

Citizens of the World enrollment nearly doubles since September

By Andrew Shilling

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Citizens of the World charter school has now been open for nearly four months, and while gathering minimum attendance of 100 students was difficult in the beginning, the new North Brooklyn school has since met and exceeded their requirements.

Protests and opposition from the community came last summer prior to opening the Williamsburg branch, which is co-located on the third floor of M.S. 126, but Principal Meredith Cronk said she remained optimistic about their success.

“I think that was one of the things that made people very nervous initially because the school is in a middle school,” Cronk said. “But that changed once parents could come in here and see that our space is very well contained. There’s no traffic from other schools and we have a separate entrance.”

Although SUNY, the school's authorizer, put the school on probation for low enrollment numbers in October 2013, Cronk said their recruitment efforts and outreach has filled the school at 424 Leonard St., which now has an attendance of 106 and growing, however they are still on probation.



Students study grammar at Citizens of the World Charter Schools.



Principal Meredith Cronk

“We did a lot of outreach to let people know that we were open, and they could come see the school,” she said, adding that they also offer bus service to students commuting from the surrounding neighborhoods. “A lot of the original founding families spread the word in their communities.”

Cronk said the school is right where they want to be, and while they were originally forced to remove one of their first grade classes back in October, all four classes are back in full operation and the staff has once again rebounded to 10 full-time teachers.

With two certified teachers appointed to each class, one acting as the lead teacher and other as an associate, the school is able to break classes up into small groups and target individual lessons towards different skill levels among students.

“It’s a model that a lot of other schools have adopted in elementary schools as a way of getting that small class size,” Cronk said.

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Mark Comanducci, executive director of CWC, said the school has been able to operate solely on per pupil taxpayer funding for local charter schools, providing \$13,500 per student, however they plan to begin fundraising in the future.

“Right now, due to the ‘per people funding,’ we haven’t had to do much fundraising as of yet,” Comanducci said. “We would want to, but we are able to operate on the per people funding from the state of New York.”

Comanducci added that while he is not only confident in their financial standing going into the spring semester, he is also pleased with their work at getting the numbers up to where they need to be.

“We spend a lot of time investing time in the community,” he said. “We try to work with as many daycares and preschools as possible, expose them to what our school is and what we are trying to do, and they advocate to other families.”

Looking forward to 2014, Cronk said there is an abundance of applications already in and the school is expecting to continue their initial plans of adding another kindergarten class in 2014, as well as 2nd grade classes for those moving on from first grade.

“Right now, even with a little bit of attrition, our first and second grade classes should be full for next year,” she said. “We’re also seeing a big uptick in applications from District 14.”



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