to integrate arts into the classroom. The Cultural Arts Committee plans family arts events, coordinates outside arts organizations, writes grants and identifies local artists and resources .

BOOK TALK

The school trains parents and other volunteers to lead interpretive literary discussions for advanced fourth or fifth grade readers. Please contact Reading Intervention teacher Eileen Eiger for more information.

COMPREHENSIVE PUPIL PERSONNEL SUPPORT TEAM

The team includes representatives from general and special education as well as other disciplines (social worker, psychologist, education evaluator) and individuals with classroom experience. Together they review at-risk students and make recommendations for services. The main goal of the support team is to identify successful interventions to help students remain in the the regular classroom—the least restrictive environment.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL)

PS 261 has one full-time and one part-time ESL teacher who teach eligible students. Classes for adults who are learning English as their second language are offered locally by Carroll Gardens Neighborhood Women—the adult education program of the Fifth Avenue Committee, a local community development corporation—and can be reached at 718-624-3475.

ENRICHMENT

The Enrichment Program gives first through fifth graders an opportunity to explore in depth a subject of special interest to them. The beauty of the program's model is that although the final project is stressed, it is the process of exploration—in teams or individually—that rewards the students' experience. The groups are small so the children get more individual attention. Parents are an invaluable component of this program, either as regular facilitators or one-time guest lecturers or volunteers.

Enrichment units have included math games, telescope building, Native American studies, acting and performance, clay sculpture, dance, computerized music, fifth-grade yearbook, journalism, photography, architecture, party planning, sewing/clothing design, science, cooking/cookbook design, fine arts/self-portraiture and advanced art. Reading intervention teacher Eileen Eiger coordinates this program.

FAMILIES AS LEARNING PARTNERS

The Parents as Reading/Math Partners Program is held on the last Friday of each month; the theme alternates monthly between math, reading, and social studies. From 8:30 to 9:15 A.M. parents come into their child's class and participate in the morning routines. All of the students benefit from having more adults to interact with during class time and the whole school community benefits from increased parent involvement. Parents also learn activities that they can do at home with their children.

INVENTION CONVENTION (SCIENCE FAIR)

In these non-competitive events, all participants are winners. All children are invited to participate, and children in grades 2 through 5 are required to do so. The science fair typically occurs in April and the math fair in May.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Finding a good middle school can seem overwhelming—but it's not impossible! Parents are urged to start early, take notes, and keep the needs of their child and family in mind. Contact middle schools directly and go on tours of the schools. Speak to your child's teacher and the school guidance counselor. The PTA sponsors middle school meetings in September and October featuring a panel of experienced parents who discuss the process and answer questions. The Middle School Choice Program Student/Parent Guide, which is available from the guidance counselor (*see Contact Information on page 3*), provides detailed descriptions of each program (curriculum, entrance requirements, locations, etc.) and questions and answers about the application process. The guide is sent home to parents of fifth graders every fall. You can also visit www.insideschools.org or read "*New York City's Best Public Middle Schools*" by Clara Hemphill.

RELATED SERVICES

Related services for children fall into the categories of occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, speech, hearing, and vision services. Each child who is to receive a particular service will have a mandated Individual Educational Plan (IEP) that outlines the frequency, time and ratio of the service to be provided. Most students automatically receive their mandated related services, but parents

should be diligent in making sure that their child receives what has been outlined for them. This can be done by presenting a copy of the IEP to the school secretary when they are enrolling their child in a new school. Or, if a child is returning to a school, parents should contact the designated provider to make sure that their child is receiving the services. Parents can also contact school administration officials.

SATURDAY TEST PREP

PS 261 provides students with additional instruction in literacy and mathematics with a focus on test-taking strategies. The test prep sessions, taught by teachers, happen on several Saturday mornings before the tests. Watch backpacks for details.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)

School-Based Management/Shared Decision-Making is in effect at PS 261. The team includes parents, teachers, administrators and other school personnel. Leadership teams should have a balance of school staff and parent members and may include representatives of community-based organizations or local businesses or other community members. The role of the SLT is to provide overall direction and guidance about the education of students, the use of resources to support the improvement of teaching and learning, and the impact of educational choices on student results. Examples of specific team responsibilities include development and review of the School Comprehensive Education Plan. The SLT is the central team coordinating the work of other teams, subcommittees, and task forces in the school. It keeps the school community involved and informed of SLT discussions and decisions. The SLT is open to suggestions. A mailbox is available in the main office, or you may contact parent Deanna Logan (2005-06 co-chair).

STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION

District 15 (*see p. 8*) and PS 261 have adopted standards-based instruction that establishes what all students should know and be able to do. These standards apply to every student in the region, including students who are English language learners, special needs students, students at risk and exceptional learners. Every teacher will be teaching to the same set of high standards. By raising academic standards, implementing expanded professional development, and focusing on providing the tools for achieving equity and excellence, we ensure that all students in PS 261 are learning at the highest possible level.

Partnerships with Outside Organizations

INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

We hold our annual **GRANDPARENTS' DAY** in the spring. Children invite their grandparents to spend the day with them in their classroom reading, talking and working on projects. The school also works with the **PREJUDICE REDUCTION PROJECT OF RSVP** (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program). This non-profit agency promotes and supports volunteerism among seniors 55 years and older. RSVP-trained senior citizens present workshops to second and fifth graders, helping them to break down stereotypes and build pride in themselves.

LEGAL LIVES

During the school year, two Assistant District Attorneys work with a fifth grade classroom to discuss the law and its impact on the students' lives. The program culminates in a mock trial and a visit to the courthouse.

MENTORING PROGRAMS

POWER LUNCH is a reading program where Department of Education employees come during the lunch period and read to children. **COURT VOLUNTEERS**, who also read with children, come one afternoon each week.

STAR PROGRAM-BROOKLYN PSYCHIATRIC CENTER

The STAR Program of the Brooklyn Psychiatric Center is an on-site licensed mental health program located in various schools throughout District 15. It provides counseling service to school children experiencing emotional difficulties that are affecting their learning abilities and/or behavior while maintaining the children in regular educational classes. The therapist assigned to PS 261 is Roger Rosenthal.

The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

The 2007-08 PTA Officers

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Presidents:

George Sanchez, gesanchez99@hotmail.com
Gerald Piper, gmpiper@gmail.com

Vice Presidents:

Nadine Jervis, nadine@prestonbailey.com
Stephanie Steinberg,
stephanie.steinberg@verizon.net

PTA Treasurer: Audrey Patton
Nicpat123@hotmail.com

AfterSchool Treasurer: Janine Taylor
janine882@aim.com

Secretary: Fran Castellanos-Ross
afrocuba87@yahoo.com

Members-At-Large:

Ann Biddlecom, annbiddlecom@yahoo.com
Rachel Godsil, godsilra@shu.edu

STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

AfterSchool: Ismene Speliotis
ahcny@acorn.org

Fifth Grade: Ramono Fluker
molove2u2@yahoo.com

Fundraising: Nadine Jervis
Nadine@prestonbailey.com

Legislative Liaison: Judith Goldiner
JGOLDINER@legal-aid.org

Program: Sarah Leah Whitson
whitsos@hrw.org

Social: YOUR NAME HERE
Audit: YOUR NAME HERE

GRADE REPRESENTATIVES

Pre-K: Open for September 2007

Kindergarten: Open for September 2007

1st Grade: Klara Carames, kcarames@yahoo.com

2nd grade: Teresa Melendez

3rd Grade: Janet Gazlay Martin,
janet.a.gazlaymartin@verizonbusiness.com

4th Grade: Marci Rosa, marcirosa@aol.com

5th Grade: Teri Brajewski, teri@twbdesign.com

Special Ed: David Goren, dbgoren@panix.com

ticket items, about \$20,000. The PTA also pays for student computers and enrichment, such as class trips, the Metropolitan Opera, and the robotics team, about \$16,500. About \$13,000 is given to teachers at the start of the school year for extra materials, and \$12,000 is used for communications such as photocopying school flyers, the monthly newsletter, the *Who's Who*, and the school handbook. Arts-related expenses—like publishing Poemagination, or re-conditioning band instruments—account for another \$9,000.

The success of our school depends in part on the involvement and support of its families, and the PTA is here to make that happen—with you. **Please free to contact any PTA officer with problems or suggestions.**

The PS 261 Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) supports the education and development of our children by raising money for school materials and activities and providing opportunities for families to get involved with the school. If you are a parent/guardian of a student, or a PS 261 teacher, you are automatically a member of the PTA.

How can I get involved? Volunteer your time or talent! PTA-organized school events like the Fall Festival in October, the Invention Convention in April, and the talent show in May rely on the time and energy of families and teachers. Help make our school a strong community by being a part of one of these school-wide activities. No matter your interest, the PTA has a need that you can fill—just contact any of the PTA officers listed here. There is also a PTA mailbox in the main office where you can leave a note.

Please come to the general PTA meetings, held once a month in the school auditorium, where you can learn about upcoming events and school concerns, vote on major expenses, and let other families know about ideas and concerns you have. Prior to each general meeting, the PTA officers, committee chairs, and grade representatives meet at an Executive Board meeting to plan events and oversee fundraising and expenditures. These meetings are open to the larger PTA membership, as well.

Each grade has an elected representative to the PTA who is responsible for coordinating class parents (every class chooses their class parents in September), other volunteers for PTA activities, and for conveying grade-related ideas to the larger PTA. Get to know your child's PTA grade representative. Those parents with access to email should sign up for the calendar listserv in order to stay informed about school-related information (see *Contact Information on page 3*). Those interested in knowing more details about the PTA are also welcome to sign up for the Board listserv, as well. Finally, the PTA sends announcements home in your child's backpack, as well as the PTA's monthly newsletter. All PTA information is also available on our school website.

Where does the PTA money come from and where does it go? The PTA has an annual budget of about \$75,000. The money comes from various fundraising efforts at the school, including the fall magazine & candy sale; the winter and spring book fairs; the January dance-a-thon and February read-a-thon; and the spring auction. The PTA also seeks funding outside the school community from businesses, foundations, and the government. The PTA's direct appeal in the fall asks every family to contribute *some* amount, even a dollar, because grantmakers are more likely to give to schools with a high percentage of families donating money. If you work at a job where your employer is able to match direct donations to the PTA with corporate funds, please let the PTA fundraising chair know.

The PTA helps pay for a lot of the things that make PS 261 a great school. Additional supervision and activities during lunch are the biggest



George Sanchez
PTA co-president



Gerald Piper
PTA co-president

SCHOOL EVENTS 2007-08
WATCH BACKPACKS FOR SPECIFIC DATES

September 4	Welcome Back To School
September 11	Curriculum Night
September 18	Candy/Magazine Sale Kick-Off
September 18	Grade Representatives Meeting
September 19	Middle School Meetings (morning & evening)
September 30	Atlantic Antic
October	Fall Festival Picture Day
November	Potluck Dinner Open House
December	Winter Book Fair
January	Open House Dance-A-Thon
February	Grade Representatives Meeting Black History Month Celebration PJ Day Kick-off for Read-A-Thon
March	Cultural Arts Day Open House Spring Tea Party
April	Poem In Your Pocket Invention Convention Poetry Night
May	Spring Book Fair Spring Auction Teacher Appreciation Week Math Fair National Teacher Day Talent Show
June	Grade Level Meetings Grandparents Day 5th Grade Graduation Kindergarten Graduation

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CALENDAR 2007-08
AS OF 8/1/07

September 4, Tuesday
SCHOOL BEGINS; Early Dismissal for Kindergarten students only. Pre-K calendar is issued separately.

September 5, Wednesday
Early Dismissal for Kindergarten students only.

September 13, Thursday -- September 14, Friday
NO SCHOOL, Rosh Hashanah

October 8, Monday
NO SCHOOL, Columbus Day Observed

November 6, Tuesday
NO SCHOOL, Election Day

November 12, Monday
NO SCHOOL, Veterans Day Observed

MID-NOVEMBER
HALF DAY, Parent-Teacher Conferences (noon dismissal); DATE TBA BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EVENING, Parent-Teacher Conferences; DATES TBA BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

November 22, Thursday -- November 23, Friday
NO SCHOOL, Thanksgiving Recess

December 24, Monday -- January 1, Tuesday
NO SCHOOL, Winter Recess. Students return to school on January 2, Wednesday.

2008

January 21, Monday
NO SCHOOL, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February 18, Monday -- February 22, Friday
NO SCHOOL, Midwinter Recess

MID-MARCH
HALF DAY, Parent-Teacher Conferences (noon dismissal); DATE TBA BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EVENING, Parent-Teacher Conferences; DATE TBA BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

March 21, Friday
NO SCHOOL, Good Friday

April 21, Monday -- April 25, Friday
NO SCHOOL, Spring Recess

May 26, Monday
NO SCHOOL, Memorial Day Observed

June 5, Thursday
NO SCHOOL, Brooklyn-Queens Day

June 26, Thursday
LAST DAY FOR ALL STUDENTS; noon dismissal

*Calendar subject to change. Watch for notices about June half days and parent-teacher conferences.
Or go here for more info: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Calendar/default.htm>*

CITYWIDE AND STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT CALENDAR

DATE	TEST	IMPACT	PURPOSE
September - October	Language Assessment Battery Revised (LAB-R)	New entrants whose home language is other than English. All grades.	To identify students who are entitled to ELL programs
September - November	ECLAS-2	Grades 1-3	Diagnostic test measuring student progress in literacy
October	Interim Assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics	Grades 3-8	Diagnostic assessments to assist teachers in measuring student progress relative to State standards in ELA and Mathematics
October - February	New York State Alternate Assessment	Special Education students whose IEPs recommend Alternate Assessment	To assess progress towards the New York State standards in alternate learning methods
October - November	ELLS Interim Assessments in English Language Arts in English Proficiency and Spanish Language Arts	Grades 3-8 ELLS	Diagnostic tests to assist teachers in measuring student progress relative to State standards in ESL and Native Language Arts
November	Elementary NYS Social Studies Test	Grade 5	To assess student progress towards State and City standards in Social Studies
December	Interim Assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics	Grades 3-8	Diagnostic assessments to assist teachers in measuring student progress relative to State standards in ELA and Mathematics
January	New York State English Language Arts (ELA)	Grades 3-5	To assess student progress toward New York State standards in English Language Arts
January - February	ECLAS-2	Grade K	Diagnostic test measuring student progress in literacy
January - February	ELLS Interim Assessments in English Language Arts in English Proficiency and Spanish Language Arts	Grades 3-8 ELLS	Diagnostic tests to assist teachers in measuring student progress relative to State standards in ESL and Native Language Arts

CITYWIDE AND STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT CALENDAR

DATE	TEST	IMPACT	PURPOSE
March	New York State Mathematics	Grades 3-5	To assess student progress toward New York State standards in Mathematics
March - April	ELLs Interim Assessments in English Language Arts in English Proficiency and Spanish Language Arts	Grades 3-8 ELLs	Diagnostic tests to assist teachers in measuring student progress relative to State standards in ESL and Native Language Arts
April - May	ECLAS-2	Grades 1-3 <i>(kindergarten optional)</i>	Diagnostic assessment measuring student progress in literacy
April - May	New York State Science performance section	Grade 4 & 8	To assess elementary and intermediate-level science programs and to assess student progress toward New York State standards in science
May	New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) speaking portion	all grades	To measure student progress in developing English language proficiency
May	New York State Science written section	Grade 4 & 8	To assess elementary and intermediate-level science programs and to assess student progress toward New York State standards in science
May	New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) reading, writing, listening	all grades	To measure student progress in developing English language proficiency
May	E-PAL 2 and 3 Early Performance Assessment in Language Arts E-PAL 3	Grades 2 students who have mastered level 5 or higher in the Reading activity of ECLAS-2 Grade 3	Diagnostic assessment in Listening/Writing, Reading/Writing, and Writing Mechanics in response to literature

DISCLAIMER: This calendar is for elementary schools only, it only gives general dates, and it is based on the 2006-07 assessment calendar. The Department of Education has been known to change the assessment calendar during the school year. Watch for notices in your child's backpack or talk to your child's teacher for more information. Or go to <http://www.nycenet.edu/> and search for "assessment calendar."

Tips on getting involved—and having a great year!

- ▶ Attend school events, both social and academic (p. 12).
- ▶ Attend the general PTA meetings (p. 11 & 12).
- ▶ Attend both parent-teacher conferences (p. 8 & 12).
- ▶ Attend Curriculum Night in September (p. 7).
- ▶ Contribute to your child's teacher's wish list (p. 11).
- ▶ Contribute financially, no matter how small, to PTA fundraisers (p. 11).
- ▶ Give double for class trips so another child can go.
- ▶ Make sure homework gets completed (p. 8).
- ▶ Read everything in the backpacks (including this handbook)!
- ▶ Read *The PTA News* every month (p. 11).
- ▶ Sign up for the PTA email lists (p. 3 & 11).
- ▶ Volunteer in the classroom (p. 8 & 9).
- ▶ Volunteer as a chaperone for field trips (p. 7).
- ▶ Volunteer to help with lunch or recess (p. 9).



COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Listservs: Bill Moree, moree@moreephoto.com

Lunch Clubs: YOUR NAME HERE

Newsletter: Matt Fenton, newsletter@thefentons.com

Open Houses: Monica Christensen,
mmc189@columbia.edu

Playground: Caroline O'Hara

Poeimagination: YOUR NAME HERE

School Safety: June Edelstein

Technology: YOUR NAME HERE

Website: Gerald Piper, web@ps261.org

EVENT CHAIRS

SchoolWide Clean-Up: Rose Beau & Rachel Godsil

Class Parent & Grade Representative Meetings:

Ann Biddlecom, Rose Beau & Rachel Godsil

Atlantic Antic: Ann Biddlecom & Alyson Gil

Middle School Meetings: Marci Rosa & Carole Kelly

Potluck: Rachel Godsil, Janine Taylor & Nadine Jervis

Candy/Magazine Sale: Susan Hyacinth

Picture Day: Rose Beau

Fall Festival: Klara Carames

Book Fairs (winter & spring): Rose Beau

Dance-A-Thon: Brenda Williams

Pajama Day & Read-A-Thon: Nancy Melissas

Cultural Arts Day: YOUR NAME HERE

Family Tea: Janine Taylor

Invention Convention: Barbara Schweizer

Poetry Night: Rachel Godsil

Spring Auction: Marci Rosa

Math Fair: YOUR NAME HERE

Talent Show: YOUR NAME HERE

Teacher Appreciation Week: YOUR NAME HERE

Grandparents Day: YOUR NAME HERE

