

# The Renaissance

OCTOBER 2007

## Charter School

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 www.renaissancecharter.org • 718-803-0060 • 718-803-3785 (fax)

### WELCOME BACK!

By Stacey Gauthier, Co-Principal

Hello and welcome back to a new school year at The Renaissance Charter School (TRCS)! On behalf of the faculty and staff, welcome back to our returning families. We are delighted to have you and your children with us. Let me also extend a very warm welcome to all of our new families. Thank you for entrusting us with the education and care of your children.

The 2007-2008 school year promises to be one of our best years ever. For starters, this is the school's 15th anniversary. The Renaissance School was started in 1993 by a group of teachers and parents looking to reform public education. The team worked on the proposal nights and weekends while holding down full-time teaching jobs across the city. Their efforts paid off and The Renaissance School was awarded a New Vision's start-up grant. Renaissance was unique from the beginning. First, it was designed to be small in a time when the small school movement was just getting under way. Second, it was K-12. Many said this was an impossible task for a public school. Third, it had a unique governance structure that was democratic and valued collaboration and cooperation among all school constituencies.

In 2000, the leadership team of Renaissance jumped at the opportunity to convert to charter status because it was believed that the added autonomy granted by The Charter Act, in exchange for increased accountability, would ultimately allow us to more successfully support the learning of our 525 young people. Renaissance was granted its charter and officially became The Renaissance Charter School in May, 2000. In 2005, TRCS' charter was renewed for the full five-year term permitted by law.

Charter renewal is contingent on meeting academic and other goals set in our charter, having a strong governance structure and demonstrating fiscal soundness and sustainability. For this achievement, we were awarded a prestigious Blackboard Award. Today, TRCS is one of the city's and state's most successful charter schools.

Last school year, our founding principal, Dr. Monte Joffee, retired after serving as the school's principal for fourteen years. His contributions to the school are numerous. Most importantly, he was one of the strongest proponents of ensuring that the school's vision always be at the forefront of everything we do. This summer, I attended Harvard University's Charter School Institute along with Nick Tishuk, one of our new teacher leaders and an Emerging Leader Fellow at The New York City Center for Charter School Excellence. My days at Harvard renewed and revitalized my commitment to our vision. I opened our faculty development conference and Collaborative School Governance

### Board of Trustees

Founders Principal	Dr. Monte Joffee
Founders Group/Comm.	Sandy Geyer
Founders Group/Staff	Nancy Condyles
Founders Group/Staff	Stacey Gauthier
Founders Group/Staff	Francine Smith
Founders Group/Staff	Maura Malarcher
Appointed Parent	Mary Anderson, Esq., MSW
Community Rep.	Andrew P. Jackson, Chairperson
Community Rep.	Dr. Lenore Gall
Community Rep.	Margaret Martinez-Deluca
Community Rep.	Vilma Cuadrado, R.N.
Elected Parent	Jacob Levich
Elected Teacher	Everett Boyd
Honorary Member	Rudy Greco, Esq.
Honorary Member	Dr. Hazel DuBois
Honorary Member	Meryl Thompson

### School Management Team

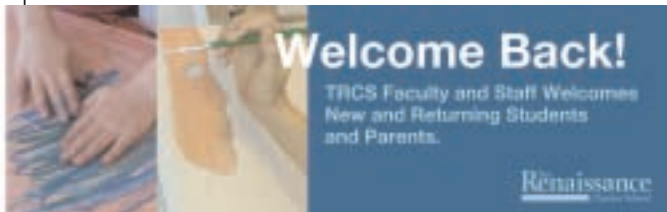
Co-Principal	Gwen Clinkscales
Co-Principal	Stacey Gauthier
Director of Operations	Denise Hur
Director of Development	Rebekah Oakes
Teacher Leader	Emily Byrum (IS)
Teacher Leader	Janet Jefferson (K-6)
Teacher Leader	Yumeris Morel (7-12)
Teacher Leader	Nicholas Tishuk (K-12)

### Collaborative School Governance

PTA Co-President, K-6	Lillian Chen
PTA Co-President, 7-12	Noreen Wortman
Cluster 1 Rep (K-3)	Kirsten Westphal
Cluster 2 Rep (4-6)	Jacob Levich
Cluster 3 Rep (7, 8)	Suzanne Reinhardt
Cluster 4 Rep (9-12)	Eileen Sanders
Cluster 4 Rep (9-12)	Mark Satinoff
Instructional Support Rep	Irene Attilio
Parent at Large (Clusters 1-3)	Elyse Lau
Parent at Large (Cluster 4)	Suman Sharma
Co-Principal	Stacey Gauthier
UFT Chapter Leader	Sandra Fritz
Cluster 1 Rep (K-3)	Carol Schwenk
Cluster 2 Rep (4-6)	Sean Conlon
Cluster 3 Rep (7, 8)	Raymond Johnson
Cluster 4 Rep (9, 10)	Nick Tishuk
Cluster 4 Rep (11, 12)	Richard Doherty
Instructional Support Rep	Liz Perez
Non-pedagogical	Pat Poljanec
Staff at Large	OPEN
Student Rep (7, 8)	Gabriel Decker-Lee
Student Rep (9, 10)	OPEN
Student Rep (11, 12)	OPEN

### PTA Executive Board

Co-President, K-6	Lillian Chen
Co-President, 7-12	Noreen Wortman
Cluster 1 Rep (K-3)	Peggy Heeney
Cluster 2 Rep (4, 5)	Geraldine Neary
Cluster 3 Rep (6-8)	Karen Joseph
Cluster 4 Rep (9-12)	Mavis Hall
Treasurer	Barbara Mutnick
Corresponding Secretary	OPEN
Recording Secretary	Renee Stonebraker



A banner, hanging above the front door, welcomes students and parents.

### OCTOBER EVENTS

M-F	1-5	Kids' Art Fund-Raiser
W	3	Open House, HS, 9 am
W	3	BOT, 7:00 pm
M	8	Columbus Day, No School
Tu	9	Picture Day
Th	18-26	Scholastic Book Fair
W	24	CSG, 5-7 pm; PTA, 7-8:30 pm
F	26	Pasta Night Fund-Raiser

Committee meeting by discussing it. Now I want to extend the same request to you, the parent body of TRCS. I ask that everyone read the school's vision, think about what it means and join us at CSG meetings where we will discuss how we are working toward its full implementation at TRCS.

Again, thank you for choosing TRCS and for your commitment to being an active partner in your child's education. I look forward to a great year working with you and your child(ren).

## **VISION / MISSION STATEMENT – THE RENAISSANCE CHARTER SCHOOL “DEVELOPING LEADERS FOR THE RENAISSANCE OF NEW YORK”**

The Renaissance Charter School (TRCS) is based on the conviction that a change in the destiny of a single individual can lead to a change in the destiny of a community, nation, and ultimately humankind. Its mission as a K-12 school is to foster educated, responsible, humanistic young leaders who will through their own personal growth spark a renaissance in New York. Its graduates will be global citizens with an abiding respect for peace, human rights, the environment, and sustainable development.

Towards accomplishing this goal TRCS has built a culture of community, cooperation, and collaboration. Its core belief is that a dynamic learning environment which prizes friendship and deep respect will open both hearts and minds of students. In this type of environment students will meet all standards as a matter of course.

In a small, village-like atmosphere, teachers team-teach, classes are arranged in clusters, and parents play a central role. Students stay with the same dedicated teachers for two years, providing stability and enabling each student to feel cared for and well-known. The school operates under a collaborative governance model in which all constituencies have a voice. TRCS reflects the spectrum of the different ethnic backgrounds, talents, and abilities that exists in New York City.

The study of New York is the central curricular theme of TRCS. Traditional subjects such as math, science, language arts and social studies are related to the study of the geography, history, economics, culture, and people of New York. Rooted in their community, as they advance, students engage in community involvement activities and work on individual and small group projects to prepare them for the work of the 21st century. Since the arts are so central to New York, students take classes in dance, music, fine arts and drama.

The spirit of leadership can best be transmitted through example. TRCS staff members model collaborative leadership which is characterized by compassion and responsible dialogue. Through this process wise decision-making emerges.

TRCS is committed to graduating individuals who are competent, powerful thinkers, engaged citizens, and life-long learners who will create the renaissance of New York.

## **WHAT'S NEW AT RENAISSANCE?**

*By Stacey Gauthier, Co-Principal*

There are a lot of exciting changes at Renaissance.

First, please join me in welcoming back Janna Pisitiner Ostroff as a middle and high school science teacher. Some of you might remember Janna, who has taught at Renaissance before. We are delighted to have her back with us. Janna designed and taught (with Raymond and Riaad) the Summer Science and Sports Camp at Colgate University which was attended by over twenty middle and high school students and received wonderful reviews. Janna will be teaching high school chemistry and 7th grade science in the spring.

We have also increased our 6-12 mathematics' department with the addition of Ramil Buenaventura – Ram for short. I know when you meet him you'll be wowed by his warm spirit and enthusiasm for the teaching of mathematics. Ram will be teaching 6th grade math skills – a new initiative for this year – and 7th and 8th grade math. He joins ET, Victor, Andrea and Joanne (Yianna). So, for those of you who thought Victor was leaving, he (thankfully) changed his mind and is still an integral member of the Renaissance faculty.

With Janet moving her role from 4th grade teacher to K-6 teacher leader, our hiring committee worked long and hard and is very pleased that Maribel Colon accepted the position. She happily joined her cluster teachers at the Urban Voices professional development in August and is a welcome member of our staff.

We are also very pleased that Miyo Tubridy will be with us teaching 7th grade English and 7th and 8th grade literacy skills. Miyo first came to us as part of the Bank Street Urban Education Program. Miyo will also be the staff facilitator for our TREA program in the high school (Teens for Racial and Ethnic Awakening).

With Rebekah Slotnick still on leave with her beautiful son, Dante, we are delighted that Dennis has agreed to stay with us as a part of the Arts department. Dennis will be working with guest artists in the upper grades and has created his own program for younger students that I think you will find both educational and fun!

In an effort to continue to support all of our students' learning, we have hired a new special education teacher – Nick Bender. Nick was a NYC Teaching Fellow and is dually certified in special education and 7-12 English. He also has a keen interest in extracurricular programs, so I am sure many of your children will get to know him.

Our last addition to the teaching staff, but certainly not least, is Jose Mane. Jose is a Renaissance alumni who went on to graduate from Connecticut College and will now be teaching 9th grade English and co-teaching social studies with Emily O. in the middle school. There is nothing nicer than seeing a former student come full circle. Jose was a leader in student government at Renaissance, continued this interest in college and this year, along with another TRS alumni and staff member, Alex Smith, will be working with Thandi to create a cohesive high school student government.

On the administrative and operations front, we are pleased to welcome Mary Sugrue as a new member of our office staff. Mary will be working both in the office and in the cafeteria.

Last year, we presented our School Management Team for the 2007-2008 school year. The team worked all summer both in our largest summer school program ever – over 200 students in grades 1-12 – and in preparation for this school year. The team members, in addition to me, are:

- Janet Jefferson, K-6 Teacher Leader
- Yumeris Morel, 7-12 Teacher Leader
- Nick Tishuk, NYC Center for Charter School Excellence Fellow, Teacher Leader
- Emily Byrum, Instructional Support, Teacher Leader
- Rebekah Oakes, Director of Development and Arts Coordinator
- Denise Hur, Director of Operations

Additionally, we continue to share leadership among staff. Faculty have assumed cluster, subject discipline, school-wide initiatives and student support and operations' coordinator positions. At future meetings and in upcoming newsletters, I will highlight these various people and the very important work they do to support the students of TRCS.

This year we will continue improving upon our middle school restructuring program with the addition of new interest groups and the option for high school Algebra and Earth Science in 8th grade. We are also moving fully ahead with our new Global and Geography Lab for 10th grade students which allows advanced students to pursue Honors Global Studies. The lab concept created collaboratively at Renaissance will be taught by a variety of Renaissance staff in conjunction with our partners Drs. Carol and Phil Gersmehl from the Geography Center at Hunter College. More to come on this exciting course ...

One very important initiative is the ability for high school students to pursue independent study programs in a variety of concentration specialties. Nick T. is overseeing this and will be presenting it to the CSG.

We are continuing our work in instructional support and have completely restructured this department. In addition to hiring Nick Bender, Liz and Nancy will be coordinating our school-wide Response-to-Intervention Program. Our vision for instructional support is one that fully supports integration of general and special education, provides for early intervention, promotes push-in whenever possible and individually addresses the needs of each student being serviced. At Renaissance, we believe that all students can learn and achieve academically. We encourage students with learning disabilities and English Language Learners to apply to our school.

In future newsletters I, and other staff, will regularly update you on our programs. If there is a course initiative you would like to see highlighted, please e-mail Rebekah Oakes at rmoakes@juno.com.

## **WELCOME FROM THE PTA!**

*By Lillian Chen and Noreen Wortman, PTA Co-Presidents*

The PTA Executive Board would like to welcome all of the returning families, new families and new faculty to what will be a fantastic new year of growth and collaboration between the parents and the staff of TRCS. By working together and maintaining open lines of communication, everyone can play an integral part in upholding the school's vision and creating an environment that will help our kids achieve their goals.

The Renaissance Charter School offers parents a unique opportunity to make a difference in their children's education and development by becoming involved. Parents are given the choice to join committees such as the After-School Committee, Fund-Raising Committee and even to be included in school wide committees such as Admissions, Hiring, Safety and Budget. As concerned parents, everyone should take an interest in what is going on at their children's school. If you have an issue or question, PTA meetings may be the perfect venue to resolve it. Join the PTA, attend the meetings and stay informed. We have many guest speakers planned throughout the year. If you have a topic that you would like to see presented, please contact one of the PTA Executive Board Members.

In addition to keeping parents informed, the PTA also helps to support programs for every student cluster by raising additional funds to purchase books, finance theater classes, sports programs, science programs, nutrition programs and much, much more.

To help fund the many wonderful programs planned for the school year, the PTA Executive Board has been hard at work organizing many fund-raisers throughout the year. The upcoming fund-raisers are our biggest ones of the year and with your support we can raise more than ever before.

- Miss Chocolate: September 24-October 15, 2007
- Kids' Art: October 1-5, 2007
- Picture Day: October 9, 2007
- Yankee Candle: October 16-29, 2007 – Raise money to fund the bus for Nature's Classroom which give students from 4th through 6th grades the opportunity to study nature outside of the classroom.
- Scholastic Book Fair: October 18-26, 2007
- Pasta Night: October 26, 2007

Volunteers are needed as well for Picture Day, the Scholastic Book Fair and Pasta Night. To volunteer for one of these fund-raisers, the contact information is as follows:

- Picture Day: Hilary Rogan at hrogan2005@yahoo.com
- Scholastic Book Fair: Kirsten Westphal at kwest@aaahawk.com
- Pasta Night: Lillian Chen at chen.l@dreyfus.com or Noreen Wortman at nwortman74@yahoo.com

## **COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS – HOW DO THEY REALLY WORK?**

*By Stacey Gauthier, Co-Principal*

- 1) Student communicates directly to teacher.
- 2) Parent communicates directly to teacher.
- 3) Student or parent communicates directly to Teaching and Learning Cluster Coordinator:
  - Carol – Cluster 1, Grades K-3
  - Cristine – Cluster 2, Grades 4-6
  - Emily O. – Cluster 3, Grades 7,8
  - ET – Cluster 4, High School
- 4) Student or parent communicates directly to Teacher Leaders:
  - Janet – K-6
  - Yumeris – 7-12
- 5) Student or parent communicates directly with Co-Principal.
- 6) Student or parent communicates directly with the Board of Trustees.

Various support groups exist in the school and parent leadership that work on helping to resolve matters – Instructional Support, Student Support, Parent Leaders. These groups will become involved as necessary and appropriate.

Please be aware that all staff at TRCS have full schedules. Always contact the staff member first to schedule a mutually convenient time to discuss the issue.

## ARTS PARTNERSHIPS AT RENAISSANCE

By *Rebekah Oakes, Director of Development /Arts Coordinator*

Welcome back to an exciting year at Renaissance – we have some wonderful partners in the arts lined up waiting in the wings.

The study of New York is the central curricular theme of Renaissance, and since the arts define New York in the minds of many, it is only natural for us to have a strong arts program. If you are a returning parent, you know that all students have classes in Dance, Music, Fine Arts, or Drama. There are many varied arts organizations allied with Renaissance through grants from the New York Center for Arts in Education, Queens Council on the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, New York Foundation on the Arts and others. These partnerships are dedicated to providing our students with a direct connection to the arts in New York City, and to empowering our teachers to continue to provide those opportunities long after the grant moneys are spent.

After our long-standing partnerships with The Salvadori Center and Learning By Design, the built environment program is part of our math, science and social studies curriculum in the elementary grades. Students will find poetry, drama, playwriting and music embedded into the social studies and ELA curriculum in all the grades, K-12, with successful partnerships with many of the cultural jewels of our city.

We are thrilled to welcome a new partnership to the school: Urban Voices Choral Initiative from The Metropolitan Opera Guild, bringing a choral program that enhances the literacy and social studies curriculum to 4th through 6th grades.

During the upcoming school year we are anticipating arts partnerships with

- The Isamu Noguchi Museum: “Learning 2 Look”; High school students study Art, Media and Communication
- Queens Theater in the Park: “Underage Cabaret”, 9th-10th grade ELA and Drama
- Metropolitan Opera Guild: Professional Development & Research Institute studying Opera in the Classroom
- Metropolitan Opera Guild’s Urban Voices Choral Initiative
- Young Playwrights, Inc.: 6th-10th ELA and playwriting
- TADA! Theater for Youth, classroom residency with 2nd-4th grades
- The Jazz Project at Queens College: 10th-11th grade Instrumental Music
- Learning By Design: K-4 Social Studies, Math, Science and Architecture
- Latin American Cultural Center of Queens: 2nd-5th after-school arts and crafts
- Hiromi Niizeki, one of our talented parents, leading a K-5 after-school arts program
- Peggy Heeney, another talented parent, leading ball-room dancing for 6th-12th

In addition we are mining the talents of our own staff. In the coming weeks students will begin signing up for after-school clubs to explore theater production, song-writing, painting, sculpture and animation, photography, music lessons and ensembles, poetry, journalism, poster-making and silk-screen techniques ... it’s going to be another eclectic and creative year here at Renaissance.



Last year’s poster, invited families to participate in the PAAP workshop series with The Noguchi Museum.

## ATTENTION ALL BOOK LOVERS

By *Kirsten Westphal*

Our Scholastic Book Fair will be held beginning Friday, October 19th and end during Pasta Night, Friday, October 26th. Volunteers are needed to make this year’s event a great success.

There will be opportunities for our students and teachers to preview the book selection, make a wish list for themselves, or to build their classroom libraries and to purchase books. This event is sponsored by the TRCS-PTA, the profits from which go directly back into programs and supplies used by each student cluster.

To let us know if you can help, please contact either Hilary at hrogan2005@yahoo.com or Kirsten at kwest@aaahawk.com. There are also sign-up sheets on the PTA door in the main office. Please visit <http://bookfairs.scholastic.com/homepage/trcs> to check our schedule. Thanks!

## “EISTEDDFOD – NY 2007”, TRADITIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

By *Eileen Pentel*

The Folk Music Society of New York, Inc. is proud to announce the fourth Festival of Traditional Music to be held on November 16-18 in Jackson Heights, Queens

“Eisteddfod” is Welsh. It connotes a gathering of poets and musicians, and there is a large Eisteddfod every year in Wales. The name was adopted by Howard Glasser, the founder of the American Eisteddfod, when he began these gatherings of singers and musicians four decades ago.

The festival has concerts, workshops, participatory sessions, and a free family concert, all with a spirit of warmth and openness. This year it is being held in Jackson Heights, at the Renaissance Charter School, 35-59 81st Street. It begins with a concert Friday night at 7:30 p.m., runs all day Saturday, Sunday morning, and ends with a concert Sunday afternoon, finishing at 5:30 p.m. The special free family concert will be on Saturday, 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Information on tickets can be had at [www.eisteddfod-ny.org](http://www.eisteddfod-ny.org) or by calling 718-429-3437 or 718-672-6399.