

Stronger LEADERSHIP DAY Together

P.S. 74 Celebrates
15 Years of
Student-Led
Leadership



FUTURE LEADERS
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATIVE LEADERS

2025
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Cover (left to right) principal Susan Mazzeo and assistant principal Jennifer LaRuffa in the newly revitalized P.S. 74's Welcome Center



Student- Leaders

PHOTOGRAPHY BY FLES STUDENT-JOURNALISTS

ABDULRAHMAN, ONE OF OUR STUDENT-JOURNALISTS, ARRIVED IN THE U.S. JUST TWO YEARS AGO AS A BEGINNER ENGLISH LEARNER. AT FLES, HE QUICKLY DISCOVERED THAT HE WOULDN'T BE SITTING ON THE SIDELINES AND CHOSE TO TAKE ON THE ROLE OF A PHOTO-JOURNALIST. NOW, CONFIDENT IN HIS ENGLISH ABILITIES, HE IS READY TO MOVE ON TO MIDDLE SCHOOL, BRINGING HIS LEADERSHIP SKILLS WITH HIM. IN THIS PHOTOGRAPH, TAKEN BY ANOTHER ELL STUDENT-JOURNALIST, ABDULRAHMAN IS READY TO WELCOME LEADERSHIP DAY GUESTS AND TAKE THEIR PICTURES.



Celebrating 15 Years of Student-Led Leadership

2025 Leadership Day

BY ILYA GRIN RECANATINI

Standing confidently at the podium, fifth grader Nevaeh Kamara took a deep breath and scanned the packed auditorium. As Student Council President, she was no stranger to public speaking, but this moment was different. This was her final Leadership Day at P.S. 74 Future Leaders Elementary School. In a few short weeks, she would graduate and move on to junior high. But as she opened the 15th annual celebration of student leadership with poise and purpose, it was clear that Nevaeh, like so many before her, would carry the habits of leadership far beyond these hallways.





PRINCIPAL SUSAN MAZZEO AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL JENNIFER LA RUFFA AT THE RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY AT PS 74'S NEWLY REVITALIZED WELCOME CENTER, WHICH SYMBOLIZES COMMUNITY AND INCLUSION

2025 Leadership Day marked a major milestone: fifteen years since the founding of P.S. 74, a Lighthouse-certified school rooted in Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective Kids. This year's theme, "Stronger Together", spotlighted Habit 6: Synergy, emphasizing the power of collaboration, student voice, and a shared vision.

While the Welcome Center had always existed, it was recently reimaged as a true point of pride. Now, as students and families enter the building, they are greeted by a vibrant, student-painted mural depicting a lighthouse and a sunrise, familiar symbols from the school's logo. The lighthouse's rainbow-colored rays reflect the diversity of student voices, while bold letters spell out "Welcome", capturing the spirit of warmth that defines P.S. 74's culture.





RETURNING ALUM BRAYAN RAMOS VICENTE DELIVERED A SPEECH ON HOW THE “7 HABITS OF HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL KIDS” LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR HIS SUCCESS

**“Without the 7 Habits,
I wouldn’t be the
person I am today”**

Following the ceremony, guests made their way to the campus auditorium at PS 16 for the main assembly. Student leaders like Nevaeh and Vice President Morium Taskin served as emcees, guiding the audience through a program that honored the past, celebrated the present, and looked toward the future.



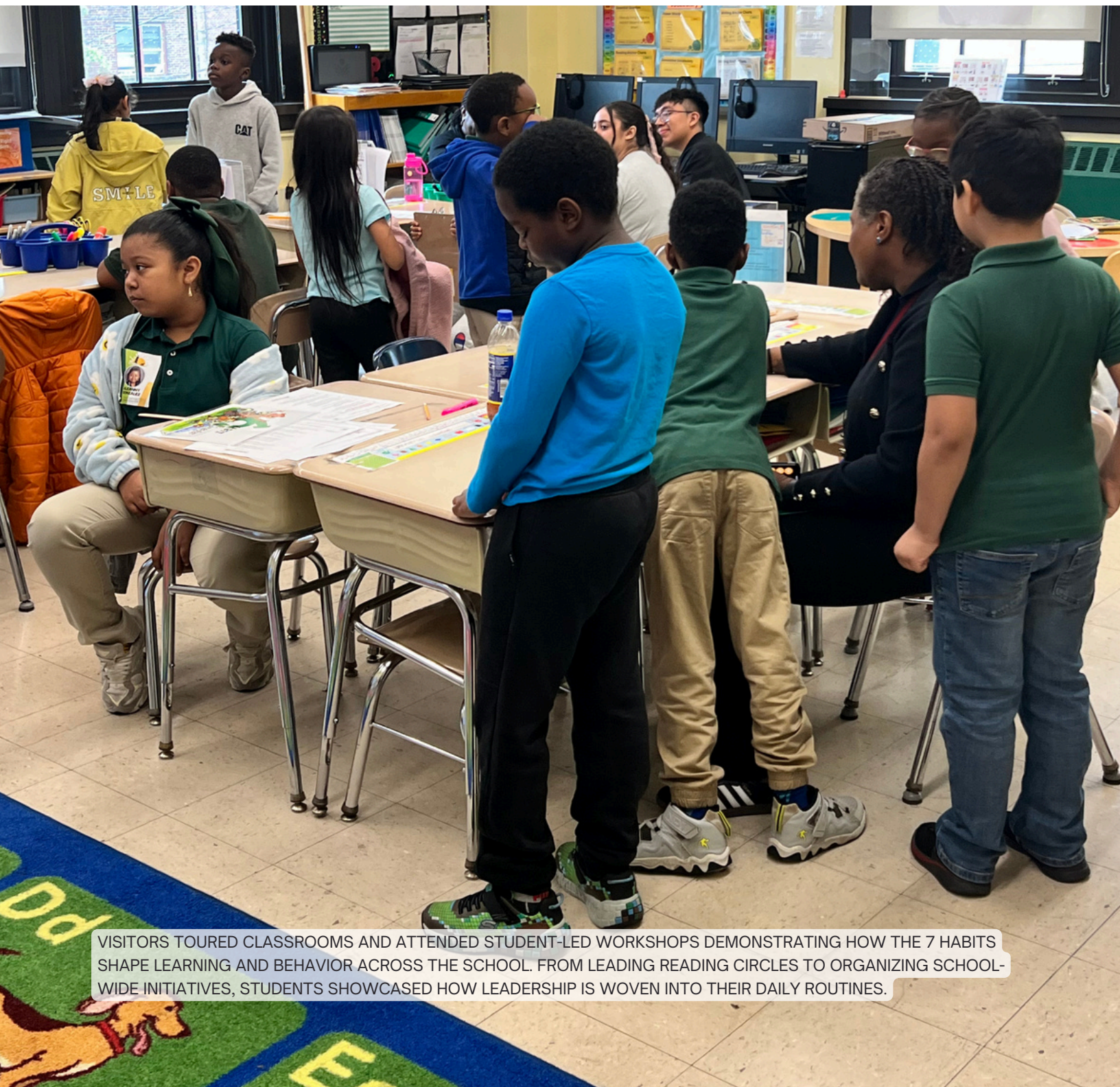
A touching keynote from Isabel Simmons, one of P.S. 74’s founding teachers, reflected on the school’s earliest days. “We turned a group of strangers into a team and, eventually, a family,” she recalled. Sitting in the audience was Dr. Nicole Reid Christopher, the visionary who launched the school in 2010. She looked on with emotion as her legacy was honored by students, staff, and alumni alike. That legacy was echoed by returning alum Brayan Ramos Vicente, now a third-year engineering student at The Cooper Union. “Without the 7 Habits, I wouldn’t be the person I am today,” he shared, crediting the school’s leadership framework for preparing him to meet life’s academic and personal challenges.



DR. NICOLE REID CHRISTOPHER, THE FOUNDER WHO ESTABLISHED THE SCHOOL IN 2010, WATCHED WITH HEARTFELT EMOTION AS STUDENTS, STAFF, AND ALUMNI CELEBRATED HER ENDURING LEGACY

Throughout the day, visitors toured classrooms and attended student-led workshops demonstrating how the 7 Habits shape learning and behavior across the school. From leading reading circles to organizing school-wide initiatives, students showed how leadership is woven into their daily routines.

Assistant Principal Jennifer La Ruffa and newly appointed Principal Susan Mazzeo both emphasized that leadership at P.S. 74 is not confined to special events. “Future leaders aren’t born, they’re made,” Mazzeo said, thanking the school’s staff and families for cultivating a culture where leadership is lived, not taught.



VISITORS TOURED CLASSROOMS AND ATTENDED STUDENT-LED WORKSHOPS DEMONSTRATING HOW THE 7 HABITS SHAPE LEARNING AND BEHAVIOR ACROSS THE SCHOOL. FROM LEADING READING CIRCLES TO ORGANIZING SCHOOL-WIDE INITIATIVES, STUDENTS SHOWCASED HOW LEADERSHIP IS WOVEN INTO THEIR DAILY ROUTINES.



This year, the fifth-grade class also debuted a special performance of *"This Is Us"*, an original rewrite of *"This Is Me"* from *The Greatest Showman*. The new lyrics were crafted by teacher Amanda Stine in collaboration with Wanda Sousa and Melissa Ortiz, making the song a powerful addition to the school's growing repertoire. Centered on themes of finding one's voice, embracing confidence, and staying true to oneself, the song captured the essence of the day's celebration. As the students sang about strength and self-belief, the message rang clear: leadership begins with knowing who you are.

The event closed with a student leader panel in the cafeteria, where students fielded questions from guests and reflected on what leadership means to them. "Leadership is using your voice to help others," said fourth-grader Arnisha Biswas. "It means doing the right thing, even when it's hard."



"Leadership is using your voice to help others. It means doing the right thing, even when it's hard."





5TH GRADE STUDENTS PERFORM “THIS IS US”, A NEW OFFICIAL SCHOOL SONG CREATED BY AMANDA STINE IN COLLABORATION WITH WANDA SOUSA AND MELISSA ORTIZ, TO THE TUNE OF “THIS IS ME” FROM THE GREATEST SHOWMAN

“Our best days are still ahead, and we will get there – *stronger together*”



CIVICS TEACHER, DIANE ANSELMO, WITH HER STUDENT LIGHTHOUSE PANEL ANSWERING VISITOR'S QUESTIONS

Belinda Fida, the newly appointed Lighthouse Coordinator, reminded everyone that leadership extends beyond school walls. “We are a Lighthouse school not because we’re perfect, but because we strive to be a light for others.”

As the fifth-grade leaders performed the school’s traditional Friday Song and guests offered hugs and handshakes, the spirit of the day lingered. It was a testament to the school’s enduring mission.

“Our best days are still ahead,” Fida said. “And we will get there – stronger together!” ■

The Founding Team Reunited

At the heart of the group stands Dr. Nicole Reid Christopher, flanked by Isabel Simmons and Elizabeth McMullen. This powerful trio penned the proposal that laid the groundwork for the P.S. 74. Framing them are two other pivotal figures: on the left, Wanda Sousa, a founding ENL teacher & creative leader who continues to enrich P.S. 74 with her dedication, and on the right, Deneen Adams, the indispensable school secretary who has been a cornerstone since day one. Together, they represent the enduring spirit and collaborative effort that built this educational community from the ground up.



**Stronger
Together**



Opening doors for tomorrow's leaders

**P.S. 74
FUTURE LEADERS
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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