



CHEETAH FAMILY ISSUE



ACADEMIC UPDATE: OUR CTE AND EARLY COLLEGE PROGRAM TAKES OFF

*By Shanique McFarlane, CEO Chief of Staff
With Collaboration from Kendra Komeng, Grade 11 Scholar*

Challenge Charter School is dedicated to fulfilling its mission of supporting students and families by enhancing its Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Early College Dual Credit programs at our high school. We have made important strides in our strategic initiatives to establish and nurture collaborative partnerships with businesses, higher education institutions, and the community.

Last fall, our high school hosted a Department of Labor Virtual reality job training, a JFK Redevelopment Quarterly meeting, and our CTE symposium, connecting our students with numerous potential employers, colleges, and vocational training partners.

During the events, the culinary students provided sweet treats, adding a touch of hospitality to the job fair. Additionally, the scholars had the opportunity to experience career exploration using VR goggles, immersing themselves in different career pathways and gaining insights into various industries.

These partnerships are crucial as Challenge Charter School works on forming business advisory committees for each of our three CTE career pathways: **Culinary Arts**, **Allied Health Certified Nursing Assistant** program, and the **Aviation** industry. The expertise shared by our business and community partners are helping us enhance our CTE programs with practical instruction and real-world learning experiences, including supervised clinical practice and hands-on career training.



Culinary Arts Kitchen

"I look forward to organizing a networking event with some of our business partners," says Laura Hogan, the Career and Financial Management Teacher. "Our scholars will have the opportunity to share their resumes and practice their interviewing skills while gaining valuable, real-world feedback from our partners as well as beginning to build their personal network."

Scholars are energized by the hands-on aspects of their learning on site at CCHS. Faith Adeniyi, 11th Grade scholar noted, "CTE Health has taught me more than the average textbook. The hands-on experience of cleaning, lifting, and talking to patients were implemented by our teachers. That has fostered a deeper understanding that is applicable in real world situations."

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CTE continuation from Page 1

Senior and Culinary Arts scholar, Caitlin Goodluck loves the program stating, "I think Culinary is an amazing opportunity to learn how to cook and gain organization skills. In class, we made clam chowder, and it was valid."

In exciting news for our Early College program, scholars recently attended their first class for the Spring Semester onsite at SLU. They obtained student IDs and are now eligible for all the internships, career, and employment services available to CUNY students, as well as access to all campus facilities.

This school year, Valencia Kirnon joined the Challenge Charter School staff as Assistant Principal of CTE and Early College. With a valuable part to play in developing our next steps with the program, Kirnon expressed, "CCHS is equipping our scholars with critical foundational skills to enter the workforce and/or postsecondary institutions. Scholars enrolled in the CTE or Early College pathway gain an advantage of attaining certifications or college credits prior to graduating high school. Through our business partnerships, scholars can engage in work-based learning opportunities that provide practical experience in the area of interest."

We extend our gratitude to the participants of the recent Department of Labor, JFK, and CTE Expo events, as well as our growing list of CTE advisory partners, such as St. John's Episcopal Hospital, Chick-Fil-A, TWA, and many others.



Mr. Alfred demonstrates the flight simulator program for Aviation to a group of scholars and family members.

AMPLIFYING STUDENT VOICE: CELL PHONE POLICY

By Kendra Komeng, Grade 11 Scholar



Recently, Challenge Charter High School scholars voiced concerns regarding the extent of morning searches and phone confiscation that has occurred throughout the school year.

Scholars feel that limiting access to their personal devices as well as searching their belongings is a breach of their privacy and freedom. Many high school students feel that they are responsible enough to maintain autonomy over their belongings while still following the school protocols.

In a way to address these concerns, school officials have assured students that each of these actions are used as a safety precaution for all members of the school community. Despite feeling like the searches are an infringement of privacy, members of the Challenge Charter School team make it their mission to prioritize the welfare and comfortability of their students and staff by engaging in these protective measures.

In addition to this reassurance, several members of the Challenge team have allowed students an outlet to express their grievances so that their desires are not only heard but also taken into consideration.

What do you think? Whether you are a scholar, staff member, teacher, or part of our school administration, let us know what your respectful, constructive opinion about this subject by writing to our editor, Kim Messer at: kmesser@challengecharterschools.org.

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FAMILY TIES: HOW TEACHERS CREATE A LASTING BOND

By *Cherry Wiggins, K-5 Family Engagement Coordinator*

Over the past five years, I've noticed that two teachers were exceptionally good at involving parents in their classroom activities. Whenever they had a field trip, classroom event, or school survey, they got 90% of the parents to participate. I was curious about their secret, so I asked these awesome teachers how they create strong bonds with families.

Mrs. McClean taught 1st grade for 8 years and is now teaching 2nd grade. She has been with Challenge for 8 and a half years. Mrs. Grant-Brown was a teacher for 10 years and is now an instructional coach. She has been with Challenge for 10 and a half years.

To my surprise, they had similar points of view. Here's a summary of their feedback and best practices:

1. Create a bond with parents and scholars from day one.
2. Communicate regularly and effectively about the benefits of being partners with your child's school.
3. Improve contactability by updating parents' phone numbers and email information.
4. Offer opportunities for parents to get involved by volunteering for a classroom party, school dance, or chaperoning for a trip to the zoo.
5. Meet parents where they are and provide them with resources to support them.

Collaborating with colleagues, families, and students has many benefits for teachers. It helps them advance their learning, address context-specific issues, foster collegiality, reduce isolation, and gain insights into teaching and learning. The ultimate goal of this collaboration is to improve student learning.

Research shows that teachers can focus more on teaching when parents are involved in their children's education. Through a strong family bond, teachers also learn more about their students' needs and home environment, which helps them better meet those needs.

GETTING SCHOLARS READY FOR TESTING SEASON

By *Danielle Colón, 6-12 Family Engagement Coordinator*

Testing Season at Challenge Charter Schools is quickly approaching and our scholars are ready! At CCMS, scholars are preparing for the New York State Tests of both Math and ELA, while our CCHS Scholars are getting ready to take their Regents Exams. Scholars are transitioning into their test prep schedules and Regents Review classes have begun.

Many of our scholars remember the test prep process from last year and are excited to begin. "Test prep is very helpful and pushes students to do better than they did last year," says Alimou, Grade 7. Scholars are aiming for nothing but high scores on their exams and are fully supported by their teachers. Julianna, Grade 7 stated, "I am excited to start test prep. My teachers are amazing and have the best teaching strategies to make sure we all pass."

All teachers at CCMS and CCHS are dedicated to ensuring success for all scholars taking the NYS and Regents Exams this year. Mrs. Vidal, who teaches Grade 6 Humanities, expressed, "The scholars have everything they need to succeed. We worked hard all year and I know each and every scholar is going to ace these exams." Staff and scholars are working together to prepare for these important exams. The 6-8 ELA Exam begins on April 8th, 2024 and the 6-8 Math Exam begins on May 9th. All hands are on deck in preparing for these exams and we are excited to see their results.



FAMILY CHECK LIST ON TESTING DAYS

- Help your scholar get rest the night before.
- Focus on healthy eating to boost energy & performance.
- Be especially encouraging on exam days.



LANGUAGE MATTERS: FAMILY COMMUNICATION

By Janelle Sanford, Parent Academy Coordinator

The Parent Academy continues to work on building stronger relationships with our families and partnering with them on scholar education. We understand and love that our families represent a variety of cultural backgrounds, and we know information needs to be distributed in other languages besides English.

The Family Engagement team along with the Parent Academy are working diligently to develop ways to communicate with our families who may speak other languages. We use [ParentSquare](#) to inform all our families about school-wide events and important announcements.



ParentSquare is our #1 way of communicating to our families. One of its best features is that it offers users the ability to receive messages in their preferred language. Families are encouraged to download the app AND designate your language of choice. [Click here for a helpful how-to page on ParentSquare.](#) In addition to Parent Square, the Parent Academy offers workshops and seminars via Zoom where all parents are able participate because they can choose their language. The Parent Academy is a safe space for all our families to express their needs, concerns and suggestions.

We look forward to meeting the on-going needs of our families throughout the school. Please continue to check ParentSquare for upcoming workshops and seminars with the Parent Academy.

SURVEY SAYS!

Your School, Your Voice.

Each year, families, staff, and scholars have the chance to take the NYC School Survey. Now is the time to use your voice to help shape our school. Please take a moment to participate by visiting:

www.NYCSchoolSurvey.org

HOW TO TAKE YOUR SCHOOL SURVEY

1. Visit www.NYCSchoolSurvey.org.
2. Important! Be sure to put an "f" (for family) in front of your child's OSIS number.
3. Complete the survey - 1 for every child at school.
4. Smile - you did it!

How to take your survey: Visit the website. YOU MUST enter a lowercase "f" followed by your child's nine-digit Student Identification (OSIS) Number to access the FAMILY survey (e.g. f123456789). Your child's OSIS number is unique to them. If you need help finding yours, reach out to your Family Engagement Coordinator. **DEADLINE is April 5, 2024.**

Our goal is 100% family participation, and your scholar's class can win an Ice Cream Party, Pizza Party, or School Dance for 90% or 100% of family participation. Parents and guardians are entered into a raffle for each scholar survey completed for items such as laptops, designer handbags, and more. EVERY scholar, EVERY grade can benefit!

Please be sure to complete a survey for EACH of your children. EACH completed family survey makes you eligible for raffle prizes:

Thank you in advance for using your voice to help improve our school!

MAKING BLACK HISTORY

By Anwar Robinson, Music Program Developer

We make history every day at Challenge. That is why it is important for our school community to intentionally celebrate notable achievements by Black innovators, educators, artists, leaders, and world changers. We honor our ancestors, predecessors, and all of our community members and loved ones who have sacrificed so that we can have the opportunities afforded to us.

On February 29, 2024, Challenge Charter Middle and High Schools celebrated **Black History Month at Far Rockaway High School**. Featured performances included:

- Black National Anthem Duet
- Dance & Step Teams from Middle and High Schools
- Dramatizations of Notable Black Innovators
- Musical Selections/Challenge Choir
- Spoken Word Selections
- A FASHION SHOW celebrating Black Wall Street
- A Closing Tribute to Black Lives Matter

The many and varied talents of our scholars were showcased that day. Performance after performance, the scholars raised the bar for our burgeoning Performing Arts program. Our Scholars left their souls on the stage, and as they made history, it was clear that, as Principal Gordon stated, "They are our Black Future in light of Black History".

Deans Jason Brown and Shanice Laing, two visionary staff members, lead the project. The event was supported by other staff members and our Operations Team to deliver an excellent off-site experience for scholars and families.

Events such as this would not be possible without our Middle and High School Principals, Mavgar Mondesir-Gordon, (SDTL and 9-12) and Gasner Vil (6-8), and our CEO and Founder, Rev. Dr. Leslie Mullings, Sr. We are grateful for their tireless work to ensure that our school communities continue to thrive and show up as our best and most authentic selves.

The event was made even greater by the families that came and shared the day with us. Their faith and support of scholar initiatives is always appreciated.

**CHEETAH CORNER:
COMMUNITY EVENTS**



JUNE 6

VIRTUAL AWARDS CEREMONIES
KINDERGARTEN & 5TH GRADE

JUNE 10

8TH GRADE GRADUATION

JUNE 13

KINDERGARTEN STEPPING UP
&
5TH GRADE GRADUATION

JUNE 17

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION



Special Days In SPRING

- International Women's Day - March 8
- Daylight Savings - March 10
- World Poetry Day - March 21
- Easter Sunday - March 31
- April Fool's Day - April 1
- Autism Awareness Day - April 2
- Earth Day - April 22

COMING UP AT CCS*

March Parent/Teacher Conferences | Women's History Month | March Madness

- 3/8 March Madness
- 3/12 Snack Shack (Redfern)
- 3/13 NYIT LI Campus Visit | Open House - New Kindergarten Families
- 3/14 6-12 Parent Teacher Conferences | Pi Day | Snack Shack (Hartman)
- 3/15 6-12 Parent Teacher Conferences | March Madness
- 3/18 Middle & High School Parent Assoc. Mtg.
- 3/19 CUNY Days Information Session | Snack Shack (Redfern)
- 3/20 Board Meeting
- 3/21 K-5 Parent Teacher Conferences | Snack Shack (Hartman)
- 3/22 K-5 Parent Teacher Conferences | March Madness | K-12 Virtual Info Session (New Families)
- 3/25 New Family Orientation
- 3/26 Kindergarten Graduation Photos
- 3/27 Grade 5 Graduation Photos | Community Breakfast | Open House - New Kindergarten Families
- 3/28 VIRTUAL Elementary School Parent Assoc. Mtg.
- 3/29 SCHOOL CLOSED - Good Friday
- 3/31 Happy Easter



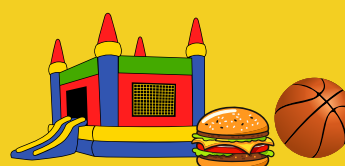
April State Exams | Spring Recess

- 4/1 SCHOOL CLOSED - Easter Monday (No fooling!) | Deadline for New Families to Apply
- 4/2 Snack Shack (Redfern)
- 4/4 Smile NY (Grades 2-5) | Snack Shack (Hartman)
- 4/5 Snack and Survey - NYC School Survey Event
- 4/8 Smile NY (Grades 2-5)
- 4/9 NYS ELA State Exam (Grades 3-8) | Snack Shack (Redfern) | Smile NY Grades 2-5
- 4/10 NYS ELA State Exam (Grades 3-8)
- 4/11 NYS ELA State Exam (Grades 3-8) | Snack Shack (Hartman) | Smile NY Grades 2-5
- 4/15 K-5 Book Fair Begins | Smile NY Grades 2-5 | Middle & High School Parent Assoc. Meeting
- 4/16 Snack Shack (Redfern) | Smile NY Grades 2-5
- 4/17 Board Meeting
- 4/18 Snack Shack (Hartman)
- 4/19 CCHS Job Fair | VIRTUAL Elementary PA Meeting | K-5 Book Fair Ends
- 4/22-26 SCHOOL CLOSED - Spring Recess
- 4/30 Q4 Begins | Snack Shack (Redfern)



May State Exams | Senior Events | Field Day

- 5/6 6-8 Book Fair Begins
- 5/8 NYS Math Exam (Grades 6-8)
- 5/9 NYS Math Exam (Grades 6-8)
- 5/10 6-8 Book Fair Ends
- 5/15 Board Meeting
- 5/20 K-12 Parent Association Meeting for Field Day
- 5/21 Kindergarten "Senior" Trip
- 5/23 Grade 5 Senior Trip
- 5/24 Grade 8 Senior Trip | Grade 5 Senior Dance
- 5/28 6-12 Progress Reports
- 5/30 Field Day!!!! (Rain Date in June)



June Save the Dates for Graduations are on Page 5

*dates subject to changes



CHEETAH FAMILY CAPTURED

Candid photos in and around our campus from parents, teachers, & staff. See more on Instagram and Facebook at

@challengecharter @challengeprep



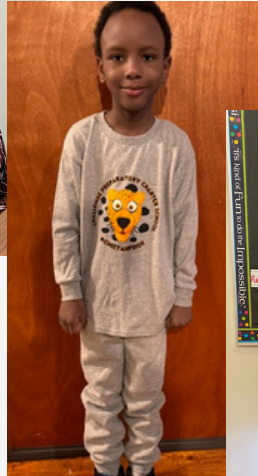
Red & White Dance 2024



Red & White Dance 2024



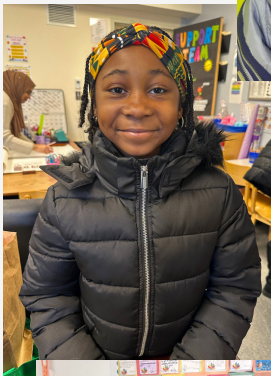
Black History Month: Head Wrap Day



Spirit Day



100th Day of School



Black History Month: Game Night



Black History Month



CHEETAH CHATTER

Spotlights & Shoutouts

Mr. Hugo Retena, affectionately called "Mr. Hugo," has been working as one of the Lead Custodians at Challenge Charter School since September 2016.



He is an exceptional employee. His consistent dedication and hard work make a world of difference for our school community.

Mr. Hugo always goes above and beyond to ensure that our facilities are operational, despite any challenges that might arise. His outstanding performance is an inspiration to the whole team and he truly exemplifies what it means to be a Challenge Charter Cheetah!



Ms. Gada Tucker is a recent addition to our Operations Team and has quickly become an invaluable asset. She demonstrates exceptional social and emotional awareness and has proven herself to be an effective leader who connects with both scholars and staff.

Ms. Tucker is committed to providing excellent service to our school community, and her friendly and approachable personality helps to create a welcoming environment for staff, scholars, and parents alike at CCHS. Whenever the team needs support, she is always the first one to jump in. Her can-do attitude and strong work ethic truly embody our school culture. One of her students, Gerry A. in grade 9, says "Ms. Tucker is very nice and always helpful. She is like a role model to me."

APPLICATION TIME!

Siblings of existing scholars and ELLs have preference in our lottery!



Serving Kindergarten through Early College



Siblings Welcome!

Did You Know?

Siblings of existing scholars have preference in our Lottery. Cheetah families, fill out an application NOW and indicate the name and grade of the child(ren) already attending Challenge Charter School.

Applications Open for 2024-25

Ready to get started? Apply today at:

www.challengecharterschools.schoolmint.net

Deadline is April 1, 2024.

Questions? Write to us: enrollment@challengecharterschools.org.

TEACH ME. PREPARE ME. CHALLENGE ME.
WWW.CHALLENGECHARTERSCHOOLS.ORG

REV. DR. LES MULLINGS, FOUNDER/CEO | FAR ROCKAWAY, NY

CHEETAH AFFIRMATION

Shared by Mrs. Cherry Wiggins in celebration of Women's History Month

"Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness." —

Oprah Winfrey

CHALLENGE CHARTER SCHOOL

www.challengecharterschools.org

Follow us!

 @challengecharter  @challengeprep

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We accept photos at photos@challengecharterschools.org.

Our Media Release Policy is in all school handbooks and can also be found [here](#). Please note, all content in this newsletter is controlled by CCS.

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