

NOVEMBER 2011

Newsletter

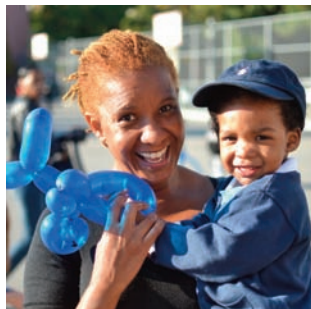
Greetings PS 261 Community

November marks the end of the first marking period.

On Monday, November 14th your child will bring home their first report card of the year. Tuesday, November 15th is Parent Teacher Conference day which runs from 1:00 PM to 8:30 PM. Each classroom teacher will send out an appointment schedule. The schedule helps to ensure that you will not have to wait an extended time to meet with your child's teacher. It is important that you return the appointment request form as soon as possible. Meetings run anywhere from 10 min to 25 minutes depending on the class size and number of appointments. All parents are welcome to contact their child's teacher if they feel they need a lengthier meeting. Numerical indicators 1-4 are used to indicate your child's academic progress in reading, writing, listening and speaking, math, science, social studies, personal and social growth and the specials; art, dance physical education and music.

Please bring the report card to the Parent Teacher Conference to discuss. Keep in mind that a report card is just that, a way for your child's teacher to communicate (report) your child's progress. Let the report card and Parent Teacher Conference be a way for you and your child's teacher to become academic partners. Hear the teacher out. While you are an expert on your child, the teacher has experience and insight that you may not have. This is a positive meeting to be used for positive growth. Every staff member here at PS 261 wants your child to succeed. Ask questions about your child's work and set goals. Where would the teacher like to see your child at the end of the year? Where should your child be in 6 weeks, 12 weeks, next report card? What will happen in school to help the child reach the expected goal? And what needs to happen at home? Is the homework too easy, too hard? What is the best way to communicate: email, hand written notes, or a communication notebook? If your child is late or absent often, how has that affected his/her growth? Please share your child's struggles and triumphs with the teacher. I hope to see a record amount of parents on Tuesday November 15.

ZIPP:)



CALENDAR

Thursday, November 10

PS 261's 3rd Annual Wine Tasting

7pm-9pm, Muriel Guepin Gallery, 47 Bergen Street
Adults Only! Book the Sitter! DJ Eli Janney!

\$30/per person in advance

\$35 at the door

Tickets on sale in the lobby November 4-9

Sponsored by: donna da vine,
Heights Chateau, The Green Grape,
Gnarly Vines, One Girl Cookies,
Paisanos, Red White & Bubbly,
Salvatore Bklyn, Saraghina, Scotto's,
Sip, Smith & Vine, Stinky and more.



ENTER THE RAFFLE AND
WIN FABULOUS PRIZES!

Wednesday, November 2

PS 261 Open House

9:00 AM or 6:00 PM session, Auditorium

Join the PS261 Staff for an introduction to our school, including a tour of the building and Q&A session. No registration required.

Friday, November 4

Arts Committee Meeting, 8am-9am, Library

Tuesday, November 8

NO SCHOOL Election Day

Wednesday, November 9

Education Panel/Screening, 6pm-10pm, Auditorium
Screening of "The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman." Childcare will be available.

Panel discussion immediately following regarding the planned Cobble Hill charter school and broader implications of charter schools & co-locations across the city. Scheduled Panelists: Brian Jones, 4th Grade teacher at PS261 and activist Khem Irby, Public school parent and activist Leonie Haimson, activist, Class Size Matters.

Friday, November 11 NO SCHOOL Veterans Day

Tuesday, November 15

PTA Executive Board Meeting (AM) 7:45am-9, Library

HALF-DAY, Noon Dismissal for All Students

Afternoon & Evening Parent/Teacher Conferences

Afternoon 1-3pm, Evening 6-8:30pm, Classrooms

Friday, November 18

School Leadership Team (SLT) Meeting (AM)
8am-9am, Principal's Office

5th Grade Fundraiser Movie Night

6pm-8:30pm, Auditorium

Saturday, November 19

2nd Annual PS261 Afterschool Turkey Bowl, 12pm

Wednesday, November 23

Families as Learning Partners
9am-9:30am, Classrooms

General PTA Meeting (AM)

8am-9am, Auditorium

Thursday, November 24-Friday, November 25

NO SCHOOL, Thanksgiving Recess

Who's New in the Halls?



INTRODUCING ONE OF OUR NEWEST TEACHERS:

Brian Jones

How long have you been teaching? This is my ninth year and my third school. I taught for four years in central Harlem and then another four in East Harlem.

What's your favorite project that you teach? Every writing unit. Words can be so powerful; they can hurt, heal, tickle, or tease. I love writing myself, and I love to teach it. It's great fun to guide students through the process, and to help them develop their ideas.

When did you realize you wanted to be a teacher? When I was in high school I worked as a teacher in a summer arts camp for elementary school kids. I was a teenager, so I was supposed to be just an aide, but I was good enough to have my own classes. I would sit in on "faculty" meetings with all of the teachers. I had always been a student, and suddenly I was on the other side of the classroom. It was exhilarating ... and exhausting. I would come home every day and collapse.

Who are your role models? I've always admired the people who spend their lives trying to change the world as they find it. I recently read *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Pick it up, and keep in mind that this man taught himself to read and write! Powerful stuff.

What's the best thing about PS 261? PS 261 has genuine student diversity — economic, racial, you name it. I think it's a great thing that kids from such different backgrounds go through these grades together. Unfortunately, that's a rare thing in this city.

What's something we don't know about you? I'm a parent! I have an 18-month old daughter named Nina. So ... it won't be long before she'll be a student in our school. Watch out, PS 261!

Brian is featured in the new documentary called "The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman" which will be screened in the Auditorium on Wednesday, November 9 at 6 PM. Childcare will be provided. For more info, check the calendar on the front page or go to PS261.org

News from our AP Jackie Allen Joseph

Global Language

We are all so excited that Global Language Project (GLP) has returned to 261 this year! Their curriculum emphasizes traditional and experiential learning and was created by leading educational professionals from Columbia University and NYU. GLP is inclusive of our English Language Learners and helps them to feel proud of their own language and culture.

GLP has a Lunch and Learn Program for 1st and 2nd grade in Arabic and will be joining our after-school program in December or January. Mandarin, Spanish or French will be added at that time.

New York Cares

New York Cares has been a wonderful support to 261. We have several programs up and running this year.

New York Cares Early Morning Literacy - Literacy Coach Karen Kaz designed a curriculum that supports this very targeted group with a focus on non-fiction reading. It aligns with the New Common Core State Standards. This program is for 4th graders that have been targeted. Wednesday mornings at 8:00am.

New York Cares Math Games - Marcy Mattera our Math Coach has designed a curriculum that focuses on fractions, algebra and geometry and supports a targeted group. It aligns with the New Common Core State Standards. This program is for 4th graders. Thursdays at 8:00am. Any questions, please contact Jackie Allen-Joseph.

New York Cares Theater Program - In this program students will gain confidence, and learn commitment, responsibility, communication and team work. Children will be engaged in performing and writing scenes along with reading theatrical plays. Brian Jones, one of our 4th grade teachers, designed this program. This program is for 4th and 5th graders. Students chosen by teacher recommendation.

New York Cares Robotics - This program takes place during lunchtime for the 2nd grade on Friday. Students chosen by teacher recommendation.

New York Cares Game Time - Wednesday and Friday during lunchtime, children play a variety of board games and learn how to be strategic. Children learn cooperation and patience. It is for 4th and 5th graders. Students chosen by teacher recommendation.

Nut Alert!!

It's holiday time! It's important to be aware that children have food allergies. When you bring in food to share during the upcoming holidays you should check with your child's teacher for any children that have food allergies. Nuts should not be in any classroom.

State Common Core Standards

Elise Abegg from our Network will be presenting a workshop for parents in December on our new State Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Math. Look out for more information on our school website.

Help Our School

PTA Direct Appeal Focuses on Science and Math Matching Grant Offered!

If you were at the October 28th PTA meeting you witnessed the thrilling but odd spectacle of our own Carmelo holding in one hand a check representing a \$10,000 donation from AT&T towards a complete redesign of the PS 261 science room, and in the other a slightly nervous-looking blue-tongued skink. Carmelo hopes to replicate the kind of environment he has created at his Cosmic Cove science center on Atlantic Avenue here at our school, and ATT's donation is a great start toward doing that. Thanks, A&TT!

But the truth is that AT&T's 10K will only get us about halfway to our new science room, so toward that goal (among others) the PTA is launching it's annual Direct Appeal campaign, in which we ask all the members of the PS 261 parent community to make a direct tax-deductible donation at whatever level is comfortable for their family. While events like the Fall Festival and Wine Tasting are a wonderful way to both raise funds and build community, because there are costs associated with putting on events, there is no more beautifully efficient way to put your hard-earned dollars to work in the classrooms at our school than making a direct contribution to the Direct Appeal.

Another exciting aspect of this year's Direct Appeal is that an anonymous donor has offered to match the first \$5000 of contributions that come in to the Direct Appeal, dollar for dollar, in order to encourage more families to participate. So if you give \$50, it will mean \$100 in teacher supplies. A \$250 contribution means \$500 goes toward our new science room. Etc.

The PTA has already committed major resources to shoring up the areas hardest-hit by the past three years of draconian budget cuts. Substitute teaching, technology support, arts enrichment — all areas part of the school's budget 3 years ago — have either fallen either mostly or entirely on the PTA budget. We'd like to do all this and more — to replace professional development (teacher training) funding, especially in math, that has also all but dried up in recent years.

The need is great, but our community has risen to challenges like these in the past. With the 5K matching offer on the table, there's never been a better time to participate in the Direct Appeal. Please help today, and get that tax deduction before the end of the year!

OPINION

Eva Moskowitz's Success Charter network wants to open a charter school in district 15. Here's one teacher's opinion on what that means for our school, and public education in general.

Why is a District 15 charter school important to P.S. 261?

Over the past few weeks, I have heard many people ask this exact question. "Are they planning to co-locate in our space? If not, then how does this affect us?" Let's begin there ...

Public Schools Accept ALL Children

P.S. 261 is a public school. We accept all zoned students. Regardless of a child's Special Education needs, behavioral or language issues, we accept them. They arrive in our classrooms, and it is our job to meet their needs, the best we can. A charter school is allowed to claim they are unable to meet a student's needs. During the 2007-08 school year, the citywide public school average for students with Special Needs was 15%, whereas the citywide charter average was 5%. In the same year, the citywide public school average for students who are English Language Learners was 14%, whereas the charter school average was 4%. Charter schools are NOT trying to educate all of the students in this city ... they are only looking to educate those who meet their limited criteria. As far as they are concerned, the rest of the kids can go to public schools.

Co-locations

Two-thirds of charter schools in New York City are co-located in Public School buildings. This is not a mutually agreed upon situation. Eva Moskowitz, Geoffrey Canada, and other similar Charter School leaders, make their claim, and move into the space. The public school is then forced to share space; lunchrooms, the yard, the auditorium and gymnasiums. We all know how difficult it is to organize space and time in one school. Imagine dividing that time up between two, or sometimes three schools. The charter school does not pay anything for the use of this space ... not rent, utilities or building maintenance. Furthermore, the co-location often occurs between varying grades, as would be the case with M.S. 447. In that situation, Kindergarten and First Graders will share space with middle-schoolers, at least for the first year. But, as the Success Academy grows (slated to be a K-8 school), it will occupy more and more of the building, while Math and Science diminishes. For those of you who look to Math and Science as one of the few solid middle school options in this neighborhood, this co-location will essentially hinder M.S. 447's ability to grow, and develop as a school.

Funding

The more students we have, the more funding we receive. Once we start to lose children (and all District 15 schools will inevitably lose children to the Success Academy), our budget decreases. Furthermore, once our class sizes drop, our school will be considered "under-utilized." At that point, we become vulnerable to co-location.

Funding our public schools and supporting ALL of our children

The strong community we enjoy at 261 doesn't happen overnight, and it is in direct contrast to the high turnover rate of teachers and administrators at the Success Charter Academies. Charter schools have a teacher turnover rate of 25% per year; in the past few months, Moskowitz has lost 30% of her teaching staff at a Harlem charter school, run by the Success Academy. This kind of community we feel at 261 will be lost, as more and more charters take the place of the neighborhood schools. And community is truly the heart of what makes a neighborhood school so special.

We need to build the schools we already have, not welcome corporate entities to run our schools, in the name of school choice. We should be getting MORE funding, we should be talking about reducing class size, having more enrichment programs, bringing back intervention teachers and so much more. We shouldn't have to spend energy defending the very existence of public education.

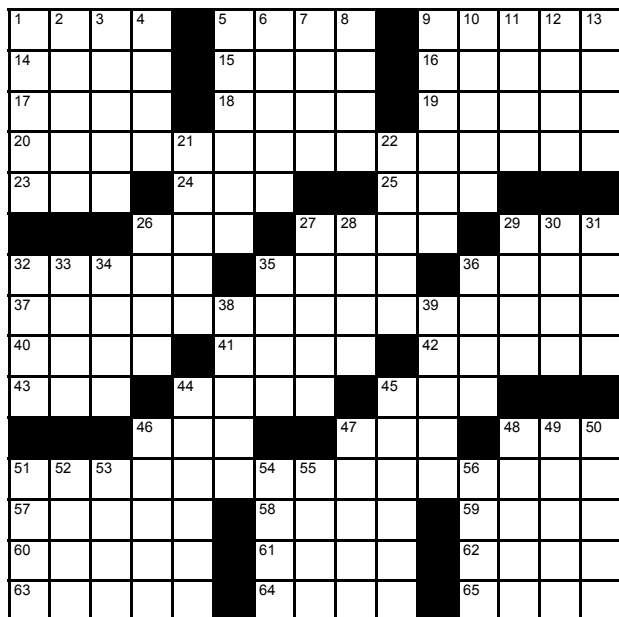
Learn More & Get Involved

On Wednesday, November 9th at 6pm "The Inconvenient Truth Behind Waiting for Superman," will be screened in our auditorium. This documentary gives a clear and thorough explanation of how charter schools are trying to undermine public education for all students. If you can't make that event, email 261Unite@gmail.com to find out other ways to be involved.

Jamie Fidler has been teaching at PS261 for eight years. She teaches first grade.

There's Math? No one said there'd be math!

BY JOHN CHANESKI (Dad to Max, 2-224, and Jessie, K-119)



ACROSS

1. Something to take in the summer
5. Raven-looking bird
9. Lettuce before dinner
14. What the hare and tortoise did
15. Arizona Indian
16. Big sports venue
17. Cut, maybe
18. Momma sheep
19. Prepare to surf, perhaps (2 words)
20. (3 words)
23. Hot ___ with mustard
24. "To ___ is human ..."
25. Chowd down
26. 30 Rock's Tina ___
27. Gift on "The Bachelor"
29. In favor of
32. Opposite of rural
35. Back to school mo.
36. Skin opening
37. (3 words)
40. Double-reed instrument
41. Miners' finds
42. "Get ___ it!" (trash; 2 words)
43. Put in stitches
44. Erupt
45. Our sun
46. PQR followers
47. Everything
48. "Now I get it!"
51. (3 words)
57. Computer messages
58. "___ upon a time"
59. Cool weather need
60. American symbol
61. "Cut it out!"
62. Bring on
63. Curl one's lip
64. Tater ___
65. Not evens

DOWN

1. Current
2. AM/FM device
3. Cake topper
4. Bad cat on "Mickey Mouse Clubhouse"
5. Chipper
6. One using oars
7. Use a doorknob
8. Will o' the ___
9. How a private greets a general
10. Got out of bed
11. Plastic building brick company
12. "Author unknown," for short
13. Great ___ (large canine)
21. Itsy-bitsy
22. Holds up
26. Destiny
27. Extend a subscription
28. Musical composition or famous penguin
29. American car company
30. Twistable cookie
31. Coral formation
32. Sci-fi vehicles
33. After-bath wear
34. It's just above your eyes
35. "Your majesty"
36. TV's Dr. ___
38. Clean, as a spill (2 words)
39. Harry Potter fought one
44. Salon fixture or employee
45. Takes a nap
46. Steps over a fence
47. Fancy tie
48. Steer clear of
49. Listened to
50. Chips in, at the poker table
51. Doctor charges
52. Saudi Arabia neighbor
53. Extreme anger
54. Opposite of found
55. "Do ___ others as..."
56. Canyon sound



Thanks to
all who made
our Fall Fest a
huge success!

With almost \$2000 raised, 50 handmade hula hoops rolled out and many many bounces bounced, it's easy to see why the Fall Fest is one of 261's most favorite events. If you missed it, we'll see you there next year!

The winner of the PS261 Fall Fest Scavenger Hunt is MICHAELA (+ 2 friends), from Ms. Miriam's class 2-213. She wins a selection of puzzles and books.

Boxtops and Labels for Education

Join us this year and help make our two fundraising labels programs a success!

Thank you to the many students and families who have been collecting labels from the Box Tops and Labels for Education programs. As of Monday, October 31, we have raised over \$300 in Box Tops and over 300 Labels for Education points. This is OUTSTANDING! In just eight short weeks, we have already surpassed the highest amount we have ever raised in one full school year at PS 261. Nice work everyone!

Classrooms in the lead with the most labels as of October 31: Mr. Louis' classroom 2-224, Ms. Marissa's classroom 5-408, Ms. Danielle's classroom 4-414, Ms. Nicole's classroom 3-308, Ms Sharon/Ms. Jennifer's classroom 3-315

Help us reach our goal of \$1000 from BoxTops and 500 points from Labels for Education by collecting labels from home and the office. (Ask family, neighbors, and friends to help!).

Please visit www.btfe.org to sign up as a supporter of PS 261. Shop via the website and we get credit for your purchases. You can also sign up for raffles to win free box tops for the school.

TO PREPARE YOUR LABELS...

1. clip labels neatly
2. place in baggie or envelope
3. label bag clearly with child's name and classroom
4. drop in main office box OR envelope near front door

LABELS COMPETITION LOW DOWN

The classroom that collects the most labels from both programs combined will be crowned the '2011 Label Champs' and will be joined by Principal Mills for either a pizza OR ice cream party in June 2012. Collecting for a Cause! Thank you!

Allergy Network News

We will be making new allergy cards this month so please be sure your paperwork is in and up to date. We also are in need of a graphic designer. Anyone who can help, please contact Lisa Lewis at lisablewis@earthlink.net

Look in your child's folder for news about the Annual Penny Harvest! It's that time of year again!!