

North Philly Metropolis

... a community newspaper ...



ISSUE 3, VOL. 3 Winter 2007
PUBLISHED BY Project H.O.M.E.
www.projecthome.org

FREE

THE STATE OF EDUCATION

WHAT'S
GOOD,
WHAT'S
BAD,



AND
HOW
TO
FIX
IT.



**PLUS: Philadelphians Demonstrate in Harrisburg - 23rd Street is Changing for the Better
Dealing with Racism - Alex's Lemonade - National Student Partnerships Returns to North Philly**

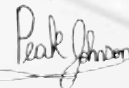
Education, 'Philly Style'

It is in this installment of the *North Philly Metropolis* that, if you look just to the right, you will notice that a couple of new titles have been given to our outstanding array of teen writers, namely the staff. They are no longer known as just plain old regular *staff*, but rather a **squad**, thus they have become the newly named *North Philly Metropolis Squad*. We're here to challenge conventions, and sometimes we find it necessary to update things a bit.

It is in this yet another excellent edition of the *North Philly Metropolis* that our theme is based on the state of education in our fair city of Philadelphia. In the opinions of some, there is nothing to celebrate. A typical day at school for any teenager living in Philadelphia seems to collide with the similarity of their suburban peers' typical day at school. The typical day seems to be waking up, going back to sleep for a few minutes, waking up again, shower, brush your teeth, put on a uniform, rush out of the house without eating breakfast so you can catch the bus on time, and then reaching school where things seem utterly unfair. Students seem to constantly argue with teachers for not having the right materials to teach and argue with each other over personal matters. One thing remains clear: when it comes to discussions over funding, governance and decision-making, the students are usually not invited to the table. When they are, their word doesn't carry as much weight as those in positions of power in our school system. We face this situation throughout our young lives, unheard or misjudged because we are not adults. This problem is something the NPM Squad hopes to rectify.

And teachers, the very people who are trained to help us reach new and higher opportunities in today's society, can be a source of aggravation for us as well. I have met teachers who I consider to be the best, but sadly they are few and far between. In my experience, teachers who do not show respect for their students, who fail to be friends or allies of their students, and do not take the time to work with them individually are the ones who are least effective. Our teachers need to be trained more effectively, and they need to be given the resources and supplies needed to be successful at their jobs. I hope politicians from City Hall to Harrisburg, all the way to the White House are listening.

From personal views on the differences between public schools and charter schools to an interesting article about the new Community Partnership School right here in our community, this edition of the *North Philly Metropolis* will make any teen ready to take a stand and find the truth at his/her school. Who knew that talking about school could be this exciting?



Peak Johnson, Editor-in-Chief

The North Philly Metropolis

Published by the Teen Program at
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GET INVOLVED!

The *North Philly Metropolis* is always looking for more writers, editors, photographers, illustrators, creative writers and anyone with talents or energy they would like to contribute to our efforts.
Call 215.235.2900 x6316
or e-mail NPM@projecthome.org
to get plugged in!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Admiration

Please continue your efforts to report news from a youthful perspective. Your efforts are greatly appreciated and your work is much admired.

Linda S. Wallace
Fairmount

Cover-to-Cover

I read the hip-hop edition of the *North Philly Metropolis* almost cover-to-cover and I was really impressed, entertained and educated from it. Tell everyone to keep up the good work!

Melanie Bartlett
West Philly

Stay Strong

In response to "I Wish" by Elnora Cutler [Issue 2, Vol 3. Spring/Summer 2006, Page 29], to those struggling with their parents:

Always keep your chin up and wipe the tears from your eyes, we are all linked together as I feel you can see. Try to understand your mother and pray for her. Maybe give her the gift of an "I love you," or even a cup of tea. For others, watching you remain strong may help guide them through their struggles.

Edward Gay
North Philly

Dreams Will Become a Reality

In response to "Renaming Diamond Street" by Anthony Phillips [Issue 2, Vol 3. Spring/Summer 2006, Page 11]:

Please thank Anthony for his contribution to the renaming of Diamond Street; it is with the help of others like him and the *North Philly Metropolis* that this dream will become a reality.

Kemah C. Washington
North Philly

WRITE TO US!

We want your critical feedback on our exploration of the state of education in Philadelphia.

Please write to us:

North Philly Metropolis
1936 N. Judson Street
Philadelphia, PA 19121

or EMAIL US at
NPM@projecthome.org

By submitting a letter, you consent to have it published unless you clearly state otherwise. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and grammar.

MISSION STATEMENT

We have created this newspaper because we want to share ideas, knowledge, and information with our community. Through publishing, we will educate ourselves—the students—in writing, photography, editing, research, investigation, and graphic design. We want to present role models from the community that are setting a good example and to counteract the negative images of the inner city in most media. We are willing to take chances to better the community and to show our faith...with love, respect, dedication, and courage.

Views expressed in NPM are those of the authors and may not reflect the opinions, politics or views of Project H.O.M.E.

Where to find the *North Philly Metropolis*

You will always find current and back issues available at our headquarters in the Honickman Learning Center Comcast Technology Labs located at 1936 N. Judson Street in North Philadelphia (Between Berks and Norris Streets and 23rd and 24th Streets). Otherwise, try our other distribution points:

SCHOOLS

Hallahan; GESU; William Penn; RR Wright; New Hope; Vaux; Strawberry Mansion; University City; William Dick; Temple Student Center; Menonite; Mercy Vocational; Temple DHS; School District Board; T.M. Pierce; Berean Institute.

BUSINESSES / CENTERS / ORGANIZATIONS

Rainbow Pizza; The Right Choice; Charlie's Country Ribs; Diamond Street NAC Center; MLK Center; YMCA; Project H.O.M.E. Departments and Residences; Child Advocate; 20th Street Health Center; Espinal Grocery; OCHC; Stores along Ridge Avenue, Diamond Street, and Berks Street; The Childrens Hospital; Truancy Courts; 22nd & 23rd Police Precincts; Ridge Avenue Free Library; Post Offices; WIC.

CHURCHES

Deliverance Evangelistic Church; 2nd Timothy Tabernacle Baptist Church; Berean Baptist Church; Miller Memorial Baptist Church; Cornerstone Baptist Church; Church of The Advocate; Deliverance Church; Christian Tabernacle Church of God In Christ; Emmanuel Institutional Baptist Church; Christlike Faith Baptist Church; Beclaham Deliverance Church; Wayland Temple Baptist Church.

Our distribution list continues to grow. Please contact us to add your organization to the list. Coming Soon: Newspaper boxes located outside the Laundromat at 28th and Cecil B. Moore, outside Charlie's Country Ribs, and outside McCoy's Auto Repair. We appreciate the support of these businesses as they allow us to get our issues out to more and more people. Keep your eyes open for these boxes around the city!

The Harold A. Honickman Young Entrepreneurial Program

Do you want to become an entrepreneur, earn money, and start your own business?



Last year, the teens at the HLC&CTL started their own individual businesses. They received start-up money by having a small car wash, set up shop in the popular Rittenhouse Square, and received payment for their hard work.



You too can become a young entrepreneur, earn money, and make new friends.

Offering Jobs in

Tanisha's Spectacular Water Ice

William's Triple Deluxe Cookies

Peak's Lemonade

Zamir's Doggy Does it

Interested? Contact Richard Amoako 215-235-2900, Ext. 6306

File Your State & Federal Income Taxes with

The Benefit Bank

A counselor assisted FREE service that helps you:

- File 2006 Federal & State Income Tax Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- Apply for Food Stamps and Medical Benefits
 - Apply for PACE/PACENET (Prescription Drug Coverage for Seniors)
- Apply for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Apply for Child Care Subsidy

For more information call Dan Samson at 215-235-2900, Ext. 6116



Project H.O.M.E.
Honickman Learning Center & Comcast Technology Labs
1936 North Judson Street

Your business would be listed here too, if you advertised in the North Philly Metropolis! We have rates as low as \$30 per issue!

See our ad rates below (at right) for more details.



PROJECT H.O.M.E.

A Great Place to Work and Make a Difference! We are a rapidly growing, independent nonprofit agency in Philadelphia with a mission to empower persons to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty, to address structural causes of poverty, and to enable all of us to attain our fullest potential as individuals and as members of the broader society. In so doing, we run homeless outreach and residential programs and offer other supportive services for chronically homeless adults and families. We also are involved in a major neighborhood revitalization program in North Philadelphia, partnering with the community to provide affordable home ownership, education and health services. We have recently developed a comprehensive learning center located in lower North Philadelphia. The Honickman Learning Center & Comcast Technology Labs (HLC&CTL) is the centerpiece of our comprehensive revitalization strategy. The programs housed in the HLC&CTL focus on the integration of technology with arts, education and employment. The Center will serve over 1,000 children and adults each year. We currently have the following opportunity available.

Maintenance Technician Seeking a skilled Maintenance Technician. Responsibilities will include the maintenance, repair of residential buildings, office space and technology facilities (The Learning Center, Residential, Community Centers, etc.) in Center City Philadelphia and surrounding area. Qualified candidates must have a high school diploma or equivalent; have basic to good skills and knowledge in plumbing, electrical, and HVAC, light carpentry, painting and drywall patching; previous experience in and extensive working knowledge of custodial work is required; a solid work history, a valid Driver's License & car insurance and dependable transportation. Must be able to must submit and satisfactorily clear child abuse and criminal background checks and meet our auto insurance standards. Scheduled: 40 hours per week and rotational on-call hours.

Web Design Instructor The Web Design Instructor will be responsible for the development of curriculum and daily instruction of up to two levels of web design and web maintenance. The classes will consist of up to 20 students approximately 18 hours a week for two groups of students. Students are expected to work on independent or group projects as part of course completion that will be managed by the instructor. Skills taught should include but not be limited to some of the following: safe handling of equipment, animation, design, expository, persuasive or creative writing, some graphic arts and layout, and some digital photography when appropriate. All students should complete a project for the end of the program. Qualified candidates must have a Bachelor's Degree in Education, technology or related field; 2 years experience working with youth; strong computer skills (MS Office, Publisher, etc.); excellent verbal and written communication skills; proficient in Studio MX, Photoshop and Quark; the ability to create lesson plans to effectively keep order/manage a classroom; and develop relationships with students and parents. **Program Schedule: Candidate would be required to work 18 hours a week.** If hired candidate must receive satisfactory clearance of child abuse and criminal background checks.

Please submit your cover letter, resume and salary requirements to:

Project H.O.M.E. - 1515 Fairmount Avenue - Philadelphia, PA 19130

Attn: Human Resources Recruiter - Fax: 215-382-7633 - Email: work@projecthome.org

For more information please visit our website: www.projecthome.org

Project H.O.M.E. is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, age, citizenship, or veteran status.

Philadelphia Police Explorers

Post #918

The Police Explorers program motivates young adults, ages 14-20, who want to pursue a career in law enforcement. The program allows exposure to all sides of law enforcement, with police officers helping you with career resources, and teaching you the policies, procedures, and practices of the Philadelphia Police Department. The designated location is at the 22nd police district at 17th and Montgomery, every Wednesday at 6:00 p.m.

Come, let us be your role models and learn to be law abiding productive members of our society.

Contact

Police Officer Ghee at (215) 685-2732

ADVERTISE IN THE NORTH PHILLY METROPOLIS!

NPM is distributed throughout Philadelphia to teens and adults in the community. By advertising with us, not only will you reach a large demographic, you make a statement that you support the efforts of teens who are trying to make a difference in their neighborhood. Please circle the ad size you desire below, fill out the form and send it to the address below.

Business Card (3 1/4 x 2)	\$30
Business Card Plus (3 1/4 x 3 1/2)	\$35
One-Sixth Page (vertical - 3 3/4 x 7 1/2)	\$50
Quarter Page (5 1/4 x 7 1/2)	\$80
Third Page (horizontal - 10 x 5)	\$100
Half Page (horizontal - 10 x 7 1/2)	\$15
Full page (inside)	\$300
Back Cover (full page)	\$350

Name	_____
Business	_____
Phone #	_____
Email	_____

Ask about special discounts for taking ads in multiple issues

Announce A New Baby Girl or Boy in the family - Shout out a Birthday or Graduation - Offer coupons and discounts for your independent business - Sell your house, car, furniture, etc. - Reach out to your community!

Each NPM page measures 11" x 16" (no bleed). We can help with ad layout if needed. Please submit your check or money order along with your camera-ready ads to the address below, or e-mail PDF, PSD or TIF formatted files to NPM@projecthome.org. To pay by credit card, please call us at 215.235.2900, extension 6316.

Your advertising helps cover our costs. Thank you for your support.

North Philly Metropolis, 1936 N. Judson Street, Philadelphia, PA 19121
Phone: 215.235.2900 x6316 - Fax: 215.235.2875



VIOLENT CRIME BLOTTER

SAMPLING OF VIOLENT CRIMES IN OUR AREA FROM SEPTEMBER 2006 THROUGH JANUARY 16, 2007. REPORTED TO POLICE IN THE NORTH CENTRAL PHILADELPHIA AREA

Report Crime in Your Neighborhood

Anonymous, Confidential Tiplines:

Report Illegal Guns: 215-683-GUNS (4867)
Rumor Hotline or Townwatch: 215-685-9521
Report Truant (out of school) Youth: 215-400-7233
Report Domestic Violence: 1-866-SAFE-014
For Emergencies: 911

West Berks Street & North Croskey Street - 9/14/2006

Victim states while walking to the store, he was approached by three black males, one having a black handgun and putting it to his head telling him to empty his pockets. They then took his red and white Rocawear jacket and access card. Male fled eastbound on Berks Street, victim did not sustain any injuries.

2200 West Cecil B. Moore Avenue - 9/30/2006

Victim stated that offender pulled out a silver gun from pants and started yelling at her. Victim ran home and called police. Survey of area showed negative results.

2400 West Norris Street - 10/10/2006

Victim stated while walking, unknown offenders came from behind him and pointed a black semi auto handgun at him and stated, "Give it up," then went through victim's pockets, taking \$45. Male fled on Judson Street from Norris Street, police surveyed area with negative results.

2300 West Cecil B. Moore Avenue - 11/13/2006

Victim states on 11/12 at 10:00 pm while walking to the store, an unknown black male approached him and stated, "Give me your f***** money or I'll shoot you." The offender then pulled from his right pocket a black handgun and said, "Now give me your f***** money or I'll shoot you." The victim gave the offender \$4, no arrests were made.

2344 West Montgomery Avenue - 11/29/2006

Victim was shot in the chest by unknown person(s) at approximately 2:10 pm Victim was transported to Hahnemann hospital by private automobile.

2500 West Cecil B. Moore Avenue - 12/2/2006

Victim states at 11:30 pm while exiting the

bus, she was approached at point of gun by two unknown black males who robbed her of \$60. Both offenders wore ski masks. No injuries. Victim couldn't give a description of the males due to ski masks.

2200 West Ridge Avenue - 12/20/2006

Victim stated at 7:20 am while waiting for the bus an unknown black male came up to him, showed him a black handgun, went into victim's pants pockets and took \$15 and two SEPTA tokens. Victim states the offender then told him, "I'll shoot you, turn around and walk away." No injuries and no arrest.

North 24th Street & West Berks Street - 12/25/2006

Victim stated to Temple police that he heard a single gun shot in the area of 24th and Berks Street, and then realized that he was shot in the right leg. According to Temple police the victim is unaware of where the shot came from.

23rd & Diamond Streets - 12/26/2006

Victim states after leaving the Diamond Food Market, offender pointed a black handgun at the victim and stated, "Give it up, I know it's in your back pocket. I will shoot you." The Victim removed \$300.00 and handed it over to the offender who then fled.

2400 Norris Street - 1/8/2007

Victim was shot on Norris Street, and then ran to Berks Street. Male was treated for one gunshot to the left leg, one shot to the left arm, and one shot to the left side of the chest. Male was listed in stable condition.

2500 West Cecil B. Moore Avenue - 1/16/2007

Victim states on 1/16/2007 at 7:55 pm while walking in the highway, two unknown black males struck him from behind and put a black handgun in his face. Offenders went into his pockets taking \$300 then fled in unknown direction. Victim is refusing to have any further police involvement. No arrests were made.

2440 West Norris Street - 1/16/2007

Police responded to a shooting, at which time police were flagged down near 25th and Ridge Avenue by a private vehicle driven by victim's aunt. She stated that her nephew was attempting to close his grocery store when an unidentified black male approached victim and shot him once in the chest area. Offender then fled and victim was rushed to Temple hospital.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

Line Dancing on Tuesdays from 6:30-8:30pm in the HLCCTL auditorium. For any questions contact Sr. Anne Kappler at 215-235-3110 ext. 5633

At the Drueding Youth Network (DYN), 1325 North Lawrence Street:

Philly Fallback-- Dinner and Discussion Monday nights, 6-8 pm Ages 13 and up

Karate with Mr. Francisco-- Tuesday nights, 6-8 pm ages 10 and up - space limited

Hip Hop Dance-- Wednesday nights, 6-7 and 7-8pm, ages 8- 12 and 13-17 yrs, space limited. For more information on DYN programming, call Lyndsey Henderson at 215-236-1506.

FEBRUARY

February is **BLACK HISTORY MONTH!** Discover it for yourself.

Meet Black History Groundbreakers: www.biography.com/blackhistory/

Association for the Study of African American Life and History (founders of Black History Month): www.asalh.org/

February 22 African American History Open House Celebration.

Help bring food, relief and medical supplies to the thousands of Refugees in Darfur, Africa and see the exciting "Living Museum" in the Wilt Chamberlain Auditorium, HLCCTL. 1936 North Judson Street. 4 pm - 7 pm Admission: \$1

February 24 & 25 Celebrate African American History at the Black History Showcase. Pennsylvania Convention Center-Philadelphia, PA, 12th & Arch Streets. 11 am - 7 pm Admission: Free

APRIL

April 11, 18, 23 Asthma Support Class (sessions 1-3) 6-7 pm - HLCCTL Free Asthma Class for parents and children who are five years and older. Sponsored by the Community Asthma Prevention Program. Asthma-related giveaways.

April 17 WHYY-Cyberchase - Workshop for parents 6-7:30 pm - HLCCTL Learn how Cyberchase helps children develop and sustain enthusiasm for math and improve their mathematical literacy and problem-solving skills.

E-mail your upcoming events to NPM@projec-thome.org

2007 PENNSYLVANIA ELECTION IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Last day to REGISTER before the primary **April 16**

Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot **May 8**

Last day for County Board of Elections to receive voted civilian absentee ballots **May 11**

MUNICIPAL PRIMARY **May 15**

Last day to REGISTER before the Municipal election **October 9**

Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot **October 30**

Last day for County Boards of Elections to receive voted civilian absentee ballots **November 2**

MUNICIPAL ELECTION **November 6**

"Part of the American myth is that people who are handed the skin of a dead sheep at graduating time think that it will keep their minds alive forever." - James Mason Brown



“This is something that should have happened a long time ago,” said Lindsey Harkins. “The government goes over to other countries and tears them down and gives them money to rebuild, why not just start at home where the problem starts?”

NEW HOMES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR 23RD STREET

BY PEAK JOHNSON
INTERVIEWS BY NADREASE PRICE

The day started out like any normal day, until helicopters started flying around the Honickman Learning Center Comcast Technology Labs, police were arriving in their cars, and members of the secret service started to appear faster than anyone could blink.

It was a sight to behold when former President Bill Clinton made his way through the blocks of 23rd and Judson Streets to join in hearing “rock star” Jon Bon Jovi announce Project H.O.M.E.’s Phase V Homeownership Project. The project is a unique partnership between Project H.O.M.E., Habitat for Humanity, the Philadelphia Soul Charitable Foundation, and Saturn. The Phase V Homeownership project will focus on renovating 15 row houses in the 1800 and 1900 blocks of North 23rd Street into energy efficient homes containing “Energy Star” appliances.

“I spent a lot of time here in Philadelphia over the last twenty-five years. One night while I was looking out of my hotel I saw a homeless man sleeping out on the street. I wanted to help him, I wanted to fix that,” said Jon Bon Jovi, referring to how he met Sister Mary and Project H.O.M.E.

“First of all, I love this city and it was very good to me and was the site of a lot of the most important things I tried to do for America when I was President,” stated former President

Bill Clinton as he took the stage. “I love this city, it is the birthplace of America and in so many ways the heartbeat of America. I’m here because I admire Project H.O.M.E., but when Sister Mary gave that speech and came back to introduce Jon, I said, ‘I’m glad you never ran against me.’” The crowd took a moment to recognize President Clinton’s joke and applaud him before he continued on. “I honor this project and they’ve been working for nearly twenty years now to end homelessness and they realize that it’s not just a matter of sticking a homeless person in a house.”

“We are people of all walks of life who refuse to accept homelessness as an inevitable part of our urban landscape,” began Sister Mary Scullion. “Joan McConnon and I are thrilled to be here in North Philadelphia celebrating a truly remarkable homecoming with you and our very special and honored guests.”

It was myself and Tanisha Clanton who were among the few lucky enough to meet President Clinton. We were nervous, but somehow we managed to pull it off and after giving presents of a copy of the *North Philly Metropolis* and a few t-shirts, we were able to also be the first to have our picture taken with him.

Members of the *NPM Squad* were able to get a few reactions about having the former President and a rock star in our fair neighborhood. “I’m here to see former President Bill Clinton and the owner of Philadelphia Soul Jon Bon Jovi,” exclaimed Lindsey Harkins of West Philadelphia. “I’m here to support anything that’ll help get housing in the city of Philadelphia,” added Tony Evans of North Philadelphia when asked the same question.

“Affordable housing is according to somebody’s income such as me, I’m on SSI and I need affordable housing. SSI doesn’t cover me enough for living expenses.” Tony Evans continued, “I’m looking at this neighborhood here where they’re planning on making affordable houses. I might be able to get lucky and get one of these, hopefully.”

But what was to be said about Project H.O.M.E. in general? What was known about Project H.O.M.E.’s partnership with Jon Bon Jovi and former President Bill Clinton?

“It was like a blessing in disguise, I just got dropped here at St. Elizabeth and since I’ve been there they’ve been affiliated with Project H.O.M.E. and Project H.O.M.E. is a good organization.” When asked how he first heard about Project H.O.M.E., Evans said, “Well, right now I’m one of the residents here at the rehab center. I’m trying to get my life back together, trying to give back to the community what they’ve given to me.”

“This is something that should have happened a long time ago,” said Lindsey Harkins. When asked what he thought about the ongoing events that were taking place, he replied, “The government goes over to other countries and tears them down and gives them money to rebuild, why not just start at home where the problem starts?”

This event, this amazing outcome, is greatly appreciated and is something that should have happened long ago. I’m proud to be a part of an organization such as Project H.O.M.E. This moment in time will truly be remembered in our community of North Central Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIANS TAKE IT TO HARRISBURG

Thousands descended on Harrisburg this past September to demand stricter gun-control laws in response to the wave of gun violence which took **406** Philadelphians in 2006. Story on Page 6.



PHOTOS BY NPM SQUAD



PHILADELPHIANS TAKE TO HARRISBURG

continued from Page 5.

Thousands gathered for a rally outside of the Capitol Building in Harrisburg this past September. Their cries varied, though their demands were simple: Gun control legislation in Pennsylvania that would stem the flood of guns in the city streets. Specific proposals call for limiting gun sales to one a month per person and mandatory reporting of lost guns. "Why

would anyone need more than one gun a month?" asked Alisha Corley before a crowd gathered on the Capitol's steps. Her 5-year-old daughter Casha'e Rivers was killed in Strawberry Mansion earlier in the week. "I thank God for the five years we had her."

35 busses arrived from Philadelphia alone, bringing with them many who were personally affected by the tragic violence.

"I lost my baby son in his second year of college. He was killed in 2004," said Wayne Jacobs, co-founder of Ex-Offenders for Community Empowerment. "We are asking that

legislators should pass a Gun Ownership Responsibility Law which makes gun owners more responsible and more careful about how they place their guns."

Many politicians were present including Philadelphia area State Representatives, City Council members, and the Mayor, who pledged to continue the fight to pass stricter legislation despite opposition from groups like the NRA.

"They can't possibly love their guns," said Congressman and Mayoral candidate Chaka Fattah, "more than we love our children."

STUDENTS PROTEST OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OFFICE

BY FATIMA THOMAS

"This is where it stops, it stops today!"

This statement came from the mouth of an angry parent on the School District of Philadelphia's front steps. Students from Youth United for Change, along with concerned parents, talked and listened to those that had something to say about the school budget. Students voiced their opinions, including sharing their facts and feelings about losing school staff who had impacts on their schools.

2003- 2004 he decreased class sizes and improved test scores, but in 2005 - 2006 funding was cut and teachers were being pulled from their classes. There is a \$73 million dollar deficit! Just two years ago the budget was stable. Schools are losing staff such as language teachers, nurses, and librarians. High school students are forced to take Spanish classes in 11th and 12th grades. Nurses, as of this year, work four times a week instead of five and for some schools it's



During the protest outside the School District building on North Broad Street, students talked about the loss of their language teachers, tutors, and friends. Parents touched on important issues that were occurring due to the school board's budget cuts. Many people used the opportunity to speak about Paul Vallas, the CEO of the School District, and how he was not doing his duties in office. Others took the time to talk about the damage of the cuts: language teachers being laid off, more students in a class, some exceeding 30!

Paul Vallas was known for keeping the budget intact, rising test scores, and construction of smaller classes, but now things are going downward and parents want to know why. From

twice a month. Counselors are being cut and now students have to apply for colleges themselves and they have no one to talk to about those problems that they are having. The people need a person that will stabilize the budget. They need someone who truly cares about the people and their voice. We need a person who cares about the children, their education, and a dedicated staff. As of right now, Paul Vallas is not the person doing it. We need to avoid this occurring again by having a line of people that have various duties that one person's slack does not affect the communities of people. Give the people what they want: Paul Vallas out and a new CEO in!

\$73 million: Deficit of the School District of Philadelphia.

\$63 million: Price of the new school in West Philadelphia called "The School of The Future."

\$1.9 billion: Funding for "The School of The Future" through the school district's Capital Improvement Plan.

\$15 million: Money that is helping in the school renovations phase through the Capital Improvement Plan. The renovations include new science classrooms and laboratories, a music suite, an art suite, and various other things.

175,886: Number of children in Philadelphia Schools.

32,000: Approximate number of children who are "illegally absent" (without an excuse) every day in the Philadelphia School System.

Sources: School District of Philadelphia website, zwere.com, kidsource.com and barnesjewish.com

If you want to voice your concerns, or support the struggle which other parents and students are going through, then you can contact:

The School Reform Commission:

Phone: (215) 400-4010 // Fax: (215) 400-4011
or via
<http://www.hallwatch.org/faxbank/philadelphia>

The School District of Philadelphia:

Phone: (215) 400-4000

Your local political representatives:

<http://www.house.gov/writerep/>

"Education is a progressive discovery of our ignorance." - Will Durant

THE MAN OF THE HOUR: WADE JACKSON

BY PEAK JOHNSON

It seems that everyone that I meet is more interesting than the next or has contributed to this community in some way. Great people such as Ms. Shelli Pennick Howard, Ms. Denise Wade, Mr. Nasir, and Officer Ghee. I cannot see why I have trouble figuring out what to write about or who to interview for each successive issue (*NPM Squad Note--You work too much, Peak!*). I was invited to a race about three months ago where not only did I see Isaiah and Icsun Smith (two teens that attend the Teen program) race, but where I also spotted Mr. Wade Jackson. While racing, Mr. Wade of course didn't have time to say much, but after the race I ran over to him knowing that he would be the subject of my next interview.

North Philly Metropolis: How long have you lived in North Philadelphia?

Wade Jackson: Forty-five years.

NPM: Have you seen any changes?

WJ: A lot of changes, I've seen it change from bad to worse, but with this building here [Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs] it could be a lot better because this building can save a lot of these kids' lives. These kids around here are good kids, but they are just led into the wrong direction. Some of their fathers might be dead or incarcerated and they don't have anybody to grab them by the arm and show them love. There was always something to do when I was coming up even during the gang wars. We had PAL's. We had roller skating around at St. Elizabeth. There was so much to do. Downtown had penny arcades. There were movie theaters. But now all of that is gone and there's nothing for the kids to do, so they're caught up in the streets. It's sad.

NPM: What do you think of the teenagers that roam the streets? If they were given the chance to come here do you think that the center would help them out?

WJ: Of course, the Center helps everyone out. If I had my way, I would have ninety percent of these teenagers in this neighborhood right in this building because they need it. Some of them are afraid because they can't read or can't write. When I talk to them I tell them not to worry about it, because they can get tutored and learn the basics. Then they can go from your GED to getting into basic computers and keep going up and up.

NPM: What do you think of the new developments that are happening around here, like the projects that Mr. Nasir is working on?



WJ: I like what's going on, I like what Sister Mary Scullion is doing with the houses. I'm just hoping that some of these other houses that are condemned on these other blocks can also get rebuilt. A lot of things that are going on around here are good. I just hope that the people that live around here stay here and don't get flushed out of the neighborhood.

NPM: What was it like before the Center even came about?

WJ: Chaos, but thanks to Sister Mary Scullion and the people who put this project here together, it's helping a lot of people. It's helping people of all ages, because of the after school program, the K-6 program, and the adult program, the tutoring, so it's helping a lot of people in different ways. It especially helped my wife who graduated as an Administration Specialist. My other son, Courtney, just started coming here and he's here getting his GED. I'm proud of my son and he's twenty years old, there's no age limit to education.

NPM: Could you tell us what you do here at the Center?

WJ: I'm a volunteer, I'm on the 21st Century Community Learning Center advisory board, I put flyers out, anything anybody needs me to do out in different areas, regarding putting things up, I do that. I've been doing it for the longest time now.

NPM: Could you explain to us what racing means to you.

WJ: Racing means a lot. First thing is that it relieves a lot of stress, and it's good for your health. It's good competition for whatever you're trying to go for. Now me, I've been running for a while, but my goal is to be the best, be number one, and to beat the Kenyans. I believe in number one, not number two.

NPM: How did you get into the sport?



WJ: Well, I used to run a long time ago and if I would have known the talent that I have now, I would have been running for years and years. But now I realize the gifts that I have, the gifts that God gave me, so I'm going to use them.

NPM: Could you tell us about the race that you were in a few months ago?

WJ: The Jefferson Run, it was a 13 mile run and there were about 11,000 people in the race. They had kids there also. I finished in about an hour and 46 minutes. I feel good about it, but I'm not satisfied with it. I think I can do better next year, God's will. It was for a good cause and I had fun. There was no violence and I'm around all different cultures who all had fun. My goal for 2007 is to run four races. I want to run the ten mile Broad Street Run, I want to run the five mile Valley Green Run, the Race for a Cure again, and I want to run the Jefferson Run on September 16, 2007. To be honest, I want to beat the Kenyans, but whatever happens, happens. But I would like to set better numbers than this year.

NPM: What does your son think of you racing, does he want to get into it also?

WJ: My son Nicholas, believe it or not he has it. He's gifted. But by him being so young he's not really motivated to run. I did a 100 yard dash in 60 seconds. He nearly beat me and he's only eleven years old. He's faster than fast. If he were to let me train him and mold him now he would have a chance. Even when he plays football as a wide receiver he blows everybody away. Not only that, but he's a smart kid too. He's real good at math. He says he wants to be like Bill Gates but I tell him he can be better.

NPM: Could you tell us where you train?

WJ: I train at home. I go to Temple track and I run there in the summer time. I go up to Valley Green and run up the trails, hills, and mountains

Continued on Page 8...

"Education is what remains when we have forgotten all that we have been taught." -George Savile

Continued from Page 7

up there. And I train at the Bellevue Hotel.

NPM: What schools do your sons attend?

WJ: Nicholas goes to William Dick. Courtney is out of school. I'm working on getting Nicholas out of William Dick. I don't like it, period. He's too smart for William Dick, but we're working on getting him out of there, both me and his mother.

NPM: Does Nicholas like William Dick?

WJ: No, he's too smart to be in there and I don't like how they treat people over there. Some of the teachers don't do what they are supposed to. If you're a teacher making all that money then you can't be scared of kids. You

have to help the kids. Some of teachers do and some of them don't, but Nicholas will be out of there in a matter of time. This Center is a nice outlet for him because he gets to use computers and he likes computers.

NPM: Where did you attend school?

WJ: Roman Catholic High School.

NPM: What do you think about the state of education in Philadelphia?

WJ: It stinks because the teachers are scared of the students and getting an education is not like it was when I was going to school. When the kids know that they can get over the teacher because the teachers are scared of the kids, it's a

lost cause. Back then, teachers didn't play. They would get right with you, but a lot of them are scared now. It seems that the clothes, jewelry, and cars are more important to students than an education. But kids don't realize without an education you have no future.

NPM: How important do you think education is?

WJ: Education is the key to life. You need it. You need to learn until the day you die because you'll learn something new everyday. For example, Bill Gates is the richest man in the world but he's still learning.

NATIONAL STUDENT PARTNERSHIPS RETURNS TO NORTH PHILLY

BY ALEX SHAW

The North Philadelphia community can once again walk through the doors of National Student Partnerships' (NSP) North Philadelphia office to find free assistance with services including housing, employment and education.

After six and a half weeks of operating without a physical office, NSP opened its new location at 2123 N. Gratz Street, between 18th and 19th Streets.

National Student Partnerships (NSP) operates a national network of resource centers staffed by student volunteers from area colleges and universities. Working one-on-one with community members, NSP provides intensive on-site and referral services that enable clients to: locate employment; secure affordable housing, health care, childcare, and other services; and pursue long-term career and life goals.

National Student Partnerships (NSP) operates a national network of resource centers staffed by student volunteers from area colleges and universities.

"While NSP never left North Philadelphia, it is nice to be able to say, 'our doors are open, come on in,'" said Ashley Mueller, NSP-North Philadelphia AmeriCorps*VISTA Site Coordinator. "It is great to be part of the Philadelphia community and to be able to give area families the resources they need to reach their goals."

Staffed by trained student volunteers from Temple and LaSalle Universities, NSP-North Philadelphia operates a resource center for community members in need of help applying for public benefits, subsidized housing, locating GED and job training programs, creating resumes and searching for employment, among other needs. NSP is the nation's only year-round student-led volunteer service organization.

With no eligibility requirements, NSP-

North Philadelphia's clientele may range from a low-income family looking to find a home to a middle-aged father pursuing higher education.

To operate effectively as a service organization, as well as a referral site, NSP-North Philadelphia has developed partnerships with the Center for Social Policy and Community Development at Temple University, the Salvation Army, and the Church of the Advocate.

The NSP office can be found next door to the historic Church of the Advocate and co-located with the Madeira Family Center. NSP-Philadelphia is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday and from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday through Friday. While walk-in clients are welcomed, appointments are recommended to avoid long wait times.

For more information on NSP, visit www.nspnet.org.

TRUCK DRIVING SCHOLARSHIPS HELP PUT PHILLY MEN ON THE ROAD

Three months ago, three Philadelphia men, Ali McPherson, Eddie Boone and Bernard Baker had never heard of each other.

McPherson was a postal carrier and part-time paramedic trying to find extra work to support a wife and four daughters. Boone and Baker were out of work and trying to find jobs.

Along came Jen Doyle, Manager of Adult Learning and Workforce Development at Project H.O.M.E.'s Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs. Their workforce development program helps North Central Philadelphia residents gain training and skills, giving them better opportunities in the job market.

Doyle was screening scores of local candidates to receive the scholarships for Smith & Solomon, a local commercial driving school in Philadelphia that trains people to drive tractor trailers and buses. These jobs almost assuredly

guarantee the recipients a full time job making anywhere from \$37,000 to \$50,000 a year.

Boone, McPherson and Baker met all the requirements and started to learn to drive tractor trailers.

"Eddie had never even driven a stick," recalls McPherson. "But we encouraged each other to hang in and complete the course."

They did, finishing the four-week program and getting their commercial drivers licenses.

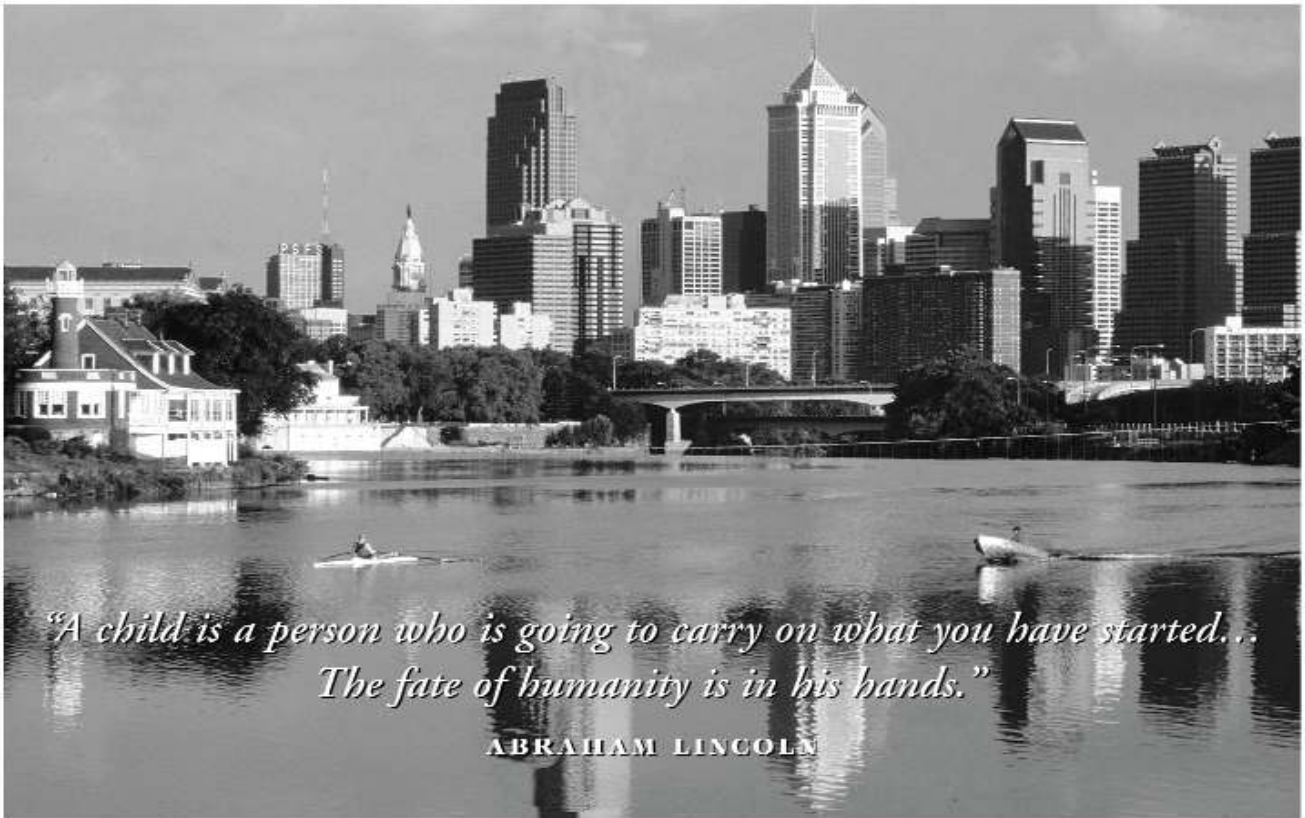
Today, McPherson qualifies to drive the postal service tractor trailers, Baker is already driving over the road for Swift Transportation Inc. and Boone is driving a school bus for the city of Philadelphia.

But there is one problem. "The program was very successful and we're grateful to Smith & Solomon for the training and job placement. But we need more programs like this."

Doyle is hopeful someone will step forward and provide the money for additional scholarships for truck driver training. "We have lots of people, including several women, who heard about the program and are asking about learning to drive."

If Doyle and Project H.O.M.E. are successful in getting additional funds, the scholarships are all but guaranteed to take North Central Philadelphia residents off unemployment and put them in readily available jobs.

"There is a shortage of 20,000 over the road truck drivers in the U.S. right now with a projected shortfall of 110,000 by the year 2014," notes Larry Carrangi of Smith & Solomon. "There is a real need for commercially licensed drivers in Philadelphia. If we have the funding we can expand this driver training program and help dozens of unemployed people in North Central Philly"



*"A child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started...
The fate of humanity is in his hands."*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

We wish a Happy Holiday to all
and

We pay tribute to the staff and students at
The Honickman Learning Center Comcast Technology Labs

We also salute

The North Philly Metropolis editors
for their wonderful contribution to the community
and especially for highlighting the importance of education.

from your friends at



THE HONICKMAN FOUNDATION

Partnering for the future through art, education and community

THE STATE OF

PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BY FATIMA THOMAS

Private versus public school has been an issue that is widely debated throughout urban areas of the United States. Children that live in these areas don't think very much about education and the standards that education should be at in Philadelphia. Schools should have both resources (such as extracurricular activities) and educational options (after-school tutoring). We look at the extracurricular activities very often as an escape route from what is known as the "ghetto."

Students in inner-city public schools are often given special treatment and are told they don't need to learn to read or write; that they should just be good at basketball or football and not take the time to worry about education. What is their back-up plan? What happens if they get hurt? That's why I feel that private schools and charter schools are better for a child than public school because they give both resources and educational options.

Don't get me wrong, I think that you can do well wherever you put your mind at, but think about it. Parents, if your child had the chance to attend a private school, would you send them? GreatSchools.net displays the test scores of public schools all around the city and even in all fifty states. They compare schools in your area so that you can see the school with the lowest test scores and smallest class sizes. I picked a well known school in my area, Strawberry Mansion High School. Then I compared it with the school that I attend; Philadelphia Mennonite High School (PMHS), and a charter school that one of my fellow program members attends, CHAD (Charter High School for Architecture and Design).

I first looked up their teacher to student ratios. Strawberry Mansion has a 17 to 1 stu-

dent to teacher ratio, PMHS has an 8 to 1 student to teacher ratio, and CHAD has a 14 to 1 student to teacher ratio. The number of children in a class can really affect how a child learns. If there are too many children in the class the child receives less attention and can't get close to their teacher. Think about it like this: say all three of these schools went on a trip with 300 students. Strawberry Mansion would have about 15 teachers, CHAD would have about 21, and PMHS would have about 35 teachers.

Then I compared the test scores of each school as of 2006. This process was a bit hard due to private schools not posting their test scores on the internet. So, I just compared

Strawberry Mansion and CHAD.

In 2006, CHAD had a 58 percent out of a 65 percent in reading, in their writing they excelled with a 98 percent out of an 86 percent, and in math they scored a 26 percent out of 52 percent. In 2006, Strawberry Mansion scored a 45 percent out of a 65 percent, they scored a 79 percent out of 86 percent in their writing, and in their math they scored a 53 percent out of 52 percent. Not bad, but CHAD is a vocational trade school; they give more classes that deal with trades and less of extracurricular and academic classes.

Next on the list is behavior. Behavior plays a major part in the way that children learn. Imagine if a child has children in their class misbehaving and the teacher has to pay more attention to the children being disobedient. The child does not learn. In 2004, Strawberry Mansion had a shooting outside of the high school; one child was killed and three were wounded. The shooting was said to be over a bet in a rap contest. I am not putting Mansion down in any way because it's not the only school where shootings have occurred. Since then, public schools have increased their secu-

ity. PMHS has no metal detectors and children are trusted not to bring weapons to the school. Children take a test to attend the school and there is a no tolerance rule (which means the first fight and you are gone; that also goes for bad grades). CHAD has rules; if the fight is extreme you can possibly get kicked out. Small fights at CHAD could get you a ten day suspension.

Finally, there are extracurricular activities. I will not even lie, PMHS lacks variety. There are very few extracurricular activities for you to choose from, but if you love singing and dancing then you would absolutely love it. PMHS has no athletics for children that are gifted with talent in those areas. I like to run track but we are not going to have it this year. Strawberry Mansion has loads of variety for students that want to partake. They have athletics and a range of other things to participate in. They have better chances for children to succeed in the area of their choice. CHAD is a great school that has great chances for children to succeed in pursuing careers with architecture and design.

Regardless of what school you attend, I feel that you should do your best. Obstacles have always surrounded successful people and that is what pushed them to work harder. Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X all had obstacles that they had to overcome to accomplish what they wanted for their people. One thing that all the people that attend these schools have in common is that they all go back to neighborhoods where they have to deal with poverty, drugs, and violence and we all choose to rise above our surroundings. What parents that truly care wouldn't want better for their child?



Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X all had obstacles that they had to overcome to accomplish what they wanted for their people.

BECOMING A TEACHER...?

BY ANTHONY PHILLIPS

You walk into the room and are told to open up your books and do the pre-class. When doing the work you feel like talking a bit because you saw something on television, but the authority figure tells you to stop talking. You then begin to argue with the usual, "I didn't say anything," line. Finally, you get to leave when you realize that you have lost the argument. You argue with the teacher who gets on your nerves. Does this sound familiar?

What if you were the teacher, what if you had to deal with the loud mouth kids, what if you had to take time out of your schedule to

come up with a lesson plan day after day? Even if you want to become a teacher, you probably won't have to face this sort of situation anytime soon, unless you're a participant in the Urban Internship program.

As a student in the Urban Internship program, I have to face many of the hardships that teachers deal with everyday as part of their career.

As a student in the Urban Internship program, I have to face many of the hardships that teachers deal with everyday as part of their career.

Before, I didn't really care how the teachers felt when I didn't listen and frequently gave them a hard time. Yes, in the past I really didn't care what a teacher was saying! The Urban Internship program spawned

this revolutionary change where I was able to see teaching through a teacher's perspective.

The Urban Internship program allows high school students to travel to a variety of middle schools and take the role of a teacher. I help students that are in need of aid, I have to teach a class that just won't listen, and have to come up with lesson plans which I then have to have the students complete. It's like pulling teeth getting them to follow the lesson! Yeah it is rough out there; I am now experiencing all of the things that you would expect from being a teacher, plus things I never saw coming. As I try to get the kids to listen to what I have to say, I have to fight the urge to just snap on them.

Continued on next page.

EDUCATION

CHESTER DENIED

BY ERIC GARDNER

Knowledge is one of the worst things we can lose," a lot of people say. Just a few miles away from Philadelphia lies a little city named Chester. Chester is very supportive of its environment, it's stores, streets, and poverty, but there's one important thing they don't support. One thing they're forgetting about is education in the schools of Chester. These students aren't getting the right education that they deserve to keep them going to school. Many children are being left behind because these children don't know the work. Not that they are ignoring the teacher or disrupting the learning process, some of their teachers don't explain their work specifically enough for the students to understand them.

The parents want the best for their children in these schools, as do their caring teachers. But I wonder, what about the mayor? Many Chester residents want to know.

Just almost two years ago Chester representatives decided to close almost every middle school in the city except two: Weatherill and Smeadley Middle Schools. All of the children are cluttered in these two small schools, holding over six hundred students. Also, Chester High, the only high school in Chester, is way overcrowded!

There aren't enough teachers in the school either. Rumors say the teachers aren't getting paid enough, others say the teachers can't take the pressure. Pressure? Yes. Shoot-outs in front of the school, brutal fights, jumping other students, breaking their jaws, and more. These are real facts, I should know I've been there. That's not all. Not enough books for the students, gangs in the school, a lot of intimidation towards the teachers and the students, and we all ask why? No one knows, except us who are in the school. There is a lot of talent in that school waiting to be unleashed. They have singers, artists, nurses, doctors, lawyers, and there are already ROCKET scientists there, but they just aren't recognized.

Becoming a Teacher, from page 10:

There are a few downs to being a teacher, but there are also ups. The ups of being a teacher are the sweet, sweet smell of success, this aroma arises when you see students that you are working with receive an excellent grade. When you see those sessions working with these kids, it begins to become all worth it.

I encourage high school students to see if this program exists in their school. If it doesn't, you should ask your principal or teacher how you could help make it happen. It's a valuable experience that I think many people could benefit from.

Listen to a podcast with interviews from other Urban Internship participants as well as teachers at www.northphillyteens.com

The parents want the best for their children in these schools, as do their caring teachers. But I wonder, what about the mayor?

Many Chester residents would like to know. Chester just spent a bundle of money on a brand new race track and casino named Harrah's. Bad idea (for Chester that is), what about new and enough text books and renovations for the schools? What about body guards for the schools? And what about more teachers? I say Chester is losing money on stupid projects instead of on impor-

tant ones. The elders of Chester wish that the city would be the same as it was in their time. There may have been racism back then, but I guess every thing was more civilized. I just wish the best for the future of Chester, which is my home city. I hope the best for the new generation of Chester. Right now though, I believe that Chester has taken a wrong turn into the wrong path. To have access to respect, integrity, pride, responsibility, and murals, Chester city has had access denied. To change Chester, first change the schools.



Illustration by Eric Gardner

A TEACHER'S VIEW

INTERVIEW BY PEAK JOHNSON

To carry out this issue's theme of the state of education in Philadelphia, I decided to interview one of my very own teachers at Delaware Valley Charter High School to try and get his thoughts on this topic. Dr. Southerling teaches English 4 at Delaware Valley Charter High School, but also is a college professor and expects the best from his students.

North Philly Metropolis: What is your opinion of the state of education in Philadelphia?

Dr. Southerling: It needs a lot of work. The charter schools were made as an opportunity for students who didn't want to go to their local high schools because of the many problems they had, i.e., disruption in the classroom, the hallways, etc. The unfortunate thing for the charter schools is that a lot of the students who come from those high schools are ill-prepared. That is, they don't have the skills to do well, for example, in the PSSA. So that's why we have to concentrate our efforts on basic skills so they will successfully compete in college whatever career they wish to pursue.

NPM: What is college like and why should students leaving high school go?

DS: College is an experience that everyone should have because it broadens your perspective of life. For example, I think it's better to go away to a university or college because you meet a diversity of other students from other parts of the country and the world. As an example, I went to Missouri and it was my "moveable feast."

NPM: What makes a good college student?

DS: Being prepared in all academic areas as well as interacting socially.

NPM: Why do you think high school students assume that they know it all?

DS: Because of the attitudes they bring or they listen to certain philosophies. In their wonderful 17 years of experience, they think they know more about life than somebody who's been doing it for 40 years or 50 years. It's just maturation, needing to grow up.

NPM: When you went to college, was it at all different from today?

DS: No, universities have somewhat lowered their standards to help those minority groups which need an opportunity to further their education. At most universities, even at the Ivy League level, they have to take elementary composition to help them get through the first two years. I was well already honed, unlike the urban area as we know it today whether it's Philadelphia, Detroit, New York City, Chicago, or St. Louis.

NPM: Where did you attend school?

DS: I've attended undergraduate school in Missouri, graduate schools at the University of Iowa, Temple University, Columbia University, Widener University, and Yale

University.

NPM: What is the point of knowing about outlines and thesis statements?

DS: Writing essays is a major part of all colleges and universities. The outline is used like



"If not prepared with the elementary skills that one should have from sixth grade on, you're going to find it extremely difficult and therefore you're going to take extra courses to build those skills up."

an architect's drawing, it sets the foundation for your writing. By using this process, you will know what topic is going to be discussed, and what details you will be using to complete each paragraph.

NPM: What are your methods for teaching and what do you get out of it?

DS: I have a plethora of knowledge and I enjoy teaching. It's something that I have always done and enjoyed, prepared myself and received wonderful benefits that most professions rarely do. I have students who have come back or have written me letters thanking me for all of the help that I've given them. That is the reward of teaching! As for the strategies/methods of teaching, that would take a month to explain.

NPM: Did you always want to be a teacher?

DS: High school and college, yes.

NPM: When a student graduates from high school, what can he/she expect in the first two years of college?

DS: If not prepared with the elementary skills that one should have from the sixth grade on, you're going to find it extremely difficult and therefore you're going to have to take extra courses to build those skills up.

NPM: Is college teaching any different from teaching at a high school?

DS: Well, as a graduate university professor, my students are all working on advanced degrees. Obviously, they all were prepared directly from college or they were in the work force and came back to get an advanced degree. Therefore, they are more prepared and ready to accept the challenges of post-graduate work. This, of course, is the antithesis of high school teaching where 'the students' are not on the same sophisticated, psychological, social, or intellectual level.

IS IT GOOD THAT SCHOOLS HAVE DIFFERENT GRADING STANDARDS?

BY TED HALL, ISAIAH SMITH & JOHN STEELE

Pros: Although it may be good for self esteem, when colleges see two people who got the same SAT scores and one has an A and the other has an A- the college will probably admit the person with the A. If people get into a college that they are not prepared for, they might be shocked by the competitiveness of the school, which could cause them to stop trying because they are used to getting better grades than they get. It is also unfair that someone who does something harder and gets an A gets the same credit for someone who does an easier course and gets an A. It is similar to someone taking an AP course and getting into a worse college than someone in the regular course.

Cons: When people get grades in school, they are compared with the other people in their school. This helps to prepare students for their jobs

in the corporate world. When one lawyer in a firm has a win of .3 but all of his comrades have a .2 sin percentage that person would be promoted more quickly than the others. If the average lawyer had a .5 win average that person would probably never get promoted. Also, if a child is getting an A+ in one school, that person would never have the chance to get as good of a grade as a student who goes to another school. Getting good grades is also good for self-esteem. Who knows how many children have committed suicide that could be alive if they had gotten honors in their schools?

This debate was written, filmed, and edited by these three members of the Cross Bridge Scholars. The video debates will be available at: www.crossbridgescholars.org.

"We are shut up in school's and college recitation rooms for ten or fifteen years, and come out at last with a bellyful of words and do not know a thing." - Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

SEGREGATION IS STILL AROUND

BY DENISE PERKINS

People think segregation is over, but really it's not. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, etc. stopped segregation between blacks and whites hating each other but one thing they didn't stop are the segregation between suburban and public schools. For example, public schools have a majority of black students because parents think that their students will get a better education than in public schools. A majority of white kids go to suburban schools because the parents want them to get a better education, but both schools are getting the same thing. It's just the fact that it is being taught a different way.

Another difference in public and suburban schools is the difference in school supplies and the quality of the schools. Suburban school supplies are more modern while public schools supplies are worn out, raggedy, and anything

else negative you can think of. The other schools are supplied better. Their students have enough books for all of the classes. the books are not torn up and the books look fresh all the time. Now, on the other side, our public schools books are torn up, the pages ripped up, not enough books for all the seventh graders so we have to share the books and they look disgusting when you get them.

In public schools, the custodial services are horrible. Our bathrooms and hallways are always dirty. In the suburban schools, their hallways and bathrooms are always nice and spotless. Another difference in these two schools is the difference in the uniforms. The suburban schools have more exceptional looking uniforms and the kids look respectful. Now in public schools the kids have uniforms but they style

it in their own way. The teachers get mad because students decorate their uniforms their way and their way sometimes differs from the rules.

Public school uniforms are just colors, they really don't mean anything because a lot of schools wear the same colors. If we had exceptional uniforms, children won't really worry about their uniform, they would worry more about their work in school. I think that all schools should get the same treatment so that students don't feel less important than other students. Segregation is still a big issue in schools today and I wish more people would see that.

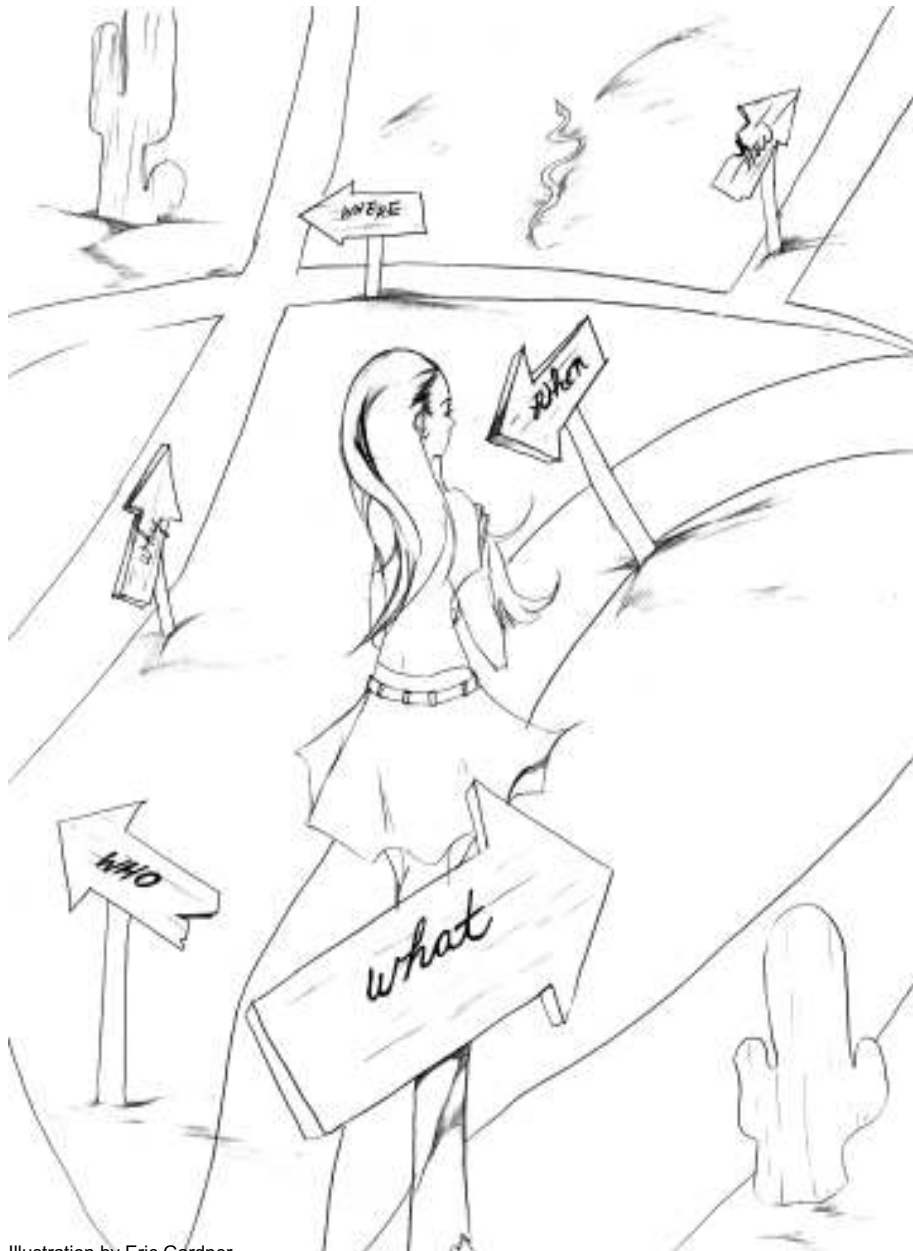


Illustration by Eric Gardner

DOING WELL IN SCHOOL CAN LEAD TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

BY JONETTA BOYKIN

In high school you can't play around like you were in 8th grade because high school is serious. You have to focus on your school work because high school is easy to fail. You can't always play with your friends; you have to focus on your work and your teacher. You have to do your homework and projects, so you can move to the next grade.



In shops (careers) you have to have a lot of credits so you can pass that shop. You have to put your hard work into that shop. You have to receive a good grade in shop. In shop you have to listen to your manager. You can't give your manager a bad attitude or you will be fired.

You have to do well in high school so you can get to college. You have to focus on your work in college very seriously. You have to pass your classes in college, so you don't get left back and have to pay for an extra year, or get thrown out. The classes I want to take in college are music because I like to sing. My career goals are to be a singer or a dancer, that's what I want to do in my career.

YOUR AD HERE!

This issue will be read by over 10,000 people. Don't miss the opportunity to promote your business, cause or celebrate a graduation, birth or the life of a loved one in our next issue.

Rates on Page 3!

"One of the few things a person is willing to pay for and not get" - William Lowe Bryan

TECHNOLOGY-BASED AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

INTERVIEW BY AJIA CAUTHEN

Why are there very few technology-based after school programs in Philadelphia? How is this affecting the young community? How do we feel about it?

I personally feel as though there should be more programs like the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs because it brings students together and provides them with a voice. I believe the Learning Center helps bring a youthful perspective to an environment that tends to ask young people their opinions after the decisions have already been made. While we're busy making beats, producing documentaries, and designing web pages to represent our points of view, we also learn technical skills which will help us when we get to college, and eventually get a job.

Here's what two teachers at the Teen Program think about this situation.

NPM: Why do you think the Honickman Center is a good resource to the youth?

April Alcaraz: I think the Honickman Learning Center is a great resource to the youth because there are a lot of things for them to do here. They can come here every day after school, so no matter what they do, they'll find something they're interested in. We have Monday through Wednesday classes like Music, Multimedia, and Video, but if they can't come those days, they can come Thursday and Friday for the Journalism, Art, College Access programs too, as well as other specialty programs. There are a lot of different things they can do here.

Steve Bozzone: I think the Learning Center is extremely important for teens in North Philly because it does two very important things. One, it gives them the opportunity to express themselves in ways they wouldn't necessarily experience, if they counted on their school system to provide them with creative opportunities. Secondly, there's an empowering element that's at work here. When we make our media: our newspapers, our videos, our podcasts and things like that, we're empowering ourselves, the youth are empowering themselves. Teenagers are often looked down upon, they're usually told, "You're younger, we're not going to pay attention to you, we're not going to give you the opportunity to have some input on the decisions which are made, which affect you every day." For us to make our own media here, that empowers teenagers to say "We know what we're talking about, and you should listen to us."

NPM: Do you think there should be more programs like this in Philadelphia?

SB: Absolutely. Remarkably, we're the only Digital Arts after school program that I'm

aware of in the city, and we're talking a city of 1.5 million people, containing thousands of youth. There are a lot of after school programs, but not many which are dedicated to technology education.

AA: Of course! We can only serve 40 students here. Even here we should have more students. If there were these types of programs throughout the city, we'd be able to bring in more students.

[While investigating this I found few, if any, other technology-based programs like the Honickman Learning Center in Philly.]

NPM: What are your feelings toward there not being a lot of programs like this and why?

AA: It's really frustrating because a lot of times people

forget that young people can accomplish a lot of different things if they are given the resources. I think that in a lot of places in Philadelphia, the mindset is that we just need to get teens off the streets, put them somewhere safe and be happy they are there and not somewhere else. That's frustrating because if they have tools and people around them that can show them how to do things, then they can accomplish so much more.

SB: The lack of after school programs in general is a big problem. Between 3 and 6 p.m. is statistically when teenagers get into the most trouble after school. They're bored, basically. They don't have things to do. If I didn't have things to do after school, I would have been getting into trouble as well. I'm starting to understand why teens end up in certain [unfavorable] situations, and after school programs are all about providing opportunities to *do something*, be acknowledged and be recognized, to be supported with school work, extracurricular stuff, athletics, and everything. We're here to support you guys and after school programs are great for that. If we don't come out with more after school programs, we're going to continue to see problems of crime, violence, truancy, high school drop outs, and similar issues. I think these things are all connected. The issues we complain about everyday, like when we say we need more money for more police and things, what we really need is more funding for social programs like this. We need after school programs, so that we can help the youth of Philadelphia understand that they are intelligent and they have opportunities, which they need to exercise and use their talents and abilities as best they can.

NPM: Do you think programs like these will keep students out of trouble and keep them

off the streets?

AA: Of course and exactly for that reason. I think that kids many times get bored with programs where they just go and hang out. A lot of times the atmosphere in those programs are the same. Not to say that those programs aren't good, they are keeping kids off the streets, but I think it's easier for them to get bored. I think programs like ours will hopefully keep them interested for longer and let them try out different things.

NPM: Do you think that students who come to this program will advance in school?

AA: I do think so. I think because they are so empowered to do different things, like making Podcasts, creating videos, or starting to prepare for their future now, which many students don't get during the regular school day. I think it does have an impact, that's the whole point of this program. It's great that students learn how to create a web page and use a video camera, but we're hoping that the effects of it are much greater than that, that they are actually preparing for their future and to be successful in school and academics.

SB: Absolutely. I've seen it myself, I've seen the report cards. I've seen students who come in here and have trouble with their homework and need help with problems in math or reading, they come in here, they work on their homework with us, they get tutoring and assistance. We have a half hour every day where we work on homework and other "brain-power" activities. From there, I see students who feel they are more capable. We pull them out of the school environment and help them with what's going on at school. Not everyone gets the support they need at home, too. So it's really good that if their parents are super-busy, working multiple jobs and things like that, that we can dedicate that time to work with them on academics. From what I've heard from students, they're doing better, especially students who come to me with certain issues at school and they later tell me that they succeeded in what they set out to do, because we were able to help them see those things through.

We need to increase funding in order to have more technology programs. Having after school programs are alright, but having technology-based programs will help students advance in high school and in college.

Ajia is a 14 year old female attending Frederick Douglass Elementary School. Her interests are singing, writing stories, eating, and hanging with friends. Her future plans are to get a Masters Degree, pass law school, become a lawyer, get married, have kids, and just grow old.

You can find this and other podcasts produced by the teens of the North Philly Metropolis at www.northphillyteens.com



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"Good manners will open doors that the best education cannot." -Clarence Thomas

LIFE THROUGH THE EYES OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT

BY ANTHONY PHILLIPS

Public School is usually perceived as the low end of the branch. It is the section of the school district that is not given the recognition that it truly deserves. People often take a look at a public school and instantly see depression; the students that seem to wear the same thing over and over again, equipment that is old and out-of-date. They see teachers that are ill-equipped to teach a classroom and do not really care to be around a place that's filled with kids. The way people look at public schools seems similar to the way a person would look at a typical human. However, you should remember this phrase: "beauty is only skin deep."

You only hear about charter schools in a positive manner, but I'm here to say some good things about public schools. I have been in both forms of schools, charter and public. Though I do agree with the accusations that kids in public school are not given an education, this has nothing to do with the students. The reason I bring up this statement is because people are always trying to blame the problem of the school on the students. Now, support in public schools is much better than that of charter schools because the teachers feel like they have taught you everything, they have done their job, and that it is our job as students to go home and understand the work. When you meet face to face with the teacher the next day, explaining that you did do that or that you went home and tried to understand the work or you just plain don't understand the problem. That is when it becomes a problem to you as a student to ask questions. It is just masked in a web of different words. I have seen this happen many times and a friend of mine whom I asked about this situation, because he has personally experienced it himself.

At public schools it is easier to make friends because you are all from the same background, so it becomes a lot easier to find a sense of belonging. Furthermore, you don't feel this sense of completion. Yes, it motivates you to do better in school, but it also makes you begin to distrust your peers. So it is difficult to get real friends. So public schools may not have



Illustration by Eric Gardner

the best equipment, but you do feel more comfortable. You don't feel as much like an outcast when you go to a public school. So in conclusion, this is what a public school can become: it can actually become a comfort zone, you can

make friends, and most of the teachers actually care about their students. They like to see you succeed, not just to make them look good, but to also to make you feel good.

LABELING AND STEREOTYPING IN SCHOOLS

BY CHANDLER JONES

"There's the girl that loves to play basketball."

At my school labeling is a daily thing; some kids are labeled in a negative way and others in a positive way. Personally I'm not offended by labeling towards me because I'm labeled as the "basketball girl!" and I am perfectly

fine with it.

But what is not fine is when my other friends are labeled as a "geek" or "freak." I have friends from other schools and they say the same things happen, but lead to serious situations. At my school last year, a girl was tired of being teased, so she brought a knife to school and told somebody, and then the person told the teacher and had the principal call juvenile guards to escort her out. I think that was the first and last time my Catholic school got into a situation like that!

But I think that labeling can lead to dan-

gerous things such as: suicide, homicide, mental problems, emotional problems, and physical problems. Labeling and stereotyping can lead to these problems. The reason is that someone then feels like they are inadequate and not worthy to be on this earth. The reason why the person feels like this is because their self-esteem is so broken that they seem depressed or "out of the loop."

At my school, I have a couple friends that are labeled in different ways and one of my



Continued on next page...

"Everyone who is incapable of learning has taken to teaching" - Oscar Wilde

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RANT: SCHOOL DRESS CODES

BY DEMETRIUS JOHNSON

If there is one thing I hate the most, it is when I'm walking to class at my school and I get pulled out the crowd for what I think is one of the dumbest reasons, not having my shirt tucked in.

For some reason, in my school, having your shirt tucked in is supposed to make us seem more "sophisticated" and like young adults. It's a really dumb thing to say, even if we are 14 years old, we really don't want to grow up. Even worse, on November 9, 2006 it was made a rule that if you were caught without your shirt tucked in, you have to go down into the office - and if my sources around the school are true, then you'll be sent to what my school calls ISS (In School Suspension). Plus, if you're on the ISS sheet more than once, you are liable to get suspended.

To me it's got to be one of the most annoying things that has ever happened to me. A staff member at my school said that we tuck our shirts in for the school's religion.

One question, WHEN DOES A

SCHOOL THAT'S BEEN OPEN FOR ONLY THREE YEARS GET A RELIGION? I FOR ONE FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE!



But yet, my school still enforces this absurd rule which has made me angry for the past nine weeks. Unfortunately, there is nothing I can really do about it. But I really don't understand why we have to tuck our shirts in. Is it made to help us feel good about ourselves? Is it made to protect us? I really don't understand why we have to tuck them in for no reason at all. If we were having some type of meeting, then yeah, by all means, then I'll tuck it in. But it's just school, nothing special in my opinion. It's more of a normal average thing to me, not something so special you have to tuck your shirt in for.

Demetrius attends People for People Charter School. He plays video games and likes pestering his older brother.

UNIFORMS: PROS AND CONS

BY ANTHONY PHILLIPS

Uniforms: this is an ever going issue when it comes to the state of education, there are some who still hate them and would be much happier if they would just get rid of altogether. Am I right? That is why everyone jumps at the chance to dress down, to grab something from their closet and to show off all of the "gear" that they are working with. Yeah, it is fun to look nice for people that you probably will not see on a regular basis. That's the good part about having uniforms; people are not sitting around preoccupied by the way their peers look. However, the con is that everyone appears the same to some extent, the originality is gone from everyone.

Another pro is the lack of insults that one might

receive. The whole process of going into your closet to find something day after day after day to wear will eventually lead up to running out of clothing to wear. This is an example of just one of the ways the insults will begin, another would be the constant line, "Ha-ha you wear them jeans every-day." Also, the insult could begin because you don't have a lot of clothes to begin with. You might find yourself wearing the same wardrobe over and over again that will eventually become worn out, giving others the chance to talk about you, ripping on you at every opportunity that they can get. Now the con to that is for those that are a little vain.

By not having uniforms, one will be unable to represent his or her school; you will not be able to walk into school saying the phrase "I have more money than you." So when you start thinking about uniforms, if they are good or bad, think about it from both sides before making your decision.

Labeling and Stereotyping in Schools continued from Page 16:

friends named Verisha and she said a quote about what she thinks: "Labeling limits a person's abilities and can also drive that person into a world of depression." I think that that is true in a lot of ways. Some kids in different schools shut their selves out, and become inaudible to their friends and parents. I was almost to that point when my uncle died, but that is not the issue. The issue is every day this generation loses a teen because they think that they don't fit in or they think that they don't deserve to be on this world. This starts with being called different names, leading to emotional turmoil and for some teens who are not given help, it can end in suicide.

I urge teens to think before making fun of or "bustin" on your friends. Anyone who is your friend won't break you down like that, and they know when to say when. Adults, pay attention to the words your children and their friends say to each other. They might seem like they're playing, but the damage can be far more severe.

A CROSS BRIDGE SCHOLARS DEBATE QUESTION: SINGLE-SEX VS. CO-ED SCHOOLS

BY ELIZABETH THOMPSON

There are many factors to consider when trying to pick the perfect school, including location, size, and whether or not you want a single-sex or a co-ed school. There are many pros and cons to single-sex and to co-ed schools and it is up to each individual to decide which they think is best for them.

Single-sex schools and co-ed schools have many good and bad qualities to offer their students. Single-sex schools provide many more opportunities than co-ed schools for their students, in and out of the classroom. It is a fact that boys in single-sex schools are more likely to study art, drama, music, and foreign languages. It is also a fact that girls in an all-girl school are more likely to study physics, advanced math, and computer science. This is because there is a sense of equality in the school because you are with students of your sex only and you do not feel the pressure you might feel in a co-ed environment. In co-ed schools boys and girls distract each other and create more pressure. The lack of distractions in a single-sex school allows students to be focused on learning and getting the most out of their schooling experience.

Another benefit to a single-sex school is that lessons are taught specifically to how boys

and girls learn best. In a co-ed school, you miss out because the teachers have to accommodate the needs of both genders. In a single-sex school, you are taught in the ways that will best work for your gender and help you learn the material to the best of your abilities. One reward for going to a co-ed school, however, is that you are able to interact with students of the opposite sex and you are able to learn from them. Boys and girls bring very different opinions to the table in a classroom and if you are at a single-sex school you are not as able to see things from that different point of view. For example, if you are at a co-ed school and you are discussing the issue of teen pregnancy, you as a girl are able to talk about your side, but you can also hear about how guys feel and learn what their opinion is. In an all-girl school, you would be less likely to know about or understand how a guy would feel about some issues. These are just some of the pros and cons to single-sex and co-ed schools.

I have attended a co-ed school all my life. I am currently a freshman at the Episcopal Academy, and personally, I could not imagine school without boys, but that is not to say that I think it is a better learning experience than a single-sex school. I love EA because I like get-

ting to hear things from a guy's perspective, as well as other girls. I cannot say that single-sex schools are bad, however, since I have never attended one. I do think that at a single-sex school I would feel less pressure in classrooms and probably be able to focus better, but I also think that having guys around keeps things relaxed and they make learning more fun. My brothers, on the other hand, go to Haverford Boys School and they love it. They like the all-boy atmosphere and they do not feel like they are missing out at all by not having girls around them all day. It really is about personal preference and neither type of school can be called "better" or "worse" based on if they are single-sex or co-ed.

Everyone is different, and every school is different. When you are trying to find the perfect school, do not be too quick to rule out single-sex or co-ed without visiting some of each first. They both have many great qualities and opportunities to offer and you'll never know which one will be the perfect fit for you.

This debate was written by a member of the Cross Bridge Scholars. The video debate will be available at: www.crossbridgescholars.org.

SCHOOL REFORM COMMISSION CHARGED WITH BAD JUDGMENT FOR ELIMINATING HOME ECONOMICS CLASSES

BY SHAHRAZAD ALI

I hate to be the one to pass the first lick, but as a parent and grandparent, I'm charging our Philadelphia School District and their School Reform Commission with bad judgment for eliminating Home Economics from the Public School System in the late 1980's. They've done our children, especially our girls, a terrible disservice by removing a class that not only teaches cooking, meal planning, and taking care of home, but an education in life management skills needed to survive in the real world. Our children need these classes back.

Another reason I'm campaigning to bring back Home Economics is because our young girls live in communities where having a baby is not only common, but viewed as the norm, and these young mothers (and fathers) are ill-equipped to properly feed and raise these children in a secure home environment. This is the incubator for future problems.

During the 90's, births to teenage mothers were higher in Philadelphia than in the 50 largest cities in America. In 1998, latest count, 18 percent of Philadelphia births were to our teenage girls, as compared with 15 percent nationwide. These young parents are overweight from junk food and lack of exercise, making them prime candidates for diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. They pass these bad habits on to their children all of whom represent the future sick and uninsured.

Our young fathers are not prepared to raise or babysit a small child. With little patience or

tolerance for babies or toddlers, several of these situations have ended in tragedy due to fathers and boyfriends not knowing what to do. Boys who take Home Economics will be better prepared to handle interaction with their offspring. We can save lives with this class and possibly reduce domestic violence too.

We have a school population of a little over 179,000 kids who complain that school is boring. The School Reform Commission's curriculum choices are not serving the real needs of our teenagers. With a school budget of over a \$2 billion a year they should be able to get the job done. By looking at our teens, we can tell they're not even close. Sometimes our students' rebel against a system that doesn't seem to provide them with a way to survive - day to day - and this deficient education leads to low motivation. This coupled with disrupted homes, drugs, and poverty is partially why we have a 45 percent drop out rate. Our School Reform Commission, despite its progressive overspending, has found that it's true; money can't buy everything. And no matter what they've purchased, they haven't been able to convince our children to stay in school. The SRC has earned a failing grade from us parents.

Some girls with no plans and little or nothing to do get pregnant. Grandparents get stuck raising some of these babies, neglected and often unwanted by their unready parents. As much as we talk and pray, things are not getting better. We're losing as many as we claim to save. Our

best bet is to prepare these girls (and boys) to thrive on the basic levels of food, clothing, and shelter = Home Economics = preparation for life. Whether they stay in or drop out, they still have to live.

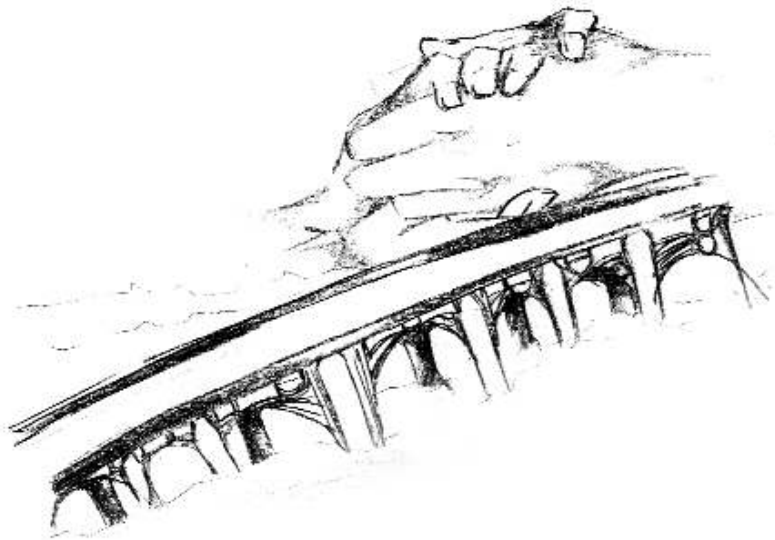
Currently, Mayor Street has convened a 25 member School Advisory Board to study our failing school system and come up with some tangible recommendations for correction. But one thing we do know is that parents and teachers are best qualified to determine what our children need to learn. We all agree to bring back Home Economics.

Family and Consumer Science (Home Economics) creates measurable skills because it gives them a way to make progress with their hands that they can see. Cooking, Sewing, Baking, Room Decoration, Shopping, Child Rearing, Consumer Awareness, Appliance Operation and Home Management Skills empower our students and builds confidence. It also equips them with transferable skills they can use in the job market, because they'll know how to do something legal and rewarding. PLUS be prepared to live in the real world where the rest of us reside.

Parents and Students interested in gathering signatures on a PETITION to be submitted to the Philadelphia School Reform Commission demanding that our children be taught Home Economics, should contact Sister Shahrazad Ali at 215-339-0062 or shahrazadali@peoplepc.com

"He who dares to teach must never cease to learn" - Richard Henry Dann

"The only divides we cannot conquer are the ones we are afraid to cross."



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Special thanks to
The Educational Partnership Program, John C. and Chara C. Haas Charitable Trust.

The Cultural Coach: Solutions for Life's Sticky Situations

Think before using a word such as 'racist'

By LINDA S. WALLACE

Certain words, such as the "N" word, need to be detached from our vocabulary. Others, such as "racist," need to be pushed aside and brought out only on occasions when we have had to consider its impact and emotional punch.

Yes, we have a right to speak freely. But, as my mother used to tell me, "If you can't say anything nice about someone, don't say anything." For 2006, we might update that mom-a-gram: If you can't express your message in a way that allows your views to be heard, go back and rework it.

Each year, I take time to assess the cultural lessons learned from friends and readers. The "N" word gets lots of press, so I won't delve into the finer details.

The term "racist," though equally poisonous, gets far less attention. So let us take up its cause.

In workshops, many white Americans often admit being called a racist is the insult they fear the most. Some avoid holding sticky, but necessary, racial conversations because that word could be used to attack them. Others say the word is a dangerous weapon, yet it often is used without first allowing the intended target an opportunity to mount a defense.

Even if one is innocent, once the word has been spoken, other people tend to assume guilt.

So it's like getting a conviction without ever going to trial.

Racism and bias are terms that are used interchangeably today, though they have different meanings. You can be biased without being racist. That is a distinction we ought to make in daily conversation. Everyone has biases, though not everyone is racist.

Now that I have audited myself, I am going to develop a method to monitor my own actions. This year, I developed new guidelines to help me choose the word that is most appropriate for the situation. Competence and accuracy in communication are never awful things.

A few years ago, I received a call from a white newspaper editor who was upset because I had sent him a press release about Black History Month. Now, the first thought that popped into my mind was the man was a racist. Was he saying that he did not want any releases related to black news or activities?

After I probed deeper, I discovered that his primary concern was that I had failed to explain why Black History Month was relevant to white readers. He was offering a concern that deserved a hearing.

So, effective immediately, whenever I find myself in a situation where I suspect a person or people may be racist, I am going to ask thoughtful and calm questions before I draw conclusions.

Questions such as:

- Does the person believe that his or her race is actually superior or that another race is actually inferior?
- Does the person believe that racial prejudice or discrimination is justified?
- Does the person view members of minority groups with a single lens, while viewing members of majority groups as individuals?

If the answer is yes, then I will ask one of these final questions:

- Were the person's actions based upon racial, religious or gender prejudices or their unconscious social lenses?
- If the word racist were removed from the conversation, would it create an opening for understanding and cultural growth?

These tools will allow me to make a fairer assessment of statements or actions that raise a red flag.

If you have questions or diversity-related problems, ask the cultural coach your question at www.theculturalcoach.com

LINDA S. WALLACE
P.O. Box 58364-8364
Philadelphia, PA 19102



Linda S. Wallace Biography

Linda S. Wallace, a modern-day story teller, is author of *The Cultural Coach*, a self-syndicated newspaper column that provides practical tips for dealing with life's uncomfortable situations such as sexual harassment, bigotry, and racism. Appearing weekly in the feature sections of *The Houston Chronicle* and the *Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*, this unique advice column seeks to advance the diversity dialogue by raising the level of cultural competency and cultural literacy among the groups involved in the discussion.

"Trying to hide our prejudices is a bit like sweeping the crumbs under the dining room table so guests will think our home is clean," Ms. Wallace advised a reader who claimed she would hide her prejudices. "Sooner or later, a speck is going to get out and expose us. As word of our dishonesty spreads, people of all colors will be less likely to trust us, long after we cleaned house."

A veteran journalist who has worked for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Commercial Appeal in Memphis, the Dallas Times-Herald and the Philadelphia Inquirer, Ms. Wallace launched LSW Communications, a Philadelphia, PA-based intercultural training firm, in 1996. The company assists educational institutions, non-profits and businesses in framing and pitching important messages to multiethnic communities.

WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED TO THE BUDGET?

BY SAM WILLIS

In June 2006, the School District of Philadelphia had a deficit of \$73,300,000.

Not much has changed since then.

There was a large mismanagement of funds that in only two years brought a school system with a reserve of funds to one facing a monstrous deficit. At the beginning of this school year, the School District of Philadelphia had decreased the deficit to \$21 million, but did so by spending up the funds that have been saved in the district's reserve.

The School District of Philadelphia is going to make \$70,000,000 in cuts in order to save the district's finances, break even, and replace the reserves. So where did this huge deficit come from?

The main reason why the School District of Philadelphia experienced such a large deficit was that in June 2006, more than 380 educators retired. The school district only planned for 250. When you include the cost of reimbursing the teachers their sick days, personal days, and other benefits, such a large number of retirees over the estimate would severely affect the budget. This cost \$18.6 million.

The second reason, worth \$18 million, is that at the end of every school year, each school is supposed to return any excess money to the coffer of the School District of Philadelphia. While this method may not make sense, it has proved effective in the past. However, this year was different because Paul Vallas, CEO of the School District of Philadelphia, announced in February 2006 that each principal's discretionary spending budget would be cut by 30 percent. This money is used to pay for extracurricular activities, overtime, graduation expenses, and extra materials. Cutting this money will hurt every school and the students will see this affect their schooling experience.

At the end of the 05-06 year, rather than return all of the money left, a number of principals spent the majority of their excess funds. The principals feared that a decrease in their discretionary fund will hurt their school's activities and facilities, so they spent additional funds. The School District of Philadelphia expected to have \$24 million returned by the schools, but only \$6 million was returned.

For the average student, the effects of the deficit will not be visible, as the budget for the School District of Philadelphia is close to \$2.04 billion for this year. Most of the job cuts were made at the central office of the School District of Philadelphia. Most of the positions being looked at for termination are nurses, librarians, counselors. "The district is also considering freezing pay for nonunion employees and also dismissing six outside managers who

run more than 40 district schools, such as Edison Schools Inc." This would save \$5.2 million this year and \$18 million next year.

Most class sizes have remained the same, but that is not a good thing either. The maximum class size for a Philadelphia class is 33 students. This number is unrealistic; 33 students are still too many to teach. This year, if the class sizes were too small, the teachers were pulled from that class and moved to schools that really needed the teacher numbers.

Mayor John Street has said, according

to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, that he would be willing to give the School District of Philadelphia more money than the \$764 million given for 06-07, but must first fully understand where the deficit came from. Street also said that none of this would happen until students, parents, teachers, and public officials are able to voice their opinions in a public format. Street has been quoted as saying, "There is something wrong. Something big is wrong. Some-

thing really big is wrong...I am disappointed in our CEO (Vallas)."

Vallas commented that the Mayor should give more money to the School District of Philadelphia. He noted that NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg gave hundred of millions to their troubled school district. Vallas even offered Philadelphia to Bloomberg as NYC's 6th borough. Vallas has been quoted as saying that "schools are under-funded in this state, and this is one of the worse states when it comes to adequate funding for education." To make matters worse, the state of Pennsylvania has turned down a \$25 million grant that Philadelphia has been receiving, stating that the grant was not guaranteed money and should not have been counted on.

Vallas claims that this is not a state of panic, but why is he offering up Philly to be part of NYC?

In order to rectify the situation, the School District of Philadelphia has hired Public Financial Management to sort out the district's budget problems and deficit.

Though many are quick to blame Paul Vallas for the woes of the School District of Philadelphia, it should be acknowledged that he was recently named one of America's 20 best leaders by *U.S. News & World Report* and Harvard University's Center for Public Leadership, for his job running the School District of Philadelphia. In addition to Vallas, other winners included the head of New York City's schools, the founder of Teach for America, and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Vallas is often praised for trying to infuse his optimism into a city's public education system that had largely lost hope. Vallas has refused a pay raise for this year of \$25,000, but

still makes \$250,000.

Regardless of the award, there are over 175,000 students in Philadelphia who are looking to Vallas and Street to resolve any issues and to get the School District of Philadelphia moving in the right direction again.

As a parent of a student in the School District of Philadelphia said, "Unless people take a stand and say there's not going to be another school cut, we're going to be living with the consequences for a while."



WHERE DID THE MONEY GO?

Expenses that added to the deficit in 2006:

\$12.4 million: Spent over budget for text books for the curriculum.

\$7.96 million: Failed to earn any revenue from two properties owned by the school district.

\$6.5 million: Failure to eliminate a number of jobs through attrition.

\$5.4 million: The state of Pennsylvania did not reimburse the School District of Philadelphia the expected amount for school construction projects.

\$4.6 million: Charter schools reported 700-800 more students to the state of Pennsylvania than the School District of Philadelphia budgeted for.

\$19,000: A special assistant to Paul Vallas has been paid over the past few years to commute from Chicago to Philadelphia, live in an apartment paid for by the School District of Philadelphia, and has been accused of renting sports cars and racking up close to \$70,000 in expenses. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, this aide has been asked to repay close to \$19,000 in expenses deemed too excessive.

The School District of Philadelphia is going to make \$70,000,000 in cuts in order to save the district's finances, break even, and replace the reserves. So where did this huge deficit come from?

"Education consists mainly of what we have unlearned" - Mark Twain

...THROUGH OBSTACLES

BY VALERIE ALSTON JONES

Happiness through Obstacles is possible you know.
What you think in your mind, can make you frown, or make you glow.

Happiness through obstacles, you can achieve if you just believe.
Happiness can be found in jumping rope, playing ball, or telling a joke.
Dancing, romancing, or singing a song,
Having a talk or taking a walk.

Give your family a hug or a kiss when they feel in despair,
Just a little time to show them that you care, if they're in despair.
Happiness through obstacles can be found in a prayer,
Through reading a book, and music in the air.

Happiness through obstacles, You can achieve!
Take time out, believe and receive.

Valerie is a woman of compassion, currently homeless, but still praying and giving to others. She loves children and is not giving up hope in spite of the trials and tribulations that give her more patience in life.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

BY DEMETRIUS OAKES

America the Beautiful, what have you done for me lately?
Dissemination leads to elimination.
That's the situation that led my people to plantations.
We happy campers while they play Jason.
And we facin.'
Genocide because of homicide.
Our youth committing suicide.
Their green money has no regard for human lives.
While we try to stay alive.
The truth belies the connotation.
That we have no inspiration for innovation.
When reality proves the black man was first in creation.
Raped our mothers.
Killed our brothers.
Where are the 40 acres and the mule due to us?
Forged our history.
It's still a mystery.
America the Beautiful, what have you done for me lately?

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

BY ISMAEL JUSTIN JIMENEZ

Young children sent to adult prison
Knowledge forced
While denying conventional wisdom
American domination
Controlling capitalistic kingdom
Yet every empire comes to its fall
A torch once shining bright
A nation founded on ignorance
Symbolized with the heads of the innocents
Slaughtered to be forgotten
How is it the end
When we started at the finish

CLASH

BY ISMAEL JUSTIN JIMENEZ

Clash
The clash of ideals
We are at War
Most of us just want to live
Isolated on this land of promise
Conceptual views
Prison populations are enormous
Juvenciles sent to detentions
Pensions disappear with bad investments
Heartache all over the world
While I'm at school learning lessons

FUTURE LOOK

BY ISMAEL JUSTIN JIMENEZ

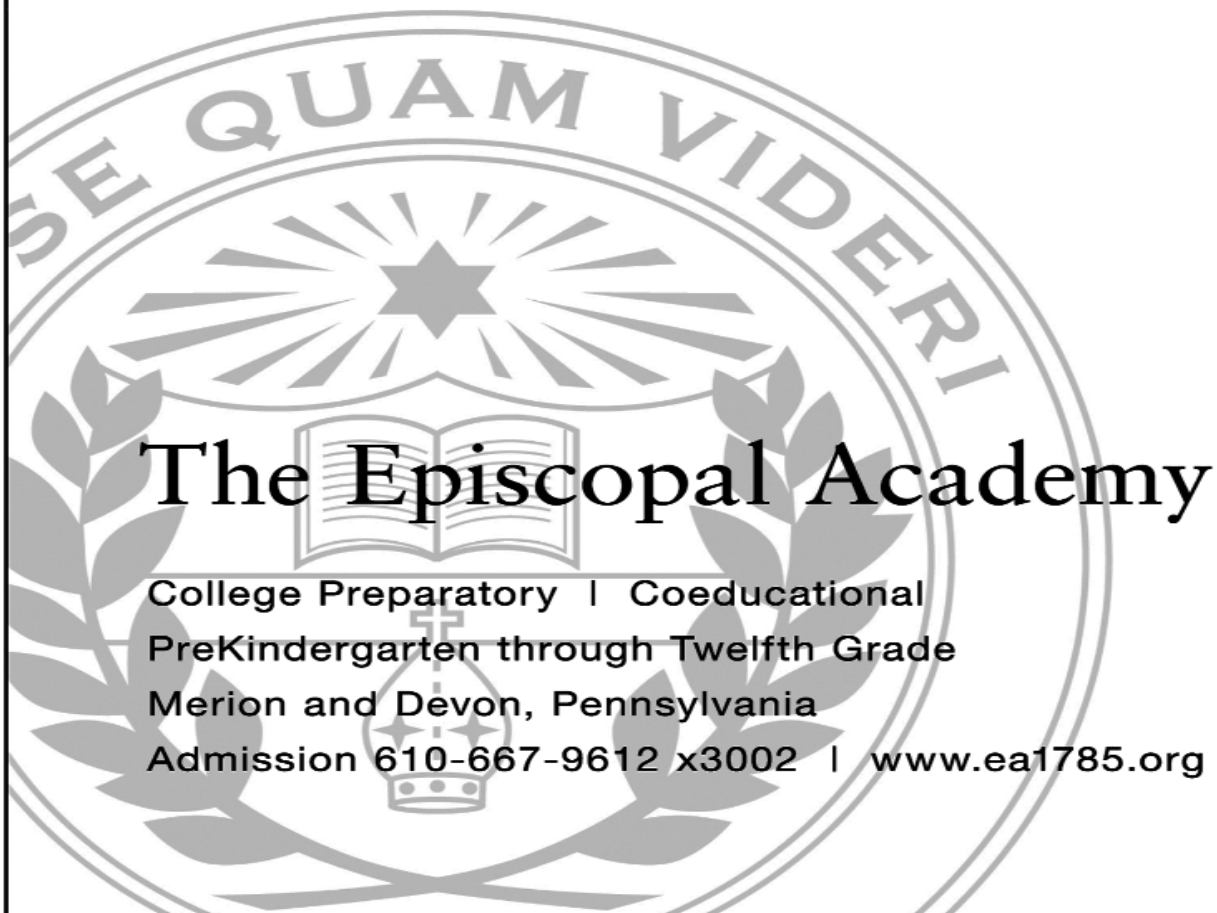
Is the thought of life headed towards destruction
Rich is establishing
Leaving the poor with nothing
Wishing one day they would hold the same
But in reality it is denied because of their name
I ask who are you to judge
The only reason your heritage isn't questioned
Is an economic stranglehold
Sucking the oxygen of dying dreamers
Soaked up
So the powerful can control the leaders
Decades of future republican cheaters
Defending so-called morals
While denying basic freedoms.

Submit your original writing, artwork and photography to
NPM@projecthome.org or call us at 215-235-2900 x6316 to get involved!

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The Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs (HLCCTL) does not only house a very successful after school program for teenagers and younger children who are entering kindergarten and the sixth grade, but very recently Project H.O.M.E. and Germantown Academy have joined together to establish a Community Partnership School (CPS). The HLCCTL opened its doors to this wonderful new addition in September 2006 with three classes: pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade, and with a total of 34 children. Stated as one of their objectives, "Community Partnership School's goal is to create a pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade program for talented inner-city children with the intent that they will be eligible to attend selective public, independent, religious and charter middle schools upon successful completion of CPS."

To gain a better understanding of CPS, I had the chance to talk to Ms. Cindy Ferguson, Director of the HLCCTL.

North Philly Metropolis: Could you tell us what you think about the school?

Cindy Ferguson: We are very excited that it's opened here and it really brings a different feel to the building because there are kids in the building from seven in the morning now and at any place in the building you could be running into a group of twelve little kids singing and doing all kinds of great stuff. So it's been really wonderful to see that energy come into the building, in addition to our after school program, but also to know that the families just have an incredible opportunity. Five of the kids that attend the school are from Rowan Homes which we are thrilled about, and to be part of something from the vision of it and to see it become a reality and to understand that there may be some kinks in the road and you have to work things out. Everybody involved in this is just so

dedicated to making this work. It's our staff sharing space that they never had to share before, to the staff it has been the school and the kids first and being able to find a way to work things out. So it has just been really exciting.

NPM: Where did the thought of the school come from?

CF: Germantown Academy has wanted to come back to its roots, which were not in Germantown but in North Philadelphia. They had been thinking about this for eight years and it's been about the last four or five years where they were really making efforts to make this happen. And they were looking to either build a building or to find space that they could share and nothing was coming. And then Jeff Honickman, who is the son of Lynne and Harold Honickman, is on the board of Germantown Academy. He said, this goes back four years now, that Project H.O.M.E. was about to build this learning center and that they should approach Sister Mary to see if there would be a way of partnering to utilize the space here. So the question had come to Project H.O.M.E. From that time there had been plans to see if this could happen and ended up to really be kind of an ideal relationship where they didn't have to build a school, the cost to them renting the space isn't nearly as expensive as if they were building something, the Center has incredible facilities. Then Project H.O.M.E. is responding to what the community had asked which was to provide a school in the neighborhood.

NPM: Do you think the CPS is necessary in this neighborhood, do you think it is helping a lot of people out?

CF: I absolutely think it will, it's small at this point with just three classes of twelve kids, but its going to be adding a grade a year so it's going to be growing. Germantown Academy's

tuition is around \$14,000 a year and for the families who are part of the Community Partnership School, they're paying between \$300 and \$1,000 based on what they can afford. So it's an incredible opportunity for them to have this top-notch education at a price that they can afford. So I think next year when a second grade class is added, if any of the kids don't continue I think the remaining spots are going to be filled up quickly because this year was the first time and many people weren't sure about what this was going to be. But now you have families who are in it and their kids are here and they see exactly what it is and I think the word is really going to spread, so to have that here in this community I think is an amazing thing.

After having a few words with Ms. Cindy, I had to dash up to the second floor where CPS classes were still in session and where I had the quick chance to interview two students who attended there, Isarah Hall and Kendi Butts. I didn't want to hold the two young ladies up from their education so I just asked them a few straight forward questions.

My first interviewee was Isarah Hall, age six.

NPM: So Isarah, could you tell us what you think of the school?

Isharah Hall: It's nice.

NPM: What's your teacher's name and do you like her?

IH: Yes, Ms. Hayes.

NPM: Could you describe a typical day here?

IH: First we do a daily edit and then we do a one hundred chart, then we go to snack, and then when we come back we have morning meeting, then we have math, and then we sit on the rug, and then we go downstairs for lunch, and then we come back up here.

NPM: What grade are you in?

IH: 1st

NPM: Do you get a lot of homework and do you find it easy or hard?

IH: No, it's easy.

NPM: Do your parents like this school?

IH: Yes.

After talking with Isarah, it was now time to have a few words with Kendi, age 6.

NPM: Do you like the school here?

KB: Yes.

Continued on next page...

"They say we are better educated than our parents' generation. What they mean is that we go to school longer. They are not the same thing." -Douglass Yates

Continued from previous page...

NPM: What grade are you in?

KB: 1st

NPM: Is the homework hard?

KB: Easy.

NPM: What is your teacher's name?

KB: Ms. Hayes

NPM: Do your parents like this school?

KB: Yes.

After giggling at me for asking if they would rather go back to class, the two young students hurried back to their teacher, Ms. Hayes, but stated that they had absolutely no problem with the school whatsoever. I would like to thank

them for letting me into their busy schedule. As you can see, I'm not too good with the young ones, but CPS appears to be an amazing place that will benefit the children of North Philadelphia.

Keep your eyes open for the documentary on CPS, produced by our video instructor Edward Basile!

NEEDED: TAX REFORM TO CHANGE PROBLEMS IN PHILLY'S SCHOOLS

BY SAM WILLIS

In examining the issue of the School District of Philadelphia's major \$73 million deficit, I have come to realize the root of the problem.

The lack of funds and the deficit are truly no one particular person's fault. The job of running such a huge school district is inconceivable. I have taught for a few years in various Philadelphia area schools (Northeast High School, Saint Gabriel's Hall, Strawberry Mansion High School, and the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs) and have seen first-hand the shortage of funding and how it affects each student. Even the best schools in Philadelphia are barely scraping by.

I do not agree with the funding ideals behind No Child Left Behind. I do think that educators should be held responsible, but holding funding over their heads will accomplish nothing, except more stress and worry that the minimal funding will be reduced. This causes schools to focus more on maintaining that funding and less on the issues at hand – ensuring that each student who graduates from the School District of Philadelphia is completely prepared to enter our world as a contributing member of society.

The main problem is the way taxes are collected and shared between towns, cities, and schools. If taxes could be more regulated statewide, then all schools could get the same amount. Wealthy parents in wealthy towns expect their tax dollars to go to their children's school, but is that necessarily representative of a democracy?

Michelle Loucas, director of the Master's in Education program at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania stated the problem and solution clearly, "PA needs to stop funding schools through local property tax and create a statewide system to give equal opportunities to all students. It's one essential step to disrupting the status quo where wealthy kids go to well-resourced schools, get high paying jobs, and stay wealthy while the reverse happens for poor kids." Without equal opportunities disadvantaged students will continue to remain disadvantaged, and that is nei-

ther fair nor right.

Each year, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* publishes a "Report Card on the Schools" which indicated that the School District of Philadelphia spends approximately \$11,000 per student, where as Lower Merion spends close to \$21,500 per student. If you calculate that difference over a student's education, K-12, the difference in spending is close to \$130,000! No wonder there is a huge gap between districts. There have been several cases across the country where poorer districts and wealthier districts have taken each other to court in order to obtain more/less funding. There was a case in Texas where four wealthier school districts sued the state because they felt it unconstitutional to have to share their tax revenues with poorer districts. They sued on the grounds that it was in effect a statewide property tax.

On the other side, there was a New Jersey Supreme Court ruling that the typical education provided to school children in urban districts was unconstitutional because it was so

inadequate when compared to wealthier areas. These school districts, now known as Abbott Districts, received several rulings in their favor and started to receive "an adequate - and constitutional - education through implementation of a comprehensive set of programs and reforms." In order to qualify as an Abbott District, a school district must be one those with the lowest socio-economic status, scores below adequate, and a student population that is largely disadvantaged.

Cases like the Abbott Districts are encouraging. There is no doubt that there is a lack of resources in public, urban school districts. The deficit only makes things worse, as clearly the Philadelphia School District was underfunded before, but now that further money is being cut from each school's budget, the schools are becoming more like starving children. Loucas added, "This deficit is not surprising, though it is another blow to the kids we as a society need to be serving most effectively."

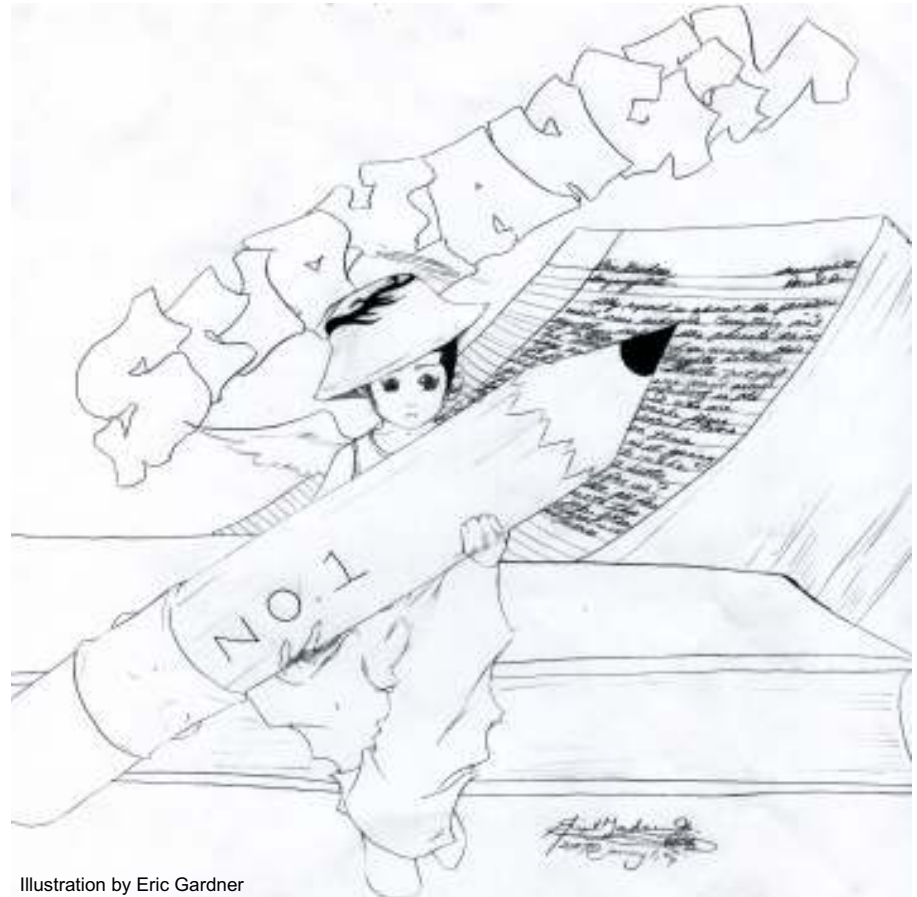


Illustration by Eric Gardner

"Education's purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one" - Malcolm Forbes



CLASSROOMS FOR TEENS, BY TEENS

We asked teens: *If you could design the ideal classroom, a work of perfection, what would it look like?*

Teachers, principals, and parents take note: students are the people who have to sit in these rooms all day, our insight could help you plan the classroom of the future! Here's what a few of us have to say:

If I have my own classroom, it will be so much fun because students will go home smart instead of stupid. In the future, they will know every thing they need to know, like math, science, learn how to read, so when a person asks a question they will answer it correctly. Then I will ask the students what they did in their old school. I will tell them to write down what they learned and I will go over every thing with them if they do not understand. Then I would read books to them like *The Land Lady*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *A Matter of Truths*, and *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*.

In science I will tell them about cells and show them how to do lots of labs, experiments with candy, like how to make a sugar cube and how to make butter, or can crusher, full of hot air. In math they will write down all the stuff they learned in their other classes like addition, using P.E.M.D.A.S., then when they go to high school the teachers will give them the math and they will understand it.

I would then take them to a field trip to show them lots of computers, like how they fix them, where they come from, how they are built, and anything else. Then it will be time for lunch and they will have good lunches like cakes, cookies, ice cream, chicken, pizza, hoagies, cheese steaks and lots of other things. Then in art I would teach them how to draw lots of things like cartoons, people, animals, and lots of other things they want to learn how to draw. Then I would let the class bring cell phones to school for emergency calls only.

--Joh'nay Creighton

Business chairs and office desks make it comfortable for the students and easier for them to do their work. Music areas would be used by the students who are mostly interested in beats, making a soundtrack, etc. They would be able to create all kinds of songs, beats, and have fun. They will also learn how to make a demo so when they get older and want to be famous, they will know how to make a demo.

Posters would motivate the children

to accomplish what needs to be done. Smart Boards would be used to show the class images, clips, and fun movies. DVD players would be used to watch the clips and play movies on the smart board. It makes it easier, fun, and quicker to get things accomplished. Games, for our work, would be an extra used to make the education of a subject easier to learn and remember.

Color-coordinated notebooks are for the students to use in class and write down notes and other important activities. They all would have a different color so everyone would know whose book was whose. Computers are to be used as a reference to the students to look up any info they need and to use for projects and assignments. They will have assignments for each class, but they will be fun and educational at the same time. Bulletin boards are for the teachers to use to hang our work, hang notices, and important info we need.

Free time is for the students and it's a time for all students to have fun. It's also for students to take a break from their work, and to rest before doing another whole load of work without a break. The class would be a bright color to make the class feel fun and exciting. It will smell like cucumber-melon lotion and it will be warm at all times. The computers will be on the desk of the student in an office-like way.

-- Brierra Kelly

My class would be perfect. It would have a big desk and rugs on the floor. It would have rolling stools and desks for the kids. When you turn and look at the windows you would see a lot of pictures of artists the kids like and what I like. Then you would see five air conditioners in the windows.

The wall color you know would be blue. The class would have laptop computers. It would have a Smart Board. My other class would have books and magazines. It would have four windows and it would have passing test papers and benchmark grades. It would have rocket chairs and it would have stools that do not roll. It would have

tables. The wall color would be pink. It would have a big desk over there for me.

-- Denise Perkins

When you first walk into my perfect classroom it will smell good, kind of like roses. It will feel very exciting; the walls will be painted lime green and white. It will have computers for the children and two laptops in the writer's station, which will be lime green. These computers will help the children, because they would learn how to type, make Power Point presentations, cards on Publisher, and much more. The two writer's stations would be set up in the corner with a couple books on the side and bookshelves above, where the kids could put their books and people could read them.

This would boost the kids' confidence to know people are reading their work. The hardwood floors would be a must have item in my class so the kids could act out their stories, not only write them. Also, there would be a stage that the kids could stand on. We need tables that are lime green, instead of desks, so the kids feel more mature and when you feel more mature you act mature. Acting mature would make the class have fewer interruptions while the teacher talks.

The chairs, that are lime green, make you stand up straight and look professional, a closet so the kids could hang their belongings so the class is not so messy and the kids could learn how not to be so messy. Girls and boys bathrooms in the class so no one needs to leave the class and this would make them more intelligent because they would never leave the class. Bulletin boards so the teacher can post important things like upcoming writing contests, project deadlines, and people's birthdays. The writing contest would make them become better writers, and the project deadlines and people's b-days would help them remember things. My room would have a lime green razor phone as the room's phone. Lastly, my class would have a Smart Board so the teacher can explain the work in front of the whole class, which would teach the kids how to follow directions.

-- Je'Trese Day

A GOOD EDUCATION MAKES YOU



FEEL ALL ORANGE INSIDE

THINK, LEARN, BECOME!

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Creative Writing

STREET PRODUCT

BY DESIREE FORD

Shameless, merciless, dangerous life game.
What a shame, yesterday the bullets had no aim.
Another heartbroken, crying family.
So young, was he a man to be.
From life of drugs, he'd never flee.
The hard streets, he smiled in cheerful glee.
Competition, came very soon from so far.
Now his family says, "That when he died, he is a star."
One of the stars in the skies.
Life, and love of a hustla, but yet his family is crying.
Such, a lovely man.
Now dissolved, in the sands.
He blowin', in the wind.
In the streets was where his life had to begin.

MY TEENAGE LIFE

BY JOH'NAY CREIGHTON

There once was a girl named Joni who would receive horrible grades in school, because she chose not to do her work and to not pay attention to her teacher. Joni did not care about anything especially what others said, often times, people would tell her what to do, like her work. Joni would just sit there and talk to her friends and sometimes even walk out of the classroom. She would act out and get smart with her teachers. Joni was a bad student and would demonstrate this by fighting in classrooms, running around the classroom, and standing on the desk of teachers.

The teachers would repeatedly call her house about her behavior but Joni wouldn't care. Every time she went to school she would be bad. She used to be in many fights throughout the whole school year. She fought over dumb things, like he said she said gossip. Joni would be angry at the wrong people and not want to listen. Joni received terrible grades because she chose not to work in class. But Joni did like math because that was her favorite subject. She got tired. Joni felt that she will not do the reading because she got tired of it. Joni felt that her teacher was making it boring.

Joni thought that she could change the uniforms because the colors were boring. The students did not like it so they wrote a letter to Ms. Williams to ask them to change the uniforms. When Joni went to school after summer vacation, they changed it to tan and black and that's some other school's color. Joni wanted to have her own school colors and that is tan and pink. Now that's better to her because no one has that color. Her school should be different from other schools. They shouldn't have the same colors that other schools have.

Then Joni and her mom had "girl-talk" about school. She said that every thing Joni does follows her until she does the right thing. Joni didn't care what anybody said after that. She thought they were lying, but they weren't then they said she will get it one day. There was this one girl that Joni beat up two times in the summer because she thought Joni was scared of her until Joni beat her up. Now people said that Joni got her scared of Joni cause she won't say anything smart to Joni when she gets smart with her. They used to get smart with each other and Joni said she wanted to fight her and she used to have all that month, so when she called her sister and tried to get her sister to fight Joni, she thought Joni was scared of her sister, but Joni wasn't.

Then Joni got to 8th grade and changed her behavior. The teachers never call her house, she never walks out or gets smart with the teachers. Now she does all her work and is being good and her parents approve of Joni because she gets good grades now, instead of bad grades. She made a positive change over the summer, and it paid!

BEAUTY FROM ALL ANGLES

BY FATIMA THOMAS

Beautiful are the lips that rub against mine as I gently...
Touch and examine them.
I want to know and feel what they feel,
I want to understand why there heart beats and where there out-
landish beauty flows.
I lay and dream of stealing it...
Every night getting high from the miraculous smells of your hair,
Feeling pleasure from your physical being.

I want more, so I steal your personality and it shows me just how ex-
cellent beauty cascades.
Personality...
To know more about me,
To understand my heart as if you ripped it out and took a look,
Caring about me so much until your walking on tooth and nail...
Just to make me feel truly masculine.
Loving me so, to where I don't question your love as if you hold your
heart in you hands.

I needed more so I stole your kiss...
And gently rubbed them against my lips and made them kiss every
bit of me,
Until my body grew weak for such beauty in that kiss.

Not satisfied, so I steal your eyes.
They look at me and follow me.
Controlling my no good,
Shaping the shell that I used to cover my tracks.
They watch as I undress in front of them and I am truly pleased and
your eyes can tell as they widen at the sight of my protruding grin.

I am now addicted, so I steal your legs.
Never having seen such beauty in legs I touch them and rub my face
against them.
They begin to quiver and the stubs of hair stand at attention.
To feel that quiver I put my lips to them and they send a chill down
my spine.

Not content with what I have, I steal your fingers.
I want to feel their struggle, so I feel for strength and perseverance.
I make them touch places that I never knew could be touched.
Wanting to know their true beauty I put precious rubies and stones
on them and they glimmer to full capacity.

Now in love with you I set to steal your very being.
Your very way of life and understanding.
My want for more lead me out on an impossible task.
High off your beauty I continue on and ask myself is your beauty re-
ally worth it?
But when I get it I am truly amazed at how well you know my under-
standing.
So I put your understanding up to the same light as my understand-
ing and they're the same...
Perplexed...I grasp your understanding in my hands and squeeze...
And open up my hand and see me.
The understanding was me?
Scared, I drop it and walk away.
The whole time ...
Such beauty was
Me.

MY LIFE, AN ONGOING SONG

BY JAMES BUTLER

I woke up this morning still tired from all these crazy dreams.
 Head still not clear yet because these thoughts got me going half crazy over this beauty.
 So once I get in school, I'm feeling like a lost one because of this pretty young thing across the room keep giving me the looks.
 I can see in her eyes that her love is crying out for me, but who knows why?
 She wants me to show her what I got?
 Is it because my leather so soft, my style, or my hustlers ambition?
 So me still not knowing, the smooth operator I am, makes me drift over to her table, and her friends whisper in my ear.
 And they tell me every time I'm around her I make her London bridge want to go down, but this ain't none of her friends' business.
 So I whisper in her ear and say "hey lover are you ready to be that girl?," and heaven only knows what she's thinking now.
 But she breathes and then says she wants to slow down first, so then I just gave her the ten digits and say "hit me up on the hotline and I will make it do what it do baby."
 And later that night, it's a quiet storm and I find myself with these day dreams about sexual healing, but then I hear the phone ring.
 And it's my angel and I say to her "My *cheri amour*, are you ready to take those five steps to eternity?" and she tells me "only if you ready to be my boo."
 So then I say, "I promise."
 So as we all know time waits for no one and I'm tired on the low and she lets me know before she lets me go.
 "Can I get a kiss goodnight?"
 So before I grant her wish, I wake up with my headphones on and I ask my self "Is this an unfinished dream going on and on?
 Or is my life an ongoing song?"



WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME, GODFATHER?

BY CHANDLER JONES

"Why did you leave me, Godfather, why?
 That awful cancer took away your strength and made you die.
 Every time I think about you, I always cry.
 You were the father figure in my life and now you are gone.
 I'm wiping my eyes and singing my sad song.
 You were always there for me as my dad.
 I see your face in my mind, and it's making me sad.
 Why did you leave me, I thought you would stay.
 I won't see you again, not ever, not today.



Illustration by Eric Gardner

ONE OF THE BEST VACATIONS...

BY JE'TRESE DAY

When I was 11 years old, my brother took his wife, his two stepkids, his daughter, and me to Wildwood, NJ, for a whole week. We drove in a car for two hours straight, played games like "I Spy" and looking for strange license plates. When we finally got out of the car I was so happy, seeing nothing, but rides, pools, and millions of people.

We went straight to the hotel room to drop off our bags; I went right to the bathroom to change into my bathing suit and went straight to the rides. The first ride I got on was the ride where you sit down, spin around really fast and get to hear music. I got on the water slide and a couple other rides. Then we went out to eat at a restaurant and it was nice.

After we left, we went back to the hotel and all the kids played hide & go seek. Safiyah, Mike's stepdaughter, was it. She got everyone except for Sabriyah, Mike's daughter. It took 10 minutes, but Sabriyah finally got caught. She was hiding in the cabinet with all the pots and pans. The next day, all the kids got up early and went straight to the pool. The pool's water was so cold. When you sit in it for awhile it starts to get warm. After we got out of the pool, we ate breakfast, then headed for the park. I ate lots of funnel cake and cotton candy. When we got back to the hotel I had a stomach ache, so I went straight to bed.

The rest of the week I had a great time getting on rides, and eating funnel cake. That was one of the best vacations I ever had.

"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or self-confidence" - Robert Frost



THE GIRL WHO COULD FLY IN THE AFTER EFFECT [PART 2]

BY PEAK JOHNSON
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC GARDNER

For a moment Zach didn't know what to say, he was stuck trying to think of something to counteract what Samantha had just said. Samantha at the moment was pleased with herself, smiling almost heinously, waiting for a reply from Zach, and looking as if she had a list of more things to say to him.

"You're not serious, Samantha," Zach finally spoke.

"Oh, I'm serious," Samantha replied. "Absolutely."

"You're acting childish," Zach said indignantly.

"*Childish?*" Samantha said, sounding as if she had never spoken the word before. "Zachary you're afraid of being seen with me because you don't want anyone to think that we go together."

There was some truth to this, Zach was afraid that hanging around with Samantha would have people talking more vigorously about them, but he still didn't think he cared much about what others said, even though it was becoming more and more clear that he did.

"Samantha, we've been together every day since school started, since I've moved here, if I was worried about what others thought, I would have stayed away from you long ago."

"Well, if you didn't want me 'hangin' around' you all the time, you should've just said so!" Samantha shouted.

"I didn't say I had a problem being with you."

"Oh, Zachary, give it a rest, I can see in your face."

It was at that moment that Zach had forgotten that Samantha could tell if he was being truthful or not because his nose, as she had pointed out, would always twitch, though this thought only made his anger rise.

"You act like this was your first time going to a dance or something," he muttered as he got up from the couch and made his way to the front door.

"...This was my first dance," Samantha said quietly.

Zach had something planned to say to Samantha, but what

she had said pretty much stopped him from saying anything remotely mean. His initial thinking was that by not going to the dance he would be saving her from being caught with someone such as himself. She would more likely enjoy her evening without him, but from this outcome it had seemed that he still ruined it for her...what a guy.

"You've never been to a dance before?" Zach said, finding this truly hard to believe.

"Afraid not." Samantha answered. "I know what you're going to say and to clearly elaborate on what Max has probably told you about me, I've never danced the way you think and I actually have never been to any parties. Except small birthday parties where I do nothing but sit quietly and talk."

Zach returned to the couch and sat back down by Samantha, still a bit angry, but at the same time a little curious. Here he had a friend who appeared to have everything she could possibly want in the world, popularity, friends, a nice house, but little by little it seemed apparent that her image was totally false.

"Well, I'm sorry, but I had to go see Shanika," Zach said stonily. "You know the one with the flying carpet, she said I was in danger," he added, but then remembering a very important fact he had almost forgotten, "You saw her, didn't you?"

"I kind of caught a glimpse of her." Samantha plainly said.

"But you still saw her." Zach said standing up, as this thought led him to something else he remembered which only enraged him even more. "Then what was the matter with you when you poured water on me?"

"Well it wasn't soda."

"So?! If I poured..." he paused for a moment to think of something, "dog pee on you and said 'well it wasn't soda' you'd be upset."

Samantha didn't say anything after that, but instead got up from her couch, walked over to her bookbag, pulled out a comb and started combing her bushy ponytail.

"Whenever you're ready to apologize, I'm listening." She said.

"What?!" Zach cried in disbelief. "I'm not apologizing."

"Why not?"

"Because you're expecting it and right now you really don't deserve it."

"What do you mean I'm expecting it and I don't deserve it? The least you can do is say you're sorry for *lying*."

"Samantha, the girl, who can fly by the way, said I was in danger. What point of that are you not getting?"

"I understand perfectly, it's just that what has passed, has passed. Even though you don't appear contrite, you can at least fake it and still apologize. I mean, it's the thought that counts Zachary. You did leave me there in front of my friends all night."

Zach couldn't believe what he was hearing, it was like Samantha didn't even care if he was really in danger or not. He arose from the couch once more and made his way toward the front door.

"Who's the one that cares what people think now?" he said, rather angrily, before slamming the door.

As he made his way to his house, Zach caught a glimpse of Samantha's dad and mom coming into the driveway together, although because he was so upset he didn't give his usual friendly, "Hi." He stopped at his door and dug deep into his right pocket again searching for his key, but finding first Mr. Harris' camera.

"I forgot to ask her about the pictures," he muttered.

He really didn't care at that moment and decided when, and if, ever he talked to Samantha again, he would mention the pictures of Shanika, but for now as he pulled out his keys and unlocked the front door of his home, he just wanted to be alone in his room.

Luckily no one was home at the moment. This didn't make Zach feel at all curious but instead comforted that for the time being, he had the house to himself. He walked upstairs to his room on the third floor slowly, throwing his bookbag to the floor as he entered his room. As he turned his lamp on, he noticed that the book had halfway slipped out of his bag. He felt drawn to it, as if something was edging him on to read a few pages.

"Knowledge is a dangerous thing that is sought after, Zach," said a voice coming from the window that made Zach jump.

"Shanika?!" Zach said, trying to stifle his sudden shock.

"Go ahead Zach, open it," Shanika urged. "You might learn something."

Zach knelt down and finished pulling the book out of his bookbag. Shanika's eyes grew wide as if her eyeballs themselves were about to pop out of their sockets. Zach opened the book, past the page with the picture of Shanika and found a new page that was previously blank, but now read:

"Samantha Smartbright."

At the sight of her name, Zach quickly looked over the page, which he realized listed almost everything personal about Samantha, from her current age to what she found most attractive. At this point, he quickly shut the book.

"Were you about to read something that you were not supposed to be reading?" Shanika asked, smirking.

"Shanika, what is this?" Zach asked, now even more alarmed but also abashed at what he had just read.

"Something I wrote a while back, why? Do you like it?"

"You wrote this?"

"Be careful not to read too deep into other people's history Zach. You might read something you shouldn't."

Shanika stepped down from off the ledge that led to Zach's window, stopping plainly in front of him.

"Why don't we go and visit her?" she said.

In one minute tops, Zach was now at a different window, in a different room that was covered with pink flowered wallpaper. He noticed as he spun around in surprise that there were shelves filled with books, pictures, and stuffed animals in the middle of the room was a bed also covered with stuffed animals. Not too far from that was a nice sized television and on the left in a corner was a video game system that looked as if it hadn't been played in years. Zach was now in Samantha's room.

What made matters worse was when he came to realize this, Samantha was just walking into her room.

"Zachary!" she shrieked, "What the hell are you doing here in my room?!"

Shanika stepped in front of Zach, who was on the floor confused and trying to hide. For some reason Shanika thought all of this was very funny.

"Hi there, my name is Shanika Maywood. You must be Samantha Smartbright," Shanika said, trying to sound as infallible as possible.



"Sha-ni-ka." Samantha said, saying Shanika's name as if she had made a terrible mistake. "Is this a joke?" She said shaken and in disbelief, looking behind Shanika and at Zach. "Because if this is, I-I just w-want you to know that I'm not f-finding it to be one."

"I'm sorry for appearing like this, but I wanted to come meet you," Shanika said, stepping aside so that Zach could be seen.

"Really, w- what for?" Samantha asked, moving back closer to her door as Shanika started moving toward her.

"I know what you're thinking," Shanika said. "I'm not just some silly legend that teachers tell to their students every fall season."

"R-really?" Samantha said, sounding as if she was getting ready to cry.

"However, if you needed help with a certain project, I could help, after all, I am an expert on myself."

And Shanika quickly glanced down at Zach before returning her attention back to Samantha.

"There really is no reason to cry. I came over here and brought Zach so that we could straighten out the little misunderstanding that happened on the day of the dance. I'm not here to beat you up or anything."

Samantha eyed Zach for a minute, wiped her bloodshot eyes, turned her attention towards Shanika, and then turned back to look at Zach.

"So you told her everything?" she said hotly to Zach. "Of course there's really nothing to explain Shanika. Zach obviously didn't want to go to the dance with me but wanted to fly with you."

"Well, who wouldn't?" Shanika said, stopping Zach before he opened his mouth to say something. "I'm sure you would have done the same if someone who could fly told you that you were in danger."

"No, I wouldn't actually. I'd think it was a joke first, I'd think I was seeing things. If I was in Zachary's position I would have still gone to the dance."

"And you wouldn't have been an ounce curious? I find that a bit hard to believe and a bit stupid, Samantha."

It was at this moment that Zach felt thankful that he was still on the floor because at that precise moment Samantha looked as if she was going to murder not only him, but Shanika as well.

"Are you saying I'm stupid?" she said calmly, although her right eye was twitching a little and Zach could see redness filling her face.

"In a way, I am." Shanika said, appearing as if what she said was quite casual. "You're acting ridiculously spoiled. It's not Zach's fault that you think you're supposed to get everything you want."

Samantha's blood was now boiling and after being insulted Zach couldn't really blame her. However, when it looked as if Shanika would cease her fire of insults, she only stopped to take a breath and continued on.



"Perhaps when you sort out your problems, like that embarrassing gas problem that you have when you're around people that you like, and this incredible thought that the whole world revolves around you, then you can come with me and Zach, not Zachary."

"E-Excuse me?"

And Zach and Shanika were gone, just as mysteriously as they had appeared. Samantha rushed quickly toward her window, opened it, and saw nothing as she looked outside frantically, but the shadow of her house on the pavement. Seeing nothing, she ducked her head back inside, slammed her window, walked over to her bed and grabbed one of her stuffed animals, buried her face in it and screamed.

"You can open your eyes now." Shanika said.

Zach opened his eyes, at the precise moment that he was in Samantha's room when he blinked and heard Samantha say "E-excuse me." He felt a sudden jerk upward into the air and suddenly felt an empty feeling in his stomach. Upon opening his eyes, Zach could clearly see that he was again flying with Shanika on her carpet through the sky, high in the clouds where no one below could see them.

"It's not that bad, you know, the wind does cut through your eyes making them water, but other than that."

"Why did you say all those things to Samantha?" Zach asked at once.

"Shouldn't you be asking where we are going?" Shanika said, while looking down at all the inhabitants of Johnsonville.

It seemed kind of wrong to quickly switch over to another subject, but other questions quickly started appearing in Zach's mind, and where he and Shanika were going was just one of them.

"It must be amazing to know how to fly," he said, but realizing this was not the question to ask, he quickly added. "You didn't need to try and explain anything to her."

"Forget about it, just lay back and relax," Shanika said, lifting her head from the view and staring back at Zach from the front end of the carpet. "Enjoy the view."

Zach suddenly felt calm, as if he didn't have a care in the world. In fact everything in the world seemed at peace, everything seemed perfectly beautiful.

"The view does seem kind of nice," Zach said in a trance-like voice.

Shanika moved over towards Zach, slightly touching his shoulder with her own.

"Shanika, where are we going?" Zach asked, now staring down at the ant-like people of Johnsonville.

Shanika smiled.

"Zach, I thought you would never ask."

Shanika didn't have to answer Zach's question because it was at that moment that they had arrived at their destination or at least Shanika's destination. They were at the Johnsonville clocktower, long abandoned since it served its purpose in World War II. It was used as a place for troops to hide and spy or shoot out enemies.

Shanika stepped off her carpet as it came to a stop in front of a small door beneath the rusted hands of the tower. Zach followed. Inside, the entire sector of the clock was cloaked with dust and the only things noticeable were the occasional mice, cobwebs, and the distinct smell of a basement. Though none of this seemed to bother Shanika. She seemed to know where she was going. Zach seemed to be coming back to his senses because, as a mouse ran over his foot, he quickly let out a yell.

"Who's the girl here?" Shanika said, smiling.

"S-sorry, I just recently had a b-bad experience with mice," Zach sputtered.

Shanika smiled once more before coming to an abrupt stop in front of Zach, stopping in front of the small door that she and Zach had just entered.

"If you turn around, you can see the whole town from up here," Shanika said.

"Ok," Zach replied, wondering why Shanika had brought him to an old tower to see something as simple as a sunrise.

"Zach, can I ask you two simple questions?" Shanika asked sweetly, as she leaned against Zach a little.

"Uh, yeah, sure Shanika."

"Do you like Samantha?"

"...maybe, she's ok at times."

The book suddenly appeared in Shanika's hands and as she looked at Zach an orange light started to shine from it. Zach continued looking out of the tower, unaware that Shanika even had the book but noticing the light was shining at something that was far away, whatever it was, it was reflecting it back towards the book.

Zach turned around, but Shanika was nowhere to be found. She had disappeared and she had taken the book with her. As Zach turned back around, trying to figure out the strange phenomenon, he saw a creature. A creature so terrifying that he nearly fell from the tower to his doom.

"Hold it right there," said an unfamiliar voice.

"You'll not be hurting that boy while I'm here ...not while I'm still breathing anyway."

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ALEX'S LEMONADE: STILL GOING STRONG

BY PEAK JOHNSON

In 2000, a four-year-old cancer patient named Alexandra "Alex" Scott announced an idea she had—she started a lemonade stand so that she could raise money to help her doctors find a cure for kids with cancer. Alex and her older brother, Patrick, put the idea into play when they began setting up the first "Alex's Lemonade Stand for Pediatric Cancer" on their front lawn in July 2000.

For the next four years, despite her health, Alex continued having her annual lemonade stand to help raise money for childhood cancer research. After following her inspirational example, thousands of lemonade stands have been set up and held across the country by children, schools, businesses, and organizations, all to benefit Alex's Lemonade Foundation for pediatric cancer. As of January 2006, her national campaign has raised over \$5 million for pediatric cancer research.

Sadly, on August 1, 2004, Alex died at the age of eight after battling cancer for seven

and a half years. Alex's determination to raise awareness and money for all childhood cancer while bravely fighting her own battle with cancer. It has inspired thousands from all walks of life to raise money and give to her cause. Alex's family and supporters are truly committed to continuing her inspiring legacy through Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation. The future vision for Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation is to become a leader in fundraising for childhood cancer research and to remain a leader in the public awareness of pediatric cancer by providing a simple way for others everywhere to get involved.

During this past summer, teens of the Harold A. Honickman Young Entrepreneurial Program decided to sell and support Alex's Lemonade by having a small Alex's Lemonade Stand incorporated into their current business (selling pretzels, water ice, bottled water, and t-shirts at Rittenhouse Square).

Throughout the summer, the teens were able to

buy Alex's Lemonade and water from Pepsi Co. and sell them for \$1.50. The small stand was a success, with customers stopping by every weekend to not only buy lemonade or pretzels, but to also make generous donations to Alex's Lemonade Stand, in general. On December 8, 2006, with a grand total of \$161.00 in pocket, the young entrepreneurs made their way to the headquarters of Alex's Lemonade with Sister Mary Scullion. It truly was a heartfelt visit, as they met with Alex's father, Jay Scott, who accepted the money and to show his gratitude gave the young entrepreneurs a few copies of *Alex and the Amazing Lemonade Stand* (which is an excellent book to read) a few key chains, and a couple of hats.

It felt good that day to continue to do something good while being a part of Project H.O.M.E. The visit truly touched each and every one of our hearts, but what really touched us was what Mr. Jay said, "You truly are helping us, one cup at a time." So remember, whenever you buy a bottle of lemonade from a store and it has Alex's name and picture on it, you're not just supporting the store, but Alex's dream.

On December 8, 2006, with a grand total of \$161.00 in pocket, the young entrepreneurs made their way to the headquarters of Alex's Lemonade with Sister Mary Scullion.

BEAUTY IS NOT IN THE FACE

BY FATIMA THOMAS

Felisha feels ugly as the popular girls stare at her. She is not surprised they usually stare, but today they're not pointing and laughing at her. She picks up her lunch and goes to her favorite teacher's class where they can no longer make her the center of their attention. She thinks that she is ugly and she feels that her skin's too dark. Her body is fat and nasty, and she has short hair. She doesn't possess the things that the other girls have and that is why she feels ugly. If only Felisha had what they had, if only Felisha could be pretty...

Felisha's situation is like many girls today simply because beauty is perceived as an artificial obsession shown through the media. Frequently this idea of beauty is planted into the minds of children who, in turn, never get the chance to find beauty in all its aspects. Beauty can be seen in everything and in everyone. But with the media around, you will never be able to see true beauty or keep your child away from the self-esteem problems that he or she will acquire, such as those of Felisha. Men are basically in charge of making up the rules for how women should look. Rap is sequentially to blame for the way women want their men to act and, in turn, their children.

If only we could find a way to express the way we feel through clothing and emotion. If only television shows were allowed to show the truth through media and teach it to our children. We could have children that will excel above the circumstances that so many children are placed in today.

Has anybody ever watched "Flavor of Love" or "America's Next Top Model"? Most people have, and they are regular shows that they watch. These shows are publicized all over the commercials for people to take part in watching. "Flavor of Love" makes women go and do things to get Flavor Flav (a

world acclaimed hype man for Public Enemy). The man goes on dates with each woman and he eliminates a woman on each show. He eliminates girls that are not the size he wants (fat) or women that are not easy to attain (sexually). What makes people actually want to watch an old man slobber over young ladies that are old enough to be his daughter? (I don't know, but I am in no way, shape, or form judging this man's character.)

"America's Next Top Model" is a show that basically prepares to pick a woman that can follow the rules that it takes to become beautiful in the public's eyes. These women are in competition and have various rules that they must follow in order to be the winner. The women have to do things; such as learn to walk the runway, be good at taking pictures, and learn to keep up with what the judges can hand out.

Society has this certain look that they want in their women and they tend to cast out any girls that they feel are not in that category. Facially, a woman has to have long hair, light skin, and pretty eyes. The media has occupied this by making women hate being a beautiful dark skin tone. On one episode of "America's Next Top Model," they made the women into different celebrities and one of the women had to be a celebrity that was really dark-skinned, but the rest of the contestants had lighter complexions. The girl thought that her picture was ugly because of how dark they made her skin tone. However, her skin tone was a couple shades lighter.

Why can't I be beautiful the way that I am? Why do I have to get skin toner to make my skin lighter so that men will pay attention to me? If a man doesn't like you or respect the way you feel then you should not be with him or give him the time of the

day. Oftentimes in school, I see men judge girls with others around, and some of the most popular girls. This makes the girl feel ugly and she, in turn, starts to have issues doubting the beauty that she holds within.

Bodies are judged, but men don't really care about them unless they want them to be 'wifey'. 'Wifey' is a figurative word for a girl that is treated like a wife and not a girl that you just want coition from. What I noticed is that younger men like voluptuous bodies, or should I say, 'thick' woman. They have to have big breasts, behinds, and nice stomachs. But older men (those that don't care about age), perhaps in order to remind them of their younger years, like young women that are skinny, pretty, and vulnerable. This statement can also be vice

versa, there are exceptions in each case. Women in their eyes are like objects because if a girl or women wants to give it up a man will take it, but they will either talk about you around the neighborhood or not take you seriously. Girls, take your time! You have your whole life to have boyfriends. Get an education first and then look for your man.

Beauty is a fake in today's society. Men, as you have seen throughout my article, are the rulers over what is pretty and what is sexy. Women tend to go out of their way to be "what a man wants" with the sexy outfits and so forth. Ladies, your body belongs to you and so does beauty. You hold the beauty and that's what really matters. Men have no say so in what you wear and the way that you choose to look. One day this week wear something that doesn't match but you like it; wear your favorite shirt, pants, or what ever else you like to wear. As Kahlil Gibran says, "Beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart."

'Wifey' is a figurative word for a girl that is treated like a wife and not a girl that you just want coition from.

"The function of education is to help you from childhood, not to imitate anybody, but be yourself all the time" - Jiddu Krishnamurti

WHAT'S UP WITH 'HARRY'

BY MARION E. HAWKINSON
INTRODUCTION BY PEAK JOHNSON

A lot of people do not understand the sensation that is Harry Potter. I admit, at one time I didn't understand what all the big fuss was about until a couple of summers ago. I picked up a copy of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (which is the third book in the series) and did something that a lot of high school teens now do, read. It was a good read, and it had been a long time since I actually picked up a book in the summer, now I do it very often with a passion to someday write great books like this one. At Delaware Valley Charter High School, there is not a student who can give their opinion on the world of Harry Potter, but a teacher. I asked this former teacher of mine if she could explain how she got hooked on the phenomenon that is Harry Potter and basically why does she think Harry is so popular.



And now without further ado: What's up with Harry by Ms. Marion E. Hawkinson

During my freshman year of high school, my little brother bought a book. I ignored it. By the time I graduated, a few more had come out and there was a major movie in the works. I ignored it. My roommates and friends in college adored these books and movies. I ignored it. Over holiday breaks, my parents raved about them as they collected dust in my "To Read" pile. I ignored it. Then, on an ordinary day of student teaching, in a moment of exhaustion and frustration, I picked up a tattered copy and began over a cup of tea. Twenty days and 717,020 words later my eyes were opened and I was a lifelong devotee to these books. It was Harry Potter.

For a story that started in the mind of a single mother on welfare while riding a train, Potterdom has come a long way. Students in east colleges play Muggle versions of Quidditch. Literary fans spend thousands of dollars to attend conferences to discuss complex alchemical theories in homemade robes. Weekly competitions pit musician against musician to create the best horcrux-inspired songs. It has even created a whole set of words—for the

uninitiated: Muggles are nonmagical people, Quidditch is a sport played on brooms, and a horcrux...well, I will let you read Book 6 for that! At any rate, the fever has spread from old to young, from continent to continent, and it shows no sign of letting up.

But why is it so popular? many people ask. Other entertaining, well-told stories have come and gone without all this fuss...what makes Harry so special? Rowling's books are not mere stories. She uses clever and exciting stories to weave lessons about how to think, how to choose, and how to live.

At the core of each Harry Potter installment, there lies a mystery. As the readers progress, they pit their minds against the challenges and race to solve the clues before the finish. Each of these solutions and mysteries feeds into larger and larger mysteries that arc over the entire series. Rowling fools us with her hidden clues, red herrings, and plot twists. Beyond these elements, the author infuses her writing with allusions to classic literature, ancient mythology, complex philosophy, foreign languages, and esoteric studies like elements and alchemy. Once, a person could not call themselves educated without being well-versed in all these areas, but they have slipped into obscurity. Until now, as Potter fans sift through the studies of bygone days to glean more clues, always believing that with enough research they could stumble on the solution to the puzzles before Book 7 appears. People use their problem-solving skills and develop new research interests over Harry, and in the process, train their brains into a new way of thinking.

One of the most powerful messages Rowling sends comes from the mouth of Albus Dumbledore in *Chamber of Secrets*, "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." Questions of friendship and simple right and wrong collide in the novels with difficult subjects like racism and evil. As young as 11 and 12, characters need to make difficult choices concerning both their individual identity and the lives of their friends.

While the magical element magnifies the consequences of all the choices, readers in all walks of life can still relate to these core questions from which everyone's morals evolve. As readers, we can see the results of the good and bad choices of a character and judge those outcomes...then maybe, just maybe, when we have to choose between right and easy or power and love ourselves, we can fall back on our Potter lessons of choice and take the correct path.

The last lessons that Rowling places as the beating heart of her novels stem from being better at thinking and choosing—for if you can do those two, you will also learn how to live. Following Harry's path of struggle from orphanhood to neglectful upbringing to sudden fame to rank unpopularity and everywhere in between, the reader gets a chance to walk with him. We share his shoes by virtue of our position as audience, and Potter gives us a model of a good life. Despite every hardship, as Dumbledore tells us over and over, Harry's heart saves him. With every pitfall and reason to hate the world, Harry only grows stronger and finds love in his friends and mentors. It is such a simple lesson, but one that has such a quiet voice in our cacophonous culture. Rowling has given the lesson a loudspeaker. Take care of yourself; take care of your friends. Act humbly. Choose wisely. Follow your heart. These ideas that provide the model for the good life are the very soul of the Potter series.

Each of these lessons in Rowling's books may explain some of its controversy...but they explain more about its popularity. We needed to hear this. Readers felt hungry for the guidance and an awkward, bespectacled boy has led the way. People often ask me whether these books should be read in schools or for pleasure. I think the question is irrelevant. They should be read in life. Knowing how to think, choose, and live make us human, even if we cannot all be wizards.

To find out the title of Book 7, unscramble the words below:

RREYH AROPAN DTT HEE TADHLYS OLL-WHATAE

Answer on next page.

CORRECTIONS

As with every great publication, there are mistakes. The *North Philly Metropolis* would like to send our sincere apologies to all those we missed, who were not credited, or did not make it into our previous issue. We regret that we left out an important advertisement from our friends at the Honickman Foundation. We're still learning, and each new experience (or mistake!) helps us in the process.

LOOK OUT FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE!

Love is in the air and after years of planning and debating, the *North Philly Metropolis* will finally take on the theme of **Love and Relationships**. We're going deep to see what's up with families, friends, communities, and romance in 2007.

Plus the return of *Mother Goose*, our very own advice columnist. Got a question for Ms. Goose? Email her at NPM@projecthome.org.

Also: Making the NPM Newspaper Boxes, a reportback from NCMR 07 Memphis and much more! Have a suggestion for what we should cover? Get in touch!

FUN PAGE

HOROSCOPE PERSONALITIES

by Brianna Kelly

Capricorn

(Dec. 22-Jan 19)

You are a person who likes to take charge. You are a "run your own show" kind of person who is really comfortable with responsibility on your shoulders. However, learning to share the load is both your gift and challenge this year. It's natural to resist, but after all, you have been self-reliant in so many ways for almost all of your entire life.

Aquarius

(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Your two planets are both rule-bound, Saturn and rebellious Uranus. This year, as fast as Saturn can place obstacles in your path, Uranus comes to the rescue with sudden breakthroughs that allows you to move your life in a successful direction.

Pisces

(Feb. 19-March 20)

Opportunities for you abound for makeovers of your image, personal relationships, and even your career this year. Let go of the overly self-protective patterns, and just express your power, your individuality, and desires to be freer now.

Aries

(March 21-April 19)

In 2006, it was hard work and steady progress; there were a lot of lessons to be learned, faced obstacles and disappointments in love. This year, as Saturn contin-

ues moving through your 5th house of love and creativity, Aries will be required to finish what has already been started.

Taurus

(April 20-May 20)

You know what you like and tend to like what you know, Taurus, but the biggest reward of this year comes from tasting unfamiliar flavors and discovering their strange delights. Take risks not only in what you do, but in what you say as well.

Gemini

(May 21-June 20)

Don't show your dual personality too much.

Cancer

(June 21-July 22)

Don't waste energy on feeling sorry for yourself if an investment, financial or emotional doesn't pan out as expected.

Leo

(July 23-Aug 22)

It's really about hard work, Leo, and it might not feel like you have made a lot of progress for all the work and effort. Fortunately, 2007 is likely to tell a happier tale for you. There will still be a great deal demanded of you this year. When you reach for the stars, it is easier to sustain your commitment and creativity.

Virgo

(July 23-Sept 22)

This is a very critical year for you, as one of the

phases in your life draws to a close, allowing a new you to emerge. You have seen your share of instability since 2003, when Uranus, the champion of the unexpected, entered the watery Pisces in your 7th house of partnership.

Libra

(Sept. 23-Oct. 23)

You are a peacemaker, the diplomat who always tries to keep everyone happy. That must be a tough role to play this year, you might want to get out of the line of fire and let the opposing parties settle their own problems.

Scorpio

(Oct. 24-Nov. 21)

It will be your job to conquer discouragement by facing your limitations rather than ignoring them. An ongoing struggle between career aspirations and your personal dreams can color this year with disappointment and accomplishment.

Sagittarius

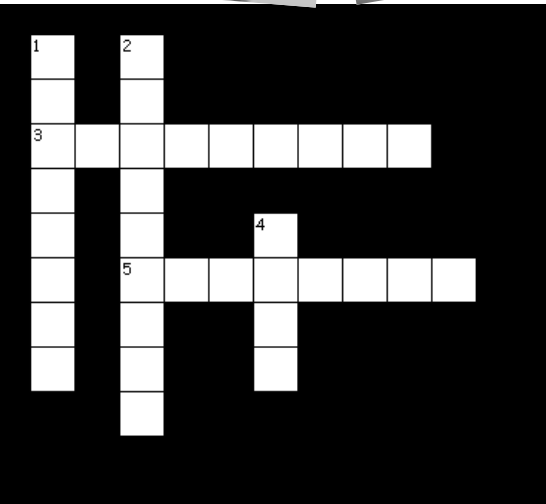
(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

This year, you have been waiting for, as your planet Jupiter, makes its once-every-twelve-years return to your sun sign bestowing grace and an opportunity onto your life. As the archer sign, you aim your arrows of intent high; your targets are often far in the distance. Now you can see even farther and your power is even stronger.

HALLOWEEN 2006!



NPM went to Memphis, Tennessee for the National Conference for Media Reform! (Details next issue)



CLUES

Across

- 3. Math class that you may take in 9th or 10th grade.
- 5. Place that you go to learn everyday.

Down

- 1. A language class where you learn another language, which they pushed to 11th and 12th grades.
- 2. Class where you read books, learn grammar, and various other things.
- 4. The mayor that's in charge of the "Safe Streets" operation and "Truants" this year.



Don't Trash It!

Please pass on this copy to a friend when you're done. After that, please recycle!

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Laura Weinbaum, Kia Gregory, April Alcaraz, Meghan Tidwell, Edward Basile, Richard Amoako, Mary Smith, Sam Willis, Fatima Thomas, Linda Wallace, Cindy Ferguson, Sister Mary, Mr. and Mrs. Honickman, Prompt Printing, our contributors, and everyone else who makes this newspaper happen!

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows is the title, and it is due out on July 21, 2007.

*"The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives."
- Robert Maynard Hutchins*

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