Coming Up

Wednesday, September 25
PTA General Meeting
6 - 7:30 p.m.
Childcare provided
ASL Interpreters Provided

Wednesday, October 2
LSAT Meeting
6 - 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 9
PTA Board Meeting
6 - 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 10
Brent Class Banner Parade
2:45 p.m.

Friday, October 11
Parent Teacher Conferences
No school for students
No Innovation Learning programming

Monday, October 14
Columbus Day
Brent Closed

Tuesday, October 15 - 18
Fall Family Days

Wednesday, October 16
Diversity Working Group Meeting
6 - 7:30 p.m.

JOIN US FOR THE FIRST PTA GENERAL MEETING OF THE FY19-20 SY!
Wednesday, September 25,
6-7:30pm. Pizza and childcare provided!
We are thrilled to welcome new and returning families to the first PTA General meeting of the year. Come find out what the PTA does; how you can contribute your voice, feedback and ideas to your child(ren) and the community’s experience at Brent, and help us plan an agenda for the year that’s responsive to things you hope to learn about, do something about, or contribute to at the school. Or just come for the pizza and good company!
Hope to see you there.
The Brent PTA Board
Genevieve, Nazanin, Kiana, Tara,
Second Graders Learn about the Anacostia Watershed

Second graders welcomed an educator from the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) into their classrooms last week to teach them about our local watershed and steps they can take to protect it. Students saw the dramatic impact that runoff and pollution can have on local waterways through an in-class experiment showcasing the benefits of green spaces, such as meadows, to absorb and filter rainwater. Second graders will be visiting Bladensburg Waterfront Park this week to experience the Anacostia River in person. Students will also be collecting native grass seeds to help with the current meadow restoration work being performed by the AWS.

Two Family Fundays for Latinx/Hispanic Heritage Month

The Diversity Working Group plans Family Fundays. These weekend “field trips” allow Brent families to explore a special event in the city together. We are excited to have two amazing events in connection with Latinx/Hispanic Heritage Month.

Last Saturday (9/21), two dozen Brent Bears went to a book signing at Eastern High School with Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court. See photos. In her new book, Just Ask/Solo Pregunta, Justice Sotomayor’s uses her own experience with having diabetes as a child to write about kids with all sorts of challenges and special powers, such as asthma, food allergies, Tourette’s syndrome and dyslexia. Her talk was followed by a question and answer session, including a question from Brent second grader Nora Baker. We left the event tired, inspired, and with autographed books in both English and Spanish for Brent’s Library. See photo.

Next Saturday (9/28) is the annual Hispanic Heritage Month Community Day at the Portrait Gallery. This year’s bilingual celebration is !Muevete! a festival of rhythms, dance, music and more. There will be performances by the Washington Ballet and Discovery Theater. The event runs from 11:30 to 3 p.m. A group of us will meet at Brent at 11 at take the metro to Gallery Place together. To RSVP or questions about the event or DWG, please contact Danielle at 202-262-5568 or Danielle@websterious.com

Brent Enrichment Spotlight - Mandarin and Spanish!

We value foreign language offerings and believe that high quality language programs demand high frequency and indepth. Our community solution? Enrichment language course! Signups are available via innovation learning (https://innovationlearning.com/brent-elementary/).

MANDARIN CHINESE
- PS3 - K: Monday / Wednesday from 3:45 - 4:45pm
- Grade 1-5: Monday / Wednesday from 4:45 - 5:45pm
- Cost: $499 for the fall semester
- Offered by Chinese Language Academy (https://www.clachinese.com)
- Small class sizes (targeting 6-10 students for younger grades and max of 15 for older grades)
- immersion setting with native teachers
- Below are links to a few videos from some of their other programs...
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn1hCbdC0C8&t=21s
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O19IYZML6xQ

SPANISH
- PS3 - K: Tuesday / Thursday from 3:45 - 4:45pm
- Grade 1-5: Tuesday / Thursday from 4:45 - 5:45pm
- Cost: $499 for the fall semester
- Offered by Mindbloom (https://www.mindbloompreschool.com/after-school.html)
- Immersion setting with native teachers and music/arts integration

We are excited to build these into the BRENT enrichment offerings! Gretchen Phillips, Brent parent, coordinated these offerings and is able to answer any questions families about the classes. Ms. Phillips can be reached at gretchen.phillips@gmail.com.
Diversity Working Group Updates

Save the Date: Multicultural Night is coming!

As part of an October-focused on community-building events, Brent’s annual Multicultural Night will be on Friday, October 25! Save the date for an evening of family fun with traditional foods, cultural artifacts, performances, crafts, and a fashion show! Interested in bringing food or artifacts, performing, or other kinds of volunteering? Sign up on https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1osyV8i38ilSkiHMHyNTA_QW9BaSLIDH1qG95CXcbPdnc/edit#gid=0. Please email Mr. Krohn at joshua.krohn@k12.dc.gov with any questions.

Reading Spotlight for Hispanic Heritage Month 2019

Dreamers by Yuyi Morales (40 pages) Morales left her home in Xalapa, Mexico and came to the US with her infant son. Caldecott Honor artist and six-time Pura Belpré winner’s gorgeous picture book is about making a home in a new place.

Alma and How She Got Her Name by Juana Martinez-Neal (32 pages) What’s in a name? For one little girl, her very long name tells the vibrant story of where she came from—and who she may one day be.

Imagine by Juan Felipe Herrera (32 pages) Juan Felipe Herrera taught himself to read and write English and filled paper pads with rivers of ink as he walked down the street after school. When he grew up, he became the United States Poet Laureate and read his poems aloud on the steps of the Library of Congress.

Turning Pages: My Life Story by Sonia Sotomayor (40 pages) Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor shares her inspirational story and love of books in a beautifully illustrated picture book autobiography.

Be Bold! Be Brave! Sé Audaz! Sé Valiente!: 11 Latinas who made U.S. history, 11 Latinas que hicieron historia en los Estados Unidos by Naibe Reynoso (32 pages) Bilingual book that highlights Latinas who excelled in their professions and made history by accomplishing something that hadn’t been done before in various fields, including medicine, science, sports, art and politics.

Silver Meadow Summer by Emma Otheguy (240 pages) Eleven-year-old Carolina’s summer is upended when Papi loses his job, and she and her family move from Puerto Rico to her Tía Cuca and Uncle Porter’s house in upstate New York. Now Carolina must attend Silver Meadows camp, where her bossy older cousin Gabriela rules the social scene.

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Each of these books is in the Brent library or DC public library collections.

Turning Pages: My Life Story by Sonia Sotomayor (40 pages) Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor shares her inspirational story and love of books in a beautifully illustrated picture book autobiography.

The First Rule of Punk by Celia Perez (336 pages) When Malu has to move away from her dad and everything she knows, she embarks on a new school journey, full of misadventures and hilarious life lessons. When classmates label Malu a “coconut,” she is determined to prove to her school and herself that she is proud of her Mexican roots.

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Brent PTA Spotlight
PTA Co-Presidents
Genevieve Taft Vazquez and
Nazanin Ash

On behalf of the Brent Community, thank you both for taking on the tremendous role of PTA co-presidents. Before we get started, how is the school year going for your families?

G: We are so happy to be back at school with friends and a terrific new set of teachers. My son, Diego, is in 4th grade and is getting adjusted to switching classrooms and to new homework routines and my daughter, Sofia, is in 1st grade and loves to play ‘school’ at home with her furry stuffed friends. On a personal note, this start to school is a lot better for our family than last year due to health issues so we are all happy!

N: It’s been great! Soraiya and Leila, our twins, are thrilled to be returning to Pre-K as the “big kids” in their classroom, Aila, our third grader, and Kian, our fourth grader, have loved getting to know Ms. Hill and Ms. Arbuckle. Aila is also loving her music class and learning the recorder, and Kian has found a new passion with the cross-country team.

Tell us a little about your educational and professional backgrounds?

G: I am a California native who thought we would be in DC for only a couple of years...that was 15+ years ago! Now we can’t imagine being anywhere else. I work on supply chain sustainability and human rights for The Coca-Cola Company so a lot of my work includes travel to one of the 200+ countries and territories where the Company operates.

N: I lead policy and advocacy for the International Rescue Committee, a global humanitarian organization responding to crises in 40 countries overseas and resettling refugees in 25 cities here in the United States. That followed a decade+ of international development work at the State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, and in the NGO sector. Like Genevieve, I’m a California native who never imagined I’d be calling DC home, but we feel lucky every day to be raising our family in our wonderful Capitol Hill community.

You both have many years of experience in Brent parent leadership roles both on the PTA and on the LSAT (Local School Advisory Team), why did you accept the position of co-presidents?

G: Brent has been an amazing part of our kids’ lives and our community overall - many of our teachers and the administration have gone above and beyond to make our experience meaningful. One of the things that struck me at Back to School night was the long tenure of many of the teachers. I believe this speaks to the strong sense of purpose and progress at the school and I’m looking forward to supporting that feeling of community as PTA co-president. Plus my PTA co-President is the best so I couldn’t resist!

N: Ha! Genevieve’s the one that made this possible. She teaches us all how to give back to community, how to take on big challenges with grace, and how to bring others into the fold. I love that Brent is a striving school, and that throughout my time here, parents have never hesitated to say “How can I help?” The Brent community identifies challenges together, solves challenges together, and celebrates our students, teachers, and community together. It’s inspiring!

The PTA has starting the school year off a sprint with so many terrific accomplishments – Week Zero faculty lunch, Family Welcome Picnic with a book and bake sale, student store enhancements, used uniform program, financial tracking upgrades and the launch of the Annual Fund, just to name a few – how will you keep the momentum going?

With the help of all of you! It’s awesome to see the level of engagement and willingness to volunteer among Brent families.
Leaders have stepped up from every corner to make things happen for our students, teachers and community. There are many ways to get involved and we hope every family will find a way to engage and share their ideas in a manner that works for their family. Come to a PTA meeting, join our upcoming school clean-up day, attend a listening session and find a committee get your volunteer clearance!

The first PTA General Meeting is tomorrow, Wednesday, September 25, 2019. What is on the agenda for the meeting?
The PTA meetings are a great time to share updates as well as collect feedback and questions from parents. With that in mind, we’ll drill down on the PTA budget, provide an update on committee activities, kick-off the Annual Fund and do breakout sessions to solicit ideas. We would like to invite guest speakers to a few PTA meetings so are looking forward to getting ideas for topics of interest.

What do you do both hope the Brent PTA achieves this year?
Our hope is that the Brent PTA provides the school with the support needed - both through volunteering and financially - to deliver on its goal of providing an outstanding education that meets the needs of individual students in an inclusive setting. The PTA budget supports many core academic and socio-emotional needs that help Brent deliver on its vision. We also think that support comes in the form of family engagement and feedback--parents and families have a key role to play in both helping the school understand our children and our community, and carrying forward the mission of the school such that our children succeed. We hope that each of the 300+ families at Brent use some forum this year - whether that is PTA meetings, online surveys, listening sessions or otherwise - to express what they love about the school and what they would like to see improved.

How should new families connect with the PTA and join the fun?
Come say hi to any of the PTA Board members on the blacktop, reach out by email or give us a call - just don’t leave either of us a voicemail because we never check it!). The committees are always in need of volunteers and it’s never too early to start thinking about joining the Board next year!

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines resilience as “the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress.” We think about resilience a lot at this time of year, in particular the range of resilience our students display and offer to their Brent community, and the still-developing skills of resiliency that we mold in response to intentional and unintentional adversity. Like the APA, we see resiliency as a skill that is necessary, beneficial, and able to be learned.

Over the last few years, DCPS has partnered with Turnaround for Children, a national organization with this mission: to translate neuroscientific research into tools and strategies for schools serving students impacted by adversity, in order to accelerate healthy development and academic achievement. This partnership acknowledges that so many of our students have experienced or are experiencing significant adversity outside of school and that those experiences are wide ranging in their definition and consequence. From the death of a loved one to the conditions of poverty, these traumas are often beyond the control of both the children who experience them and the adults who care for them. But our response is within our control. Our learning with Turnaround for Children gives us a sense of the impact of trauma on the brain, the strategies for creating a safe environment for those who have experienced trauma, and mechanisms for recognizing the positive resilience that can emerge. We seek to build trauma-responsive environments (physical and emotional safety, adult-child relationships and tiered supports), skills (self-regulation and relational), and mindsets (sense of belonging and purpose).

While we plan for a school environment that recognizes the big adversities often outside of our control, we also proactively introduce smaller moments of adversity as a way of building resiliency. We ask for two students to talk through a disagreement rather than solving it for them; we introduce new academic learning that requires students to try on many strategies before discovering the solution; or we help our students set big goals and plans for reaching them. We also allow for the natural emergence of adversity, such as a changing friendship or not getting a preferred choice.
We do not ask our students to face this adversity without support; many of the aforementioned trauma-responsive environments, skills and mindsets apply here as well. It also involves general supports over time that can be lifted up at home and at school. For more information, read through the APA’s tips for building resilience in children and teens.

As a Responsive Classroom school, our first six weeks of school are dedicated to building a community. And what might look like relatively simple activities of greeting peers, creating class names, contributing to class and school rules, or marching in a banner parade are in fact deeply intentional practices that bolster our response to adversity and foster a climate of belonging, significant and fun.

Sincerely,
Norah Lycknell
Principal
FUNDRAISING SEASON IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER!

Join the PTA General meeting this Wednesday, September 25th from 6 - 7:30 p.m. to learn about fundraising at Brent: the Annual Fund, PTA sponsored events, the allocation of funds, and what you can do to get involved.

Why Is Fundraising Important To The Brent Community?
Fundraising contributes to so many of the rich experiences we all cherish at Brent.

Government budgets are limited and restrictive but with a model like ours, not only can Brent attract and retain our wonderful team of teachers and staff, it can invest in robust programming to meet our families and children where they are year over year. Things like academic enrichment programs, rich recess and outdoor experiences, professional development for our educators, equipment in every classroom, diversity events and recitals and social/emotional activities to name a few. Brent is unique in that it has the ability to do this because the PTA works hard to fill the gap. This model is not typical for DCPS schools but is made possible by the funds we raise every year and the big role the PTA takes on in supplementing the budget.

Did you know that the Brent PTA provides funding for most non-personnel items in Brent’s budget so that the school can max out its DCPS budget on its personnel? This school year Brent’s Administration has zeroed out the non-personnel line item in the DCPS budget to focus dollars on teachers and staff. In doing so, Brent has placed extra support directly in the classroom with our focus teacher program, can fund additional teachers and staff where needed and focus on high levels of engagement and continuity in the school which was shown in last year’s 97% retention rate!

Separate from school supply and field trip fees, fundraising is crucial to our success. We need to work hard every year so that Brent can continue to ensure an enriching academic and social experience that benefits ALL of our children.

What Is the Annual Fund?
The Annual Fund kicks off Fundraising Season at Brent and is the largest of three major fundraisers at Brent. It runs from October 2nd - November 29th. The Annual Fund provides for 31% of our fundraising income and relies on direct contributions from community members. Though we provide recommended amounts, our goal is 100% participation and we ask that families contribute whatever they are able. For more information about the Annual Fund and how you can support Brent visit http://www.brentelementary.org/support-brent.html.

Annual Fund season is an exciting time. Not only do we raise funds that support our school, but we also host featured events like raffles and community coffees. Track our progress on the Annual Fund thermometer and let’s get to 100%!