



DAPS WINTER CELEBRATION

More than 150 DAPS staff members gathered at the Children’s Museum of the Arts in Manhattan on Wednesday, December 18 for the annual Winter Celebration. The evening featured remarks by Chief Academic Officer [Shael Polakow-Suransky](#) and a performance by the elementary school choir of P.S. 236, the Langston Hughes Explorers Academy, from the Bronx. See below for photos from the event taken by [Brett Cluff](#) and [Victoria Gonzalez](#) from the Office of Instructional Support in Academics – all captions list the names of pictured individuals from left to right in order of appearance. Many thanks to the dedicated planning committee and volunteers who made the event possible!



Left: [Melia Polynice](#) and [Kristina Jelinek](#) from the Office of Instructional Support in Academics were among over 25 volunteers who dedicated their time and enthusiasm to planning and setting up for the event.



Above: [George Anthony Benners](#) from the Office of Assessment in Performance embodies the holiday spirit in his Christmas-themed outfit.



Above: DAPS staff enjoy a performance by the P.S. 236 choir, comprised of first through third grade students. Music teacher Ronald Osborne has directed the choir for more than 10 years.



Left: Chief Academic Officer [Shael Polakow-Suransky](#) addresses the attendees following the P.S. 236 choir’s performance.



Left: [Jaela Kim](#) from the Office of Instructional Support, [Nadeea Saeed](#) from the Office of Academic Quality, and [Victoria Gonzalez](#) from the Office of Instructional Support, all in Academics, came out to celebrate the holidays with fellow DAPS staff.



Above: [Josh Dragoon](#) and [Jie Zeng](#) from the Office of Instructional Support in Academics.



Above: [Lindsay Messina](#), [Lianna Wright](#), [Ankit Rastogi](#), and [Maya Mitchell](#) from the Office of Research, Accountability, and Data in Performance.



Above: Attendees mingle among the exhibits at the Children’s Museum of the Arts, located in Soho in lower Manhattan.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES OF INTEREST

Brown Bag Briefing: Knowledge Sharing in the New Year: Making the Most of the Common Core Library

Thursday, January 16, 12:00-1:00 p.m., 2nd Floor Conference Room, Tweed

For the past three years, the [Common Core Library \(CCL\)](#) has acted as the New York City Department of Education's primary online vehicle for disseminating the [citywide instructional expectations](#) and the [Common Core-aligned tasks and units](#). During the summer and fall of 2013, the Knowledge Sharing team in the Office of Instructional Support in Academics implemented a series of changes to reflect the initiatives being rolled out in schools. The CCL now offers a space where practitioners can access the curricular and professional development (PD) resources associated with the [Core Curriculum options and PD opportunities](#), up-to-date information about the New York State [assessments](#), and [resources for families](#) to help parents better understand the Common Core and how to support their children at home. During this presentation, the Knowledge Sharing team will share these updates, the data they have collected over the past three years, plans for the CCL's future, and how teams can share their high-leverage resources on the CCL.

For questions, contact [Courtney Ng](#).

DAPS Book Club Meeting: *Hope Against Hope*

Wednesday, January 29, 4:00-5:00 p.m., Room 105, Tweed

The DAPS Book Club experienced record turnout for its last book club discussion about Amanda Ripley's book, [The Smartest Kids in the World: And How They Got That Way](#). The group discussed Ripley's findings about what why certain nations seem to be outpacing the United States in providing a rigorous public education, as evidenced by their students' performance on the Program for International Student Assessment. Among other topics, book club members discussed the importance of teacher preparation programs, parent engagement, and high expectations for students of all backgrounds.

The next book club discussion will center on Sarah Carr's [Hope Against Hope: Three Schools, One City, and the Struggle to Educate America's Children](#). Through the stories of students and faculty at three charter high schools in post-Katrina New Orleans, Carr explores the complexities of school reform and the tensions between newcomers unfamiliar with the culture of New Orleans and educators and parents suspicious of their intent. The book also goes beyond New Orleans to examine the broader issues of education reform in urban areas throughout the nation.

The book club will gather on Wednesday, January 29, from 4:00-5:00 p.m. in Room 105 to discuss the book. If you are interested in receiving invitations to book club discussions and/or would like to make a suggestion for future book club readings, please fill out [this form](#).

For questions, contact [Jill Schimmel](#).

Announcing a Winter Series of Excel Skill-Building Workshops

January 21, January 24, January 31, February 5, February 11, February 14, February 20, 9:00-11:30 a.m., Rooms 207/208, 131 Livingston St, Brooklyn

Following the summer round of Excel skill-building workshops, DAPS is announcing another series of leveled workshops to enhance the continued development of Excel abilities for DAPS and DOE staff. Review the descriptions of the four workshops [here](#) to determine which one is most appropriate given your level of Excel experience. Then you can [sign up through this calendar to enroll in the workshop\(s\) of your choice](#). Note that an additional Advanced Excel workshop for Thursday, February 20, was recently added to the calendar.

Please note that there are only 25 slots available for each workshop. You may sign up for the wait list if all 25 slots are taken. All participants, including those removed from the waitlist if a spot opens, will receive a reminder confirmation email two days prior to their workshop.

Many thanks to our volunteer instructors for sharing their Excel expertise!

For questions, contact [Courtney Ng](#).

DISCOVERING DAPS, a regular *Buzz* feature, explores the various groups, offices, and teams that comprise the division.

The Office of School Programs and Partnerships

The Office of School Programs and Partnerships (OSPP) in Academics, overseen by Executive Director [Monique Darrisaw-Akil](#), works to engage school communities, their partners, and the networks, clusters, and central offices supporting them, in the development of quality instructional, student, and professional development programs, resources, and materials. This work is aligned to the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) goals of enhancing teacher effectiveness and preparing all students for college and careers. OSPP's portfolio includes: the Arts; citywide instructional programs in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math); Library Services; Service in Schools; and Teaching American History Grant programs. Essential to this work is the strategic engagement of a diverse range of community, cultural, non-profit, vendor, and higher education partners.



Left: In orange, Executive Director [Monique Darrisaw-Akil](#) and, from left to right, Directors [Norah Lovett](#), [Jessica Kaplan](#), [Paul King](#), and [Richard Hasenyager](#), of the Office of School Programs and Partnerships in Academics, at their summer retreat.

Arts and Special Projects

The [Office of Arts and Special Projects \(OASP\)](#), led by [Paul King](#), supports schools by fostering increased quality in arts instruction through the annual arts data reports, curriculum and professional development, and art leadership training for school leaders. Additional advanced arts learning opportunities are provided directly to students along with private/public arts programs and free resources to schools.

Citywide Instructional Programs in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM)

Through the [STEM Matters NYC initiative](#), led by [Norah Lovett](#), OSPP provides STEM resources and opportunities to New York City educators, students, and families to strengthen science teaching, promote and reinforce science knowledge, apply engineering design, and build schools' capacity to support students pursuing careers in STEM fields.

Teaching American History Grants

Teaching American History (TAH) Grant programs, also led by [Norah Lovett](#), are federally-funded programs that strengthen American history instruction by providing teachers with opportunities to work closely with many of the City's rich cultural institutions. TAH programs provide teachers with unique opportunities to work side-by-side with renowned historians and field experts. Together, they explore teaching strategies and activities that incorporate primary sources, artifact analysis, and content area reading strategies while building essential historical thinking and disciplinary literacy skills. For more information about one of the TAH Grant programs, [the Hunts Point Slave Burial Ground Project](#), see the [News Bits](#) section on page 3.

Library Services

The [Office Library Services \(OLS\)](#), led by [Richard Hasenyager](#), coordinates the New York City School Library System, providing programmatic supports and assistance not only to public schools, but also to independent schools throughout New York City. Through site visits, professional development, and consultations with principals and librarians, OLS supports schools in the development and strengthening of library programs, facilities renovations, collection development, integration of technology, library catalog automation, teaching of information skills, and increasing students' reading motivation.

Partner Engagement

OSPP's partner engagement strategy, coordinated by [Elena Chon](#), works to enhance the support schools, networks, clusters, and central offices receive by

DISCOVERING DAPS Continued

guiding partners in aligning services and resources to the NYCDOE's instructional goals. OSP also develops tools to assess the impact of external partners and their programs on educational outcomes.

Service in Schools (SIS)

[Service in Schools \(SIS\)](#), coordinated by [Elizabeth Benjamin](#), is a partnership between the NYCDOE and [NYC Service](#) which seeks to engage New York City public school students in community service and/or service-learning. Service-learning encompasses project-based, problem-solving opportunities in which students address authentic local, national, or global concerns. SIS offers schools direct support in launching and improving their service programs, publishes a monthly newsletter of upcoming service-related projects, grants, and professional development opportunities, and offers a Service in Schools Award to honor schools with outstanding service efforts.

For questions, contact [Jessica Kaplan](#).

NEWS BITS

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY GRANTS PROJECT ENGAGES STUDENTS WITH RECENTLY RECOVERED HUNTS POINT SLAVE BURIAL GROUND

The Hunts Point Slave Burial Ground (HPSBG) Project is an educational project launched two years ago in the Bronx by the Teaching American History (TAH) Grants team and P.S. 48, the Joseph Rodman Drake School. The Teaching American History grants are managed by project directors [Philip Panaritis](#) and [Brian Carlin](#) from the Office of School Programs and Partnerships in Academics. The Hunts Point Slave Burial Ground Project was launched after the Museum of the City of New York published online versions of more than 50,000 historic photos of New York City. Among the thousands of Bronx images was a 1905 photograph entitled "Slave Burying Ground." The only other information available about the photo was that it was taken at Hunts Point Road – a street that no longer exists. Local history teachers and their students wanted to know more, so they began looking for historical and scientific evidence that the burial ground did indeed exist in that spot.

Since then, scores of historical records, contemporary newspaper accounts, original lesson plans, and high-quality science resources have been discovered, developed, curated, and uploaded to the new [HPSBG Project website](#). Teachers have been using these resources to invite students to think like historians and make hypotheses about whether the burial ground exists. They have engaged students in reading and writing lessons using primary sources, analysis of artifacts such as leaf pressings and wax rubbings, and field trips to Drake Park, which exists today where the burial ground is thought to be.

Right: Students from P.S. 48 in the Bronx study a photo of the Hunts Point Slave Burial Ground through a project funded by a Teaching American History Grant. The grant is managed by the Office of School Programs and Partnerships in Academics.



In addition, the HPSBG Project has been working in collaboration with the New York City Parks Department, Congressman José Serrano from the Bronx, and numerous Bronx historians and scientists to attract [media coverage](#) and supporters. This past September, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists used ground penetrating radar to analyze the area where it was believed the HPSBG was located. Two weeks later, a report revealed anthropogenic features, scientific evidence of human remains, six feet below the surface, in the exact spot that students had visited and researched.

A New York City Parks Department interpretative sign will be unveiled at a HPSBG Re-Consecration Field Day in May 2014. The HPSBG Project has ensured that New York City public school students bear witness as the

NEWS BITS Continued

existence of these enslaved Africans and their forgotten cemetery are written back into history.

For questions, contact [Philip Panaritis](#).

2012-2013 PROGRESS REPORTS REVEAL INCREASE IN COLLEGE READINESS RATES IN NEW YORK CITY

The [2012-2013 Progress Reports](#), released in mid-November, award letter grades to schools based on students' progress, performance, and attendance, as well as surveys of students, teachers, and parents. This is the second year that the high school Progress Reports have included a college and career readiness section, which measures the extent to which schools are preparing their students for success in college and the workforce. This year's high school reports found that more students are graduating from high school ready for college and careers than ever before. The four-year college readiness rate, which measures the percentage of students in a school's graduating cohort that will not need college remediation in math or English, is up nearly three points since last year, from 28.6 percent in 2012 to 31.4 percent in 2013.

This year's high school Progress Report also includes a college persistence measure, which gives schools credit for students who enroll in college after graduation and work their way through at least three semesters. Within the class of 2011, 47.6 percent of students were either college ready by graduation or persisted into their third semester within six years of graduating high school. Efforts to ensure that the Progress Reports and other accountability tools provide an accurate picture of how well students are being prepared for college and career continue, and are further outlined in the recently released paper entitled "[What's Next for School Accountability in New York City](#)." To read more about the release of the 2012-2013 Progress Reports, [click here](#).

For questions, contact [Simone D'Souza](#).

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES ALL-TIME RECORD HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES FOR 2012-13 SCHOOL YEAR

Earlier this month, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott announced that [the four-year graduation rate](#) for New York City public high schools in the 2012-2013 school year reached a new record high. According to preliminary figures, 66 percent of students in the 2009 cohort graduated within four years, an increase of 42 percent since the State began releasing New York City graduation rates in 2005. Since 2005, black and Latino students have made the most notable gains in graduation rates, jumping 53 percent and 58 percent respectively. At the same time, the graduation rate for students with disabilities has climbed 119 percent, from 17 percent in 2005 to more than 37 percent in 2013. Chancellor Walcott stated that these "record numbers would not have been possible without our incredibly dedicated school staff, our parents who are tremendous partners, and especially our students who have worked extremely hard to prepare themselves for college and careers."

For questions, contact [Ailish Brady](#).

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

The DAPS Style Guide

Have you ever wondered when to capitalize a school subject? (Only when it's being used as a proper noun or it's a language.) Or been confused about whether there's a space between NYC and DOE in the acronym NYCDOE? (There's not.) The DAPS Style Guide can answer both of these questions, and many more, as it provides guidance on a range of commonly-asked style and formatting questions. The DAPS Style Guide was developed in an effort to create clearer, more consistent communication both within and beyond the division. See page 4 for a sample entry from the guide.

DAPS staff are encouraged to access and reference the Style Guide when drafting communications. The latest edition of the DAPS Style Guide can be found on the [DAPS Staff Resources page](#).



RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT Continued

Acronyms

Spell out all acronyms upon first reference, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Then, upon subsequent references in the same document, you may just use the acronym. For example, on first reference, write out the title of “the United Federation of Teachers (UFT).” For subsequent references within the same document, you can just write “UFT.” Note that if you only plan on mentioning a term that has an acronym once in a document, there is no need to provide the acronym in parentheses.

If you use an acronym, always capitalize it and do not put periods between the letters (“UFT” is correct; “U.F.T.” is incorrect). Whenever possible, limit your use of acronyms. Acronyms can be overwhelming to readers who are not familiar with our work. For a list of acronyms commonly used around DAPS, click [here](#).

For questions, contact [Brendan Lowe](#).

DAPS CELEBRATIONS!

Congratulations to the 2013-14 Chancellors Fellows from DAPS!

[The Chancellor’s Fellowship](#) is a leadership development opportunity for top talent at the New York City Department of Education. The program is designed for managerial employees who are committed to public education and have a proven record of success. The Fellowship provides professional development, executive coaching, career guidance, and a network of peers and alumni which help the fellows develop their leadership skills in a supportive environment to enhance their career opportunities. Twelve participants were selected for the 2013-14 Chancellor’s Fellowship, including the following three individuals from DAPS:

- [Suleyni Abreu](#), senior managing director, Office of School Support
- [Jerel Cokley](#), director of operations, Network 402
- [Andrea Soonachan](#), senior director of college and career readiness, Office of Postsecondary Readiness, Academics

Congratulations to Suleyni, Jerel, and Andrea!

THE ROVING REPORTER

The Roving Reporter section, an interactive feature of *The Buzz*, poses a question each issue that DAPS staff are encouraged to respond to [here](#). In the November *Buzz*, readers were asked to reflect on what they are thankful for this holiday season. One selected response is below:



I am very thankful for my family, which includes my husband Chris and our son, Evan (who turns three this Valentine’s Day). I am also thankful that my husband’s birthday party, which took place during the Thanksgiving weekend and required a lot of planning, turned out to be a great success!

-[Anna Alexandrakis-Pappas](#),
DAPS Operations

The December question is: **What is one tip you have for staying organized at work?**

Please submit responses [here](#). The submission deadline is **Wednesday, January 8, 2014 by 5:00 p.m.** Look out for responses to this month’s Roving Reporter question in the January issue of *The Buzz*!

WELCOME! Profiles of Additions to DAPS

[Suzanne Elgandy](#) joins the Office of Research, Accountability, and Data in Performance as a senior research associate with the Research and Policy

WELCOME! Continued

Support Group (RPSG) where she will be involved in several projects, including research on special education reform, *A Shared Path to Success*, and the Middle School Quality Initiative. Prior to joining RPSG, Suzanne served as a research manager within the education department at the American Museum of Natural History. Suzanne holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology and Spanish from NYU, and a master’s and doctorate in applied developmental psychology from Fordham University. In her spare time, Suzanne loves to run and is looking forward to running in the 2014 New York City Marathon.

[Zeinab “Sade” Elhawary](#) is a product of Los Angeles public schools whose passion for education and social justice was ignited in college. Sade received the full-tuition Urban Scholars Fellowship to pursue a master’s in education at Harvard University. After graduating in 2011, Sade returned to her community as a youth organizer to make a deeper impact on the education system, leading campaigns at turnaround high schools in South Central Los Angeles. Sade recently moved to Brooklyn and is joining the Office of Postsecondary Readiness in Academics as the associate director of postsecondary planning, working towards her ultimate goal of increasing access to higher education by empowering underserved communities.

[Scott Moore](#) joins the Achievement Support Initiatives team in the Office of Instructional Support in Academics as blended learning specialist after managing the development of online courses with the iPD team for the past five months. Prior to joining the New York City Department of Education, Scott taught sixth grade English Language Arts at a district school in Brooklyn for four years and then taught general pedagogy to first-year teachers at Relay Graduate School of Education. When he’s not working, he’s often writing, editing, indulging in movies and TV show marathons, or facilitating workshops on cultural competence and inclusiveness.

[Thomas Samaris](#) joins the Office of School Support as budget and operations manager and will work cross-functionally with a human resources counterpart to assist clusters and networks through various human resources operations functions. He spent two years of working on the operations team within the Division of Portfolio Planning. Prior to that, Thomas worked in the Division of Contracts and Purchasing as a procurement analyst in the Office of Early Childhood Education. He holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology and philosophy from the University of Ottawa and a master’s degree in industrial/organizational psychology from Baruch College.

[Dan Simoes](#) joins the Office of School Support as special assistant to Sandy Brawer, the executive director of budget services. He is a former high school math teacher who is transitioning from the Office of Student Enrollment where he was a projections analyst. When not at Tweed, he volunteers to help transfer school students at Harlem Renaissance High School in Manhattan obtain their math credits and pass the Regents. This past May, he graduated from NYU’s Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service with a degree in urban planning. He is originally from the Boston area, but has called New York City his home for almost the past decade.

[Reina Utsunomiya](#) joins the Office of Postsecondary Readiness (OPSR) in Academics as the director of policy and operations in postsecondary planning. She will be leading the policy-making related to OPSR’s development of new school models, particularly for the early college and career model, in collaboration with postsecondary and other external partners. Reina comes from the Division of Portfolio Planning’s Office of State Portfolio Policy, where she supported the planning and implementation of state and federal policy on comprehensive school reform initiatives for schools in need of improvement. She began her career at the New York City Department of Education in the Office of Career and Technical Education. Reina has a master’s degree in public administration from Columbia University and a certified savory tooth for pastries.

HAPPY TRAILS! Recent Departures from DAPS

- Nathan Horton, Office of Postsecondary Readiness, Academics
- Alba Langenthal, Office of Assessment, Performance
- Sean Murray, Office of Research, Accountability, & Data, Performance
- Katy Shannon, Office of Instructional Support, Academics, to Office of the Chief Operating Officer