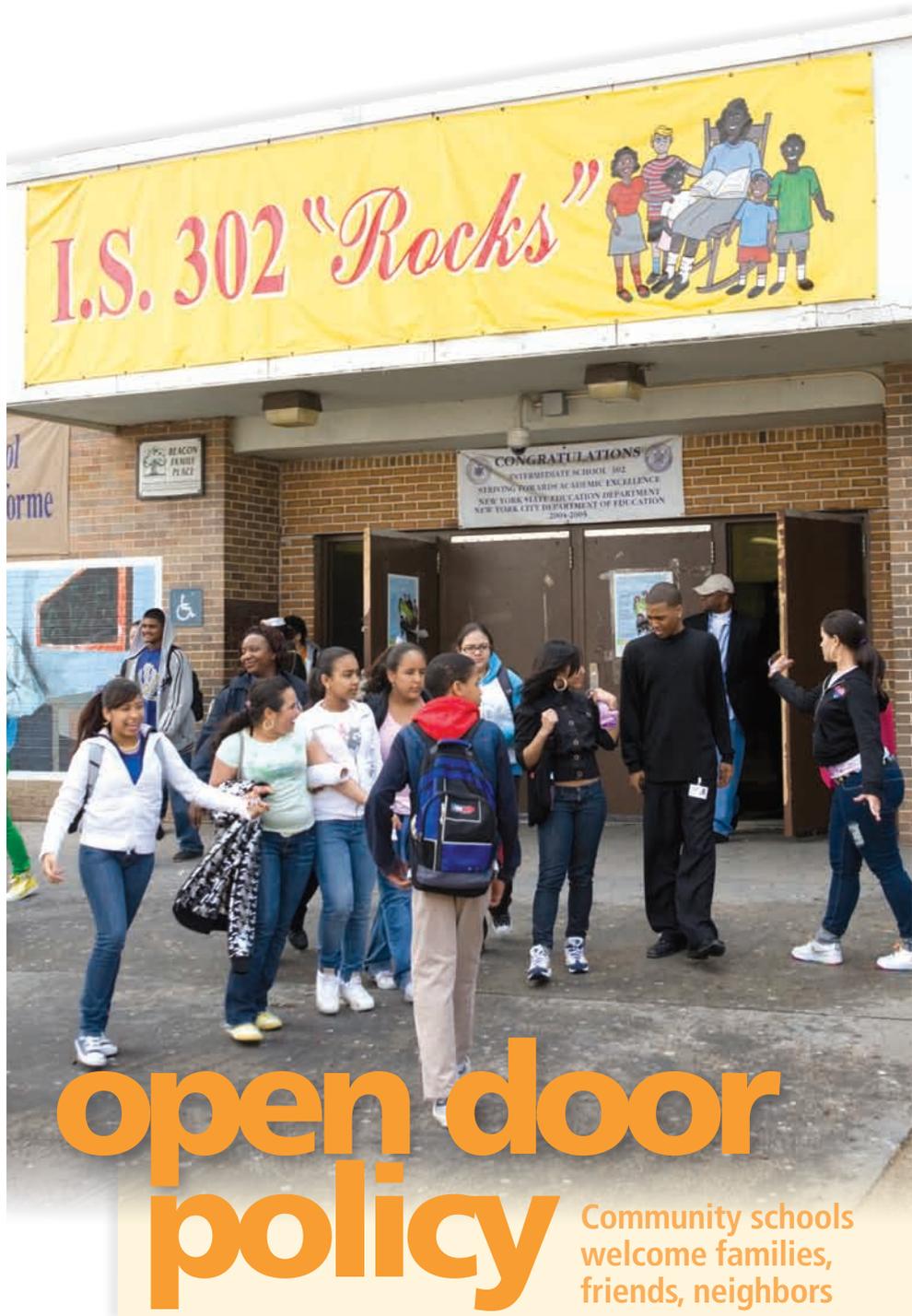




PSRP Reporter

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF AFT PARAPROFESSIONALS AND SCHOOL-RELATED PERSONNEL



SCHOOL IS NOT JUST WHERE

Valeria Marquez works. It's a place where she and her family are welcome to drop in around the clock for learning, healthcare, fun and games, volunteer projects and more learning.

"It directly touches my family because I live right around the corner and my kids really use the programs," says the pupil accounting secretary in Brooklyn, N.Y., a member of the United Federation of Teachers.

For the middle-schoolers, there's homework help, food, counseling and even summer camp. Her 16-year-old son still comes back for a program to help elderly neighbors—picking up a prescription, doing yard work or installing an air conditioner. And at the Rafael Cordero School, I.S. 302, there's also a community-based nurse who can give him the shots he needs for his working papers.

Marquez, who has worked 21 years in the schools, 13 of them as a safety officer, reviews the immunization registry to see if any are missing, then coordinates with the nurse. "This makes it easier for the parents because they don't have to run up every time the kid needs a shot," she says.

The school buzzes in the evenings with exercise, karate and arts classes—all free—as well as volleyball and basketball. "I come back to school at night sometimes just to run my mouth with security, and this place is jumping," says Marquez.

How does this kind of enrichment happen at a school where 90 percent of the students qualify for free lunch? I.S. 302 is a community school.

Great advances in urban education have come through community schools that stay open day and night, serving as the hub of their neighborhoods by hosting a wide range of services. While there's no single model, they all have features in common, including such services as child care, healthcare, recreation and the arts, job training and a stunning array of adult education classes, from English as a second language to tax preparation.

Continued on page 4

open door policy

Community schools welcome families, friends, neighbors



Many voices, one union

PAGE 5



Champion behind the wheel

PAGE 3



'We've got to ... bury the idea of privatizing Social Security.'

Hillary Clinton on retirement security

PAGE 7



open door policy

What precautions do you take to protect yourself from exposure to chemicals and other hazardous materials? What does your facility do to protect you from hazardous chemicals?

"Having obtained a degree in hazardous materials technology, I tend to look for potentially dangerous situations anytime I step into a workplace or other setting. If a workplace has stored chemicals, then material safety data sheets (MSDS) should be readily available for instructions on what to do or not to do in case of contact or spills. It's always a good idea to familiarize oneself with any substances that might pose a threat to your health and safety."

TROY PIERCE
Los Angeles

"My school does very little to nothing to protect us from hazardous materials. In fact, when it rains the ceilings have been known to cave in and pour water all over the place! The solution has been to divert the water into garbage cans. The water problem is so bad that [the resulting mold] makes people sick. Why are schools such toxic places to work? Put health and safety first and foremost, where it belongs. Our children deserve at least that."

CORLISS BLOCK
Saugerties, N.Y.

"The facility tries to supply me with the necessary materials to handle hazardous materials. If they cannot do so, I do not use them."

SHIRLEY RACHAL
Stonewall, La.

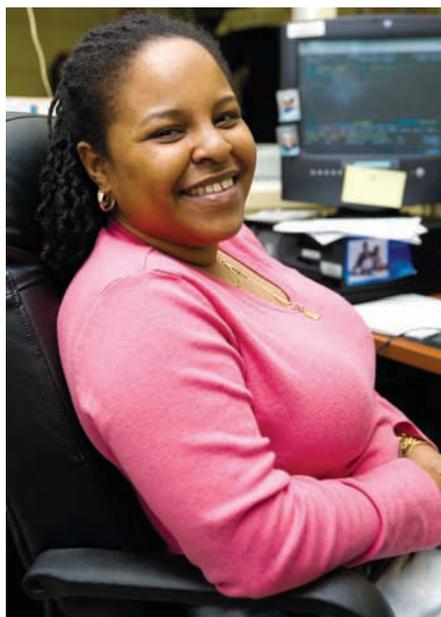
IT'S YOUR VOICE We want to hear from you! Visit www.aft.org/voices to respond to the question below and other questions about issues that are important to AFT members.

Lots of things hook kids on reading: contests, book clubs, time for free reading—even loaner books from their favorite school staff. Share your ideas about how to encourage reading.



Continued from page 1

The purpose is not just to make maximum use of a school building, but to strengthen the community. When parents come after hours for ESL or GED classes, "we have a chance to grab some of them for PTA meetings," says Oral Brady, an eighth-grade social studies teacher and UFT chapter leader, adding that some of them go on to become hall monitors. One of Brady's former students now runs an after-school program at the school.



Valeria Marquez, a pupil accounting secretary, says after-school programs are heavily used.

programs but also has infused community programs directly into the curriculum.

A partnership with the University of Pennsylvania since 2006 has brought science lessons into Sayre, starting with a neuroscience unit focused on lead poisoning in children. Students identified lead "hotspots" and checked their siblings' teeth for lead. Today, students in Jennifer Boyd-Waller's chemistry class are learning about forensics by playing a version of the television show "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation."

Because of the partnership with Penn, attendance at Sayre increased by 10 percent and suspensions dropped by 50 percent between 2005-06 and 2006-07. More Sayre students now consider careers in medicine, and 90 percent of participants in fitness night say they're eating healthier and exercising more.

Another example of community schooling is the Children's Aid Society, which runs about 24 full-service public school programs in New York City, "each a little different," says Phil Coltoff, special adviser to the society. Since 1990, he says, the group has worked closely with the UFT to make sure that schools respected the union contract if staff worked extra hours.

AFT members know firsthand the benefits of community schools, not only for their students but also for their own families.

"It's an excellent program because if you refer a student there, you already know it's working," says UFT member Aracelia Cook, a school secretary at P.S. 72 in Brooklyn, who takes her daughter to a community school nearby. "You can recommend a program based on seeing that it's working."

At the national level, U.S. House majority leader Steny Hoyer of Maryland has introduced legislation that would give higher visibility and credibility to what's still a local movement.

In the meantime, the benefits of community schools are clear to people like Robert Livingston Sr., a paraprofessional coordinator and UFT district rep in Harlem. "They're really good," he says of the classroom and after-school helpers. "I welcomed them in when I first saw them because it takes a whole lot of work to get our kids on target and to stay on target."

This kind of around-the-clock programming is "training for citizenship and democracy," says Marty Blank, director of the Coalition for Community Schools, an alliance of about 160 groups, including the AFT.

Other fine examples abound, including schools in Baltimore, Boston and Minneapolis. Blank points to Chicago's aggressive efforts to expand wraparound services into a quarter of its 600 public schools.

In the trenches

One of the rock stars of community schooling is Sayre High School on the west side of Philadelphia. AFT members who work there have helped win a national award for Sayre, which not only has a health clinic and after-school