Dear Cahn Alumni,

As we step into this new school year with the sunlight of a restorative summer at our backs, I’m reminded of a story one of the 2011 Cahn Fellows shared during the Summer Leadership Institute:

Her small high school in Brooklyn had a growing Special Education population, where over 25% of the incoming class had IEPs. With this dramatic shift, this outstanding leader realized that the school had to adjust its instructional programming to meet the needs of this growing population.

First, she set out to understand some basic aspects of the world of Special Education - classification, related services and providers, etc. “Our intent was to no longer treat these students as if they were different and could not achieve success at the highest level.”

The principal held monthly meetings with all Special Education students and their teachers to identify and monitor their goals. “Our students’ voices were a major factor in designing the process that would support their ability to be successful in the classroom.” Through small successes, students gained a level of confidence that was evident in their classroom performance and participation on school teams and programs.

Teachers, support staff and the administrative team provided individual support and skills classes in English and math for students with IEPs. The school created a culture of academic and social development support that transformed not only how students with IEPs, but how all students approached school.

At the end of the year, 94% of IEP students passed their basic competency exams and 73% earned a score of 65% or greater on their Living Environment and Math A Regents exams. After four years, 14 of the 28 students with IEPs were still classified and 13 of those students graduated and are heading to college.

This outstanding leader committed to a plan of action and the students, that some see as unable to achieve at a high level, reaped the benefits of that vision and commitment.

When Robin Pitts shared her story this summer, her colleagues benefitted not only hearing about what she put in place; they also were able to hear a story that they live every day and gain energy from knowing that they are in fellowship with leaders like themselves.

This benefit of fellowship - “The discussions with Cahn Fellow peers and advisors that provide valuable resources, insights and perspectives to broaden our understanding, to overcome fears and take risks and to foster innovation in our schools,” as stated by Melessa Avery (CF 10) - can only happen with you and among you.

The Cahn Alumni Network (CAN) thrives, thanks in large part to your generous donations. This year 32% of the alumni contributed and the 2006 cohort, with 40% giving, was the most generous of all! As special thanks, we will send a special dinner invitation to members of that Cohort this fall. We will reach out to you in the coming weeks with the details.

I look forward to seeing you at CAN events in the year ahead.
FROM THE BOARD: KEEPING CURRENT
Book of the Month Titles to Match the 4 I’s
By Carmen Farina
Cahn Fellows Program Board Member and Former NYC Deputy Chancellor of Schools

It was a pleasure to be with the 2011 cohort of Cahn Fellows at the Summer Leadership Institute and hearing their enthusiasm for their yearlong challenge project ahead.

Several Fellows requested Book of the Month titles to match the 4 I’s so I expanded on what I presented and hope will be helpful in starting off your new school year.

I love September because all things are possible and wish all Cahn Fellows and Alumni the joy of new beginnings!

Let me know if you uncover some great titles for this list and I will forward them on!

1. Intellectual Curiosity & Deep Inquiry - My favorite book that emphasizes the importance of correct questions to ask is Jon Muth’s “The Three Questions.” The questions the book poses are based on eternal philosophical issues but have relevance for today’s educational system.

“When is the best time to do things?” tackles issues of scheduling, reporting to parents and test prep, which elicits a lot of conversation. “Who is the Most Important One?” We must move teachers to understand that to have a great school, students must come first. “What is the right thing to do?” Pick a current topic in your school and have small communities come up with different solutions.

For teachers, “The OK Book,” by Amy Frouse Rosenthal might encourage conversation on how they might share their best practices with each other and even plan for regular team teaching on strategies they might excel in. Principals can share their talents as well. Pick something you love teaching and do it in every classroom.

2. Individualization and Interpersonal Relations - Regardless of data the results and solutions differ greatly from student to student and teacher to teacher. “Giraffes Don’t Dance” by Giles Andreae and Guy Parker-Rees is a wonderful book to help us lead conversation around differentiating our teaching and administrative practices.

There are many ways to encourage teachers to understand that “sometimes when you are different, you just need a different song.” Grouping is a crucial teaching tool not being used enough in our schools.

Another great book on this topic is “Calvin Can’t Fly” by Jennifer Berne, which emphasizes how reading can make you independent but ultimately you still need to rely on each other.

3. Independence - “Courage” by Bernard Waber can encourage reader and listener to make a list of things they wish to become more independent in pursuing. Encouraging risk-taking is a big part of moving everyone towards self-sufficiency.

“Chrysanthemum” or any book by Kevin Kenkes can be made personal and delivers a strong message on making every moment we teach count. We do have a big impact on the life of our students, let’s use it wisely.

“For teachers, “The OK Book,” by Amy Frouse Rosenthal might encourage conversation on how they might share their best practices with each other and even plan for regular team teaching on strategies they might excel in. Principals can share their talents as well. Pick something you love teaching and do it in every classroom.

4. Inspiration - Any book by Jodi Hill, interweaving your school’s narrative onto each page will personalize the pep talk for the opening of school.

I love the new book by Joyce Sidman, “The is Just to Say: Poems of Apology and Forgiveness.” Certainly, this is a topic we all need and can be a great writing mentor text. High School principals should not shy away from using picture books. They are great fun to read and easier to digest than sermons.
FELLOW FEEDBACK
Participants Respond To The Summer Leadership Institute and the Gettysburg Tour

“Clear leadership theories, reflective community examples and decision-making strategies; inspirational team building activities and concise steps on how to develop the challenge project and internalize leadership styles and change.”

Yolanda Mendez, Roberto Clemente

“Discovery and applicable hands-on learning about innovative practices, tools and partnerships available now; real world practice so many ideas that we could try out and use back at school.”

Danielle Guinta, P.S. 154

“Excellent forum to share best practices and experiences with other principals; working together in groups is invaluable.”

Anthony Barbetta
Thomas Edison High School

“Understanding Action Learning Conversations and our NBIs, making connections in a transparent, safe and honest environment; building community and respect as leaders is a part of building culture.”

Jie Zhang
Queens High School for Science

JOIN THE NEW 2011 CAHN FELLOWS PROGRAM BLOG: LEARNING FROM LINCOLN
By Colleen Dulcey
P.S. 326 Principal and Cahn Fellow 2011

After returning home from our Gettysburg trip, I was literally going through withdrawal missing my newfound Cahn Fellow buddies and thought, wouldn’t it be great if we had a blog to keep us connected during our fellowship year?

A Cahn Fellows Program Blog would remind us of our leadership journey in Gettysburg as well as our school challenges, while also keeping us in conversation. Check out the book, Learning from Lincoln by Harvey Alvy and Pam Robbins (www.ascd.org), which I am recommending as the focus of our blog. The book helps connect what we learned about Abraham Lincoln and offers exercises which can help in reflecting on the past and direct our efforts on the future.

The entire 2011 cohort, Cahn Fellow board members and staff have been sent an invitation which contains a link that takes you to a Google log in page.

Basically it’s for every one so we all can participate fully in constructing the content of this blog. When you log onto the blog, you can read the insightful comments posted.

If you would like to change the topic, hit the tab in the upper right hand corner. Participate in the conversation and add your thoughts to the blog. Post anytime, day or night, and let’s stay connected!

Any questions, email me at cducey@schools.nyc.gov or at cmducey@gmail.com

To visit our 2011 Cahn Fellows Program: Learning from Lincoln blog, follow the link below: http://learningfromlincoln.blogspot.com/?psinvite=ALRopfUkzBHotwikjU080nMz8uGtVZti8Sztj2VVK2qrYkeqJVOvDmyqfYr7B1i5jKRmrz03h2LFbCOI8PYDaLTHxIsWw6A

It's in the CAN
LEONG LEADERSHIP JOURNEY:
From High School Student to English Teacher, School Principal and Cahn Fellow
By April Leong
Liberation Plus Diploma High School Founding Principal and 2011 Cahn Fellow

I am so proud to say that it was another Cahn Fellow, Phil Weinberg, now principal of High School of Telecommunications Arts and Technology (CF 2007), who was one of my special teachers and school leaders. Phil not only motivated me to succeed but he also sparked my special interest in English. I always loved to read and write, but he was the first to validate my work and encourage me to share my writing.

Phil Weinberg, Cahn Fellow 2007
HS Telecommunications Arts

I have such a vivid memory of being really stressed out and nervous about reading a part from "West Side Story." Phil was especially patient. If you knew me back then, you would know it was impossible to make me do something I didn't want to do! There are many other memories about his teaching and his leadership but they all tell the same story; that Phil Weinberg was a great teacher. He saw beyond my anger with the world (thank you Phil!) and saw me as a successful student and future leader.

When I sit and reflect on my present role as founding principal of Liberation Plus Diploma High School in Brooklyn, there are so many thoughts and laughs that go through my mind as I think about my leadership journey. I could never have imagined when I was a high school student that I would one day become a high school principal or a Cahn Fellow.

My life was in such turmoil then and my attitude often reflected that. I was lucky to get through high school because I was "smart" but there were many distractions that could have easily led me, like so many of my students today, to dropping out of school.

Beyond being "smart" and having an internal motivation to survive my circumstances, there were also external motivators that gave me what I needed to graduate. Those external motivators were a few teachers and administrators who truly believed in me and knew even then that I would become a leader.

April Leong
Cahn Fellow 2011

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With degrees from Baruch, the College of St. Rose and Brooklyn College, I started my career as an English teacher and family group advisor in District 79. As a teacher at High School Redirection, I was awarded the Allan Houston My Teacher is My Hero Award, and was responsible for creating many innovative programs in youth development and community service.

I then became an integral member of the team that brought the nationally recognized member of Alternative High School Initiative, Diploma Plus to New York City. As an Assistant Principal, I transformed two underperforming suspension sites and received awards for outstanding leadership from the staff, principal and superintendent. I then conceived and founded my current alternative high school, where I am a strong advocate, educator, family, community supporter and school leader.

I am excited about being inducted as a Cahn Fellow but am more humbled by the fact that I am joining great educators like Phil Weinberg, who I have known and respected since I was a high school student.

I now look forward to continuing my leadership journey with my cohort of Cahn Fellows, and am eager to learn from the some of the greatest school leaders in New York City.
A true highlight of the Cahn Fellows Program is when Board Member Carmen Farina opens her Cobble Hill home to us. The time that we spend together at what has become our annual Cahn Fellows and Alumni Spring Reception in May is always wonderful!

How great it is sharing thoughts and ideas with a true educator. Carmen strategically invites a variety of high-profile guests who listen to and discuss our concerns and celebrate our successes.

Carmen always empowers, energizes and motivates while graciously entertaining with her husband, Tony. To be in her presence is very special. She embraces Cahn Fellows and Alumni with a spirit of hope and shares her expertise and knowledge in a hands-on, practical way. You can’t help but learn in her company! While indulging in delicious hors d’oeuvres and good drink, you find yourself engaged in conversation on current events and issues related to our schools.

Among the many Cahn Fellows and Alumni who attended the reception were Brooklyn Technical High School Principal Randy Asher (CF 10) who grew up with Carmen’s daughter, Marisa Farina; Millennium High School Principal Carmen Farina, Millennium High School Principal

Robert Rhodes (CF 08), recently retired Principal of The Beach Street School Linda Beal-Benigno (CF 10).

Carmen almost always engaged in conversation on current events and issues related to our schools. She almost always bestows gifts upon her guests. She sometimes gives her treasured books to the principal she believes will enjoy or benefit from them most. Clearly sensing what each person not only wants but needs.

New York City Public Advocate Bill De Blasio graciously accepted Carmen’s invitation to the Spring Reception. He spoke to many of us before gathering a large group of Cahn Fellows on the terrace overlooking Governor’s Island to hear out voices and ask us some probing questions.

De Blasio wanted to know what principals school system and shared his views and concerns about the children of New York City. It is so important that we have elected officials understand our needs and our struggles as school leaders.

As Cahn Fellows and Alumni, we can always rely on Carmen to bring us together with individuals who can help us improve our schools. It is no wonder that Carmen is especially loved and respected by not only Cahn Fellows, but educators throughout New York City.
STRATEGIC SCHOOL LEADERSHIP FROM SWEDEN TO AMERICA:
Cahn Fellow Principals Sense a Need or the Possibility to Be Better

By Mike Powers, The Stockholm School of Music/Kungsholmen’s Gymnasium

When I asked my colleagues from Sweden what they thought of the New York City principals and Cahn Fellows we visited recently, there was general agreement that we had met two fantastic school leaders, Randy Asher (2010 Cahn Fellow) from Brooklyn Technical High School and Valerie Reidy (2007 Cahn Fellow) from Bronx High School of Science.

But the whole point of the Cahn Fellowship Program as we understood it was just that - even good principals could be better. The question was how? We had the opportunity to visit their schools as well as the chance to sit in on a 2010 cohort study session at Teachers College in May.

The effects of the Cahn Fellows Program, the recognition itself of the excellence demonstrated by being chosen as a good leader was an incentive to develop further. And we believe each participating principal saw it as an opportunity to take time, reflect and identify an area to be even better.

During the Fellows’ study session, we observed at a distance their sensitive, self-critical discussions. There was an atmosphere of openness, trust and appreciation for being able to discuss a problem - where a Fellow could sense an area to be improved without being able to put their finger on it. The methods being used seemed appropriate for their challenges. Cahn Fellows made the commitment to be there because they sensed a need or a possibility to be better.

The self-identification of areas for improvement through small group dialogue and reflection was recognizable. It’s typical that busy school leaders found it difficult to give priority to their own personal development. You deal with it when you get to it. But what was different to us was the selection process for these American educators.

In Sweden, in-service training of principals is general rather than selective. All school leaders are somehow equally expected to improve. Our dilemma about mixed ability groups was also present when we asked Cahn Program Director Krista Dunbar to arrange two school visits with very selective students at Bronx Science and Brooklyn Tech.

We were most impressed by the efforts of both principals and schools to draw attention to student achievement and to the resourcefulness of involving Alumni in the continued work of the schools. Valerie Reidy’s proud display of Bronx Science’s Alumni Nobel Prize Recipients and Randy Asher’s initiatives with Brooklyn Tech Alumni were more than impactful.

Although Stockholm may be the home of the Nobel Prize, we are as yet unable to boast of any Nobel laureates among our former students from the Kungsholmen’s Gymnasium/The Stockholm School of Music. But we could do a lot more to highlight their achievements and inspire others as these American principals did.

Yet the competition to enter our own Swedish school is similar. Our challenge is also to find ways of satisfying students’ needs and furthering their individual development.

As strategic school leaders and Cahn Fellows, Asher and Reidy were keen on the challenge project they had taken. During our school visits, I noticed how encouraging the principals were to all the staff and students—always telling us how important the individual was. You could see them beam when they were praised in public, they were noticed. We refer to this as “management by walking” - being visible in your organization. There seemed to be a focus on results and achievements, as well as a permissible, allowing atmosphere.

When it came to evaluating teaching practice, both principals showed respect for the professionalism of their teachers, backed up by the basic question of “Why” about content and method.

Cahn Faculty Advisor Victoria Marsick explained to us that the program’s aim is to “offer a leadership development opportunity.” She added with emphasis that, “it is not enough to identify the problem. The Challenge is to continue and to solve it.”
The team can also compare classes against one another with the ability to disaggregate data (for example, removing ELL’s or special education students) in order to identify trends to better align teaching across the department.

While the focus of Nancy Love’s work (Collaborative Inquiry into Student Learning, 2002) is on examining data, she cautions early on that “nothing changes if classrooms don’t change; school reform must impact teaching and learning. This inquiry cycle is geared toward improving instruction. Love sees data inquiry as a collaborative and iterative cycle.

A cycle calls for planners, including administrators and teachers, to commit to student learning, collect and analyze data, formulate learner-centered problems, set measurable learning goals, develop a learner-centered action plan, take action, monitor results, and start again.

Many times, the data is not summarized or reported in any fashion that could be easily accessed by school personnel and no centralized reporting system is in place beyond raw ATS downloads.

Once schools have the opportunity to download this data they can examine the results by exam, question, student, teacher, and grade level. This data has significant potential to assist teachers conduct item analysis of student learning and plan intervention efforts for the students that failed this exam and identify core weaknesses in instruction so that teachers can plan for September and beyond.

Unfortunately, the speed at which the data comes at the school and the teacher and the sheer unfiltered volume of the data pose significant problems for schools as they attempt to assist with student achievement as well as plan and prepare lessons based upon acute knowledge of the data.

Whatever reforms may be made to the No Child Left Behind Act, district- and school-level data will remain the focus of attention. Educators will need to disaggregate achievement data, track progress of all students over time, and examine assessment results to identify problems and plan appropriate instructional interventions.
Over the past year, I have worked closely with Program Director Krista Dunbar and the Cahn Alumni Network (CAN) on the development of Cahnections, a model for current Principals and Cahn Alumni to share expertise and best practices.

The idea for Cahnections grew out of my current roles as mentor and consultant for supervisory support for Children First Network (CFN) 201 and Cluster 2, and as a member of the Cahn Alumni and Selection Committees.

I often find myself working with school leaders who have developing innovative practices, while at the same time with principals who are challenged by these very issues.

It occurred to me if we linked the successful innovators with those struggling with challenges, we could develop powerful Cahnections between skilled effective practitioners and those seeking to expand their knowledge, strategies and leadership skills.

Testing the model in June, I arranged for two second year principals I work with, Donna Delfyett-White of Law and Government High School and Rosemarie Omard of Humanities and the Arts High School (both housed at Campus Magnet High Schools in Queens and part of Cluster 2/CFN 201 for which I provide supervisory support), to join me in a visit to Principal Pat Tubridy (2010 Cahn Fellow) at Channel View High School. The idea for the visit was rooted in my Cahn Selection Committee visit to Channel View in 2010. I was impressed with Tubridy’s unique programming model which provided time for both intensive student work and extensive professional development initiatives. Both of these are important priorities at Law and Government and Humanities. The visit was most productive for all present and indicative of the benefits a full-fledged Cahnections program could provide to both Fellows and other sitting principals.

As a next step, we have asked Cahn Alumni and Fellows to complete an emailed survey that will allow us to collate areas of expertise with areas of need.

With this information, we hope to fully implement Cahnections during the 2011-2012 school year. We look forward to working closely with Cahn Alumni and Fellows who are committed to developing this Cahnections initiative.

If you would like to join us as we develop and expand Cahnections, feel free to contact me at jscherr@schools.nyc.gov. Please complete the survey if you have not yet done so at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NDDP63K

We welcome your participation and support. Working and learning together, we can all begin to make powerful Cahnections!
The summer enrichment program at M.S. 223 in the Bronx, which just finished its first year, is the brainchild of Principal Ramon Gonzalez (Cahn Fellow 2007), who has gained a reputation as a leader in public school management since he opened the school in 2003.

Gonzalez has touted initiatives to increase literacy and parental involvement to school community members throughout District 7, which is largely poor and low-performing. Now he is trying to turn District 7’s attention toward arts education, at a time when many schools are facing cuts to their art and music teaching positions.

He is asking a handful of New York City principals and Cahn Fellows to help him write a large grant to fund free after school and summer school arts education at multiple schools in future years.

Gonzalez said he wanted to create a summer program for his students that would address the learning-loss that some students, particularly those from low-income households, experience between June and September. He hoped offering afternoon classes in painting, printmaking and orchestral music—in addition to trips to Broadway shows and the Museum of Modern Art— would bring the students back each day, even though the classes were not mandatory.

Rather than try to carve $85,000 out of M.S 223’s tight budget, he leveraged his connections— augmented after this spring’s appearance in the New York Times Magazine—to win funding.

So Gonzalez approached this summer’s pilot program with a hypothesis: If you offer students quality arts education during the summer, then they will be more likely practice reading and math outside of the school year. Gonzalez wants other principals to help him prove the point, so he is recruiting them to join him in offering arts integration programs outside the school day.

“His focus on trying to use arts to raise reading scores is really good,” said Mary Padilla (2004 Cahn Fellow), principal of P.S. 5, who visited M.S. 223 for a tour of the summer program. “We need to do things differently than other districts because of all the high needs our students have. We have parents who are standing on unemployment lines, on food stamp lines. They don’t have the time to take kids to museums.”

Padilla, who sent four graduating fifth-grade students from her elementary school to M.S. 223 this year, left the school impressed by what she heard. “You had over 100 kids participating in his summer arts program in a heat wave, on a Friday, at one o’clock in the afternoon,” she said. “This is August, when kids want to take a break and put their feet up, and these kids were in work mode.”

Gonzalez pitched the program to eight other principals and approached donors with his expansion plans for September. Most of the principals hail from Bronx and Harlem public schools which are outside of M.S. 223’s Support Network within the Department of Education, Gonzalez said, so collaborations like this one are his only opportunity to interact with them.

“You need a good body of people to effect change,” he said. “It’s the activist in me. We need to create the model to drive instruction, because this is not being done by outsiders.”
PENCIL PARTNERSHIP GIVES BOOST TO LONG ISLAND CITY HIGH SCHOOL CULINARY ARTS PROGRAM

Principal Partnerships Impact New York City Schools
By Susan Foorotan, PENCIL Communications Director

A chef at B.R. Guest’s Wildwood BBQ gives culinary arts students from Long Island City High School a tour of the kitchen.

As fall approaches, PENCIL is seeking new school partnerships for the coming year. The PENCIL Partnership Program builds and supports customized relationships between private sector leaders and principals, providing a flexible yet structured way for members of the business community to contribute and leverage their unique expertise and resources to help meet school needs.

For Long Island City High School (LICHS) in Queens, a PENCIL Partnership with B.R. Guest Hospitality helped bring its culinary arts program to new heights. LICHS Culinary art students are learning more than cooking and pre-paring food; they are developing professional portfolios and learning the ins and outs of the restaurant business, thanks to LICHS Principal and 2010 Cahn Fellow Bill Bassell.

A legendary name in food and hospitality, B.R. Guest has worked with Bassell to increase career awareness and job preparedness for LICHS students. Through its PENCIL Partnership, a team from B.R. subjects from Guest holds workshops on interviewing to financial management, hosts restaurant visits, gives cooking demonstrations, and offers highly coveted paid summer internships for select students.

If you are a principal interested in beginning a PENCIL Partnership and want to learn more about how your school’s needs could be assisted by the program, go to www.PENCIL.org or call 646-638-0565 for more information.

SEEKS NEW YORK CITY TEACHERS TO SUPPORT ITS 2011-2012 EDUCATION INITIATIVES

By E4E Outreach Director Beth Doctor

Educators 4 Excellence (E4E) is always looking to connect with passionate educators across New York. Our organization of education professionals seek to provide an independent voice for educators in the debate surrounding education reform.

Our mission is to unite the education community around a shared set of goals, principles, beliefs, and actions which place student achievement first. As an independent nonprofit organization created by teachers, for teachers, E4E provides teachers with opportunities to learn more about education issues, network with like-minded educators, and take action on behalf of their students. In just over a year, 3,000 NYC educators have joined this grassroots, teacher-led movement committed to improving the education system. Principals interested in scheduling a free lunch or presentation at your school for your staff should call me at 212-279-8510 or to learn more and E4E, please visit: www.educators4excellence.org.
The summer months are a great time for Cahn Allies and Fellows to reflect on practices put in place throughout the year.

The 2011-2012 school year will prove to be challenging as we are all hoping to do more with less. Perhaps it will bring us back to a handcrafted, barebones, up-close approach to creatively effectuating great gains in student progress.

My principal Theresa Dovi (Cahn Fellow 2009) and I will do our best to do just that at The Bayview School in Brooklyn. We plan on a continuation of our work with Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching utilizing the research-based rubric to empower teacher effectiveness as well as extend student thinking with school-wide Depth of Knowledge training.

Theresa Dovi
P.S. 102 Principal
2009 Cahn Fellow

Utilizing the knowledge we received during our Cahn Fellowship, P.S. 152 Principal Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas (Cahn Fellow 2009) and I are better equipped with the tools necessary to support our inquiry teams with this endeavor as we look forward to another school year of challenge, growth and progress.

Dr. Rhonda Farkas
P.S. 152 Principal
2009 Cahn Fellow

The Allies Corner gives a warm welcome to our two new Cahn Alumni Network (CAN) Ally Committee members. Congratulations to Andrea Lawrence and Katie DelloStritto for taking the Cahn, as well as the Ally Committee, Challenge on, which as we well know, will change their professional growth forever.

Katie DelloStritto is a lead teacher at The Carroll School in Brooklyn. Katie is involved in enrichment programs in her school’s development of a French Dual Language program serving 144 children in grades K-2.

Katie DelloStritto
The Carroll School
Lead Teacher
2010 Cahn Ally

Andrea Lawrence is an Assistant Principal at the South Bronx Academy for Applied Media where the DOE has highlighted the exemplary school practices embodied.

Andrea Lawrence
Assistant Principal
SBAAM
2010 Cahn Ally

The Allies Corner is working closely with the Cahn Alumni Network (CAN) to showcase resources and programs for our vast learning community. This year’s calendar of events will provide and empower Allies with valuable professional development opportunities. Event networking can solidify long-lasting relationships with friends and colleagues who are enthusiastic educational leaders.

There will be another session of the Educational Leadership: Navigating Your Career Path in the fall which will focus on career advancement for school leaders. If you have suggestions on education leaders who you would like to meet or programs that you are interested in, please forward your recommendations.

The First Annual Allies Soiree is in the planning stages for the spring. This proposed 2012 event will be Allies of the past and present a great chance to meet with and reconnect with other Cahn friends.

The Apple iPad training for administrations in July was well-attended. Scott Josephson, Systems Engineer for Apple Education, demonstrated the many innovative “apps” for iPad that can be incorporated into your daily school routine. For free iPad training at your school, please contact Scott Josephson at 646-248-0745 or email scottj@apple.com.

There are over 4,500 apps available for educational use and many are free! For example, Notes is an app that displays an on-screen keyboard and is able to sync with your Gmail account. If you don’t like to use a keyboard, there is Phat Pad. This app enables you to write on the screen with a stylus pen and then converts the handwriting to typed text. There is also an app called Dictation Dragon which transfers speech to text.

If you are trying to go green, there’s an app for that too! Paperless Meetings and Agendas allows you to collaborate and meet with other iPad users without using paper.
Black kids and white kids are sitting together in a building that used to house a private yeshiva. It's not exactly what you'd expect to see when you walk into the Hebrew Language Academy (HLA), a public charter school in the largely Jewish neighborhood where Midwood meets Marine Park.

But in each kindergarten classroom, you'll find just that: tables of four children, with both white and black students seated at them.

Here's why that's so unusual in New York City: At "gifted" public schools, students are often nearly all white and Asian. At the city's poorly performing public schools, students are usually all black and Latino. Even charter schools, of whatever quality, are 95 percent black or Latino.

It's unusual to see relatively equal amounts of black and white students sitting together in any New York City public school. But then you see there's another unusual pairing at HLA: in the written material.

Every bit of written instruction—from the alphabet to science—is explained from left to right in English, and then from right to left in Hebrew.

At this school, kindergartners, only six months after being introduced to the language, are comprehending and speaking Hebrew aloud.

Aside from the Hebrew language, which its administrators insist is not a religious school, despite its obvious ties to Judaism. Apart from that issue, however, HLA is closer to a true melting pot than most other schools in the city.

Male teachers are rare in New York City elementary schools, where 75 percent of teachers are female (and that imbalance is even higher in the lower grades). Black males are even rarer.

But poke your head into HLA's cafeteria during gym class, and you'll find Qayyim Shabazz, a commanding man with an impressive beard and deep voice, instructing soccer in Hebrew.

"He didn't speak any Hebrew when he started," the principal, Maureen Campbell (Cahn Fellow '05), says. "He's just great with languages." (Campbell herself is a black woman who does not speak Hebrew.) "We're the most diverse public school in New York City," Campbell and her staff repeatedly claim.

While that's a difficult thing to quantify, the numbers do show that 55 percent of families identify their children as white, 38 percent as black, 6 percent as Hispanic, and 1 percent as multiracial. HLA is evidence that this is, in ways, a much different time.

You might not expect to see a black Muslim parent send a child to a school with the word "Hebrew" in its name, but New York is not the Middle East. "I don't know much about the situation over there," says Willie Moody, explaining why his two children come to HLA. He likes that his daughters study Hebrew, saying, "I can only imagine that this will help."

Parents, as well as the staff at HLA, also echo that idealistic sentiment: that their work will help change the world and make it a better place. For many parents, their decision to come to HLA shows how, from Waiting for Superman to The Lottery, charter schools are winning the war of ideas that they are better schools, even when they have little so far to show for it.

But for all the peace and love expressed by staff and parents, charter schools are always in a fight for survival. They battle for the hearts and minds of not only their pupils but also of city education officials. Principal Campbell and her staff spend many weekends at street fairs, barber shops, beauty salons, and, yes, even Baptist churches recruiting for the school.

HLA’s education director says she'd love to do something with an Arabic-language school in New York City—if there was one. HLA plans to open two new schools in Harlem next fall.

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