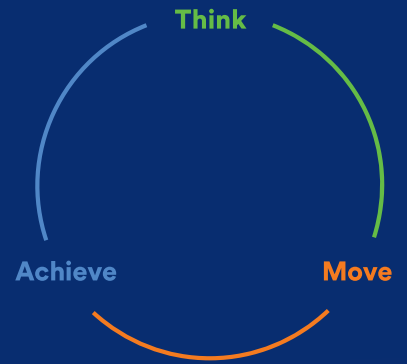


PE STORIES OF CHANGE SPRING 2018 WORKS



PE Works is Mayor Bill de Blasio's unprecedented multiyear investment to revitalize physical education (PE) for every student in NYC public schools. Prior to 2015, the quantity and quality of PE varied from school to school, and very few elementary schools met State PE requirements with certified PE teachers. Building on an eight-district pilot in 2015-16, the New York City Department of Education set out to revitalize PE Citywide in 2016-17 with funding and support in three areas: investing in teachers, building PE into school environments, and developing communities that are proud of PE.

PE Works *Stories of Change* feature principals and staff who are making changes so that PE is a meaningful part of each child's school experience. Their work marks the beginning of developing a physically literate, health-centered generation of New York City students. For this story, we visited PS 90 The Magnet School for Environmental Studies and Community Wellness in Brooklyn.



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At PS 90 in Coney Island, Principal Greta Hawkins wanted to stay true to the “community wellness” theme in the school’s name. That meant making the bold choice to give her students more physical education (PE). “Whenever principals shift time away from core subjects such as ELA, math, science, and social studies, there is a bit of apprehension as to what academic experiences students will miss,” Ms. Hawkins said. “This was my concern as well; however, I researched how students learn best, including the connection between PE and movement to students’ social, emotional, and psychological development. Physical education complements academic learning.”



Complementary Learning

To increase PE classes from once to twice a week for more than 600 students, PS 90 needed an additional PE teacher. Thanks to PE Works, the school received funding in 2016 to hire Ms. Candice Lamarre, a certified PE teacher, to join existing PE teacher Mr. Tim Reale. PE Works Capacity Manager Luke Hollis worked closely with the school to reorganize the PE schedule so that all students could safely participate in PE twice a week with the right teacher-to-student ratio. He also worked with PE teachers on creating positive learning environments, strengthening classroom management, and using questioning and discussion with students.

To increase students’ vocabulary and enhance literacy, Ms. Hawkins asked the teachers to highlight words they used during instruction, like “formation,” by writing or spelling them out. When Mr. Reale explained a soccer-related fitness station to third graders, he paused to ask students to spell “goal” together. “G-O,” they said, then stopped to giggle because Geo is a student in the class. After spelling out “goal,” students raised their hands and shared multiple definitions of the word.

Students have wholeheartedly embraced the new emphasis on PE. “We get more exercise and we get smarter and stronger,” said 11-year-old Raymond M. When asked how he feels before and after PE class, he said, “Before I feel excited and I know I will get stronger. After PE, I feel relieved I am out because it’s so much work, but I like the work. I feel accomplished.”

Active Classrooms

At Move-to-Improve All-Star schools, all teachers integrate the activities into classroom instruction to supplement PE daily. PE Works staff trained Mr. Reale and Ms. Lamarre to conduct Move-to-Improve training sessions at the beginning of each school year for all classroom teachers. Ms. Hawkins communicates with the school community about Move-to-Improve through a community wellness newsletter and in parent meetings. She also asks students about the regularity of Move-to-Improve sessions in a monthly survey.

Teachers use Move-to-Improve to shift the classroom's mood and to expand academic learning experiences. Even the practice of measuring out an arm's distance from classmates to be able to move safely before physical activities heightens the awareness of personal space. Students and teachers build positive relationships with laughter that comes with the fun of moving together.



PE Professional Community

PE Works' Pathways to PE program allows teacher-candidates to earn their Master's in Education while pursuing a PE career. In Spring 2018, Ms. Lamarre served as a mentor to Pathways to PE participant Ms. Uzette Caldwell. By the end of her mentorship, Ms. Caldwell managed PE class with Ms. Lamarre like a seasoned professional. After the warm up, all students except for one started to run as instructed. Ms. Caldwell approached the reluctant student and walked alongside her, motivating her to keep moving at any speed. At three skills-building stations in which students learned how to strike a ball, the teachers took turns explaining and modeling each task, then asked student volunteers to model the steps. When some didn't strike the ball hard enough the first time, Ms. Caldwell reassured students by reminding them that effort matters and most of us need multiple tries to get something right. After students practiced a station activity, the teachers tapped students on the shoulder to release them to their next assigned station. What looked like a strategy for orderly transitions was actually an elegant way to integrate students from three different classrooms at each station. Ms. Lamarre and Ms. Caldwell made a great PE teaching team.



Principal Greta Hawkins with PE teachers Ms. Candice Lamarre and Mr. Tim Reale.

Family Fitness Day

With the support of Ms. Hawkins, the teachers took what started as a small student fitness challenge and turned it into a school community event called Family Fitness Day. In the days leading up to the event, students stopped science teacher Marc Rolla and fourth-grade teacher Kevin Flynn, asking them to join the challenge and even requesting that they demonstrate excellent push-up form (elbows at 90 degrees).

At Family Fitness Day, students earned completion stamps on their “fitness passports,” with modifications or assistance for students with physical disabilities. Students circulated among the stations, completing 20 jumping jacks or 10 sit-ups, with staff and family joining in. A kindergartener encouraged his father’s sit-up routine with a loud “You can do it, Dad!” One mom completed five push-ups to cheers from the crowd. By inviting the whole community to participate, the challenge created community connections through effort, pride and laughter.

Smarter and Stronger

Ms. Hawkins’s community wellness vision is evident throughout the school. Posted in the hallways are all units of study with wellness-guiding questions. By the gym, life-size cardboard cutouts of two teachers highlight the five tasks of a school-wide fitness challenge. In the schoolyard, students race the emotional support dog, Jed. Outside the cafeteria proudly hangs a Move-to-Improve All-Star banner. “I believe physical education promotes not only the physical development of students but their social and psychological growth as well,” Ms. Hawkins said. “In the gymnasium, our students learn to assume responsibility, work cooperatively, and practice making decisions that benefit self, a peer, or many classmates.”

For Ms. Hawkins, PE Works came along at the perfect time, dovetailing seamlessly with the school’s mission and helping The Magnet School for Environmental Studies and Community Wellness live up to its name.

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