



## **Spruce Street School – P.S./I.S. 397**

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Dear Families,

Despite the warm weather, it is already mid-December and the thick of the holiday season! Last letter, I shared the important work of developing and fortifying relationships across our school community. I asked us to consider how we welcome new members into our community, and how we nurture the **relationships** we've had for years. This time of year always brings a lot of stress....as well as many opportunities to be mindful of how much we have to be thankful for. Let's make this the season of **gratitude** and **giving** at Spruce Street!

As a reminder, our main priority this year is to maintain a sense of ONE SCHOOL. This includes preserving instructional coherence across all grades, so all Spruce Street students engage in rich, engaging curricula. This also includes preserving a positive, cohesive school culture where we both support students with social emotional development and hold them to high expectations.

As we head into the end of 2015, it is a perfect opportunity to reflect on all that we've collectively accomplished, and all we have to look forward to in the New Year.

### **Giving**

We live in a world of plenty, though there are many who are obviously, and in some cases quietly, suffering. Our PTA has taken on an amazing campaign to make December a month of **giving**. We are collecting men's clothing, plastic toys, canned goods, soccer gear, etc. These concrete opportunities for students and adults to come together to **give** are priceless.

Whether or not you've been able to donate items to any of these drives, consider what you **give** to our community. This could be time spent volunteering in our school community at our numerous events. It could be positive relationships developed and partnership **given** to your child's teacher(s). It could also be commitment **given** to this dynamic neighborhood of Lower Manhattan. Whatever the case, your contributions to Spruce Street and the wider community are valuable and part of our students' lives.

### **Gratitude**

Each year, I write an annual Thanksgiving letter to staff. Hillary and I spend some time thinking about each person, naming what we appreciate most about them. Now that we are up to 60+ staff members, this is quite a tradition to keep up with! This usually takes a few hours and is a great opportunity to be deliberately **grateful**.

For the past two years, I've invited families to share their ideas about **gratitude**, and included it with my letter to staff. I've included the family-generated portion of the letter below.

Finally, I continue to be so **grateful** for the gift of each day at Spruce Street. Families put their trust in our amazing teachers and staff each day, and I am incredibly proud of the work that goes on here. This work is hard...raising children at home is hard, and educating children at school is challenging as well. There are so many obstacles, it can be tricky to navigate and see the moments of joy and appreciation. Your positivity and partnership are gifts for which I am truly **grateful**.

Let's close 2015 on a positive note and journey together into 2016. Please join me in showing **gratitude** and a spirit of **giving** this season. Wishing you and your loved ones a wonderful holiday season and New Year!

Sincerely,

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Even older traditions need a new twist every now and then! This year, we asked FAMILIES to help co-construct this letter...see their sound bites as they share their gratitude...

I can't really name just one thing and it's hard to name just one staff member...honestly **ALL the STAFF** is awesome.

It is always nice coming and going to a place where people smile, say nice things and are welcoming. It brightens every day. Plus people seem to have fun while doing their jobs. On top of that, my kids are learning and thriving!

We are thankful to **Jenn** for trying her best to get to know [my child] and for her patience with him and with us!

To **Eric** (Music), for awakening a deeper appreciation and passion for music in [our son] not just in music class but most especially through the band.

To **Rebecca** for subtly but significantly advancing the social and educational environment from K to 1st grade.

I love the way **Linda** comforts my child at drop-off each morning.

My child loves art and the way **Danielle** teaches she has a lot of patience and you can definitely tell that she loves what she does!

I am grateful for all the support teachers (**Art-Lee, Trent-Science, Music-Eric, Library-Yael, PE-Kevin**). My little girl has become a girl with a big mind and appetite for all sorts of new activities thanks to their great work.

**Amy** - She is so wonderful with the kids.

**Lauren** and **Lynette** work so carefully to help my child meet his goals – and he loves working with them!

**Paola** and **Bari** are great teachers for our daughter. Under their support and guidance, she has grown so much emotionally, mentally and academically. **Paola** and **Bari** are always very fair to everyone. We appreciate that as well!

**Jess** - She's just amazing. My daughter is extremely happy to experience this in depth training on her reading/writing skills. What a great chance for her!

**Dee Dee** is amazing! She is a take-action superhero. I am eternally grateful to her for helping us in a very traumatic situation.

**Emma** is such a sweetheart she knows every single child at Spruce Street extremely well. Emma has eyes everywhere and she always has the kids' best interests at heart.

We will always be thankful that our son's first year at Spruce was spent under **Al's** care. **Al's** passion and excitement at sharing a young child's first journey into full time education has instilled in [my child] a huge desire for, and love of, learning. A foundation that will stay with him throughout his coming years. Thank you, **Al!**

I'm grateful for **Myrsa's** gentle manner with my child.

**Katherine** and **Nicole** are full of love and the love they give multiplies and spreads throughout the classroom.

**Josephine** does not raise her voice; this is tremendous skill and requires a lot of patience. By doing this, she provides safety and effectively models an ideal way of handling problems.

**Joyce** is amazing! I am grateful for her energy, creativity, and genuine love of teaching. She has truly cared about my child and respects her unique path to learning.

I'm grateful for the fact that my child gets two great teachers and that way all the children in the class get some fair share of the attention. The fact that my child has started to read and put sentences together gets me really happy and grateful. Thank you **Dan & Christine**.

**Trevor** has joined our middle school and brought a serious level of experience with him. My child is enthusiastic about math and I appreciate how he has taken Spruce to the next level.

**Lisa** established take-home reading and homework assignments that brings our family into the education process for our child.

**Katya** is concerned for [my son's] educational growth and has reached out regarding his needs, which is great.

We are thankful for **Stefanie's** patience and sweet disposition. She has also taught [my child] so much in the last 2 months!

**Rena** and **Little Nancy**, always ready with a smile and support for each and every child! Love them and the love they show to the children!!

**Nancy Welch** is dedicated, and truly has the kids at heart, without any hidden agendas. She will push the kids to their maximum potential and ability.

We love **Julie** and **Principal Nancy** who meet every child at morning arrival. This speaks volumes and my daughter knows both by name and hugs them both. I love this about arrival. it makes me feel that my children are safe and feel safe at school.

**Vanessa** showed such care for my child when he was injured – he still loved coming to school every day.

**Alison** is a strong, but kind, authority figure that [my daughter] responds positively towards. **Alison and Evette** have helped her get started out on the right track.

**Candice** has taken the time to praise for kindness to peers and allowed for space for this to happen.

**Laura** looks at his math homework, and puts great comments on it. **Laura** has helped him get his academic confidence back, and he feels very connected to her.

**John** and **Samantha** – my child's current teachers who are just amazing at their jobs. Thanks also to **Laylah** for being part of the team.

**Meryl** brings out the best in her students. Her influence is still felt today, many years after graduating her class. **Kristen** and **Priscilla** bring a sweet but serious tone to my daughter's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class.

**Sarah** - Appreciate her time to discuss with us for the middle school options.

**Lindsay and Rochelle** - The atmosphere that they create for us - always, welcoming and accommodating all our needs when our kid has to go to school tours, etc. Kids are all proud of themselves as it seems that they feel teachers' trust in them.