

NYCDOE

## Highlights of Community School District 5 Harlem Schools

### Special points of Interest:

- *Tips For Test Success*
- *PS 200 Students Skype Their Way to Knowledge*
- *Sports at Kappa IV*
- *What's Happening at PS/MS 161?*
- *Showtime at the Apollo with CS 154 Students*
- *Harlem Renaissance High School Celebrates Students Achievement*
- *District 5 Annual STEM Expo—May 19, 2012*
- *National Poetry Month*

### Superintendent's Message

*"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant;  
if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."*  
- Anne Bradstreet

As we prepare for the upcoming Spring Recess, we want to remind all of our schools and families that the 2012 New York State Testing Program will begin immediately following the break for our elementary and middle school students. As we embark upon this testing period, we are optimistic that our district will show continued growth and progress as measured by the results of the assessments. After all, the high caliber of administrators, teachers, and support staff in our district demonstrate our commitment to providing a quality educational experience for all of our students!

While results from the assessments are useful for measuring the progress of students, we know they are not the only measurement for what's taking place in our schools. It's vitally important that monitoring daily instruction (for rigorous tasks and high expectations), as well as informal assessment of student learning be consistently taking place in our schools. Together with ongoing communication between school and home, schools and families can collaboratively fully assess students' progress and growth. This type of partnership is what will ensure that everyone is working toward a shared goal – helping our students succeed!

To help make test experiences more positive for our students, there are many things schools, parents and family members can do.

*Please see some suggestions below:*

### TIPS FOR TEST SUCCESS!

#### BEFORE THE TEST:

- ◆ Be encouraging! Remind your students (children) that they are special and that you believe in them!
- ◆ Remind students to:
  - ◆ Get a good night's sleep before each day of the test.
  - ◆ Be sure to eat properly each day of the test (at home or at school).
  - ◆ Be present during the entire testing program.
  - ◆ Come to school on time each day of the test.

#### REMINDERS FOR WORKING THROUGH THE TEST:

- ◆ Remind students to listen carefully to the instructions from the proctor.
- ◆ Remind students to read the directions and questions carefully.
- ◆ Tell students to answer all of the questions and not to leave any blank.
- ◆ Encourage students to stay focused on the test, even if other students finish early.

#### AFTER THE TEST:

- ◆ Praise students for doing their best on the test.
- ◆ If a student is disappointed after taking a test, reassure him or her that as long as they did their very best, they should be satisfied.

*Best wishes for the successful administration of the 2012 NYS Testing Program!*



*Community  
Superintendent  
Gale Reeves*



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*James McCune Smith Students Skype Their Way to Knowledge About Afghanistan*

Students at The James McCune Smith School (PS 200) were fortunate recently to have had the most amazing experience by SKYPING 7000 miles across the world by computer, to make contact with U.S. engineer Robert Mariner, who assisted them on their Social Studies project about the region. It was awesome! Mr. Mariner, one of the few African American engineers over in Afghanistan who is helping to rebuild that country, was informative and helpful by giving students a real-world perspective on the country, which lies between Pakistan and Iran in Southwest Asia. It is approximately 7,000 miles from New York and is about the size of Texas.

Mr. Mariner skyped with students, from the McCune's Journalism Club on a huge screen, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Time, which was 8:00 pm at night in Kabul, Afghanistan. He answered all the students' questions in a 20 minute interview as they viewed him on the big screen, courtesy of the smart board. Many of the questions related to the landscape, culture and climate of the region. Mr. Mariner was able to make comparisons for students to enable them to make connections to things they could relate to life here in the U.S.. One such thing was the climate in Afghanistan, which Mr. Mariner said was very much like Denver, Colorado, because of its cool climate and high elevation, which affects the air that you breathe.

Students also asked him how he adjusted to the culture of the region, and what were some of the major differences from the United States. Mr. Mariner told students that women don't drive in Afghanistan, nor do they make eye contact with strangers. He found that to be one thing that was very different from the U.S. He also said that he understood that it was a part of their culture, and that as long as you respect the culture of the region, you will be prepared to enjoy the history and beauty of the country. Students were extremely grateful for this hands-on history and geography lesson, and were left hoping that they could gain even more knowledge from this able engineer, upon his return home.



### **Sports at KAPPA IV**

KAPPA IV is much more than academics. Over the last few years staff members have created after-school sports programs that provide students with a variety of sports they may participate in. In the 2011/2012 school year that tradition continues in full force. We currently offer chess, track, volleyball, softball, basketball and many other sports. In between, KAPPA IV teachers have continually sought avenues whereby the students may build and practice the lessons, ideas and principles they learn in classes like health and physical education.

At KAPPA IV a great education is as much about learning in classrooms as it is about applying that learning in fun, competitive and challenging after-school activities....

#### **Chess**

Headed by active chess players social studies teacher Mr. Prophile and Mr. Martinez, the ELL provider, KAPPA IV students participate in the after school chess program twice a week. The program is sponsored by *Chess-in-Schools.org* which sponsors numerous tournaments throughout the year. Last year, KAPPA IV scholars placed 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in the tournament and this year KAPPA IV's new member students are eager to use their critical thinking skills in competition.

#### **Basketball**

In its second year, KAPPA IV scholars are participating in the *CHAMPS* citywide tournament sched-

ule that begins in the spring. Lead by the physical education teacher, Mr. Collins-Day, select student athletes (12) must maintain an 80 average to participate on the team.

Additionally, Mr. Collins-Day places a premium on cooperation, collaboration and shared sacrifice as the foundation of a strong team. Last year KAPPA IV went undefeated against teams from Mott Hall middle school and older opponents from Bread and Roses and Choir Academy. Mr. Collins-Day is excited about the team's chances of remaining competitive come this spring.

#### **Volleyball and Softball**

In spite of a busy schedule as the assistant principal, Ms. Qasim (one of the founding members of the school) plans on making volleyball and softball a reality once again at KAPPA IV. Through the *CHAMPS* program, KAPPA IV young ladies take to the gym courts in volleyball and softball showing that sports are not just for the boys ....

#### **Step**

If you ever wanted to see just how well KAPPA IV scholars move, all you have to do is take a look at the step team. Lead by Principal Vives (a former stepper himself) the team meets twice a week for several months starting in January running through the spring. Learning difficult and complex routines, the steppers emerge as artists who mix precision with dynamic energy.

### ***What's Happening at PS / MS 161?***

Great things are happening on West 134<sup>th</sup> St. at the Don Pedro Albizu Campos School, PS/MS 161. We are currently getting ready to send our Chess team, the DPAC Attack, to the Chess National Elementary Championships for four days in Nashville, TN in early May. Last year the team of 8 third through fifth graders took home 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Unrated Division. We wish them all the best and good luck in the competition. Also over the winter, for the second year in a row, the entire sixth grade took part in the technology program named Connected Learning. A NYCDOE initiative, this stellar grant program helps to bridge the digital and home/school connection by giving computers to all sixth grade students and their parents. The Saturday workshop they must attend to qualify for the hardware begins a link with the parent/guardian- student and school with the expectation of increasing learning outcomes and communication with the home and the classroom. This year over 125 families qualified for the free computers. Thanks Connected Learning, District 5 and the NYCDOE!

***It's Showtime At The Apollo – With CS 154 Students!***

*“If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive.” – Barry Lopez*

On Wednesday, March 21, 2012 our fifth grade students showed how much great care they took of the stories shared with them by our community’s Significant Elders. Our students participated in the culminating performance of this year’s Apollo Oral History Program, appropriately titled, *Living History*, on the stage of the infamous Apollo Theater. What an honor for these youngsters to have graced the same stage as Apollo legends such as: Nat King Cole, Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, Michael Jackson and more!

The Oral History Project at CS 154 integrates the history of Harlem, Black culture and the Apollo Theater into the school’s existing curriculum. It also provides fourth and fifth grade students with the opportunity to learn how to conduct oral history interviews and use the collected information as content to create theatrical skits. This year, our fifth grade students had the opportunity to meet with members of the Significant Elders of Harlem three times. During these meetings, students were able to interview the Elders and ask them questions that helped them establish bonds and obtain knowledge about life in Harlem in the past and its connection to the present.

Working with a teaching artist, Mr. Alvin Keith, our students learned about various aspects of theater production including: set and costume design, stage managing, marketing and acting! On that Wednesday, they were delighted to share all of this year’s hard work on the stage to an audience that included important community members like our superintendent, Ms. Gale Reeves, our principal, Ms. Elizabeth Jarrett, our partner community based organization Harlem Commonwealth Council CEO, Dr. Joseph Tait and of course, the Significant Elders themselves.

The students courageously acted, danced and sang on that awesome stage and did a fantastic job! Kudos to our fifth grade teachers: Ms. Tiawana King, Ms. Yvonne LaRoche and Ms. Zeniaf Myers as well the Apollo Theater Education Staff including: Ms. Shirley Taylor, Director of Education; Ms. Debbie Ardemento, Education Manager; Mr. Alvin Keith, Teaching Artist; Ms. Julia Taylor, Teaching Artist and Ms. Latia Miller, Project Intern, for their dedication and support of our young performers! Hope you can join us for next year’s performance!

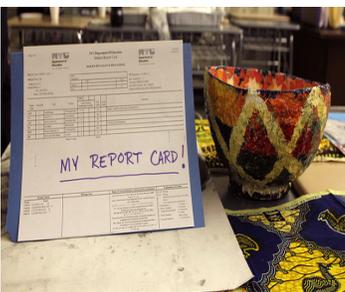


### *Harlem Renaissance High School Celebrates Student Achievement*



Lisandra and 10 other students were the stars of the Harlem Renaissance expo, a showcase of the work and achievements of the school's graduating seniors. Nadav Zeimer, a bespectacled former computer engineer and robotics coach, who took the helm at Harlem Renaissance in 2010, said the event served both as a shout-out to students and a way to engage them with the larger community.

Mr. Zeimer came up with the expo event in concert with PENCIL, a nonprofit organization that looks to boost student achievement by linking educators with business leaders.



From 4 to 6 p.m. on Friday, each classroom was transformed into an individual gallery space displaying various student projects. The students played host to family and community members who came to help

them celebrate their achievements. They displayed their best school work, photographs and collection of inspirational quotes. The whole time, videos chronicling their journeys were running on a screen. A jazz musician greeted guests at the school's entrance. They then went around from room to room, munching on snacks while watching videos and writing testimonials for the participating students.



Many students come to Harlem Renaissance after struggling at other schools, and the school itself has struggled recently. Harlem Renaissance is on the list of 33 schools targeted for "turnaround" according to a federally prescribed improvement plan for struggling schools. The designation has meant some instability for the school.

The videos were prepared by volunteers who interviewed the students about their best work — Kassandra Lugos, 19, spoke about her science project on osmosis and diffusion in an egg – and then involved them in the video editing process. And there are added pluses: students often use their video profiles to supplement college applications. Mr. Zeimer, known to the students as Mr. Z., said the videos had helped students land internships with corporations and government agencies.

"We have some powerful stories," he said of a school whose students have high poverty and truancy rates and who might be facing problems related to gang violence, teen pregnancy and depression. Harlem Renaissance has 225 students. But because many of them come to the school with spotty academic records, they have not followed a traditional academic path and not every senior will graduate at the end of the school year.

Many of the stories the students told in their videos were indeed emotional; some graduating students spoke of a lack of motivation, others of the anxiety of life in a new country. In a room decorated with a traditional African ceramic bowl and clippings of her favorite quotes, Diane Zoundi, a 19-year-old student from Ivory Coast, spoke about moving to the United States and learning English. "They make fun of you — of your accent, of the way you speak," she said. Diane transferred in from New World High School, where she said she failed her Regents exams. Sticking her tongue out when smiling, she bragged that she had passed her remaining four Regents in January. She said she had applied to several colleges, including John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Monroe College.

Among those gathered to celebrate Diane were the parents of her best friend, Bernadette Dravie, who is from Togo. "She's evolved," Sassou Dravie, Bernadette's father, said in French. "When you change, you get better." The mother, Louise Dravie, who embraced Diane after her video, said she was a big believer in education. "Why sit at home?" Mrs. Dravie said. "I would want Bernadette to go to school even if she was gray-haired."

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**"Leadership We Can  
Count On"**

**We're on the Web!**  
<http://csd5.nycdoe.org>

***District 5 Annual  
STEM EXPO***

***Super Saturday! Science,  
Technology, Engineering  
and Math Expo!!***

***(Grades PK – 12) Schools  
have the opportunity to ex-  
hibit STEM projects!***



***Saturday, May 19, 2012  
10:00am—3:00pm***

***PAL Harlem 369th Armory  
One West 142<sup>nd</sup> Street  
New York, New York 10037  
(212) 749 - 1570  
or  
(212) 769 - 7500 X 236***

***Harlem Renaissance High School Celebrates Student Achievement  
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In her video, Diane also introduced what she referred to as her new “boyfriend,” a dictionary given to her by Miguel Vasquez, the parent coordinator at New World High School. Mr. Vasquez, who has a boxer’s nose and a philosopher’s manner, said: “I told her, ‘He won’t leave you, won’t let you go, but don’t play him dirty.’”

Another student, Maya Bedell, 17, who had transferred from Frederick Douglass Academy, was gluing together a collage of her childhood photographs for her gallery. She said she wasn’t applying to college this year because of financial constraints and because she was “too nervous.” But Maya, who wants to be a nurse, said that Harlem Renaissance had helped her change her mindset. “Before, I just wasn’t motivated,” she said. “Now I am my own support system.”

Lindsay Heinlein, who is partnership coordinator for PENCIL, said she hoped other schools would adopt the expo idea, particularly the emphasis on using video to tell a student’s story.

The school’s “turnaround” designation means that the school may lose up to half its teachers, and since some of them are so involved in the expo, it is unclear how the program will change in the future. But the “turnaround” designation won’t deter the school from trying out new ideas, said Mr. Zeimer. “We don’t really care if we’re turnaround or not. We’ll get a new name, have to do a little extra paperwork, but we’re committed to improving the school independent of that.”

***April is National Poetry Month!***

April is National Poetry Month, 30 days of celebrating the creativity, expressiveness, and joy of poetry! National Poetry Month is a celebration of poetry as a way to increase awareness and appreciation of poetry in the United States. Every year, in the month of April, National Poetry Month is celebrated throughout the United States and in various countries worldwide.

In honor of National Poetry Month, how do you plan to celebrate poets and their craft? There are many different suggestions including:

- ◆ Introducing students to a variety of poetic forms.
- ◆ Assign one or two students each day as "Poet of the Day" for the month of April.
- ◆ Provide students with several models for creating different forms of poetry including: Shape Poems, Acrostic Poems, Diamante Poems, or Instant Poetry Forms.
- ◆ Participate in “Poem in Your Pocket” Day (April 26, 2012) by carrying your favorite poem around with you to share with everyone you meet!

To learn more about National Poetry Month, and for more ideas on how to celebrate it in your school or classroom, visit the following website:

**<http://www.readingrockets.org/calendar/poetry/>**