



P.S. 198 The Isidor and Ida Straus School

www.ps198m.org

1700 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10128
Tel (212) 289-3702 / Fax (212) 410-1731

Katharine DeBenedictis, Principal
Linda Shkreli, Assistant Principal

August 2018

Dear Families,

Can it really be that we are approaching the end of August? In just a few weeks we will welcome your children into our building for the start of the new school year. For those of you returning to PS 198, I look forward to seeing you at the door in the morning and hearing about the many ways your child enjoyed their summer vacation. New families, I have had the pleasure to meet many of you at registration, but I am eager to get to know your kids more personally and show you all there is to love about our school. I am confident that you will find our staff and PTA to be able to assist you with any needs that arise this year and that you will soon feel a great connection to our community.

So what do we have to look forward to this year? I have been planning for our 2018-2019 enrichment programs. We will continue to partner with Bent on Learning for kindergarten Yoga, and NYChessKids for first grade chess. (Hopefully you have had the chance to check out their after school chess offerings. We are hoping to start a PS 198 chess team this year!) LEAP will provide Hip Hop to second graders and African Drumming/Movement to third graders. Of course we will bring back the always popular ballroom dancing for fourth grade, and this year, I am very excited to start a partnership with New Amsterdam Fencing Academy for fifth. They have graciously donated all the equipment for this first year of instruction. These enrichment opportunities would not be possible if it were not for PTA funding and the many ways in which all families contribute their time and energy. I thank you in advance for helping me to secure these activities for our students.

Our PTA also helped to secure funding to bring on a math coach one day a week. We will share Nina Liu with PS 77 and PS 158. She will work with our teaching staff on Fridays to continue to develop best practices in math instruction. PS 198 will also continue to utilize the services of Barb Golub, our literacy consultant. Last spring our Deputy Superintendent noted the great work she has done with our teachers. I have no doubt she will see the same progress in our school's math practices when she visits throughout the year. Whereas observational data is always valuable and captures student progress much differently than hard data, I know that scores are also important. For those of you who are upper grade families, the state plans to release state ELA and math exam results in mid-late September.

If you walked by the building this summer, or stopped in to visit at any time, you likely know about our ongoing major window renovation project. Whereas we aren't whole just yet, in just a few more weeks we expect to see substantial completion. Please bear with us as our rooms look a little unfinished. It should not be long before all rooms are fitted with better insulated and more attractive windows. You will also notice our playground is undergoing a renovation. If School Construction Authority sticks to their anticipated timeline, by spring our makeover will be complete and our kids will have a fabulous new play yard. Finally, there's the installation of air conditioning in our cafeteria, expected at some point this school year as well. We are grateful to Councilmember Ben Kallos for all that he has done to support our school in funding each of these projects. There is a lot of work happening in a short period of time, but these much needed improvements are well overdue. Of course, no construction will ever take place during the school day and thus the education of your child will not be compromised in any way.

Probably my most important summer task is to figure out how to take our school's anticipated goals and action plan and actually make it all happen in real time. In July you speak with a budget manager who tells you all the reasons why your ideas may not be possible and you are forced to make some changes. But that's not what is most difficult



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about this task, it is really the solo planning. Whereas I have a vision for school progress, without the ideas or input of our staff and families, it is nearly impossible to see it come to life. While I was training to be an administrator my advisor always said, "The answer is in the room." It is hard to come to the answer when you look around and the room is empty. I guess what I am saying is that despite how difficult it can be at times to return from a vacation and move further and further away from the relaxation the months July and August bring, I do need all of you - our staff, families, and most importantly the children - back in the building. It is bittersweet, but I am ready to say goodbye to summer reading on the beach in Cape Cod, burgers and dogs on the grill, and Red Sox games (actually, I have a feeling Mr. DeBenedictis will make sure we are still watching for as long as they are still playing).

Let's try not to forget that heading back to school can sometimes bring anxiety for kids, as well as adults too. Your teachers and other staff will be here to answer your questions and address your needs but I urge you to take the first few weeks of September to ease in, to remember that transitions can be difficult and take time. I encourage everyone to soak up what remains of the beautiful weather. Go for a bike ride, a walk, or a picnic in the park. Yes, bedtime should start to get a little earlier, but don't forget all the benefits of socialization and play for children, and for adults too. I had to remind myself of that while I was away on the Cape and resist the urge to take out my computer to get just one more thing done. *There is always just one more thing!* Don't miss out on opportunities to make just one more summer memory.

With great anticipation of exciting things to come...

Warmly,

Katharine DeBenedictis (formerly Katharine Macmanus)

Katharine DeBenedictis
Principal