



Friday Letter

February 15, 2008

February 14, 2008

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As many of you know, unlike a traditional public school, our school operates under a charter (a contract) with New York State that must be renewed periodically. We are presently in the middle of the renewal process and the Charter Schools Institute (who has the power to recommend that we get a new charter or that we be closed) has issued a draft report recommending that our school be closed at the end of this school year.

This is not the final recommendation. We believe it is based on factual errors and we are vigorously opposing the Institute's recommendation. We are appealing their recommendation and we are confident that the decision to close the Ark will be quickly reversed.

We strongly believe that we will be open next year. However, it is important for you to know that you may need to make another school choice in the event we are closed. We will be glad to help you in this process in any way we can.

Please understand how much we continue to value the trust you place in all of us each day. We know you realize how hard we are fighting for the continued privilege of educating your children.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Theresa".

Mary Theresa Streck
Principal

Charter School Facts

The Charter Schools Institute has three primary concerns when considering charter renewal:

- That the school is a viable organization both in governance and financial matters. There is no dispute that the Ark has excelled in this area
- That the school meets its performance goals in mathematics. The Ark has met its performance goals in math
- That the school meets its performance goals in English Language Arts (ELA). We had not we yet officially met this goal as of the reporting period.

In September of 2006, at the beginning of our current charter, the Ark adopted a completely new ELA program to improve data gathering and instruction. The program includes weekly selection tests and unit benchmark tests modeled on the NYS ELA assessment to inform instruction.

This new program has had a very positive impact on our students' ELA performance. In January 2007, after only four months of instruction in this new program, the absolute ELA proficiency increased for students who had been with us for 2 years by 18 percentage points and increased for all students by 10 percentage points.

Seventy-three percent of the current 6th graders and 54% of the current 5th graders increased their ELA performance levels from 2006 to 2007.

Most importantly, based on still-unofficial results of the recently administered state assessment, our ELA scores for 2008 greatly exceeded those of 2007, with 72% of students tested achieving proficiency. This is extraordinary progress and we could not be more proud of what our students have achieved.

Although these results will not be official until May 2008, we believe that once the state sees what we have accomplished, they will grant us an additional charter year to allow our results to be officially considered.

The Charter Schools Institute is now routinely issuing three-year renewals to schools who show promise but have not yet met their performance goals, not the two-year charter we were granted in 2006. The Institute has changed their policy because they have come to realize that a two-year renewal does not give schools enough time to both implement changes and see results.

An extra year can make all the difference here—and that's what we're asking for. We feel it's only fair. Without an extra year, the decision to renew or close our school will be based on tests taken only four months after the beginning of our renewal charter and that's just not enough time to make a final decision on the future of your children.

Bio Poems

The 2nd graders are working on poetry and are writing biographical poems. Some of them worked together with family members on bio poems. Here are bio poems of TJ Brown and mom, Danielle Casseus.



Terris

Kind, Clever, Caring, Happy
Brother of Zoe and Donnay
Lover of games, math and TV
Who feels wise and handsome. I'm
peaceful when I'm laying down
Who gives presents, kisses, hugs
Who fears lions, bears, being away
from mom
Who would like to roller-skate, go
on a plane, read more books
Who lives in Troy, New York

Brown



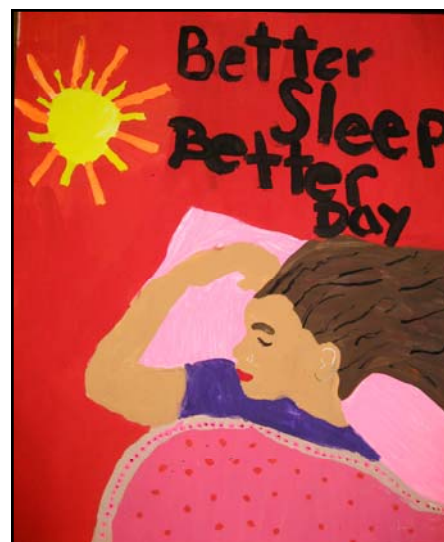
Danielle

Loving, caring, nice, pretty
Sister of Lucie, Pat, Paolo, Michael
Lover of music, cars, God
Who feels happy, strong, confident
Who gives hugs, kisses, gifts
Who fears snakes, failure, fires
Who would like to go to Hawaii, buy
a house, send kids to college
Who lives in Troy, NY

Casseus



Chance Bruce




Kiara Lopez

The fifth grade students were studying the systems of the body in Science. To reinforce what they were learning in science they were asked to design a poster to promote healthy habits. The class then looked at several pop art posters, which are commonly brightly colored. They used this style of art to inspire their color decisions. When they were finished painting each student had the opportunity to search the internet to find facts to support their poster.

Enjoy, Ms. Molly Suwara

February 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3	4	5 7:45 Awards Breakfast HALF DAY Parent Con- ferences- Report Cards	6 PATT Meet- ing 5:30PM	7 	8 Rescheduled Special Breakfast 7:45	9
10	11	12 3:30 Board of Trustees	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
W I N T E R B R E A K - N O S C H O O L						
24	25 Back to School full day 7:50- 3pm	26	27	28	29 Assembly 1:00pm	1

**Mark your Calendar:
NYS MATH TESTING
MARCH 3-7
Grades 3-5**

**SCHOOL PICTURE
MAKE UPS ON
Thursday, March 13**

LUNCH MENU for week of Feb 25—Feb 29

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Macaroni and Cheese Tossed Salad Fruits Milk	Salami and Cheese Sandwiches Pears Chips Milk	Baked Chicken Baked Potatoes Cranberry Sauce Milk	Spaghetti w/meat sauce Green Beans Pineapples Milk	Hot Dogs on a roll Beans Apples Milk

Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches are always available as an alternative.