



Spuyten Duyvil

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UPCOMING DATES TO NOTE:

- **Memorial Day..... NO SCHOOL Monday, May 29**
- **Mini Mall Thurs, Fri – June 8 and 9**
- **Open Class Somos Artistas..... Monday, June 12**
- **Open Chess Friday, June 16**
- **Violin Presentations Tues, Wed – June 20 and 21**
- **Drumming Presentation Thurs, June 22**
- **LAST DAY EXTENDED CARE Tues, June 27**
- **STEPPING UP CEREMONIES..... last day of school.... Wed, June 28**

APRIL Newsletter

Dear Families,

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

Yes, yes. I know it is May but if there were 31 days in April I would have gotten my newsletter out in time!

After some adventurous extra overseas travel of my own, I am also back ready to take on the last 2 months- and what a beautiful sight our front yard was to come back to! The daffodils are done, the tulips nearly also, but the irises are just starting to open and there are white blooms on the apple trees. Please take some time to walk around at drop-off or pick-up. Your child should be able to give you a little tour of what they have been doing with Liana each week.



The rain this past weekend did quite a number on lots of outdoor events, including our Garden Party. I am afraid there is no time left in our calendar to reschedule, but there is a list of simple outdoor tasks that we need adult volunteers for: plant our potted magnolia tree in the sidewalk tree pit, trim back overgrown shrubs, weeding and tying back vines on the back yard

fences. A lot of this is cosmetic but cleaning things up also allows the growth we want to encourage to flourish. No experience needed, just a few hours of commitment. Liana and I worked Friday afternoon so the coming rain could be put to good use. Just let me know when you have some time and I am glad to set you up.



4K MOVIE NITE – MARCH 24 – It does seem like ages ago, but the second Movie Nite was lovely as well. UP! Was a good choice. We cuddled together, shared snacks and had a generally friendly time. 3K Families- we will do this again next year in January and March.

VACATION ARTS CAMP – another great success. I will let the pictures speak for themselves. Even those of you who are moving on this year can return for Vacation Camp next year- just get in touch next winter. It would be great to have you back for these special sessions. We even had a little boy attend who did not get off our waitlist this year so there was a new friend to be made as well this time.



SPRING CONFERENCES: Nearly every family has attended a meeting to follow up on their child's progress this year. Only a few more to finish. If you have not met with your teacher yet, please reach out. 4K students all received thorough Progress Reports with checklist and narratives; 3K was an open conversation following up on the Fall Goal Sheets. There is no question that every child has grown in so many ways this year, not the least of which is all of them seeming to be a head taller than when we first met them!

THIS AND THAT:

- **TOWN MEETING** – every last Friday of the month at 9 am. Next whole school get-together is Friday, May 26.
- **CALENDAR CHANGES:** We will be closed for Memorial Day, Monday, May 29, but that is the only school day off until the end of the year. It is official now- our last day of this year will be WEDNESDAY, June 28. This is only an hour for each class that morning for Stepping Up ceremonies. The last day for extended care is Tues, June 27. Chess, Drumming, Violin and Somos Artistas will all have last day shares for parents. See the calendar at the beginning of this Newsletter for exact dates.



GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2023-24

Scary as that sounds, its true. Teachers asked all 4K families where their child is going for Kindergarten. There is a range again this year- PS 24, Bronx Community Charter, Amistad, WHEELS, Muscota, Dos Amigos, Amber- a healthy mix of charter and DOE public schools. This shows that parents are being conscientious consumers around their children's education. If there are any questions and problems as you start registering, feel free to ask for assistance. I know a lot of people- and people who know people!

The 3K applications have been completed by DOE; all current 3K families and Urban Explorers who put Spuyten

Duyvil first on their list should be getting their offer letters from MySchools this week. Again, let me know if you don't hear from them or any problems pop up. Actual registration won't be for a while.

SUMMER PLANS?

Pick up a copy of New York Families issue on Summer Camps in our downstairs entrance.

I am sharing the programs that are renting space at Spuyten Duyvil for summer programming. Mary is considering a Getting Ready for Kindergarten movement group the last 2 weeks as well. If you are interested in any, contact them directly-

- **Second Nature Summer Program**, Hannah Saunders – July 17- August 18
<https://sites.google.com/nyu.edu/secondnature/summer-camp?>

- **Scribble Art** - Aug 21 – Sept 1
<https://www.scribbleartworkshop.com/upcoming-classes/summer-camp-nyc>

- **Music Camp** run by Val Fleeer and Ben Covey (Bella's parents)
August 21 – Sept 201 741 6131 vfleer@gmail.com



BIG ART UNIT –

This is the study I am doing with the 4K classes on the work on artist Herve Tullet. This is where the large scribble-like work in the halls and classrooms comes from. The end project will be a mosaic made from the bins and bins of plastic caps I have been saving for year. I originally started this unit January 2020, and we all know what happened that March! But this time we will make it through to the end which will be hung in the walk-through tunnel. There are still details about grout, wood and design to be worked out but that is all part of the fun. Keep your eyes out for this work-



ARTICLE OF THE MONTH:

The Long Shadow of School Closures NY Tmes April 28, 2023

This short piece is an introduction to the larger article that was in yesterday's NYTimes Magazine section about Randi Weingarten, president of the national teachers' union. That isn't what struck me though. As teachers and I debriefed after conferences last week, and we all reflect over this past school year, there are patterns that

become more and more evident as we look at our student population as a whole. Teachers, directors and service providers I speak with have been seeing these trends for some time, but there is no question that the pandemic gave these concerns about children's coping abilities, resilience, independence and even physical development a further emphasis. One serious warning I keep going back to is the amount of screen time kids have- any screen- mom's phone, TV, tablet, all of it. That was a growing issue outside of the pandemic, but the shut-in aspect and then schools' reluctance to keep the doors open was a double-edged issue- on one hand technology isolation was a fact of life for adults and older kids, while the social connections that are the bedrock of healthy emotional development for everyone were so seriously fractured. I know things are never clear black and white but I have to wonder about the frequent conversations I have had with parents encouraging playdates and find that the adults are not very socially connected themselves. Was this a growing tendency anyway or is it a leftover from those 2 years?

Well, at Spuyten Duyvil we have no shortage of social interaction opportunities for sure.

Sincerely,



The New York Times

The Morning

April 28, 2023 By [David Leonhardt](#)

Good morning. Long school closures have put public education — and Randi Weingarten, the leader of a major teachers' union — on the defensive.

The long shadow of school closures

During the early months of the Covid pandemic, Randi Weingarten and the teachers' union she leads faced a vexing question: When should schools reopen?

For years, advocates of public education like Weingarten had argued that schools played an irreplaceable role. School was where children learned academic and social skills. It was where low-income children received subsidized meals. Without public schools, their defenders argued, society would come apart.

On the other side of the ledger, however, was the worst pandemic in a century. Teachers and parents feared that reopening schools before vaccines were available would spark Covid outbreaks, illness and death.

In 2020, the pandemic's first full year, Weingarten came down strongly on the side of keeping schools closed. Safety measures were not enough to reopen them, she argued. Instead, Covid became an opportunity for her union, the American Federation of Teachers, to push for broader policy changes that it had long favored. As my colleague Jonathan Mahler writes [in a new story in the Times Magazine](#):



The A.F.T. had issued its own reopening plan in late April calling for adequate personal protective equipment, new cleaning and sanitization regimens in school buildings, a temporary suspension of formal teacher performance evaluations, a limit on student testing, a cancellation of student-loan debt and a \$750 billion federal aid package to help schools prepare to reopen safely and facilitate “a real recovery for all our communities.”

In retrospect, the strategy seems to have failed.

Today’s newsletter, like Jonathan’s story, looks at the lingering costs to public education.

A lost year

Many other education leaders took a different approach in 2020 and came to favor a faster reopening of schools. In Europe, [many were open](#) by the middle of the year. In the U.S., private schools, [including Catholic schools](#), which often have modest resources, reopened. In conservative parts of the U.S., public schools also reopened, at times in consultation with local teachers’ unions.

Some people did contract Covid at these schools, but the overall effect on the virus’s spread was close to zero. U.S. communities with closed schools had similar levels of Covid as communities with open schools, be they in the U.S. or Europe. How could that be? By the middle of 2020, there were many other ways for Covid to spread — in supermarkets, bars, restaurants and workplaces, as well as homes where out-of-school children gathered with friends.

Despite the emerging data that schools were not superspreaders, many U.S. districts remained closed well into 2021, even after vaccines were available. About half of American children lost at least a year of full-time school, according to Michael Hartney of Boston College.

And children suffered as a result.

They [lost ground](#) in reading, math and other subjects. The effects were worst on low-income, Black and Latino children. Depression increased, and the American Academy of Pediatrics declared [a national emergency in children’s mental health](#). Shamik Dasgupta, a philosopher at the University of California, Berkeley, who became an advocate for reopening schools, called the closures “a moral catastrophe.”

The closures also caused some Americans to sour on public schools. Nationwide enrollment fell by 1.3 million, or 3 percent, according to the latest federal data. The share of U.S. adults with little or no trust in public schools rose by a few percentage points, to 33 percent, according to Gallup. In last year’s elections, political candidates who supported vouchers — which effectively reduce public-school funding — fared well, as Jonathan explains in his story.

“It’s pretty undeniable that the last few years have been bad for public schools — even very bad,” he told me.

A democratic failure

I recommend [his story](#) because it’s a nuanced look at Weingarten and the challenges she now faces. Republican officials have spent years trying to demonize teachers’ unions, and Weingarten in particular (including [during a House hearing this week](#)), and have been less successful than they hoped. In Michigan, where Weingarten campaigned for Democrats last year, as she frequently does, the party won a sweep of major offices. In Chicago (an overwhelmingly Democratic city), a former teachers’ union organizer, Brandon Johnson, was elected mayor this month.

These results reflect the fact that many Americans are sympathetic to teachers and grateful to their children’s own teachers. Teachers do vital work and don’t make big salaries. Many spend their own money on teaching materials when schools don’t do so.

In the case of Covid, the risks associated with reopening schools were unclear in the spring of 2020, and teachers were understandably frightened. Over the course of the summer, however, evidence increasingly suggested that schools could reopen without accelerating the spread of Covid — and that the costs of keeping them closed were steep. Despite this evidence, many schools remained closed for months on end, even after vaccines became available.

Dasgupta, the Berkeley philosopher, has a thoughtful way of framing this failure. As he wrote to me in an email:

It is clear that extended school closures were a mistake — they harmed children while having no measurable effect on the pandemic. It is also clear that teachers’ unions were a major factor behind the closures. But remember that the unions were just doing their job. Their remit is to advocate for their members and that is exactly what they did.

Seen like this, the problem was not the teachers' union per se — I am personally in favor of public sector unions — but the absence of a comparable organization at the bargaining table to represent the interests of students and their caregivers. It was a failure of democratic decision-making.

Looking ahead, my colleague Jonathan puts it this way:

The question (and political debate) is where do we go from here — double down on public education, try to address the learning loss and emotional damage caused by the pandemic closures and make an effort to restore the nation's confidence in public schools, or create more alternatives via school choice?

As Jonathan notes, public education is likely to be a major issue again in the 2024 campaigns.