



Upperclassmen Present Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens

Ms. Annette's seventh grade Literature curriculum recently studied "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens". The best-selling book written by Sean Covey covers how teens can become more independent

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and effective by learning seven basic habits. The book was first published in October 1998, and its knowledge has withstood the test of time. Covey's habits start with 'Be Pro-active', 'Begin with the end in mind', 'Put first things first', "Think win-win", 'Seek first to understand, then to be understood', 'Synergize', and finishes with 'Sharpen the saw'. Throughout the book, the author discusses three stages to maturity: dependence, independence and interdependence, and covers every aspect of teen

Upcoming News & Events

1/29 Movie Night! At 6pm on the PS 17 campus, the PTA will be showing Minions at 6pm, concurrent with the **PTA meeting**. All grades are invited! Food and beverages will be available for sale and parents and students can come in their pajamas.



2/1 5:15pm, **School Leadership Team** will meet at the IS 126 campus. All are welcome.

2/8 Lunar New Year - School is closed

2/11 8:40am, the **PTA Executive Board** will meet. Location will be announced. All are welcome.

2/11 The 6th grade will visit the **Metropolitan Museum of Art, Egyptian section**.

2/15 - 2/19 **Midwinter Recess**

2/26 5:45 **Middle School Dance**. 6:30 pm, the **PTA General Membership** meet at MS Campus Auditorium immediately following dance. All are welcome.

2/26 Elementary School **Picture Day**

3/1 Middle School **Picture Day**

life from planning and prioritizing daily life to responsibilities and pursuing success.

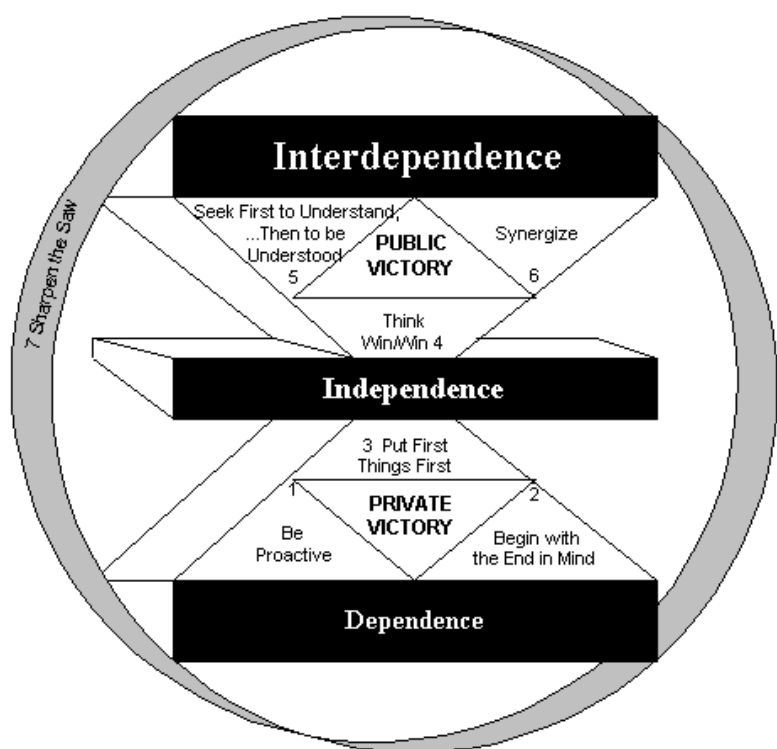
For the presentations, the upperclassmen were divided into groups and worked collaboratively to conduct research on larger connections and implications related to their assigned habit. Students were further challenged to choose notable individuals and organizations related to the youth community that have become good representatives of Covey's habits. Each group then presented a media-rich presentation that demonstrated their knowledge, insight and discovery of the core principles.

Attending parents were really excited to learn about the individuals each group had chosen. One example was Ann Makosinski, a 15 year-old girl from British Columbia, who invented a flashlight that works off the warmth generated by your hand. Her "Hollow Flashlight" uses a technique called the thermoelectric effect, which converts temperature differences to electric voltage. But what's really cool is how she got inspired to pursue the project. Ann is half Filipino,



Edgar Allan Poe Trip Makes Big Connection to Classic Short Stories

The name Edgar Allan Poe brings to mind literary tales of mystery, macabre and haunting lyrical poetry. He is one of America's earliest practitioners of the short story and is generally considered by many to be the inventor of the detective fiction genre. On November 30th, Ms. Annette took her seventh grade Literature class up to the Bronx to visit the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage. "This Classic Short Stories" unit has the upperclassman studying Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart", "The Black Cat", "Annabelle Lee," "The Bells," and his last published short story, "Londor's Cottage." What makes the fieldtrip so interesting is that Poe wrote some of his greatest literary classics while living in this cottage during the late 1800's. Big thanks go out to Ms. Annette for helping the students develop a deeper connection to the author's personal perspective and unique themes by visiting his home. 📍



and has friends overseas. One day she was talking with a friend who lives in the Philippines, "My friend was failing school because there was no electricity at home. She was supposed to be studying at night. I came to find out that a lot of people around the world don't have access to electricity and wanted to find a way to help people in that situation."

The premise of 7 Habits is that most people deal with problems in a scattered manner that unfortunately leads to more disorder. Covey's book is really about developing a core set of values so that it's easy to find solutions and be a more effective person in life. The book is loaded with real-life examples and is a great tool for teaching Middle School students important skills. This event provided our students with an opportunity to engage their peers and families in skills they are developing and sustaining as lifelong learners. As well as a great example of how Q300's core principles of Inclusion, Inquiry and Responsibility translate into classroom curriculum. 📍

Thanks!

The PTA sends our sincerest thanks to MS Instructors Betty, Ms. Annette, and Kathleen; along with MS Rep Steve (7th) and parents Moreine (6th), Randi (6th), Melissa B! (6th), Maura (1st), Adele (9K), and all others who contributed content for this newsletter edition!



Science Investigation in Water Quality at Alley Pond Environment Center



In Middle School Science, the sixth graders extended their water quality studies into the field, and traveled to the Alley Pond Environment Center (APEC). Alley Pond Park is located nearby at the south end of Little Neck Bay, right in the middle of urban Queens. Comprising 657 acres, it is a perfect environment for performing a Watershed project and for young scientists to learn about the different qualities of water throughout the New York City area as well as for our seventh grade scientists who traveled

separately on another day to pursue their investigations on animal adaptation. Alley Pond sits right on a geographical 'Moraine' and offers us insights into its natural past. A moraine is an accumulation of loose soil and rock debris that was once formed by a glacier. The Park is well known for containing an entire watershed, its pristine nature preserve, colonial history and conservation center. Because of its classification as a moraine, the park maintains many protected natural features, such

as freshwater and saltwater wetlands, tidal flats, coastal grasslands, expansive meadows, lush forests and shrubland habitats which create an amazing ecosystem abundant with wildlife and animals for our students to discover and run experiments upon. Spending time performing scientific research in the field was truly satisfying to the sixth and seventh graders and exemplifies how Betty's curriculum places a priority on hands-on exploration, critical thinking skills and depth for learning. 🌱

Middle School Draws Citywide Turn-Out for Recruitment Night

On November 24th, parents and rising fifth graders from throughout all five boroughs traveled near and far to gather in the Auditorium for Q300's Middle

School Recruitment Session. Families were electrified by the in-depth video presentation that gave them a firsthand look into the city's newest Citywide Gifted and Talented Middle School. The experience offered the attendees a glimpse into our classroom community and took them onto an inspiring multimedia journey to what makes Q300's education so special. Principal Matt and Assistant Principal Kristina then walked the attendees through a typical day, providing a variety of insights to how our students collaborate, use technology, socialize and structure their curriculum goals for success.

As many of you know, there are

thousands of rising fifth graders attending NYC public schools and finding the right Middle School for your child can be daunting. Consequently, parents were actively making enquiries about admissions in hopes their youngster could attend Q300 and were delighted to learn that up to 60 seats will be available to qualifying students next Fall.

Special thanks to our amazing school leadership, Matt, Kristina and Jill for assembling such an engaging video presentation. And big cheers to all our PTA members, students and parent volunteers whose tireless support helped make this event so successful. 🙌



If Only This “Hoodie” Could Show My Coolness Sixth Grade Drama

Aspiring sixth graders completed their Drama cycle under Kathleen's leadership with a presentation of the vignette play “Hoodie” by Lindsey Price. The play uses a collection of short scenes called ‘vignettes’, to explore the age appropriate difficulties middle school students face in trying to determine whether to be part of a peer group or stand socially on their own. The title “Hoodie” is symbolic of how rising teens feel about their self image and the clothes they wear as noted by the author in; “This shirt has to show everything there is to know about me, my absolute coolness, and demonstrate my abilities to reach the highest rung on the in-crowd ladder.” What's great about using a short form play, is that it gives the youngsters a fast paced, ensemble format filled with fun characters, and exciting monologues to learn about the complex challenges we all face maturing into adulthood. We can't wait to see more from Kathleen's class! 🙌

Letter from the PTA President David Wang

Dear Q300 Community,

Happy New Year!

We have accomplished so much since the PTA's formation some 15 months ago. During the 2014-2015 school year, we raised about \$125,000 to fund programs such as kindergarten and first grade early learners' music program and the sixth grade violin program, first and sixth grade soccer programs, kindergarten teaching assistants, elementary school library books, teachers' wish lists, and so much more. Because of your support through the direct appeal, where we had 78% family participation, and other fundraising, we hit the ground running at the start of the current school year – paying for music for all grades, second grade architecture, and kindergarten and first grade teaching assistants. In addition, we established a website, published a regular newsletter, coordinated volunteers, organized celebrations, and received tax-exempt status. We also advocated on your behalf on a number of issues to the administration and the Department of Education.

We have much to do to build on this great start.

First, as you may know, our Direct Appeal gives families a chance to donate directly to the PTA with minimal fundraising costs. For those who have already donated, our sincere thanks. We have raised nearly 39% of our budget goal, with 37% family participation, thus far, in the Direct Appeal.

If you have not yet done so, please consider making a donation to fund these important programs to benefit our children this year and next:

- a. Music program for all grades;**
 - b. Teachers' wish lists;**
 - c. Kindergarten and first grade teaching assistants;**
 - d. 2nd grade architecture and class library books;**
 - e. A class set of middle school Chromebooks and a security cart;**
 - f. Physical education enrichment program for the middle school;**
 - g. Need-based financial aid for class trips and other activities; and**
 - h. Assistance for middle school overnight trips.**
- In addition, the PTA is considering funding the following:**
- a. 10 middle school robotics kits (\$5,000);**
 - b. continuation of middle school Spanish for spring 2016 (\$6,500); and**
 - c. second grade Chromebooks (\$3,300).**



Q300 6th Grader Featured in NY Metro Parents

Q300 sixth grader Nathaniel and his family were featured in NY Metro Parents. Check out the feature at: <http://www.nymetroparents.com/article/five-families-on-choosing-public-private-charter-parochial-schools>

We aim for 100% family participation and hope you will invest in our children's future.

Second, please consider volunteering. We need help organizing events such as movie night, middle school dance, and spring auction; writing articles for the newsletter; helping us diversify our funding sources; and volunteering on PTA committees. You can also sign up for in-school volunteering, whether helping out at lunch or recess in the elementary school or assisting with class prep and clean-up in the middle school. More information can be found at our website www.q300pta.org or in our electronic bulletin.

Third, in the next few months, the PTA, in consultation with the Q300 administration, will create a survey to establish budget priorities for the 2016-2017 school year. The survey is a great way for families to provide feedback about the PTA budget, and we hope all will participate.

On behalf of the PTA, thank you again for all your help in making Q300 such an exciting and enriching experience for our children. I welcome your feedback; please drop me a line about your family's experience and any suggestions you might have. My email is president@Q300pta.org.

Thanks,
David William Wang

Stories from Holiday Break



Anika, Q300 First Grader

During the winter break, my family went to Texas. We went to the Houston Space Center where we learned about NASA space missions and astronauts. We learned that astronauts need the right training to go into outer space. For the first missions only men went into space but then women also started being astronauts too. We saw a rocket that used to fly into outer space and it was really big! It was really cool! We also did a tour that went to the place where astronauts go underwater in a pool to practice fixing things so when they go into space they can fix things easily.



James, Q300 Second Grader

James took the subway from his house into Manhattan to catch his bus at the YMCA on the Upper

West Side. From there, he took a 2 hour bus ride to attend winter camp upstate for five days. His family was happy to have him back after he stayed up until midnight at a New Year's Eve party with other young winter campers.

Upperclassmen Discover the Power of Pinwheels to Help Syrian Refugees

One big problem in our world today is dealing with the hundreds-of-thousands of Syrian refugees fleeing their ravaged homes due to war.

Q300's very own Kathleen was moved by the crisis that recently occurred in Paris and encouraged her advisory students to learn more about the Syrian war, its impact on refugees and invited them to do something to help. In discussions, the students discovered a charity project called "Students Rebuild" that works alongside the Bezos Foundation (created by Jeff Bezos the founder of Amazon.com) to benefit the International Rescue Committee known in short as the IRC. The IRC is a nonprofit organization that responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people survive, rebuild their lives and can be found online at rescue.org. Much to our Middle Schoolers' surprise, "Students Rebuild" put out a call to action in the form of pinwheels. For every pinwheel mailed in, the Bezos Foundation will donate \$2.00 USD to the International Rescue Committee to aid the Syrians. Kathleen's sixth grade class worked on the project for two days and then reached out to all the classes of the middle school to help. Eight students put together a presentation, a how-to poster, and gathered materials. Then they went around to the four other advisories and presented the goals of the pinwheels project. As a result, all the Q300 middle school students enthusiastically climbed on board and began making pinwheels! As of January, the Middle School students made 1,090 pinwheels and raised \$2,180!!! 🍵



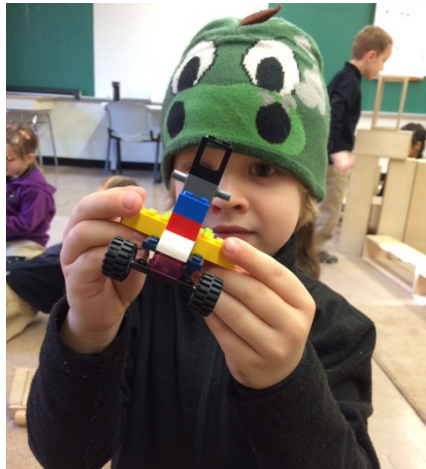


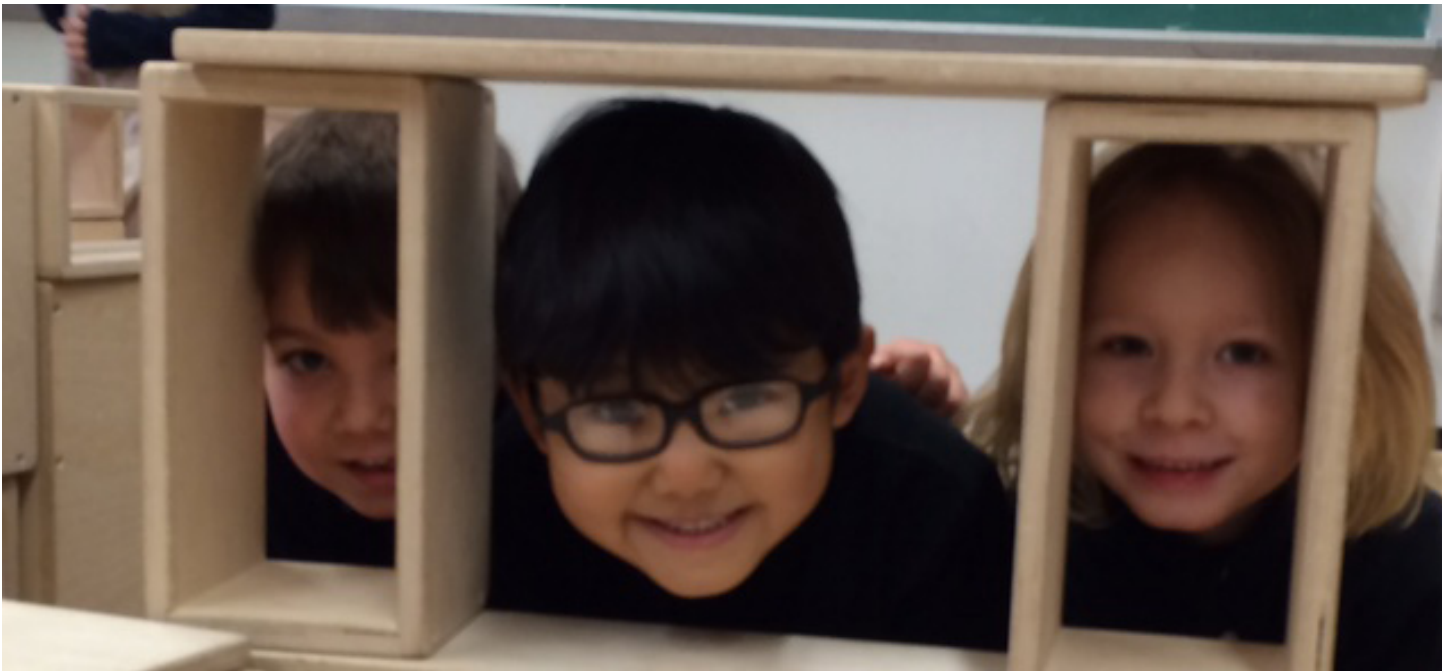
Matilda The Musical

Now Every Child in Middle School Wishes They Had the Power of Telekenisis!

On December 16th, the sixth grade took Manhattan by storm for a production of “Matilda The Musical”. The new adaptation of the beloved children’s novel by Roald Dahl’s “Matilda” was written by Dennis Kelly with accompanying lyrics and musical score by Tim Minchin. The Broadway show tells the story of a bright, young girl with special powers named Matilda who loves reading and mischievously schemes to overcome a variety of obstacles in her family and at school. Matilda has received widespread acclaim, winning seven 2012 Oliver Awards, including Best New Musical—the most ever won by a single show. Starting out early from Queens, our aspiring students headed to the renowned Broadway workshop “Dany Studios”, where they learned first-hand how unique music and special choreography is used in musical productions to tell stories like Matilda. There, the sixth graders were taught by actual performers from the Matilda musical they were to see that day. The rising upperclassmen then enjoyed lunch outside of Times Square, and headed over to the Shubert Theater for a matinee show. The Shubert is a majestic looking theater marked by a Venetian façade that first opened in 1913 to rave reviews located on West 44th Street. Inside the students were ecstatic to be placed in orchestra seats that provided them up close views of the performers as they raced across the stage and down the aisles. Getting out of the textbooks and into the theater was a great opportunity for our youngsters to expand their sense of camaraderie and to learn more about the power of storytelling through Musicals. Our sincere thanks goes to our amazing Middle School Faculty; Ms. Annette, Kathleen and Scott along with all the many chaperones; Moreine, Rosanna, Jeanne, Anthony, Zoraima, and Lisa for volunteering to help make all the afternoon’s drama, music and delight so successful! 🍷







Be as Explorative as a Kindergartner

Q300's Kindergartners visited the Queens Botanical Garden (QBG) for their first field trip on October 9th, as part of their FOSS science unit. Fifty-two young explorers scanned the 39-acre living museum. What would they see? Where would they investigate? Look, there's the same tree [Ginko] next to our school! Into the garden they poured, beginning their investigation of living things.

The brisk morning began with a warm welcome and introduction to environmental stewardship. The garden educator invited students to observe for attributes while walking together from tree to

This field trip tied directly into the classroom, where students continued their learning by observing a potted tree in-school and through weekly neighborhood walks to discuss properties of trees and leaves, such as shapes, patterns, and textures. These opportunities invited students to expand their vocabulary and learn new words in the context of learning about nature in their urban environment

tree, and to think about basic needs trees require to thrive. These prompts unleashed a flurry of questions for the garden educator, who shared her arsenal of knowledge. Students made their observations known, including "sap comes from Cherry trees, not just Maples," "why does bark [of the London planetree] peel off?," "the bark looks like camouflage."

Kindergartners spied a nest anchored among evergreen branches, and their discovery brightened

their teachers' day. They continued to explore properties of deciduous trees, searching the grounds for roots, fruits, and colorful leaves. They touched various bark, compared textures. Excitedly, they cited bark

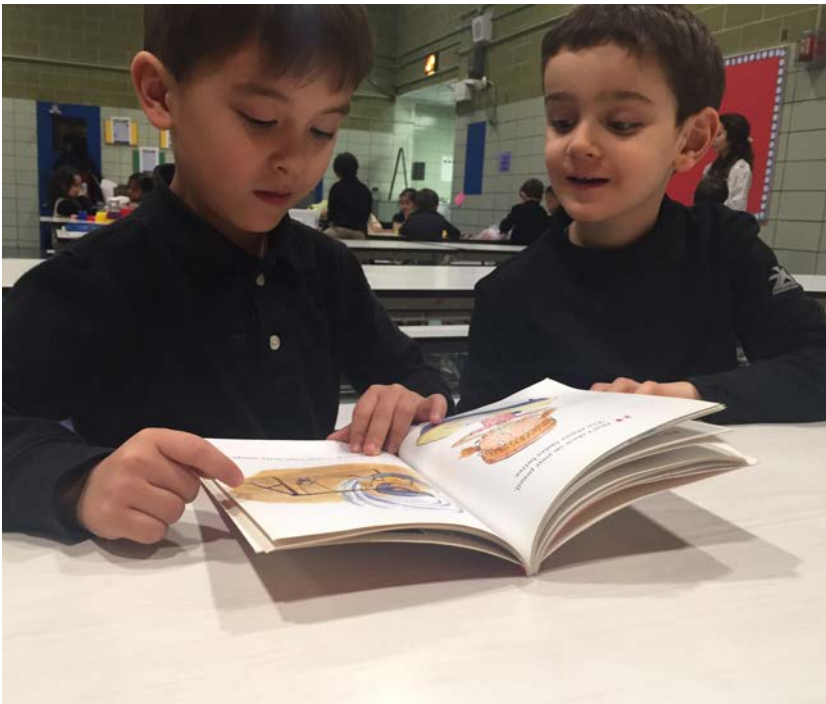
as bumpy, rough, smooth, peeling, papery, or cold. They described fallen leaves as soft, crumbly, crunchy, golden, or shaped like a heart, a triangle, a circle, a hand. They asked why trees drop leaves, why leaf color changes, and why some seeds are prickly.

When the wind picked up, numerous yellow leaves rained down from a tall Linden. Simultaneously a celebration of leaves ensued. Kindergartners leaped into the air catching leaves. (Imagine children reacting to a bubble machine.) Later, they discovered a field covered with grapefruit-sized Osage-orange fruit, which made for alternative soccer balls and more entertainment.

Indoors, kindergartners participated in the "Trees and Me" workshop, an introduction to plant life cycle at the garden. Students enjoyed the hands-on process of removing seeds from grapes, measuring soil for their pots, then watering the soil to nourish the seeds they planted to take home and watch grow.

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Concluding the trees investigation, Kindergarten teachers hosted a science unit and Thanksgiving celebration on November 25th. Families shared food while students created thankful trees, and presented their discoveries about living things. 🍌



How Q300 First Grade Families Approach Homework

Under Q300's no-mandatory-homework policy for grades K-2, families decide how many optional enrichment activity worksheets to tackle each week—if any.

Q300 is not alone; nationwide, many elementary schools have eased or eliminated at-home assignments as educators debate the

Several parents said they try to strike a balance between academics and free play. Some limit homework to three nights a week, up to 30 minutes at a time. And some parents believe children in grades K-2 are better off learning through play, and following their own interests and creative impulses.

pros and cons of homework, especially for the youngest students.

The optional-homework policy gives families a say in how much time students spend doing academic work outside of school. In an informal, highly unscientific email survey, first-grade parents reported a wide range of approaches to the activities. Some said they prefer to skip them altogether in

favor of imaginative play, reading and extracurricular programs. Some set aside time on evenings and weekends, aiming to complete most or all of them. And many fell somewhere in between, depending on the family's schedule and their child's enthusiasm for the project.

First-grade father Ravi said his daughter "gets inquisitive and excited to learn the outcomes of the activity. In my opinion these activities give her a good understanding of the subject matter."

One math worksheet asked students how many ways they could

divvy up dimes between two piggy banks. Science worksheets call on students to experiment with solids and liquids. A reading worksheet asked students to discuss how the main characters in a story changed over time. In "small moment" writing projects, students used quotes and details to describe their experiences.

The activities "give me an opportunity to help her think through concepts and most importantly, contribute to a balanced routine which I think will be important in the higher grades," Pooja, the mother of a first-grader, said. "So some weeks if she fights it we don't do them, some weeks getting through them is a breeze."

Sometimes her daughter prefers to simply play, or rest after a long school day, and that's fine, Pooja said. But, she said, "I do reiterate that with any enrichment, if she is going to do it, she has to bring her 100% to it."

Kids' enthusiasm varies

Sometimes, students can't wait to get started; other times, not so much. One first-grader "is excited about the idea of doing homework," though she does not complete all the activities, her mother, Ingrid, said. "She picks through the pages, choosing the ones she likes best. Finishes those, and then I have a harder time getting her to work on pages that she is not excited about."

For those who choose to do them, writing projects can be challenging. "Since he loves typing on my laptop, we tried something which worked a few times—we would first type the story into a Word document and once he had that down, it seemed less of a challenge to get him to write that story on paper," first-grade mother Kripa said.

For some families, it's best to do the activities on weeknights. Others find weekends are better. Students who attend afterschool might do a few worksheets there. The promise of being able to play or watch a movie later can help. One first-grader "does a little each night with the goal of handing it in on Friday so her weekend is homework-free," her mother, Sue, said. "If she finishes early (say Wednesday night) and hands it in on Thursday then we definitely make the most of it on Thursday evening and do something fun like play games together, watch TV with dinner, etc."

Parents provide different amounts of guidance. Many say they need to be present while their children write. Some offer detailed feedback and guide students to correct any mistakes. Others deliberately avoid all corrections.

Striking a balance

Several parents said they try to strike a balance between academics and free play. Some limit homework to three nights a week, up to 30 minutes at a time. And some parents believe children in grades K-2 are better off learning

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—Mother of a First Grader**

through play, and following their own interests and creative impulses. If that means skipping the homework, so be it.

“Studies have shown that homework doesn’t help academic performance of children of elementary school age, and I believe that pushing homework could have a negative effect on my son’s enjoyment of school and motivation in the future,” said one mother of a first-grader. “He does the occasional worksheet, but it’s not part of his routine. After school he enjoys playing on his own or with friends, reading, some screen time, and just hanging out.”

Mandatory homework can actually be harmful for the youngest students if it is pushed too hard, said Maria, a professor of education at Vassar College and mother of a second-grader, who did not participate in the survey but shared her thoughts as an education researcher. “We are grateful for the school’s flexible policy in the early years because we know that over-emphasis on mandated homework at that age isn’t that helpful and can potentially have a negative effect on kids’ growth and learning,” she said. “It also gives families more freedom to decide what they want to do and learn about together, and sometimes, that is beyond the scope of what happens in school.”

While the written assignments are optional in grades K-2, Q300 does require all students to read every day. But first-grade parents reported no challenges there.

As father Arvind put it, “Reading, he does on his own time!” 🕒



Star Wars Exhibition Ignites Seventh Graders’ Imagination on Time’s Square Trip

On December 16th, Instructors Betty and Anna happily took the seventh grade to the much anticipated Star Wars Costume exhibit in Times Square. Students were transported into the realm of George Lucas’ imagination and learned about the detailed precision of design and how it can be a bold tool of storytelling similar to words on a page, revealing truths about a character, event or situation. The exhibition featured 70 hand-crafted costumes from the first six blockbuster Star Wars films along with really cool lightsaber props and robots, plus a special presentation for “The Force Awakens”. Each hall presented aspects of the films’ timeless heroes and villains, from the menacing black mask of Darth Vader, the shiny golden suit of C3PO, to the lavish royal gowns of Queen Amidala . . . each served the creative process and helped the students better understand how they uncover the connection between character and costume. This was a day that made real Middle School memories. Not only did the teens get to see the Star Wars show, but they were treated to free boxes of Chocolate Pocky by a Times Square promotional truck and wrapped up the afternoon with the delicious culinary acrobatics of amazing chefs at Benihana Restaurant. Big thanks to Betty and Anna for all their efforts in making this exciting trip possible. 🕒



6th Grade Field Trip — WORMS!

The sixth graders visited the Queens Botanical Garden where they learned about worms, and the role they play in creating compost. By using compost, you reduce a source of trash. This fits with the mission of one of our Lego Robotics teams, the Compost Cadets- who are working to build a worm bin here in our school! We were able to learn about the anatomy of worms and examine worms with magnifying glasses. We recorded observations in our field notebooks and learned about how different and complex decomposers like worms can be. Did you know worms digest using grit in their intestines? Also, worms secrete a yellow substance to deter predators and help keep themselves moist. A lot of us experienced that first hand! Thanks to our chaperones and I hope everyone had fun! 🍌

2nd Graders!



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