Homeschooling In New York
If politics is the art of the possible, Mayor Bloomberg has proven himself to be a consummate politician. He played off the need of the UFT leadership to conclude a contract granting teachers significant salary increases to gain their support in Albany for a bill restructuring the governance of New York City’s public schools which gives him virtually complete control of the schools. While it would seem that both sides got what they wanted, in fact, the big winner was the mayor.

It is true that the mayor did not get the union contract he wanted. He had to give away larger salary increases than he desired, which will be difficult to fund. He did not get the work assignment changes or the merit provisions he wanted. The UFT contract will be all that stands in his way to making the changes he wants and needs. But, little matter. The teacher’s contract will only run until May 31, 2003, and, he can afford to wait. In many ways the wait will be beneficial. It will give him time to put a new Chancellor and a new Board of Education in place. It will give him time to revise the management structure of the schools and take on 110 Livingston Street. The union will have little leverage next year, and the mayor will then be able to insist on the changes he wants, even in the face of a strike threat.

Just how much the take-over of the school system will effect the quality of education in NYC is unclear, but it can only help. The system will effect the quality of education in each district who have direct access to the city’s schools. It now behooves us to get behind the mayor and support the changes in the schools he deems necessary to provide a quality education to all of the children. The mayor is our last, best hope to improve our public schools and to resist the demands for vouchers and privatization.

Vouchers, the Incomplete Solution

By Adam Sugerman

Solutions to perceived problems at our nation’s public schools evoke “The World Turned Upside Down,” the march the British band played as Cornwallis surrendered to Washington at Yorktown. Rather than tackle the real issues — teacher shortages, uncompetitive salaries, lack of cohesion in teacher training, super-sized teacher-to-student ratios, and most importantly, changing our school-age students’ preference from entertaining over training — society prefers Mickey Mouse fixes to real cost-effective long-term solutions. Indeed subsidizing private- and religious-school education with vouchers will not much needed competition into our lowest-performing standardized test-givers. However, schools that stand in his way to making the changes he wants and needs. But, little matter. The teacher’s contract will only run until May 31, 2003, and, he can afford to wait. In many ways the wait will be beneficial. It will give him time to put a new Chancellor and a new Board of Education in place. It will give him time to revise the management structure of the schools and take on 110 Livingston Street. The union will have little leverage next year, and the mayor will then be able to insist on the changes he wants, even in the face of a strike threat.

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To the Editor:

Thank you for your story about the students from metro NY who competed in the “Entrepreneurial Expo” sponsored last month by The Goldman Sachs Foundation. The writing was good, the facts were straight, and the exposure for this program in your newspaper will have New York educators take notice so that more bright students from underserved neighborhoods can receive scholarships for their participation in Center for Talented Youth (Johns Hopkins University) summer program and related school-year events.

Chuck Beckman, Director, Communications Center for Talented Youth, Johns Hopkins, MD
INSIDE THE SUPERINTENDENT’S OFFICE: BETTY ROSA

By MARYLENA MANTAS

Classic music echoes through the hallways of IS 101, an intermediate school in Community School District 8 in the Bronx. Visitors can witness group work at its best, with students sitting together engaged in problem solving and discussion. More impressive, however, remains the joyful, uplifting spirit of the school, whose students and staff are partly due to the district’s efforts to celebrate its diversity—District 8, located in the East Bronx, runs along the Bruckner Expressway, extending from the Hunts Point peninsula and the South Bronx to the Soundview Clason Point area in the center, and bounded on the north by Pelham Bay and Throgs Neck.

Today, the school is the academic home of students who call themselves “ambassadors” as they are enrolled in IS 101 to represent the elementary school they came from. “This school binds us as one district,” says Betty Rosa, Superintendent of District 8. “It does not matter what local community you come from. The school is symbolic of our diversity [and it is] a place that belongs to students.”

IS 101 is only one of 30 schools located in District 8, which serves about 24,000 students. “My first accountability is to the children in my community,” says Rosa, who considers the role of the superintendent as that of the “master speculator.” Her principal responsibilities are to her students and the district is my classroom,” she says.

Her “lesson plans” stem from her own experience as a teacher and a principal, but most importantly from her interactions with her students. The core elements of these values appear in the form of a quasiquotation written on a blackboard in her office: “Go to: Go to the people, live among them, plan with them. Start with what they know and need, and what they lack. When the leaders leave, the people will say we have it.”

I serve the people, the children and the community… I am here to provide guidance,” says Rosa, adding that she considers her job “the most humbling experience” and is guided by one of her favorite quotes: “The best kind of person is the one that has humility… no matter what you know or do.”

Although she remains committed to her values and acknowledges that she is “a collection of her own experiences,” she also believes that she embraces the different characteristics of every school and the leadership styles of principals.

“Every school in my district is different,” she says. “[When I visit a school] I always ask myself ‘if I was 10 years old again, would I run it this way?’ [The answer might be no], but that does not mean that what principal is doing is wrong.”

Rosa’s model for a principal or teacher is one who takes responsibility for their actions and is committed to their values and integrity. She looks for individuals who are strong leaders and have an ability and willingness to learn. As an administrator, Rosa has worked with educators who have taken on the role of learning from their students and teachers.

“We have sterilized some of the stuff related to the joy of learning,” she says, adding that it’s good to create frameworks as long as they are not internalized. “I am a superintendent of children, not of adults.”

From Coney Island to Paris to Miami: An Assistant Principal Shares Her Views

By LYNN K. ROBBINS

Ruby K. Payne states in A Framework for Understanding Poverty, “An incident brings with him/her the hidden rules of the class in which he/she was raised.” However, he added, the impact an educator can have on a child can modify those rules and change that child’s future, regardless of their socio-economic status. I’ve been around public and private education for 36 years, sometimes in a classroom, sometimes in an office, but always a learner as well as a teacher. I’ve certainly learned from my peers, but more importantly, I’ve learned from the children by listening to who they are, where they come from and what it is that they need.

I met Sylvia in France during my first full-time teaching experience. All of her permanent teeth were pulled when she was 14 because she had a gum infection. Her mother didn’t want to go to the dentist and the school didn’t want to go with her. Sylvia talked about how sixteen year olds talk about their parents or someone they trust. But, mostly, we talked about math. She hated math. We discussed what she could do in life if she didn’t learn math. There wasn’t much. Six months before graduation, all of the seniors were asked to write a valedictorian speech. Sylvia’s was the best. But she was in last in her class and the administration refused to use her speech even though she knew it was written with great passion and insight. I talked with Sister Anne and she finally agreed that Sylvia’s speech could be read by the true valedictorian. Following her graduation Sylvia moved back to the New York area with her parents. Although her grades did not support her parents. Although her grades did not support her efforts, she refused to go to college for fear of disappointing her mother.

Tranisha was a 12-year-old girl who lived in Coney Island but rarely came to school. She was retained twice and far too mature for her present grade. Her father was killed one day while trying to save the life of a child who had fallen into a stream. Not soon enough, her mother became an alcoholic. Every morning before 7:00 a.m. I would set out to find her underneath the Coney Island boardwalk. She would come to school with me now and again, but not often enough. One day I received postcards from Montauk and Manhattan. When I returned in August, I opened a bank account for him with the proviso that whatever money he made working at sea or babysitting jobs he would save 50 percent of it in the account. The rest he could use for whatever he wanted. The account was opened with $25. After 4 months he had saved $80. I told him by the time he entered college he would be able to buy whatever he needed. He never thought about college before and now does.

These children have reacted to the images and sounds of their different environments and have moved beyond those experiences. With borders collapsing, human dignities being devalued and personal hopelessness growing, we need to look closer at the way we can help children develop a sense of self-esteem, and an ability to reach out to children. We need to be aware of the impact that educators can have on our students and the way we can make a difference in their lives.

By Lynn K. Robbins is currently an education administrator and is currently pursuing her doctorate in Educational Leadership from Florida Atlantic University.
Who’s Minding the Schools?
By JILL LEVY

By the time we go to press, elected officials will have hammered out the details of the NYC school governance legislation. The big questions, however, remain: What impact will this change have on our schools, the children and educational outcomes? How will our roles, responsibilities and professional relationships look in the future?

My career began in 1959 in a red, wood-frame school. My first memory of that forbidding place was on a hot, August day when my husband and I drove by, for the first time, to “scout it out.” My mother and her siblings graduated from that school, and I knew that the principal was renowned for her autocratic temperament. But I was unprepared for the terror that gripped me when I saw the dark structure with its dozens of broken windows. A few weeks later, I found myself teaching in one of 14 first-grade classes, managing 38 non-English-speaking children. I used orange crates for bookcases. The school had no library, and the readers—don’t ask. I cherished and relied on my teacher guides, gifts from the central board.

School governance? I knew there was a Board of Education, and that the Board had a president, but what did the Mayor have to do with education? For my colleagues and me, school governance was simply a matter of day-to-day survival. When the Ocean-Hill Brownsville crisis ended in a decentralized system in 1969, school and the community. The three pillars of support are: 1. For children, the home; 2. the school and the community. When one of these supports is inadequate or even missing, the child suffers. The children who are at risk of dropping out of school are designated by their teachers to the Mentoring USA program. We recruit and provide trained volunteer mentors for each child, establishing a one-to-one relationship. The mentor is given training and resources to help the relationship flourish and become meaningful. The mentor is a positive role model who can direct and counsel the child through many challenging situations in life.

The increase in the rate of adolescent suicide appears to be key factors. How should parents, caregivers and friends relate to the suicidal young person? Above all, it is important to be a good listener, trustworthy and nonjudgmental. The young person at risk for suicide must believe that she/he is respected and accepted.

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Warning Signs of Depression and Suicide
By MATILDA R. CUOMO & MARGARET I. CUOMO MAIER, M.D.

The three pillars of support for children are the home, the school and the community. When one of these supports is inadequate or even missing, the child suffers. The children who are at risk of dropping out of school are designated by their teachers to the Mentoring USA program. We recruit and provide trained volunteer mentors for each child, establishing a one-to-one relationship. The mentor is given training and resources to help the relationship flourish and become meaningful. The mentor is a positive role model who can direct and counsel the child through many challenging situations in life.

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Awareness of mental health issues that affect children and adolescents is essential for parents, teachers, and mentors. By providing a caring, attentive, mature adult presence in a young person’s life, a mentor can serve as a significant support system for a young person at risk.

Matilda R. Cuomo is the Founder and Chair of Mentoring USA. Margaret Cuomo Maier is a physician.
By MARYLENA MANTAS

Seven months ago, Kerryann Heron, was evicted from her apartment in Brooklyn after her roommate ceased paying her share of the rent. Financially unable to sustain that apartment, Heron, a 27-year-old single mother of two boys, gathered her belongings and went to the Emergency Assistance Unit (EAU) in the Bronx to seek placement in a shelter. A month after her visit to the EAU, Heron, who had been temporarily placed in a shelter, walked through the doors of the Red Cross Respite II located on 25th St off 5th Avenue. She was offered a small room—equipped with a bed, a table, two chairs, a refrigerator, a microwave and a private bathroom—that and her two boys have made home.

Her current neighbor, Jennifer Saldana, 23, found herself on the same path after giving birth to her second child, who is asthmatic. She was forced to leave the apartment she shared with six other family members—who were evicted a few weeks after Saldana moved—because the poor living conditions posed a hazard to the newborn’s health. Last February, she moved into the Red Cross Respite II.

Although both women admit to occasionally feeling or having felt scared, they both appear content and happy to overcome the odds and provide better homes for their children.

“I can’t be scared. I have two children to raise,” says Saldana, who hopes to earn her GED and become a nurse’s aide. Heron explained that the only fear she feels now is death—“I am a woman of confidence,” says Heron, who now works part-time as a nurse’s aide and plans to become a licensed nurse practitioner. “Whatever I aim for I get. To be scared is not my thing. I am an advocate for myself.”

These families are only two of 92 living at the Red Cross Respite II, a 13-floor facility with over 200 rooms, housed in the Latham Hotel, which became a welfare hotel in the mid 1980s. The Red Cross serves as the parent organization of the Respite, which houses the Emergency Family Center—a Tier II facility designed only for mothers and children—and the Red Cross Community Center, which provides housing to elderly individuals, AIDS patients and other who need a place to live.

The children of Heron and Saldana number only two of approximately 13,000 children living in New York City who live in temporary housing sites. They are also four of 1.35 million children nationwide who experience homelessness annually. The two mothers decided to transfer their two school aged boys, Jimmy and Justin, to schools located close to the Red Cross Respite II, even though they, like all parents who live in temporary housing have the right—as a result of the McKinney Act, which was enacted in 1987 to protect the educational rights of homeless children—to keep their children enrolled in their school of origin. Last February, she moved into the Red Cross Respite II.

According to Camille Huggins, the Assistant Director of Family Programs at the Red Cross Respite II, several students experience academic difficulties, especially when their new school has more rigorous academic standards. Huggins added that the Respite provides tutoring and after school programs to assist students in that situation, while representatives from the Respite meet with parents and schedule meetings between parents, teachers and principals.

Academic challenges further intensify for children living in temporary housing, since they often change schools more than once. According to Lourdes Estrella, Principal of PS 62 in the Bronx where a substantial percentage of the student body live in shelters, some students enroll in PS 62 after having attended several schools.

According to Estrella, the children and their parents arrive at the schools frustrated and angry. “We show parents high respect, so that they can trust us,” she said. “We believe that one kind word can have an impact. We’ve seen evidence of that and it’s beautiful.”

Educators at PS 62 underscored that schools often have an impact in areas beyond the academic sphere.

“This [homelessness] has changed our schools. The education of the child is extremely important, but we are no longer just an educational institution. We are a homeless institution, a social and emotional institution,” said PS 62 Assistant Principal Lisa Manfredonia, adding that the school often assists parents in locating agencies and that community members help them in everything from housing, to dental care, to attaining prescription glasses.

John Hughes, the principal of PS 48 in the Bronx also characterized the school as a community institution and added that his staff has been instructed to help parents even if their concerns are not directly related to their child’s academics. The school provides children with access to a health care facility—established in the school by a community-based organization—counseling and after school programs, while it encourages parents to further their own education through GED programs.

Twenty-nine out of the 32 Community School Districts (CSD) in New York City have shelters. A district coordinator is assigned by the Board of Education (BOE) to every CSD to ensure that children living in temporary housing receive all the educational services they are entitled to. In the BOE’s on-site contact is assigned to every shelter and scatter-site housing to work with the students. The on-site contact works with parents as soon as they enter the shelter to enroll the children in school. The on-site contact functions as the liaison between the school and the shelter and the school and the parent and is responsible for helping to resolve any problems that emerge, such as poor attendance.

According to PS 48 Attendance Coordinator Pat Mullins, problems with attendance usually spark a phone call to the on-site contact, a phone call from the parent if they have access to a phone and sometimes a visit to the shelter. Mullins also offers various incentives to encourage children to come to school, including ice cream and cookies to those classes with 100 percent attendance.

“Most students have gone through some sort of trauma…yet, some do remarkable work,” she said. According to Robert Diaz, director of the BOE Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention Programs/Office of Students in Temporary Housing, the BOE receives funding from the New York State Department of Education, which it then distributes to school districts to provide services to members of their student body in temporary housing. The funds are part of the Attendance Improvement and Drop-Out Prevention Money, which amounted to $6 million in the past academic year. The allocations are provided to ensure that students receive various support services, including after school programs, academic enrichment programs, counseling and academic assistance. The funds set-aside as part of the federal Title I program for homeless children, or they can apply for McKinney grants.

“The districts are responsible to ensure that the youngsters’ needs are met,” said Diaz. “We enhance whatever services the schools have. Since this population has greater needs than the regular population we have to address the issues and enhance the services. We do whatever we can to help these families.”

He added, “The system is as effective as possible. We are constantly changing according to the needs. The system is not fool proof. It’s constantly changing.”

According to Diaz, the BOE liaisons work hard to ensure that “the lines of communication are open between schools and shelters.” He believes that school provides homeless children with a sense of “continuity and safety.”

Most of the services provided to the homeless student population in NYC will soon extend to students in the approximately 700 offshoots of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which it then distributes to school districts and others nationwide. Although the recent reauthorization of the McKinney Act, which became effective on July 1, will not impact NYC because most of its great need is already forward have been activated in NYC for quite some time, advocates for the education of children who are homeless are expecting the reauthorization to have an effect on other school districts.

“Homelessness remains one of the greatest unresolved issues facing our nation. In spite of the unprecedented resources devoted to address-ing this problem, the system of delivering and enhancing services to homeless children must be reinvigorated. The reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, we are on a new trajectory that will increase the ability of homeless children and youth to enroll, and succeed in school. Among other things, one of the key explanations is that it will allow the federal government to provide funds directly to homeless children schools serve as “the oasis of stability at a time of transition.”

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The reauthorization comes at a time when the number of homeless children is growing around the nation.

“Advocates for the homeless says that one of the major reasons for this is the recent economic boom, for some, that provided cash that was used to buy up what was previously unaffordable properties (and that was historically used as rental properties) thereby resulting in a lack of rental/affordable housing. This, coupled with the lack of a living wage, affordable care, affordable housing, and mass transit, were the major contributors to the increase in the number of homeless nationwide,” said Kate Ventura, director of the New York State Technical and Educational Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS-TEACHS).

She noted that the number of homeless children in New York is the highest ever recorded according to the Suffolk County Department of Social Services. In New York City, according to Diaz, the number of scatter sites has increased to 1,700 from 200 last year when the program began.

Ventura and Barbara Duffield, of the National Coalition for the Homeless, cited the lack of awareness as a main challenge in bettering the education system for the homeless. NYS-TEACHS has been holding training sessions for the State’s districts and communities, in reauthorizations and to assist school districts in taking necessary steps to comply with the legislation.

“If we do not intersect to change the life of these children, they may just repeat the history of their parents or guardians,” said Ventura. “We have to change the playing fields of schools. They [the students] will come to school frightened, hungry and tired. The school districts need to address that. We need to look at the American family and see what they need. They need socialization more than before,” she added and called for an “increase in the funding of McKinney grants. And, support for the collaboration among state holders on all levels; federal, state and local.”

Duffield agreed. “We have our work cut out for us to make sure that he law has been implemented. We want to see the promise of McKinney made reality,” she said, adding that for homeless children schools serve as “the oasis of stability at a time of transition.”

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Events at Everett Children’s Adventure Garden, NY Botanical Garden, Bronx

For Children of all ages
Tuesday – Sundays and Monday holidays: 10:00 am – 6:00 pm.
Throughout the season, children dissect plant parts such as seeds and flowers, experiment to find out if plants make sugar to use as food, investigate bugs that help plants grow, use microscopes to see plants up close, press flowers and plants to take home, and much more. We encourage children to explore, examine, inquire and question just like scientists. A few of the many things children discover include, what’s in a flower by taking it apart and putting it back together – and children have an opportunity to look at things through a bee’s eye view!

Special Weekends
Herbal Delights—July 4-July 7, Adventure Garden, 11-5:30pm and Family Garden 1-5:30pm
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Special Summer Storytelling Series—Every Saturday, June 15-Aug 31
In the Everett Children’s Adventure Garden, master storytellers weave amazing tales about plants and wildlife, insects and animals that keep kids spellbound. Famed performers are listed on the weekly schedule below. Performances take place at 2 pm and 3 pm.

Summer Exhibits
Roger Tory Peterson Institute Photography Exhibit—Through July 28
Explore the beauty of plant and animal interactions through this series of striking nature photographs on loan from the Roger Tory Peterson Institute. Taking inspiration from the photographs, children investigate plants and animals and record their observations in field notebooks.

For more information call (718) 817-8700.

The Everett Children’s Adventure Garden has been made possible by the leadership generosity of Edith and Henry Everett.

By ARI MCKENNA
This year’s Appreciation Reception for Mentoring USA’s volunteers and devotees, which took place at the headquarters of the New York City Police Department recently, became a ceremony of gratitude to the very kids that the volunteers are helping. Speakers who stepped up to the microphone extended their praises towards their mentees and spoke warmly of the opportunity that they have been given to work with these kids.

Nate “Tiny” Archibald, NBA Hall of Famer, teacher, and mentor was in attendance to present the Special Recognition Award to Natalie Lukas, who was the Site Coordinator for JHS104 and spoke about “the joy of watching them [mentors] give love and understanding.”

Other awards were presented to the New York City Police Department, Bloomingdale’s, The Junior League of the City of New York, and Morgan Stanley for their continued participation in the program. Mentor and Police Officer Richard Pierre addressed the old adage “it takes a village to raise a child” as he accepted the award for the department. He underscored the importance of helping youngsters view cops as members of this village and “come to realize that the NYPD is more than just guns and badges.”

Other notable speakers were Matilda Raffa Cuomo, the Founder and Chair of Mentoring USA, Richard P. Motta, the President and CEO of HELP USA, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, and news anchor Soledad O’Brien who is the mentor of three young girls and was the evening’s Mistress of Ceremonies. O’Brien mentioned that although mentoring is a giving experience, “Mentors are grateful” for being able to spend time with such bright young kids.

Natasha Atkins, a program manager, who was busy recruiting new mentors at the entrance to the large hall, credited her mentee, Jamilla Young, for allowing her to reconnect with her own inner-child.

Founded in 1995, Mentoring USA, a nonprofit organization which pairs adult volunteer mentors with “at risk” kids has expanded to two other continents. The program requests that adult volunteers meet with their children once per week, nine to ten months out of the year. The program hopes that this small weekly block of stability will help to improve kids expectations and nourish their self-esteem. As Richard Pierre aptly puts it, “Our youth must believe that they can and will be successful.”

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SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOLS • EDUCATION UPDATE • JULY 2002

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(L–R) Raymond Kelly, Matilda Raffa Cuomo & Richard Pierre

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Nate “Tiny” Archibald, NBA Hall of Famer, teacher, and mentor was in attendance to present the Special Recognition Award to Natalie Lukas, who was the Site Coordinator for JHS104 and spoke about “the joy of watching them [mentors] give love and understanding.”

Other awards were presented to the New York City Police Department, Bloomingdale’s, The Junior League of the City of New York, and Morgan Stanley for their continued participation in the program. Mentor and Police Officer Richard Pierre addressed the old adage “it takes a village to raise a child” as he accepted the award for the department. He underscored the importance of helping youngsters view cops as members of this village and “come to realize that the NYPD is more than just guns and badges.”

Other notable speakers were Matilda Raffa Cuomo, the Founder and Chair of Mentoring USA, Richard P. Motta, the President and CEO of HELP USA, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, and news anchor Soledad O’Brien who is the mentor of three young girls and was the evening’s Mistress of Ceremonies. O’Brien mentioned that although mentoring is a giving experience, “Mentors are grateful” for being able to spend time with such bright young kids.

Natasha Atkins, a program manager, who was busy recruiting new mentors at the entrance to the large hall, credited her mentee, Jamilla Young, for allowing her to reconnect with her own inner-child.

Founded in 1995, Mentoring USA, a nonprofit organization which pairs adult volunteer mentors with “at risk” kids has expanded to two other continents. The program requests that adult volunteers meet with their children once per week, nine to ten months out of the year. The program hopes that this small weekly block of stability will help to improve kids expectations and nourish their self-esteem. As Richard Pierre aptly puts it, “Our youth must believe that they can and will be successful.”

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MENTORING USA HOLDS APPRECIATION RECEPTION

(L–R) Raymond Kelly, Matilda Raffa Cuomo & Richard Pierre

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New Middle School at Marymount

By SYBIL MAIMIN

Students in the fourth through seventh grades at the Marymount School are moving into bright new quarters in the fall. The independent Catholic girls’ school (nursery through 12), now housed in three beautiful adjacent townhouses on Fifth Avenue, has acquired and renovated a Beaux Arts building on nearby East 82nd Street which will serve Middle School students exclusively.

As explained by headmistress Sister Kathleen Fagan, this is an effort to give youngers in a sometimes difficult stage of life “a special place where they can shine.” The school will be a blend of the old and the new, a self-contained unit with its own program, faculty, dining hall and commons, library, science lab, computer center, and technical facilitator. A special advising system is being established.

The students will interface with girls from the upper and lower schools in shared use of the chapel, gym, and assembly as well as in school service programs. The addition of a building, more a reflection of the need for “breathing room” following several years of increased enrollment than of plans for further growth, will be followed by incremental renovations of the original mansions including expansion of dining, library, technology, music, drama, and art facilities.

Though the stately buildings recall another era, the activities within are cutting edge. Don Buckley, director of technology at Marymount, oversees integration and faculty development. He says, “is to get teachers to discover what technology works for them and get them to run with it.” The school has granted money to reward teachers who come up with interesting proposals about classroom applications.

Marymount conducts summer technology workshops open to professionals from other institutions. Utilizing online learning, it was the first school in Manhattan to enroll students in a Columbia University course in Java, a computer language. Technology is introduced in kindergarten and, as they advance in grade, pupils do everything from creating fictitious online businesses to making videos of frog dissections.

Marymount is part of a religious order founded in Beziers, France in 1849. It is devoted to the education and today has schools in 14 countries. They are not parochial (church or parish affiliated). Marymount, New York is part of a network that includes schools in London, Paris, Rome, and Los Angeles. Representatives of network institutions meet annually and set goals and objectives. Each has an implementation committee. Instilling values is central to the school mission, and each year a particular value, such as the current “Unity Through Diversity,” is chosen by the network for special focus. Recognizing changes in the Church and society, the network is presently developing plans to pass the schools on to lay leaders. In New York, only three sisters remain on a faculty of 75. As fewer people choose a religious life and the community work that needs to be done grows, schools that lose clergy must transfer their governance or close down. Marymount New York has been administered by a lay Board of Trustees since 1969, but has continued to be headed by clergy. Headmistress Sister Kathleen welcomes the coming changes noting that, previously clergy were considered an elite class, but now we are all equal in our possibilities of good.

Ramaz Lower School

By POLA ROSEN, E.D.D.

Established 65 years ago, the Ramaz Lower School is a modern, orthodox Jewish day school that was originally built for the community and has continued with that vision. Head of the school Rabbi Alan Berkowitz explained that “Ramaz represents a standard of excellence in the world of Jewish education. Starting in nursery, we try to provide a quality program that will lead to an outstanding education.”

The student-teacher ratio is low: about 15 students to a class with a head teacher and assistant teachers.

The curriculum is half-religious and half-secular. Our children are expected to follow the laws and principles of Judaism. The first graders participate in a Hebrew language immersion program. In the second grade, the entire religious component is taught in Hebrew, which is considered the heritage language. French and Spanish are introduced in the middle school. Project Community takes place in the middle school. Once a week students volunteer under the supervision of their teachers.

“Our school has a strong sense of commitment because many of the parents are Ramaz graduates,” said Rabbi Berkowitz. The mission of Ramaz is for students to be outstanding citizens of the world and to excel. In recruiting students, parents must share the mission. Students are recruited by an interview process with parents in the lower school students come from all boroughs. In the upper school, students also come from Connecticut and New Jersey. Most graduates spend a year in Israel studying and exploring roots. Then they enroll in many of the best universities in the country.

On teacher recruitment, Berkowitz looks for educators who have long-term experience and a commitment to their mission. Most of the teachers have Master’s degrees in education. Judaic studies teacher must be fluent in Hebrew. An unusual feature of the school is the day-care center for faculty children.

The atmosphere of the school is nurturing and caring. No wonder then, as Berkowitz noted, “Parents have an enthusiasm about this place; the school has charisma.”

Private or Public Education?

By CHRISTINA PERPIGNANO AND ZAHER KARP

Recently on WNYC radio, Brian Lehrer featured a panel of authors and consultants discussing the choices that a parent must go through when caught between the accessibility of the public school system and the exclusivity of the private schools of New York. The panel consisted of Clara Hemphill, author of New York City’s Best Public High Schools: A Parents’ Guide, Catherine Hausman, author of The Manhattan Family Guide to Private Schools and Robin Arnow, psychotherapist and educational consultant.

The panel discussed the many different issues in the debate of private vs. public school. Topics such as financial and social considerations as well as cultural issues were included.

Private schools are unattainable to many families because of their high tuition. However, as the speakers pointed out, scholarships and financial aid are available. One of the callers was concerned with the lack of diversity within the private school system. This was confirmed by the panel. However, they noted that many private schools are making an effort to introduce a multicultural element into the student body.

As the panel pointed out, the disadvantage to families that must rely upon the public school system is that there are few choices within the district, while a private school student has no such constraints. The advantages of private schools is that they have the facilities to concentrate on the student as an individual and “make sure the child is well rounded,” according to Arnow.

Community service has always been an aspect exclusive to private schools, but recently more and more, public schools are requiring it as well. In public schools, parental control of the curriculum and administration is at a minimum, but at a private school, parents have greater control of the system. The speakers indicated that some public schools lack leadership especially because their principals and administrators are paid poorly. The panelists agreed that private schools seem to be the best environment for a young child who needs individual supervision, whereas public schools require the child to have a certain degree of independence and self-sufficiency. Parochial schools, on the other hand, seem to be a good balance between the two because the tuition is less than the majority of the private schools.

Christina Perpignano & Zaher Karp are students in private schools in NYC and interns at Education Update.
SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOLS  •  EDUCATION UPDATE  •  JULY 2002

NASA’s Education Programs for High School Students

By FRANK SCALZO, Ph.D.

NASA’s Educational Programs provide support for systemic improvement, teacher preparation/enhancement, curriculum support and dissemination, student support, educational technology and research and development. Some notable NASA student and teacher support programs in the NYC/Metropolitan area include the American Museum of Natural History’s Planet Earth interactive exhibit, Summer High School Apprentice Research Program (SHARP—provides gifted and talented, ethnic minority students with an opportunity to work with a scientist or engineer on NASA research and development projects), New Jersey Middle School Distance Mentoring project at Stevens Institute of Technology (implemented at five Hudson County schools), the NASA Educational Resource Center at City College of New York, and a number of research projects at colleges throughout New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), founded in 1961 as a division of the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) in Greenbelt, MD, is located at 2880 Broadway in NYC. Current research, under the direction of Dr. James Hansen, emphasizes a broad study of Global Change, which is an interdisciplinary research initiative addressing natural and man-made changes in our environment, which is an interdisciplinary research initiative addressing natural and man-made changes in our environment that occur on various time scales and affect the habitability of our planet.

In 1994 Carolyn Harris and Dr. Hansen founded the Institute on Climate and Planets (ICP), by recruiting talented and underrepresented students and teachers from NYC area high schools and CUNY undergraduates, to participate on summer research teams and work with graduate students and NASA scientists on research projects to improve what is known about Earth’s Climate and Global change. ICP faculty fellows formulate and implement Earth Science curriculum materials, which are aligned with national standards and integrated into existing high school and college courses.

Frank Scalzo, Ph.D. is an Education Specialist at NASA in NYC. He can be reached at 212-678-6938.

START SOMETHING” & TIGER WOODS FULFILL KIDS’ DREAMS

By TOM KERTES

“Start Something”, an educational program born out of the cooperation between the Tiger Woods Foundation and Target Corporation, encourages kids between the ages of 8 and 17 to identify a specific personal desire or goal and take action through small and specific steps toward achieving their dreams.

It all started when Earl Woods, Tiger’s father, wrote a book that propounded the theory that all kids carry something special within themselves. “As parents and educators, it is our role and our duty to help kids figure out their goals and then show them how they can achieve them,” Earl Woods said.

Woods partnered with Target Corporation, a socially-minded company that spends 5 percent of its taxable income—a sum over $2 million a week—on the community, particularly on children and their education. Thus, in the year 2001, “Start Something” was born.

When Tiger first described to kids the spirit driving the project he said, “I challenge you. I dare you. I challenge you to be a winner in whatever you choose to do, whatever you care about. I challenge you to make a difference in the world, to reach higher and farther than you ever imagined. I challenge you to “Start Something.”

“Start Something” offers 10, two-hour sessions that students can attend individually or in a group. The first five sessions help kids think about their dreams and goals in order to come up with an Action Project, which is based on those ideas. Sessions six and seven are devoted to completing the Action Project. During sessions eight through ten kids have an opportunity to reflect upon their efforts.

Upon completion of the program, the students can apply for scholarships ranging from $100 to $5000, which are used to fund their special interest or hobby. Over the course of the year, over $300,000 are awarded in scholarships.

“Start Something” aims to build character, to help kids learn to care about others and to teach them right from wrong. Though many of the children’s goals and dreams involve buying an instrument or attending music or soccer camp, some has dealt with providing medical support to a village in Africa or traveling to Australia to speak at a conference on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

“We’ve had a great success so far,” said Ann Aronson, director of Community Relations at Target. “Over 77,000 children are participating in the program this year, led by teachers, coaches and a host of other volunteers.”

Dr. Richard Gallagher, the noted child psychologist who is the director of the Parenting Institute at the New York University Child Study Center, is a great supporter of the program. “Start Something” is special because it engages kids in the active pursuit of concrete goals,” he said. “Other programs may talk about goals in a positive way. But most never challenge kids to actually do something about them.”

Dr. Joyce Coppin Honored

BY ALFRED POSAMENTIER, Ph.D.

As a part of the celebration on April 3, 2002 in Vienna, Austria to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the very fruitful cooperation program between the Austrian school system, the New York City Board of Education and the City University of New York, the Minister of Education, Elisabeth Gehrter bestowed upon Dr. Joyce Coppin, Supervising Superintendent, New York City Board of Education, the Austrian Cross of Honor for Science and Art (first class). This is one of the highest honors that the Austrian government rewards those who have done extraordinary service to their country. Dr. Coppin has not only been involved with this cooperation since its inception, but has been one of the main promoters of the many activities that have linked the educational systems in the two countries. Thus the government (nominated by the ministry of Education, approved by Parliament, and bestowed by the President) showed its appreciation.

It is often asked how a small country, whose population is about that of New York City, can related to just a city. The response is that both locales have been havens for immigrants, both are hosts to the United Nations, and both are respective cultural centers. Some of the cooperative ventures are the New York City Virtual Enterprises program, the visiting math and science teachers program, lots of student, class, teacher, and administrator exchanges, and a CCNY masters degree program for English teachers in three cities in Austria.

Alfred S. Posamentier is the Dean, School of Education, The City College of New York, CUNY

It takes more than an apple to reach today’s teachers...

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Paige Discusses After-School Programs

By TOM KERTES
(Exclusive to Education Update)

President George W. Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” initiative has a quartet of major components: accountability for results; flexibility and local control; expanded parental options and doing what works in the classroom. “And these points apply equally to after-school and summer programs, whether they’re provided in or out of the classroom,” Secretary of Education Rod Paige said recently at a Satellite Town Meeting.

According to Secretary Paige, after-school and summer programs are extremely important. “The parents of more than 28 million school age children work outside the home and as many as 15 million “latch-key” children return to an empty house on any given afternoon,” he said. “All studies have shown that after the school bell rings, too many children without adequate supervision may neglect necessary school-work or, worse, fall prey to negative influences. In fact, children are at a greater risk of being involved in crime, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy in the hours after-school – peaking between 3-4 p.m.”

“Yet, in spite of all this, after-school programs are so inadequately funded, creating local partnerships with corporations, faith-based organizations, and the community is extremely important,” said Michael LeFlore, the Director of IMPACT Afterschool Program in Phoenix, Arizona. “Our success in doing that has allowed us to keep our programs in line with state standards and provide a diverse outlook on education that has led to higher grades and greater parent participation.”

Variety in quality programming is also of the essence. “In the INTEL Computer Clubhouse, we really try to keep a club atmosphere – it seems to inspire children,” said Roma Avellano, Education Manager on INTEL Corporation. “The computers are organized in clusters, they are not facing the wall. The students learn skills that people use as professions – so we use the very highest technology available in our music studio and video editing centers. And the students’ creativity is further encouraged and enhanced by the presence of adult and older student mentors.”

“We did this because we felt that society has developed a technology gap between children of different backgrounds,” Avellano added. “And we could not allow this technology gap become first a skills gap, and then an achievement gap.”

Carla Sanger, Executive Director of LA’S BEST, one of the nation’s most outstanding afterschool programs, spoke of accountability and results. “We must work within articulated high standards,” she said. “We have 17,500 kids coming to work with us each and every day. And the outcome measures are sometimes surprising: among others, one that made us feel good was that children have reported greater pride in learning. According to one of the high schools, “this is great; when I have children I’ll be able to teach them myself about a whole variety of different things.”

All participants agreed that the No. 1 key to a quality afterschool or summer program is involvement in the school, talking to teachers, talking to parents, talking to kids. “We have to find out what’s real to the children, we must have adult mentors who really, really listen,” Sanger said.

How The Constitution Works for Students

By ARI MCKENNA

In a sparsely furnished courtroom in Manhattan recently, students from IS 89 had the opportunity to mock-try a Supreme Court Case on National Security vs. The First Amendment. Equipped with suits, some robes, a large wooden hammer and some sound knowledge of the Constitution, the students played out the case, which lingers in the shadow of the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center and explores democracy.

IS 89 is only one of approximately 400 schools in the New York area that take part in such activities, due to their collaboration with the Constitution Works (TCW) program. Now in its fourteenth year TCW is a veritable harbinger of conscious and active future citizens who will participate in government.

New York City Board of Education offers a supplementary program, which satisfies requirements in social studies and language arts to teachers of civics, social studies, and related subjects. TCW, whose full-time staff includes Thomas Stokes (Executive Director), Rosa Taveras (Program Manager), and Eric Neutoch (Program Associate), holds training workshops for those teachers, brushing them up on their constitutional knowledge, introducing them to methodologies concerning group work, interdependence, and active student participation, and eventually putting them through a role-played court case.

Before they return to the classroom, they are given a “unit” to introduce to their respective classes. While some units may be more involved with the Executive or Legislative branches, most deal with the Judicial branch and are usually recent Supreme Court cases with current implications.

Students start with groundwork introduction on relevant excerpts from the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. As the process continues they receive roles and engage specifically with their own “unit.” Upon the teacher’s request, TCW provides technical support in the form of law students from Fordham University, volunteer attorneys, and TCW staff who are able to help kids on a more one-on-one basis.

TCW is involved with public, private, Jewish, and Catholic schools as well as some adult education centers. It is privately funded but has recently been seeking public funding with the help of Borough President Virginai Fields.

While working with a bilingual class that TCW services, Taveras noticed an interesting phenomenon: many of the South American students refused to take the side which was in opposition to the government because they were “afraid of punishment.” At this point, Taveras explained the first amendment’s second clause, involving free speech and free press. Taveras notes that the American students had no such qualms about opposing the state; “they don’t see it as going against the government, they see it as ‘this is my right.’”

The Constitution Works has reached about 100,000 students, establishing and sending out with the future a “Reserve of Uprights” of sorts, emerging young citizens aware of their own personal-political contexts who will participate in government with acuity, awareness and knowledge.

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Bloomberg and Soros Announce Plan to Fund After-School Programs

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, joined by George Soros at PS 130 in the Bronx, announced recently that the City and the Open Society Institute (OSI) will devote over $30 million to support after-school programs during the 2002-2003 school year. Mayor Bloomberg committed to allocating $10.5 million in the FY 2003 executive budget and OSI will contribute $20 million. The combined funds will benefit more than 40,000 city students.

“Our goal is to provide first-rate after-school programs to produce high-quality students,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “Given the City’s fiscal crisis, we need partners like the Open Society Institute to sustain many of the programs our children and families rely on. Today is just the beginning of what I hope will be one of the banner public-private partnerships of my administration.”

“Mayor Bloomberg’s commitment of $10.5 million to support after-school programs is especially significant, given the City’s fiscal situation,” said George Soros. “The fact that he has pledged his support in such hard times affirms the importance of after-school education even more.”

The funds will be awarded to The After-School Corporation (TASC), a non-profit group that distributes grants to community organizations to contract after-school programs in public schools across New York City and state. Together, the funds will allow TASC to leverage millions of additional dollars from the federal and state governments, the Board of Education, and other private donors. The City’s and OSI’s contribution will raise $80 million to support after-school programs this coming school year. In total, the funds ensure a safe, protective environment for more than 40,000 children in 157 schools. In addition, the programs preserved by today’s announcement will provide 11 million hours of reading and math instruction, sports, arts, and community service programs this upcoming year.

Summer Travel & Education: Heritage Seminars

By RICKI BERKOWITZ

Since the shocking horrors were brought to an end over half a century ago, memories of the Holocaust have become a substantial component of Jewish identity for three generations. Its bearing on the World and Jewish communities can be recognized in the vast amount of literature on the subject, the hundreds of museums worldwide, the tales of survivors and witnesses. Yet despite this wealth of information, there are many who feel that in taking a look at themselves for the world in which such devastating tragedy occurred, a stronger connection to the past is formed. As Marc Blanco, a student at the University of Pennsylvania put it, “After years of reading and learning about the Holocaust, I had my first really personal experience only when I saw these sites for myself.”

This year, over 400 students participated in Heritage Seminars, a program that travels to Eastern Europe and Israel for a first-hand experience.

The program describes itself as “unique educational experiences that study Jewish ancestral roots, research the sources of Jewish life in Eastern Europe and identify with our heritage. Through extensive visits to the destroyed centers of Jewish culture and Torah scholarship and a course of creative academic study that takes place throughout the seminar, participants strengthen their Jewish identity, awareness, and commitment to the Jewish people and the State of Israel.”

They must enjoy a measure of success in their mission, because, as Rachel Fortgang, a senior in Ramaz expressed, she gained a strong insight from a comparable Poland-Israel program. “After visiting the sites of Poland, I felt a greater sense of Jewish identity and the importance of Israel.”

Approximately 40 Ramaz seniors (an orthodox Jewish day school on the upper east side) participated in Heritage Seminars to Poland and Israel this May. The first days were spent visiting old Jewish cemeteries, synagogues in Warsaw and Jedwabne, yeshivot, places of higher Jewish learning of traditional texts, and the Schindler factory, attending a Commemorative Ceremony in Treblinka, and learning from witnesses during evening sessions. During that time, participants were able to commemorate and even celebrate the heritage of those who perished in the Holocaust.

Heritage Seminars, a program that travels to Eastern Europe and Israel for a first-hand experience.

“Beginning in September 2002, Bard High School Early College, which opened this year in shared space in Brooklyn, will have a place of its own. The school is moving to 454 East Houston St., currently the site of PS 97, which is closing because of low enrollment and low scores. Currently, there are 300 students in the High School and enrollment will grow to 500 in September.

Bard High School Early College is a four-year school that serves as an alternative to traditional high schools. The early college program offers a rigorous core curriculum in general education geared toward highly motivated high school-aged students who are academically ready and eager to begin college in the 11th grade. At the end of the four-year program, students will receive an Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences from Bard College. Students will also earn credits that can be applied to any four-year college.

“In its first year the Bard High School Early College has truly delivered on its potential,” said Chancellor Harold Levy. “It has become a model for a national program announced earlier this year by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which plans to replicate the program with 40 new schools nationwide. I am pleased to see New York City set the pace for continued high school reform and I expect the school to continue to flourish in its new home.” Admission to Bard High School Early College is by application and includes an essay and an interview with the students and the student’s parents. All New York City students are eligible to apply.

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All our current workshops and assembly programs can be viewed under Educational Resources at www.lsc.org. Please call (201) 451-0005 and speak with either John Herrera x218,jherrera@lsc.org, or Jim McGlynn x340, jmcglynn@lsc.org for further details.
My Experiences in Italy

By MOLLY WALLACE

Suor Paola was a nun, a sports commentator, and a teacher. It was the day of my tenth birthday when I started as a student in her fifth grade class. It was my third year in Italy, so my Italian had progressed beyond its starting point of, “Io sono americana, non parlo italiano.” (“I’m American, I don’t speak Italian”) My next-door neighbor and close friend was half Swiss, half Italian, and went to French school. She spoke passable German, and fluent French and Italian. Even though I spoke none of these languages, with her intuitive grasp for communication I learned from her quickly. Fifth grade was going to be a different matter altogether.

The difficulties of writing and reading comprehension were not the only ones I would have to face. The notation they used for math was different: decimal points were represented by commas and commas by points. Long division was done not on the same scheme I had been taught. When we studied America in geography, the textbook stated that people of color were not allowed on the same buses as white people. This was in 1994. When I argued, the teacher seconded the textbook’s claim. Another day I brought in a book, and so I popped my umbrella near his face. With a smile on her face Suor Paola decided that for punishment I should have to kiss him. The whole class, including the teacher began chanting, “Bacio! Bacio! Bacio!” (Kiss). They stopped when I started crying. In America this could easily have been turned into a sexual harassment case. I realize in retrospect that in a country where a kiss on the cheek is equivalent to a handshake, this would have been nothing but a symbol of reconciliation.

Though my peers were for the most part helpful and supportive, there were times when they were less than understanding. English lessons were part of the curriculum and generally involved learning how to conjugate the present tense of the verb “to be”. For someone who had been taught to go to another room and read. Responding that they were not studying Italian at the same level they were studying English was to no avail. I ended up preferring the English lessons to the lectures I got from my classmates. Another area in which I didn’t get much support from my classmates was on the soccer field. I was a soccer crazed – boys play and girls watch, which made me the only girl on the soccer team. When I complained to a boy that he never passed me the ball he told me, “Torna a quel paese!” This expression was of Roman slang, and I was not familiar with it. Literally it means, “go back to that country,” so that’s what I took it to mean. When the coach forced him to apologize he explained that it did not have anything to do with me being American, it was just a generic insult.

Soccer was one place where Suor Paola came in handy. When the school was starting out she wrote off to the Rome soccer team and asked them to donate uniforms. She got no reply so she wrote to the Lazio soccer team, Rome’s rival. They sent her everything she requested. From then on she was an avid fan and went to the stadium on Wednesdays and Sundays to watch her team play. It is illegal to transmit full games on TV in Italy so TV spectators have to settle for shows with commentators, various distractions and the clips of live highlights. One such show came across Suor Paola in the stadium one weekend, listened to her cheer, and hired her. She became somewhat of a national celebrity. Compared with a nun sports commentator, a girl on the soccer team was not that weird. Thankfully she came to our games and this contrast was apparent to the other teams as well.

When fifth grade was over I took the national exams to pass elementary school, and did fine. I looked at some Italian middle schools, but could not find anything that would match the intimacy that a small school like the one I went to provided. I ended up going to an international school where the Italians spoke to me in Italian, the English speakers in English, and everyone else in whatever language was most convenient. Now I am at college in New York where one of my two majors is Italian. Studying the language and culture in a classroom is a different experience, and while I am learning new specifics about Italy’s history and culture, it all rings true to my experience there.

Molly Wallace is a student at Barnard College and an intern at Education Update.
Talking with Pioneer Dr. Ira Black About Parkinson’s Disease

By JOAN BAUM

It’s hard to believe that this internationally known clinical neurologist and neuroscientist, at the cutting edge of research, wasn’t thinking of medicine when he was in college. Although he was graduated from the Bronx High School of Science, he went on to Columbia University where he got a B.A. in philosophy. Somewhere along the way, however, and certainly by the time he entered Harvard Medical School, he became “more interested in the organ that philosophizes than in philosophy.” And so began the career of one of the most distinguished research scientists in the country. For the past 10 years Dr. Ira Black has been professor and chairman of the Department of Neuroscience and Cell Biology at the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Director of the Joint Graduate Program in Physiology and Neurobiology there and at Rutgers, and is past president of the Society for Neuroscience of North America. A descriptive listing of agency, society, committee, and board affiliations; of publications, including major texts; of patents granted and pending; of peer-journal editorial positions; and of visiting professorships at major universities would consume this entire newspaper. It’s said that he may be the most significant researcher working on Parkinson’s Disease (P.D.) today. A modest man, with an engaging sense of humor, he stated, “Maybe at one time a single researcher paved the way; our society doles out heroes,” but the truth of the matter is that “scientists work in communities,” and medical advances “derive from the work of a large number of people.” In fact, Dr. Black is even more ecumenical. He believes that all modes of treating P.D. and all avenues of research should be pursued, regardless of what he, himself, is working on. “We must proceed on all fronts, we must customize for each patient.” He has great respect for Parkinson’s advocacy groups, such as the Michael J. Fox Foundation. “They have played an immensely important role in supporting research and recruiting scientists,” he points out, adding that they are also reliable sources of information for the lay public. It is to those foundations that fearful, newly diagnosed patients might turn, rather than jump too quickly into clinical trials.

Certainly Dr. Black appreciates more than most the desperate hope that often attends media coverage of a procedure that would appear dramatically to retard or temporarily arrest the progress of degenerative and acute neurologic disease. But the reality is that despite promising drugs and surgery, there is at the moment no course of action for Parkinson’s Disease that will stop its slow, erratic and implacable course. In fact, by the time most patients realize they have P.D. they have already suffered 70 – 80% loss of vital brain cells. Is timely diagnosis of any value then? Indeed it is, he replies. Though diagnosis may be difficult, because there is no test, and delayed until symptoms have set in—slowed movements and stamina, halting gait, stiffening of muscles and “mask like” facial expression—the difference between knowing and not knowing is critical for the way one lives. Much can be done.

A first step for those who suspect they may have a neurological problem, Dr. Black advises, would be to see a good old-fashioned neurologist who will do a close hands-on examination. As for the cells that have already suffered damage or died, Dr. Black explains in sympathetic tones that “the brain is fault tolerant,” explaining that even where a great preponderance of nerve cells has been damaged or destroyed, it is possible to replace them. This is important information for P.D. patients to hear, especially as the debate continues on the direction of stem cell research. Meanwhile, there is good argument to be made for taking advantage...

Continued on page 27

ADD children show undiagnosed vision problems

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1) Avoids reading, incomplete work, eye strain, restless. This is often caused by focus disorder or problems with eye teaming.
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-Lillian Sanchez-Perez
Risky Teen Behavior

By RICHARD FRANCES, M.D.

Early detection and treatment of major psychiatric disorders that afflict young people, including addiction, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, attention deficit disorder, schizophrenia, and autism spectrum disorders or peers, can prevent the progression and worsening of conditions that can lead up to disaster. Other important signs include a positive family history of major illnesses, including addiction, depression, bipolar illness, anxiety disorders, and suicide. Watch for signs of these problems in first-degree relatives, including siblings. Most of the major psychiatric illnesses begin in the teenage years and young adult years, and the earlier they are detected and treated, the better the result. A variety of cognitive behavioral and psychodynamic treatments are available and are most effective when combined with medications in the treatment of these disorders. For young people with substance abuse and additional psychiatric diagnoses, it is crucial to make sure that both diagnoses are well treated and that the individual is substance free while engaged in medication treatment and psychotherapy.

Twelve step, peer led group, family and network therapies can be very helpful in working with this age group. An especially critical time is the period right after high school and just prior to living at home with college at its often concomitant increase in substance use and decrease in parental presence. One example of a psychiatric illness that has a 15 percent mortality related to suicide is manic depression, a disorder which can be effectively treated with lithium and mood stabilizers, and which is frequently associated with alcohol and drug problems. Both parents and professionals must be successfully treated to avoid the roller coaster ride of relapse. Well treated individuals with this disorder can go on to productive lives and are often among our most creative and effective people. Untreated or untreated bipolar illness leads to enormous suffering in patients and their families. Some characteristics for evaluating suicide risk include presence of suicidal or homicidal thoughts or plans; access to means for suicide and the lethality of those means; presence of command hallucinations, other psychotic symptoms or severe anxiety; presence of alcohol or substance use, history and seriousness of previous attempts and family history of recent exposure to suicide. Abuse of substances increases impulsivity and worsens judgment which can add fuel to self-destructive impulses.

It is important that schools, parents and the mental health community work closely together to provide better screening, detection and preventative treatment for major psychiatric illnesses. This will lead to reduction of the devastating effects of suicide on family, schools and community.

Dr. Richard Frances is President and Medical Director of Silver Hill Hospital in New Canaan, Connecticut.

Depression in Teenagers

By GLENN S. HIRSCH, M.D.

Adolescence and the beginning of adulthood is a developmental phase burdened with stress. The adolescent’s problems include the pursuit of goals, resolving identity, and establishing relationships. The first years of adulthood bring thoughts of depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, eating disorders and even suicide. Schizophrenia and bipolar disorder often have their onset during this time.

While twice as many girls attempt suicide as boys, boys are more than ten times as likely to kill themselves. This difference appears to be related to the method used. Girls tend to overdose with pills which is often less lethal than the use of guns which has been implicated in more than ninety percent of teen suicides. Since depressive disorders are implicated in the majority of teen suicides, an important pathway to preventing suicide is the identification and treatment of mood disorders. Some of the signs that a teen or young adult is suffering from depression include loss of appetite, irritability or boredom, complaints that nothing is enjoyable or a decrease in interest in activities or peers, sleep or appetite changes, difficulty concentrating and poor school performance. Youngsters with these symptoms should have a diagnostic evaluation with a mental health professional to identify the problem and treatment. The two treatments that show the most promise include antidepressant medication and specialized psychotherapies. They include cognitive behavioral therapy, and interpersonal therapy. (For further information about mental illness and its treatment in children and adolescents see www.AboutOurKids.org.)

The National Institute of Mental Health is currently studying treatment strategies for young people aged 12-17 who are suffering from depression. The NYU Child Study Center is one of the sites in NY. For further information call 212-263-8613.

For some teens and young adults outpatient treatment may not be sufficient or the danger of suicidal behavior may be great. For them hospitalization may be necessary. The Young Adult Program at the New York University Child Study Center was established several years ago to help older teens and young adults whose psychiatric condition requires hospitalization. It is an intensive inpatient program which serves the mental health needs of the often-neglected population of 15 to 24 year-olds. Experts from NYU in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, social work and nursing draw on leading-edge therapeutic techniques and breakthrough pharmacological research in treating patients. Emphasizing rapid assessment and individualized attention, this team of experts strives to restore balance to a young person in turmoil and help the young adult return to active life. For further information about the program call Dr. Naomi Weisnhenker at 212-295-9968.

Glenn S. Hirsch, M.D. is the Deputy Director of the NYU Child Study Center and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.

Choices: Perspectives of a Patient With Parkinson’s Disease

By HARVEY K. FRIEDELAND, J.D., B.E.E.

It started with a twitch in one of my fingers. It pulsed then quickly abated. For reasons then unknown, I coughed and then became rigid and lethargic. I was arriving at increasing intervals. During the cherished “on” times, when the medication is working the disease seems to be under control. But the disease progresses and the body deteriorates. New symptoms have started occurring. I’ve now found myself plagued with shuffling, dizziness and intermittent loss of equilibrium.

When I was first diagnosed with PD, I read a tremendous amount about the disease. As I familiarized myself with PD by following cutting-edge research, alternating hopes (such as those given by Dr. Jeff Bronstein, Director of Motion Disorders at UCLA) and going to support groups, I found that: there are really only a few options available to the Parkinson’s sufferer. A patient can opt to take medication and let the disease take its ineluctable toll on his body, or he can elect to have DBS – Deep Brain Stimulation – a surgical procedure that has shown promising results but is still a far cry from a cure. DBS only lessens certain symptoms (such as tremor) and still requires some patients to maintain their regimen of drugs. Also, DBS sometimes requires patients to undergo the procedure more than once.

There is a third choice – a third hope – on the horizon. “Spheramine”, a procedure not yet approved by the Food and Drug Administration, involves inserting dopamine-producing cells that have been dying into a person’s brain so that the replacement cells can take over the job of the dying ones. Though spheramine has yet to be approved, Dr. Donna Masterman of UCLA, firmly believes I may be a suitable candidate for the procedure, and has the potential of emancipating the PD sufferer from both his symptoms and his dependence on side-effect causing drugs. The true innovative genius of spheramine, which was pioneered by the brilliant neurologist Dr. Ray Watts of Emory Medical School, is that the replacement cells degenerate into a patient don’t eventually wither and die. They maintain their potency for an extremely long time. What’s more, as many as 10,000 patients could be treated by a single batch of replacement cells.

My personal national coordinator, the aptly-named Dr. Donna Masterman of UCLA, firmly believes I am making the right choice in pursuing spheramine therapy versus DBS or another form of treatment. Dr. Masterman is expertly familiar with the tribulations of Parkinson’s and feels that replacement cell technology is right for my body and stage of the disease. Replacement cell technology bears such unique promise that Michael J. Fox’s foundation has donated over four million dollars to its furtherance.

During my intensive research in the last few years, I learned that spheramine is the replacement cell technology that is right for my body. It is a product of a company called Titan Pharmaceuticals. Though spheramine has yet to complete the necessary clinical trials to attain FDA approval, it has completed phases I and II of safety and efficacy. In all six patients in the clinical trial of spheramine have demonstrated marked improvement. In an April 18, 2002 news release, Alison Roselli, Titan’s director of communications, reported on the six individuals in the pilot study, “Patients experienced an average of 48 percent improvement in motor “Universal Parkinson’s Disease Rating Scale (UPDRS)” over a 36 month period. Spheramine’s medications. [They also experienced] an average of 43 percent improvement in

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Attention Women

By HARVEY K. FRIEDELAND, J.D., B.E.E.

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continued on page 30
ASK DR. MCCUNE

About Children and Depression

By LORRAINE McCUNE, Ph.D.

Every moment of infant and childhood happiness is precious. As the adults in charge, parents or professionals, we hold the possibility of children’s happiness, sadness, or depression in our power. A natural state of healthy well-being comes from a sense that we are safe, that we know our powers and their limits, and we know that a cushion of support, parental, familial, societal, surrounds us, taking up the slack where our own powers are limited. For very young children, their powers are limited indeed, and the sense of an adult at the ready, some one especially for them, is essential to well-being. This is the simple basis of attachment theory. In infancy one or both parents, perhaps other relatives, and in some cases, professional caregivers fulfill this essential role. The seeds of childhood well-being, a general sense of happiness rather than sadness or depression is sown in the early years through the availability of an adult to “attune” to the young child, providing psychologically intimate understanding, as well as nourishment and physical contact.

During the early months, infants of depressed mothers have been found to show much lower frequency of happy facial expressions, and much more frequent sadness or anger than comparison infants whose parents were not depressed. Adults’ own mental health is a serious contributor to children’s emotional well-being. We may not think that young children can be “depressed” as adults can, and the situation is, of course very different. However, children of any age can experience a diminution of interest, activity and learning due to feelings of sadness and insecurity. Sometimes their depressed state is expressed by excessive feelings of sadness and insecurity. Sometimes children need to hide their sadness or anger in order to maintain a façade of being okay and not being “different.” Sometimes children need to hide their sadness even from themselves until it diminishes naturally in intensity, or until an adult reaches out. # Dr. Lorraine McCube is a professor at the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education and serves as advisor to educational toy company, General Creation. She can be reached at www.gen- eraction.com in the “Ask Dr. McCube” section.

Keep Your Child’s Mind Fresh During the Hot Summer Months

A study conducted a few years ago found that over the summer vacation, children can lose a quarter of their reading and math skills. Over the summer vacation, children can lose a quarter of their reading and math skills. They are more likely to attribute malevolent intentions to peers in ambiguous situations, leading to fighting and bullying. These disruptive behaviors are always symptomatic, so that along with disciplinary strategies, therapeutic attention need also be paid.

Parents and professionals need to monitor the emotional well-being of the children in care, just as they monitor physical health and progress in learning and development. Within the family, proactive support such as listening to your children with attention as they report the sometimes mundane interests of their world, broadening those interests through book reading, joint television watching, and trips with your child to fun places, especially with the summer months upon us, are all ways of enhancing the sense of well-being and preventing potential mental health problems. It is also important to assist children with the necessary challenges of their lives. Divorce and loss through death come to mind as circumstances extremely challenging to children. These are also challenges which cast adults into emotional upheaval or deep sadness. It can be difficult in these circumstances to remember the special needs of children who may seem happy-go-lucky through it all. Don’t be fooled by bravado. Sometimes children need to hide their sadness even from themselves until it diminishes naturally in intensity, or until an adult reaches out.

Dr. Lorraine McCube is a professor at the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education and serves as advisor to educational toy company, General Creation. She can be reached at www.generalcreation.com in the “Ask Dr. McCube” section.
Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide

By MERRI ROSENBERG

‘Behold, I am a dry tree’ (Isaiah)

When Kay Redfield Jamison uses this quote from a suicide to explain the degree of hopelessness that the successful execution of this act embodies, it is hard for the reader not to feel just as overwhelmed by those feelings of despair.

As Jamison explains in this thorough, beautifully written and oddly compelling book, suicide is one of those acts that mocks those who survive, whether they are family members, health professionals, compassionate friends, or simply bewildered bystanders. She writes that we now know almost everything about suicide except the ‘why’, and to a large extent, this book is her attempt to bring us closer to some comprehension of this tragic mystery. Be careful, though. It’s not a book to attempt in one sitting; that would be almost too much to bear.

“Most suicides, although by no means all, can be prevented,” says Jamison. “The breach would be almost too much to bear. The gap between what we know and what we do is lethal.”

And according to a 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Study that the author mentions, 20 percent of high school students have seriously considered suicide. Another study, based on New York high school students, suggests that 50 percent of them have thought about killing themselves.

Jamison is particularly stringent in her condemnation of diagnosis and treatment of primarily ill children and adolescents, who are at risk for suicide. One problem is that bipolar disorder and manic-depression are often misdiagnosed as attention deficit disorder. Another is that too many school-based programs aren’t effective in their interventions. Jamison believes that some do harm, by presenting students with inaccurate or misleading information.

One program she does like, based on the work of David Shaffer at Columbia, is effective in part because there is no responsibility for teachers or students to assume the role of mental health profession. In one of the more disheartening narratives, following the fallen trajectory of a successful Air Force cadet who succumbs to mental illness and ultimately suicide, Jamison writes, “Each way to suicide is its own: intensely private, unknowable and terrible.”

To be sure, there are some definite risk factors that contribute to the likelihood of suicide. Having a bipolar disorder, manic depression, schizophrenia, especially when combined with alcohol or drug abuse, clearly contribute to successful suicides. In general, according to Jamison, suicide is more likely to be linked to a psychiatric, rather than a major medical, condition. Still, she cautions, “Psychological pain or stress alone—however great the loss or disappointment, however profound the shame or rejection—is rarely sufficient cause for suicide.”

It’s hardly coincidences that suicides often occur to run into a family member. In the family, provocative chapters, Jamison suggests that perhaps there is an evolutionary, or even biological basis for suicide. She asks, “Is suicide a price to pay for diversity?”, wondering whether...
Parents Respond to Suicide: The Jed Foundation Tries to Save Lives

By POLA ROSEN, Ed.D.

You have suffered the greatest nightmare of parenthood: you have lost a child to the violent, self-inflicted torture of suicide. Your life will never be the same.

Some parents feel guilt: they should have been more insightful and seen the pain. Others can’t go on and feel their lives are destroyed. Some find that through blazing a path to help other young adults, they are helping to memorialize the child they lost. Donna Satow is one such parent. After her son Jed committed suicide at the University of Arizona in Tucson, she created a memorial to the child they lost. Donna Satow is one such parent. After her son Jed committed suicide at the University of Arizona in Tucson, she created the Jed Foundation, only one year old, has just raised one million dollars and already has customized websites for 60 colleges. Satow has pulled together a series of experts including lawyers, psychiatrists and college presidents to come up with a blueprint for suicide prevention. The Satows are also developing a Parents Program to assist families of students who may need help currently enrolled in university or those soon to enter.

When asked what parents can do to help their newly bereaved, Satow emphasized: “They should ask what services their children’s college has and the services available, ‘just in case.’” Parents should know about mental health services and be alert for warning signs.

Ron Gibori, the fraternity president who was a friend of Jed’s now runs the Jed Foundation, only one year old, has just raised one million dollars and already has customized websites for 60 colleges.

The Jed Foundation

The Jed Foundation (www.jedfoundation.org or www.uiflifeline.org) is to provide a safety net for students at risk and to reduce the suicide rate in people 18-24. The Jed Foundation, only one year old, has just raised one million dollars and already has customized websites for 60 colleges.

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Suicide Prevention On College Campuses

By MOLLY WALLACE

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college aged students. In his 2001 book Noonday Demon, Andrew Solomon wrote that “Someone in a first depressive episode is particularly likely to attempt suicide.” Many experience their first bout of depression in college. As a result, college counseling services and administrations are crucial to preventing suicide.

“When we’re talking about suicide among college students, generally talking about mental illness,” says Dr. Laura Smith, Director of Barnard College Counseling Services. Confirming Dr. Smith’s comments are Solomon’s statistics from the National Institute of Mental Health: 90-95 percent of suicides, especially at the college age, are the result of mental illnesses, the most prevalent being depression. Studies cited in Kay Redfield Jamison’s noteworthy book on suicide, Night Falls Fast (reviewed in this issue), depressives are at approximately twenty times the suicide risk of the general population. Those who have previously attempted suicide are at thirty-eight times the risk: “Contrary to popular myth, those who talk about suicide are the most likely to kill themselves,” states Solomon’s book. Targeting these populations can cut suicide rates.

Dr. Smith contends that peer support and student groups play an invaluable role in raising awareness, de-stigmatizing the seeking of help and helping others recognize depression in themselves. There is less stigma attached to therapy than there once was, Dr. Smith explains. Students will not buy products one needs help seeks it. Some want to prove that they can handle the indecision and stress of college without help. Others, especially at highly selective institutions, are used to succeeding on their own and looking for help simply does not occur to them. For those adjusting to college, or who are under academic or other forms of stress it can be difficult to draw a line between what is a normal response and what constitutes symptoms of depression. In these cases student groups can help by having students bring up their experiences with counseling and referring students to both the college’s counseling service and Jamison writes of a young man who took his own life, “Drew’s family, who knew him and understood of him would have been, in a fairer world, more than sufficient to keep him alive, but not always comfortable with a relentlessly and ruinous disease,” explaining that all the kindness and support shown to a suicidal person is not necessarily enough. As Andrew Solomon suggests, the “Illness of the mind is real illness...and it requires treatment.”

So what do college counseling services do once a patient is in their hands? Both Dr. Smith and Dr. Paul Buckingham, Director of Counseling Services at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Hawaii explain that there is no textbook response to how to handle a severely depressed or suicidal patient. Each case must be evaluated on an individual basis. As relationships remain confidential unless the student’s safety is at risk. Students at both institutions are encouraged to contact family members, if appropriate, and get them involved. If it were necessary and appropriate, family members could be contacted without consent of the patient. If the situation calls for it, students can be hospitalized. Dr. Smith observes that generally students who bring themselves in know they are struggling, and in that sense they are better off than those who are brought in by others. The latter tend to require hospitalization more often.

“Colleges are not equipped to be mental health centers,” says Dr. Buckingham justifying the hospitalization of students. At BYU Hawaii suicide is an honor code violation. Consequently, if a student is talking about suicide and refuses treatment he or she can be forced to leave the school in order to get treatment. In such a case acceptance is guaranteed with reapplicant provided that the student agrees to a letter from a psychologist or psychiatry stating that he or she has been treated successfully. Hospitalization also has the advantage of taking pressure off friends. Dr. Smith emphasizes that although it is important for students to have someone they can talk to, depressed patients need to put their own well-being first.

Dr. Smith’s statistics show that around 25% of Barnard students use counseling services (numbers increased by a letter from a psychologist). Dr. Buckingham’s numbers show that at BYU Hawaii 8-12% of students do. Few of these cases are severe enough to require hospitalization. Both Dr. Buckingham and Dr. Smith say that a large number of people who come in complain of depression. The causes range from academic stress to family problems to romantic problems, and at BYU Hawaii where a large part of the student population is international, depression is especially difficult. Both doctors say for less severe cases of depression vary. In some cases medication is suggested. “We would never put a student on medication, with some exceptions following through with therapy,” says Dr. Smith. In other cases only therapy is used.

The University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign has a successful suicide prevention program that follows up every suicidal gesture or attempt with an incident report and four weeks of mandatory assessment. Approximately 1,500 students have gone through this program in seventeen years. None have committed suicide. Considering the high risk that these students were at, this is a remarkable feat.

Another program called Columbia Teen Screen, researched at Columbia University under Dr. David Staffler, has been successful in high schools. The program utilizes trained personnel, then completing a questionnaire. If the participant scores positively on the first screening, they are more thoroughly assessed by a computerized diagnostic interview called the Voice-DISC Program. The interview taras for the teen’s past 12 months and for the first time reveals the extent of the problem, and identifies the need for professional help. Parents are also notified. In the Columbia Teen Screen, for the first time, children permitted to collect the interview independently and eliminates the cost of having trained interviewers. Those who are identified by the Vocare-DISC Program might then be referred to a community mental health professional. The clinical team then recommends further evaluation and/or treatment to the child and the parent’s family after discussions. The results of the program show that it catches young people before they attempt suicide thereby helping to predict or prevent depression later in life. Dr. Ted Greenberg, a coordinator of the program says, “it should be used in colleges”.

By POLA ROSEN, E.D.D.

By the time Jacqueline Danforth, a Dalton student, was fifteen years old, she was into drugs, gangs, and alcohol. It was time for drastic action. Her mother, Barbara Walters, researched different options and Jackie entered the Rocky Mountain Academy, a 3-year degree-granting (high school diploma) wilderness school in Idaho. After 3 and 1/2 years, Jackie graduated, with much more than a high school degree: “It was a place where people cared, where people understood and were honest.” Although not agreeing with certain techniques used such as sleep deprivation, the program helped her and others achieve self-esteem and feel good about themselves. Jackie did not return to her home in New York, a place she had not had much happiness. Instead, she lived with older students from the school in Oregon, then Washington state, finally enrolling in a marine biology program at the University of Maine. Feeling uncomfortable and isolated at the age of thirty, in a college community of 18-year-olds, she soon decided to opt for establishing her own wilderness camp for troubled teenage girls, ages 13-17. New Horizons Wilderness Camp, completing its first year, “is an unlocked, nurturing and caring environment,” says Danforth. Her husband, a registered Maine guide, is a vital part of the program.

Along with hiking, canoeing, and week-long camping trips into the wilderness, there is daily journal writing. Reading necessary resources, and to encourage networking. Those who benefit from this program? Girls who are depressed, mildly self-abusive, have poor body image or are bipolar (who are stabilized on medication). Borderline personality disorders are “too tough” said Danforth. “They take a lot of attention, and are disruptive to the point of hurting the others because they want all the attention.” For suicidal girls we make a contract. She agrees to come and talk to us before she does anything. The contract gives her a measure of control. There are also contracts for self-mutilation and running away. Said Danforth, “We set boundaries; that leads to a set of values and self-respect.”

To the question, what role do you play in the camp, Danforth answered, “A big sister.” She talks to the girls about her own experiences, about adoptive issues and is a resource person who has “been there, done that.” Her vision for the future is to run a school that will be separate from the wilderness program. “It will be a three year program with individual and group therapy. There will be no home visits; the girls will go on expeditions in the first year and gradually taper therapy and include more home visits by the third year. There will be high quality academics and non-competitive sports like yoga, ballet, and martial arts.”

The high points of Danforth’s life are the hugs and embraces whenever a girl leaves and says “I won’t come back and work for us.”

Programs like the University of Illinois and Columbia Teen Screen’s only exist in a few communities. In 1997 Senate resolution #84 that declared suicide a national problem, passed unanimously. In 1998 a similar resolution (House Resolution #122) passed unanimously in the House of Representatives. The Surgeon General has also made suicide one of his priorities. All these are signs that help is on the way. Part of the senate resolution states, “the Senate acknowledges that no single suicide prevention program or effort will be appropriate for all populations or communities,” pointing out how important it is for every community to take its own initiative. Organizations such as the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and the American Association of Suicidology have already been established to provide such initiatives with the necessary resources, and to encourage networking.

Molly Wallace is a student at Barnard College and an intern at Education Update.
Alex’s eyes were darting side to side looking for a student on the other team to challenge with a fast throw. Then with an explosive forward arm motion, Alex let loose a dart of a toss that was headed right to a girl on the other team. With lightening quick reflexes, she quickly raised her hands and caught the spongy ball, firmly in her hand. “Yea,” screamed the jubilant girl. “Ohh,” said Alex, his smile still beamning brightly. A teammate quickly tapped Alex on the shoulder, and in this cooperative brand of dodge ball, where no one sits out, Alex never had to leave the game he was having so much fun playing.

For Alex, age 10, this was more than just the ordinary gym class. As a student at The Jewish Guild for the Blind’s Guild School, Alex was participating in his first mainstream physical education class at Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School.

“It’s an opportunity for him to participate with other kids that are close to his level of athletic ability,” says Debbie Workman, Alex’s teacher for the past two years. “The way he performs on a basketball court allows him to have social interactions with typically developing kids.”

Alex, who has vision and hearing impairments, has a talent and love for sports. The ultra fast and agile Alex, can shoot a basketball, throw a football, and hit a baseball despite his apparent disabilities. Thus, taking a physical education class with kids close to his sports ability, plays to his strengths and speaks to the principles behind the inclusion of students with special education needs into regular education (The Regular Education Initiative).

The Regular Education Initiative (REI) began to gather momentum in 1975 when congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. In 1990 a reauthorization of this law, The Individuals with Handicapped Children Act, began to gather momentum in 1975 when congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. In 1990 a reauthorization of this law, the legislative mandate the question remains: ‘Should students’ with special learning needs be taught in regular education?’

“I think it’s great,” says Mark Alter, Steinhardt School of Education professor at NYU when asked about Alex attending gym class at Columbia Grammar. “We live in an integrated culture and no one should be denied access to and participation in any environment because of a physical barrier, a disability, or a label.”

At Columbia Grammar, Alex’s first physical education experience was, indeed, great—and, not just for him. The children at Columbia Grammar quickly accepted Alex into their class and supported him during the group’s activities. As we often see, kids can become overly competitive, so to accept Alex into their class required the other children to adapt their way of playing.

“Our kids learned a lot about themselves,” says the physical education teacher Jeanne Levin. “They saw how well they were able to interact with Alex and the game took on a more significant meaning.”

Alex also did his part. “He adjusted very well,” says Levin. “He seemed so comfortable. He watched me and followed directions closely. He was respectful of my lesson.”

In fact, Alex proved to Levin and to me that all kids are basically the same. While receiving the pre-game instructions, Alex was no more fidgety then any of the other students in the class. “He was excited like the rest of the kids,” says Ms. Levin. “He was basically looking at me and saying ‘let’s play teacher,’ no more talking.” His classmates for the day were no different.

While this experience was a new one for Alex and the Columbia Grammar third graders, they played together like “old” friends. Their differences seemed to disappear as they played. The students from Columbia Grammar were impressed with Alex’s ability and attitude, and Alex was made to feel like a member of the class. Guild School principal, Dr. Carole Gothelf, couldn’t hold back her enthusiasm; “We are strengthened by the fact that once again, our kids can make it in the mainstream.”

Mike Cohen is the Adaptive Physical Education teacher at the Jewish Guild for the Blind, Guild School.

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Addi Freidenberg

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definitions

- ADD: American with Disabilities Act
- ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- IEP: Individualized Education Plan
- 504: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Inclusion Program at Francis Lewis HS

By Dave Coddington

Our Inclusion Program at Francis Lewis High School in Queens has been an ever-changing work in progress. We began the program in September of 1997 without any prior plan. One day before school started, I was assigned as the Methods and Resource Teacher, which was the title given to the Special Education Teacher in charge of adapting and modifying the curriculum in an inclusion program. I believe the title is now just plain Special Education Teacher.

Word went out to the Committees on Special Education that a new high school inclusion program was canvassing for students with emotional disabilities who might be appropriate to return to a mainstream high school setting. These students would be on the same level as their General Ed. peers far as testing and other requirements. We started with three young men, two eighteen year olds and one sixteen-year-old. The Principal of Francis Lewis High School, where we were “guests,” had no prior knowledge of inclusion and was not too thrilled by our start student population because of their age and prior anti-social behaviors. She was, however, diplomatically supportive and has become more than a friend to inclusion over the past five years.

Just before Thanksgiving in 1997, the two older students got into a serious fight in the cafeteria and they were reassigned to another program. About the same time, our third student, who was an undeclared graffiti artist, was caught creating a masterpiece in a stairwell. The artist was also removed from the school because of his age and prior anti-social behaviors. She was, however, diplomatically supportive and has become more than a friend to inclusion over the past five years.

At the beginning of each term (and there are two terms a year), I meet with each student’s General Education teachers is done on a “catch me when you can”, basis and “if I have time, I make it a point to “catch” teachers during their preps or lunch hours to discuss student work and progress. I joined the high school Executive Board and the School Safety Plan Committee with the intention of presenting myself as less of a “guest” and more of a member of the high school faculty. I learned what the issues were in the school and attending the meetings gave me the opportunity to advocate for my students.

Inclusion is still considered a Special Education project or program and not a shared responsibility of the educational community as a whole. Economics plays a big factor in the division of responsibility but that’s a whole new ball of wax to investigate. I believe this will change as more students with disabilities find their rightful place among the mainstream population. It is easier to include students when they are younger and it is easier for the general population to accept them. I have seen a positive change in my school over the past five years. Three of my students participate in the high school chorus; peer tutorials are up this year, socializing with peers in classes has increased, and a general feeling of acceptance from teachers and students is taking hold.

When everyone accepts the fact that we all learn in different ways and at different speeds, then that will be the day when my job will no longer be necessary.

Dave Coddington is a teacher at Francis Lewis High School.

Literary Riddles

By Chris Rowan

“In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plains to the mountains.” Name the Nobel winning author and the title of the work.

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Music in Berlin

Few cities can compete with this city’s musical quality and variety.

By IRING SPITZ

With three active opera companies, in addition to several symphony orchestras, including the venerable Berlin Philharmonic, Berlin’s rich choice of musical offerings can easily overwhelm the casual visitor. I had this fortunate experience some weeks ago during a visit to Berlin, when I enjoyed some of these rewarding offerings.

At the Deutsche Opera, a revival of Wagner’s Tannhäuser with the American tenor Frank Lopatka in the title role was particularly enjoyable. Singing with assurance and dignity, West gave a magnificent portrayal of the role. Venus was sung by Nadja Michael and Elizabeth by Eva Johansson, both gave very commendable performances. At the very outset, Johansson tended to strain with her fortissimo passages, but she rapidly settled into the role. The other principals, including Maxime Rycroft as Walther and Stephen Milling as the Landgraf, were up to the demand of their roles. The production by Gotz Friedrich and the staging and costumes by Rolf Güttinger were modern and tasteful, the scenes in the Venusburg being particularly effective. Conductor Marc Albrecht showed his skill at supporting his singers while allowing the orchestra to express itself to the maximum.

The revival of Handel’s operatic masterpieces continues. The Komische Opera staged his opera Tamerlano composed in 3 weeks in 1724. Although a brutal leader, Tamerlano (Timur) is portrayed by Handel with dignity and charisma. Indeed, his personality is sufficiently winning to jeopardize the love between Asteria, daughter of Bejaezat and the Greek Prince Andronico. Tamerlano holds captive Bejaezat, the Turkish emir whose country he has conquered. Asteria begs Tamerlano to release her father. This he will do if Asteria agrees to marry him, even though he is engaged to the princess Irene. This demanding opera requires two counterenemies. The Komische Opera certainly delivered the goods and provided two outstanding artists, Axel Kohler in the role of Tamerlano and Countertenor Kobie van Rensburg as the astronomer Ecclitico. The Komische Opera staged the opera to express itself to the maximum.

The 18th century symphonies have provoked such criticism. In this performance, Maurizio Pollini, Renato Balsamo, and Stephen Milling as the Landgraf, were up to the demand of their roles. The production by Gotz Friedrich was modern and tasteful, the scenes in the Venusburg being particularly effective. Conductor Marc Albrecht showed his skill at supporting his singers while allowing the orchestra to express itself to the maximum.

This opera, based on Goldoni’s witty farce, is a forerunner of Mozart’s Cosi fan Tutte. In the plot, the astronomer, Ecclitico and his companions, Ernesto and Cecco persuade a simpleton, the old man Buonofede, to take a trip to the moon. The aim is to hoodwink the old man into allowing Ecclitico to marry his daughter Clarice, and Cecco to marry the second daughter, Flaminia. In the end, Buonofede gets deservedly duped for his stupidity. This far-fetched plot requires much imagination and ingenuity to stage effectively. Karoline Gruber’s stage direction went for overkill. In place of Haydn’s nymphs and shepherds, the scene on the moon was replete with transvestites in fanciful costumes. Rene Jacobs, the Belgian conductor who has made baroque operas his specialty managed to coax the maximum out of the Akademie fur alte Musik Berlin, but there were nevertheless some rough passages. All principal singers acquitted themselves admirably, particularly noteworthy being Kobie van Rensburg as the astronomer Ecclitico and the bass Enzo Capuano as the old father, Buonofede.

Finally, I attended a performance of the Berlin Philharmonic under their director, Claudio Abbado. Abbado certainly pulled out all the stops with a masterful performance of two minor works by two great composers. Beethoven’s Fantasia for Piano, Choe and Orchestra consists of an introduction for piano solo, several variations for piano and orchestra and a short choral conclusion. This was a fore- runner of the composer’s ninth symphony. Mendelssohn’s second symphony with its instrumental movements, followed by a multi- sectional finale with chorus and soloists, is openly modeled on Beethoven’s ninth. Mendelssohn’s symphony, known as the Lobgesang or Song of Praise, was composed to honor the 400 anniversary of Gutenberg’s invention of printing. Although the work has not been without its defenders, few other nineteenth century symphonies have provoked such criticism. In this performance, Maurizio Pollini put his expected masterful stamp on the Beethoven, and together with Claudio Abbado, this proved to be a magisterial and unforgettable partnership. Soprano Karita Mattila and Lisboa Braun and tenor Peter Seiffert all gave creditable and vocally impressive performances in both works, although the highest accolades must go to Karita Mattila.

Abbado’s tenure with the Berlin Philharmonic is drawing to a close. Under his guidance the orchestra’s brilliance has remained untarnished. It is possible that they play more with warmth and passion than ever. Abbado’s predecessor, Herbert von Karajan, refused to have women players in the orchestra. Today he would turn in his grave: I counted 12 female instrumentalists.

Shakespeare Program at LI Elementary School

Since the 1999-2000 school year The Shubert Elementary School has been engaged in an innovative after school theatre program. Under the leadership of founder Joseph A. DeLeo, The Shubert Shakespeare Players have developed an outstanding dramatic ensemble. Focusing exclusively on the works of William Shakespeare, students gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the world’s most important playwright. To reach the readiness to perform, students are guided towards an understanding of the universal commonality of human feelings and emotions inherent in Shakespeare’s works.

With Board of Education approval in 1999, The Shubert Shakespearean took its first steps as a fledgling after school drama club. Shakespeare’s popular play, Romeo and Juliet, became director DeLeo’s initial attempt at staging a serious drama along with co-director Kimberley Wood and set designer Jeff Smith. Set in Verona, New Jersey in the Disco 70s, this production became an instant success with students, teachers and parents alike. Shubert’s PTA honored each of its young stars with a mini Tony Award. A generous grant from The Baldwin Foundation for education will allow The National Shakespearean Company to take residency at the Shubert Elementary School in the upcoming 2002-2003 school year.

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A homeschooling program is a lot like a pair of shoes: It has to fit well to be comfortable and effective day after day. If you start off with a good program, you can tailor it with confidence.

Careful evaluation is critical to success, say experts. “You want appropriate, academically challenging lessons that inspire your child to do his best,” says Jean C. Halle, president of Calvert School Education Services, based in Baltimore, Md. The company is the homeschooling provider arm of Calvert School, which in 1906 started to offer its private school curriculum to families who wanted to teach at home. Today, Calvert enrolls 17,000 students each year in its pre-kindergarten through eighth grade programs.

Calvert School receives thousands of calls each year from families investigating whether the school’s complete classical curriculum is right for them. “We put a lot of time into helping families select what’s right for them, based on the students’ competencies,” says Halle. “Sometimes a student is placed ahead or below his age-grade level. In math, for example, he may be placed at a different level than the balance of his studies.” “It’s critical that the curriculum be well-suited to that child’s needs in order for him or her to be successful.”

Parents should explore four main components of a provider’s offerings when choosing a homeschool curriculum.

**Placement**
The first step in a child’s academic experience should be appropriate placement in a grade. The ideal placement assessment takes into account how your child arrived at answers in order to evaluate both concept knowledge as well as his ability to apply those skills. Because they offer details about a child’s writing mechanics, vocabulary and spelling levels, sentence structure, content, and organization skills, evaluations of writing samples are important.

**Curriculum**
A good curriculum will draw material from a variety of sources, incorporate opportunities for practice to improve written and oral communication, and help your child to learn, analyze, and interpret information, not simply memorize facts. An integrated curriculum allows the student to write about all subjects, to think mathematically about subjects other than math, to compare and contrast geographical statistics to history facts, and to review and obtain valuable reinforcement of concepts taught.

**Instructional Support**
Lesson manuals should provide good detail, including lessons that introduce topics, explain concepts, coordinate subjects with each other, and suggest added practice and enrichment. At the appropriate age, the manual should be directed to the student, and the role of the home teacher should turn to more of an advisory role. If the provider offers answer keys for all daily work, parents can confirm their child’s performance.

Educational professionals, who can offer strategies for teaching children with all learning styles, should be available by phone, fax, or email, to answer any questions you may have and offer suggestions for accelerated or remedial work.

**Testing**
Knowing if your child is learning is important. A good program will include tests, which evaluate both content mastery and skill development. The availability of tests with answer keys can be helpful. If you have difficulty evaluating your child’s composition and other subjective work, you should look for a provider that offers testing support in these areas.

Another key to success is evaluating the provider’s materials. “Take time to review sample lessons, if offered by the provider, to be sure that the curriculum delivers as promised,” says Halle. “Your family is making a commitment for the entire school year, so the time you invest in evaluating your options is well spent.”

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By JOAN BAUM, PH.D.

If music be not only the food of love, as Duke Orsino proclaims in Twelfth Night, but also the sustenance of culture and civilization, as Dr. Jerrold Ross believes, then we must all “play on.” To Dr. Ross, who has a Ph.D. in Music Education from NYU and is Dean of the School of Education at St. John’s University, educational improvement is music to his ears. How do the arts fit in? “Music is the most abstract of the arts,” requiring a high development of “sight unseen,” as Dr. Ross points out, “a complete turnaround” from educational improvement is music to his ears. How do the arts fit in? “Music is the most abstract of the arts,” requiring a high development of content and “is not dependent on what the arts,” requiring a high development of content and “is not dependent on what

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Robert Lee Colvin Moves to Hechinger Institute at Teachers College

Robert Lee Colvin, an award-winning education writer of the Los Angeles Times, will become the new deputy director of the Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media at Teachers College, Columbia University this summer. The Institute organizes and sponsors seminars for journalists, top policy makers and researchers on timely issues in education. The seminars are tailored to the interests of different groups of journalists, including editorial writers who cover education, education editors, reporters who specialize in higher education issues and reporters new to the beat.

Colvin, 48, said the new position provides him with a unique opportunity to represent journalism as well as education. “I want to leverage what I’ve learned in my many years on the beat to benefit other reporters in their coverage of education,” Colvin said. “At the same time, I’ll continue to be a working journalist.” Colvin said in addition to his work with the institute, he intends to remain active as a writer on education topics.

The Hechinger Institute is named in memory of Fred M. Hechinger, who was a reporter and writer on education topics. Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media is supported by the New York Times Company Foundation, the Knight Foundation, the Broad Foundation and the Broad Foundation.

Bank Street Conference at Museum of Natural History

By DEBORAH YOUNG

Education’s place and potential in a democracy is an assumption that needs frequent revisiting, said speakers Deborah Meier, Dr. Carl Glickman and conference moderator Richard Rothstein, during an exchange of ideas at a recent Bank Street College conference held at the American Museum of Natural History.

“Empowering students to think this way starts from joining.” School should be where students get the tools to question the system they live in, she added.

“My students are trying to make it through the present,” she said, “for the first time last October.”

“Some of them broke down and cried to me because he need any evidence to prove us right or wrong,” he said, urging for more long term studies of different educational methodology. Progressive educators labor under the default assumption that if you give students an education which encourages their input, they will automatically agree it’s the best way to learn, said Dr. Carl Glickman, the Endowed Chair in School Improvement at Southwest Texas State University, who has authored a dozen books on such topics as school leadership and the moral imperative of education.

“But this kind of education helps them make up their own minds,” he said. “The DNA of a democracy is where citizens use education to help each other.”

All students must first feel respected before learning to make their own decisions and then ultimately taking the next step to help others, concurred conference participant Briana Nurse—a fourth-grade teacher at 15th Avenue School in Newark.

But foremost in her mind are the everyday, gritty details of teaching in a school where 100 percent of the students fall below the federal poverty guidelines, she said, before heading to a workshop to develop strategies for teaching about the community—one of many afternoon sessions offered around the theme “Social Studies: Where We Are in 2002.”

“My students are trying to make it through the present,” she said. “For the first time last week during a lesson about neighborhoods, one of them broke down and cried to me because he was scared just walking to school. Those are the stories we hear.”

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Dr. Ira Black  Continued from page 12
of approved drug and surgical therapies. Dr. Black carefully separates what’s available from what’s still in experiment. Most of what the lay public hears that sounds promising is in animal-based trials. Even where the literature shows that there’s been a marked clinical impact treating advanced P.D. in humans, such cases are “rare.”
L-dopa, the drug that created a “revolution in neurology” when decades ago it was found to replace missing or damaged brain signals is still “the mainstay of treatment today for Parkinson’s.” Whether taken alone or in combination with other drugs (perhaps the most effective course of treatment), it can provide on average from 5 to 7 years of good life. What about the media-ballyhooed success of certain surgeries, such as “deep brain stimulation,” which was undertaken on Michael J. Fox? Dr. Black is supportive but cautious. The procedure, a pinpoint electrical stimulus of parts of the brain, is “a real step forward,” a “viable alternative” for those for whom other therapies have not been particularly effective, but treatments should be careful and measured.

MCC Awards College Scholarships

Three students from Talent Unlimited High School recently received college scholarships from the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, based on essays delineating their plans for rebuilding the site of the World Trade Center. Winner of the $1000 award, Emil Isanov, stated that the original towers should be rebuilt because they are “symbols of the economic power of the United States, [they] were the pride of our country, and the “rebuilding . . . will reinvigorate the spirit of our great nation.”

Candace Arnold, awarded $500 wrote about building a memorial site that “needs to be honorable and memorable to all the victims.” Her vision includes a wall of black marble where all victims names should be inscribed. “The inside . . . should consist of waterfalls symbolizing the cycle of life. This means that even though we lost a tremendous number of lives, their children will grow up and keep their dreams, hopes and aspirations alive.”

Janice Consu proposed a World Trade Center Memorial Park which would be as tall as the Empire State Building, surrounded by a grass field with play areas for children. On the first floor, the names of those lost would be inscribed on tiles. The remainder of the building would be leased to businesses to revitalize our economy. “It will help NY become the economic powerhouse it once was while paying homage to all victims and their families.”

Principal Dina Forman gratefully acknowledged the work of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce, in trying to help students achieve their educational goals. Chamber Board members making the presentation at the school, located on East 68th Street, were Dr. Pola Rosen, publisher of Education Update, Leslie Yerman and Linda Lopez. Don Winter, President and Nancy Ploeger, Executive Director were unable to attend. #
Elizabeth Rohatyn Brings Technology to Schools

By TOM KERTES

Eight years ago, in response to a growing concern that students in affluent schools had greater access to technology than those in less affluent neighborhoods, Elizabeth Rohatyn, along with a group of former teachers, founded Teaching Matters, a nonprofit organization devoted to promoting excellence in teaching and learning through the use of technology in the classroom.

“I did not want the technology gap to become a skills gap and then a more or less permanent achievement gap,” she said. “The idea first occurred to me when my husband Felix and I were participating in the “I Have a Dream Foundation” founded by Eugene Lang. I wanted to do more than give money. I wanted to go beyond that. I wanted to touch children’s lives, to be hands-on. I felt that it was no longer enough to make charitable donations, no matter how generous they might be.”

Of course, there have been a number of other organizations devoted to the same cause, but Teaching Matters’ low-keyed yet persistent approach makes a difference. “First of all, we don’t go into schools telling them what they should do,” Rohatyn said. “We go into schools and ask them ‘What do you need? How can we help you?’ We assess the school, its needs, and ask them ‘What do you need? How can we help you?’ We assess the school, its needs, and ask them ‘What do you need? How can we help you?’ We assess the school, its needs, and ask them ‘What do you need? How can we help you?’ We assess the school, its needs, and ask them ‘What do you need? How can we help you?’ We assess the school, its needs, and ask them ‘What do you need? How can we help you?’

Teaching Matters holds extensive workshops to help teachers understand how technology works, and how they can best use that technology in the classroom to help their students. “The difference is that we stay with the teachers following our workshops,” Rohatyn said. “We go into the school, we follow up, we do complete re-training if necessary. We understand quite profoundly how difficult the absorption of all this new information can be, especially after a full workday.”

Teaching Matters constantly works on updating and customizing its materials to respond to particular needs. “To be optimally effective, we must be flexible,” said Rohatyn. “So we always adjust our model.” There is also an online learning component, with a prominent teacher from Arizona providing up-close guidance.

To date, Teaching Matters has provided professional development training for teachers and principals in over 500 public schools in New York City and around the country. In spite of its imaginative platform, dare-to-be different approach, and notable success, some changes appear to be inevitable in the near future. “I’m concerned about the upcoming budget cuts in education,” Rohatyn said. “I want to get out of the discretionary budget for schools, which are always the first to go. I intend to move more into the funded area, acquire grants, build partnerships, perhaps even form a consortium with similar organizations. I felt that there’s room for all of our ideas. And what we do is just too important; this may be the only way for us to survive and thrive.”
**SPORTS**

**Building Fields, Building Character**

By TOM KERTES

The crumbling athletic fields of New York City Public High Schools haven’t had public funding in 25 years. Shocking, isn’t it? And this is only made more shocking by the fact that New York City has the highest percentage of students not participating in physical activity; that the City has the highest percentage of child obesity and other health problems of any major American city; and that it has the highest percentage of school absenteeism, while athletics has always been known to serve as the great equalizer when it comes to school attendance. Based on the principle of “better late than never”, three powerful New York personalities—New Jersey Giants owner Bob Tisch, urban planner Richard Kahan, and community activist Tony Kaiser—have decided to respond to this sorry situation. The result was the formation of Take the Field, a private-public partnership aimed at fixing public athletic fields.

“The pilot program, established two years ago, was a three-to-one challenge,” said Executive Director Mary Musca. “Take the Field was going to raise $4 million if the City provided $12 million.” The program was such a sizzling success—seven horribly damaged fields have already been fixed up—that, a year ago, then-Mayor Giuliani said in his State of the City address: “I’ll make sure any field they want to fix will have funding.” Twenty-one fields are slated to be completed by the end of the summer, including the ancient athletic facility at Brooklyn’s South Shore High School. “It hasn’t been as much as touched since 1970,” Principal Steven Berger said. “It is a mess.” Remarkably, in spite of the horrible conditions, South Shore has been fielding outstanding, sometimes even nationally ranked, football and track teams for years. In fact, it was the great track team that caught the attention of John Whitehead, the former chairman of Goldman Sachs. An enormous track and field fan all his life, Whitehead decided to team up with Take the Field to give a leg up to South Shore by putting up a significant portion of the cost of the $4.5 million project personally.

“High school athletics are a very important part of a young person’s development,” he said. “Among other things, it keeps them away from temptations that are all over the city.” The building of the new athletic complex, which shall bear Whitehead’s name, has been a tremendous boon to the school and its 2,600 students. “They’re ecstatic,” Berger said. “We have a great deal of athletic prowess at the school—and now we’ll have the facilities to match that.”

Whitehead had nothing but praise for the efforts of Take the Field. “There are important lessons to be learned through playing sports, in leadership, discipline and character,” he said. “I hope this organization merely scratches the surface right now. There’s so much more to be done.”

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**TECHNOLOGY**

**Innovative Use of Cable in the Classroom Award to Time Warner Cable**

Time Warner Cable of New York City was presented with a 2001 Gilbert Award for Community Service for Innovative Use of Cable in the Classroom by a New York Educator in a statewide competition that recognizes outstanding community service programs conducted by cable television companies in New York.

Laraine Mirabile, an educator at Public School 5 in Staten Island, used programming pertaining to Afghanistan and the September 11th tragedy on CNN and Nickelodeon to motivate students to write letters to the rescue workers at Ground Zero. A New York City Firefighter, Mark Solarli, received the letters and began working with Mirabile to coordinate a school wide project to benefit the children of the Staten Island victims of this disaster. Students gathered teddy bears and wrote letters of support for the children. Members of the PS 56 PTA, firefighters and police officers distributed the teddy bears.

“Time Warner Cable was proud to nominate Mirabile for a Gilbert Community Service Award for her exemplary use of Cable in the Classroom,” stated Harriet Novot, Vice President, Public Affairs, Time Warner Cable of New York City. “Not only is Cable in the Classroom a vital teaching tool, she used this resource to inspire her students to make a difference in their community.”

Each year, an independent panel of judges representing the Governor’s Office, the New York State Assembly and Senate, and New York State Conference of Mayors selects the Gilbert Award winners. For more information, visit www.cabletvny.com.

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School Reform: Putting Our Kids First
By MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG

For years, New York City’s public school system has been floundering. And the heart of the problem is the lack of clear direction and accountability at the top. The current structure for running the schools promotes diffused, con-fused and overlapping layers of authority. It creates clouds of uncertainty just where clarity of purpose is desperately needed.

Mayors Koch, Dinkins, Giuliani and I have all agreed that this structure for running the schools does not work, and we have fought to change it. The Mayor should have sole control over the appointment of the Schools Chancellor, and the Chancellor should report directly to the Mayor. That establishes democratic accountability—and if democracy can be trusted to safeguard our children, the Mayor and his top aides, will dramatically reconstruct the way the school system operates, and I believe it will prove to be a huge victory for the children and the future for our school system.

As Chairman of the Education Committee, I worked intensively to negotiate the deal with the Bloomberg administration to make the new schools chancellor a tremendous decision—one of the most important victories—by requiring in law that the Mayor, who will now have central but not total control of the schools by way of appointing the Chancellor and naming a majority of members to a newly configured Board of Education (BOE) will be legally bound to sustain, if not increase, the City’s appropriation for the Board of Education from one year to the next.

Also, I applaud the Mayor for taking on the mantle of the grant in order of education control of the schools and that there no longer be any form of central board. What we have achieved, in a sense, is the best of both worlds: accountability plus continued public debate with parental input. It was never acceptable to the Assembly majority that the Mayor—any Mayor—should be given absolute autonomy over education policy with no vigorous public debate. This legislation ensures that decisions will be made openly and in a manner that includes the public and the voices of parents and the community.

Under provisions of the legislation, the Mayor will have sole power to appoint the Schools Chancellor, who will head a 13-member BOE, as well as sole power to appoint seven other members of the board. The remaining board members, appointed by the borough presidents, must be parents of children currently in public school in New York City.

This is unprecedented. Never before were there any qualifications at all for any members of the BOE, but now at least five—all of the appointees of the borough presidents—must be parents, ensuring that the parents’ voice will be represented in each and every policy decision made by the Board.

District superintendents will be appointed by the Chancellor. The board will no longer have any role in day-to-day management decisions, but will approve the school system’s budget, capital spending plan and citywide educational policies and standards. The Mayor will also have sole control of the School Construction Authority.

The Mayor and his top aides, will dramatically reconstruct the way the school system operates, and I believe it will prove to be a huge victory for the children and the future for our school system.

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A New Era for City Schools
By ASSEMBLYMAN STEVEN SANDERS

The new school governance law, which Speaker Silver and I spearheaded in negotiations with the Mayor and his top aides, will dramatically reconstruct the way the school system operates, and I believe it will prove to be a huge victory for the children and the future for our school system.

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