

**Not just numbers**

“Division excites people in this room, and there’s a lot to say!” proclaims Ms. Grennan, Mentor Math teacher, during a long division lesson with the 6th grade class. Our 6th graders aren’t just excited about division, they are excited about math. That enthusiasm is a common feeling among CMS students this fall thanks to Ms. Grennan.

“Working at CMS really feels like I’ve come full circle. I grew up in this neighborhood and I learned all of my math at Immaculate Conception on 13th Street [and 1st Avenue],” says Ms. Grennan, “Now to be teaching math in this community and at Holy Child is incredibly gratifying.”

Peggy Grennan, or Ms. Grennan as our students know her, can be seen a few mornings each week wheeling up to CCC on her Razor scooter, a perk of living just a few blocks north. Ms. Grennan grew up in Stuyvesant Town, a community in which she still lives with her husband and four sons. Though initial aspirations of academic sociology took her to the University of California—Berkeley for her B.A., and then Yale University to begin Ph.D. studies, Ms. Grennan returned to “the greatest city in the world, the city that gave birth to me” to do the work she loves: opening the world of math to young minds.



After years of working for New York City’s public schools, Ms. Grennan was looking for change. “I wanted to feel a sense of mission around me,” she reflects. “I wanted to be in a school where I could see myself teaching for the rest of my life.” This desire for meaningful, mission-centered education is precisely what led her to CMS. And while our mission was the draw, it’s our students that compel her. “These girls make demands of themselves. They defy circumstances, defy statistical odds – that’s gutsy. They are gutsy enough to aspire when everything around them says no. It is inspiring to be around that energy.”

Ms. Grennan believes math is more than just a subject to master. She sees it as a potential pathway for young women to find their confidence. She teaches her students to “own” their math – to be definite, convinced and ready to convince others – knowing that being sure of oneself is more than a math skill, it’s a life skill. “It’s very important that this is happening on 4th street,” notes Ms. Grennan. “We are providing a top-notch education to girls in our own community. I’ve seen girls on the 6 train headed to the fancy schools of the Upper East Side. It is far more powerful to have this little light on the Lower East Side. When it is local, it’s poignant – this is possible in our own community.”



**Amazon Wish List**

Are you interested in providing school supplies that would make Ms. Grennan’s classroom and our entire school even better? Visit our Amazon Wish List to see just what we’re looking for!

<http://amzn.com/w/19EEPTT0B8QYQ>



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**Working to transform lives**

**Cornelia Connelly Center** was founded in 1993 to give girls from low-income families a uniquely effective educational foundation, encompassing a comprehensive middle school program, strong support through high school, planning for higher education, and a vibrant alumnae community, which together enable Connelly students to fulfill their potential and achieve productive roles in society.

This is our specific expression of the shared mission of the Holy Child Network of Schools: To endeavor, guided by the philosophy and spirituality of Cornelia Connelly, to develop mature persons capable of making choices which enrich their lives and contribute to the lives of others.

The Center relies almost entirely on individual and institutional donors to fund its programs. Its mission is sponsored by the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.

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**Cornelia Connelly Center**



*Cornelia Connelly Center*

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATING GIRLS SINCE 1993

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Heather L. Raftery  
Director



**Dear Friends,**

Fall has always been one of my favorite times of year. This fall at the Cornelia Connelly Center has been full of rewarding moments – we walked for the cure, learned more about college access and the hurdles faced by immigrant families, and visited my hometown of Boston, to name just a few. All of this on top of the daily hard work and dedication from our students and teachers. The Class of 2015, our newest members of the Holy Child family, is one of the most joyous groups of young people I’ve had the pleasure of working with. Each day they lift my spirits and warm my heart.

This leads me to an invitation. I would like to welcome you, our dear friends and loyal donors, to visit the Center and to witness the learning, the effort, the spirit and the success that you help make possible. If you have never walked our beautiful hallways and experienced the joy that fills them, I hope you will consider joining us one day soon. You will see myriad ways in which we constantly challenge our students to be their best selves, while simultaneously giving them the tools they need to do so. I promise that you will be profoundly moved by watching them rise to the occasion – academically, artistically, emotionally and spiritually. These young women are indeed climbing a mountain. And they are blessed to have your support on the journey.

In joy and gratitude,

*Heather*

Heather L. Raftery  
Director

**Race for the Cure**

On Saturday, September 18th, members of the CCC community came together and participated in the Susan G. Komen Foundation’s Race for the Cure 5K. Donning pink Camp Holy Child t-shirts, more than 50 trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumnae and families walked 3.1 miles through Central Park supporting the foundation’s mission to eliminate breast cancer. In total, the CCC community raised almost \$5,000 in honor of Ms. Bush!



*“There aren’t words to express how touched I am by seeing our CCC family together to support me and so many women battling this disease. Thanks to all who helped in any way! Love ya”*

– Ms. Bush

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SPOTLIGHT ON...

Shalonda Neeley Gutierrez

Growing up in Schenectady, New York, Shalonda Neeley's favorite class was social studies. "I loved learning about people and how they lived their lives. I was always interested in movements of people, especially the Civil Rights movement." Her passion for people led Shalonda to study sociology and African-American studies at Fordham University. After graduating, she began teaching elementary school in the metro-New York area, eventually completing an M.A. in Curriculum and Teaching from Teacher's College at Columbia University, while still teaching full time. It was a class of 5th graders that inspired Shalonda to make the switch from elementary to middle school, and a chance meeting at a career fair that brought her to Holy Child.

In 2003, Ms. Neeley joined Holy Child as the 8th grade homeroom and 7th and 8th grade English Language Arts (ELA) teacher. Ms. Neeley remembers, "I was hooked from the first assembly I went to – by our mission, by our community, and by the joyous education we give to our students." This September, Ms. Neeley became the Principal of CMS, a role she describes as "rewarding, challenging and inspiring on a whole new level."



*"I love that our students' lives are changed by coming to Holy Child, that we are giving a voice to a population that isn't always heard."*

– Shalonda Neeley Gutierrez

**Favorite part of the school day:**

It's the "surprise" moments. My office is on the same floor as the 5th and 6th grade classrooms. On a daily basis the 5th and 6th graders are stopping by to check in and update me on their lives. It is a true blessing of this position to be so close to them, and to have them feel like I am accessible, not only as their Principal but also as a person.

**Best part about being the principal:**

I love the perspective it has given me. It's very easy to be one-sided – to only see things as a student or as a teacher, for example. As the Principal, I see and manage those views, and, along with my own new perspective and understanding of what it means to run our school, work to make the best solutions for our community.

**Hope for Holy Child:**

Our mission has always been a partnership between our school and our parents. This year, I've committed myself to nurturing our parent relationships, by being accessible and showing our parents how much we value their role in their daughters' success. My hope is that by consistently connecting with parents in a variety of ways – at arrival and dismissal, through my monthly Principal's Newsletter, inviting them to morning assembly – all of our parents will know "this is what I can do to positively impact my daughter's education."

GRADUATE SUPPORT PROGRAM (GSP) HAPPENINGS

**Mentorship matters**

It's the inaugural year of our GSP's Mentorship Program, and we are off to a fantastic start! With our first semester nearly complete, our 14 mentor-mentee pairs are enjoying the opportunity to create new relationships through CCC. We began in September with a reception, bringing our mentors together with mentees and their families, and in early December, our pairs had the opportunity to volunteer at Holy Redeemer Church's soup kitchen together as well as visit Manhattan College. Both our mentees and our mentors are looking forward to more shared cups of coffee, trips to the library, and time spent together in the new year!



**Visits to Boston colleges**

Fulfilling a promise she made when they were 8th graders, this October Director Heather Raftery took four high school juniors on a trip to visit colleges in Boston. Over the course of the weekend, Heather, Rosena Graham, Michaela Rivera, Amalin Robles, and Genesis Torres strolled campuses, went on tours, perused libraries, and saw the sights at five Massachusetts colleges. Visiting Boston College, Boston University, Emerson College, Harvard University and College of the Holy Cross in two days was no small feat, but the girls were up for the challenge and had a fantastic time.

"It was great listening to other peoples' college experiences at all the different schools," said Rosena, an 11th grader at St. Joseph High School who hopes to study forensic science. "At first I didn't think I wanted to go away for college. But one of our tours totally changed my mind. I realized it will be nice to be out on my own, and now I'm really excited to go away for school."



Never having been to Boston before, the girls were able to get a glimpse into college life, and experience a new city. Michaela, an 11th grader at Millennium High School, noted, "Boston is really cool, but it's so different from here [New York City]. It has such a small town feel. Our trip really helped give me some perspective about what college is like in another city." After their trip, the girls are looking forward to more college visits through our GSP and applying to colleges next fall.

**Fall Fundraisers**

This November, CCC opened its doors to friends, loyal and new, for the annual Fall Fundraisers. On the 9th, more than 35 people gathered for lunch and heard from Tatyana Kleyn, Assistant Professor at City College–New York, about current issues at the intersection of immigration and education. The following day, more than 30 people started their day at CCC for breakfast. Prompting a thoughtful discussion about college access for our girls, Melinda Mack, Director of Graduate! NYC, shared her work in college preparedness and education reform in New York City. On both days, our guests were treated to a performance of "Suddenly I See" by our CMS Advanced Chorus, along with some Connelly Center updates from Director Heather Raftery and the opportunity to take a tour with current students.



*"It's nice to have my sister here. We walk home together and on days when Aylin comes to GSP, all three of us walk together."*

– Kate Martinez, 5th grade

*"My older sister has been really supportive and gave me advice about coming to school here. I feel really lucky that I can give the same advice to my younger sisters."*

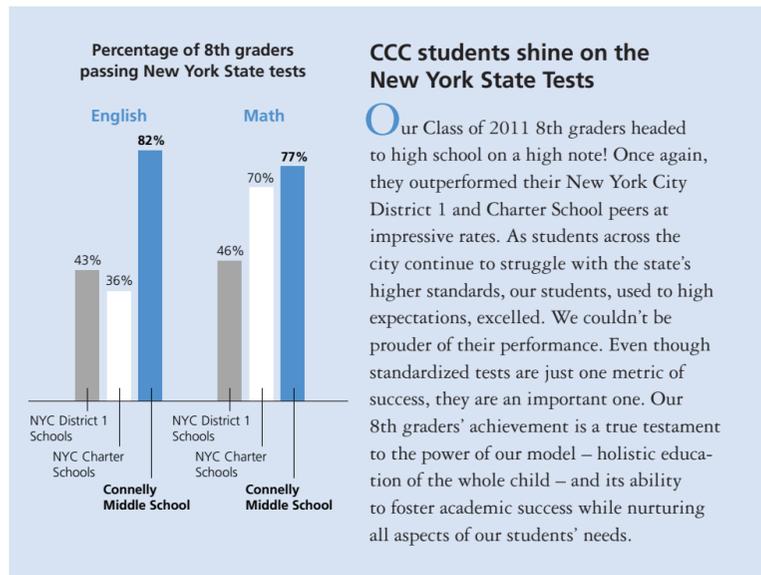
– Aylin Martinez, 9th grade

**Generations of Holy Child**

All of our students consider themselves sisters of Holy Child, which makes it even more special when we have biological sisters attending together. Aylin, Katherine and Kate Martinez are Holy Child and real-life sisters. Aylin is in the 9th grade at St. Joseph High School, while Katherine and Kate attend CMS in the 7th and 5th grades. Their older sister, Geraldine, graduated from CMS in 2005, and is now a junior in college. This fall, the three youngest sisters and their mother, Ana Collado, attended CCC's annual Back to School Ice Cream social and reflected on what Holy Child means to them.

*"I heard about Holy Child through a friend and decided to put my oldest daughter at the school. Once she attended, I loved the environment and decided to put the rest of my daughters here. I am very happy with the school and so are my daughters."*

– Ana Collado, mother



**CCC students shine on the New York State Tests**

Our Class of 2011 8th graders headed to high school on a high note! Once again, they outperformed their New York City District 1 and Charter School peers at impressive rates. As students across the city continue to struggle with the state's higher standards, our students, used to high expectations, excelled. We couldn't be prouder of their performance. Even though standardized tests are just one metric of success, they are an important one. Our 8th graders' achievement is a true testament to the power of our model – holistic education of the whole child – and its ability to foster academic success while nurturing all aspects of our students' needs.