

The Cooking Room

Promoting food literacy in public schools

The Cooking Room Set to Launch Standardized Curriculum at Public School 3 in New York City's West Village

~ Pilot Program is First of its Kind to Offer Dedicated On-Site Cooking Classroom ~

The Cooking Room, a 501(c)3 non-profit whose mission is to educate and empower kids (grades K-5) about the food choices they make through hands-on learning in dedicated kitchen classrooms, will be rolling out a new standardized curriculum this fall at Public School 3 (PS3) in Manhattan's West Village, the site of its pilot program. The curriculum will lay out lesson plans that will directly utilize and reinforce the grade-appropriate curricula set forth by the Department of Education. To create this curriculum, The Cooking Room team enlisted the help of **Julie Negrin, M.S.**, a certified nutritionist, cooking instructor, and author of *Easy Meals to Cook with Kids*, who was assisted by **Ann Yonetani, PhD.**, a teacher at the New School in the Food Studies department.

After spending most of last year in the classroom, testing lesson plans to see what worked and what could be improved, the program's co-founders, **Zakary Pelaccio**, the creative force behind the **Fatty Crew** (Fatty Crab, Fatty 'Cue, Fatty Snack), parent of a PS3 student, **Claudia Bellini**, **Marion Rosenfeld** and **Phil Gutensohn** of the **French Culinary Institute**, soon realized a more integrated curriculum that would shadow what the kids were learning in their other classes would help elevate what they were trying to achieve. Now, with Julie and Ann on board, the program is set to break boundaries in the realm of elementary education and school nutrition.

With the support of **PS3's Principal Lisa Siegman**, Zakary and his team's vision for a dedicated kitchen classroom where teaching elementary school kids how to create tasty food with real, fresh, non-processed ingredients could come together with, and reinforce, the standard school curricula to empower, inform and excite kids about the food choices they make.

"When we inherited a room fully equipped for middle school science, I immediately thought of the amazing work that Zakary had been doing in a regular K/1 classroom and suspected that he could take a full advantage of the upgrade" recalls Ms. Siegman. "I am thrilled with the way that he and his team are working to bring together experts in cooking and nutrition science, and consulting with our teachers, to construct a curriculum that integrates theoretical and hands-on components. Based on his past work, I expect that it will be fully engaging and produce learning that is durable and fun."

A staunch supporter of improving school nutrition and teaching kids about the beauty, taste and fun of using fresh ingredients, Zakary also connected PS3 with another project near and dear to his heart, **The Urban Farm at The Battery**, to bring kids together with fresh produce grown for The Cooking Room in Manhattan's only urban farm. Not only do the kids get to see, touch and taste vegetables cultivated less than a mile away down in The Battery, they also get real hands-on lessons in science, mathematics and geography.

The Cooking Room's pilot program at PS3 is on its way to becoming a model for other schools, but still has a long way to go before that can happen. This new standardized curriculum is one of many steps the team has taken to constantly evolve and improve, and with continued dedication and support, the face of school nutrition and food education will be changed forever.

For more information on The Cooking Room, visit www.thecookingroom.org.