



The Harbor Reporter

Winter 2008 Volume 31, Issue 2

INSIDE

Portrait of
Gestures Superstar
Rosa Cabrera

French Minister
for National Education
Xavier Darcos
visits The Harbor

Interview with
Alexis Clark
by Mentee, Leah Rizer



**Executive Director
Hans Hageman**

Our economy and our country's place in the world are poised for dramatic restructuring. If our education system evades the same scrutiny that is now being paid to the way we have done business, then we will be guilty of negligence of the highest order. Students must learn to decode the symbols of our language and they must feel comfortable manipulating the symbols for computation. We know what works for improving basic literacy and numeracy and we now just have to develop the will to implement the knowledge. These two basic tools drive students on the path to college readiness. A larger concern for all children from primary to teen should be how they are doing with the "life prep" curriculum.

When you walk into any kindergarten classroom and ask the students how many of them can sing, dance, and draw, just about every hand goes up. When you ask this same question in a sixth grade classroom, only a few hands go up. What happens? Does this have any impact on our preparation for life? Pablo Picasso said, "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once the child grows up." The "problem" is now becoming manifest. Creativity and passion are wrung out of us during our school years and this fact has had and will have an increasingly adverse impact on our nation's ability to navigate the difficult times ahead.

In the recent past it was good enough to get children on the path to college and then on the road to a good job. Schools provided the most useful subjects for the world of work. All children needed to do was become adept and obedient manipulators of symbols in the language arts and in math. The "different" or the "difficult" children are weeded out. Our standardized testing regimes do not allow students to be wrong – and you need to be prepared to be wrong if you are ever going to do anything original. We now have to ask ourselves, "What have we been preparing our children for?" Who is prepared to confidently predict the social, cultural, economic, or political landscape that will exist even three years from now? When students contemplate careers they have to first ask themselves if their dream job can end up overseas or be done by a computer.

The accompanying articles will provide a glimpse into how much the Harbor values cognitive diversity. Like Sir Ken Robinson, we view intelligence as diverse, dynamic, and distinct. This also means that it is not susceptible to easy measurement. We know that the country's financial troubles will fall hardest on the most vulnerable – the children who we serve. Regardless of the turmoil around us, we have no choice but to continue, in an even more direct fashion, to develop young people who are confident, creative, and in control. We will teach them to develop and maintain critical awareness and not just go on autopilot as other people make decisions about their futures. We must inspire a heroic imagination in children and develop in them the courage and the skills to implement that heroic vision. Our goal is to create young people who are different, difficult, disciplined, and even deviant when their community or our society stands to benefit. They will become "heroes-in-waiting" and act when others around them are passive. They will learn how to make a living and they will fight to make a difference. We refuse to abdicate responsibility for these efforts and we thank all of you who join us in this battle.

Hans Hageman

Reflections on President-elect Obama's victory speech

I think Barack Obama spoke truthfully when he spoke about "making history;" "overcoming obstacles;" and how for hundreds of years people of color were slaves but now there is a person of color who is President.

I was also very inspired by the journey through history he took us on. He spoke about our country overcoming both World Wars, the Great Depression, and bombs on Pearl Harbor.

I think Obama is going to be a great President because we need change—from getting the troops out of Iraq to fixing the crises both on Wall Street and Main Street—and I believe he will offer the best solutions.

He called it a "historic moment" and I totally agree. Obama recognized that America played a role in the change and I agree because I witnessed some of what I know were many prayers and long hours spent on lines to vote. Obama also said "in order for America to be a better place, we all need to pitch in." We must rely on ourselves for the change we need. I couldn't agree more!

Felix Hernandez
FIRST YEAR STUDENT
EMILY N. CAREY SCHOOL

Personally, I thought Barack Obama's speech was very good. He talked about "where America stands now" and that "change is here."

The part that stood out the most to me during his speech was when he said: "The road will be long; we may not get there in a year or even one term, but America, I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you." I really commend him for being honest with us but I also come from the school that "talk is cheap" and I will have to see us "get there" to believe. Although his speech was so passionate and persuasive that it is hard not to believe him.

I think Obama is a good man and he will be a great President. He understands that all people are created equal—no matter their race, religion or sexual preference. Most important, he knows in order to better this country we all need to work together.

Mark Lafferty
FIRST YEAR STUDENT
EMILY N. CAREY SCHOOL

To me, this election and Barack Obama's speech were both historical events. Still, it's amazing how some people won't really listen to the words of his speech because of the color of his skin. If one truly listened to his delivery and the words—the way he spoke about wanting America to be a better place for all—surely they would see his race has nothing to do with the merit of his words. Wake up, America! We are a part

of a society that shouldn't judge people based upon the color of their skin but upon their intellect and achievements.

Barack is right; America is a place where all things are possible. He is proof of that! Barack's election moved a nation around him in a way that united many African Americans. Isn't that what we wanted to do? Unite the people within our community?

Barack mentioned a 106 year-old woman named Ann Cooper who voted in this year's election. I found that so inspiring! I can only imagine what she saw in her 106 years and to know she was determined to vote this year was so telling!

Many of our young African Americans were encouraged to vote too. I know it has been a constant struggle to get the younger voters out to the polls and they came out in full force this year. That's what I call change. Courageous, supportive, full of pride—that's what I hope we can become as a whole nation. We now have a commander in chief protecting a society. In a word maybe we can truly be a "family."

Shaatisa Byant
FIRST YEAR STUDENT
EMILY N. CAREY SCHOOL



Founder Anthony Duke, Sr.

I don't want any more time to fly by without reporting on an enlightening experience I had during Spring Break this past April when I visited Crystal Floyd and 16 Harbor students in New Orleans who'd volunteered to work in the tragically devastated Hurricane Katrina flood area.

Their job required helping restore and repaint severely damaged homes so that owners could, after two and a half long years, return and live with some semblance of normalcy. The destruction by flooding of vast areas of that beleaguered city is impossible for me to adequately describe. Those Harbor students who'd undertaken to be a part of such a challenging task surely know what I mean—and must recognize that every little bit

of energetic assistance such as they provided becomes a valuable contribution towards solving the whole tragic problem.

Our Harbor squad, under the extraordinary leadership of Crystal Floyd and Anthony Means did great work there in New Orleans working alongside their local sponsor, Trinity Christian Community Center. All involved did valuable work, and did it cheerfully under demanding conditions and extreme hot weather.

Sometimes in life the challenges that lie ahead are so huge and demanding that it's hard to know where or how to start. What our Harbor students surely learned there in New Orleans is that one has to take a step forward no matter what—and that step can lead to further steps—and eventual accomplishment.

Congratulations, Harbor students who went to New Orleans this year and did a meaningful job and the same to their mentors Crystal Floyd and Anthony Means who led them and worked with them side by side.

Tony Duke Sr.

P.S.: I should note here that Crystal Floyd arranged the entire project to be carried out through the New Orleans Trinity Christian Community Center and that she raised the funding for it entirely in our East Harlem Community. At the Harbor we are so very grateful and proud of this valuable contribution the Harbor has made to the rebuilding of New Orleans.

Mailed to over 5,000 households!

The Harbor Reporter

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Founder, Anthony Duke
in New Orleans

FUN
FACTS

It takes 70,790.625 gallons to fill the Harbor's indoor swimming pool.



Upward Bound students with director Crystal Floyd in New Orleans



The Harbor Says “Bienvenue!” to France’s Minister for National Education

Education system reforms and hopes to see the emergence of viable solutions and effective change are not unique to the States; it is of global concern and importance.

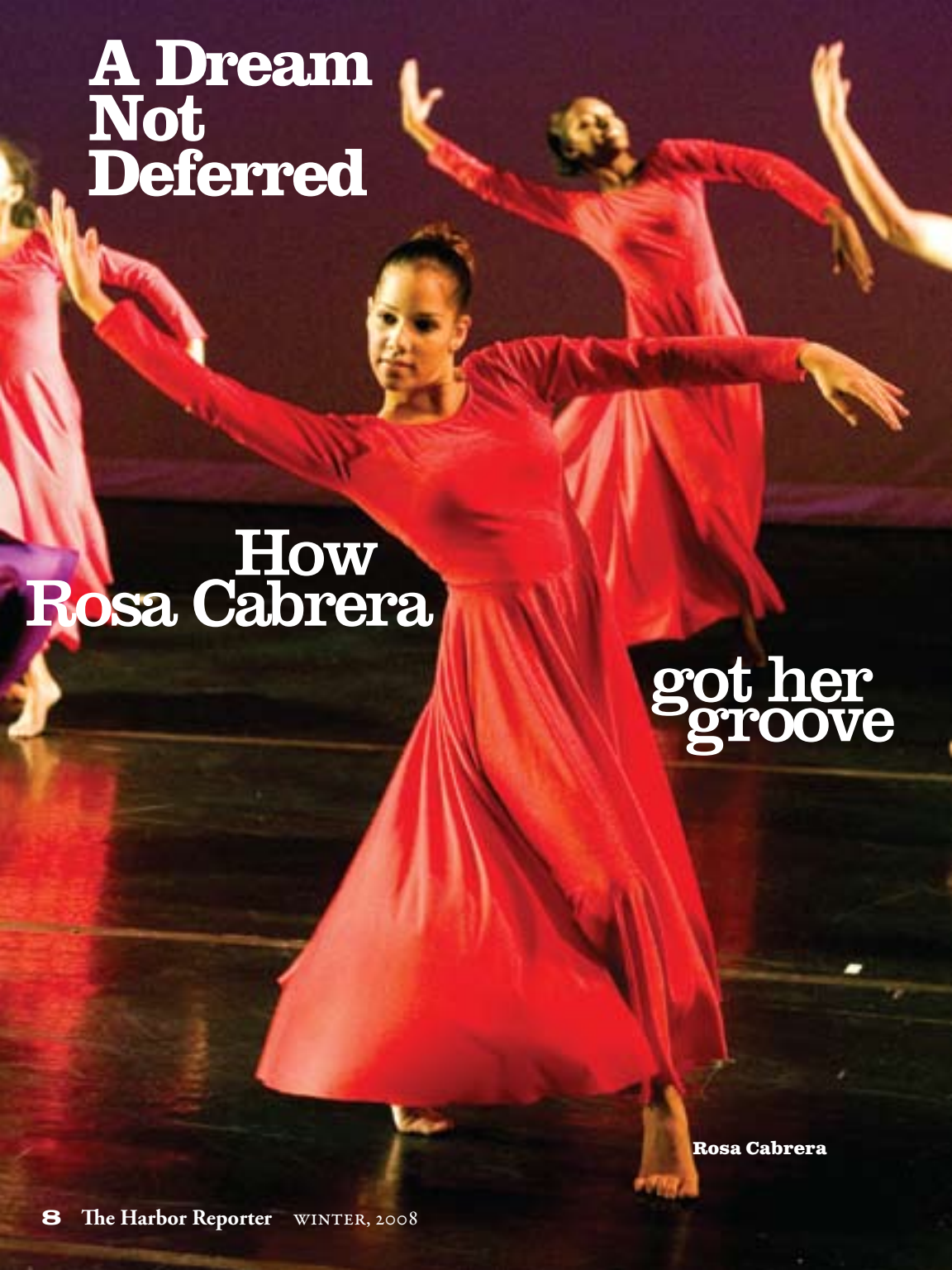
In September, politician, scholar, civil servant, and France’s Minister for National Education Xavier Darcos paid a visit to Boys & Girls Harbor to experience firsthand the makings of successful education programs. “We were very happy to have Mr. Darcos experience our mission,” says Boys and Girls Harbor Executive Director Hans Hageman. “Here students are exposed to a range of programs from outdoor education to mental health counseling to theater and dance. It truly is a *full* experience.”

In his own right, trailblazing Darcos has been rather proactive –albeit controversial to some—with reforms in his native France. Authoring a myriad of reforms from instituting a program that offers optional intensive seminars in English-language skills that buttress his notion that “speaking better English is key to success,” to setting a mandatory minimum number of hours to be devoted to French and Mathematics in primary schools’ curriculum—Darcos is willing to challenge convention. It is this willingness that may put him at odds with some but has bred a great deal of success. His choice to visit the Harbor—an innovation-driven organization—was a fitting move and he was welcomed with open arms.

To welcome the minister, his wife, and members of the delegation, were Founder, Anthony Drexel Duke; Board Member, Jane Ross; Executive Director, Hans Hageman; Development Director, Yaromil Fong-Olivares; and key Program Staff including: Joanne Hunt, The Harbor Charter School; Nina Klyvert-Lawson and Ramon Rodriguez, The Harbor Conservatory for the Performing Arts. One of the Harbor’s resident musical impresarios and Emily N. Carey Harbor School senior Jason Gamboa awed the audience by showcasing his classical piano skills with an original composition. Mr. Darcos returned the favor on the keys with his adept playing of a nocturne. Tours of the Harbor followed, led by Harbor staff and enthusiastic Emily N. Carey School students.

Concerning the visit, Darcos told ***The New York Amsterdam News***: “The lesson I draw from this visit is the way that people get self-confidence—and young people in particular... The essential point is to give young people a proper framework so they can gain confidence in themselves and then try in every way possible to succeed.”

Xavier Darcos
France’s Minister for National Education



A Dream Not Deferred

How Rosa Cabrera

got her
groove

Rosa Cabrera

Poised, graceful, gracious and downright cheerful—Rosa Cabrera enters a room full of strangers and commands attention. At the ripe age of twenty-one, the mainstay in Gestures Dance Ensemble at the Harbor Performing Arts Conservatory has a “superstar” quality that just may warrant the attention.

Born in the Dominican Republic, Cabrera moved to New York at the age of four. Born in the birthplace of the Merengue and where exaggerated hip movements are preferred, Cabrera’s preference was of a different kind and remembers thinking to herself: “ballerinas are just so graceful.” Ironically, she wouldn’t begin her ballet training until years later.

She began her dancing career at P.S. 1, an elementary school in Brooklyn that specialized in the visual and performing arts. After moving with her family to the Bronx, Cabrera was admitted to Junior High School 117 and had a stint majoring in dance there her freshman year. She’d changed majors after finding the program not challenging enough. Ever the determined one, she still participated in dance training after school.

That same year, her teacher, Ms. Bernard decided to put on production of the Broadway musical *Cats*. Though Cabrera wanted more than anything to be cast in a major role, she’d been told anyone who wasn’t a dance major was barred from taking such roles. Determined and just eager, she began to learn all the parts on her own. Good thing too because opportunity knocked when spaces opened up in the cast. The experience left her to reevaluate her decision to drop the major and she rejoined the dance program her senior year. A fitting move it was because the time came to apply for high school.

Every year, Ms. Bernard escorted all dance majors at Junior H.S. 117 to auditions for the legendary and highly competitive La Guardia High School for the Performing Arts. “I didn’t think I was going to make it,” Cabrera recalls. “La Guardia has a focus on ballet and at the time I didn’t have any ballet training.”

She had a plan though. “I watched a lot of ballet videos, movies and television shows and tried to copy everything—especially technique.” Be it sheer luck, a dab of foresight and/or a lot of inherent talent, her plan worked and Cabrera was the only student from her class to get a space on the coveted call-back list.

On the second day of auditions, she felt confident...until she found herself standing in front of the panel and suddenly realized she forgot everything she rehearsed. “I began improvising and showing the panel things I thought they might want to see,” explains Cabrera. “I thought for sure I was out.” She wasn’t though and she became the first in ten years from her school’s dance program to get accepted to La Guardia. **continues on page 10**

A Dream Not Deferred: How Rosa Cabrera got her groove, continued from page 9

"When I arrived at La Guardia I hated it," Cabrera laments. "I was coming in from a dance world that was like a family. La Guardia was so competitive. The kids wanted to constantly show off their skills and they definitely knew a lot more than me." Never deterred, she continued to work painstakingly at improving her craft, welcoming La Guardia's double periods of ballet and modern dance. Though her skills were improving by all accounts, she again—much like during her previous school experience—wanted more experience in front of audiences. "At La Guardia, we spent 3 years, 4 periods a day preparing for our senior concert and it just seemed so far away." Her qualms were allayed after attending the senior concert at the end of her first year. "I finally understood why we spent three years taking classes without performing," Cabrera acknowledges. "From that moment on my goal was to get into the advance classes and the senior concert."

When senior year came and it was Cabrera's time to finally vie for a spot in the performance, those nagging and inevitable fears and insecurities surfaced. "I didn't think I was doing as well as my teachers would tell me," she says. "I would honestly look at other kids and think my leg is not as high as that one." Adding to the overall pressure was the fact that all senior projects were lead by choreographers who were alumni. Cabrera thought it was a very nurturing process but also very demanding as well.

Alumni, Darrell Grand Moultrie choreographed one of Rosa's three pieces. "I loved Darrell; his professionalism and his piece," Cabrera beams. "Each moment was so unique and when he brought us all together the whole piece looked amazing."

A couple of days before the performance, Rosa experienced every dancer's nightmare: a sprained muscle. She cried and thought "They are not going to let me do the show." She was determined to push through the pain. "I was on pain killers and adrenaline and I didn't feel a thing...after each show I felt more pain and genuinely asked myself 'why did I do it?' And then right after I thought: I have to do it again tomorrow." Cabrera's fortitude and "the show must go on" attitude prevailed and the show was a major success.

With a successful run in one of the nation's top performing arts school behind her, Cabrera wanted to put off going to college right after graduation, instead deciding to hone her craft even more.

Inspired by the senior concert at La Guardia, Cabrera's younger brother landed admission to a small dance program at Washington Irving High School and was also accepted to the pre-professional company at the Harbor Conservatory. Soon thereafter, he began to encourage Cabrera to audition for the company as well.

Cabrera graduated from La Guardia in the summer of 2005. Call it divine intervention or kismet but her audition was a piece by Darrell Grand Moultrie, her fellow La Guardia Alum and one of the choreographers of her senior concert pieces. In January 2006, she joined Gestures Dance Ensemble at the Harbor Performing Arts Conservatory.

"Gestures is not a joke for us," she says vehemently. "Last year we had a lot more pieces and it was more diverse: Caribbean, modern, gospel," she says, wanting for them to reflect Harlem's diverse cultures. "I thought this company must be great," she adds.

Rest assured, Cabrera played a major role in making the company *great* but the time has come where she must now "pass the torch," breeding opportunities for others to take the company into new uncharted heights. This year marks Gestures' 20th anniversary and will be Cabrera's last year in the company. "Although I am ready to move on, I am happy to be teaching my parts," she says, pondering fondly over her run with Gestures. "This year is the year to let go."

The future is bright for Cabrera! Her goal is to get into a small dance company where she can grow with others like herself. "I want to go somewhere I can push myself to be better," she says, not wanting "the Conservatory to become a comfort zone."

"My mother," Cabrera mouths without skipping a beat when asked about her inspiration. "Cliché, I know... and of course my brother. He started at 15 and right now he is in college on a dance scholarship. My drive pushes him and his pushes me. Darrell Grand Moultrie also; as soon as I met him I was so inspired. He has traveled, choreographed so many pieces, he comes into a room and you feel his spirit. He demands respect and I want that."

By many accounts it seems Cabrera just might have *that!*

SANDWICH-
MAKER AT
SUBWAY

RESTAURANT
HOSTESS

WAITRESS

DENTAL
ASSISTANT

ASSISTANT AT
DAD'S SIGN
MAKING
BUSINESS

ROSA'S
PREVIOUS JOBS

Caught giving back!

Alexis Clark of Town & Country Magazine

Every Wednesday night, Alexis Clark rushes up to Boys & Girls Harbor to meet with her Emily N. Carey School mentees, Leah Rizer and Shayne Alvarado. For almost a year now, Alexis has been steadily guiding these two young women as they navigate college applications, life challenges and personal growth. But, what motivates this Brooklyn resident to share her time, energy and expertise? Let's find out.

Alexis, before we talk about your volunteer work as a mentor, can you tell me what you do at Town & Country Magazine?

ALEXIS My main responsibility is to cover the social/philanthropic world in New York City. I attend events for museums, cultural institutions and charities, where I get the opportunity to see exhibitions and performances, as well as meet influential people who support these vital causes. My day-to-day responsibilities are lower profile: going through pitches, reviewing tons of party photos and then deciding with Pamela Fiori, the Editor in Chief, if any should run in the magazine. After selections are made, I collaborate with the art department on ways to bring the events to life on the printed page. Also, I edit the venerable Wedding Pages that run in the back of the magazine each month.

Wow! This sounds like a wonderful career-but a lot of work. Who were your mentors as you "rose up the ladder" as it were?

ALEXIS My parents have been my most significant source of support. They taught me the value of building relationships. There's nothing more valuable than someone who cares about your success and overall well-being. Not to mention that it's helpful to listen to people who have persevered in certain situations that you may encounter. Today, I continue to run ideas by my family and friends to make sure I continue on course successfully.

LEAH That's why I think you're a good mentor.

ALEXIS Why, thank you!



Leah Rizer with Alexis Clark

LEAH No, I mean it. Because even being a young woman, you've achieved so much. You're an editor of a big magazine - you are doing what you like to do.

SHAYNE And you take the time to help a less experienced person like me acquire knowledge and the character to help me achieve my goals.

Shayne, how is Alexis doing that for you?

SHAYNE She is an inspirational figure in my life. She shows me how to carry myself, how to speak in front of people, and to engage an audience. She is motivating me to go for my ambition to be a nurse.

LEAH I want to be a nurse, too. And when I have an attitude to give up, Alexis is always there to tell me, I made it this far-why give up now?

ALEXIS I think you both will be excellent and caring nurses.

SHAYNE See? She is always keeping our outlooks positive.

Alexis, what has mentoring brought to your life?

ALEXIS It's taught me the importance of helping people. No matter who you are, being a teenager and transitioning into adulthood can be difficult. Everyone needs guidance and support. I feel I've been very fortunate in my academic and my professional experiences. I want to return the favor. I believe in giving back to the community, so others are given the chance to thrive as well. For example, Shayne and Leah are in their last year of high school, so we've been focusing on college application essays and SAT vocabulary.

SHAYNE Sometimes we do homework together, but I usually want to do it on my own. And we always make time just to talk.

ALEXIS That's right. Sharing a few tidbits about our lives, just so our time together isn't only about schoolwork. They can ask me anything.

LEAH And that's why I think Alexis is a good mentor. This is something she wants to do. She has a good heart for it.

SHAYNE I think so, too. Alexis provides friendship, audience and constructive examples to help me succeed. Mentoring can mean the difference between success and failure, and she is teaching me how I can be successful.

ALEXIS Don't forget-you are both teaching me a lot, too.

SHAYNE OK, I guess it does work both ways.



Learning and growing

Moving up from preschool into first grade



For Sauda Johnson, first grade teacher at the Harbor Science and Arts School, September is her favorite month. "First grade at Harbor Charter is a bridge from a student's prior experiences in preschool to elementary school and beyond. In order for them to build a strong foundation, my students need to grow their curiosity and be willing to ask questions. It's remarkable what some of my first graders ask (but any parent or teacher could tell you that). This is a remarkable time in a child's life."

This year's first-grade class has developed a particularly wonderful sense of rhythm and they love music. Over the joyful din one afternoon Ms. Johnson remarked "Their kinesthetic recall is amazing." Their what? "Kinesthetic—it means students are learning by doing. It's an important method of teaching here at Harbor Charter."

Ms. Johnson brought the classroom back to order with familiar attention-getters and soon enough the students were back in their seats; positively focused although some had a special twinkle in their eye. Was it from the recent music improvisation? Or are they already truly developing a love for learning? Let's find out.

"Harbor Charter is better than other schools because it is more fun," pronounced Seneca Hilliard. "When we go to the next grade and pass all of our tests, we will be older and that is a good thing." Syian Briscoe smiles and says, "Here it is like a family because everyone is nice to everyone."

It's hard to think of a better start than this! Visit the Harbor Science and Arts Charter School's website at www.harborcharterschool.org.

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