



AFP

Celebrating 35 Years!

Alliance For Progress

COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY

Only 389 seats were allotted last June by the NY School Construction Authority's (SCA) Five Year Capital Plan (2010 – 2014) for our long anticipated Highbridge Jr. High School (middle school), scheduled to be built behind Highbridge Gardens on W. 167th Street (between University Ave. and Sedgwick Ave.). Despite the limited number of seats, and the recent concerns about school safety and building design, we continue to stress the most important features that will affect the success of this new school – namely the curriculum that is to be introduced there and the level of knowledge achieved by its students – our neighborhood kids. Curriculum is the defining character of a school and makes the real difference.

There are a multitude of factors that affect the overall level of education students can attain. Today, we find the NYC Department of Education closing large or poor performing schools in order to open smaller schools within the same complex (i.e.: Theodore Roosevelt H.S.). But a smaller school does not guarantee an improvement in school performance. Public schools receive more funding per student than private and parochial schools, but funding has not guaranteed an improvement in school performance. Typically, private and parochial schools have fewer students and very limited resources, but seem to outperform their public counterparts. Is it their school location? Is it their marketing strategy? Or is it their dedication to excellence, intellectual integrity and social/ academic formation that helps their students perform well?

We continue to support the new middle school but strongly reiterate our position that our neighborhood kids be inculcated with a keen sense of excellence within this middle school. This school must be one in which neighborhood children can play, learn and grow through a rigorous academic curriculum based on the rigorous NYS standards. This will offer its students the best foundation on which to build on enabling them to aspire to higher education (college/university) where they can explore and attain an affinity for truth which imparts knowledge: both speculative and theoretical. This, we know, will contribute to the restoration of Highbridge into a thriving neighborhood with its own flare and intricacies like Park Slope, Riverdale, Forest Hill or Upper East/Westside neighborhoods.

It is important that we not get lost in the minutiae of the school's physical structure. Our focus must remain steadfast on the curriculum: academic excellence in keeping with but not limited by the NYS educational standards and social formation: affinity for the truth. AFP calls for this new middle school to incorporate economics, foreign language, and the hard sciences into its general curriculum. We trust that such an agenda will instill our neighborhood children with a deeper yearning for learning.

Sincerely,
Manuel Martínez
Executive Director