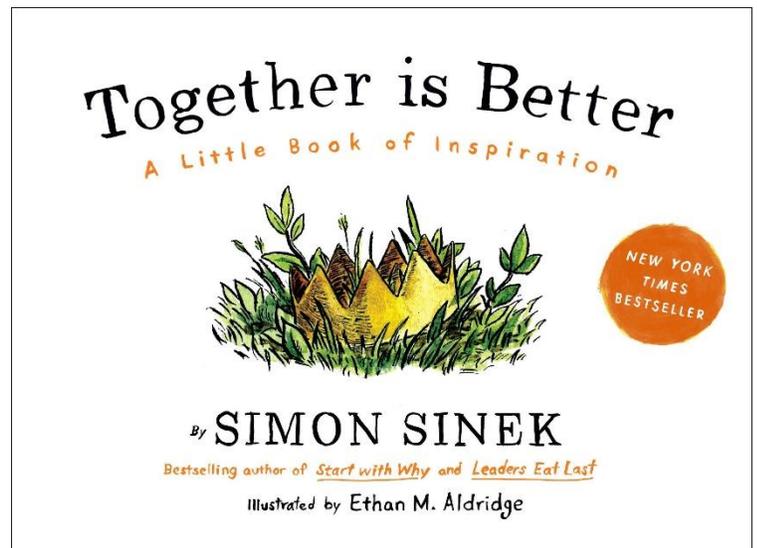


Together is Better in 2018-2019

We closed out school year 2017-18 with prideful satisfaction at the progress our district had made in taking on some of the toughest questions we can grapple with in education. While some truths have revealed themselves, we recognize that the journey towards Equity and Excellence is one of a lifetime in service of our students. The one concrete truth we have learned is that we have only made it as far as we have come—and will only travel further down this road—because of our shared core values of collaboration and communication. With this in mind, there is no other book we could open this year with than Simon Sinek's *Together is Better*.



The big questions still exist, and we are committed to providing the community with as many opportunities as possible to engage with them. As we open the year, I want to take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to all of our students through our District's three priorities, and celebrate the welcome back events that show how #togetherisbetter when we work towards these goals.

Nurture an Inclusive Environment

All members of our district community benefit from diverse and inclusive schools and classrooms where all stakeholders are supported and welcomed. Where emotionally intelligent inclusivity exists, all stakeholders have voice, take greater ownership over their work, and actively contribute to higher levels of achievement, engagement, and innovation. Our work surrounding equity and inclusion inside of schools is meaningless unless

we can cultivate strong partnerships with the parents of children in our district. In August we had our PTA Meet-and-Greet at PS 376. Parents are the driving force of our system, and PTAs are the key vehicle for parental empowerment. Central to our work this year is making sure that all parents feel as though their schools' PTAs are accessible and able to harness the energy and passion parents have for their children. If you are looking for ways to be more involved in your child's school, please do not hesitate to ask your PTA about ways to help out!

Who could we be if we were more inclusive?

What mechanisms or structures would allow for that?

How will we defend those mechanisms from deteriorating back to exclusivity?

Build Coherence of Practices Across PreK-8 Feeder Patterns

Are we engaging with sufficiently diverse perspectives?

Does everyone have equal voice at the table?

Are we able to notice difference without added value?

To provide the right and best educational experience for every child, stakeholders must be able to see their work with individual and groups of children within the context of their developmental journeys. Wherever possible, we organize professional learning opportunities to ensure the plurality of perspectives necessary to address the needs of our children is present, so they leave us with skills necessary to be tomorrow's leaders. Leadership matters, and our schools do not arrive

at greatness without the principals and assistant principals who are at their helms. Our Back-to-School Welcome Breakfast for District Leaders was a brief, but powerful check-in time for us to get re-energized

about the work ahead of us. With that, we are excited for the year ahead modeling effective collaborative practice in our K-8 leadership professional learning communities!

Grow Leadership, Capacity and Sustainability at Every Level in Pursuit of Equity & Excellence for All

To achieve the vision of the Framework for Great Schools, all stakeholders need to see themselves as dynamic agents of change within their communities. When provided with the right support, all members of the District 26 community have the capability to thrive in authentic leadership opportunities in pursuit of equity and excellence for all. Our August Community District Educational Council and District Leadership team meetings were the best reminder of the power and potential energy that is present when representatives from across the community are in the same room. We would not be positioned for our strong start without these partnerships.

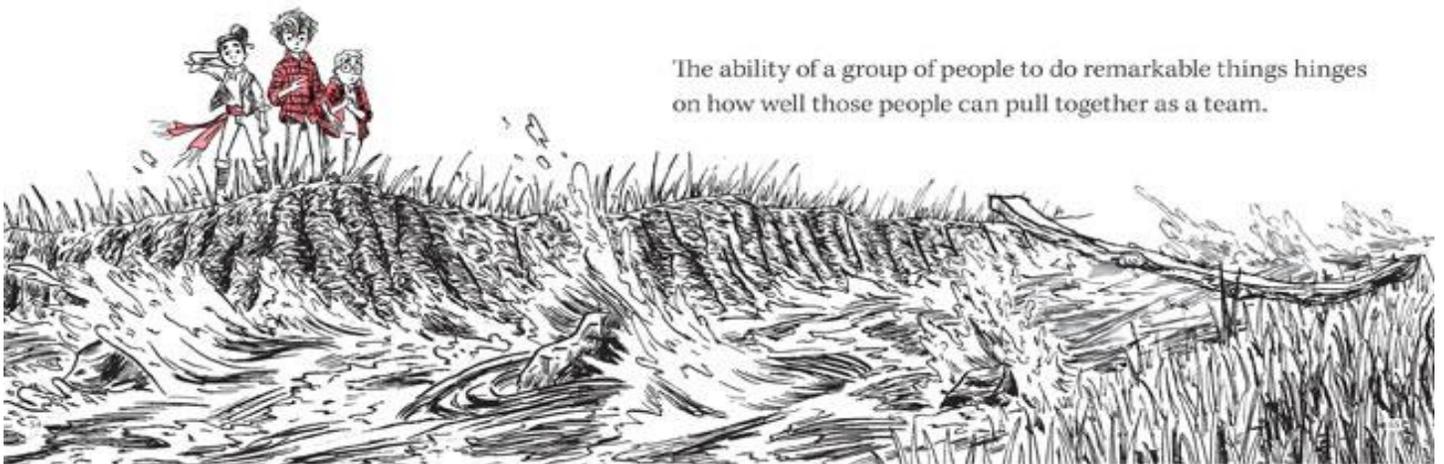
In what ways are we leveraging our ability to listen as part of our coaching?

How are we building bridges from where people are to where they need to be?

Are we providing ourselves with enough opportunity to live at the edges of our comfort?

These are but a handful of wonderful events that have kicked off our year. As you open your buildings and learning communities, we encourage you to make use of social media to amplify the power of these moments, mentioning @D26Team and with #BacktoSchoolNYC and #togetherisbetter.

Opportunities for Great Things in the Coming Year



The New York City Department of Education is cosmically large—the 1.2 million students we serve are more people than the combined total populations of Vermont and Wyoming! In a system with so many moving pieces, sometimes it can feel as though the only constant is change. While we have steadily been at the top of the city in terms of student performance, in the past five years new leaders have come into 17 of the 27 schools in District 26. Such consistency in the face of change is a testament to the vast and deep network of stakeholders we have supporting our schools. The year ahead of us is filled in equal measure with anticipated challenges and exciting opportunities. For all of these known endeavors—as well as those which have not presented themselves to us—it is our hope that you lean in to the power of the teams you are a part of to collaborate on solutions. At times it feels as though we are the only ones confronted with a problem: in our work, no one is alone. Together is better.

As we enter this school year together with the same boundless ambition that comes with every September, we can't wait to get out into the community to support all of you as we touch the hearts and minds of all students in our district. Dream big. Take chances. Know that this community is here for you, and that we will catch you if you fall. Here's to another year of excellence in education in District 26!

Sincerely,

Danielle Giunta, Superintendent, and the District 26 Team

What good is an idea if it remains an idea?
Try. Experiment. Iterate. Fail. Try again.
Change the world.

