

CALENDAR

Wed, March 11

Executive PTA Meeting

6:15pm-7:20pm, Library (Room 214)
All Are Welcome!**Wed, March 18**

General PTA Meeting

8:30am-9:20am, Auditorium

Thursday, March 19

NOON DISMISSAL

Parent/Teacher Confs.

1pm-3:30pm, 6pm-8:30pm

Monday, March 23

SLT Mtg.

5:30pm-7pm, Library (Room 214)

Thursday, March 26

PS261 Game Night

6:15pm-8:30pm, Cafeteria

Friday, March 27

Families as Learning Partners

8:30am-9:20am, Classrooms

Saturday, March 28

Family Tea

2:30pm-5:30pm, Cafeteria

Wednesday, April 1

Executive PTA Meeting

6:15pm-7:30pm, Library (Room 214)

All are welcome!

Friday, April 3

Staff Appreciation Day

Auditorium

Friday, April 3rd at 5PM and**Saturday, April 4th 1pm**"Alice in Wonderland" performance,
Auditorium**Tuesday, April 7**

5th Grade Graduation Pictures

PS 261 PTA Sponsored
winter term celebration,
4:30PM, Auditorium

100 Froot Loops for the 100th Day of School!

Hello March! Soon we'll be able to put our snowboots into storage and dig out those crocs! March brings Parent Teacher conferences and a Family Tea. Check the website for the latest updates!

The Power of Words WAS THE

THEME OF THIS YEAR'S BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

on Friday, February 27th. The audience was packed and enthusiastic. The program featured singing, dance, and an audio/visual presentation punctuated by students reading their own composition about how words can bring a person up or drag him or her down. Poet and occasional substitute teacher, Barbara Newsome, recited a poem she wrote for the occasion. She admonished the audience to "Choose words like you would choice time." Third grade teacher Waita Moore introduced the PS 261 Steppers, who performed a routine influenced by African Dance and a style often seen in American parades and Black fraternities and colleges. A slideshow presented Black leaders and significant events in Black History to the tune of Sam Cooke's "Change is Gonna Come." Overall, the program celebrated the joy and hope that came with the election of Barack Obama. To the declaration, "Yes, We Can!" the students answered, "Yes, We Did!"

Parents —Just a quick note to let you know that, thanks to your help, afternoon dismissal & pickup is running very smoothly. We know you're anxious to pick up your child as quickly as possible, so that you can get on with the rest of your day. So thanks again for waiting patiently outside the front doors until 2:50pm (this will get easier as the weather turns nicer!). Also, if you need to pick up your child early, make sure you stop at the Security Desk BEFORE 2:30pm. The building is very busy in those final 20 minutes before the 2:50pm dismissal, with students, teachers & staff preparing for the end of the school day. If you arrive at the Security Desk at 2:30pm or later, you'll be asked to wait until the regular dismissal to pick up your child; please help us by respecting this request. Thanks very much for your continued cooperation! —Jerry Piper

The PS 261 Newsletter is put together by Melanie Hoopes and Duane Stapp with help from Pam Potischman, Stacey Meshnick, Rick Knutsen, Monica Christensen and Jerry Piper.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT ON

Vivian Lipman *Pre-K Trailer A*

Q: *How long have you been at 261?*

A: 10 years. This is my fifth year as the Pre-K teacher.

Q: *What's it like teaching 23 kids in half a trailer?*

A: Busy and exciting. Each child brings something special to the class. Whether it's 18 or 40 it doesn't matter. There is never a dull moment. Although often I wish there was more space to do all the special things we do in class. We learn to make do especially since we have that wonderful playground right outside our door!

Q: *What's your favorite part of the year in your classroom?*

A: The holidays. I love working with the families. My favorite is the Family Harvest Breakfast when the entire Pre-k Community creates a family quilt together.

Q: *What are you looking forward to for the rest of the year?*

A: The Annual Pre-K Play. Ms. Justice and I love proving that 4 year olds can do anything. It's the culmination of skills they built during the year.

Q: *What would you be if you weren't a teacher?*

A: Life would be so boring if I was something else besides a teacher. What else would allow me to fill so many roles? Where else would I be a teacher, social worker, secretary, historian, boss, judge, lawyer, mom, artist, accountant, public speaker, nurse, photographer, dancer, singer, event planner, videographer, playwright, scientist, cook, etc.? I couldn't imagine being anything else but a teacher.

Q: *What's your favorite thing to do when you're not teaching?*

A: Resting at my house upstate looking up at my very tall trees. Painting. And when I can't go upstate, I like to look at art.

Q: *What do you love about 261?*

A: Definitely how close I am to my families and my colleagues. Lately, I discovered Facebook. It has been fun to see how families and teachers have shared photos and their daily lives with each other. That says We like each other.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT ON

Janine Taylor



Q: *What was the first thing you volunteered for at 261?*

A: The first thing I volunteered for was the Winter Book Fair (when my daughter was in 1st grade- she is in 4th now)

Q: *What do you currently volunteer for at 261?*

A: Currently I volunteer for various events - The Fall fest (crafts), The Potluck, Book fairs and the Dance-a-thon. I also organize the Family Tea which will be on March 28!

Q: *Why do you volunteer?*

A: I volunteer because I enjoy helping. I love the events and it's my way of giving back

Q: *What would you say to a 261 parent who's looking to get involved?*

A: If you want to get involved just show up at the event, see how things flow and jump right in.

THANK YOU to Janine and ALL the parents that have helped so much already this year!

WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO...

Game Night

Thursday, March 26th, 6:15 – 8:30,
Cafeteria, Auditorium and Gym

A night of fun for the whole family! Come challenge your friends, classmates and family to some of your favorite games. Board games, active games and card games! For more information, contact Ismene Spiliotis at ismene@acornmail.net

The Fourth Annual Tea Party

Saturday, March 28, 2009, 2:30 - 5:00 PM
Cafeteria
Adults \$10.00, Children \$ 5.00

Enjoy an afternoon of assorted tea, delicious finger foods, and delightful entertainment & ambiance inspired by the African culture. For additional information, please contact Janine Taylor at janine882@aim.com.

YES YOU CAN... VOLUNTEER AT AN UPCOMING SCHOOL EVENT!!!

March 28th | FAMILY TEA – volunteers needed to help set up, help during the event and clean up.

April 20-27 | SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR – Volunteers needed during school hours to help keep books organized and help kids select books to buy.

April 23rd | SCIENCE FAIR – Parents needed to help organize the event, set up and help out at the event.

May | TALENT SHOW – volunteers needed who can help during school - rehearse acts and plan the show, and help at the event.

May | SPRING AUCTION – event chair /planners needed and donation solicitations needed (ask local businesses for goods/services that we can auction, ask family, friends...possibilities are endless!!)

Please contact Yvette Torres-Schwartz yts07@mac.com or Elisa Wallman Jacques ewallman@institute2000.org if you are interested in volunteering for ANY of these events!!

Up Close with an Inspiring Student

Fifth grader Eli Bacher-Chong started “The PS 261 Recycling Act” to help set up a school-wide recycling program for paper, cardboard, plastic, metal and glass. We caught up with him on that great snow day.

Q: *What prompted you to begin such a program?*

A: The idea came to me last year when to my surprise I realized that PS 261 did not recycle. Being an environmentalist, I knew that recycling is one of the simplest ways to help the environment.

Q: *What steps did you take to initiate it?*

A: We started with a pilot program in our Going Green headquarters office in Room 318. We got bin decals and sorting flyers from the NYC Dept. of Sanitation. Although we had to take out our own recyclables, the pilot worked so well that we then expanded it to my classroom -- Theresa Foley's fourth grade class (Spring 2008). This too was a success.

This year I hope to expand the program to the whole school. Our largest obstacle is getting enough bins for each class. I thought we might re-use any extra trash receptacles for recycling, but we will still need more bins for this to work.

Another large hurdle to recycling is improper sorting. This was the main reason PS 261 has not had a recycling program before -- it wasn't possible for our custodians to sort out the recyclables for the whole school. This showed me that people needed to be educated on proper sorting if this (or any) recycling program is going to work. This year I have sent out school-wide letters on the proper sorting of recyclables, bin decals, and recycling fliers.

Unfortunately I don't think this has been taken in as I have seen improper sorting in many classrooms, even in my own class, but I still have other ideas to educate people in sorting their recyclables. Even though I have come

a long way with this program, it is still not fully initiated and I feel I still have a long way to go.

Q: *Did you have help?*

A: I have had a lot of help and support from many people, mostly from my counselor Ms. Nancy Storms, but also support and encouragement from my fourth and fifth grade teachers, Theresa and Ellyn, as well as Principal Mills.

Q: *How have you gotten any other students, if any, involved/recruited?*

A: This year, I have been helped tremendously by my classmate, Lyndon Hernandez. Also, last year I worked in collaboration with the student council to spread the word about environmental awareness. I hope to recruit a third or fourth grade successor to take over next year after I graduate.

Q: *What benefits are you hoping to achieve from the program?*

A: I hope this program will allow PS 261 to contribute to protecting our environment with very little effort. I hope students and teachers will learn that you can make a great difference with small actions. This is our only planet and we must take responsibility for it.

Q: *What will you do in your life after 261?*

A: In my spare time, I like to research environmental issues in books, websites, television programs, and do hands-on experiments. Like most New Yorkers, my family and I recycle. I hope to become an environmentalist and ecologist when I grow up.



WE'RE LOOKING BACK ON...

The Chinese New Year Celebration

at PS 261 was a big hit. The evening featured a variety of Chinese dishes, "lucky money" (gold-wrapped chocolate coins) for the kids and traditional decor. The event was organized by the 5th grade committee which sold t-shirts to raise money for the upcoming 5th grade trip and 5th grade graduation. While the grown-ups chatted, the kids had fun with a kind of make-your-own karaoke (basically just singing into the microphone). It was a great chance to connect with friends and meet new community members in the dead of winter, when most of us would normally stay home!



The First Annual PS261 Sock Hop was a resounding success! The kids danced to The Supremes, The Four Tops, The Temptations, Stevie Wonder, The Jackson Five and James Brown. Josiah Jones proved to be a future the contender for American Idol. Delicious food was prepared by some culinarily gifted parents and Mark Williams provided the mix. Look for this great event next year! We'll do it again!

The 100th Day of School this year fell on Wednesday, February 11th. The highly anticipated event was met with enthusiasm, silly hats and Fruit Loop necklaces. Thoughts go to all the teachers who continue to count the days of school even though that exciting hallmark has passed.

The PS 261 Trivia Quiz *By Rick Knutsen*

You go to PS 261, but how well do you know PS 261? Try your hand at the following quiz—guaranteed to be more fun than the statewide math test—by cutting out this page and circling the letter for the response you think is correct for each question. When you're done, drop the completed quiz in the folder marked 'Newsletter' in the PTA mailbox in the main office by Friday, March 20th. The name of student/family (it's OK to work on this with your family) that gets the most correct will be published in next month's newsletter, along with the answers. Ready? Here we go!

1. Among students, more boys at PS 261 have this name than any other:
A. Matthew B. Jacob C. Max D. David
 2. Among students, more girls at PS 261 have this name than any other:
A. Kayla B. Sophia C. Rose D. Charlotte
 3. The most common last name at PS 261 for students is:
A. Johnson B. Rivera C. Algozy D. Garcia
 4. According to Ms. Tanya, what color marker consistently runs out first in the art room?
A. Blue B. Red C. Green D. Yellow
 5. According to Jessie, how many large bags of trash are generated at PS 261 every day?
A. about 40 B. about 60 C. about 80 D. about 100
 6. In which month does the school's trash output nearly double?
A. September B. June C. December D. April
 7. How many students at PS 261 currently take part in the PTA's AfterSchool program?
A. 335 B. 299 C. 268 D. 240
 8. Of the AfterSchool classes that started in January '09, which was the most requested?
A. Theater for You B. Karate C. Basketball D. Kickball
 9. The population of kids in PS 261's AfterSchool is made up of:
A. a few more boys than girls B. almost the same number of boys and girls.
C. a few more girls than boys. D. a lot more girls than boys.
 10. On average, how many lunches does the cafeteria staff serve every day?
A. 350-400 B. 450-500 C. 550-600 D. 650-700
 11. This is the most popular lunch item at PS 261:
A. cheeseburger B. pizza C. chicken nuggets
D. steamed broccoli
 12. Including teachers, assistants, specialists, aides, support staff, custodial, lunch room, administration, security,—EVERYONE—how many people does PS 261 employ?
A. 82 B. 95 C. 104 D. 115
 13. In what year was the construction of PS 261 completed?
A. 1947 B. 1951 C. 1957 D. 1965
 14. What is Principal Zipporah Mills's middle name?
A. Grace B. Naomi C. Anani D. trick question, Ms. Mills has no middle name!
- Name: _____
Class: _____