



RACHEL CARSON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL 237
Magnet School for the Arts
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Judith Friedman, Principal

Carla Brathwaite, Assistant Principal
Stephen Galizia, Assistant Principal
Jennine Strong, Assistant Principal

November 2021

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We understand just how challenging the past 18 months of the pandemic have been for you as parents, families, and caregivers. We are in awe of the work you have done, and continue to do each and every day, to support your child(ren) and we thank you for your continued partnership with us. Our work together is more important than ever as we strive to ensure your child thrives this school year and beyond. To further support you, our teachers, counselors, and social workers as champions of your child(ren)'s academic and social and emotional needs, are excited to let you know about a wonderful opportunity in our school this year!

Research has consistently shown that developing the social and emotional skills of students helps them to succeed academically, gain confidence, and be happier. Social-emotional learning, or SEL, includes developing relationship skills, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and optimistic thinking.

To identify and support the social-emotional growth of all children in our school, we are excited to be administering a strengths-based SEL screener, known as the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA). The DESSA asks questions about areas of social-emotional functioning including decision-making, relationship building, confidence, and others.

The responses we gather will help us provide targeted, highly responsive support to each individual student. Perhaps most importantly, the tool enables us to build on each student's strengths while identifying the social-emotional skills they need to further develop. Once our students' growth areas are identified, we can create highly responsive plans to target and enhance those skills in the most appropriate manner and settings.

The results of this screener will not be included on report cards, will not have any impact on grades, and will not be used to make any diagnostic or evaluation decisions. The results will be stored securely in an online portal that meets the DOE's strictest privacy and security settings and will only be viewable by your child(ren)'s teachers and select school staff such as the principal or counselor.

The information gathered from the DESSA screening tool will allow us to provide the very best support to your child and will be beneficial to their overall success, both inside and outside of school. Families will have an opportunity to hear about their student's SEL skills during family conferences.

We are excited to implement the DESSA beginning November 22, 2021. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Ms. Shirley Bryant, parent coordinator at (718)353-6464 EXT 1231 or email @ SBRYANT22@SCHOOLS.NYC.GOV.

If you do not want a staff member to complete the DESSA screener for your student, you must submit a written letter stating that. The letter must be returned to the homeroom teacher by November 19, 2021. This letter stating your opt out intention may also be emailed to Ms. Shirley Bryant, our parent coordinator at SBRYANT22@SCHOOLS.NYC.GOV

If you have any questions regarding social-emotional learning or the DESSA, please email Mr. Stephen Galizia, Assistant Principal at Sgalizi@schools.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,

Judith Friedman
Principal