

Diving Deep in the Zone



Diving Deep in the Zone is Zone 126's monthly newsletter featuring stories and highlights from across our community in Astoria and Long Island City's zip codes

11101, 11102, and 11106.

--Zone 126 Team

In this edition...

- Cocoa Mingle 2017's highlights, featuring Santa and his elves
- Learn about the power and importance of Youth Voice at the Summit
- Delve into the ways one afterschool program connects with students to support families and the school community

The Condition of Education: Equity or a Zero-Sum Game?

by Anju J. Rupchandani, Managing Director

In Latin, the root word "equ" means equal, thus when thinking about equity we think about fairness. This interpretation runs counter to the economic principle of a Zero-Sum Game, "a situation in which one person or group wins something by causing another person or group to lose it".* In education however, who wins and who loses?

According to a recent [report](#) by the [New School's Center for New York City Affairs](#), "The Calculus of Race and Class: A new look at the Achievement Gap in NYC Schools," a review of 2016 Math scores by race and income in grades 3-5 highlights the sad reality that low-income Blacks and Latinos remain on the losing side of academic achievement.

We've seen it for years: higher performing schools in middle-income neighborhoods like Astoria and Long Island City are better resourced with powerhouse PTAs, while schools in low-income neighborhoods with more struggling learners get threatened with potential closure or state takeovers and never address the root causes of inequality—a zero-sum game.

If we are to think about Equity as a means towards academic achievement in schools we should not be thinking about a "have" and "have not" track, where some students at some schools receive arts or sports programming because its linked to academic achievement, or some school districts setting aside seats for a few students in underrepresented groups within each of the schools. The question that comes to mind is, is this really fair? Does this create equity, or does it further the notion that some will win and others will lose. Intentional or not, it seems that with all equity rhetoric, action in the form of funding schools with high need is still being stunted by the winners.

Zone 126 has worked with numerous partners for almost seven years to support both school based and neighborhood solutions because we believe that learning happens in a variety of locations. We have looked at our work through the equity lens from our very inception because we do not believe only the highest needs students need support, we believe all students in a school need the highest quality support to fit their individual needs. Rooted in the theory of Collective Impact, working collaboratively—as compared to the institutionalized silo approach—gets better results for Black, Latino and low-income students from cradle to career. In this context, *Equity includes building a school culture—from the ground up, not the other way—that includes the voices of Black, Latino and low-income people in*

every aspect of decision-making on educational issues that affect students who struggle to learn. Maybe that will begin to level the playing field at its roots.

*Source: [Merriam-Webster Dictionary](#)

News from the Zone

Pipeline Update



An Early Childhood Program Becomes Part of the School's Fabric

by Michelle Makabali, Community School Director Long Island City High School



NYU ParentCorps is an evidence-based early childhood health and development program. This program is in its third school year at PS 171Q-Peter G. Van Alst Elementary School.

NYU ParentCorps follows a three-pronged approach to implementing this program effectively. It involves the student, parents/guardians, and school staff through (1) Professional Development (2) Program for Pre-K students and (3) Program for Pre-K parents. The program is timed when parents are able to attend the program fully, such as early morning.

Students take part in a 14-week curriculum called "The Friends School" that concentrates on social, emotional and behavioral skills of the child and peers. Each week focuses on teaching students about healthy interaction and communication skills with peers. Students interact with a puppet to practice mutual respect.



Class puppet at PS 171Q

Simultaneously, parents attend an adult version of the program that also reinforces the practices students are learning in "The Friends School." In time, the group collectively forms a "ParentCorps" which helps parents become stronger advocates for their child and build a camaraderie with fellow parents.

The last component features a group of learning opportunities for Pre-K teachers, Kindergarten teachers, classroom assistants, parent support staff, and school leaders to utilize evidence-based practices that will help reinforce the home-school connections.

I also had the opportunity to speak with teacher Ms. Cassidy at PS 171Q. She has been teaching for over 30 years and has been involved with NYU ParentCorps since its inception. Ms. Cassidy stressed the importance of the program and how it has become part of the fabric of early childhood culture at the school. She sees firsthand NYU ParentCorps' ability to empower and create a safe space for parents.

Ms. Cassidy spoke about a grandmother who was skeptical about the program but decided to give it a chance. She quickly discovered the usefulness of trying different parenting strategies she would not use. This instant home-school connection led the grandmother to complete the program and become an advocate for NYU ParentCorps.

Ms. Cassidy notices that parents who attend NYU ParentCorps show an interest in their students' school lives in the years to come. She expressed that it was a rewarding feeling to know they learned those skills alongside their child during the first years of school.



A Memorable Visit from Santa and His Elves

by: Anju J. Rupchandani, Managing Director



"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

- Jacqueline Kennedy



PS 171Q students had a surprise visit from the North Pole this past holiday season, when Santa made a special visit to the school. Along with him followed some extra special Student Elves from Long Island City High School (LICHS) and Rudolphina the Zone 126 Reindeer. Students in Pre-K through 5th grade were treated to hot cocoa and cookies served to them by the LICHS students, while listening to the chorus and band play holiday tunes. Each student from the elementary school had the opportunity to take their holiday photo with Santa, and was given an age-appropriate book as a gift.

The event was a first time collaboration between PS 171Q and Long Island City High School. Zone 126 spent weeks leading up to the event reaching out to board members, local business, and private donors to obtain new books. All 520 students at the school were able to walk away with a book to either build or add to their own personal home collection. The idea for providing a book to each student came from thinking about Kindergarten readiness, as well as 3rd grade reading proficiency. A widening achievement gap in low-income neighborhoods, can often affect high-school graduation rates. Providing a book and sparking an interest, was the opportunity to give the gift of literacy in the Zone this holiday season.



Long Island City High School Student Elves huddled with Principal Selenikas

Please join us next year as we begin to continue this collaboration between PS 171Q and Long Island City High School to continue spreading the joy of literacy.



Steps to Success: Zone 126's Inaugural Youth Summit

by Kiara Rodriguez, Community School Coordinator Long Island City High School



On Saturday, January 27, 2018, over 100 students traveled to Long Island City High School to attend Zone 126's Inaugural Youth Summit. The Summit was geared towards students in middle/high school with the goal of providing youth an opportunity to have their voices heard and to "encourage leadership and academic success as they begin to prepare for their future," said Anthony Lopez, Executive Director. Alongside partners:

Cormac Nataro, enACT, Global Kids, Let's Get Ready, Little Flower Yoga, and Owen Consulting, Zone 126 was able to put together an event that not only pushed students to think about their next steps, but also inspired them to take action and make a difference.



The Youth Summit began with an inspirational speech by Deputy Chancellor (DC) Milady C. Baez. DC Baez spoke about her journey as a Latina woman and her ability to overcome obstacles to achieve success. DC Baez, despite not understanding the language, was able to graduate college as she explained, "Against all odds, even if I did not know the language, I would get my graduate credits." DC Milady Baez described how she

navigated her way through the education system to be appointed superintendent and eventually becoming Deputy Chancellor for the Division of English Language Learners. "You need to be the people who are going to motivate each other to be future leaders," she advised to the eager youth of Western Queens.

The Summit strived to give each student the opportunity to experience something new. Workshops were divided into three themes: Success in High school, Path to Success through High School, and Pathways to College & Career. 7th and 8th grade students began their day with a riveting Youth Panel consisting of LICHS students who opened up about their experiences in High School "When I came in [to LICHS] I was very shy. I didn't want to participate in anything. But then my teacher told me I should join robotics," explained (Roseli, 11th grade). 9th and 10th graders were given the opportunity to choose from three workshops facilitated by partners enACT, Global Kids and Owen Consulting. Students in the enACT workshop learned about how to express themselves and their desires. "Everyone has a story," Jose (student) explained to the students as they engaged in honest and unfiltered conversations about life as a high school student. "I want to start hanging out with positive people that will lift me up instead of bring me down." 11th and 12th graders worked with former City Year member Cormac Nataro to build a resume while others joined Let's Get Ready's panel of experts to discuss college applications, financial aid, and next steps.

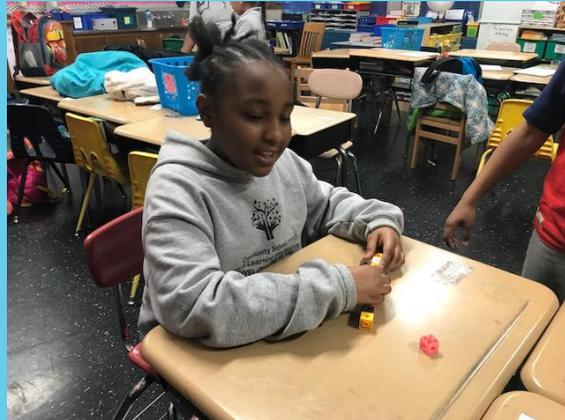
Students came together during lunch and the cafeteria buzzed with conversations about the workshops. When asked to highlight takeaways from the morning workshops one student raised her hand to express "I learned that everyone is different and everyone experiences things differently, you never know what people are going through." During lunch, keynote speaker Angy Rivera addressed students. She advised students to use their voice and take a stand for what they believe in, "Through activism I was able to find my voice." Rivera encouraged the youth to use their voice to create change and explained how important it is to be a leader. By the end of the Summit, students walked away with the knowledge and tools needed to make positive decisions about their future.



Afterschool Programming: A Win for Scholars, the School, and the Community

by Claudia Esteva, Community School Director CS 111Q

At CS 111Q, we have a variety of in-school and after school programming. From arts to academics, athletics to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) we are incorporating a multitude of student-selected electives to engage and excite scholars about school. The Jacob A. Riis Afterschool Program or Riis, as we call it, is our afterschool program that provides services to over 140 scholars. Group leaders and activities specialists focus on arts, athletics, dance, leadership, and tutoring.



I interviewed two of our afterschool parents with scholars in the 2nd and 3rd grade to hear their thoughts on afterschool. Ms. Aminah "Mimi" Lee, mother of a 2nd grade male student stated, "I think that the hours are great... the staff is friendly."

Another parent of both 2nd and 3rd grade girls, Ms. Millissia "Missy" Taylor, stated, "I appreciate that CS 111Q has afterschool, it helps out with working parents" and "I know they offer really good programs like Alvin Ailey and cooking class, which both my girls love." Jacob A. Riis provides families a safe place for scholars to engage in high-yield activities and that is a win for scholars, the school, and the community.

What We Are Reading

- *Excellence Through Equity: Five Principles of Courageous Leadership to Guide Achievement for Every Student*, Alan M. Blankstein, Lorena Kelly, and Pedro Noguera
- *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, Simon Sinek

Partner News

- Legal Outreach: Harvard Law Grad Helps Low-Income Kids Aim High, The Hechinger Report
 - enACT January 2018 Newsletter, The enACTor
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Zone 126 in the News

New York Nonprofit Media: What New York Nonprofits Learned in 2017

Opportunities for Youth

Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute



Illustration by Zach Williams/[NYN Media](#)

"Political uncertainty at the federal level led many New York nonprofits to become more political in 2017. A looming state budget deficit and cuts to federal social services programs will likely keep up the pressure on nonprofits to maintain their public visibility as they fight for critical funding. But nonprofit leaders from across the state say such issues were only part of the story.

A dozen of them submitted lessons learned and predictions for the upcoming year. Their causes are varied – fighting homelessness, domestic violence, illness, poverty, gentrification and drug abuse – but they all shared a commitment to grow this upcoming year." -Zach Williams, NYN Media

Read Anthony Lopez's lessons and predictions [here](#).



Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute



The New York City delegation invites all NYC public school juniors and seniors of Hispanic descent to apply to HYLII 2018

The institute will be held on during after schools hours (January through March), culminating with a trip to Albany to be part of the Mock Assembly on March 10-12. Participants will learn writing, debating, leadership skills, and how a bill is passed by the New York State Assembly.

To apply for participation, you need to:

- Register online: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NYTMNT8>
- Submit a 500-word essay on specific topic (visit the link above for detail information about the essay).

For additional information, contact:

James F. Rodriguez: jrodrig32@schools.nyc.gov

Division of English Language Learners and School Support

The New York City delegation invites all NYC public school juniors and seniors of Hispanic descent to apply to HYLII 2018

The institute will be held on during after schools hours (January through March), culminating with a trip to Albany to be part of the Mock Assembly on March 10-12. Participants will learn writing, debating, leadership skills, and how a bill is passed by the New York State Assembly.

For additional information, contact:

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Follow us at @Zone126Queens on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#)!

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*Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of the individual

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