

SEPTEMBER 2015

PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

Latest News for Parents from the NYC Department of Education



Parents Key to Student Success

One of the most important aspects of supporting a young person's education is creating a strong home-school connection. In a demonstration of her commitment to this priority, Chancellor Carmen Fariña has appointed a new head of the Division of Community and Family Engagement (FACE). The appointment will bring a comprehensive parent

engagement strategy across all divisions of the New York City Department of Education.

Executive Superintendent Yolanda Torres will lead FACE's renewed efforts to ensure parents feel welcome at every point by developing parent leaders and helping families support learning in and out of the classroom. A longtime Bronx educator and former public school parent and

grandmother, Ms. Torres started her career teaching English to middle school students in Puerto Rico, and has gone on to serve New York City public schools for over 30 years, most recently as superintendent of Community School District 7.

"I have spent my career working at the intersection of schools and families, and I strongly believe

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in the power of community-building to increase academic achievement for our students—no matter the neighborhood they live in,” said Yolanda Torres, Executive Superintendent of FACE. “I am humbled by the opportunity to join FACE and I am excited to lead the efforts to make our schools more welcoming to families.”

As demonstrated by both the incredible attendance at parent conferences held at the Tweed Courthouse and the more than

1,500 parents who attended grade-specific workshops around the City, parents have made clear their interest in becoming more involved in their children’s education. In addition to the [40 Minutes of Parent Engagement](#) each week across City schools, principals have been actively developing their own programming to attract and foster parent involvement, hosting events such as homework dinners and bilingual parent breakfasts. Building upon this foundation,

FACE will incorporate leading research and practices used in other city school districts moving forward, emphasizing training and professional development, outreach, and parent leadership.

Each superintendent will have a designated Family Support Coordinator who will join the Family Leadership Coordinator (formerly known as District Family Advocate) to serve as a direct point of contact for families at superintendents’ offices.

A Note from Chancellor Fariña



Dear Parents,

It is such an exciting time in our relationship with you and your communities. I was encouraged by the results of our annual [School Survey](#) which indicated now, more than ever, you are feeling welcomed in your schools, with greater access to teachers, school leadership, and academic information on your child. To continue this momentum, I have asked Yolanda Torres to serve as our Executive Superintendent for the Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE). Her critical expertise will ensure that strengthening family and community ties continues to be a top priority for the New York City Department of Education. Building upon former FACE Executive Director Jesse Mojica’s four years of intensive engagement efforts, Ms. Torres will be a great asset in carrying this work forward. Please continue reading to learn a little bit more about her, in her own words.

I look forward to seeing you at events in your school communities, and hope that you choose to be an active participant in your child’s education.

Warmly,

Carmen



Have a question for the Chancellor? Send it to AskCarmen@schools.nyc.gov

1 What led you to become a public school educator?

I consider myself and who I am today to be a product of public education. Growing up, I had caring teachers encouraging me to learn, but the expectations started at home. My family set very high standards for my education, and I believe that they are the reason I am a first-generation college graduate. It was made clear that I was to do homework by a certain time every night, and that I had to review my notes from the day's classes before returning to school the next day.

When I was in sixth grade, my family moved from the Bronx to Puerto Rico, where I experienced the support and mentorship of some very pivotal educators in my life. My eighth grade teacher was my biggest inspiration for entering a career of public education. She saw the qualities of a public servant in me, and encouraged me towards teaching. Thanks to her guidance and my family's support, I attended college and began my career as an educator in Puerto Rico and, later, in the Bronx.

I learned so many valuable lessons from incredible mentors as a teacher and superintendent, and I try to integrate those lessons into my work and share them with my family and grandchildren.

2 What have you most enjoyed about being an educator?

Making an impact on students' lives is my favorite part of being an educator. When students learn something new, or a lesson

clicks, their eyes light up. I believe that to make an impact, educators must make connections with students and their families—find a common ground and form a relationship.

One of my favorite memories is when I was serving as District 7 superintendent, and a mother of a former student sought me out. The student was a senior in college, and had asked his mother to locate me so that he could thank me, and share how I had inspired him. It was such a meaningful moment for me, and is a good example of how powerfully teachers influence their students' lives, and the importance of keeping their families engaged.

3 How will you integrate your perspective on parents' role in education into your new role with FACE?

I am totally committed to parent engagement. Throughout my career, both as a teacher and as a superintendent, I always considered parents to be partners. As their child's first teacher, parents have an integral role to play in their child's education. Strengthening the school-home connection ensures learning and social-emotional development are consistent both in and out of school. Research demonstrates the impact of strong parent engagement. Attendance rates are higher, motivation and self-esteem are boosted, disciplinary incidents are minimized, and test scores and graduation rates are



increased.

Also, the [Framework for Great Schools](#) is a critical component to my parent engagement approach. It is so important for parents to see, live, and breathe each of the six elements that support their child's educational success. Our job is to ensure that parents understand how they can contribute to each element within the *Framework*. By creating a welcoming environment at the school in which parents feel valued and heard, we will create great engagement opportunities. Parent coordinators and Family Leadership Coordinators are especially critical to these efforts. They will be coordinating extensive outreach and trainings for parents, so that they may learn how to be involved in the school community in a meaningful way. There are so many opportunities for partnerships between schools and parents, and I am very excited to see this strategy in action.

4 If parents have questions or concerns relating to their child how can they gain assistance?

The first point of contact is at the school level. Parents should work with the parent coordinator, who can connect them to teachers or, if needed, an assistant principal or principal. Should parents need to escalate their concerns, they can speak to the Family Support Coordinator at their superintendent's office. FACE is also here to support parents. We can be reached at 212-374-4118, or email FACE@schools.nyc.gov.

5 Do you have any first day of school tips for parents?

Every school day counts, and every child counts. Parents need to ensure students are in school on time so that they do not lose out on any learning time. Parents should also be aware

of their school's schedule, especially since many schools have implemented Expanded Learning Time (ELT), which adds one additional hour of instructional time each school day. Finally, they should be sure to attend the four parent-teacher conferences that occur throughout the year. The first one, Curriculum Night, will take place on September 16 for middle school students, September 17 for elementary school students, and September 30 for high school students. This event is important for parents to understand academic expectations and how teachers can best support their child.

Additionally, we have the 40 Minutes of Parent Engagement program. This is a unique opportunity for parents to engage in one-on-one conversations, by appointment, to discuss specific issues related to

their child. This arrangement may be especially helpful for parents of English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Translators can be arranged, and support staff can be present, to contribute to the discussion of students' unique needs.

6 Is there any additional information you would like parents to know?

Yes. I will be conducting a citywide listening tour to hear directly from parents what supports we can provide for them, and their child. I plan to be in schools and at community events, and will hold parent focus groups to hear their ideas for ensuring students are successful and supported. By working together, I know that we can improve educational outcomes for our students.

September 2015

**BACK TO
SCHOOL
BASICS**

Welcome to the 2015-2016 school year!

For New York City students and their families, this page is a one-stop, [back-to-school](#) shop with important information to get ready for the first day of school and a fantastic school year.

[Check out the welcome back video message from Chancellor Fariña.](#)

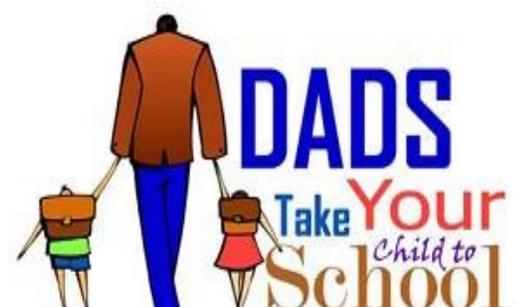
Dads Take Your Child to School Day 2015

You're invited!

The annual Dads Take Your Child to School Day is right around the corner —September 22!

This citywide event highlights the importance of fathers and father figures in their child's education. Schools across the city will host special activities and share information to help fathers be more engaged and better support their child academically. Attend, network, and learn more about volunteer and parent leadership opportunities at your child's school. To find out if your school is participating, contact your school's principal or parent coordinator.

For information, visit the Dads Take Your Child to School [website](#).

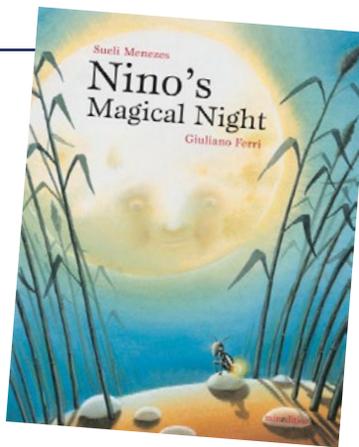


BOOK of the Month

Nino's Magical Night

(Minedition, 2011)

By Sueli Menezes, illustrated by Giuliano Ferri



Nino is a firefly on a mission. He and his fellow fireflies make the night beautiful, but the moon makes the night so bright, the animals in the jungle don't notice the fireflies' glow. "I bet we could do as good a job as the moon, couldn't we?" Nino asks his mom. The moon overhears Nino and has an idea. What happens next is a testament to the power of teamwork.

The following night, the moon tells Nino he's tired and would like to sleep behind the mountains, giving Nino and the fireflies a chance to light up the night. Nino is excited, but the tiny fireflies wonder how they will be able to create that much light.

Then Nino proposes a solution, one we can all apply to our lives. Instead of flying randomly about, the fireflies join hands and move closely together, forming a giant ball of fireflies. Slowly, they rise as one into the sky, creating a light that is bigger and "brighter than the brightest moonlight." The animals are amazed by the beautiful sight. The moon is happy and smiles. It truly is a magical night.

In taking their chance to shine, Nino and the fireflies learn a valuable lesson: by working together, anything is possible. Working in a focused way doubles the success.

This month's book, with enchanting illustrations that glow gold on the page, reminds us of the importance of friendship and trust. Most notably, it communicates that dreams can come true when individuals work as one. I encourage you to check this book out from your local public library and either read it to your children, or have them read it to you. Let your children know that you will support them as they seek their own magical nights...and days.

Warmly,

Carmen

Have You Signed Up for a NYC Schools Account? It's Easy!

NYC Schools Account is a new and easy-to-use way to have key information about your child's progress in school at your fingertips. Use the account to stay up-to-date with their attendance, grades, and the school's contact information. You can also use it to access your child's results on the State exams. It's available in 10 languages and can be accessed on a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or home computer.

Open a NYC Schools Account by simply visiting your school; you will need a photo ID such as a driver's license, your IDNYC, or passport to register. If you have children in multiple schools, you only need to visit one school to link all children to one single account. For more information on NYC Schools Account, visit the website [here](#).

As we head back to school, take advantage of this exciting new tool to remain engaged, and to provide the best support for your child's education.

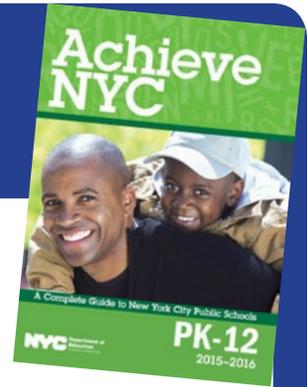
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PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESS

SIGN UP!

Achieve NYC



Achieve NYC: A Complete Guide to New York City Public Schools has been delivered to all schools. Available in 10 languages, the guide has been redesigned to provide you with useful, easy-to-understand information on academic expectations, school and district level supports, and tips for supporting your children academically and emotionally.



When you get your copy, please be sure to review it carefully. You can find PDF versions of the guide in all languages on the Achieve NYC [webpage](#) starting September 9. Please send any feedback you may have on the guide to achievenyc@schools.nyc.gov.

Get Involved in Education Councils

An Easy Way to Contribute to Your School Community



Shortly before summer vacation, the exciting results of the 2015 Community and Citywide Education Council elections (CCECs) were announced. It is clear by the increase in parent applications and parent voters that our schools have dedicated and passionate leaders who are eager to make a strong grassroots impact in their communities.

CCECs help shape educational policies and priorities in their districts. Members, who are parents of public school students, serve two-year terms on 36 Councils throughout the City, which include 32 district Councils and

four Citywide Councils—one each for high schools, English Language Learners, Special Education, and District 75.

CCECs allow you to collaborate with other parents to best serve your children, your school, and your community throughout the school year. Attend your education council's meetings to gain valuable information about the school system, and to bring your particular concerns to a larger forum.

Your education council holds monthly calendar meetings with the superintendent. This is of special importance this school year, as superintendents will be serving parents and schools more closely, and will oversee accountability in a more clear and structured way. You can expect to hear reports on all important district developments and issues as well as overall Department of Education policies and initiatives.

Parents are entitled and encouraged to speak and share concerns, issues, and ideas. Attending these meetings will also allow you to partake in informal conversations and networking with council members and other parents. You will be able to share ideas and speak freely about issues that are important to you with fellow parents.

For a full schedule of meetings, visit the CCEC page [here](#).

More Girls and Small Schools Teams

Hundreds of PSAL Teams Added to Schools

Over 220 new teams will be added to the Public School Athletic League in the 2015-16 school year, providing athletic opportunities for an additional 3,000 high school students.

Nearly 70 percent of the additional teams will be girls teams, with 49 starting in the fall. The Small Schools Athletic League (SSAL) will get a highly sought after boost, receiving roughly 150 new teams and creating 2,000 new roster spots.

Forty-nine of these new SSAL teams will start in the fall, with seven in the Multiple Pathways League (MPL) that has modified academic eligibility standards. Specifically, the MPL is geared toward serving students who are overage and under-credited, as well as meeting the unique needs of English Language Learners.

The increase in teams will contribute 500 new teams over the next four school years. By the 2019-20 school year, the DOE expects male and female athletic participation to be fully equal.

"More and more of our students will now experience important team camaraderie and enjoy exciting

competition as we expand access to athletics for girls throughout the City and for thousands of students at smaller schools," said Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña.

The PSAL expansion comes with a budget increase of 14 percent, from \$28.4 million to \$32.4 million. The City Council provided a \$1 million commitment

for SSAL teams, with Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito lauding the benefits of participation in school sports, and the importance of equal access to teams.

"As we know, playing sports has been positively correlated with higher retention rates in school and lower dropout rates, especially for girls of color," she said. "We are excited that we are moving closer to equity in all of our schools."

Prior to this expansion, 97 percent of general education high school students already had access to a traditional PSAL or SSAL team. Now, even more students have an opportunity to reap the benefits that come along with participating in a school sports league. Studies have shown that students who play high school sports have higher grades and standardized test scores, and are at reduced risk of developing obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, among many other advantages.

The increase in teams will contribute 500 new teams over the next four school years

Dates to Remember

SEPT. 9:

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL!

Early dismissal for non-District 75 kindergarten students only.

Partial school time for pre-k public school students.

SEPT. 10:

First full day for non-District 75 kindergarten students.

Partial school time for pre-kindergarten public school students.

SEPT. 14-15:

Rosh Hashanah (schools closed)

SEPT. 23:

Yom Kippur (schools closed)

SEPT. 24:

Eid al-Adha (schools closed)