

# PASSAGES POST

## *Principal's Message*

Provided by Yvette Baxter-Sweet

Greetings to all of Passages Academy Community! Wow! What a first quarter of the school year. We began the year with a strong family and community outreach event in the middle of October – Curriculum Night. This was the first time Passages Academy has engaged in a family and community-based outreach to introduce the school and our professional staff. The Superintendent, Dr. Lisante, summarized these events very well:

**“STRONG FAMILY & COMMUNITY TIES:** On Tuesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the first of a series of **Curriculum Nights at Passages Academy @Belmont** had all the components that exemplify exactly what D79 envisions when we talk about family and community engagement. From the leadership of Principal Yvette Baxter-Sweet, APs Norma DeLara and Ron Carter, to the partnership among ACS and agency staff, it was obvious the sole reason of this gathering was to promote student achievement.

The families were very receptive to the information given as they were welcomed in the school as partners and experts in their children’s education. They could sense PASSAGES is maybe the most positive thing in their child’s life at a very difficult time. The families were respected and informed, a key in developing relationships. All combined with the presence of teachers and counselors made for a complete evening where families received valuable information and had meaningful conversations about their children.

Curriculum Nights also were held that week at **Horizon and Crossroads Juvenile Centers, as well as NSP/NSD site, Bronx Hope.** Special thanks to **Parent Coordinators Victoria Nickles and Gwendolyn Burton and FACE Liaison Lisa Fucci** for organizing these events. Throughout my career I’ve seen parents marginalized when their children are in the criminal justice system. I am very appreciative and thank all D79 Passages teachers, counselors and school leaders; ACS and agency staff for their extra efforts and expertise in working with students who have been separated from their families.”

Earlier this month, we had Chancellor’s Professional Development Day, which was held at Bronx Hope. I will have to admit that this was the first full day professional development that I was responsible for organizing and executing. However, with support from District 79 Instructional Specialist, teacher organized activities, and professional development opportunities that many of our staff took part in across New York City, the day turned out to be successful. This day provided all individuals an opportunity to learn and grow as professionals with the goal of improving student outcomes. Shortly following the Chancellor’s Professional Development Day, we had a second opportunity to greet families during Parent Teacher Conferences. This fall, all sites reported an exceptional turn out of families to support their children. I truly believe that this is a direct result of our family and community engagement initiatives this year. Our FACE team is working diligently to continue reaching out to families to help provide support as their child moves through the process of being court involved.

We now find ourselves on Thanksgiving Eve, a time of the year that families and friends travel far and wide to be with each other, and to give thanks for the many blessings life has bestowed upon them. We too have much to be thankful for. We are moving forward with each small step. Change takes time, training, learning, openness, vision and willingness to embrace the different and unfamiliar. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire staff of Passages Academy for their support and dedication for working with a population of students that the vast majority of the field of education is unaware that exists. Each time a kid smiles at you because they just got a concept that you taught, know that you just made that kid’s day. He or she just had a light bulb go off – to experience understanding is the greatest feeling in the world – and you were a part of that. I am very grateful for the work that we do and the people that I work with in this process. I wish everyone a very happy and healthy Thanksgiving.

## Belmont Highlights

Provided by Patrick Dorfer

On Friday, October 23rd, Belmont honored three of ACS's "Superwomen," all of whom have endured and survived battles with breast cancer. During 3rd period, our NSD students and NSP female students, as well as teachers and staff, came together in our multi-purpose space in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month. The three brave women are:

- 1) Regina Foster: Administrative Assistant at Crossroads
- 2) Faye Stewart: Assistant Director of NSD Abbott Residence
- 3) Irma Stephens: Court Transportation for NSD Beach Residence

The song "Survivor" by Destiny's Child was played as the three women entered the space respectively to a standing ovation. Three different NSD students read individual biographies detailing each struggle and triumph as each Superwoman was given a pink tiara and flowers following each speech. There were plenty of tears and applause to fill a neighborhood, never mind a small space. This was a great program and relayed the message for an important cause. Great job to all who participated!



## Bronx Hope Highlights

Provided by Allison Trevaskis

Breast Cancer Awareness Day

On Friday, October 23rd, the faculty, staff, and students of Bronx Hope took time to recognize people fighting Breast Cancer, celebrating the survivors and remembering those who have passed. The school building was a sea of pink for the day, including ribbons, clothing, juices and much more.



## Crossroads Highlights

Provided by Erica Addy

On October 15th, Crossroads celebrated their annual Hispanic Heritage month program. Students were able to “visit” several Latin American countries as they moved from each classroom. In each room, they sampled food from that country and learned about the history and culture. Countries represented included Cuba, Puerto Rico, Peru, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala.

October 23rd was national wear pink day. Pink shirts and ribbons were seen throughout the entire building as Crossroads had their annual breast cancer walk in the gymnasium. Information pamphlets, pink ribbons, and pink bands were distributed at the walk.

October 26-30th marked New York State College Application Week. Crossroads began the week with our annual “homerom day.” Each teacher provided information specific to each CUNY named class. CUNY schools highlighted were Hunter College, Baruch College, York College, City College, Brooklyn College, Lehman College, Medgar Evers College, and School of Professional Studies. On Tuesday, teachers and staff held a college fair representing their alma mater. CUNY representative Cindelle Harris also attended the fair. As the week continued, students learned about financial aid, scholarships, and how to write personal statements. When asked what they thought of college week, one student replied “I learned a lot about college that I didn’t know before. It was a great experience.”



To end the month’s activities, Crossroads had their first annual door decorating contest. Each class decorated their door with items such as cobwebs, fake blood and spiders! Judging the competition were Ms. Matthews, Mr. Rashid, Ms. Stewart, and Ms. Whitaker.

## Horizon Highlights

Provided by Angeles Rosario and Carolyn Rudder

On Friday, October 23rd, 2015, the students and staff at Horizon Juvenile Center participated in their 3rd Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walk. We would like to give a big shout out to Ms. Sydorowitz, School Liaison (DYFJ) for organizing this event.



## Staten Island Highlights

Provided by Anthony Lama

On Thursday, October 29th, our fine young ladies of Staten Island Promise took their show to the road. They served their community at the Staten Island University Hospital North, delivering some holiday cheer to the children on the Pediatric Unit.



Under the direction of Ms. Pritchett-Dames and Ms. Piccinonno, our young women were then hard at work preparing their portfolios in preparation for our Transfer Schools Fair.

Otherwise, our students are diligently completing their work in anticipation of receiving course credit for the first unit, and in preparation for the Regents being given in January.

## Curriculum Night



Belmont, Bronx Hope, Crossroads, and Horizon all hosted a Curriculum Night the week of October 19th. Parent Coordinators Gwen Burton for Bronx Sites, and Victoria Nickles for Brooklyn and Staten Island Sites, both worked very hard to put together an exciting, informative evening for the parents and guardians of our students. Special bags full of information regarding libraries, colleges, our Passages Parent Handbook, and other important information, were handed out to each parent or guardian. Refreshments were provided, and there were some raffles for those who attended, with prizes ranging from free museum tickets to a backpack stuffed full of brand new school supplies. It was a wonderful opportunity for parents, guardians, Passages staff, and our Parent Engagement Team to discuss our curriculum and other topics. Here are some snippets on Curriculum Night from our sites.

### **Belmont**

Belmont's Curriculum Night was jam packed with information and presentations. Several teachers, including Ms. Rosenthal and Ms. Nadel, presented information on curriculum. Ms. Nickles gave her first presentation as Parent Coordinator, welcoming the parents, and discussing her plans for future workshops. Ms. Fucci, the FACE Liaison, also introduced herself to the parents and explained the new District 79 FACE (Family and Community Engagement) program. Ms. Baxter-Sweet was in attendance, making herself available to parents to speak to. It was a very exciting night, and Belmont received a lot of positive parent feedback.

### **Bronx Hope**

Bronx Hope's Curriculum Night was an opportunity for parents and providers to meet some of the school staff and explore the programs of study offered at our site. Mr. Prince presented the topics of educational transition plans and high school graduation requirements. Social Worker Ms. Woods covered special education services, the transition process from middle school to high school, including requirements and the high school application process, and the ELA department. Representing their departments were Ms. Walsh (Math), Ms. Arandes (Social Studies), and Mr. Donocoff (Science). Parents in attendance also had the opportunity to meet our Parent Coordinator, Ms. Burton, who handed out a surveys and reviewed the Parent Handbook. Our site was pleased to have increased parent involvement at this event than in past teacher conferences.

### **Crossroads**

Curriculum Night at Crossroads was combined with DYFJ family night. This has always been a night that family members of all ages could come into the facility and meet with the students. This year has been the first time Passages Academy has been present at this event. In attendance were district representative Stacey Oliger, Assistant Principals Mr. Rashid and Ms. Stewart, and Crossroads teachers, counselors, and staff. When asked how they felt about the evening, teacher Ms. Snow described it as "An enjoyable experience, and a unique opportunity to see students interact with their families."

## Upcoming Events

- November 26-27:** Thanksgiving Recess – Schools Closed
- December 24-January 1:** Winter Recess – Schools Closed
- January 18:** Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day – Schools Closed
- January 26-29:** Regents Exams
- February 1:** Chancellor’s Conference Day – No School for Students
- February 8:** Lunar New Year – Schools Closed
- February 15-19:** Mid-Winter Recess – Schools Closed



*“I am what I am today  
because of the choices  
I made yesterday.”*

*Stephen Covey*

## Important Links

- Passages Academy Public Website: [www.PassagesAcademy.org](http://www.PassagesAcademy.org)
- Passages Academy Staff Website: <https://sites.google.com/a/passagesonline.com/staff/>
- Passages Academy Handbook: <https://sites.google.com/a/passagesonline.com/staff/documents>
- Passages Academy Library Website: [www.passagesacademylibraries.org](http://www.passagesacademylibraries.org)
- Passages Academy Library Blog: [www.whatsgoodinthelibrary.blogspot.com](http://www.whatsgoodinthelibrary.blogspot.com)
- Chancellors Regulations: <http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/ChancellorsRegulations/default.htm>
- ELA & Math Middle School Testing: <http://engageny.org/content/just-released-2013-test-guides-for-ela-mathematics>
- Online Textbook Codes: <https://sites.google.com/a/passagesonline.com/staff/textbook-online-access-code>
- ACS Online Policy Library: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/home/policy\\_library.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/acs/html/home/policy_library.shtml)

## Facts, Thoughts, and/or Questions for the Week

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically.

Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.

Martin Luther King, Jr.