In This Issue

2015 Dewey Spirit Awards ............................... 15
Dewey seniors Alena Halushkina and Miguel Olivan received the JDAA Scholarship Award for 2015

Alumni Updates .............................................. 4
Status updates from former Deweyites

Bulletin Board .................................................. 16
Announcements and advertisements for and from members

Dewey Alumna Wins 46th District Assembly Seat ..... 6
Pamela Harris is elected to NYS Assembly for Coney Island district

Dewey Days ..................................................... 6
Then: Dewey students fight censorship in Federal Court
Now: Retired JDHS Staffers meet for annual luncheon

Dewey These Days: A New Administration ............. 11
New principal Connie Hamilton speaks about Dewey and its future

Dewey These Days: Behind the Leadership Change 13
Findings of the Dept of Education’s investigation of alleged improprieties at John Dewey H.S.

In Memoriam ................................................... 5
A sad farewell to those members of the Dewey Community whom we lost in 2015

Letter from the Editor ......................................... 3
A message from founding (and outgoing) Deweygram editor Janice Deutsch

Meet the Board of Directors .............................. 2
Photographs of the new JDAA leadership

Message from the Board .................................... 3
A look back at 2015 and ahead to 2016, plus a recap of the general membership meeting

REUNION RECAP ......... See SEPARATE SECTION

John Dewey Alumni Association

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Board of Directors 2015-2016
Alfred Bevilacqua (1969-73), President
Caryn Montague (Class of 1975), Acting V.P.
Christopher Andre (Class of 1991), Secretary
Thomas Heinegg (Retired faculty), Treasurer
Rob Kanyuk (Faculty), Director

Audit Committee 2016
Barbara Abramowitz (1974)
Eileen McGivney (1973)
Edmund Unneland (1981)

Newsletter Committee
Janice Deutsch, Editor
Christopher Andre
Shelly Carrera
Michele Caruso Grasso
Natasha Coates
Sue Epstein
David Winclair

Send newsletter feedback to:
alumnirelations@johndeweyalumni.org
**MEET THE 2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Christopher Aaron Andre (1986-1991).** I was born and raised in Brooklyn and have been a train operator for the New York City Transit Authority for nearly 19 years. I initially decided to attend John Dewey H.S. because I wanted to do whatever my very cool big brother, Amario Andre, was doing. He used to tell me stories about Dewey – the locker bays, the free periods and, most of all, “Dewey or Don’t We,” an 80’s-era showcase production of Dewey’s diversely talented students and faculty. (I love all things entertaining.) I was sold! Dewey was my destination. It was everything I hoped for and then some. I would like to be a part of the bigger picture for all Dewey alumni. This will be my first year serving on the JDAA Board of Directors. I hope to bring fresh ideas to the table and be a team player who enhances the alumni experience for all.

**Alfred J. Bevilacqua (1969-1973)** attended John Dewey H.S. the first year it opened. He started WRFD (Radio Free Dewey), where he not only played music but also interviewed people in the music business, such as Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee Dave Herman (disc jockey) and Louis “Moondog” Hardin (musician, composer, instrument inventor, famous street person and the subject of the upcoming movie The Viking of Sixth Avenue). Al went on to Staten Island Community College in 1973, where he continued doing radio in the early morning, and later worked on Wall Street for many years. He has been a member of the JDAA Board of Directors since 2014 and served on the organizing committee for the 45th Anniversary Reunion. He hopes to give back to the school as it gave to him and his fellow Deweyites.

**Thomas Heinegg (Retired Faculty)** Following two years of teaching service in the Peace Corps in Malaysia, Tom was employed at John Dewey High School in the capacities of science teacher, Coordinator of Student Activities, and Director of the SPARK program from 1969-1979. The following 6 years he worked as the Director of Admissions at Parsons School of Design and was subsequently responsible for facilitating the creation of a two-year College of Art and Design in the Dominican Republic. Entering the business world, he was appointed Vice President of the New York Chamber of Commerce and held that position for 3 years. From 1989-2009 he served as an Assistant Principal and Principal in the Shoreham-Wading River, Great Neck, and Northport School districts. He has been a member of the JDAA Board of Directors since 2013 and holds the position of Treasurer.

**Rob Kanyuk (Current Faculty)** earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Rhetoric from SUNY Binghamton and Master’s degree in Secondary Education from Hofstra University. He has been a member the John Dewey H.S. English Department since 1993. He has served on Dewey’s School Leadership Team (SLT) and its United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Consultation Committee, in addition to serving as Dewey's UFT Chapter Leader. In 2009, Robert co-founded the “Friends of Dewey” coalition for the preservation and improvement of John Dewey High School.

**Caryn Montague (Class of 1975).** The biography and photograph of Acting Vice President Caryn Montague were unavailable at time of publication.

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**WANT TO BE A DIRECTOR?**

The JDAA is looking for a few good leaders to join the Board of Directors, either for the current term (through November 30, 2016) or the next one (December 2016 – November 2017). By becoming a member of the governing body of our organization, you can help set policies, establish goals, continue the Dewey legacy, and maintain a relationship with John Dewey H.S. If you attended or worked at Dewey, you are eligible to serve.

A one-year commitment is required – unless you are joining the Board in the middle of a term – but the duties are not demanding. Directors attend between five and ten meetings per year, and perform whatever committee activities they volunteer for. **If you are interested in serving the JDAA and its members**, please email your name, graduating class (or department) and contact information to alumnirelations@johndeweyalumni.org. 
Any member may join one of the JDAA committees to assist the Board in fulfilling its mission and goals. Current committees include:

- **Communications**: gets our message out by word of mouth, email, social media, and written communications.
- **Newsletter** (a subcommittee of Communications): responsible for creating and publishing the *Deweygram*.
- **Alumni Relations**: reaches out to our members and potential members to promote involvement and events.
- **Events** (a subcommittee of Alumni Relations): plans social activities for members, including reunions.
- **Legal**: monitors compliance with the by-laws and reviews all legal issues facing the JDAA and its Board.
- **Archives**: seeks and maintains documents, images, recordings, and memorabilia from the entire history of JDHS.

To volunteer, please email your name, graduating class or department, contact information, and committee of interest to alumnirelations@johndeweyalumni.org. Please put “Committee Volunteer” in the subject line.

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**Letter from the Editor**

By Janice M. Deutsch

While attending a JDAA-sponsored Broadway outing in 2013, I mentioned to the association’s then-Vice President that I was a professional writer and sometime editor. She asked me if I knew anything about putting out a newsletter and I told her of my long history of creating and contributing to such publications, including the first incarnation of *Deweygram* for the Alumni Association in the late 1980’s. This was apparently very exciting news. I was immediately invited to attend the next Board of Directors meeting and discuss the possibility of a new *Deweygram* for the new JDAA.

Within two months of that meeting, I was the official founder, sole writer and editor of the JDAA newsletter. My tenure as editor was to have lasted one year. Now, more than two years later, I am stepping down from that role.

It has been my pleasure to produce six issues of *Deweygram* for your reading and reminiscing pleasure. Member feedback has been consistently positive, including high praise from some former faculty advisors of Dewey publications. My thanks to all who took the time to recognize our efforts and to offer both content and concepts for further issues.

Several new alumni have recently joined the *Deweygram* staff, and new ideas for the future of the newsletter are being discussed. Changes may be forthcoming as new editor David Winclaire takes over our publication, but we hope to continue to bring you news of your fellow graduates, former teachers, and alma mater. As always, suggestions and contributions from our readers is welcome. We are your alumni association. Your input helps us serve you better. Email us at secretary@johndeweyalumni.org.

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**Message from the Board**

As 2016 gets underway, the Board of Directors would like to express their thanks to the 2015 JDAA team. Special recognition must go to the reunion committee who brought us the fabulous event you can read about in our special in-depth reunion pull-out section. The committee worked tirelessly for over a year to coordinate all of the elements for a fun-filled celebration of Dewey’s 45th anniversary, overcoming numerous obstacles in the process. We all had a great time, reconnecting with former classmates and teachers and visiting places around the school and campus.

Thanks also go to the members of the 2014-15 Board who are stepping down this year – Shelly Carrera (Secretary); Janice Deutsch (V.P.); and Bunji Fromartz (President). Janice and Bunji previously served multiple terms in other officer roles, and each has assisted in the transition to the new leadership. They and Shelly will continue to serve on various committees for the coming year. We appreciate their ongoing service.

Returning Board members include Al Bevilacqua, Tom Heinegg and Rob Kanyuk, and new directors include Christopher Andre and Caryn Montague. We all look forward to furthering the JDAA’s mission to maintain a the legacy of Dewey’s past and an ongoing relationship with the school. We have met with Dewey’s new principal, Connie Hamilton and anticipate the further development of a positive working rapport with the forward-thinking administration. (See page 10 for a full article on Ms. Hamilton, and page 4 for the recap of our 2015 general membership meeting, including Ms. Hamilton’s remarks to our members).

As always, we are YOUR alumni association. Your input and participation are welcome. We hope you will consider joining the Board or a committee to get involved.
Recap of 2015 General Meeting

The annual JDAA membership meeting was held at John Dewey H.S. on November 10, 2015. Dewey’s School Leadership Team provided refreshments.

JDAA President David Bunji Fromartz welcomed the alumni and faculty members, including those attending in person and those participating remotely by telephone conference call, as well as the school’s new principal, Connie Hamilton, and Assistant Principal Jeff Simon, who had accepted our invitation to join our meeting. Mr. Fromartz reported on the success of this summer’s 45th Anniversary Reunion and noted that commemorative merchandise, including tee shirts, hoodies, and mugs remained available for purchase at the meeting and at the JDAA website.

Treasurer Tom Heinegg reported the financial state of the JDAA, including assets of approximately $8,700. Our application for charitable organization status has been resubmitted to the IRS and a decision remains pending.

The members passed three resolutions: (1) to accept the revised bylaws as amended at the 2014 general membership meeting; (2) to permit the board to make grammatical and proofreading changes to correct errors in the bylaws; and (3) to adopt the recommendation of the Nominating Committee as to the members of the 2015-2016 Board of Directors.

The nominees for the Board included: Christopher Andre; Alfred Bevilacqua; Thomas Heinegg; Robert Kanyuk, and Caryn Montague. Alumna Susan Epstein withdrew her candidacy prior to the election. All remaining nominees were elected.

Three members of the new Board are returning directors. Those who were stepping down agreed to make themselves available for transitional advice and assistance.

Master Principal Connie Hamilton spoke of her new leadership role at Dewey and addressed many of the concerns facing the school, the students, the faculty and the community in the wake of the improper policies and practices that led to the termination of former principal Kathleen Elvin. In just two months since the start of the school term, tangible progress has been made to restore integrity and trust throughout the school, to improve services to the students and their families, and to provide training and mentorship to new and developing teachers. [Former faculty member and JDAA Treasurer Tom Heinegg volunteered to become a teacher mentor, and suggestions were made for possible student mentorship programs by alumni.] Plans are also underway to expand existing programs into career pathways, to restore lost programs in the arts, and to develop effective small learning communities. Ms. Hamilton’s vision for the school is further described in our Dewey These Days column below. [See page 11 for the full article on the new principal.]

Alumni Updates

Susan Alman (Class of 1977) retired in August 2014 after working as a computer programmer for the City of New York for 29 years. In October of 2014, she lucked into meeting President Obama when her friend won a contest to have dinner with the president. She is currently living in Bay Ridge, and likes visiting quiet places.

Michele Caruso Grasso (Class of 1985) was an executive assistant for twelve years, a dispatcher, an arbitrator and a sales person. She has been happily married to her husband Frank for 28 years. Their daughter, Jaqueline, is 23 and attends St. Paul’s Nursing School. Michele was an executive board member of Council for Unity while she attended Dewey.

David Chan and Leanne Wong (Class of 2006) recently became the proud co-owners of Wowfulls, a specialty waffles and ice cream business operating on weekends at Smorgasburg Brooklyn Flea Market in Sunset Park. During the week, David works at Prudential as a Media Television Broadcast Specialist. He has a degree in Advertising and Marketing Communications from Baruch College. Leanne’s degree from the University of Buffalo is in Marketing and Finance. She spends her days as an Ad Operations Manager at Opera Mediaworks. Both David and Leanne still reside in Brooklyn, where their “side business” has been getting a lot of local and digital media attention. (See the recent article on Wowfulls in the “Food Stuffs” column of Bensonhurst Bean.)

More Alumni Updates on Next Page
Alumni Updates (continued)

Diane Deutsch Keahey (Class of 1975) has returned to New York after residing in Michigan for 30 years. She is now an Assistant Professor of Clinical Laboratory Science at CUNY York College in Queens. She recently earned an extremely rare certification as a Specialist in Hematology from the American Society of Clinical Pathologists. Before moving back to New York, she made a special visit to attend the 45th Anniversary reunion at Dewey. It was the first time she had been back on campus since she left forty years ago, and she was thrilled to reconnect with some of her old (umm … that is to say, past) friends.

Reuben Last (Class of 1981) worked in a variety of fields after leaving Dewey: tax preparation; construction work; social services; legislative assistance; culinary arts; and theater set design. None of those career paths would have predicted that he’d end up becoming a surgeon! Reuben graduated from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and spent several years on the surgical staff at the University of New Mexico Hospital, where he was also a faculty member. He now works as a staff surgeon at the Albuquerque Veterans Administration Medical Center and was listed in a 2015 New Mexico “Top Doc” survey.

Keith Dom Powell (Class of 1974) is an accomplished hornist (he started that with Mr. Levine in tenth grade, switching from trumpet) who has played in the U.S. and Europe. Mr. Powell has performed for such luminaries as Placido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti, Bernadette Peters, Patti Lupone, Art Garfunkel, Eddy Arnold, and the Moody Blues. His forte is chamber music and opera but he has done country, Broadway, symphonic, band and many other kinds of music. He has branched out to include a few jazz appearances as well. Mr. Powell resides, composes, occasionally conducts, and teaches French Horn in Appleton, Wisconsin. He is a member of the symphonies of Marquette, Michigan and Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Laura (Rosenblatt) Rose (Class of 1975) remembers her Dewey days fondly and extends her warmest regards to all who remember her. After graduating, she traveled and worked for two years, before studying theater at SUNY New Paltz and graduating with honors. Returning to Brooklyn, she became a children's clown and entertainer, performing at well over 800 venues in a 7-year period. She went on to become a teacher, took a Master’s in Political Science at Brooklyn College (again with honors) and taught high school social studies while continuing post-graduate studies in Education. In 1999, Laura relocated to the Hudson Valley, where she taught history at Marist College and worked with various groups teaching conflict resolution through puppets and theatre for the Mental Health Association of Dutchess County. She also found a beautiful piece of land and built her dream home. While still working at Marist, she began selling real estate and yet again found that career change can be invigorating. She worked through Century 21 for 8 years, and started her own company in 2010. If you're interested in purchasing a home in Ulster County, or if you just want to say hello, get in touch! www.lauraroserealestate.com

In Memoriam

It is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the loss of the following members of the Dewey community during 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicky Del Gandio</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>Class of 1986</td>
<td>May 9, 2015</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les Max</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>March 30, 2015</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James D. Rodriguez</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>Class [unknown]</td>
<td>March 9, 2015</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lila Sandler Goodman</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>August 17, 2015</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darryl Shepherd</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>Class of 1993</td>
<td>November 2015</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Tempkin</td>
<td>Alumnus</td>
<td>Class of 1973</td>
<td>August 30, 2015</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members are invited to forward information about confirmed deaths among Dewey students and staff. Please send details to info@johndeweyalumni.org. A John Dewey H.S. Memorial website is maintained by Dewey alumna Marci Ann Kaplan-Lips at http://johndeweyhighschoolmemorial.wordpress.com/. Newly reported deaths can be sent to her by email at johndeweymemorial@gmail.com.
Alumna Pamela Harris Wins Vacant Assembly Seat

By Michele Caruso Grasso

Pamela Harris (Class of 1978) was recently elected to the New York State Assembly for the 46th district which covers the Bath Beach, Bay Ridge, Brighton Beach, Coney Island, Dyker Heights, and Seagate communities of southwest Brooklyn. A special election was held in November to fill the seat after former Assemblyman Alec Brook-Krasny stepped down in July to take a job in the private sector.

Harris is a resident of Coney Island and a long-time civic leader for her community. She is the founder of Coney Island Generation Gap, a non-profit community service organization dedicated to educating, training and empowering young adults. As a retired Corrections Officer, she is committed to reducing crime and providing young people with opportunities that keep them off the streets. She has also been a strong advocate for victims of Hurricane Sandy and a champion for the needs of under-served populations such as the elderly and the impoverished.

Harris plans to dedicate herself to issues involving education, housing, youth and senior services, and to continue her efforts to reduce the impact on Brooklyn communities suffering the ongoing effects of Hurricane Sandy. She will relocate her predecessor’s district office from Coney Island’s Luna Park development to Bay Ridge, where her campaign headquarters was located.

Harris defeated Republican candidate Lucretia Regina-Potter, the Republican District Leader of the 46th Assembly District and a member of the Executive Committee and Director of Communications of the Fiorello LaGuardia Republican Organization. She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Kings County Republican Party, a sustaining member of the Republican National Committee and the National Federation of Republican Women. Potter is a design consultant at Bari Tile & Ceramics in the Dyker Heights section of Brooklyn.

Harris is the first African-American elected to represent the 46th district in the State Assembly.

Continued on Next Page
**Students Against Censorship** (continued)

The magazine’s selection committee didn’t think this story was obscene. The faculty advisor didn’t think this story was obscene. But the principal did. And he would not be let it be distributed in his school.

In November, the editors appealed Levine’s edict to the Assistant Superintendent of High Schools, Jacob Zack. A hearing was held but Zack’s office would not render a decision despite numerous letters requesting one. An appeal directly to the Schools Chancellor was rejected by his office on the grounds that the superintendent’s office had not yet ruled on the matter.

According to Board of Education policy, a decision should have been made within approximately two weeks. Zack’s long-awaited decision finally came on January 26, 1972, two months after the hearing and more than four months after the magazines were impounded. The Assistant Superintendent ruled against the students.

The editors renewed their appeal to the Chancellor on February 7, and received an adverse decision on March 6, another month later. On March 7, they appealed to Isaiah Robinson, President of the Board of Education of the City of New York. The Board upheld the earlier decision in an opinion dated April 5.

What happened next was, in colloquial terms, legendary!

On April 26, 1972, more than one year after the magazine’s impounding, editors Bonnie Koppel and Donald Margulies brought suit in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York. They sued Sol Levine, both as an individual and as Dewey’s principal, the school itself, and the Board of Education of the City of New York. They were represented in court by the New York Civil Liberties Union.

The lawsuit was based on the improper restraint of constitutionally-protected free speech as well as the NYC school board failing to adhere to its own schedule for prompt responses to such disputed issues, causing an unreasonable delay in resolving the matter at the administrative level.

On August 10, 1972, Judge Jack B. Weinstein of the U.S. District Court issued his rulings: (a) the content of the confiscated Spring 1971 issue of *Streams of Conscience* was not obscene; (b) there was no valid pedagogical reason to suppress the magazine; and (c) the delays in the administrative resolutions of the students’ appeal were unacceptable. The judge ordered Principal Levine to return the impounded magazines to now-editor-in-chief Bonnie Koppell (Donald Margulies had graduated during the court case) and allow its distribution throughout the school!

Bonnie and *Streams of Conscience* had prevailed, setting a legal precedent against the censorship of student-run publications by school officials.

Weinstein’s decision on the merits of the students’ case included high praise for *Streams of Conscience*:

> It was intended by the students involved to be a serious literary effort, and, especially with respect to Mr. Margulies, that intent was effected in a manner demonstrative of unusual talent. The entire literary project was of significant constructive social and educational importance for high school students.

Years later, looking back on her effort to overturn the suppression of this magazine, Bonnie recalled:

> My favorite moment of the case was when Judge Jack B. Weinstein said, ‘My role here is not to question the good sense of the NYC Board of Education, which, with all its enormous problems, chooses to devote itself to the suppression of this fine example of student literature.’ Clearly a good judge of literary merit…

And that’s how Dewey students made their first court case a resounding success.

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**Have a story about a significant historical event at John Dewey High School? Send it to us at alumnirelations@johndeweyalumni.org**
After Dewey Days

Retired JDHS Staff Meet for Lunch & Laughter

On May 7, 2015, dozens of former Dewey H.S. staff members gathered at Gargiulo’s Italian Restaurant in Coney Island for an afternoon of delightful conversation, reminiscences and merriment, accompanied by an excellent three course meal and a variety of extraordinary raffle prize giveaways. This was the fifth luncheon of its kind, the first having taken place in 2011. This annual event is skillfully organized by Elaine Saturno, a former member of the school administration, and has been consistently attended by a great many assistant principals, teachers, paraprofessionals and secretaries. Current Dewey staffers are welcome to join with former Dewey professionals to, as this group’s Facebook page says, “Keep the dream and the memories alive.”

The luncheon was attended by two JDAA Directors: Vice President Janice Deutsch (Class of 1978) who worked as a paraprofessional in the Program Office after graduation; and Treasurer Tom Heinegg, who taught Science for ten years (1969-1979) and coordinated the SPARK program for a while.

How many past staffers can you identify in these photos? (Watch for folks lurking in the background, too!)

![Image 1](image1.jpg)

![Image 2](image2.jpg)

![Image 3](image3.jpg)
Retired JDHS Staff Luncheon (continued)
Check out our reunion section for more teachers among the attendees and presenters!
**Dewey These Days**

**Master Principal Connie Hamilton Takes the Reins**

“We Need You."

As summer 2015 arrived, Principal Connie Hamilton was in her office at Kingsborough Early College Secondary School, less than half a mile from Dewey, winding down from the last school year and planning for the next. She had no idea that her plans and her professional life were about to be disrupted by a single telephone call. Unbeknownst to her, the Department of Education (DOE) had concluded its investigation into allegations of wrong-doing by Dewey Principal Kathleen Elvin and she was about to be removed from the position. Dewey would need a new principal, and fast! Hamilton was their first and only choice for the job. And so her telephone rang, and a voice on the other end made the message clear: We need you.

**Track Record of Success**

Hamilton was already known in education circles for having the necessary skills and experience to address troubled or failing schools, often amidst challenging political climates. She had done it at Concord H.S., an alternative high school for under-credited and overage students which had been on the DOE’s SURR (Schools Under Registration Review) list for four years. She was part of the team that converted John Jay H.S. from a large, underperforming school to a campus of multiple successful smaller schools, and she had spearheaded a similar turnaround at Harry Van Ardsdale H.S. She would serve as the Assistant Director and then the Assistant Superintendent of Small Schools before becoming the principal of a new school that she designed in partnership with City University of New York and Kingsborough Community College. “Kingsborough Early College Secondary School” (KECSS) is a pioneering six-year school, housed in the Lafayette Educational Complex just down the road from Dewey. It offers incoming sixth graders the opportunity to attain both their high school diplomas and a tuition-free Associate’s degree by the end of 12th grade. KECSS consistently receives outstanding ratings from the DOE.

On its 2014-15 School Quality Review, it was given the highest possible ratings for three of six factors most associated with student achievement: rigorous instruction, collaborative teachers, and school leadership – which is to say, Connie Hamilton’s leadership.

**Building Relationships**

The removal of Kathleen Elvin as Dewey’s principal last July was the second such action by the DOE, which had removed Elvin’s predecessor, Barry Fried, in 2012. The need for new and effective leadership was compelling. The relationship between the many of the teachers and the administration had reportedly weakened during Fried’s tenure, and the situation had further deteriorated during Elvin’s. Morale in the school appeared to be at an all-time low. Hamilton’s arrival caused a nearly instantaneous improvement in outlook for the entire Dewey community – students, parents, staff, and faculty – because of both her attitude and her actions.

It was immediately clear to everyone in the building that a new order was being established, a collaborative one. Hamilton describes her goals as beginning with “calming the waters.” She understood the strained relationship that had existed between some of the teachers and their prior principal; she set out to immediately alleviate any lingering tensions and uncertainty. Her approach, she says, emphasizes “building relationships … everywhere!” That is, both inside the building and out.

**Let’s Talk**

“If it’s meaningful to them,” she says, referring to all the stakeholders in the Dewey community, from students and parents to teachers and staff, “it’s meaningful to me. Even if I don’t agree, I talk.” She talks about the *whats and why and how* of bringing ideas to fruition. And she listens, paying attention to small things as well as the big picture issues. While major changes may be in the planning stages for the coming school year, the
Connie Hamilton (continued)

immediate needs of her students and staff are not to be ignored.

With 25% of the Dewey students classified as English Language Learners (ELL), indicating that English is not their primary language, Hamilton immediately hired translators and arranged for morning announcements to be rendered in multiple languages. She also organized an exceptionally well-attended Saturday orientation for ELL families – complete with notices in native languages, translators on hand, and refreshments for the attendees – as well as a community dinner.

Professional development, especially for Dewey’s 29 first-time teachers, is a priority. The administration held a special meeting with these new educators to discuss the challenges they were facing and offer assistance. New and senior teachers received templates for lesson plans and ongoing professional development workshops in-house, offered through the UFT Teacher Center.

The list of immediate interventions for both students and staff is lengthy, but the overall message was clear: “We will help you. We will support you.” The benefits of Hamilton’s efforts are already obvious. Multiple staffers have remarked that the school has emerged from a heavy feeling of darkness and anxiety into the light of respect and openness. The students, Hamilton notes with some bemusement, actually stop by to take selfies with her. [Yes, she allows this.] A positive culture of rapport, community and school spirit is being reestablished.

The Vision: Meaningful Learning

Building relationships with Dewey’s stakeholders is just the beginning. The principal’s vision for the school centers on providing the best possible education within its walls and preparing them for either college or employment at the end of their Dewey Days.

Posted in Hamilton’s outer office are the four ideals of the 2015-16 Frameworks for Great Schools: Supportive Environment; Trust; Collaborative Teaching; and Rigorous Instruction. In any plan, in every plan for the school, Hamilton focuses on learning. “All children can and will learn,” she says, almost as a mantra, noting that she really does mean the all part, and she means to provide them with the opportunity and the resources to make that learning meaningful.

Restructuring the Academic Houses

She begins with the organizational structure of student groups that predated her arrival. Dewey’s students had been divided into three loosely-themed “small learning communities” called academic houses. A review of the system revealed that they were too large to be truly considered small learning communities, and they were insufficiently thematic and not cohesive enough to provide the kind of comprehensive instruction that would prepare the graduates for post-secondary pursuits in their areas of interest. Hamilton and her staff are preparing to rectify the shortcomings of the current structure to create six smaller houses, each with a maximum of 350 students, a more well-defined theme, and a clear sequence of academics and electives that will prepare the participants for either some kind of occupational certification or further study toward professional qualification.

There will be a Law Institute, an Arts Institute, a Future Teachers house, a Science and Technology (STEM) house, and a PreMed and Health Professions house, and possibly a Business school. Hamilton’s goal is to make these various options into positive career tracks for her students. Toward that end, John Dewey H.S. has applied for a grant through Laurene Powell Jobs’ (Steven Jobs’ widow) XQ: The Super School Project, which offers funding for imaginative and innovative redesigns of public high schools. The school is also in line for funding through Councilman Mark Treyger’s office to expand the Culinary Arts curriculum into a Career and Technical Education (CTE) certified training program.

Remembering the Past, Looking to the Future

Hamilton’s educational philosophy is well-aligned with the principles of John Dewey the educator and John Dewey the high school, as it was envisioned at its inception. Circumstances are too different, however, to look backward and attempt to reestablish programs and

Continued on Next Page
Connie Hamilton (continued)

structures of the past. The student population is more challenging, with one in four of the students in ELL and 15% receiving Special Education services. The budget, based as it is on the current educational paradigm in Albany, would never allow for things like resources centers for every department and independent study periods throughout an extended school day. But Hamilton is not content to let the past lapse permanently into oblivion. There is once again an S.O. store. Music, arts and theater programs are being restored or expanded. Sing! (a traditional student-led musical production) may come to Dewey, recalling the Sights and Sounds music and art showcase of Dewey’s earlier years.

Hamilton is also committed to working with the JDAA to commemorate the history and ongoing evolution of the school, including the possibility of an exhibit in the school of materials from our archives. We are also committed to working with her, assisting her in any way we can, to bridge the past and the future, and to help bring her positive new vision of John Dewey H.S. to reality.

MORE DEWEY THESE DAYS

BEHIND THE LEADERSHIP CHANGE:
THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INVESTIGATION

The “Credit Recovery” Controversy

It was an idea that actually started at Dewey. When the school still had a pass-fail system, students received grades of “M” for Mastery or “R” for Retention for Reinforcement (we kid you not). But the students who were on the borderline would sometimes receive a grade of MC (Mastery with Condition), indicating that they had done minimally satisfactory work, but still needed reinforcement in the subject matter. That reinforcement came in the form of a “prescription” for an additional packet of work, to be completed independently or under the supervision of a resource center teacher. The supplementary work would then be submitted to the classroom teacher to ensure that the student had truly mastered the material and did not need to repeat the class.

As with many pioneering approaches to education which started at Dewey, this practice spread to other schools, and when the Department of Education was looking for ways to promote increased four-year graduation rates, the citywide Credit Recovery program was born. Students who had not passed certain academic requirements would be allowed to complete a packet of work under the supervision of a teacher rather than having to repeat the entire course again.

It was a good idea. Unfortunately, with the emphasis on credits over learning, the system ultimately led to allegations of mismanagement and outright fraud. Several Dewey teachers reported that Principal Kathleen Elvin was artificially inflating the school’s graduation rates by improperly crediting students with unearned passing grades in academic coursework. They also claimed that she had attempted to force the faculty into going along with this practice, and teachers who refused to cooperate were reportedly subjected to harassment, disciplinary action, unsatisfactory evaluations, and administrative retaliation. Multiple complaints were lodged against Elvin and several of her assistant principals and, in 2014, the Department of Education (DOE) began a formal investigation of the teachers’ claims.

Continued on Next Page
Allegations of Impropriety

Several teachers alleged that the principal violated the DOE High School Academic policy guidelines for credit recovery which mandate “targeted intensive instruction in the student’s identified deficiency areas of a course.” Additionally, the instruction had to meet graduation-level standards and minimal time requirements, be equivalent to coursework in the regular curriculum, and be conducted by a teacher licensed in the particular subject area.

The complaints stated that none of these conditions were fulfilled. On the contrary, students were reportedly given little or no instruction in these classes (sometimes referred to as “Project Graduation” [PG] classes), which typically mixed together as many as thirty students needing to make up coursework in different subject areas. Teachers were reportedly assigned to supervise PG classes for students working on curricula outside their license areas, such as a social studies teacher being faced with Life Science and multiple math curricula. According to the complaints, the administration was unconcerned that the teachers were facing subject matter outside their areas of licensure and qualification. Several faculty members claimed that they were directed to pass the students on the basis of attendance rather than performance of any coursework. When they refused to do so, grades were entered for their students by some other individual. Teachers also reported discovering that grades they had assigned were subsequently changed by persons unknown.

Further allegations were made that PG classes routinely contained students who were not even eligible for credit recovery. The DOE Academic Policy guidelines limit participation in this program to students who (a) attended at least two-thirds of the class time of the original course they failed and (b) failed that course in the immediately preceding semester. Further, students may only be placed in targeted recovery classes after consultation with the instructor of the original class. Finally, credit recovery is capped at a maximum of three core academic credits throughout high school. Elvin and five of her assistant principals allegedly violated each of these requirements and restrictions.

Improprieties during Regents Exams

The complaints against Principal Elvin also included allegations unrelated to the credit recovery program. Teachers reported that the June 2014 Integrated Algebra Regents Examination was administered without providing individual calculators to each student as required; there were not enough calculators, so students were forced to share them. Further, some proctors alleged that “rubrics” (instructional guidelines) were posted in certain examination rooms during the Algebra II/Trigonometry Regents exam.

The Investigation

The DOE Office of Special Investigations (OSI) assigned three primary investigators to determine the truth, if any, in the allegations. Over the course of several months, these investigators conducted interviews with Dewey staff, reviewed written DOE policies, and examined documentary evidence submitted in support off and in opposition to the claimed irregularity.

In a 22-page report issued on July 8, 2015, the investigators revealed that they had interviewed Principal Elvin on three occasions, as they had done with the UFT Chapter Chairperson who initiated the complaints on behalf of several then-anonymous teachers. Subsequent interviews were conducted with two assistant principals, three guidance counselors, and eight teachers.

Records were obtained from the Student Transcript and Academic Reporting System (STARS), as well as from Skedula, a non-DOE database used by some schools for class schedules and grade tracking. Emails and additional class schedules were provided by two of the complainants. Policy documents and relevant analyses were reportedly provided through correspondence with the Deputy Director of Academic Policy.

The Findings

Approximately one month prior to the issuance of the OSI report, Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña was quoted by multiple news outlets as saying that most of
DOE Investigation (continued)

The pending allegations investigated had so far been “unsubstantiated.” The final report found otherwise. Only a few of the charges were dismissed in their entirety. Others claims were found to be substantiated against one or more of the accused administrators, though not necessarily against all of them.

Substantiated allegations:
- Credit recovery practices at John Dewey H.S. did not meet DOE standards
- Principal Elvin failed to properly supervise the assistant principal responsible for programming credit recovery courses
- Teachers were assigned to credit recovery courses outside their license areas
- Teachers were assigned to credit recovery in a manner which made appropriate instruction impossible
- No instruction occurred in credit recovery classes
- One teacher was directed by an assistant principal to assign grades based solely on student attendance
- Regents exams were not administered in accordance with the rules and regulations of the NYS Education Department (NYSED)
- Principal Elvin failed to ensure compliance with NYSED testing requirements
- Individual calculators were not provided to all students for the June 2014 Integrated Algebra Regents examination

Unsubstantiated allegations:
- Students who were newly assigned to class rosters already had grades assigned next to their names
- Principal Elvin engaged in misconduct to pressure credit recovery teachers to achieve an 85% passing rate
- Principal Elvin improperly requested that credit recovery teachers change student grades to achieve an 85% passing rate
- An unknown individual changed grades for two credit recovery students
- Rubrics were displayed in examination rooms during the June 2014 Algebra II/Trigonometry Regents exam

As a result of the investigation, the DOE determined that Principal Kathleen Elvin had engaged in misconduct sufficient to warrant termination of her employment. No other administrators were dismissed, but two were subject to undisclosed disciplinary action.

2015 Dewey Spirit Awards

By Natasha Coates

Who’s got the Dewey Spirit?!

Every year, at the John Dewey H.S. commencement ceremony, two exceptional seniors receive the John Dewey Alumni Association’s Dewey Spirit Award. This award is not the average academic achievement award, but one which recognizes exemplary character, citizenship and overall contributions to the Dewey community in accordance with the highest principles of the John Dewey Ideal.

Alena Halushkina and Miguel Olivan have embodied what it means to have the DEWEY SPIRIT. They have been exceptional members of the Dewey community and helped to foster a positive educational environment for their fellow students. In recognition of their hard work, dedication and perseverance throughout their Dewey careers, Alena and Miguel will each receive $500 and a certificate from the John Dewey Alumni Association.

Alena was nominated for this award by her teacher, Mr. Robert Kanyuk, who describes her as a conscientious and authentic student who has worked diligently to overcome academic obstacles and taken on extra work to prepare for college. She has volunteered to assist her fellow students, which included reaching out and scheduling appointments for parental conferences. Alena has facilitated group projects with exceptional leadership, ensuring successful completion for herself and her peers.

Miguel Olivan has been a dedicated member of Council for Unity, an organization founded at Dewey to reduce conflict and promote cooperation among ethnically and culturally diverse student groups at the school. Miguel’s

Continued on Next Page
participation has moved him to advocate for the school community and promote a positive and safe learning environment. As part of his community service, he served as a volunteer for the JDAA’s 45th Anniversary Reunion. Upon graduation, Miguel plans to attend CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College. After receiving his Associate’s degree, he will transfer to John Jay College to study Criminal Justice--using what he has learned from his Council for Unity experience to apply to his career.

As these two recipients embark on this new chapter of their lives, making the transition from high school to college and walking through the portal of adolescence into adulthood, they are encouraged to continue striving for success, being pillars of their communities, and applying what they have learned from their John Dewey experiences.

Join the Deweygram Team

If you like reading the Deweygram and wish to contribute to its pages or help produce the publication, please volunteer for the JDAA Newsletter Committee. We are looking for an assistant editor as well as writers, word processors, desktop publishers and other contributors.

If you can help, either permanently or on an issue-by-issue basis, please email your information (name, graduating class, contact info) to alumnirelations@johndeweyalumni.org. Please indicate Newsletter Volunteer in the subject line, and specify the type of service you’d like to provide.
Have you been saving your Dewey stuff for 10, 20, 30 or 40 years?

Photographs?  Papers?  Bus passes?
Lesson plans?  Artwork?  Buttons?
Awards?  Event programs?
Other Memorabilia?

If you don't want it anymore, **DONATE** it to the **JDHS Archives**

Or maybe you still want to keep your treasures but would like them to become part of our archive, to be displayed online and at future reunions.

**SCAN** your items to our Archivist, Sue Epstein at jdhsarchives@gmail.com.

Or Sue can do the scanning for you.

**LEND** her your Dewey memorabilia for a little while and it will be returned to you.

Contact Sue at the archives email address above for details on how to contribute.

**GET INVOLVED!**

The John Dewey Alumni Association is looking for members who want to contribute their ideas and their time.

**VOLUNTEER!**

Join a committee (see page 3 for a list) or serve on our Board of Directors (see page 2 for details).