

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 one Pre-K student's academic milestones
- Delve into the importance of mental health
- Learn about LICHS' attendance successes
- Take a look at LICHS's Family Night highlights (and beautiful photos!)
- RSVP: November's Cradle to Career Convening
- Be inspired by a local Parent Coordinator

How Businesses Can Help Students Achieve

by Anthony Lopez, Executive Director



Source: Getty Images Royalty Free Collection

While the building boom in Long Island City and the gentrification of Astoria has brought new restaurants and bars to the area, the public schools in the neighborhoods continue to struggle. Three zip codes in the area – 11101, 11102 and 11106 – house three major public housing developments that enroll hundreds of children and youth in local schools. Only 29% of children show age appropriate functioning by age five, English and Math proficiency rates start to drop after the 6th grade, 60% of youth graduate from high school in six years and 17% of high school graduates are college ready. Families are not accessing existing supports, local institutions can do more, and much of the non-profit sector is still largely fragmented when it comes to working with local schools.

Established as an intermediary non-profit organization in 2011 by the Thomas and Jeanne Elmezzzi Foundation and anchored in Astoria and Long Island City, the work of Zone 126 is designed to bring cross-sector partners together to find organic solutions to complex problems within the local education ecosystem. To date, we have organized instructional, resident, non-

profit, youth and public service leaders to engage with Zone 126 in finding impactful education solutions to the needs of children, youth and families living in areas of concentrated poverty along the waterfront in Astoria and Long Island City. The voice that remains silent in this type of work is that of the local business community.

A 2015 [report](#) published by the Harvard Business School titled: “The Promise of Collective Impact” calls on business leaders across the country to (1) take stock of their efforts to support and improve Pre-K-12 public education and (2) commit to using the innovative approach of collective impact to address fundamental weaknesses in the education ecosystem. The report also suggests that the current way business is involved with the school system may contribute to the slow progress of student achievement.

The collective impact work of Zone 126 aims to change this picture in a hyper-local way for students who live in public housing—along the waterfront and surrounding areas—and the public schools that serve them. The first step is to draw local business leaders who can make a difference off the sidelines, and onto the field as informed essential partners of educators and connect them to one of Zone 126’s elementary, middle or high school. The Zone 126 team would vet and introduce new or existing activities, events or programs to local businesses for adoption. A Business Affinity Group would be formed to expand and sustain efforts that boost student outcomes—and take them to scale. Doing this overtime, will invigorate the local education ecosystem—from cradle to career—create multiple pathways, and fill the gap of learning that’s tied to the future workforce.

Let’s be clear, education is political and we have to be political about protecting our students. With all the gentrification coming to the waterfront of western Queens, I know there is a political will to make more investments in the local schools. Zone 126 cannot do it alone. Join us in creating more opportunities for these residents beyond the beautiful view of the Manhattan skyline.

News from the Zone

Pipeline Update



Making a Difference with Early Childhood Education

by Dylan Woloszczuk, Community School Coordinator CS 111Q

Dylan Woloszczuk, Community School Coordinator at [CS 111Q](#), sat down with Pre-Kindergarten parent, Ms. Nazarae, to talk about the importance of early education and the progress she has seen her daughter make since starting Pre-K this year.

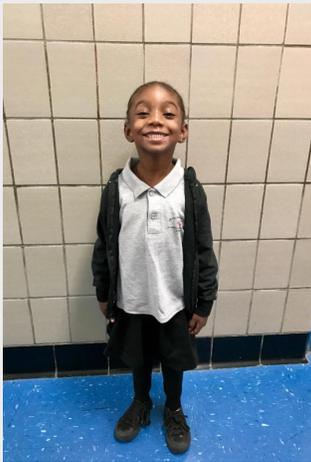
Ms. Nazarae reported that she hoped school would bring her daughter Madison the ability to, “follow directions, engage and not move off topic...and learn more.” Despite enrolling Madison in a daycare program from the age

of two, Ms. Nazarae reported she noticed that Madison had difficulty with spelling her name, using the alphabet, and recognizing letters. Ms. Nazarae reported that within a week of starting Pre-Kindergarten at CS 111Q, Madison began identifying letters.



Ms. Nazarae and CS 111Q Scholar Madison

Madison has already achieved several academic milestones during the short time that school has been in session. Ms. Nazarae described a particularly exciting moment in which she came to pick her daughter up from school and discovered that Madison had written her name by herself. Ms. Nazarae stated, “When I picked her up, I noticed on a piece of paper that it looked like she spelled ‘Maddy’...I was just, again, too happy because that’s something that she wasn’t doing before. She would only write the letter ‘M’ and then she would give up.”



Ms. Nazarae reported that she noticed significant progress in Madison very quickly after enrolling her in school. Ms. Nazarae recalled that initially, Madison had some trouble transitioning into the school from a daycare program that lacked structure, but ultimately, Madison became Scholar of the Month for September 2017. Ms. Nazarae stated, “When I first came, the teacher said [Madison] was having a little bit of a hard time. Every day walking to school I told Madison, ‘Madison, you’re going to become Student of the Month’...One day I come in and there’s the paper and it says her name under Scholar of the Month. I was just too excited.”



The Importance of Mental Health

by Claudia Esteva, Community School Director CS 111Q

Edited by Eloise True, Social Worker, Counseling in Schools (CIS)



Ms. Eloise True is on her second year as a full time Social Worker at CS 111Q

The first week of October marked the National Alliance on Mental Illness' (NAMI's) Mental Health Awareness Week. Community School Director Claudia Esteva and Counseling in Schools (CIS)'s Social Worker Eloise True sat down to discuss mental health and the work being done around social-emotional wellbeing at CS 111Q.

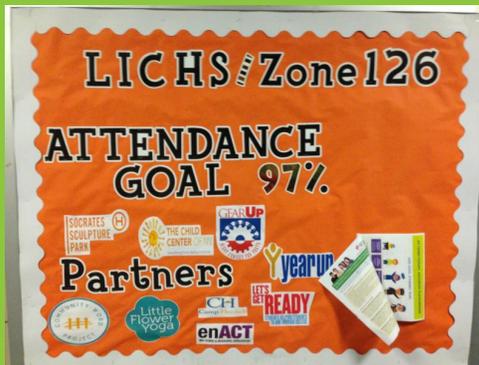
Both Ms. True and CIS feel that having an in-school Social Worker is key to our children's success. She explained, "There is an adage around schools that says something like 'Order Before Learning,' but one of the things we strongly believe in at CIS is 'Social-Emotional Wellness Before Learning'... If we are dis-regulated, unable to be comfortable in our bodies, if we are upset or worried about a multitude of things, then we can't be present. In schooling, one of the main goals is to be able to concentrate and be present enough to learn. Ultimately, we know if kids are distracted by a distressing emotional experience they will be unable to concentrate on whatever curricular expectations are being set in front of them. Distracted by intrusive thoughts, painful memories, or anxious worries, our scholars can become unable to be present and thus unable to learn. Part of the human experience is feeling emotions intensely, however when they become overwhelming we turn to whatever is around us to cope. Our hope is that through talk, play, and art therapy our scholars will have access to healthy and positive coping mechanisms that will help them heal from painful parts of their stories and serve to better equip them for life's great challenges. The motivation behind the work that CIS does is helping students not just to learn to cope with difficult emotions and experiences but ultimately to learn to thrive."

Through one-on-one counseling, Ms. True allows the students to be able to tell their story, which, as she describes, is incredibly emotionally regulating. "Sometimes our children, particularly growing up as many of them have, find it incredibly liberating to tell their story, to have someone witness their story, not try to fix it, not change it, but to hear them out" she says. Empowering children to speak about themselves and their experiences from an early age will help them cope with so much in the future, ultimately allowing them to separate those anxious moments and be able to stay in the present.



Re-Engaging Students for a Successful School Year

by Andre T. Stith, Organizing Director and Kevon Webb, Attendance & Family Success Coordinator



During Summer 2017, Long Island City High School Attendance & Family Success Coordinator Kevon Webb embarked on home visits. He targeted new, incoming freshmen, as well as current students with chronic absences. During Mr. Webb's visits, he provided families with a brief overview of the average school day in the life of a student. He also emphasized the importance of beginning the school year with strong attendance. For current students, he helped families review their child's attendance data from previous years.

At the end of each visit, Mr. Webb left families armed with information about the school's many programs, small learning communities, key contacts for parents, and most importantly confidence that students will come to school on time and attend all classes each day.

The Zone 126 office at Long Island City High School also provides a plethora of resources. Room 540 makes the Zone 126 team accessible to all students. The team ensures the office is a safe haven, a place students can come if they need someone to talk to and converse with during lunch and after school. In building trust, the Zone 126 team builds relationships with students to connect them to the in-school and outside of school resources to encourage academic and socioemotional success.



Kicking Off the School Year with Long Island City High School's 3rd Annual Family Night

By: Michelle Makabali, Community School Director Long Island City High School

Zone 126 and Long Island City High School hosted their 3rd Annual Family Night on Thursday, September 28, 2017. As in past years, the event helps to bridge families and community and featured remarks from Principal Selenikas. She highlighted key groups of individuals that contribute to the success of students and families.



The event provided a "one-stop" shop for families to become more familiar with their child's school life and opportunities in the community. Over 25 tables presented initiatives as well key departments and



personnel within Long Island City High School. Tables represented all academic departments, smaller learning communities, the parents' association, sports teams, JROTC, and community partners such as [City Harvest](#), [Let's Get Ready!](#), [enACT](#), [Child Center of New York](#), [Community-Word Project](#), [Queens Library](#), and many more.

Principal Selenikas' State of the School:

- Emphasized the importance of attendance. Long Island City High School's attendance goal for the current school year is 97%.
- Availability of College Now classes and over 11 Advanced Placement courses, along with free SAT Prep for all 11th graders from Let's Get Ready!
- The school's newest program is a work-based learning opportunity for seniors. The internship program leverages partners and a nearby elementary school, PS 171Q, to engage senior interns on a daily basis. Work-based learning provides students with an enriching experience as they develop and work toward career-oriented goals.
- Zone 126 will be leading the wi-fi hotspot initiative. This initiative, part of the Sprint 1 Million Project, is intended to close the digital divide both inside and outside of the classroom. *Every student attending Long Island City High School is eligible for the 3GB wifi hotspot until the culmination of their high school career.*



Complete with festive balloons and music, this energetic and informative event maintained its student focus while building stronger relations with the community.

Click [here](#) for more pictures from Long Island City High School's Family Night event.

School Spotlight

Awatef Ibrahim, Parent Coordinator

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

Zone 126 would like to congratulate Long Island City High School Parent Coordinator, [Awatef Ibrahim](#), for being named as a [Women's Forum/Macy's Inc. Fellow](#). Her high achievement, having been selected as one of 10 women from over 500 applicants, has enabled her to receive grants through the Women's Forum of New York's [Education Fund](#).

Mrs. Ibrahim is one of Long Island City High School's amazing parent coordinators. Her role includes cultivating relationships with families and communicating the needs of families to the appropriate school staff for support.

Her passion for education stems not just from her work ethic, but also as a hard-working student. Ms. Ibrahim immigrated to the United States from Egypt at the age of four. She completed high school within 3 years and subsequently received a college



acceptance. However, her family urged her to get married and return to Egypt. A decade and 3 beautiful children later, Ms. Ibrahim returned back to New York with her family. As the key English speaking parent of her family, she navigated through the ups and downs of the New York City school system...

Her inspiring story continues [here](#).

Important Information for Educators

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) 8 Things Every Educator Should Know

UNDERSTANDING ESSA

On September 11, 2017 The New York State Board of Regents has approved its state ESSA plan "laying out the state's goals for its education system."

1. New York State values a well-rounded education for all.
2. New York State wants to reduce testing time and improve the testing experience.
3. New York State will redefine and re-imagine the educator preparation experience.
4. New York State is committed to working with districts to ensure cultural responsiveness.
5. New York State will encourage and foster the ability of districts to advance equity and access for all.
6. New York State will identify schools for support and recognition based on multiple measures.
7. Each school identified for improvement will work with staff, families and the community to craft a plan that identifies school-specific solutions for areas of need.
8. New York State will award funds to each school district to support a Professional Development Plan developed by educators.

High Impact Corner: 4 Ways That Leadership Teams Create Conditions for Success in Schools



"The City's School Leadership Teams are responsible for developing educational plans, matching budget to needs, and building a sense of community."

1. Strong leadership teams enable teachers to work with their peers and focus on improvement rather than evaluation.
2. Strong leadership teams involves teachers in decisions about curriculum assessment, instruction and professional learning.
3. Strong leadership teams engage families and community.
4. Strong leadership teams create a safe, nurturing learning environment for students.

Half of a School Leadership Team is parents. The other half includes teachers, school staff, union and Parent Association representatives, and possibly students or community members.

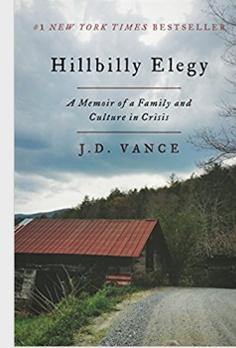
More Information Here:

[NYC DOE SLT Overview](#)

[SLT Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[School Leadership Team Resources](#)

- *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*, J.D. Vance (right)



Partner Newsletters

- [Little Flower Yoga's](#) latest Mindful Mondays Resources and News [here](#)
- [enACT's](#) October 2017 Newsletter: [The enACTor](#)



Zone 126 Out and About

College for All – A Broken Promise? College, Alternative Credentials & Equity



Zone 126 Executive Director Anthony Lopez attended College for All – A Broken Promise? College, Alternative Credentials & Equity at NYU's School of Law, hosted by NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development.

John B. King Jr. is a former U.S. Secretary for Education and current president and CEO of The Education Trust, a national nonprofit organization that seeks to identify and close opportunity and achievement gaps, from preschool through college. He presented at this "conversation on the changing world of higher education, alternative credentials and how best the equity in education movement can prepare and persist with integrity and wisdom in the decade ahead."

Photo: October 26, 2017

Anthony Lopez, ED Zone 126 and John B. King Jr

Save the Date: Upcoming Events

Wednesday November 08

Zone 126's November 2017 Cradle to Career Convening

Variety Boys and Girls Club of Queens

21-12 30th Rd Queens, NY 11102

8:30 AM-10:30 AM

Breakfast will be served

[Click to RSVP \(Eventbrite\)](#)

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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