

# Welcome to Spruce Street!

September 2015

Dear Families,

We are proud to welcome families to the 2015-2016 school year at Spruce Street. As we head into this upcoming school year, we have so much to look forward to. After years of uncertainty and advocacy, we welcome our inaugural group of 6th graders! Our staff has grown to include nearly 50 educators and administrative/support staff. As in years past, we are so proud of the talented, dynamic adults who will work to actualize Spruce Street's vision for your children.

Our school is a product of Lower Manhattan's resilience and community-mindedness. This year we welcome back our remaining families, as well as dozens of new families in all grades. Each of you plays an important role in crafting and maintaining our school community. As a school grounded in the uniqueness of Lower Manhattan, we do not underestimate the endless supply of inspiration your families provide. This month, we open the doors to our incredible school building. We are humbled and excited by the chance to lead Spruce Street and work alongside you and your children.

In Learning,  
Nancy Harris and Hillary Casado

## Address and Phone Number

Spruce Street School  
12 Spruce Street  
New York, NY 10038  
Main Office: 212-266-4800

## School Hours

8:15 a.m.-2:35 p.m.

Inclement weather may result in delayed opening, early dismissal, or school closing. Radio and television stations carry this news as soon as decisions are made. School closings are also posted on the New York City Department of Education's website (<http://schools.nyc.gov>), or you can call 311.

### School Calendar 2015-2016

Date	Event
September 9, 2015	First Day of School (Early dismissal for Kindergarten, Partial Day for Pre-K)
September 10, 2015	Partial Day for Pre-K
September 14-15, 2015	Rosh Hashanah - School Closed
September 17, 2015	Curriculum Night/Safety Orientation
September 23, 2015	Yom Kippur - School Closed
September 24, 2015	Eid-al-Adha - School Closed
October 12, 2015	Columbus Day – School Closed
October 22, 2015	Pre-K Non Attendance Day
November 3, 2015	Election Day – No School for Students
November 5, 2015	Half-Day for Students – Parent Teacher Conferences
November 11, 2015	Veteran’s Day – School Closed
November 26-27, 2015	Thanksgiving Recess – School Closed
December 3, 2015	Pre-K Non Attendance Day
December 24, 2015-January 1, 2016	Holiday Recess – School Closed
January 18, 2016	Martin Luther King Jr., Day – School Closed
January 28, 2016	Pre-K Non-Attendance Day
February 8, 2016	Lunar New Year – School Closed
February 15-19, 2016	Mid-Winter Recess – School Closed
March 3, 2016	Half-Day for Students – Parent-Teacher Conferences
March 25, 2016	Good Friday - School Closed
April 5-7, 2016	ELA Exam (grades 3-6)
April 13-15	Math exam (grades 3-6)
April 21, 2016	Pre-K Non Attendance Day
April 25-29, 2016	Spring Recess – School Closed
May 12, 2016	Spring Curriculum Night (details TBA)
May 30, 2016	Memorial Day – School Closed
June 9, 2016	Chancellor’s Conference Day – No School for Students
June 14, 2016	Clerical Day – No School for Students
June 28, 2016	Last Day of School - Early Dismissal

Please note, we will send weekly updates for families, including grade-wide and school-specific events. Please check our website on an ongoing basis.

## Spruce Street’s Mission and Vision

***Spruce Street is a Pre-K-8 public school serving the growing community of Lower Manhattan, engaging students in research and authentic inquiry-based experiences.***

***We transform the youngest members of our local community into contributing members of our global community.***

Against the backdrop of Lower Manhattan, we use our immediate surroundings as inspiration to affect the future. Our students study the history of Lower Manhattan, and learn ways to impact the community and world as it is today. For example, our 1st grade classes study the journey of food from seed to markets, partnering with a local urban farm. Spruce Street students represent the international community and leave prepared to give back.

***We foster intellectual curiosity, independence and leadership through challenging and engaging curricula.***

Research units form the foundation for our curriculum units. All students inquire, study, and cultivate skills through authentic experiences. Our lower grades sketch, observe, and interview to learn more. Older students combine that work with critical conversations about texts. All students engage in a range of experiences that cultivate the academics with the arts.

***We nurture individual strengths and build a caring, cohesive community of learners.***

As a school community, we believe in an inclusive setting for all children and adults. We explicitly teach social emotional development, and utilize a schoolwide system of Four Be’s – Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Fair, Be Responsible. Adults and children communicate thoughtfully and supportively with one another.

## Who's Who – an Organization Chart

<b>Spruce Street Faculty 2015-2016</b>		
Name	Role	Room
Nancy Harris	Principal	Room 102
Hillary Casado	Assistant Principal	Room 317
Rena Gregory	School Secretary	Room 104
Nancy Chen-Rios	Supervising School Aide	Room 104
Jackie Santos	School Aide	Room 104
Osage Williams	School Aide	Room 104
Sarah Maiolo	Guidance Counselor	Room 249C
Julie Lam	Parent Coordinator	Room 249B
Stanley Hui	School Psychologist	Room 248
Naomi Ovidia	Social Worker	Room 248
Patricia Young	Family Worker	Room 104/248
Emily Tavag	School Nurse	Room 242
Laylah Barryn	Paraprofessional	Room 323
Amy Chen	Paraprofessional	Room 247
Myrsa Joseph	Paraprofessional	Room 245
Linda Lee	Paraprofessional	Room 241
Evette Marsach	Paraprofessional	Room 337
Priscilla Ciscart	Paraprofessional	Room 433
<b>Spruce Street Teachers 2015-2016</b>		
Alison Hannon	Pre-Kindergarten Teacher	Room 337
Alexander Long	Pre-Kindergarten Teacher	Room 241
Daniel Osborne	Kindergarten Teacher	Room 243 (ICT)
Christine Rodgers	Kindergarten Teacher	Room 243 (ICT)
Lisa Collazo-Torres	Kindergarten Teacher	Room 245
Stefanie Ericksen	Kindergarten Teacher	Room 247
Rebecca Mitchell	Grade 1 Teacher	Room 329
Vanessa Verde	Grade 1 Teacher	Room 331
Katherine Miller	Grade 1 Teacher	Room 333 (ICT)
Nicole Silverberg	Grade 1 Teacher	Room 333 (ICT)
John Speedling (ICT)	Grade 2 Teacher	Room 323 (ICT)
Samantha Weng (ICT)	Grade 2 Teacher	Room 323 (ICT)
Josephine Hendrix-Hansen	Grade 2 Teacher	Room 325
Candice Batson	Grade 3 Teacher	Room 427
Paola Higuera (ICT)	Grade 3 Teacher	Room 425
Bari Reyer (ICT)	Grade 3 Teacher	Room 425
Katya Haratonik	Grade 4 Teacher	Room 429
Laura Koelwyn	Grade 4 Teacher	Room 431
Meryl Glicksman	Grade 4 Teacher	Room 433 (ICT)

Kristen Guttormsen	Grade 4 Teacher	Room 433 (ICT)
Jennifer Heo	Grade 5 Teacher	Room 437
Rochelle Yaros	Grade 5 Teacher	Room 439 (ICT)
Lindsay Aitken	Grade 5 Teacher	Room 439 (ICT)
Nancy Welch	Grade 6 Humanities	Room 423
Trevor Buckley	Grade 6 STEM	Room 409
Jessica Kulesa	Learning Specialist (K-5)	Room 335
Joyce Heller	Learning Specialist (6)	Room 435
Eric DiVito	Music	Room 313
Kevin Lundgren	Physical Education	Room 345
Lee Fairchild	Visual Arts (Pre-K-3rd)	Room 401
Danielle Mongelli	Visual Arts (4 <sup>th</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> )	Room 449
Trent Kirkpatrick	Science (Pre-K-5th)	Room 405
Yael Gogolev	Library	Room 411
Lynette Cedeno	Occupational Therapy	Room 239
Lauren Marcus	Speech Therapy	Room 237

## Teaching and Learning at Spruce Street

We are constantly striving to provide an educationally sound and stimulating environment at Spruce Street. This section outlines many of the curricular offerings and special programs that will shape the educational lives of Spruce Street's kindergarten classrooms. More specific information will be shared during Curriculum Night in mid-September.

### Instructional Approach

Our instructional philosophy is that learning is an active process. To that end, Spruce students will have multiple opportunities and experiences to deepen their understanding of grade level content and concepts. In each classroom, children have extended periods of inquiry-based study. This in-depth, conceptual approach is balanced with direct instruction of skills and strategies. Through this approach, children acquire skills and knowledge they need to be successful in kindergarten and beyond. Teachers continually work to map curriculum, plan units, and develop sequential lessons across content areas.

### Curriculum Overview

Our curricular approach is fully aligned to all Common Core Standards. Teachers work together to explore existing curriculum materials, and create and revise units of study with our students and community in mind. Literacy is at the core of all learning at Spruce Street, including reading, writing, listening, and speaking. On a daily basis, students participate in a rich, balanced literacy program. This includes Reading and Writing Workshop, where students learn strategies and skills, as well as opportunities to practice. Some key components of our literacy program include shared reading, read aloud, guided reading, independent reading, interactive writing, and word study. Each class reads and writes across a variety of genres, and studies famous authors as mentors. Literacy is infused into every part of the day, and children learn natural connections between literacy and other content areas.

Research forms the foundation of all our units, driving forwards our choices across the weeks and months. Our classrooms participate in several investigative studies throughout the year. Each study lasts 10-16 weeks, and allows students to explore one idea in depth, becoming experts. When participating in studies, students engage in fieldwork, sketching, interviewing, and reading to learn all about a topic. This year's studies include a study of Five Senses, our

school, Families and Community Workers, Bread, Markets, New Amsterdam/NYC History, World Cultures, American Revolution, Immigration, etc.

To rise to the expectations set forth by the Common Core, we follow a balanced approach to mathematics instruction. As a framework, our teachers use Investigations Mathematics, a comprehensive, concept-based curriculum. Students explore materials, learn math strategies, recognize math in their world, and become curious, capable mathematicians. To supplement, each grade also engages in several higher-level units including those from Contexts for Learning. Each class has a daily math workshop, and engages in ongoing math routines – such as Number Talks.

As we all continue to dive more deeply into the Common Core Standards, we continue to revise and deepen our curriculum units. We will continue to post information on our website, helping families access and understand our planned curriculum. While these shifts are predominantly relevant to math and literacy instruction, we encourage families to understand these changes in a holistic way.

Science is a natural extension of a child’s curiosity! Spruce Street students have science each week. They learn observation, research, and questioning skills, and study physical, earth, and life science units over the course of the year. Science is connected to classrooms as well, and students have additional opportunities to explore the scientific world within our school and local community.

This year our arts program is robust with creativity and variety. Classes will experience a range of arts opportunities via weekly classes taught by Spruce Street educators, as well as from outside programs and residencies. A complete listing of the 2015-16 programs and residencies can be found below.

### Spruce Street Programs and Residencies: 2015-2016

	Fall (Sep-Dec)	Winter (Jan-Mar)	Spring (Apr-Jun)
<b>Pre-K (Full-Day)</b>			
School-Based Programs		PE (1x every week) Music (1x every week) Science (1x every week) Art (2x every week) Library (1x every week)	
Additional Programs/ Residencies		Brooklyn Beanstalk (Spanish) – 16 sessions (Feb-Jun)	
<b>Kindergarten</b>			
School-Based Programs		Science (1x a week) PE (1x a week) Art (2x a week) Music (1x a week) Library (1x every week)	
Additional Programs/ Residencies		Brooklyn Beanstalk (Spanish) – 16 sessions (Feb-Jun)	National Dance Institute (NDI) – 10 sessions (Apr-Jun)
<b>Grade 1</b>			
School-Based Programs		Science (2x a week) PE (1x a week) Art (2x a week) Music (1x a week) Library (1x every week in small groups)	
Additional Programs/ Residencies	Brooklyn Beanstalk (Spanish) – 16 sessions (Sep-Jan)	National Dance Institute (NDI) – 10 sessions (Jan-Mar)	

<b>Grade 2</b>			
School-Based Programs	Science (2x a week) PE (1x a week) Art (2x a week) Music (1x a week) Library (1x every week in small groups)		
Additional Programs/Residencies		Brooklyn Beanstalk (Spanish) – 16 sessions (Feb-Jun)	National Dance Institute (NDI) – 10 sessions (Apr-Jun)
<b>Grade 3</b>			
School-Based Programs	Science (2x a week) PE (1x a week) Art (2x a week) Music (1x a week) Library (1x every week in small groups)		
Additional Programs/Residencies		National Dance Institute (NDI) – 10 sessions (Jan-Mar)	Brooklyn Beanstalk (Spanish) – 16 sessions (Feb-Jun)
<b>Grade 4</b>			
School-Based Programs	Science (2x a week) PE (1x a week) Art (2x a week) Music (1x a week) Library (1x every week in small groups) Electives (2x a week) * Electives include choices such as band, NDI, TADA Theatre, Brooklyn Beanstalk Spanish, student government, etc.		
Additional Programs/Residencies	National Dance Institute (NDI) – 10 sessions (Oct-Dec)		
<b>Grade 5</b>			
School-Based Programs	Science (2x a week) PE (1x a week) Art (2x a week) Music (1x a week) Library (1x every week in small groups) Electives (2x a week) * Electives include choices such as band, NDI, TADA Theatre, Brooklyn Beanstalk Spanish, student government, etc.		
Additional Programs/Residencies	National Dance Institute (NDI) – 10 sessions (Oct-Dec)		

### Assessment

Teachers at Spruce Street use a variety of assessment tools to monitor student learning. We value understanding each child academically, emotionally, and socially. To that end, we use both formal and informal means of assessment to revise our teaching practices to adapt to your children. Tracking student performance and progress is an important component of the school. Teachers compile student work portfolios that demonstrate both performance and progress over the course of the school year and, eventually, over the course of several years at Spruce Street.

Beginning in Grade 3, all children will participate in the New York State English Language Arts and Math exams. These exams take place in April. Exact dates and more specific information – including ways to support children in preparing for these tests – will be shared throughout the year.

## Academic Support

We are committed to supporting all children in their journey towards academic success. Virtually every part of the day affords teachers the chance to work with small-groups and individuals. *This model of instruction means we constantly adapt to meet your child's needs.* There are numerous opportunities for differentiation – children read books on a variety of levels, engage in a variety of math games, etc. Children with a range of academic strengths work together and receive the support they need while in class. This happens in every classroom every day.

Spruce Street also has several pathways for children who need additional academic support. We meet for ongoing PPT Meetings to discuss children exhibiting at-risk social/academic behavior. During September, teachers receive specific referral procedures that are aligned to Response to Intervention initiatives. These procedures will allow us to create targeted small-groups that address Tier II intervention needs across the school.

Families will receive more information about these programs as applicable.

## IEP's and Special Education Services

*At Spruce Street School, we are an inclusive environment. We offer a range of supports and services to meet the individualized needs of all our students, so that they can access grade level curriculum and reach their full potential alongside their peers. Our staff takes a team approach and collaborates with families to nurture all students.*

As a public school, we are committed to serving and supporting all children in our community. Special Education is a service – not a place/class. Learners sometimes need additional support. Some students have entered our school with Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). These plans call for a range of services including team teaching, SETSS, speech, occupational therapy, counseling, and physical therapy. Teachers are provided access to IEP's as per federal guidelines. If a child's IEP mandates related services, we work with the Department of Education and the child's family to provide accommodations.

We hold Special Education Team Meetings to continually discuss our IEP caseload. This team approach allows all adults who work with a child to remain consistent and to brainstorm new ideas and best practices.

At times, we are asked to include outside specialists in a child's education. We welcome a shared collaboration between home, outside specialists, and school. Here are some school-based policies:

### *Collaboration with Outside Specialists:*

- We appreciate new ideas and suggestions, and will strive to implement them into our work at school. Implementation of outside specialists' suggestions will be considered based on Spruce Street's staff professional opinion.
- We support in-school observational visits.

### *Communication:*

- We communicate with Spruce Street Families on an ongoing basis. In our work with outside specialists, please expect us to contact you within 7 days from your reach-out date via phone or email (at each professional's individual discretion).
- Due to limited time, we are happy to communicate with outside specialists one time prior to our meeting/ visit and one time as a follow-up to plan next steps.

### *Forms:*

- Please provide us with any forms that need to be completed ahead of our scheduled meeting/ phone conversation.
- Forms will ONLY be sent directly to outside specialists.



### *Final Report:*

- We ask outside providers not to use students' or teachers' full name in reports, and to only use student initials when referring to children.
- Based on our participation, Spruce Street School requests a copy of the final report to be kept on file. Please give a copy to our school psychologist within 1 week of finalization.

### **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**

As a school community, we are committed to supporting students in their social and emotional growth. Aligned with the mission and vision of our school, students and adults play an active role in this social/emotional work, from curriculum development, to family involvement, to conflict resolution. This area of work is the perfect opportunity to truly be *reflective, inquisitive, and community-minded problem-solvers*.

We are fortunate to have a full-time guidance counselor, Sarah Maiolo, to lead this work. Sarah's work and schedule are aligned to the needs of the students/school. She works directly with individual children, small-groups, as well as entire classes. She also runs a series of workshops devoted to social and emotional development.

For the 2015-16 school year, we have fully adopted the Responsive Classroom approach. The Responsive Classroom approach is a way teaching that fosters safe, challenging, and joyful schools. Developed by classroom teachers across the country, this approach consists of practical strategies for bringing together social and academic learning throughout the school day. The Responsive Classroom approach is a natural fit for Spruce Street School as it has an emphasis on building friendly and supportive communities. All staff members participated in full day training on the Responsive Classroom and many of our staff members did extended training during the summer.

Please see our Behavior Handbook for additional information.

### **Discipline**

Spruce Street adheres to The Chancellor's Discipline Code, which is distributed to families and available online. We implement appropriate consequences and guidance interventions to positively shape behavior.

While we take a supportive, developmentally appropriate approach to discipline, there are also clear boundaries and consequences for children. We have a set of guidelines for our shared spaces, including the cafeteria, yard, stairwells, hallways, and bathroom. Teachers also manage their classrooms in a way that balances nurturing with structure. Children and families are active partners in maintaining a safe and lively learning environment. Please see our Behavior Handbook for additional information.

### **Report Cards/Parent Teacher Conferences**

We distribute student work/goal feedback during November and March conferences, and more formal report cards in January and June. Our report cards reflect Common Core Standards and grade-level expectations, combining qualitative and quantitative reporting to families. Our report cards utilize the DOE's electronic reporting system known as STARS Classroom.

There are many opportunities throughout the year for teachers and families to engage in dialogue about children. Report cards and conferences are two formalized vehicle for these conversations to be documented. The goal of a parent-teacher conference is to support children through the ever-important home/school connection. By collaborating with families, teachers gain valuable insight, and vice versa. The goal is not for families to feel anxious, confused, or defensive! Please see the calendar for dates of parent teacher conferences, and be on the lookout for additional information throughout the year.

The Department of Education has rolled out a new system called NYC Schools account which provides a new way for you to view your child's attendance, grades, and contact information on a computer, phone, or tablet.

In order to register for the NYC Schools Account, you must be the parent or guardian with whom the student resides and have legal access to the student's academic and biographical records and you must come into the school and register in person.

Please click on the link below to learn more about your NYC Schools account and what is needed to create an account. If you have more than one child attending NYC schools, you can create an account for all of them in one visit.

[http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B869A0B7-5281-4D25-A657-AC4CF7DA8A91/0/AcpolicyNYCSAOnePagerFamilies\\_English.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B869A0B7-5281-4D25-A657-AC4CF7DA8A91/0/AcpolicyNYCSAOnePagerFamilies_English.pdf)

### Curriculum Workshops

Spruce Street holds many curriculum workshops throughout the year. We will continue to offer a range of other academic workshops, including those around standardized testing, supporting children with learning to read, etc.

This year, we are building on a successful model where families are invited into classrooms to both hear from teachers AND learn alongside their children. Based on your feedback, we are holding sessions for upper and lower grades on different days.

We will host a range of workshops for families to discuss curricular topics, social emotional development, and the middle school process. Beginning in October, we will hold a series of recurring, classroom-based learning opportunities.

The dates for this year's Learning Alongside your Child are:

Pre-K – 2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	3 <sup>rd</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> 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

Grade teams will agree upon a range of topics for each date and distribute the calendar to families at Curriculum Night.

### Consultants/Partnership Programs

We are fortunate to have several partnership programs with community-based organizations and institutes of higher learning. National Dance Institute (NDI) partners with all Kindergarten-5<sup>th</sup> grade classes for a residency program. TADA is a children's theater organization that works with 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade students during Electives and Performing Arts classes. Brooklyn Beanstalk provides Spanish immersion for Pre-K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade classes, as well as during Electives.

Read Ahead is an organization that works to promote a love of reading with students during lunchtime via one-on-one mentoring. Additionally, our school partners with Responsive Classroom for social and emotional education programs.

We also have a partnership with New York University and Pace University, which provides a connection between Spruce and emerging educators. These partnerships are designed to enhance what Spruce Street stands for, and to forge new connections between school and community.

## Daily Life at Spruce Street

Each day of school includes numerous events and transitions. This section outlines a day in our school from start to finish, with pertinent information regarding policies and procedures.

### Understanding our School Space

Our school is housed in a state-of-the-art facility at the base of a residential skyscraper in the heart of Lower Manhattan. Our school entrance is on William Street, opposite the entrance to NY Downtown Hospital. Our school building includes ample classroom spaces and a variety of specialty spaces. We have access to a rooftop playspace, auditorium, library, gymnasium, science lab, art studio, music suite, and ground-level cafeteria. As amazing as our building is, we do have quite limited space to gather on the ground floor.

**For safety reasons, strollers, hot beverages, dogs and scooters are not permitted inside the school. Your cooperation is required and appreciated.**

We share space with P94, a District 75 program for children with special needs. When appropriate, our students and staff collaborate and coordinate shared activities. Although the building houses space for the hospital and 900+ apartments, we do not cross paths with non-DOE employees or residents.

Our school is located on a public plaza. There is often active construction, visitors entering and exiting the adjacent hospital lobby, etc. therefore, it is imperative and the responsibility of parents and caregivers to actively supervise children at all times. There is a parking garage being constructed at the base of our school building, with two-way vehicular traffic entering and exiting on Beekman Street. This underscores that the plaza is not a playspace for children, and all children need to be adequately supervised at all times.

There are no restrooms for adults to use in our lobby.

### William Street Plaza

This plaza is used for many purposes, by many members of the public. Each day, there are a myriad of tourists, hospital visitors, Pace students, protestors, and others – all mixed among Spruce families. In addition, this space is an active construction zone for the soon-to-be parking garage. In cooperation with the hospital and residential building, here are some additional safety measures we are putting into place:

- Students should never play with the metal chains or climb the metal posts outlining the garage. The posts and chains are there for a reason – to develop safe habits and distance from the soon-to-be parking garage.
- Ball playing is not permitted on the plaza before arrival or after dismissal.

We sometimes see children arriving at school alone. Young children should be escorted to the front entrance by an adult. If you are in a car on Spruce Street, or walking along Beekman, do not send your child alone to the front door. Better to leave your car unattended for 60 seconds than leaving your child unattended. This does not apply to older children who have permission to self-dismiss.

### Arrival for Pre-Kindergarten– 6<sup>th</sup> grade

#### ❖ Pre-Kindergarten

At 8:15 a.m., parents/guardians/caregivers escort their children directly to their pre-kindergarten classrooms, using our main lobby. For safety reasons, strollers, hot beverages, dogs and scooters are not permitted inside the school. **Early drop-off is not available for Pre-Kindergarten.** We do not have space in our lobby for parents and caregivers to wait with children ahead of 8:15 a.m. Family cooperation is required and appreciated. After dropping children off, adults must exit the building via our main lobby.

### ❖ Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade

Doors open for general arrival at 7:50 a.m. Parents drop children off at the front entrance, as we have a variety of staff members supervising the lobby, stairwells, cafeteria and auditorium during arrival.

At 8:10 a.m. staff line-up and escort students in 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grades to the auditorium and to their designated row. Students in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades will proceed directly up Staircase D to their classrooms.

At 8:15 a.m., classroom teachers greet children in the hallways/auditorium/cafeteria, and escort their students up to the classroom.

For the first week of school (September 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup>) kindergarten parents may drop their children off in the classrooms. Kindergarten teachers will greet families in the hallway and welcome them into their classrooms.

### ❖ Inclement weather

In case of inclement weather, parents will follow standard drop-off/arrival procedures. We do not have space in our lobby for parents and caregivers to wait with children during inclement weather.

### Attendance/Late Procedures

Any child who arrives after the bell rings at 8:20 a.m. is late. Late students will receive a yellow late pass, and are marked late.

Families arriving late are required to enter the main lobby and sign the Late Log, documenting the time of arrival. Late children are provided with a Late Pass and depending on grade, may be escorted to class by Spruce Street staff.

Teachers take official attendance each day in the morning. This attendance is a legal document, and is tracked throughout the years. It is imperative that children are on time for school each day. When children arrive late, it often sets up a ripple effect, preventing them from seamlessly transitioning into the school day. Late students also have a disruptive impact on the remainder of students in the class who have arrived on time and have started their day.

Attendance is essential to your child's success in school and is part of New York City's promotional criteria for all grades. Absences and latenesses are documented and part of your child's report card and educational record. Children need to be present in order to learn, *and* in order for educators to assess what they've learned.

Any student with more than 10% absence/lateness rate or who present patterns of absences/latenesses will be discussed at our school's monthly attendance meetings will receive an attendance letter. Additional supports and interventions will be used as needed, and are listed below:

- Phone Call Home from Office Staff
- At-Risk Letter
- Meeting with Principal/Guidance/Parent Coordinator
- Home visit conducted by the DOE Attendance Teacher

We will provide several interventions to address poor attendance, including phone calls, letters home, and if need be, home visits by a DOE Attendance Teacher. Please remember that these situations can negatively impact your child *and* the school – attendance is high-stakes data! Parents have access to their child's attendance record via their report card (which tracks cumulative data), as well as NYC Student Accounts, which provides updated information on a weekly basis (for more information please contact Julie Lam or refer to the "*report card/parent teacher conferences*" section of this handbook).

### Absences

Families are encouraged to report absences via the online link on our website. Families may also continue to call the main office – 212-266-4800 ext. 0 – by 9:00 a.m. on the day of each absence. *Please do not email us about*

*absences!* If calling before school hours, please leave a detailed message on our voicemail. If you know in advance your child is going to be absent (an appointment, etc.), please send in a note to the main office or your child's teacher, or share this information via our website link. In case of illness, please submit an absent note and/or doctor's note upon returning. We will follow-up if your child is absent and we have not heard from you.

**Families are strongly encouraged to use the DOE calendar for guidance when planning personal vacations.** We are unable to provide homework packets or make-up work for children who are on vacation at alternate times of the year. Unauthorized absences and vacations have a tremendous impact your child's education. These situations can be very difficult for children to acclimate back into daily life at school. Since much of our curriculum is project-based, it is quite challenging for children to "make-up" missed assignments.

### **Dismissal for Pre-Kindergarten– 6<sup>th</sup> grade**

We invite families into the building at 2:30 p.m. for our dismissal period. A Spruce Street staff member (usually Nancy) will open the doors to signal the beginning of dismissal. Families who are unable to enter the building and follow standard dismissal procedures (e.g. a medical condition that prevents you from walking up the stairs, or a sleeping child in a stroller) have several options. We will bring any students who have not been picked up down to the main office. If you are unable to pick your child up, simply meet them in the main office after the crowd thins out. Another helpful tip is to befriend a classmate's parent so you can trade off pick-up duty and watching sleeping children on the plaza.

All children must shake hands with their teacher each day before leaving. Parents/guardians must be close enough to make eye contact with the teacher. These routines promote safety and the relationship between adults and students. Although dismissal can be a good time to check in with teachers, we ask parents to refrain from having in-depth conversations with teachers until all students are dismissed. It is important for teachers to concentrate on dismissing all children to their proper adults.

We understand some children participate in a variety of activities. It is essential that families fill out and submit the dismissal form, so we are aware which activities take place on which day, etc. If your child is participating in Manhattan Youth's afterschool program, teachers dismiss them to a Manhattan Youth counselor inside the school building. Children assigned to be bused home will be escorted by a staff member to the bus. Please update this form as your dismissal plans change throughout the year.

Once you have picked your child up, please exit the building. This will help the crowd thin out and allow teachers better lines of sight. If you are involved in conversation with other parents, please exit and continue your conversation outside the school.

#### **❖ Pre-K and Kindergarten**

Each Pre-K and K family receives two Spruce Street dismissal passes at the beginning of the school year. Parents/ guardians are required to show this I.D. to staff in the lobby each day before picking children up from their classrooms. Any adult without a pass will be required to wait in the lobby for dismissal to end and late children to be brought downstairs.

#### **❖ Grades 1 through 5**

Students are dismissed from the cafeteria. Once you have picked up your child, please exit the building. This will help the crowd thin out and allow teachers better lines of sight.

Our school is located on a public plaza. We have no control over the happenings outside the building. It is imperative and the responsibility of parents and caregivers to actively supervise children at all times.

- ❖ **Grade 6** - Students self-dismiss through Exit D. Students may not re-enter the building once they have been dismissed.

*For all families - It is important for parents/caregivers to be on time for dismissal.* Children not picked up by 2:35 p.m., are escorted to the main office by school staff. Late parents/caregivers must then enter the building and sign the late log. **For safety reasons, strollers, hot beverages, dogs and scooters are not permitted inside the school. Your cooperation is required and appreciated.**

If you have arranged a playdate for your child, or for them to be picked up by a different friend/family member than you've indicated, you must submit a note to your child's teacher via the blue folder. Please do not fax or email same-day changes in dismissal plans. We do not always receive these changes in time.

### Early Pickup

We strongly discourage early pickup, except for medical appointments and/or emergency situations. Students leaving early must be picked up by 2:15 p.m. Please send in a note to your child's teacher – so that the child can be prepared to leave class as discreetly as possible. Parents may not proceed directly to classrooms when picking children up early. Adults must sign them out via our main office.

No early pick-ups from **2:15-2:35 p.m.** Our main office is unable to call and coordinate early dismissal during these times.

### Half-Day Procedures

On half-days throughout the year, including those for Parent-Teacher Conferences, the schedule is as follows:

- ❖ Pre-K, Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2 students have lunch from 10:30-10:50 a.m.
- ❖ Grade 3-6 students have lunch from 10:55-11:15 a.m.
- ❖ Dismissal for all students takes place at 11:15 a.m.

On half-days, teachers remain with their classes during lunch and follow standard dismissal procedures.

### Bus Transportation (K-2)

Children who live more than one half mile from Spruce Street are eligible for free bus service. School bus service will begin approximately two-three weeks after the school year begins. Qualifying families will be notified directly about routes, times, and the commencement of service.

Children riding the bus are not allowed to alter their destinations. Play dates are not allowed on the school bus. If you wish to alter this plan, for any reason, a note signed by a parent or caregiver must be given to both the office and the teacher clearly stating the change in plans. We must have this information in writing. Do not fax or email changes in dismissal plans. We do not always receive these changes in time. Please note, we cannot accept phone calls regarding changes in bus plans except in an extreme emergency.

Children confuse days and times very easily: we cannot rely on the children to recall accurately the days they are not supposed to ride the bus. Do not wait until 2:30 p.m. to inform us that your child is not riding the bus – dismissal is too hectic and the message may not get through!

If your child is to be met at the bus by a new/unfamiliar person, please send the appropriate information including the name of the person in writing. The note will be given to the bus driver who will ask to see photo ID before releasing your child to this person.



If, for any reason, an adult is not waiting at a bus stop for a child, the driver is instructed to bring the child back to the school after finishing the bus route. Parents will be notified at once and will be expected to pick the child up from school immediately.

Some children riding the school bus in the morning may arrive too late for breakfast. Please provide breakfast at home. If for any reason the school bus is late, your child will not be marked late for that day.

### **Snack (Pre-K – 1<sup>st</sup> Grade)**

Snack is served each day, usually during mid-morning. Since our lunchtime is mid-day, we understand that young children become hungry! Families in each class sign-up for a snack calendar in the beginning of the school year. Class parents coordinate a snack calendar, manage snack sign-up and serve as the liaison between families and the classroom teacher. During those assigned days, we ask each family to provide snack for their child's class. This alleviates having to remember each day, and provides a more communal, collaborative atmosphere for our classrooms.

Snack includes time for students to drink water, and students should bring in reusable cups to fill in the classroom sinks. Juice or other beverages should not be sent in. **In most classrooms, children have access to snack *independently as they work*.**

Our indicators that a snack works well for a class are pretty basic – healthy, individually packaged, and fulfilling. Students should be able to open packages independently, and classrooms will not have access to refrigerators, microwaves, or utensils on a daily basis. To that end, we have developed a list of recommended snacks we find work well in our classrooms, and a list of snacks that don't. Please use this list as a guide:

*Recommended Snacks:* raisins, Pirate's/Veggie Booty, bananas, apples, animal crackers, mini pretzels, rice cakes, mini cheese crackers (e.g. Goldfish), cereal bars, granola bars, graham crackers, string cheese.

In our experience, these snacks *do not* work well: popcorn, chips, fruit snacks, applesauce, yogurt, cookies.

Children with allergies or other unique dietary needs should bring in an individual snack.

### **Breakfast and Lunch**

Breakfast is available daily in the cafeteria, and is free for all students. We begin serving breakfast at 7:50 a.m., and any student wishing to eat breakfast must arrive before 8:05 a.m. This does not include Pre-K students, who have access to breakfast in their classroom at 8:30 a.m.

All families may participate in the school lunch program. Meals are provided through the Office of School Food on a daily basis. Families can access the lunch menu by selecting the K-8 Lunch Menu via this web link: [http://www.opt-osfns.org/schoolfood/public1/menu\\_select.aspx](http://www.opt-osfns.org/schoolfood/public1/menu_select.aspx).

Families may also send their children with a packed lunch from home, (glass containers are not permitted). Students do not have access to a refrigerator or microwave, and should be able to carry, open and eat their own lunch. We strongly discourage sharing food &/or candy as this can quickly get out of hand. Adult assistance is available, but we encourage student independence as much as is feasible.

Each family fills out a lunch form in the beginning of the year to determine eligibility for free/reduced lunch. It is important that **all families** complete this form, even if you don't plan on participating in the school lunch program, or if you don't believe you qualify. School lunch forms are tied to state and federal funding, and we will reach out more about this in the beginning of the year. Nancy Chen-Rios coordinates lunch payment with families. We offer several payment options, including pre-payment for an entire year, and billing for several months at a time.

Here is the timeline for lunch/recess:

#### **11:15 a.m.-12:05 p.m.:**

Pre-K eat and play in classroom – recess/outdoor play will take at a different point in the day

Kindergarten has lunch first, then recess.

1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade has recess first, then lunch.

\* This year, each 1<sup>st</sup> grade class will play and eat with the kindergarteners for a period of several months. This will help evenly distribute classes and promote leadership among 1<sup>st</sup> graders. The schedule will be as follows:

1-333: September/October/November/December

1-331: January/February/March

1-329: April/May/June

### **12:10-1:00 p.m.:**

5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades have recess first, then lunch.

3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades have lunch first, then recess.

We will begin recess clubs for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders, such as library and art club, later in September.

### **Recess/Outdoor Physical Activity**

Recess is an important time for children to recharge, socialize, and practice good habits around physical well-being. Each day, students spend a block of time playing outdoors before or after eating lunch. Here, they have a chance to run, play, use their imaginations, and socialize with friends from other classes. Students are supervised by various Spruce Street staff, as we remain committed to safety at all times throughout the school day.

It is important that children are dressed appropriately for daily, outdoor physical activity. *Please send your child with comfortable shoes every day of the year – no flip flops are permitted.* This will allow your child to participate in recess each day. As the weather changes throughout the year, we will continue to play outside. In general, we play outside unless it is steadily raining, snowing, or frigidly cold. We ensure children are bundled up with mittens, hats, and any other items you send in. In the event of inclement weather, students play in the gymnasium where a variety of educational and fun activities will be provided.

### **Bathrooms**

All pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms are equipped with student bathrooms. Students in Grades 1 through 6 have access to bathrooms on floors 3 and 4. There are also age-appropriate bathrooms located adjacent to the rooftop yard and the cafeteria. Children have access to these bathrooms throughout the day. Classroom teachers set-up and practice bathroom routines with children in the beginning of the year.

We ask that families of younger children (Pre-K through 1<sup>st</sup> grade) send in a change of clearly marked clothes for their child in September. This is essential in the event of bathroom-related accidents. As the year progresses, families may need to replenish this change of clothes, as items are used, seasons change and children grow.

We ask families to support independence in children when it comes to bathroom procedures. This includes making sure your child uses the bathroom before arriving at school, and wearing clothes that they can remove, unbutton, and re-fasten on their own.

**Adults may never enter or use student bathrooms, including those in the cafeteria, hallways, or classrooms.**

### **Safety and Security**

Safety is our number one priority. We appreciate all families' cooperation with DOE and Spruce Street safety guidelines. Our building is fully equipped with surveillance cameras in all stairwells, corridors, and outdoor/public spaces. We have a school-based safety committee that meets monthly, as well as a formal safety plan on record with the DOE and NYPD.

We conduct a series of fire and safety drills throughout the school year to help students and teachers practice evacuation procedures. These are not meant to scare children or families, but meant to make sure we all know what to do and where to go in case of emergency. Teachers and other staff members work with children to make sure they



understand the rules during a fire drill, and the safety precautions we all must take. More information is shared during our September Orientation.

**Visiting the School - new**

When visiting the school, **all** parents/visitors must sign-in and out with our School Safety Agents. Please note that a photo ID is required for all visitors to sign-in; including those stopping by the main office (located in the lobby in Room 104). Adults/visitors may not wander the building and visit any classrooms/staff unannounced.

While visiting Spruce Street, all visitors are required to wear a visitor sticker. Please keep in mind that random classroom visits or drop-ins can be disruptive for both the teacher and students, therefore we ask that visitors go to the intended room or area only. Safety agents may ask visitors to exit the building if they find parents/visitors in areas other than those specified.

We are in a public building and anticipate visitors, ranging from DOE officials to occasional reporters. Please fill out and submit the media release form you receive via your Take Home Folder.

**Contacting the School**

If you need to contact the school for any reason, please call our main office at 212-266-4800.

During the school year please email or write teachers directly if you have questions or concerns related to your child’s academic performance or class work. If other questions or concerns arise during the school year, please contact the school staff as follows:

<p><b>Nancy Harris, Principal</b>  <a href="mailto:nharris@sprucestreetnyc.org">nharris@sprucestreetnyc.org</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Overall concerns</li> <li>● Issues unresolved through other channels</li> </ul>	<p><b>Hillary Casado, Assistant Principal</b>  <a href="mailto:hcasado@sprucestreetnyc.org">hcasado@sprucestreetnyc.org</a>, ext.3171</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Curricula</li> <li>● State testing</li> <li>● Special education / 504 accommodations</li> <li>● Behavior and discipline</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sarah Maiolo, Guidance Counselor</b>  <a href="mailto:smaiolo@sprucestreetnyc.org">smaiolo@sprucestreetnyc.org</a> , ext. 2493</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Test accommodations</li> <li>● Bullying / Harassment</li> <li>● Middle school admissions</li> <li>● Social/emotional health concerns</li> </ul>	<p><b>Julie Lam, Parent Coordinator</b>  <a href="mailto:jlam@sprucestreetnyc.org">jlam@sprucestreetnyc.org</a>, ext. 2492</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● General questions</li> <li>● Jupiter logon</li> <li>● NYC Schools Account/state testing score information</li> <li>● School events and calendar</li> <li>● Financial assistance for school trips</li> <li>● Parents Association related questions</li> <li>● Afterschool</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rena Gregory, School Secretary</b>  <a href="mailto:rgregory@sprucestreetnyc.org">rgregory@sprucestreetnyc.org</a>, ext. 0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Busing</li> <li>● Blue card updates</li> <li>● Immunizations</li> <li>● Records requests</li> </ul>	<p><b>Nancy Chen-Rios, School Aide</b>  <a href="mailto:nchen-rios@sprucestreetnyc.org">nchen-rios@sprucestreetnyc.org</a> , ext. 0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Official attendance records</li> <li>● Planned family trips or absences</li> <li>● Absence phone calls/emails</li> <li>● Doctors’ notes</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Permit requests and inquiries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Immunizations</li> <li>● Metrocards</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stanley Hui, School Psychologist</b>  <a href="mailto:shiu@sprucestreetnyc.org">shiu@sprucestreetnyc.org</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● IEP's and Special Education Services</li> </ul>	<p><b>Emily Tavag, School Nurse</b>                  212-266-4800, ext. 2421</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 504's and Medical Issues</li> </ul>
<p><b>Jessica Kulesa, Special Education Liaison</b>  <a href="mailto:jkulesa@sprucestreetnyc.org">jkulesa@sprucestreetnyc.org</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Academic Intervention and IEP support</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pat Young, IEP Clerical Worker</b>  <a href="mailto:pyoung@sprucestreetnyc.org">pyoung@sprucestreetnyc.org</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scheduling IEP Meetings</li> <li>● Parental Consent</li> </ul>

## Classroom Policies and Procedures

This section outlines many of the other events that will take place in our classrooms. We thank you in advance for respecting our school's policies.

### Birthdays and Holidays

Birthdays are special days for our students. We invite families to donate a favorite read aloud to their child's classroom, which includes a birthday dedication page/photo. Families have the option of coordinating with classroom teachers to read their donated book to their child's class as a celebratory occasion. Families in Pre-K, K and 1<sup>st</sup> grades may coordinate with teachers for a special treat during snack time. **Please note that party invitations or goodie bags may not be distributed at school.**

**As an option, we invite families in middle/upper grades to send in a special treat and leave it in the main office for distribution. Classes in 2<sup>nd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades do not devote classroom time to birthday celebrations.**

The Spruce Street community includes families from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. It would be impossible for classrooms to celebrate and honor all the days families celebrate. Some families in our community may not celebrate holidays and birthdays at all due to religious or cultural beliefs. While we encourage families and students to share their traditions, we do not focus celebrations on any one holiday. We do not decorate the school or classrooms for holidays, nor do we hold any holiday celebrations. This includes Halloween and Valentine's Day. We do, however, come together for several school wide and grade based celebrations.

### Student Health

We have a nurse, Emily Tavag, on staff at Spruce Street who administers medication to children, and sees children when they are not feeling well. Families should see Rena Gregory or our school nurse for paperwork pertaining to the administration of medication. Children are not permitted to self-medicate, and school personnel are not able to administer medicine either. If your child has a 504, it remains on file in the school and all school staff are made aware of individual medical needs.

Children often become sick, sometimes with a contagious illness. Please do not send your child to school with a fever or other contagious illness until symptoms have stopped for **24 hours**. This time period includes children sent home from school. (For example, if your child has a fever or vomits during school on a Tuesday, s/he should not return to school on Wednesday. Assuming s/he is free of symptoms, it is safe to send them back on Thursday). While we are

vigilant about monitoring children's health for contagious illnesses such as the flu and lice, with so many people sharing space, illness can spread quickly, we ask for your cooperation.

### Field Trips

Spruce Street students actively engage with the outside community. This means we take trips on a frequent basis, always connected to our teaching and learning. Trips range from walking/observing tours around our immediate community, to museums, to larger trips with months of planning involved.

Each family is asked to fill out a walking trip slip at the beginning of the year. This covers general walking trips around our neighborhood. Teachers distribute trip-specific permission slips well in advance of larger trips (e.g. those involving public or school bus transportation). Families need to complete all required information on the trip slips, before signing and returning them. In the event of money collection, teachers coordinate directly with families.

Chaperoning a field trip is a great way for families to be involved in your child's education. We reach out directly and via class parents to coordinate chaperones for field trips. Please note chaperoning a field trip is a responsibility and a commitment to the safety and education of an entire class. We are counting on our chaperones to be vigilant about safety, to be committed to the experience for all children in the class, and to be positive role models for students.

**For innumerable reasons, younger siblings may never accompany parent chaperones. Only parents/guardians are permitted to serve as chaperones on school field trips.** Chaperones are expected to pay the adult rate for any incurred costs (admission price, etc.).

The following are some chaperoning guidelines:

- Each chaperone will receive an agenda/directions before leaving. This will include the purpose of the trip, whether to meet us in the lobby or classroom, time specifics, etc
- If students have a trip sheet to complete, you will receive a copy. This way, you can know what is expected of each student.
- You will be assigned to a small group of children. Please know where your assigned children are at all times.
- You are volunteering to help support, encourage, and supervise **all** children in your group – not just your own child.
- If you are unable to be away from work, your cell phone, or other electronic devices for the duration of the trip, please decline the volunteer opportunity.
- Volunteers must begin and end at the school. You cannot meet us at the venue or leave early.
- Please be flexible with your time. Sometimes, field trips run later than expected – it may help to leave some wiggle room past the expected end of any trip.
- Adults are the models for our students. For example, if students are not permitted to eat or drink on the bus, adults are not either. The same holds true for souvenir/snack shop trips, electronic devices, inappropriate language, etc.
- **We need to follow all rules we expect students to, especially when it comes to safety.**

### Class Configuration

All Spruce Street classes are configured heterogeneously, seeking a balance between gender and personality. For kindergarten, parents had an opportunity to list three children they would prefer their child be placed with. While this is not a guarantee, it is an opportunity to thoughtfully ease the transition for some children. At the end of each school year, classroom teachers complete articulation cards, sharing strengths information about each child's academic and social strengths and needs. Beginning in Grade 1, we work collaboratively to create balanced classes of students, with teacher assignment as the final step in the process. **Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate individual requests regarding class/teacher placement.**

Some of our classes are co-taught, and all classrooms are inclusive with a range of children and needs. Families with students placed in a co-taught classroom will receive additional information in September, including a fact sheet about ICT classes, and an invitation to an information session during Curriculum Night.

### **Accidents**

As previously mentioned, we value safety as our top priority. In case of an accident, we take appropriate measures. The school nurse and all staff are trained and equipped to handle emergencies, and know what to do depending on the severity of the situation. **It is imperative that families maintain updated phone numbers and an updated blue card to ease communication in case of accidents/emergencies. This is especially true if your living arrangements have changed recently.**

### **Supplies**

All grade specific supply lists can be found on the website. This supply list outlines both communal supplies and those required for individual children. Cluster Class (i.e. art, science, etc.) wish lists and requested items can be found on the website as well. We may reach out if supply needs emerge, and appreciate any and all contributions.

### **Personal Property**

Students may not bring electronics into any New York City public school – this includes, but is not limited to cell phones, electronic games, iPods, etc. Children are also not permitted to bring any personal property, including toys, games, money, playing cards, jewelry, or special items. Students are not permitted to play with/use prohibited items at any point throughout the day, including recess/lunch and afterschool. Any prohibited items will be confiscated by a teacher and must be picked up by a parent/guardian. In general, do not send your child with any item they would be sad to lose! Your cooperation is required and appreciated.

We do have a lost and found in our school lobby. Please mark all personal items and make a habit of checking for lost jackets, gloves, and lunch boxes. We work hard to return labeled, lost items, but do donate unclaimed items at the end of every month. It is staggering how many items wind up there each week!

### **Cell Phone Policy**

The use or display of cell phones, computing devices and portable music and entertainment systems at school is subject to many restrictions. Please read our complete policy for specific information.

[Spruce's Cell Phone policy](#) in accordance with NYC DOE procedures.

### **Privacy and Recordkeeping**

Please note that all student records are privacy-protected, and all Spruce Street staff takes the utmost care when discussing individual children/families. In accordance with Chancellor's Regulation and FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), we will not discuss individual children with any adult other than their parent/guardian. We ask all adults, including families, to maintain privacy and use courtesy and respect when discussing incidents that involve other children.

### **Communication between Teachers and Families**

Teacher-family communication is crucial to a child's success in school. At the same time, we want to maintain a professional environment where everyone respects privacy and boundaries.

Families are encouraged to send in notes for teachers via Take Home Folders, and may set up appointments/leave messages with teachers via the main office.

Teachers are each provided with an individual email account via our school website – [www.sprucestreetnyc.org](http://www.sprucestreetnyc.org). Each staff member’s email address is their first initial and last name – for example, [nharris@sprucestreetnyc.org](mailto:nharris@sprucestreetnyc.org).

Email is a quick way to connect with families, and we have created reasonable guidelines when handling this type of communication (see below). **Email is generally not best for discussing specifics about children, especially since so many subjects can quickly turn private or sensitive.** Class parents can help facilitate volunteers, supplies, snack, reminders, etc. For more information about class parents or our website, see Julie.

Teachers are strongly encouraged to use school phones to make and return family phone calls (as opposed to personal cell phones or texting). Phones are available in classrooms, as well as in the main office. It is also recommended that teachers maintain a log of family communication, to document outreach and conversations.

Each grade team creates an ongoing newsletter to be distributed to families and posted on our website. This newsletter includes instructional happenings across all subject areas, as well as information about trips and events. Newsletters are a terrific avenue to explain instructional practices and to reinforce the home-school connection. Additional information can and should be posted to the grade-level page on our school website.

### Spruce Street Communication Guidelines

We are thrilled to offer additional, streamlined communication options for families. Please see below for some tips and guidelines when communicating with teachers:

**DO** adhere to these communication norms and respectful boundaries. We want to make sure this communication method works for everyone involved.

**DO** use the Family Handbook, Behavior Handbook, and school website as ongoing reference tools. Many answers to common questions can be found there.

**DO** continue to use existing communication methods (phone, notes, and meetings) in addition to emails.

**DO** direct relevant questions to office and support staff (questions about lunch, Metrocards, snack, etc.)

Here is a helpful guide:

Things Best Communicated by Email	Things NOT Best Communicated by Email
Setting up a meeting and/or changing the time of a future meeting	Same-day drop-off changes
Absences/illness information for teachers	Specific academic or behavior issues (email to set-up a meeting instead)

**DO** expect a reasonable response time from teachers. We’ll aim for 24-48 hours, but remember...teachers don’t sit in front of a computer all day and enjoy much-deserved time off on the weekends.

**DO** maintain student privacy when communicating. We can only talk/meet/write about your own child, and must always maintain privacy rights.

**DO** remember – emails have permanence. Emails are long-lasting and have the ability to be monitored.

**DO** allow yourself some time to cool off if you are feeling particularly angry or frustrated. Composing and sending an email when you’re upset can often lead to additional tension. Emotions often translate into a confrontational-sounding email, and nobody appreciates being on the receiving end of that communication.



**DO** expect support or intervention if these protocols do not meet our needs.

### **Candy**

Candy, gum, etc. is not permitted at school at anytime. Once again, do not send your child with any sweet treats they would be sad to lose! Your cooperation is required and appreciated.

## **Family/Community Involvement**

Family and community involvement are pillars of our school's creation and mission. This section outlines how we communicate with families, and many ways for families and community members to be involved in our school

### **Communicating Information to Families**

Our **Website** [www.sprucestreetnyc.org](http://www.sprucestreetnyc.org) provides archival information, copies of forms, photos, and news about our school. Our calendar and website are updated frequently.

**Weekly Updates** - An update of events, celebrations, meetings, etc. will be emailed to you each week from our Parent Coordinator, Julie Lam. If you would like to be added to this email communication or you would like to submit an announcement to be added to the weekly, please contact Julie at: [jlam@sprucestreetnyc.org](mailto:jlam@sprucestreetnyc.org)

**Newsletters** - Each grade team creates an ongoing newsletter to be distributed to families. This newsletter includes instructional happenings across all subject areas, as well as information about homework, trips and events. Newsletters are a terrific avenue to explain instructional practices and to reinforce the home-school connection. Families also receive periodic letters from the principal, assistant principal, as well as other relevant updates.

**Message from Nancy** – Throughout the year, Nancy will send out a message to the entire community to reflect the priorities and reflections on the school year. These messages will connect to our instructional goals for the year, our school's mission, as well as the needs of the community.

### **Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)**

This organization provides a great opportunity for families to gather, discuss community issues, plan events, and fundraise for our school. In addition to the annual welcome breakfast and beginning-of-school social, the PTA meets on a monthly basis, with a standing meeting time to be determined in accordance with the bylaws. This year, our PTA Presidents are Ashley Duncan and Sarah Elbatouney. Please reach out to members of the Executive Board for more information. Updates and announcements will be distributed, via a newsletter, several times throughout the school year.

### **School Leadership Team (SLT)**

Like the PTA, the School Leadership Team is a great vehicle for fostering home-school connections. Parent representatives on the SLT are involved in important discussions about our school's development, including the creation of our school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP). This group meets monthly and includes representatives from various constituents (teachers, parents, administrators).

### **Class Parents - Pre-K - 5th Grade**

Each class will have 1-2 class parents. Class parents provide support in various ways to our talented teachers. Primary responsibilities of class parent(s) may include coordinating the snack calendar, organizing field trip chaperones, and communicating PTA happenings, etc. Class parents and teachers will collaborate on an individual basis as needs arise.

### Volunteer Opportunities

We value our parents at Spruce Street and welcome them to help out when necessary and meaningful. There are many ways to volunteer throughout the school year and it is essential that parents get involved in any way possible. These might include: PTA sponsored events, helping in our beautiful library, chaperoning on field trips, etc.

### Workshops

Spruce Street holds many parent workshops throughout the year. See the section titled Curriculum Workshops for more information.

### Classroom Events/Celebrations of Learning

We often invite families to join us in celebrating learning at Spruce Street. This includes celebrations, publishing parties, art exhibits, performances, etc. We welcome family members into the school and classrooms during these times, as there is sure to be much learning happening and much to celebrate!

When families arrive, there will be a sign-in sheet at the front desk. Typically, a Spruce Street staff member will alert guests when it is time to proceed to the classroom. We strive to create an inclusive, welcoming environment for families. Classroom events are often highly attended!

While we understand that in-school siblings like to share celebrations, performances, etc. we ask that families reach out to teachers a day or two before the in-school event to confirm that the event does not conflict with valuable instructional time. *Same day requests to release students (siblings) are disruptive and strongly discouraged.*

### Younger Siblings School Policy

Many families have younger children who do not yet attend Spruce Street. Here are some guidelines about bringing your younger child(ren) to school.

- **Learn Alongside your Child, class celebrations and sibling birthdays:**

Younger siblings **can** attend these events. However, classroom space is extremely limited and we must reiterate that you are responsible for your little ones and that NO strollers are allowed inside (due to fire code).

- **Volunteering in the classroom:**

When you volunteer in your child's classroom, read to the class, chaperone field trips, or help in the library, you **cannot bring younger siblings**. The purpose of your volunteering is to focus on the classroom and/or your student. Younger siblings distract you from that purpose.

- **Volunteering for PTA fundraising and meetings:**

Siblings are allowed to enter the building as long as they stay with parents in designated areas. The PTA office, main office, nurse's office to pick up a sick child and the auditorium for PTA meetings are ok to bring younger siblings.

### Afterschool Program Partners (Grades K-6 only)

We are proud to partner with Manhattan Youth for our onsite afterschool programming. Families can find out more information via [www.manhattanyouth.org](http://www.manhattanyouth.org), including registration, programmatic offerings, etc. Additionally, families often participate in a variety of other afterschool programs that provide pick-up from Spruce. These include Gil's Sports, JCP, and Church Street Music.

### Translation Services

The DOE and Spruce Street are committed to communicating with families in appropriate and inclusive ways. We strive to provide essential and ongoing information in families' home languages if necessary. Translation services are also available during Parent Teacher Conferences.



## Conflicts of Interest

It is natural that families may want to contribute gifts to teachers and staff members. We want to encourage parents to express their gratitude to all Spruce Street staff for the wonderful work they have been doing, but we want to ensure that your gratitude does not put anyone's employment at risk. Here are some guidelines/rules of thumb:

- No teacher or other city employee may accept a gift from any individual that is valued over \$50- it is suggested that gifts be of "nominal value" (i.e. \$5-20).
- Employees may accept a gift that totals more than \$50 if:
  - o It is from the whole class and no individual child or family is mentioned as being the giver and
  - o Every child/family has an opportunity to be included regardless of monetary contribution and
  - o No family has been made to feel obligated to contribute to the gift.
- In the case of whole-class gifts, the total value of the gift shall not exceed a "nominal" donation from each family.
- No teacher or staff member should ever accept cash or a cash-equivalent gift.

If a staff member is in a situation where a family bestows a gift upon them that violates NYC conflicts of interest rules, they are required to refuse the gift and report this gift to an administrator. Staff will graciously let the parent/guardian know that they are not permitted to accept the gift.

Any teacher or staff member who violates such guidelines is putting him/herself at risk for an investigation by the Special Commissioner of Investigations or the NYC Conflicts of Interest Board. Such investigations have the potential to end in employee termination.

We express our thankfulness in many ways each and every day. As parents of children in New York City and the Department of Education, we must all be aware of conflicts of interest and avoiding potentially unethical situations. A full description of prohibited activities and relationships, including guidelines on tutoring and outside employment, can be found in Chancellor's Regulation C-110.