

# OPEN

“OFFERING PARENTS EDUCATION NEWS”



## Chancellor Fariña and First Lady Chirlane McCray meet with CEC Members

Chancellor Carmen Fariña had her first meeting with members of New York City’s Education Councils. She announced that Jesse Mojica, Executive Director of the Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) will now report directly to her. This shift in protocol reflects the Chancellor’s commitment to “change the dynamic of where we place parents on the education spectrum.” Mayor de Blasio has stated his intention to put parents first, and Chancellor Fariña is committed to and passionate about honoring his mission.

Her top priorities include: middle schools (she has already visited sixteen), parent involvement, and English Language Learners (ELL)/ Special Needs students. The Chancellor also praised some of the phenomenal staff in Special Education. In terms of parent involvement, Chancellor Fariña spoke of moving “beyond the bake sale” and encouraging parents to ask themselves, “How can I help other parents?”

Another key message she had for parents was, “You matter more than you think you do...as a parent you should be your child’s advocate. Your voice counts!” The message of getting involved and working together so that our individual and collective needs as parents are met came across powerfully.

The Chancellor was also sensitive to the needs of non-traditional families. In today’s world there may be several people raising children, not just parents. Support and acceptance is necessary for all of us to work together to elevate our education system.

Some of her key announcements included her Book of the Month Club. Chancellor Fariña’s debut selection is *I Will Make Miracles* by Susie Morgenstern. On her first day on the job, she symbolically taped over the “I” so that it now reads “We.”

And so the story begins... ”



(L - R) FACE Exec.Dir. Jesse Mojica and Chancellor Carmen Fariña listen to First Lady Chirlane McCray’s remarks to CEC members.



CEC Member Pamela Johnson speaks with Jose Vasquez and Paola deKock from FACE.

**Special Note!**  
**Financial Training For CEC Members**  
**And Administrative Assistants**  
**Details on page 6**

# A Note from Carmen Fariña

Chancellor,  
New York City Public Schools



## Welcome to the first issue of OPEN

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the first edition of OPEN: The Source for Parents. OPEN stands for “Offering Parents Education News.” More than just information, this newsletter is meant to build stronger and tighter connections between the families of New York City public school students and the Department of Education (DOE) charged with serving you. I know how motivated you are to help your child, but I also understand that the DOE must meet you more than halfway by providing you with the tools you need to help your child excel in school and beyond. That’s why I am so excited about sharing news, events, and ideas with you through this monthly newsletter.

So much of our shared past success and what we can do going forward starts with Parent Leadership. That’s why we will spotlight a Parent Leader and a Parent Coordinator in each issue. If you are interested in being profiled, or would like to suggest someone please contact the Division of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) at [face@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:face@schools.nyc.gov) or 212-374-4118. In each issue, you’ll find notes on recent Parent Academy events, and information on upcoming ones. At each event we will include index cards -- “Carmen’s Cards”-- upon which you can provide feedback to me. FACE will make sure I receive the cards after each event.

We are also committed to keeping you involved in the DOE decision-making process by providing timely reports on my meetings with the Community Education Councils (CEC) and the Chancellor’s Parent Advisory Council (CPAC). We hope this will inspire you to attend these meetings, since this is one of the most influential ways you can shape your child’s education and DOE policy. Please stay in close touch with the FACE office via phone or e-mail, and we hope to see you at our scheduled events and meetings. Together, I know we can collaborate on creating a bright future for our children.

Let’s start the conversation, and keep it going.

Sincerely,

Chancellor Carmen Fariña  
New York City Department of Education

### **\*District 27 Town Hall**

**District 27 CEC presents:  
A Town Hall with Chancellor Fariña  
Details on page 6**

\*Have a question, comment, suggestion or an item for the OPEN calendar? E-mail OPEN at: [FACE@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:FACE@schools.nyc.gov)



# Meet The Leaders

A monthly profile of leaders in our Public Schools



## Nick Comaianni President, CEC, District 24

### “Local and Vocal”

OPEN recently spoke with Nick Comaianni, President of Community Education Council 24 in Queens. He described D24 as very vocal.

“When something has to get done you might get one to two thousand people to show up at one meeting. They might bicker with each other, but if something serious were to happen my district does come out in full force to make their point.” He encouraged parents to get involved in their children’s education as best they can.

“My wife is PTA president at PS 113. We’ve been involved since our first child went into Pre-K. You can be involved in the increments you have the time for. Basically the CEC is a school board for all purposes. I see the opportunity to make policy decisions that could affect the education of my kids and other kids in the district.”

Mr. Comaianni believes the most important thing he has accomplished as CEC President is to help to relieve overcrowding. “District 24 is the most overcrowded district,” he said. “Over the last 10 years we have probably extended or built approximately 12 or 13 schools. We have pushed for these funds. We have located places for them to be built. We’re still the most overcrowded! But before we were the most *extremely* overcrowded.”

When asked about how he thought he’d look back on his years as a CEC President, he responded with deep feeling. “It’s been one of the greatest experiences of my life. I’ve been an adult for 27 years. And of those 27 years sixty percent of that time has been dedicated to education. So I take away with me a great experience – working with children, parents, and community. It’s just heartfelt. I’ll probably really miss it.” Ultimately, Mr. Comaianni had this advice for parents:

“Continue the fight. Make sure you never give up. It’s been sad; I’ve seen many districts literally give up and stay at the mercy of other people to make their decisions for them. Don’t stop fighting until you get what you want for your children.”

## Tracy McClaire Parent Coordinator, West Side Collaborative MS

### “Providing Her School with the Parent’s Perspective”

Tracy McClaire was kind enough to speak to OPEN about her intense—but intensely satisfying—work as Parent Coordinator.

“The fact that the PC role even exists has had an impact on families and schools because it is a validation that parents play an important role in their children’s education,” the Veteran PC told OPEN.

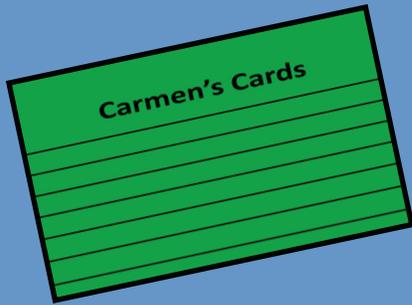
“My school—West Side Collaborative Middle School on Manhattan’s Upper West Side—is very committed to including parents in the learning experience of their children. For example, following a model established for teachers at my school, I was encouraged to take parents on a retreat off-site to help design tools to support other parents.”

We were curious what Ms. McClaire thinks the key to increased parental involvement is, and she told us, “The families of the 1.1 million students in NYC schools have just as many stories and experiences, and so it is important wherever possible to see them as individuals, not just profiles. That said, in order for schools to be successful learning environments, I believe that a school community must share common language and expectations with their families. So I see my work as building a bridge between home and school.”

“First and foremost I am a parent of two public school children,” Ms. McClaire said in discussing what motivates her as a Parent Coordinator. “I go to work every day prepared to do what I would want for my own children. As a member of a collaborative school structure, I am fortunate to be included in the various projects and school initiatives that impact students and their parents.

As the staff aligns curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards, develops adolescent development programs, and prepares students for high school, I design parent-friendly opportunities to learn about the school initiatives, and ways for parents to support their children at home.”

# This Month at CPAC



On January 9<sup>th</sup> Chancellor Fariña addressed the members of the Chancellor’s Parent Advisory Council (CPAC) and attendees. She handed out green index cards that will be specific to CPAC and requested that each member write down one top priority for their District. In this way she will be able to get the best sense of what the most pressing needs of each district are.

The Chancellor has also made a commitment to improve middle schools, and asked members to submit examples of the most outstanding ones. She looks forward to providing training and workshops for parents through the Parent Academy, in addition to training for Parent Coordinators. The Parent Academy will be an important tool in assisting parents in preparing for Parent/Teacher Conferences, understanding the Common Core Learning Standards, as well as discovering creative and effective ways to help struggling students.

The Chancellor went on to say how important parental involvement is to her, and expressed her unwavering commitment to improving communication between the Department and parents. In that spirit, building community will be a key focus of this administration. She emphasized the need for all those involved in the education of New York City children to come together as a community. “We need to look not for what is best for *my* children but for *our* children; while we need to improve literacy, we need to bring joy back into education as well,” she said. The Chancellor made clear that enthusiasm is what will motivate students, stressing that learning needs to become less of a chore and more of a passion.

## Presentations:

- Daiana Iqbal, Deputy Director of FACE, updated on the Biennial Survey
- Stacy Oliger, GED Graduation Requirement Update
- Mary Doyle, School Improvement Grant (SIF) and School Innovation Fund Grant (SIG)
- Debbie Lee Cohen, Cafeteria Culture
- Nancy Northrop Queens HS, C-30 Committee report



Chancellor Carmen Fariña presented her two recent appointees, Senior Deputy Chancellor Dorita Gibson and Deputy Chancellor for Teaching and Learning Phil Weinberg, to principals on January 29<sup>th</sup> at Brooklyn Tech.

# Parent Academy in January

**At PS 71  
Forest Elementary!**



**Parent Engagement  
from Queens**



**to Staten Island**

**At PS 54  
Charles W. Leng  
Elementary**



**Upcoming Parent Academy Events!**

**Saturday, March 1<sup>st</sup> Manhattan**

**Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup> Staten Island**

**Register Now!**

[www.eventbrite.com/nycparentacademy.com](http://www.eventbrite.com/nycparentacademy.com)





# February 2014 Calendar of Meetings & Events

For the complete 2013-2014 School Year Calendar, visit:  
[www.schools.nyc.gov](http://www.schools.nyc.gov)

## February 12

Panel on Education Policy Meeting (PEP)  
The Michael J. Petrides School  
715 Ocean Terrace  
Staten Island, NY 10301  
6PM - TBD

## CEC 01 Meeting

6PM - 9PM

## CEC 03 Calendar Meeting

6PM - 9PM

## CEC 04 Meeting

6PM - 9PM

## February 13

CEC 23 Town Hall with Chancellor Fariña  
The Waverly School of the Arts, PS 156/IS392  
104 Sutter Street Between Legion and Grafton  
Brooklyn, NY 11212  
6PM-7PM (CEC meeting to follow)

## CEC 05 Meeting

6PM - 9PM

## February 17

Washington's Birthday  
Central Offices Closed

## February 17 – February 21

Mid-winter Recess (Schools Closed)

## February 24

CEC 27 Town Hall with Chancellor Fariña  
The Goldie Maple School/PS 333  
365 Beach Street  
Arverne, NY 11692  
6PM-7PM (CEC meeting to follow)

## February 25

Financial Training for CEC Members  
and Administrative Assistants  
Tweed Courthouse, 52 Chambers St.  
New York, NY 10007  
2nd Floor Conference Room  
6PM - 8PM

## February 26

Middle School EVENING Parent/Teacher Conference

## February 27

Middle School - AFTERNOON Parent/Teacher Conference  
Citywide Council on Special Education- Calendar Meeting  
6:30PM - 9PM

Have an event for parents that you want to put on  
the OPEN calendar?

Email details to [FACE@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:FACE@schools.nyc.gov)