

Extra

A11 STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE SILIVE.COM SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2017

SPOTLIGHT ON SCHOOLS



Fourth-grade teacher Dominick Mascara works with Nikki Arias and Luz Janis. Photos by Claire Regan for the Staten Island Advance



Second-graders Justin Rivera and Christina Obermayer love to read.



Caroline Blake is a fourth-grader at PS 21.



Zion Tobe and Sariya Harris are kindergarten mathematicians.



Media library teacher Patricia Wong works with third-grader Taishawn Burton.

PS 21:
168 Hooker Place, 10303;
718-816-3300;
ps21statenisland.org

Principal: Anthony Cosentino

Mission Statement:
PS 21's mission is to challenge students to achieve their personal best and empower them to become productive, independent members of society. Our collaborative learning teams provide standards-based curriculum utilizing real life experiences embedded in data-driven instruction. We, the staff of PS 21, commit to partnering with parents and community members to maximize each student's potential.



Mario Solis and Michael Acosta are fourth-grade friends at PS 21.



PS 21 first-grader Alicia Rivera uses pattern blocks to create a design.

PS 21

Preparing students for the future

Claire M. Regan For the Staten Island Advance

Move over, Apple CEO Tim Cook. Paul Sebastian Jara wants your job.

He may only be 10, but a future in technology is on the horizon for this confident and articulate fourth-grader, a member of the tech squad at PS 21 in Elm Park.

Under the direction of media library teacher Patricia Wong, Paul has become as conversant with Google docs, GIFs and links as he is with fractions, adverbs and the American Revolution. **SEE PS 21, A 13**



Paul Sebastian Jara, a PS 21 fourth-grader, said he plans to be a computer engineer.



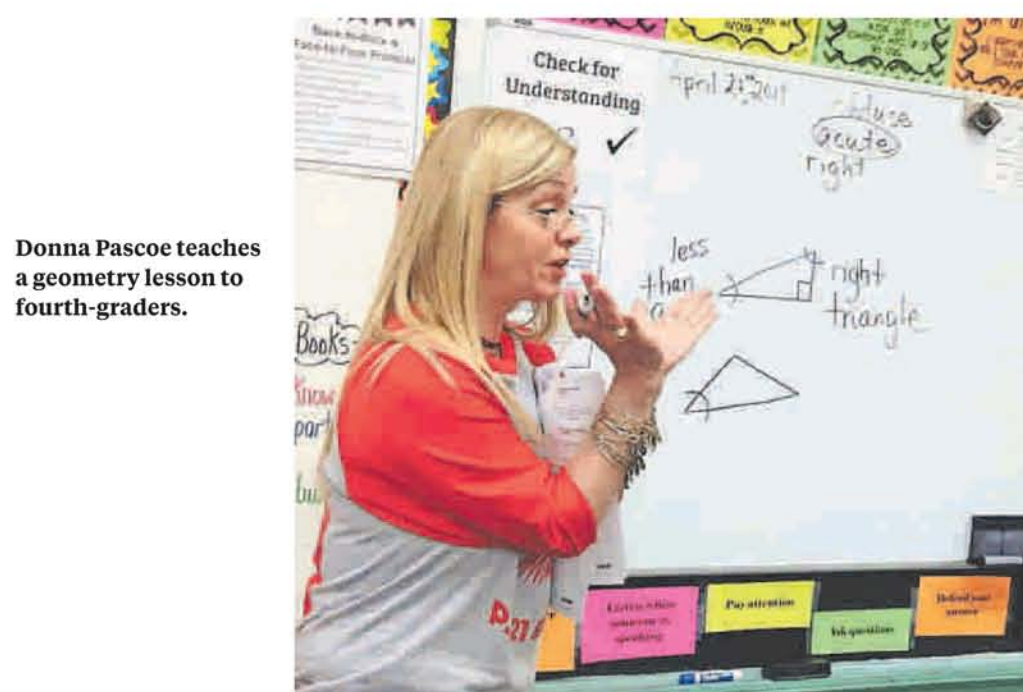
Principal Anthony Cosentino gives fourth-grader Marvin Carreon a fist bump on his way to class.



Third-graders McKayla Rolon and Leanna Collins are eager to see the seeds they planted grow into radishes.



First-grader Amiya Harris loves to dance in music class.



Donna Pascoe teaches a geometry lesson to fourth-graders.



Morgan Fortune and Sa'adatu Suleiman are fourth-graders at PS 21 in Elm Park.

PS 21

FROM A 11

"I learned how to type before I learned how to print," boasts Paul, who uses a MacBook Pro at home. "I'm gonna work for Apple because it's No. 1 in technology."

He and his tech squad pals, Luis Davila and Mario Solis, have decided they will major in computer engineering at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken and room together in the dormitory.

Technology is a priority at PS 21, where all teachers use SMART Boards and students work on laptops in a second-floor media library.

Next year, every classroom will be equipped with Google Chromebooks and the lower grades will have access to iPads. New SMART Boards for the school are on the way, thanks to funding from Borough President James Oddo and Councilwoman Debi Rose.

"We are preparing them for jobs that do not exist yet," says Anthony Cosentino, finishing his second year as PS 21's forward-thinking principal. "We want to give them a wide range of skills for jobs that will be available 20 years from now. We want our kids to be more marketable."

The school has built its own website and uses Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to share news and accomplishments.

Located on Hooker Place, in the shadow of the Bayonne Bridge and a few blocks from Port Richmond High School, PS 21 was built 111 years ago with separate entrances marked "Girls" and "Boys." A small annex was added in 1996.

Most classrooms are in the original two-story building, which features the perfect mix of modern amenities and old-world charm. A petite auditorium accommodates 200 in vintage wooden seats; the stage has built-in benches with cushions.

PS 21's 20th-century architects did not include a gymnasium in the design, but that doesn't bother physical education teacher Melissa Neglia, who makes use of the spacious school yard for her classes.

NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

"Good morning, Mr. C!" the fifth-grade class recites in perfect unison as Principal Cosentino pays a visit on a recent Friday morning.

Energetic and athletic, 35-year-old Cosentino logs a few miles every day inside his school building, spend-

ing more time fist-bumping his 382 students and greeting visiting parents than seated in his office. His staff includes one assistant principal and 33 teachers.

"The staff is a great team," he says with characteristic humility. "They are really invested in what we're trying to do here. I'm very fortunate as a principal."

Cosentino fosters a family atmosphere and welcomes "pop-up moms" like Janet Rosa who frequently stop by to check on a child's progress.

"I peek in [the classroom door] and try to catch my oldest to see what he's doing," explains Rosa about fifth-grader Aziz Thomas. "I watch him interact."

"This school is a second home for many kids; they can't wait to come here" she continues. "Mr. C makes kids and parents feel comfortable."

"If there is an issue, he'll drop what he's doing and address it."

"I wish this school went to eighth grade," she adds, noting that Aziz, the eldest of five siblings at PS 21, heads off to junior high next year.

Principal Cosentino recently introduced My Hero and Me, an eight-week program that celebrates fatherhood and fosters positive role modeling. Kids and dads bond during a different after-school activity each week, including martial arts, break dancing, jiu-jitsu, woodworking and basketball.

"It gets more fathers into the building," says Charles Fernando, who has served as

PS 21's guidance counselor "for six happy years."

Cultivating good citizens is also a priority at the Elm Park school. After a vigorous campaign season that coincided with the national election season last fall, class leaders were elected in all grades based on the strength of their platforms and speeches.

PS 21 students develop an awareness of the environment in Maria Littre's science classes, where they learn about recycling and organics and how to save energy. PS 21 this year reduced energy usage by 19 percent and won the Green Design Lab Energy Challenge sponsored by the Department of Education (DOE).

PS 21 is also a Zero Waste School, recognized by the city Department of Sanitation for its recycling and sustainability efforts.

DEGREE IN PHILOSOPHY
A native of the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, Principal Cosentino moved to West Brighton with his family when he was 9 years old.

He graduated from Blessed Sacrament School and Monsignor Farrell High School and earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Fordham University and a master's degree in education from Wagner College.

He later completed the DOE's Leaders in Education Apprenticeship Program and the Advanced Leadership Program for Assistant Principals, sponsored by the

Council of School Supervisors and Administrators.

Cosentino worked for a year at Geller House, the intervention center for adolescents in Arrochar, then at Monsignor Farrell before transitioning into the public school system with a teaching position at the Hungerford School Annex in New Springville.

He served as an assistant principal in Brooklyn for three and a half years and was appointed principal of PS 21 in summer 2015.

"We've made a lot of progress in 18 months," he says, referring to a 13 percent jump in English Language Arts (ELA) test scores and a 10 percent increase in science test scores.

PS 21 has been recognized by the DOE as a Respect for All School in recognition of its work to promote a community of inclusion.

A rich after-school program offers crocheting, Zumba, calligraphy, coding, robotics and cooking.

Next year, a college- and career-readiness office will open at PS 21, sponsored by the Wagner College Port Richmond Partnership.

It will be the first of its kind in a New York State elementary school, Principal Cosentino points out, enabling PS 21 to collaborate with Markham Intermediate School and Port Richmond High School, also participants in the Wagner initiative.

"When students leave PS 21, we want them to know that college is not just a possibility, it's an expectation," he says.