

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...

- Read about Zone 126's gift of literacy to PS 171Q students this holiday season
- Learn about CS 111Q's continuing partnership with Community-Word Project
- Take a look at LICHS's Let's Get Ready program closing highlights
- Delve into the ways one LICHS teacher connects with families to boost attendance
- In Memoriam: Michael G. Officer

The Golden Era of Youth Development

by Anthony Lopez, Executive Director



Stock Photo

On December 4th, I attended the Partnership for After School Education's (PASE) Richard Murphy Leadership Award Ceremony. Former New York City Mayor David Dinkins received the inaugural award. Richard Murphy was a social policy innovator and one of the inventors of the community schools approach to youth development. Richard believed that we must all take responsibility for each other—especially the powerless and most vulnerable—our youth.

The audience was comprised of many notable individuals of today and the golden era of youth development's movement. While waiting for the Alison Overseth, PASE's Executive Director's opening remarks, I reflected on my start as a youth development professional working at the Double Discovery Center at Columbia University (DDC) back in 1986. I represented DDC on the West Side Task Force for Youth, a coalition of youth services providers that included Geoffrey Canada and Joe Stewart (Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in New York) Alfonso Wyatt and John Bess, (Manhattan Valley), Tom Pendleton (DOME Project), Stephanie Pinder (Goddard Riverside) and me, the youngest of the group. Richard Murphy would sit in on

meetings hosted at Rheedlen.

Looking back at what my time with these individuals and others—Luis Garden Acosta ([El Puente](#)) and Moises Perez ([Alianza Dominicana](#)), Paula Martin ([Harlem Center for Education](#)) did for my career and for me as a person, reminds me that it takes the leadership of many to create change. The first job of a leader is to build and support other leaders and this is an important part of the work at Zone 126.

After the event, I reconnected to peers of mine from this golden age of youth development. While speaking with Eddie Silverio, (Catholic Charities/Alianza), Aldrin Bonilla, ([Deputy Manhattan Borough President](#)), and Sandino Sanchez ([Children's Aid Society](#)), Geoffrey Canada approached us and said: "Those days were the golden era of youth development and you guys are in a class by yourselves." We were mentored by the giants in the field and continue to serve New York City's young people to the best of our abilities.

On [January 27, 2018](#), Zone 126 will host its first Youth Summit to continue the legacy of Richard Murphy and Zone 126 advisory board member Michael G. Officer who passed away on December 4th, 2017. Their commitment to our young people will never be forgotten.

News from the Zone

Pipeline Update



Giving the Gift of Literacy in The Zone

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, Former First Lady of the United States of America

Countless studies have been done over the years on the importance of building early literacy skills from the time a baby is in the womb, through the time they walk through the door for their first day of school. I remember very vividly the Christmas that I was ten years old when my Aunt was visiting from the Caribbean, and brought me a copy of Cinderella. I was so excited, a book to add to my growing collection. I remember thinking 'when I grow up, I am going to have my own library at home with tons and tons of books.'



As I've grown older through the years, one of the things that I love to gift to any child, friend or family member for any occasion is a book. In a time where technology seems so prevalent, the feeling of a book in one's hands seems to have become something of a pastime. At Zone 126

we have significantly emphasized the importance of literacy, and have focused our work in the last several years around building our own approach to Community Schools that is delivered through the Collective Impact Framework.

Through strategic partnerships with the Parent-Child Home Program, the Child Center of NY, Queens Library and others we have made a commitment to ensuring students enter Kindergarten, ready to learn and are on a successful trajectory to on time reading by 3rd grade.

This holiday season Zone 126 launched a campaign called "Giving the Gift of Literacy in the Zone," an Amazon Wishlist of books age appropriate for children who are Pre-K through 5th grade that would be distributed by Zone Elves at our first annual Cocoa Mingle at PS 171Q. We have had a tremendous outpouring from friends, family, local community members, and business owners who have sent us 300 books to distribute in the coming days.

Testimonials on this campaign include "*what a great idea, I remember this book from when I was a kid,*" or "*wow the magic of a book*" or even "*all the places a child can go with their imagination when they are given a book, and taught to read.*" This collective community-wide effort to support the children of PS 171Q is central to the work we do in the Zone each and everyday. *The children of Astoria thank you for being a part of the building their own personal library, and putting them on a path to literacy success.*



A Thriving Collaboration in its Third Year

by: Claudia Esteva, Community School Director CS 111Q



Community-Word Project is an educational arts organization that partners with classrooms to help children how to better read, interpret, and respond to their everyday experiences through in-class arts residencies. CWP has been a long term partner of Zone 126 and community schools. Spring 2018 marks CWP's third year at CS 111Q.

Last year, CWP worked with CS 111Q's 1st and 2nd grade classrooms to make their own anthologies, which they received after the 12-14 week program concluded. Anthologies are booklets comprised of stories and poems written by the scholars of their work done within the program. This year, Community-Word Project will continue developing writing with 1st and 2nd graders to further develop their story telling skills and love of theater expressions from their previous residency experience.



Above: CS111Q's School Year 2016-2017 2nd graders working on their poetic writing

Teaching Artist Deanna Green will return for her second year to add to the continuity of the program's impact. It is exciting to have effective artists and teachers come back to work with our scholars, to hear "I remember you as the echo throughout across the classroom.

Our collaboration with CWP is deeply rewarding, as they are in their third year at our school, building deeper rapport with our students. Not only does CWP work on literacy and theater, but also within that process our scholars are able to talk through their challenges and emotions. We are excited to see this Spring's residency further encourage social-emotional development.



Another Successful Season of Let's Get Ready

by Anita Williams, College Mentoring Coordinator

**LET'S
GET
READY**



As the Fall 2017 Let's Get Ready SAT Prep Program at Long Island City High School came to a close, many students expressed their gratitude and much excitement as they successfully completed the program. The closing celebration on November 29th, 2017 marked the completion of the program, but more importantly, the beginning of a college-focused journey for juniors taking the SAT for the first time. Let's Get Ready site directors led panel discussions about college life and admissions. The celebration closed with a financial aid presentation, followed by each student receiving certificates of completion and gifts to prepare them for the upcoming SAT exam.



Ms. Anita Williams, College and Career Success Coordinator at Long Island City High School spoke to Kani about her experience during the 10 week program. Kani participated in the program to score higher on the SAT. She first expected the program to solely focus on preparing for the exam but quickly realized the the program "actually prepared [her] for college readiness. [They] discussed topics like financial aid, college applications, college essays and more." The time management skills she gained from the

program carry over into homework assigned by her teachers. In addition to learning how to manage time wisely, Kani appreciated the chance to meet other LICHS students and LGR's



Attendance Equals Success

by Kevon Webb, Attendance & Family Success Coordinator

Attendance matters! "Every school day counts!" is the mantra at the forefront of Long Island City High School teacher Ms. Melissa Diaz's work as an educator. She is a Social Studies Teacher in the Global Languages Academy, who began working at Long Island City High School in 2001 and is dually licensed to teach Social Studies and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).



She believes that an attendance rate of less than 90% negatively impacts a student's chance at passing his/her classes and even being able to graduate on time. She reminds students daily that being present in class is vital to their success. In the event a student is absent, Ms. Diaz does not hesitate to reach out to parents with phone calls home.

She also connects with parents during parent-teacher conferences. During these conferences, Ms Diaz uses the opportunity to keep parents aware of their child's performance and attendance. Teaching parents how to use PupilPath gives parents a detail account of their child's grades and attendance.

Finally, Ms. Diaz shared, "Last year, I taught a period 10 class that had 34 students. My parent outreach guaranteed that every day we either had perfect attendance or close to it. My students all knew their attendance counted. As a result, every student in that class achieved success. Attend today...achieve tomorrow!" Ms. Diaz strongly believes that "when parents and teachers work together, student growth and success becomes evident."

We thank the following for helping promote literacy in the Zone through book donations:

- Aida Makabali
- Alexis Racassi
- Alison Overseth
- Alfred LaRosa
- Anju J. Rupchandani
- Carmela Makabali-Chan
- Claudia Esteva
- Juan Manuel

- Laura Parker
 - Little Flower Yoga
 - Lynn Grossman
 - Maritza Arroyo
 - Mayuri Gonzalez
 - Michelle Makabali
 - Rebecca Lee
 - Yvonne Braithwaite
 - Anonymous
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**In Memoriam: Michael G. Officer
(1965-2017)**



On Monday, December 04, the Zone 126 team was sad to learn of the unexpected passing of one of our Advisory Board Members, Michael G. Officer. Michael was a native of London, England who was a long-time non-profit professional who served in several leadership capacities in New York City and DC in the last two decades. He found time to sit on boards such as Dress for Success, the Children's Storefront and Zone 126. Michael joined the board in June 2016 because he deeply believed in the power of community, collaboration, and collective impact. He loved to visit schools, see staff in action, and provide mentorship and guidance to young professionals. For those that Michael mentored, he always said the best way to thank him was to pay it forward to another young professional in due time, and keep it going. Michael will be sorely missed by all that knew him, and his legacy will continue to live on in the Zone.

Save the Date: Upcoming Events

**Zone 126's 2017 Cocoa Mingle
Wednesday December 20**

14-14 29th Ave, Long Island City, NY 11102
8:00 AM to 12:00 PM
Hot Cocoa will be served

**Zone 126's 2018 Youth Summit
Saturday January 27**

14-30 Broadway, Long Island City, NY 11106
10:00 AM to 2:00 PM
Hot Breakfast and Lunch will be served
Round-trip MetroCard will be provided

Interested students, parent coordinators, and organizations:
[email info@zone126.org](mailto:info@zone126.org) for more information

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

We would like to thank all of our funders for all their help: Thomas & Jeanne Elmezzi Foundation, New York City Department of Education, Altman Foundation, Pinkerton Foundation and Staples Foundation.

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

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