



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 are new to Spruce Street, consider this an official welcome to our community. For those of you who are returning, welcome back!

Today marks the anniversary of September 11th. Though that day was a tragic day for so many reasons, it reminds me of how far we've come as a community in Lower Manhattan. As a young teacher watching the events from my classroom window, I knew I felt a strong connection to this amazing city. It makes me incredibly proud to lead a school within a building that has truly embodied the renaissance and resilience of Lower Manhattan.

The 2015-16 school year holds so many exciting days ahead. We have officially launched our 6th grade classes and converted our Pre-K program to include two full-day classes. With this expansion and change come 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 priorities and goals

With our school's expansion comes one overarching priority – 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.

Our school's full CEP goals are forthcoming.

Programs and Enrichment

This year, we are expanding partnerships with NDI and Brooklyn Beanstalk. **All classes PK-3** will participate in a 16-week Spanish immersion residency through our work with Brooklyn Beanstalk. **All classes K-5** will engage in a 10-week dance residency through our partnership with NDI.

We are also launching a partnership with TADA! Youth Theater, working with 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. 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.

These outside partnerships are generously funded by our wonderful PTA. Thank you for continuing to support the arts across our school.

We will also be expanding Electives opportunities for 4th, 5th, and 6th 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 doubling in size!)
- Spanish (partnership with Brooklyn Beanstalk)
- Musical Theater (partnership with TADA!)
- Student government
- Sculpture
- Running

For more detailed information on what *your* child will experience this year, please read the Programs and Enrichment section of our Family Handbook.

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 have fully launched 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 have been able to provide professional development and training for all staff members and will continue to provide support throughout the year. For more information about Responsive Classroom, please see our Behavior Handbook and join us for our Safety/Behavior Orientation on September 17th.

Increased supervision 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.

Addition of two Learning Specialist positions

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

- Jessica Kulesa – Jess will provide academic intervention to students K-5, 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.
- Joyce Heller – Joyce will work to support 6th graders with academic and organizational skills. We know middle schoolers have diverse needs, both identified and emerging. She brings tremendous experience and enthusiasm to the table.

Technology!

One of our CEP goals aims to increase 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 hired a technology intern who supports our school 15 hours each week. Vitaliy Kril 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 I applied for 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. We are so grateful for this award and plan to expand our repertoire of technology as soon as the funds become available.

We are also working in partnership with the PTA to purchase Google Chromebooks for our middle school students.

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.

One change we’ve made based on parent feedback is to divide our school events by grade band. 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.

Learning Alongside your Child (times TBA)	
Pre-K – 2nd Grade	3rd - 6th Grade
October 9, 2015	October 23, 2015
December 4, 2015	December 11, 2015
January 29, 2016	February 5, 2016
April 1, 2016	May 6, 2016

Community Coffee (8:45 a.m. in our cafeteria)	
Pre-K – 2nd Grade	3rd - 6th Grade
October 30, 2015	November 6, 2015
January 6, 2016	January 13, 2016
March 9, 2016	March 23, 2016
May 20, 2016	May 20, 2016

I wish each of you an incredible 2015-16 school year, and I feel privileged to lead you on the journey ahead.