



March 2019

Dear Families,

We believe at PS 29 that service learning has tremendous value in teaching our students that the world is bigger than themselves and their immediate community. As you know, we opened the school year with the launch of the “PS 29 Code for Living,” our school’s core values - integrity, responsibility, respect, and empathy - that we reference throughout the school day and year through our daily interactions, the books we read, our discussions in the classroom and beyond.

Our commitment to service learning is aligned with our core values. It is our hope to guide students through a process of acknowledging that there are many forms of inequity in the world and inspire them to feel that they have the power to combat these inequities with knowledge and action.

Our goal at PS 29 is for our students’ service learning process to be hands-on and as close to the heart of the issues as possible in order to understand the perspectives of others and deepen their experience with empathy.

As such, we have developed a goal for each grade to engage in service project that may connect to our curriculum or content and/or partner with outside organizations to effect change. As young as kindergarten, our students have recently collected books for Project Cicero to support other school and community libraries across our city.

Our kindergarteners helped to collect, sort, categorize, and pack these books that were delivered to communities in need. This also connected to our kindergarteners’ school study in social studies in which they’re learning about members of a school and their roles within the community, as well as how schools can support other school communities outside their own.

In 1st grade, you might recall that our students were collecting canned food in conjunction with City Harvest as well as supporting our school wide coat drive during the December holidays. This work connected with their social studies curriculum around the study of family. At this time, our students were also learning about different families’ needs versus wants, which went hand in hand with the service learning process.

In 2nd grade, our students worked with an organization called Heights & Hills that trained our students in the types of skills needed to work with and support the elderly. They learned about the aging process and how compassion and patience are integral to service work with the aging community. Our 2nd graders

have been following up by visiting the Cobble Hill Health Center, a nursing home down the street, where they have been presenting artwork, singing songs, and reading books with the residents.

In 3rd grade, tied in with the study of Africa and South America in social studies & current collaboration with Brooklyn Academy of Music around African dance and drumming, each classroom has “adopted” an endangered animal from these regions and have been working with various outside organizations such as Wildlife Fund to support this work. Through research and presentation, our students will be sharing their knowledge and potential action items with our school community at upcoming events including our “Day of Service” in the garden on Saturday, April 13th.

In 4th grade, for a second year in a row we are working closely with a cohort of what has become 70 schools across the city in a program called STAR. Last year, you might remember, we collected over 30 boxes to be added to shipping containers that were sent to a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan - watch this video here for more information: <https://youtu.be/JbP8ZajZdRY>. This year’s 4th graders will be collecting items for communities in Jordan, Bangladesh, Yemen (and possibly Lebanon and Somalia). As we did last school year, we will be working in conjunction with our Rummage Sale, another service initiative with a set of sustainability goals (i.e., reused clothing and recycling electronics). At this event, we will set aside clothes specifically in support of the STAR collections for the aforementioned countries. Our 4th graders will manage the collections process and also share their knowledge about these countries and provide historical and political context to students of other grades. Some 4th grade students and families will also help with transporting the collections to the shipping site.

Additionally, our 4th graders are working with the Service Learning Project (SLP), an organization that will guide our students through 5 phases of project work, each of which is student driven. Each class has selected an issue (e.g., homelessness, etc.) and are researching and creating an action plan to address the selected issue.

In 5th grade, while service can be much broader (as experienced in 4th grade and in other years), it also does start “at home.” Teachers and staff work closely with different 5th grade classrooms to focus on a school-specific area or need and engage in hands-on problem-solving to address the issue through service.

School-wide, we have a host of service efforts throughout the year. We have service embedded in our Green Team that is hosting an upcoming “Day of Service at the Beach” on April 7th (stay tuned for more information) among all the daily recycling and sustainability work of these students. Our Peer Mediators and Lunch Helpers support our students with conflict resolution every day. Our upcoming “Earth Day Work Day in the PS 29 Garden” on April 13th will also feature a school-wide collection for [ChiPs](#), a nearby shelter in Park Slope. Please look out for information about collecting and filling canvas bags with toiletries, such as soap, shampoo, deodorant, lotion, cologne, toothbrushes and toothpaste on April 13th in service of individuals in this shelter in a nearby community.

We have thoughtfully developed our grade-specific projects with the idea in mind that service learning experiences illustrate the value for our students of thinking beyond themselves. We feel that our school has

a responsibility to respond to disasters and tragedies within and outside of our own community. As such, we will continue to communicate to families about organizations that are operating within our neighborhood, city and beyond with which, in the spirit of service, we encourage connection and engagement.

Thank you for your partnership, and we look forward to working together to serve our community and beyond.

Warmly,

Rebecca & Community Service Committee