

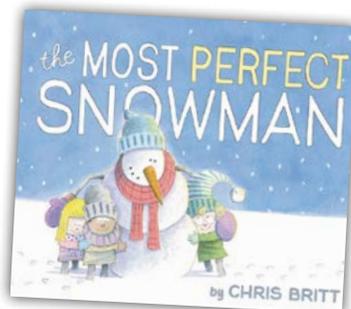
Principal **NOTES**

December 2016

Chancellor's Letter

December's Book of the Month, *The Most Perfect Snowman*, is a heartwarming tale about the importance of giving, which resonates this time of year. As the story opens, we see a snowman named Drift alone in the woods. Built fast and forgotten, Drift has only two skinny stick arms, and eyes and a small mouth made of coal. The well-dressed snowmen tease him and exclude him from their games and dances. Shuffling through the snow by himself, Drift dreams of having a colorful hat, scarf, and mittens of his own. But most of all, he longs for a pointy, orange carrot nose.

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Hope for peace
Hope for understanding
Hope for all mankind

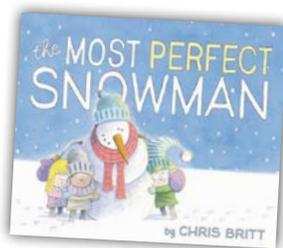
Happy Holidays!

Career
Exploration
Month
Jan. 2017

NYC Department of
Education
Chancellor Carmen Fariña

College
Awareness
Day Jan. 11

Chancellor's Letter



The Most Perfect Snowman

By Chris Britt

(Balzer + Bray, 2016)

December's Book of the Month, ***The Most Perfect Snowman***, is a heartwarming tale about the importance of giving, which resonates this time of year. As the story opens, we see a snowman named Drift alone in the woods. Built fast and forgotten, Drift has only two skinny stick arms, and eyes and a small mouth made of coal. The well-dressed snowmen tease him and exclude him from their games and dances. Shuffling through the snow by himself, Drift dreams of having a colorful hat, scarf, and mittens of his own. But most of all, he longs for a pointy, orange carrot nose.

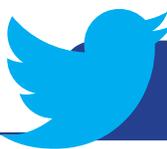
One day, three children walk by and complete Drift's outfit, offering him a hat, scarf, mittens, and even a carrot for his nose. A deliriously happy Drift plays with the children all afternoon. However, when a blizzard blows through, Drift has to make a decision. Will he keep the colorful winter garments and carrot nose, or will he give them away to save a tiny bunny's life? You guessed it. Drift makes the generous choice, and in so doing, becomes "the

most perfect snowman of all."

During the holiday season, people from all cultures tend to open their hearts to those less fortunate. Often, we give away possessions we no longer need or want. While this is admirable, I encourage you to be like the perfect snowman and give an essential part of yourself. Give your time to a cause you believe in. Befriend a neighbor who lives alone. Share your skills, or buy and donate food, new household items, toys, or clothes to an organization in your community.

As an administrator, reach out to the people in your school community who are isolated. Get to know the teachers in your building who eat lunch by themselves or who live in New York City without any family nearby. Introduce one of your favorite books to students who may be having a tough time during this time of the year. Give extra support to the parent who has difficulty speaking English or who feels out of place at their PTA meetings.

Instead of making New Year's resolutions we invariably fail to keep, we should direct our attention to the people in our lives who are in need of kindness and do something that validates their worth. Receiving is wonderful, but it is through giving that we become the most perfect people we can be.



Let's start an online conversation:

[@CarmenFarinaDOE](#).

Save the Date

"Chancellor's Conference: Designing Instruction to Challenge Students," will take place on **January 31, 2017**, at TKP Conference Center, 109 West 39 Street in Manhattan.

I will deliver remarks, and there will be a keynote from Dr. Sally Reis of the University of Connecticut. Participants will select a breakout session where they will explore ways to design instruction that engages and challenges students, and attend a "School Share Fair," where schools will present their own effective practices for challenging students.

Click [here](#) to register.

Spotlight on District 26

Grooming Aspiring Leaders

For Superintendent Danielle Giunta, necessity truly was the mother of invention. In September 2014, the new leader of District 26 in Queens knew she would have six principal slots to fill before the next school year. "I didn't know the existing talent and didn't want to overlook anyone," Giunta said. So she put out an open call to all the assistant principals (APs) in her district, asking to hear from anyone interested in moving into a principal-ship—either in the upcoming school year or farther into the future.

Her goal was to build a leadership pipeline for APs by offering them real-world experience and support. "Assistant principals got where they are by being the most innovative teachers, and they support the implementation of other people's visions," said Giunta. "We wanted to nurture them and honor their true leadership."

Giunta's District Aspiring Principals Project began in the 2014–15 school year with 15 APs. Participants attended training sessions to help them identify their core values and practiced "elevator pitches" to communicate their visions. As part of the program, APs participated in a mock C-30 interview process, with three minutes to articulate each point. "This gave them an authentic experience of how little time you have to communicate what you bring to the table," Giunta said.

The following year, she placed two APs in principal positions in her district. Two other APs were ready to take on the responsibility but wanted to wait to lead middle schools. In the interim, Giunta worked with them to create district projects that would advance their leadership skills.

Assistant Principal Brian Anello, of M.S. 74 Nathaniel Hawthorne, for example, created a Student Leadership Project to engage fifth- and eighth-grade Student Council presidents in social action. Through a partnership with the Ronald McDonald House in Manhattan, students—supported by their Student Council liaison (including teachers, parent coordinators, and assistant principals)—held a food



(From left) Superintendent Danielle Giunta, Principals Henry Schandel and Brian Anello, and Principal Leadership Facilitator Lucius Young.

drive and took a trip to the Ronald McDonald House to see what they had accomplished. "The awareness that their work was impacting the lives of families with sick children was a big takeaway," Giunta said.

Student Council presidents also presented on the status of their project at their monthly PTA and School Leadership Team meetings. The goal of the project was to help these student leaders hone their communication skills and teach them about character and commitment, Anello said. In collaboration with now-Principal Anello, student leaders attended three sessions that were also led by APs in the pipeline program that supported the mission of this work.

At the same time, Assistant Principal Henry Schandel, of M.S. 67 Louis Pasteur, established a Teacher Leadership Program to prepare teachers for future leadership roles as assistant principals. Teachers were mentored by an AP, attended monthly meetings to practice the various skills they would need as school leaders, and collaborated with their principal on a project addressing a need in their school community.

Giunta is very committed to this work. She attends all leadership sessions along with her district team, including the principal leadership facilitator, teacher development and evaluation coach, and field support liaison. Afterward, they debrief with the assistant principal leaders and provide feedback towards growing their leadership practice.

Since the program began, six APs have become principals and four teachers have taken on AP positions. Schandel currently leads M.S. 158 Marie Curie and Anello helms M.S. 67, both in District 26. He says the district program enabled him to make

Spotlight on District 26 (continued)

“a more natural transition into principal-ship. The collaborative decision-making I’ve transferred into my leadership at M.S. 67 is a direct result of the work of my district leaders and former principal.”

Indeed, principals have been “extremely supportive of the program,” says Giunta. “They’ve noticed that their AP’s leadership capacity has grown and they’re able to do more work as instructional teams.”

Now in its third year, the project has expanded to include professional learning series also run by assistant principals in the District Aspiring Principal program on such topics as pre-k, STEM, and project-based learning.

Giunta is noticing other benefits to her zoned district.

“We’ve seen stronger relationships between our feeder elementary schools and middle schools,” she said. More APs and principals are visiting each other’s schools now.

In fact, the program has created a real district-wide community. At the end of each school year, the Community Education Council honors all the participating students, teachers, and assistant principals. “People see student voice playing a more important role in the district,” said Giunta. “They see teachers being more innovative in their practices. AP’s have built relationships with the larger community. And everyone supports each other.”

For more information, visit the [District 26 website](#) and follow them on Twitter, [@d26team](#).

On My Mind

Collaborating for Success

I learned early in my career that the ability to collaborate and share resources and ideas is essential to building strong school cultures, as you can then help provide even more opportunities for students and staff members. This month, I am thrilled to share some of the ways the Department of Education is expanding collaboration within campuses and across our school system.

Co-Locations Initiative

This month, I visited four campuses: George Washington Educational Campus in Manhattan, Evander Childs Educational Campus in the Bronx, Springfield Gardens Educational Campus in Queens, and the Thomas Jefferson Educational Campus in Brooklyn. My aim was to showcase the collaborative partnerships between the co-located schools and the notable improvements across all of the campuses. Here are just a few of the things all of these school communities have achieved:

- ▶ Created parent welcome centers for all families;
- ▶ Created college resources centers for all students;
- ▶ Initiated branding/beautification programs to

promote school culture and identity (for example, new banners with school logos);

- ▶ Hired campus managers to oversee safety, discipline, and school climate;
- ▶ Transitioned to single bell schedules (where possible);
- ▶ Offered joint professional development sessions for staff members;
- ▶ Shared academic courses, such as AP for All, for all students; and
- ▶ Created a student advisory with representatives from each school to ensure that all student voices are heard.

We hope to expand this model to other campuses across our school system.

D75 Collaborative School Communities

In alignment with Equity and Excellence for All, the Division of Specialized Instruction and Student Support has launched the Collaborative School Communities project. The Division has identified 12 campuses across the City where strong partnerships exist between schools in Districts 1–32 and District 75 programs. This project seeks to showcase the collaborative practices of these communities while

On My Mind (continued)

encouraging and promoting increased access and diverse learning opportunities for all students. The goal is to develop unified communities of students, educators, school leaders, and parents.

As part of this initiative, New Dorp High School and District 75's Richard H. Hungerford school in Staten Island are sharing supports, resources, and services. Students from both schools participate in holiday shows, recitals, and other special events, and the Hungerford students are welcome to participate in New Dorp's teams, clubs, and PSAL sports. New Dorp students, in turn, work with Hungerford students on art projects, assist during extracurricular activities, and volunteer at the annual D75 barbeque, among other activities. Both schools share academic resources as well, including professional development sessions for special educators.

District-Charter Partnerships

On December 15, we launched our District-Charter Collaborative (DCC), a new, two-year, 29-school initiative that pairs district and charter schools into groups of about four schools that work on a Learning Focus Area: Innovative Math Instruction, Supporting English Language Learners, or Restorative Practices. Together, these groups will form a professional learning community in which schools share promising practices and learn from each other.

The DCC is part of the District-Charter Partnerships program, an Equity and Excellence for All Initiative that supports several partnership opportunities across the City. This year, 137 district and charter schools have partnered to share best practices. In addition to the schools participating in the DCC, this includes 11 co-located schools building campus community and sharing practices; 19 schools in District 16 in Brooklyn participating in a district-wide, district-charter partnership initiatives; and 78 schools in Districts 18, 19, and 23 in Brooklyn engaged in the DOE Uncommon Schools-Impact Partnership.

Partner Schools

Superintendents are supporting collaboration by creating partner schools that enable teachers and

principals to share resources with each other and maximize the strengths of both schools.

In District 13 in Brooklyn, Superintendent Barbara Freeman arranged for P.S. 8 Robert Fulton to partner with P.S. 307 Daniel Hale Williams through a teacher exchange program. P.S. 307 will send teachers to look at P.S. 8's math practices, while P.S. 8 will send teachers to see P.S. 307's Monday professional and social-emotional learning.

Under Superintendent Ilene Altschul's leadership, all of the schools in District 3 in Manhattan have created triads or quads to collaborate and share best practices. The principals identify an inquiry topic, and during the school year they visit each other's schools, share successes, and discuss a "problem of practice." Some have set up intervisitations to the schools and developed partnerships among teachers.

As an example, four schools—M.S. 250 West Side Collaborative Middle School, Wadleigh Secondary School for the Performing Visual Arts, M.S. 258 Community Action School, and Mott Hall II—are studying teacher practices that impact student learning for a wide range of learners within a classroom. Educators discuss professional literature and visit each other's schools to further explore ways to engage students at all levels, and develop strategies for building teacher capacity in this area.

Principals from M.S. 247 Dual Language Middle School, M.S. 256 Academic Athletic Experience, and West Prep Academy are sharing the work they are doing with the Middle School Quality Initiative in their individual schools. Their focus is on strengthening academic vocabulary through strategic reading interventions and direct-content area vocabulary instruction.

These and many other innovative collaborations are helping us expand our knowledge and expertise beyond our own boundaries—and this enhances everyone in our communities. When schools work together, share strong practices, and exchange ideas, we can empower all of our students on their path to success.

Shout-Outs

[Principal Suany Ramos](#) of **P.S. 188 The Island School** in Manhattan, is a compassionate and dynamic leader who is truly there to serve her students. During my classroom visits, I saw much evidence of student empowerment. Students spoke confidently about identity, the importance of selecting their own topics of study, and assisting their peers with math lessons. I was impressed by the school day, which runs from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., including weekends and summer sessions. While this is a difficult schedule to coordinate, Principal Ramos does not see the extra hours as an imposition on her time, but rather as a means to provide needed services to her students while making every effort to ensure their success.

[Principal Matthew Tossman](#) oversees **Manhattan Early College School for Advertising**, a limited unscreened school that accepts a diverse group of students. I was pleased to see that the principal has high expectations for student achievement. The concentration that students showed in class also speaks to the dedication of the school's staff members; they obviously believe in Principal Tossman's mission and provide a high level of academic support to students. As I walked through the school building, I saw evidence of the school's advertising theme and indicators that students are not only college-ready, but they are career-ready, too.

New Millennium Business Academy Middle School in the Bronx is on the cutting edge of our Renewal Schools initiative. It was clear from the moment I met this school's poised and self-confident student greeters that the entire school community supports [Principal Dorald Bastian](#)'s mission of excellence. My classroom visits made it clear that this principal focuses a great deal on vocabulary development and independent reading; the English Language Arts classroom I visited could serve as a model class in any City school. Additionally, it was a joy to watch the interactive math classroom participate in peer-to-peer collaboration. I was also pleased to see so many parents in attendance, and was very impressed with the school's community-based organization, The Center for Supportive Schools.

[Principal Uchechukwu Njoku](#) of **I.S. 318 Math, Science Technology Through Arts** in the Bronx has great energy and ideas and is committed to his staff members. I was delighted to hear that he is

focused on teacher retention and is communicating his expectation that all of his teachers will return next school year. Equally importantly, it was clear that Principal Njoku has invested in his new staff members.

At **P.S. 17 Henry David Thoreau** in Queens, [Principal Rebecca Heyward](#)'s commitment to the Sanford Harmony Education Program and mindfulness training is a strong indicator that she understands that emotional competence is of the utmost importance in students' lives. I was excited to learn that Principal Heyward has an extremely dedicated parent community. As she clearly articulated, school climate and family engagement are critical to academic achievement.

[Principal Eduardo Mora](#), of **The New School for Leadership and Journalism** in the Bronx, provides his students and staff members with the support they need to thrive. His model classroom teacher, Lisa Kuinlan, could easily serve as a model for all of the teachers in the building. Ms. Kuinlan's classroom environment was vibrant, organized, attractive, and student-centered.

After the presidential election, I was pleased to see middle schoolers at **J.H.S. 54 Booker T. Washington** in Manhattan engaging in activities that stressed the importance of democracy and civics. It was very clear that [Principal Elana Elster](#)'s students gained a tremendous amount of knowledge from engaging in these activities, and fully understood their roles as citizens and future voters. Although not everyone in her school community may share the same political views, I felt an overwhelming sense of hope for the future when I saw everyone come together to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

At **Bell Academy** in Queens, [Principal David Abbott](#) has created a culture in which all family members are welcome and eager to contribute to their school community. It is obvious that staff members work well together and are committed to the principal's vision.

[Principal Donna Finn](#) has built a strong community at **Frank Sinatra School of the Arts High School** in Queens. Staff members believe in her vision and stand ready to assist her. Having strong support from founders and donors, such as Tony Bennett, is a very special gift that the principal is nurturing and celebrating.

Shout-Outs (continued)

[Principal Rory Parnell](#)'s rebranding efforts have made a positive impact on enrollment and changed the neighborhood's perception about **August Martin High School** in Queens. I was pleased to learn that this principal's relationship with the New Vision School on her co-located campus is a good one and enables both schools to serve their school communities. During my classroom visits, I met with students who spoke highly of the individualized attention they receive while referencing the opportunities they have to pursue personal interests within a safe environment. Additionally, I found teachers engaged in interactive learning practices with clearly prepared lessons and appropriate instructional tools. I was also pleased to see that students helped each other, and not only was talking permitted, but it was encouraged. When I asked how many students anticipated applying for college, every hand went up in every single room.



Chancellor Fariña and David Marquis present Paul King (left) with the VSA NYC Arts Advocate Award.

A special shout-out to Paul King, executive director of the DOE's Office of Arts & Special Projects. On December 2, Marquis Studios/VSA NYC honored Paul with an Arts Advocate Award for his leadership in improving arts education in New York City's public schools. It was my pleasure to introduce Paul and thank him for the progress we have made in expanding access to the arts as part of our commitment to equity and excellence for all students. Under Paul's leadership, we have the most licensed arts teachers in 11 years as well as a substantial increase in arts programming for English Language Learners and students with disabilities. These investments will enable all of our students to pursue the arts in a meaningful way.

Comfort Dog Pilot Program

Thanks to a partnership between the [North Shore Animal League America](#) and staff members from the DOE's [Office of Counseling and Support Programs](#), seven City schools have started a pilot program that incorporates the use of rescued comfort/therapy dogs in their classrooms. This pilot is based on research conducted over the past 30 years that shows that therapy dogs can offer social-emotional and physical support for children. Therapy dogs can also be used to help students fulfill educational objectives, such as learning how to read, utilizing turn-taking during student activities, and making eye contact during public speeches. You can read more about the pilot on the DOE's blog, [The Morning Bell](#).

