



## COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2017

### P.S./M.S. 188 The Island School

#### *New York City School Blends High Expectations with Trauma-Informed Practices*

**W**hen parents at P.S./M.S. 188 The Island School wanted to know more about what their children were learning in Math, they brought the issue before the School Leadership Team. From that point, a variety of partners and volunteers jumped into action to organize an evening Math Fair for parents and children.

At that event, math experts created centers focusing on different skills, and the Parent Engagement Committee got the word out about the event. The Educational Alliance, one of the school's lead partners, along with the Borough of Manhattan Community College, provided staff members for the evening. Sports and Arts in Schools Foundation (SASF), the other lead partner, organized the dinner. School administrators and teachers were also involved. The event drew over 200 participants. Monthly fairs in other subject areas, which Principal Suany Ramos calls "vital school-community partner collaborations," have been an effective way to reach out to individual parents.

This well-orchestrated focus on curriculum is just one example of how The Island School's entire school community works toward a common goal and demonstrates why the



#### Awardee At-A-Glance

**Location:** New York, NY

**School District:** New York City Public Schools

**Grade Levels:** PreK-8

**Number of Students:** 451

**Race/Ethnicity:** African American – 30%, Asian – 2%, Hispanic – 64%

**ELL Students:** 16%

**Special Education:** 29%

**Free/Reduced Lunch:** 100%



school is seeing consistent progress in attendance, academics, and parent engagement.

Located on Manhattan's Lower East Side, The Island School serves 451 students, nearly all of whom qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and live in public housing or the adjacent shelter for homeless families. Despite these challenging circumstances, students are showing academic growth and developing their talents. In 2001, the school adopted The Schoolwide Enrichment Model, and with support from federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funding and ExpandedED Schools, the school initiated an 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. whole-school extended day program implemented by school leaders in collaboration with the school's community partners.

P.S./M.S. 188's Community School Planning Team includes several subcommittees focusing on identified areas of need. Together they review multiple sources of data ranging from attendance, stakeholder surveys, and event feedback, to academic assessments, in order to determine intervention and enrichment programs needed, and students most-at-risk.

The Island School is open six days a week, holidays, and summer, providing parents access to a variety of programs and opportunities. "Parents have confidence

in the extended day program for their children and can access building facilities and staff, such as the parent computer lab, a health center, and on-site clinical social workers. The 100 year-old building is a well-equipped, safe and welcoming space where parents are respected and supported," says Jerred Jones, Community School Director, an SASF employee.

9<sup>th</sup> Period Academic Challenge, which takes place as part of the extended day program, is one example of how the School Leadership Team responded to students' needs for additional instructional time. Students are grouped based on multiple measures of performance and receive instruction targeted to their needs from both certified teachers and community educators hired by The Educational Alliance. Originally focusing on middle school English Language Arts and Math, Academic Challenge is now available for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students as well.

Many students at 188 struggle with chronic absenteeism. To help students improve their attendance, the Attendance Team meets weekly, identifying student needs and planning targeted supports. AmeriCorps mentors and Masters of Social Work interns provide one-to-one services along with attendance case workers and school guidance counsellors.



Partners also collaborate with school staff to provide NYPD Mentoring, educational field trips and exposure to STEM and arts activities in order to give students equitable access to experiences that can prepare them for high school and college.

## Providing a sanctuary

With much of the school's population experiencing unstable living arrangements, the Island School places a strong emphasis on supporting the needs of families. "By being a community school, we are able to be a 'one-stop' center for our families so they are able to obtain all the necessary resources," says Parent Coordinator Mirta Rosales. These services include case management, legal services, ESL classes, employment services, and finance and nutrition classes.

A primary goal of the school has been to transform parent engagement by recognizing that parents are experts in their own community and key partners in decision making. Their knowledge provides the school and community with vital resources. Parent leaders have assumed responsibility for leading workshops, steering the School Leadership Team and providing one-to-one supports for individual families.

One example is the Parent Outreach Team created by Principal Ramos. It includes staff members, administrators, and community-based providers who greet students and parents during arrivals, dismissal, and lunch every day. Their consistent presence has fostered ongoing communication with parents, allowing for closer ties and a better understanding of student needs. This face-to-face approach extends beyond school walls into the community when staff members visit parents in their homes and in the community where they gather.

School staff members are using trauma-informed practices in working with children and families. Specifically, with funding from Deutsche Bank, all staff members are being trained in the Sanctuary Model which focuses on addressing the effects of exposure to trauma. Island School teachers and community educators have also been trained in RULER to support Social Emo-

tional Learning in classrooms and after school groups.

As part of the recently launched NYC DOE Community School Initiative, The Island School now has wider access to a network of resources and support. For example, NYC DOE Office of Community Schools staff provide on-site support and trainings. In collaboration with The Children's Aid Society, the Office of Community Schools staff conduct monthly director meetings where participants share best practices, discuss data and find out about additional opportunities for students and families. Families, for example, received winter coats and eyeglasses through partnerships developed through the DOE's Office of Community Schools.

"The successes at P.S./M.S. 188 Island School demonstrate the effectiveness of the Community School strategy. These supports," Ramos says, "have enabled us to provide more targeted and intensive services making the critical difference for students and families."

### Key Results

Received "Excellent" (*top 25<sup>th</sup> percentile*) in both "Growth on Tests" and "Closing the Achievement Gap" from 2016 NYCDOE Quality Snapshot.

ELA scores increased from 6% in 12/13 to 15% in 15/16.

Math scores increased from 10% in 12/13 to 22% in 15/16.

Chronic absenteeism is down from 49% in 14/15 to 33% currently (16/17).

99% of parents responded positively to questions about strong family-community ties.

100% of parents feel that teachers understand their problems and concerns.

100% of teachers say they work closely with families to meet students needs.

Points of contact with parents increased from 874 in 14/15 to 975 in 15/16.



## ABOUT THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Since 2006, the Coalition for Community Schools, an initiative of the Institute for Educational Leadership, has highlighted the effectiveness and power of community schools across the country. The Awards for Excellence, distributed every two years, highlight schools and initiatives that have become the hub of their neighborhood, created partnerships for better learning, and responded to the unique needs of their students and families so all young people learn and thrive.

This year's winners were judged on the strength of their partnerships, ability to align supports and opportunities with the school's or initiative's core mission, engagement of families and the community, commitment to equity, creation of sustainable policy and finance structures, and powerful results.

On behalf of the Coalition for Community Schools Steering Committee, the Awards Selection Committee, and Staff, congratulations to all of our 2017 Award winners!

**Community School Initiative Winners:** Community Achieves (Nashville, TN), NYC Community School Initiative (New York, NY). **Neighborhood Community School Initiative Winner:** Enlace Chicago (IL); **Community School Winners:** Oakland (CA) International High School, Pearl-Cohn Entertainment Magnet High School (Nashville, TN), P.S./M.S. 188 The Island School (New York, NY).

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