

Education

Klein Endorses Horizons



Horizons at Brooklyn Friends School was in the spotlight as the Brooklyn, New York affiliate welcomed Joel Klein, Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, on August 6, 2009. Klein had heard of the budding success of this one-year-old affiliate of the Horizons National network of programs, and decided to get a firsthand look at the program by attending a class. Klein was impressed and offered a strong endorsement of the program that has been shown to narrow the achievement gap between low income children and their middle class peers.

“The Horizons program demonstrates what can be accomplished when community resources are marshaled for the benefit of underprivileged youth. Until we address the disparity in summer experiences between low income students and their more advantaged peers, the achievement gap will persist,” he noted.

Accompanying Klein was Joe Chan, newly appointed member of Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s Panel for Educational Policy in New York City and chairman of the Horizons at Brooklyn Friends Board. Also in attendance were Horizons National Board member Monica Lamontagne and Horizons at Brooklyn Friends Executive Director Carla Precht. Klein, who oversees the largest system of public schools in the U.S., visited a classroom

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of five and six-year-old students. He got right down to the children’s level, putting his elbows on the kid-sized tables and talking with the students about their latest projects. He also discussed curriculum with teacher Shoshana Wolfe and asked her about her impressions of the differences between Horizons students and their more affluent peers. She explained that language-based challenges from vocabulary to literature and writing create a social, as well as an academic, barrier for the students.

Horizons’ efforts to help students overcome the combined challenges they face as a result of the summer slide in academics resonated with Klein, whose school reforms have helped to narrow the achievement gap in New York City. The Chancellor took particular note of the public-private partnership that is emblematic of the program. “Horizons illustrates the mutual responsibility we have to educate all of our children so that all have the potential to dream and achieve,” he said. “There is an obvious need for a big expansion.”