



The Rose Certificate of Appreciation

*is presented to **The Academy of Talented Scholars (TAOTS)** by the New York Restoration Project and the New York City Department of Sanitation in recognition of its outstanding **Children's Corner at Seth Low Park**. Your creativity in building a community garden, as well as your beautification efforts have helped make New York City a cleaner and more beautiful place.*

Presented in June 2012




John Doherty, Commissioner




Bette Midler, Chair, NYRP

2012 Golden Apple Awards Contest Entry Judging Info

(This sheet prepared for judges' use by DSNY BWPRR)



ID Info: 12005
School: (TAOTS) THE ACADEMY OF TALENTED SCHOLARS
Grade Division LM
Borough: K

Golden Shovel Award contestant
(for borough Master School Composter)

2012 Project Entries received for:

School Population: total # 234

TrashMasters! Super Recyclers

Received:

Core Group:

Total Participating:

TrashMasters! Reduce & Reuse Challenge

Received:

TrashMasters! Team Up to Clean Up

Received: 4/30/2012

15

70

Superkids on a Mission: Children's Corner Beautification

The goal of Superkids on a Mission, which first began in February 2010, was for our students to learn that anyone could be like a Superhero because anyone could act like a Superhero. The students learned that Superheroes use their strengths and abilities to take care of others and make the world a better place to live in by solving problems and helping those in need. Overall, the purpose of the cluster is for children to understand a citizens social responsibility to their immediate community.

Prior Year Entries:

first entry

School Contact Information:

Phone: 718-621-2730
Address: 50 AVENUE P
Brooklyn 11204

Block&Lot: 3066180001
DOE Location: K682
DOE Bldg: K237

Contest Coordinator: Anne Casalan
Coord Phone (if different):
Coordinator Email: acasalan@taots.org

Principal: JOSEPHINE SPORTELLA-GIUSTO
Principal Email: JSportellaGiusto@schools.nyc.gov

REQUIRED for Super Recyclers only:

Custodian: ANDREW FONSECA
Custodian's Phone: 718-621-9751
Custodian's Email: ck237@schools.nyc.gov

Comments (may not be relevant to judging)

LUCRETIA MARCIGLIANO CAMPUS (2 schools)

Info Confirmed:

5/9/2012

Superkids on a Mission: TAOTS Children's Corner Beautification Project

School description

The Academy of Talented Scholars, Inc. (TAOTS) would like to respectfully submit our TAOTS *Children's Corner Beautification Project* to the New York City Department of Sanitation 2012 Trash Master Team Up to Clean Up! Contest for consideration.

TAOTS is choice school located at 50 Avenue P in the neighbourhood of Bensonhurst in Brooklyn, New York. TAOTS shares its building with two other schools; a District 75 school and The Brooklyn School of Inquiry. Currently, TAOTS comprises of 234 students from K-3 with plans to expand from K-5. Our student body is diverse both culturally and economically – over 60% of our students qualify for the free or reduce lunch program; almost 40% are non-White and 20% are English Language Learners. Additionally, TAOTS offers an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Nest program built on the Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) model, modified to meet the needs of higher functioning children with ASD. The program helps children with ASD learn how to function well academically, behaviorally and socially in school and in their community. The program creates a therapeutic environment in which the requisite supports are provided by a transdisciplinary team of specially trained educators and therapists. ASD Nest classrooms provide the same academic curriculum as other classrooms in our school on that grade level.

TAOTS was founded in 2009 by Principal Josephine Sportella-Giusto, who drew on her 15 years as a teacher to create the blueprint for TAOTS. TAOTS incorporates the Schoolwide Enrichment Model of Education (SEM) where hands-on-learning is emphasized and academics are fused with arts. SEMS is a model that is often used with gifted children and enables all children to explore their interests and discover individual areas of expertise. TAOTS believes that a creative learning environment will foster respect, confidence, and critical thinking skills through Inquiry and Project-based learning.

The enrichment clusters, which run for 8 weeks three times a year throughout the school year, are one of the highlights of TAOTS. Once a week during the school year, the entire student body participates in small groups to pursue special interests that enrich the overall educational experience. Current enrichment clusters include Top Chef, Tai Kwan Do, Math Wizards, Mad Scientists, Artsy Authors, Painting Pros and Superkids on a Mission. Clusters provide a hands-on approach to learning in an area of interest. Teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school personnel work with these groups to support and facilitate learning in all curriculum areas through the cluster. Teacher teams work collaboratively to create surveys, lessons, and culminating events to showcase the clusters. Parents are also encouraged to volunteer and assist the students and teachers during each cluster.

The goal of Superkids on a Mission, which first began in February 2010, was for our students to learn that anyone could be like a Superhero because anyone could act like a Superhero. The students learned that Superheroes use their strengths and abilities to take care of others and make

the world a better place to live in by solving problems and helping those in need. Overall, the purpose of the cluster is for children to understand a citizen's social responsibility to their immediate community.

Implementation

Given that our Superkids were learning about the concept of community for the first time, we decided to focus on helping their immediate school community during the first year. Student projects ranged from initiating a school wide campaign to collect spare change for books for their classrooms' libraries to educating the entire school student population about the importance of recycling and the specifics of the school cafeteria's recycling program. Our Superkids created posters that clearly marked what items were to be recycled and where by hanging these posters by the recycling bins in the cafeteria. They also patrolled the lunchroom at breakfast and lunch time to make sure that students put milk cartons in the proper receptacles for recycling, that the plastic cereal boxes and trays were piled up neatly for recycling in the proper place and that remaining garbage went into the garbage can. However, it was one of the Superkids' last school projects in 2010 – celebrating Earth Day by developing a school garden in our school yard in collaboration with a District 75 class- that solidified their conviction that *the community is where we live and it is up to us to maintain and take care of it.*

In partnership with the PTO of The Academy of Talented Scholars, Inc. (TAOTS)/Public School 682 (a 501(c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit corporation comprised of volunteer parents of students attending TAOTS and school staff), SuperKids on a Mission, reached out to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks and Recreation) in the Fall of 2011 to discuss possible collaborative opportunities for a beautification project.

With technical advice and support from Parks and Recreation, the Superkids on a Mission decided to collaborate with parent volunteers and school staff to create the *TAOTS Children's Corner (Children's Corner)* at Seth Low Park, a public park located across from the school in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. The *Children's Corner* will consist of a community garden and a play space with stencils of popular children's games including hop scotch, four square, etc. painted onto the dedicated space at Seth Low Park.

The Project will be rolled out in 3 Phases:

1. Phase I: General clean-up of the dedicated space at Seth Low Park with continuous maintenance of the area by Superkids, volunteer parents and school staff
2. Phase II: Images of children's games will be stenciled onto the dedicated space at Seth Low Park
3. Phase III: Flowers and plants will be planted onto the dedicated community garden space at Seth Low Park Park

On March 2012, 20 parent volunteers, TAOTS staff and Superkids partnered with staffs from the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation to roll out Phase I of our beautification project by sweeping and picking up almost 15 bags of debris and leaves from the dedicated *Children's Corner* at Seth Low Park. The plan is to implement Phase II on "It's My Park Day" on May 19, 2012 and Phase III in the Fall of 2012.

Project planning

The TAOTS *Children's Corner Beautification Project* will become an integral part of the TAOTS' Schoolwide Enrichment Model. The goal of the beautification project is threefold: 1) to allow students and parents to be connected to and to appreciate the resources in the city's parks; 2) to promote the importance of physical activity as a contributing factor to overall health; and lastly, 3) to enable students and parents to learn about social responsibility through community service by participating in the development of a community garden and dedicated play space.

The responsibility for the development and maintenance of the *Children's Corner* will be offered to students as an 8 week curriculum based enrichment cluster starting in the Fall of 2012 with Phase I starting in March 2012. Once a week students along with parent volunteers will get the opportunity to take part in the general clean-up of their park, learn about the history of Seth Low Park, steps each individual and the community can take to protect our natural environment and the importance of maintaining our natural resources. Students and parents will also get "hands on" experience with learning about what types of seeds and plants are appropriate for potting as well as preparing the grounds and planting the flowers and plants in the community garden. The culmination of this enrichment cluster will conclude with a field trip to Marine Park in Brooklyn where Urban Park Rangers would lead lessons at the Salt Marsh Nature Center and students, parents and TAOTS staff can hike through the Gerritsen Creek Nature Trail to observe the unique regional flora and fauna. Lastly, students participating in the *Beautification Project* will have the opportunity to showcase their project with the rest of the student body as well as community members at the conclusion of their community service project by sharing their experiences through a video and pictures documenting their journey and the lessons learned over the course of the 8 weeks.

Below is the proposed timeline for the project:

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Timeline</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• PTO, students and TAOTS staff work in collaboration with Parks and Recreation staff to pilot TAOTS <i>Children's Corner Beautification Project</i> including a general cleanup of the dedicated area, stenciling the dedicated area and working with Parks and Recreation to identify appropriate seeds for planting and potting, and developing lesson plans for the 8 week enrichment cluster curriculum in consultation with a gardener/horticulturist	May – June 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll out and implement the TAOTS <i>Children's Corner Beautification Project</i> including 8 week classroom curriculum and "hands on" experience including cleaning up dedicated area on a weekly basis and preparing the soil for a community garden at Seth Low Park and transferring the potted plants/flowers to a plot of soil at the identified space in Seth Low Park.	October – December 2012

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAOTS <i>Children's Corner Beautification Project</i> showcase at TAOTS auditorium attended by fellow students, parents and key community stakeholders 	December 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents, students and TAOTS staff take field trip to Marine Park led by Park Rangers from Parks and Recreation 	April 2013

The PTO of TAOTS/PS 682 recently secured funding from the Partnerships in Parks Capacity Fund to support the implementation for Phase III of our project – the development of a community garden as part of our beautification project. The Superkids, PTO and TAOTS staff will continue to work closely with Parks and Recreation throughout the year.

The PTO has also submitted a proposal to Lowe's Stores requesting for the donation of painting brushes, paint and a playground stencil kit for Phase II of our beautification project with the hope of an approval by May 2012.

Project Analysis

At the conclusion of the 8 weeks cluster, the *Children's Corner Beautification Project* will have engaged least 10 students, 5 parents and 2 TAOTS staff members to participate in the community project. In turn, the students will have educated at least 300 students, parents and key community stakeholders during a showcase presentation at TAOTS about how to appreciate our natural environment and our role as citizens to protect our environment through lessons taught by our TAOTS faculty and Parks and Recreation staff and the development of a community garden.

Quantitative feedback from students, parents and TAOTS will be collected to gauge the value and response to the *TAOTS Children's Corner Beautification Project*. Based on feedback, amendments will be made to improve the project as necessary. Future students participating in the enrichment cluster will continue to work in collaboration with Parks and Recreation staff to maintain and tend to the *Children Corner* at Seth Low Park. The plan is to have a total of 3 enrichment clusters during the school year, engaging a total of 30 students directly participating in the project, 15 parents and 2 TAOTS staff members. All the participants in the beautification project enrichment cluster will participate in the field trip at the end of the school year in Spring 2013. Additionally, the PTO and students will continue to explore other opportunities for collaboration for the mutual benefit of the community and the Seth Low Park.

The *TAOTS Children's Corner Beautification Project's* success will be based on the intrinsic rewards of motivating and enabling people to engage in community and public service.

SuperKids Recycling Project



Superkids for Planting Project for Earth Day



Superkids on a Mission at Seth Low Park cleaning up the TAOTS Children's Corner for Phase I of the beautification project.







