



Spruce Street School – P.S./I.S. 397

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Dear Families,

It is always exciting to begin a new year after a summer of rejuvenating and planning. For those of you new to Spruce Street, consider this an official welcome to our community. For those of you who are returning, welcome back!

This weekend marks the 15-year anniversary of September 11th. That day holds so much meaning for so many. As a young teacher in New York City, it was a defining moment so early on in my career. While the day itself was terrifying and tragic, the anniversary allows for moments of reflection and even optimism. It makes me incredibly proud to lead a school within a building that has truly embodied the renaissance and resilience of Lower Manhattan.

The 2016-2017 school year holds so many exciting days ahead. We have continued to grow our long-awaited middle school program, welcoming new 6th graders and launching our inaugural 7th grade. With this expansion and change comes new opportunities. Please read on for an introduction to our schoolwide priorities and goals, as well as a highlight reel of some of our initiatives.

Schoolwide priority

With our school's continued growth we remain steadfast in our one overarching priority – 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.

Programs and Enrichment

This year, we are deepening the partnership work that has enriched the lives of Spruce students for several years. Many of these initiatives are generously funded by our wonderful PTA. Thank you for continuing to support these initiatives across our school.

As a school, we will be continuing our partnership with the National Dance Institute. **All classes K-5** will engage in a 10-week dance residency through our partnership with NDI. Grades 4 and 5 will have their residency in the fall, grades 2 and 3 in the winter, and K and 1st will work in the spring. This dance program truly enriches our already strong, school-based visual art and music program.

This year, it is a goal to expand foreign language instruction to all students. And a goal has become a reality! **All classes PK-1** will participate in a 10-week Spanish immersion residency through our work with Brooklyn Beanstalk. Additionally, students in **Grades 2-7** will have weekly Spanish instruction with our teacher, Hernan Serruya.

These programs supplement a robust offering from within Spruce, including physical education with Kevin, Music with Eric, Science with Trent, and Art with Lee and Danielle.

We will also be expanding Electives opportunities for 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th graders. Electives take place for two periods each week. Students will be able to pursue their interests and develop new ones through Electives. This year, we will be offering Electives such as:

- Band (which is expanding in size!)
- Yearbook
- Chess
- Yoga
- Spruce News/eNews

For more detailed information on what *your* child will experience this year, please read the Programs and Enrichment section of our Family Handbook when it launches in the next week or so.

Schoolwide focus on inclusivity and supports for students

As a growing and dynamic school community, we are especially mindful of maintaining a sense of inclusivity. Here are some things to look for in the year ahead:

Responsive Classroom

As a school, we will continue our work with Responsive Classroom. This approach embeds positive, common language and social emotional instruction across our school. We support students with building a strong sense of classroom community and minimizing negative interactions. Through PTA funding, we will continue to provide professional development and training for staff members. For more information about Responsive Classroom and other ways we support positive behavior at Spruce Street, join us for our Safety/Behavior Orientation on September 22nd.

Increased expertise during recess

We know that lunch and recess can be especially challenging for students. Through a combination of DOE and PTA funding, we are expanding our recess and lunch support staff to better match our growing student population. We have partnered with **Kids in the Game**, a terrific organization that provides us with at least 2 daily recess coaches. These coaches facilitate age appropriate games and provide active options for students. They also provide staff training and other opportunities for student athletics. For more information check out their website at www.kidsinthegame.com.

Expansion of student support positions

When managing the school budget, there are always tradeoffs and priorities. This year, I prioritized the increase in staff positions that support children. I firmly believe these positions will support our goal of better supporting students directly, **and** helping teachers and parents support their kiddos as well.

- o Sophia Rock and Melissa Levi will work as Learning Specialists in our middle school. Both bring tremendous experience and enthusiasm to their roles.
- o Jessica Kulesa will return from maternity leave in early November. When she does, she will provide academic intervention to students across our school, working with individuals and small groups on a rotating basis. She will also serve as a support for families and our school as Spruce Street's Special Education Liaison.
- o Allyson Ehrlich joins as our social worker for 2 days a week. This increase will allow her to work with families during the IEP process, as well as see students who need extra support.
- o We now have an increase in speech providers! Lauren Marcus will serve the entire K-5 student body, while Stacianne Lester joins to work with our middle school students. Lauren will be on maternity leave for the first part of the year, but will have a full-time substitute.

Technology!

One of our CEP goals aims to continue to amplify the use of technology across our school. This year, we are well on our way to doing that!

Partnership with CUNY

Through PTA funding and in collaboration with both CUNY and the DOE, we have again hired a technology intern who supports our school 15 hours each week. Abdul Aziz will be here to support our school with maintaining and maximizing the equipment we currently have, as well as incorporating new devices and techniques.

Borough President and City Council Funding

Last year we were awarded a capital grant allowing us to upgrade our technological devices. We are in proud receipt of a \$140,000 grant – 100K from Gale Brewer’s office and an additional 40K from City Council. The funds were finally available this spring and all items were received and installed this summer. They include

- New Macbook Air laptops for each classroom to use with their interactive whiteboard, such as SmartBoards.
- We have installed new Promethean Boards to replace our SmartBoards in most 4th floor classrooms. The new designs integrate a projector and speakers into one flat panel display. Teachers also receive training on how to use the new software to bolster instruction.
- A new cart of MacBook Air laptops for middle school student use. This frees up our other laptop carts to be used across the elementary school grades.

Communication and Family Engagement Opportunities

As a growing community, it is important to continually strive for more effective and personalized communication. This is an area of constant reflection and growth, and we always appreciate hearing what works for you. We want to always make sure you feel connected to your school community.

This year, we welcome families for our annual Curriculum Night on Thursday, September 22nd. The evening will run from 5:00-8:00 p.m., with various opportunities and events. A detailed flier is forthcoming.

Here are the dates for upcoming Learning Alongside your Child and Community Coffee sessions. For more information on these events and other ways to be involved, please see our Handbook and be on the lookout for information from Julie. Families are invited into classrooms three times throughout the year. Additionally, each grade band will have two opportunities to visit cluster classes. During these weeks, PE, music, art, Spanish, and science will be open all week for families to visit during their child’s regularly scheduled class.

Learning Alongside your Child (LAYC)	
Pre-K – 2nd Grade	3rd - 7th Grade
October 14, 2016	October 17-21, 2016 (Cluster Classes)
December 5-9, 2016 (Cluster Classes)	December 2, 2016
February 3, 2017	January 27, 2017
March 24, 2017	March 13-17, 2017 (Cluster Classes)
May 8-12, 2017 (Cluster Classes)	April 21, 2017

**Community Coffee – All Grades
(8:45 a.m. in our cafeteria)**

October 7, 2016
November 18, 2016
January 20, 2017
March 17, 2017
May 12, 2017

I wish each of you an incredible 2016-2017 school year, and I feel privileged to lead you on the journey ahead.

Sincerely,