

New Voice Middle School Love Your Block Grant Application

Section 1: General Information

1. **What is the name of your group or school?**
New Voices Middle School of Academic & Creative Arts/M.S. 443 Parent Association (PA)
2. **What is your project's name, if any?** NV Beautification
3. **Two contact names for your group:**

Contact 1 Name:	Contact 1 Phone #:	Contact 1 Email:
Michele Israel	718-788-4096	malamu@optimum.net
Contact 2 Name:	Contact 2 Phone #:	Contact 2 Email:
Gina Stormont	917-496-1287	ginastormont@newvoicesbrooklyn.com
4. **What is your group's mailing address?**
330 18th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215
5. **In what neighborhood and borough does your group work?**
The school is based in South Slope, Brooklyn.
6. **When was your group formed - month and year?**
The school's PA officially became a tax-exempt organization in October 2010.
New Voices was established in 2003.
7. **If your group is new, is this the first project it is undertaking?** NA
8. **If your group is on the web (Facebook, website, blogs, etc.), please list the URLs.**
Main website: <http://newvoicesms443.org/>
Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/NewVoicesMs443>
9. **Has your group received a *Love Your Block* grant before? If yes, when?** NA
10. **Please briefly describe your group's purpose, history, and accomplishments.**

New Voices was established to provide students (grades 6-8) with a challenging educational environment in which instruction in core academic subjects is infused with and enhanced by the integration of the visual and performing arts. The school's philosophy centers on the arts as a mechanism for the enhancement of students' artistic passions and talents, intellect, creative innovation, and self-discipline. Thus, since its inception, New Voices has offered electives and concentrated instruction in the disciplines of visual arts, dance, instrumental music, chorus, theatre, and graphic arts.

New Voices was originally a program within M.S. 142; it became an independent middle school in 2003. Over the last 10 years, under the leadership of Principal Frank Giordano, the school has built a solid reputation as a solid, balanced academic and performance arts school in Brooklyn and around the city. Prior to Mr. Giordano's leadership, the school was not ranked well, and had greater recognition for its unruly students and poor academic status. It is now one of the most highly desired Brooklyn middle schools.

New Voices serves 531 students. Demographically, the student body breaks down approximately as follows: 40%-Hispanic; 27%-White; 15%-African American; 18%- mix of multi-racial, Asian, American Indian, and others not identified. While New Voices is no longer a Title I school, almost 50% of the student body remains eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Academics Mr. Giordano emphasizes academic proficiency, as evidenced by the intensive programming described below. Note that New Voices is an inclusive school, catering to students at varied academic levels and those with special learning needs. Thus, each academic class involves collaborative team teaching (CTT), with two teachers on every grade level who address students' specific different learning needs and styles. (For full curricular details, log onto <http://newvoicesms443.org/>; go to the Academics button on the navigation bar.)

- *Mathematics*: New Voices balances basic skills and conceptual understanding as students build new mathematical ideas and then practically apply these skills and knowledge. Students have 90 minutes of math instruction daily, taught via “the workshop model” that allows the students to explore and make discoveries. The school offers Regents math classes.
- *Humanities*: The school uses an interdisciplinary, understanding-based approach to the teaching of ELA and Social Studies. Students meet for three periods each day. Reading, writing, and the study of history, geography, and current events are blended together.
- *Science*: This subject engages students in hands-on lab activities, as well as in an integration of literacy and mathematics. Students have five periods of science per week, including weekly labs. The school offers Regent science classes.
- *Technology*: The Computer Graphic Arts (this a main component of the school's expansive arts programming) studio features a full class set of iMac computers. Students use a variety of applications such as Appleworks, MSWord, Power Point, HyperStudio, Adobe Photoshop, and Illustrator. Students also use technology in the music studio, while learning the keyboard and recording. The school has several mobile rolling computer labs, I-Pad carts for the 30 i-Pads the school recently purchased, and smart boards for teacher and student use. All students are now using ALEKS (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces), a web-based learning system that supports our students' math progress.
- *Foreign Language*: Eighth graders have four periods a week of Latin.

While the principal recognizes that testing is here to stay, and has some value in supporting student achievement, it does not greatly interrupt the regular academic schedule. Instead, 6th grade students currently have an extended day to strengthen math and ELA skills in preparation for standardized exams.

Arts Programming New Voices centers its arts instruction on the visual arts, dance, instrumental music, chorus, theatre, and graphic arts. All of the arts programming at New Voices is aligned with the NYC DOE *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning*, and supports the *Common Core Learning Standards* in ELA and Math.

Sixth graders have classes in all six arts subjects in order to develop their understanding of the unique qualities of each art form, and experience and appreciate the elements that unite the arts across disciplines. In the 7th grade, students select one art discipline as their “major” that they will continue through the 8th grade. A typical 7th and 8th grader studies his or her art form three to four times a week, an hour and a half each time. Students also prepare and document work in portfolios that are particularly critical to admissions requirements for arts-specialized high schools.

Throughout the year, students in all grades have a variety of opportunities to present their work to the greater community. They take pride in their concerts, performances and art-installations. Among the myriad annual performances are the 7th and 8th grade winter and spring chorus and dance shows and band concerts, the 8th grade theater performance, the school musical (this year, *Guys and Dolls*); and

the 6th grade dance showcase. Accompanying these productions are many rehearsal hours and in-class training that involves additional theater/stage presence and activity.

Recognition New Voices has much to boast about; the following highlights several of these successes.

- The NYC DOE Office of Arts and Special Projects named New Voices as one of ten Exemplar Sites for Arts Education.
- According to a rating posted on *The Schoolboards.com*, New Voices placed among the Top 20 Brooklyn Middle Schools based on the 2013 NY State Math & ELA tests.
- New Voices received an A on its 2011-2012 and 2012-13 DOE Progress Reports
- In the 2011 *NY Times* article “As Best Schools Compete for Best Performers, Students May Be Left Behind,” New Voices is featured as among the more desired Brooklyn District 15 middle schools
- In the 2012 *WNYC* piece “Middle School Grades Reflect High School Prep,” New Voices is cited as a school that excels in preparing middle school students for high school, determined by how 8th graders actually perform in the 9th grade.
- *Inside Schools.org*, in its October 2012 piece “Noteworthy special education: middle schools,” places New Voices among five Brooklyn schools noted for its special education services, in this case collaborative team teaching
- In 2010, *The Blackboard Awards: Honoring Excellence in Education* recognized New Voices as a Rising Star Middle School.
- In 2008, the *Daily News* listed New Voices as one of the Brooklyn schools cited as among New York City’s best public schools.
- Chorus teacher, Dr. Amy Musick, has been working on the citywide Arts Achieve project for four years, helping to design a citywide Arts Assessment in Music connected to the NYC DOE *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Music* and *the Common Core Capacities for Career and College Readiness*. Dr. Musick is also part of the citywide curriculum design team creating new lesson plans to add to the Common Core Library.
- The New York State Dance Education Association gave New Voices dance instructor Michael Kerr a “thumbs up” acknowledgement because of his contributions to dance education. Mr. Kerr was also one of the NYC DOE dance teachers who contributed to the NYC DOE publication *Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance*
- Teacher Ghazi Albuliwi recently received public and press recognition for a film he wrote and directed.

11. List your neighborhood’s:

Community Board #: 7

State Senator: Sen. Kevin S. Parker

Congressional Representative: Nydia Velazquez

Council Member: Carlos Menchaca

Assembly Member: Felix Ortiz

12. How did you hear about *Love Your Block*?

Announcement from Citizens Committee via an e-mail update

Section 2: Project Description

1. Please describe your block in detail. Include an estimate of block demographics and its commercial/residential mix.

One side of 18th Street, between 6th and 7th Avenues, is comprised of DOE schools: M.S. 88 and New Voices, and P.S. 295 (New Voices and 295 share the building). At the end of the street, on 6th Avenue, between 18th and 19th Streets, is a NYC community playground. Across the street from the schools and playground are residential apartment buildings, small in stature, and a mix of either co-ops/condos, rentals and private homes. Some are more recent construction, with others being “native” to the community. About a quarter way into the block from 7th Avenue, and above the Prospect Expressway, is a small dog park. The block has mixed demographics, probably with the larger numbers of residents being Hispanic and White.

2. What are some of the specific concerns you have about the physical appearance of the block? (Photographs attached)

For the NV Beautification project, there are three components:

- 1) The primary focus is the entrance to New Voices, a large concrete veranda that perhaps, historically, had more stature in terms of its architecture, but is now an open, bland space with no green elements at all. The veranda is a highly visible element in the community, and thus beautifying it with greenery makes the surrounding block a bit nicer. But more so, makes the school a greener, more inviting place for students, teachers, parents, and all other school staff.
- 2) The school has a large yard on the side that is considered the “play area” but is, in fact, just a vast, black top space with no green elements. It is used by students, the outside community (it is rarely locked, so other young people in the neighborhood play there), and by P.S. 295, especially for its weekly green market. While not an eyesore, it is also a very visible community site that could benefit from greenery...and thus benefit the school and block.
- 3) There are 14 trees on the block; most of them have tree guards (except for a few, which we as a school, in partnership with block residents, hope to mount), but the trees are not tended to appropriately. We plan to partner with our neighbors for tree care training and stewardship, with students taking the lead in making sure there are sufficient amounts of mulch, soil, and water for the trees, and planting flowers to beautify the tree beds.

3. How will your group improve the physical appearance of the block?

As partially noted above:

- 1) Students, teachers, and parents will plant flowers and small shrubs, and or small trees in self-watering planters on the veranda in front of the school and the iron fencing around the veranda.
- 2) Students, teachers, and parents will open portions of the black top in the yard to plant trees.
- 3) Students, parents, and teachers will partner with community residents to participate in tree stewardship and then care for the trees, from soil/mulch management to watering to planting tree-friendly flowers and/or plants.

4. Please list the City services that your group will request; note that each group is required to utilize at least one City service through the Love Your Block grant.

The NV Beautification Project clearly needs and will greatly benefit from the Department of Parks and Recreation Tree Survey, Tree Stewardship, and Gardening Mulch offerings.

5. Please include a detailed action plan that indicates the various steps your group will take to carry out the block improvement project, following the format below.

Action	Person or people responsible for carrying out the action	Date(s) the action(s) will take place	Intended outcome(s)
Recruitment of New Voices students, teachers, parents, and other school staff	Michele Israel, PA Grant writing Committee Chair; Jeremy Burnworth, 8 th Grade Science teacher Dr. Amy Musick, Chorus teacher Cherize Austin-DeSota, New Voice parent heading up greening efforts	Outreach has already begun Extended, more focused outreach to students and parents will occur late February, early March 2014	Generate interest among varied school community members in greening efforts; recruit core group to jumpstart proposed school and community beautification; encourage broader thinking about additional beautification/greening efforts to undertake on the block
Active fundraising and solicitation for donations and garden support	Michele Israel and grant writing committee members	Fundraising has begun and will be ongoing throughout 2014	Raise base funds for initial beautification materials/supplies; further funding contacts for continued beautification/greening efforts moving forward
Beautification planning	Core group of parents, students, and teachers	Late February, early March	Solidify designs for veranda in front of the school and large play yard, decisions about tree guards for unprotected trees on the block; identifying potential donors for plants and seeds, and related gardening supplies/equipment; discussing with science teacher ways to engage youth in curriculum-connected science learning (Butterfly Project -- http://butterflyprojectnyc.org/about/) is a part of this teaching/learning)

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Outreach to community members interested in partnering with school beautification group (identify, if existing, block association)	Core group, with emphasis on student outreach to generate civic engagement interest and skills	Early-mid March; continued planning through end of March	Generate partnership with small group of active neighbors to work not only on tree care but also to contribute to the school beautification effort; organize a meeting of school and community members to plan work date
Flyers and letters to neighbors to attend meeting at New Voices or other local venue	“	“	“
Upon receipt of funding and purchase of materials, organize beautification team for work day	School/community beautification team	Mid-April planting season (full day of work to mount planters, plant, put up tree guards, etc.)	Start of beautification
Second work day and community event (event to be discussed during earlier planning) to showcase beautification efforts	School/community beautification team	April 26-27 (one day for work, the other for the community showcasing event)	Completion of beautification, celebrating beautification: event will include school and local community members, local public officials, press, if doable
Tree survey	NYC Parks Dept. with the school/community beautification team	Early May	Analyze health of block trees; create action plan for tree stewardship
Tree stewardship training (perhaps two sessions)	School/community beautification team with Dr. Musick and NYC Tree Stewardship	Mid-may	Ensure that beautification team and local community understands how to care for trees on the block; provide strategies and build stewardship skills
Garden maintenance	School/community beautification team	Immediately after planting and through spring and onward, with focus on summer watering/maintenance	Create solid plan for maintenance and upkeep

6. What materials does your group already have access to that will support your project?

Because this beautification/greening initiative is literally a first for the school/PA, there are no existing gardening tools, materials, etc. However, the grant writing committee is actively fundraising for this project, establishing partnerships with greening/gardening groups (Michele Israel, heading up the project, launched a very successful and visible garden at PS 107 in Brooklyn, leads a school wide network of school and youth gardeners, and has multiple relationships with individuals and organizations (such as NYC GreenThumb, Brooklyn Botanic Garden Community Garden Alliance and Brooklyn Urban Gardeners, GROW to Learn, Million Trees NYC, etc.) that can assist this project.

7. What materials do you need? Please provide a budget that includes all planned expenses related to the project, following the format below. Your budget items should total up to \$1,000.

Note that we are in the process of writing grants to other groups in order to underwrite additional project costs. For this budget, we focus on some materials for tree care and start-up for the school's front entrance. If some of these materials are available through NYC, vendors, partners, etc., for free, funds will be applied to other supplies. We will alter the budget and submit to CCNYC for approval.

Item	Description of use	(Optional) Source/Vendor	Cost (estimated)
9 4' self-watering window boxes	To mount on the iron gates in front of the school	Gardener's Supply Company (gives 25% discount to schools)	\$582
20 bags of organic soil	For planters and tree pits	Shannon's Garden Center, Brooklyn	\$140
Seedlings/plants	For tree pits and planters	Shannons (and donations through partnerships)	\$100
Shrubs	For large planters	Shannons (and in-kind Donations)	\$178
	Total:		\$1,000

7. How will your group reach out to your neighbors to encourage participation? How will you involve them? How many individuals do you expect to participate?

The school-based beautification team will reach out to community members on the block. We hope to encourage participating students to take the lead on this: create and distribute flyers, set up an “orientation” table in front of the school that highlights plans and invites neighbors to get involved, and related approaches the team (students in particular) decide to undertake. We are confident that with parents, teachers, students, and community members, we are likely to have 20 or more enthusiastic participants with various skills to contribute to the project

8. How will your group work with local businesses and community-based organizations?

The following is a short list of ways we will partner with/engage local businesses and community-based organizations:

- Outreach to nurseries/plant centers for donations and/or discounts on supplies
- Outreach to lumber suppliers (Dykes in particular)
- Partnership with local greening/environmental organizations (such as those named in question six)
- Outreach to local media for coverage of efforts
- Request for sponsorship or in-kind donations for beautification efforts
- Work with P.S. 295, which currently has an edible garden, for shared support and supplies

9. How does your group plan to sustain the positive changes your project will create? (e.g., For a block cleanup, what is your group’s plan for keeping the block clean?)

The mini “garden” at the school will be easily maintained by parents, participating teachers, and students. The beautification committee will invite one or two community members to maintain oversight of the street trees. Once key members are about to move on from the project, “succession planning” will allow for others to fill their slots toward project longevity. One other option is to establish an after-school greening program that would be responsible for beautification oversight, along with the development and implementation of related projects.

Section 3: Block Event Dates

Indicate the weekend on which you will hold your event by placing an ‘E’ by that date. Also, indicate a ‘rain date’ weekend by placing an ‘R’ by that date. **Please note that this is a firm date, so please discuss it with your group before making a decision.**

2014 Love Your Block Event Dates

_____ April 19-20	_____ May 31 – June 1
x _____ April 26-27	_____ June 7-8
_____ May 3-4	_____ June 14-15
_____ May 10-11	_____ June 21-22
_____ May 17-18	_____ June 28-29
_____ May 24-25	



Love Your Block
DSNY Services Form

Groups are asked to complete the following form in order for City agencies to track service requests. Requests are due with application by February 20, 2014.

Contact information

Group name: New Voices Middle School Parent Association

Project location: 330 18th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11215

Contact person: Michele Israel

Telephone number: 718-788-4096

Email address: malamu@optimum.net

Available Services

1. Graffiti Clean Up

Address of Graffiti Location: _____

2. Replacement of worn out litter baskets

Intersection: _____ and _____
(Street 1) (Street 2) (Specific Corner: NW, NE, SW, SE)

3. Would someone like to adopt an existing litter basket on your block? Yes /No X

Name of Adopter: _____ Phone Number: _____

4. Cleaning of vacant lots Address _____
(Indicate nearest address)

5. Enforcement

Describe Violation/Offense _____

Location: on _____ from _____ to _____
(Main Street) (Cross Street) (Cross Street)

6. Collection services of refuse bags generated from the clean up

Clean up date: _____ Specific Location: _____