

June, 2005

Principal

Kevin J. Dotson

Administrative Support

Maria Caccia
Jaime Caccia

Art

Melissa A. Nicolardi

Humanities

Paula Lettiere
Wesley Stonicher
Marie Johnson
Deborah Bobowski

Guidance

Lydia Parchment

Math

Alexander Caputo
Saranii Muller
Margaret Uicker

ESL Paraprofessional

Castel Jean

School Aides

Rolando Napier
Glenn Kilpatrick

Science

Richard Ames

Social Studies

Latoya Massey

Social Work

Stephanie Krepein

Spanish

Tina Giambastiani

Tech Coordinator

Jorge Trejo-River

Interim Acting

Principal: Nov- Dec
2004

Vanessa Parkinson

Principal Coach

Lew Frohlich

Lead Partner

HREA
Felisa Tibbitts
Jessamyn Waldman

Dear
Members of
The School
for Human
Rights
Family,

We have much to celebrate, as we close out Year One of The School for Human Rights. So much that perhaps the written word struggles to do justice.

We came far, we dreamed big, we worked hard, we achieved much --so much beyond the standard measures of what we would call school.

There is a Hebrew word that poetically sums up our work together this past school year: *Dayanu*. Loosely translated, it means, "... and that would have been enough." To illustrate the meaning of this term, please consider:

- The families of 135 students took a chance on a new school and enrolled their children.

Dayanu.

- A staff of 11 experienced teachers, a social worker, a secretary, a counselor, a paraprofessional, a technology coordinator, two school aides, and a first-year principal took a chance at implementing a sophisticated school plan that was developed by a parent, a student, four teachers, a principal-in-training, and a human rights organization;

Dayanu.

- A strong after school program to support students' academic skills was in place before the end of the second week of school;

Dayanu.

- There were 25+ field trips that students at this school took, including a trip to The Gates at Central Park, several theatre excursions to Lincoln Center, and a 3-day Creative Writing Camping Trip.

Dayanu.

- We kept class sizes to 25 or fewer students, and our attendance was at an average of 90% or better each week.

Dayanu.

- We started a new small school with a model of inclusive education for all students, regardless of identity and ability with two teacher team teaching in 4 out of 6 English Language Arts/ Humanities classrooms on a limited budget; students learned a foreign language, and how to be Human Rights Monitors.

Dayanu.

- Our lead partner, Human Rights Education Associates, along with New Visions for Public Schools, The Autonomous Zone, Global Kids, and Midori and Friends Foundation, Brooklyn College, and others, all had real presence in our school, on a Campus that formerly housed a large comprehensive high school.

Dayanu.

- We functioned as a school with a high level of autonomy and accountability to State, City and our own standards of excellence, freeing up teachers to be creative with the direction of the best interests of young learners in mind, rather than constrictive, generic and impersonal mandates.

Dayanu.

- Our teachers enabled students to score high on the Math and ELA Citywide and 9th grade Assessment Examinations, helping many students to move up a full point (and in some cases 3 points), while still holding true to preparing students to meet the real-life challenges of life that cannot be measured on standardized exams.

Dayanu.

- We provided school bus service to 6th graders attending school in a traditional high school building for the first time in the history of New York City Public High Schools.

Dayanu.

- We had high levels of parental involvement -in the forms of PTA, parent-teacher conferences, and school-wide events.

Dayanu.

- We educated students about Human Rights, through our Lead Partner Human Rights Education Associates, and in collaboration with such organizations as The International Center for Tolerance Education, Media Rights, Global Kids and Witness.

... And more

The term *Dayanu* goes a long way toward describing our successes and achievements. Yet, when it comes to our children, the term, "...and that would have been enough" is not enough, for nothing is ever enough when

it comes to ensuring the education and well-being of our children, who are the guardians of the future of our Humanity.

I am confident that you feel the same way, and wish to thank you for the support and guidance you have given our staff throughout the year. I wish to thank you for allowing us to help you grow your children into the responsible, caring and skilled young people that we both want our children to be.

Our future is in your hands and ours. A new group of 6th graders and 9th graders will be entering the school in September. It is our work to help them embrace what it means to be The School for Human Rights. It is our duty to continue our hard work and to welcome newcomers into a place where Dignity, Respect and Responsibility are the values that guide our growth.

We have completed Year One. We have done well. And, as poet Robert Frost suggests, we have "miles to go before we sleep."

I ask that over the summer, you do a few things that will help us all continue to support the growth of our children.

- Spend time listening to your child. Ask questions. Hear their responses.
- Listen closely and without judgment;
- Work with your child to address one or two things, rather than try to fix or accommodate everything;
- Call or write your child's teachers, at least once over the summer. Always remember: teachers are humans too and all human beings need connection to other human beings.
- Be sure your child has some constructive summer activities that will encourage and enhance their growth: a summer camp, clubs, books to read, fun places to go.
- To the extent possible, monitor your child's television intake - there is much on TV that is good for your child (PBS, The Discovery Channel, etc.) and there is much more that is not. You set the tone about what flows into their minds from TV.
- Whenever possible, take your child on excursions and just talk - to the plant nursery, to the museum, to Coney Island..
- Most important: Ask your child each and everyday before bedtime: "What's something new you learned today?" And "What's one good thing you did for yourself and for others today?"

These are my requests to you, because we adults are your child's best chance at becoming lifelong learners and good people. So, for our children, it is never enough.

I wish you a very happy summer vacation, and look forward to seeing you and our children in September.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Dotson
Principal
The School for Human Rights