

Overview

Planning

Colonial Perspectives
Project

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Martha Andrews
5th Grade5th Grade Social
Studies Curriculum

Archive

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THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

"There is a culture in the classroom and our school in general, of working together, doing small group projects, and also having whole-class conversations where everybody's voice is valued." Andrews

Martha Andrews works in a K-5 public elementary school in the Bronx founded in the late 1980's. The school has about 400 students with admission determined by application and lottery. About 40% of the students are African-American, 40% are Hispanic, 10% are White, and 10% are Asian; about 40% of the students participate in the free and reduced price lunch program. Almost 50% of the students in tested grades met the standards for English Language Arts, and about 40% of the students in tested grades met the standards in Mathematics.

The School seeks to provide a welcoming and nurturing atmosphere that respects the children's needs and understands that each child learns in a unique manner. Classes are grouped heterogeneously, which creates a strong sense of respect for this racially and economically diverse community. As Andrews says, "It's a place where teachers have a lot of voice and a lot of say over what happens in their classrooms and are supported in that."

The school features an interdisciplinary curriculum and active learning experiences such as projects, drama (for example, in the Colonial Perspectives Project, students each assume the role of a towns person), trips, cooking and other "hands-on" activities. In classrooms, a sense of community is established through opportunities for shared responsibilities, group work, working in pairs, and whole-class meetings in which ideas are shared. The knowledge that students gain through their work in the projects is often made public through presentations to each other, their families, and others in the school.

MARTHA ANDREWS

This is Martha Andrews' eighth year teaching and her fourth teaching 4th and 5th grade. She studied at Brown University and received her Master's degree from NYU. She "loops" with her class, keeping her fourth grade students for two years, before taking on a new group of 4th graders.

"We're set up in grade teams, so the fourth and fifth grade meets twice a week, usually; officially we meet once a week during the school day, and usually we have another time, outside the school day, when we meet together. We also do a lot of planning together over the summer and on vacations, so that we're generally on the same page. We also try to coordinate that planning with the grades that come right before us, the second and third grades." Andrews

BEVERLY FALK

Beverly along with a group of parents participated in the founding of Martha's school in 1988. She is currently Professor of Education and Head of the Graduate Programs in Early Childhood at the City College of New York, City University of New York (CUNY). She is the editor of *The New Educator* journal and author of *The Power of Questions: a Guide to Teacher and Student Research*, *The Heart of the Matter: Using Standards and Assessment to Learn*, and numerous other publications. She met Martha on one of her many research visits to the school.