

OUR DIVERSITY IS

Our Treasure

2025-26 School Year





VALUING AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

"Forget your fairytale stereotypes!"



Martin, a Cooke senior who played the role of Donkey in last year's production of *Shrek*, improvised this line during rehearsal of a scripted, spirited exchange between Fiona, Shrek, and Donkey on whether royalty and ogres should pursue relationships. Martin's declaration captures the essence of Cooke School's mission and demonstrates the power of our students' ability

to embrace and internalize the values on which Cooke School was founded. At Cooke, we believe that a strength-based approach, true inclusion, and the celebration of student diversity are not only foundational ideals but the most powerful way to build a lasting community.

Our faculty's focus on identifying and acknowledging our students' innate talents in order to educate the whole child is often emulated by our students. Students are seen, and see themselves as leaders in their areas of expertise. Throughout this calendar, you will read stories about students using their gifts and abilities to support each other and their teachers. They value contributing meaningfully to their school community and treasure the diversity of the student body. Appreciating each other and feeling appreciated naturally engender empathy and kindness.

High regard for one another's strengths and expressions of kindness as hallmarks of the Cooke model attract like-minded community partners. Our Upper School and Transitions students have been the beneficiaries of a number of internships and inclusive college experiences made possible through partnerships with mission-aligned organizations. Invaluable opportunities provided by St. John's University, our Gala donor chefs, and others, a sampling of which are featured in this calendar, have an incredible long-term positive impact on our students' road to independence.

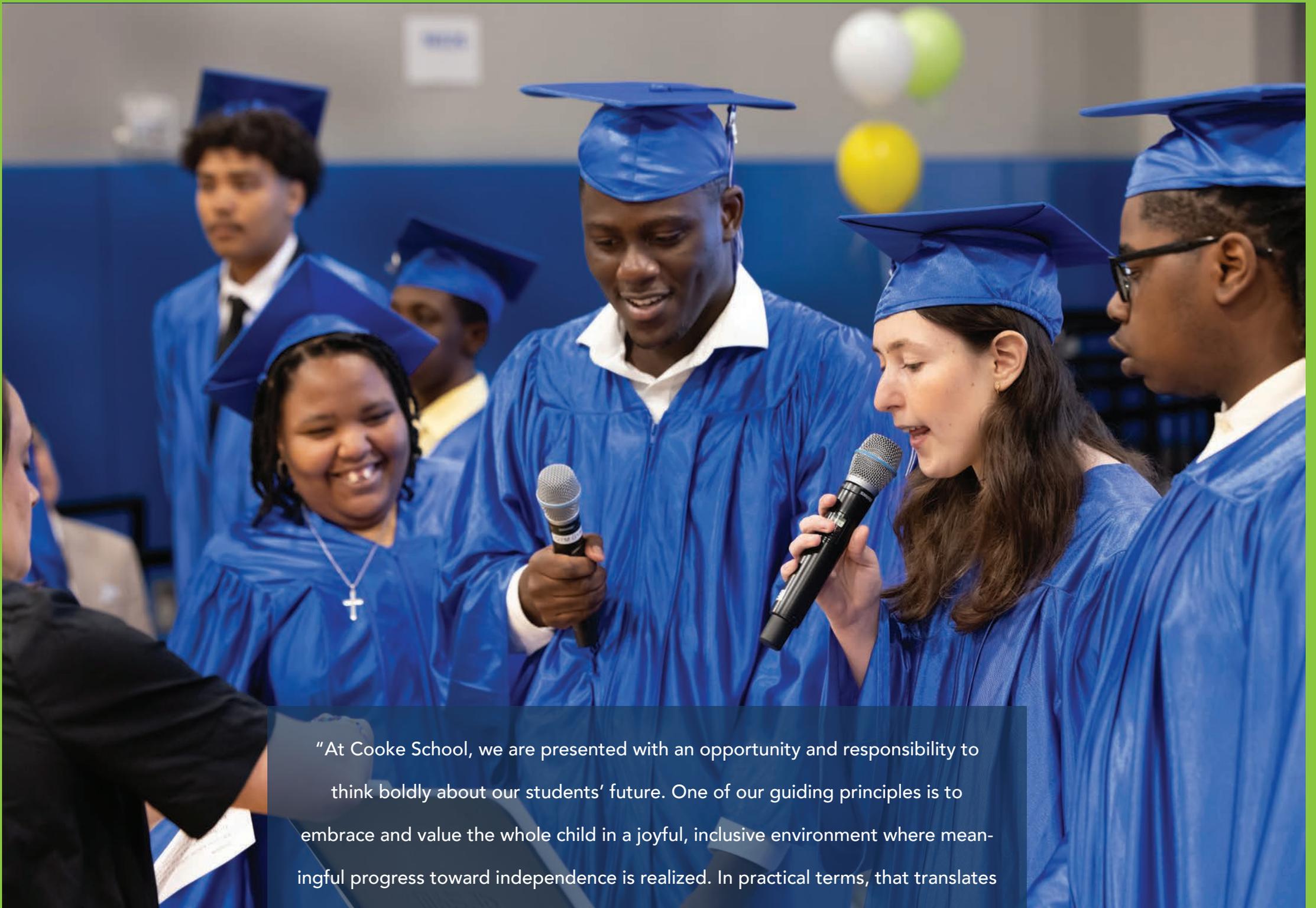
By nurturing each student's strengths, we cultivate a community rooted in belonging, mutual respect, and shared purpose. I continue to be grateful and proud to lead this wonderfully diverse community of learners.

Warm regards,

DR. FRANCIS TABONE

Cooke Head of School





“At Cooke School, we are presented with an opportunity and responsibility to think boldly about our students’ future. One of our guiding principles is to embrace and value the whole child in a joyful, inclusive environment where meaningful progress toward independence is realized. In practical terms, that translates to seeing our students through a lens of acceptance, and allowing their strengths

and interests, rather than their deficits, to guide the learning process.”

—Dr. Tabone

SEPTEMBER

"At Cooke School, Irina is the kind of classmate who makes the halls feel a little brighter. She always notices when someone looks unsure, especially new students trying to find their way. With a warm smile and a spark of energy, she says, 'Come sit with us!' or gently explains what the teacher just said, never making anyone feel behind or left out.

Irina has a way of including people without making a big deal about it. She listens with care, laughs easily, and always seems to know when someone needs a little encouragement. Even the quietest students open up around her.

Whether it's collaborating on a group project, welcoming someone at lunch, or offering a kind word in passing, Irina brings all kinds of people together just by being herself. Cooke is a good place, made better by students like Irina."—Ty Marius, Special Education Assistant Teacher Grade 3/4



Sunday



Monday

1

LABOR DAY
School Closed

Tuesday

2

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
ON SITE
All Staff

Wednesday

3

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
ON SITE
All Staff

Thursday

4

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
ON SITE
All Staff

Friday

5

STUDENT ORIENTA-
TION & FAMILY ICE
POP SOCIAL
Madison Avenue
ALL FAMILY
ORIENTATION
Transitions

Saturday

6

7

8

FIRST DAY
OF SCHOOL
All Students

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ROSH HASHANAH
School Closed

24

ROSH HASHANAH
School Closed

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BACK TO
SCHOOL NIGHT
Madison Avenue
BACK TO
SCHOOL NIGHT
Transitions

26

27

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“The Halloween Party and other alumni social events create a welcoming space where current students and alumni can connect in meaningful ways. We’ve seen friends reunite, new friendships form, and students and alumni bond over shared interests. Some stay in touch long after the event. Even alumni who weren’t students at the same time are meeting at these gatherings and building new connections. These events strengthen the sense of community across the program.” — Michelle Lang, Director of Alumni Services

OCTOBER



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Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

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Saturday

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YOM KIPPUR
School Closed

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PARENT WORKSHOP
Madison Avenue

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY
School Closed

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DIWALI
School Closed

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FAMILY FORUM

24

UPPER SCHOOL FALL DANCE

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Alumni pictured above at our highly-anticipated annual Halloween party: Justin Muniz and Andrew Drobenko

NOVEMBER

"Langston is really adept at technology. He's also incredibly empathetic, patient, and willing to share his strengths to help others," says Cooke School Psychologist, Dr. Fazel. "I still remember one day when I was struggling to turn on the White Board. The students were already seated and ready to go, and I just couldn't figure it out. Langston quietly approached me with an offer to help, and had it fixed in seconds."

On another day, Dr. Fazel noticed Langston moving from classmate to classmate, adjusting settings on their laptops. After receiving compliments on his custom cursor, he was designing personalized mouse pointers for everyone who wanted one. "You can see it in his face," she says. "He just lights up when he has an opportunity to help someone."



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



On his class trip to The Met, Langston practiced active learning. He struck poses inspired by sculptural figures, played with perspective by snapping photos of paintings and displays with his hand in the foreground, and eagerly participated in drawing activities suggested by the school's tour guide in the newly reimagined Arts of Africa galleries in the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing.



2	3	4 STAFF DEVELOPMENT/ ELECTION DAY No Students	5 POST ELECTION DAY PARTY Transitions	6	7 SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL! A year-end donation by 12.31 qualifies as a tax-deductible contribu- tion on your 2025 taxes!	8
9	10 PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES Noon Dismissal	11 PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES (REMOTE) No Students	12	13	14 FALL PSA MOVIE NIGHT Madison Avenue	15
16	17	18	19	20 FAMILY FORUM	21 PARENT WORKSHOP Madison Avenue	22
23 30	24	25	26 LS/MS HARVEST FESTIVAL TRANSITIONS POTLUCK Noon Dismissal	27 THANKSGIVING School Closed	28 THANKSGIVING School Closed	29



“When new students arrive, Matthew consistently demonstrates leadership and kindness. He takes the initiative in giving them a tour of the building and offers thoughtful insights into the various subjects and teachers. He’s also quick to step in with small but meaningful acts of support—holding the door, offering a comforting word, or encouraging a peer after a setback with remarks like, ‘You’ll get it next time’ or ‘You can try again.’”

—Julie Greenberg,
M.S., OTR/L
Occupational Therapy
Department Chair

DECEMBER

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



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GIVING TUESDAY
A year-end donation by December 31 qualifies as a tax-deductible contribution on your 2025 taxes!

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12TH GRADE RING CEREMONY
Noon Dismissal
STAFF PD

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PARENT WORKSHOP
Madison Avenue

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FAMILY FORUM

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WINTER BREAK
TRANSITIONS
HOLIDAY PARTY
Noon Dismissal

24

WINTER BREAK
School Closed

25

WINTER BREAK
School Closed

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WINTER BREAK
School Closed

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29

WINTER BREAK
School Closed

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WINTER BREAK
School Closed

31

WINTER BREAK
School Closed



Role play is an essential exercise in Travel Training at Cooke. Our exceptionally favorable student-to-teacher ratios allow Upper School students to safely rehearse real-world scenarios with 2:1 staff support.



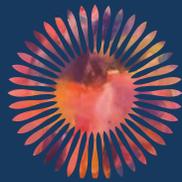
The foundation for a love of travel is instilled upon arrival in Kindergarten for Cooke students. On-site learning adventures are frequent and integrated into the school curriculum from the beginning. Requisite to pursuing knowledge outside of the classroom on indigenous people and farm life and fine art and animal wildlife as well as instruction on how to swim, shop, and use library resources, students learn the fundamentals and value of navigating the city.

Cooke students engage in the world around them with curiosity and confidence. To hear more about this experience from the students' perspective, scan the QR code below to watch our video.



TRAVEL TRAINING

Cooke's outstanding student-to-teacher ratios ensure that every student receives the attention and support they need to succeed. If a student requires one-on-one guidance to securely master navigating the world, Cooke provides it. Small group configurations allow faculty to thoughtfully tailor instruction to individual learning styles, build strong relationships, and respond to students' strengths and challenges in real time. Our staffing model also facilitates safe and well-supervised travel, making real-world learning experiences both accessible and meaningful for everyone.



A photograph of two young men, likely students, sitting at a wooden counter in a museum exhibit. They are wearing yellow t-shirts and blue lanyards with 'Cooke School and Institute' printed on them. The exhibit is a window into a subway car, with a wall covered in subway tokens and a sign that reads 'NEW YORK TRANSIT M'. The window is framed by a red door with four light bulbs above it. The students are smiling and looking towards the camera.

Many Cooke students enjoy drawing maps and sporting New York subway gear. At gatherings like the Transition Halloween party, one might overhear animated conversations about favorite subway lines, preferred stops, or the best routes to the top destinations. Some students augment their annual school trips to the New York Transit Museum with family visits. This love of mass transit evident among so many Cooke students and alumni is no accident. It has been cultivated intentionally as a key component of their journey to independence in the city.



Travel Training at Cooke is comprehensive, extending well beyond memorizing routes and observing safe behavior on trains and buses. It also covers how to problem-solve when things go wrong. What do you do if you are returning from your internship gig and the train skips your stop? Your onsite job coach might advise you to deboard at the next stop and hop on the train going in the opposite direction to ride back to your proper exit. Regardless of the suggested solution, your coach is always at your side modeling a clear-headed demeanor and flexible response.

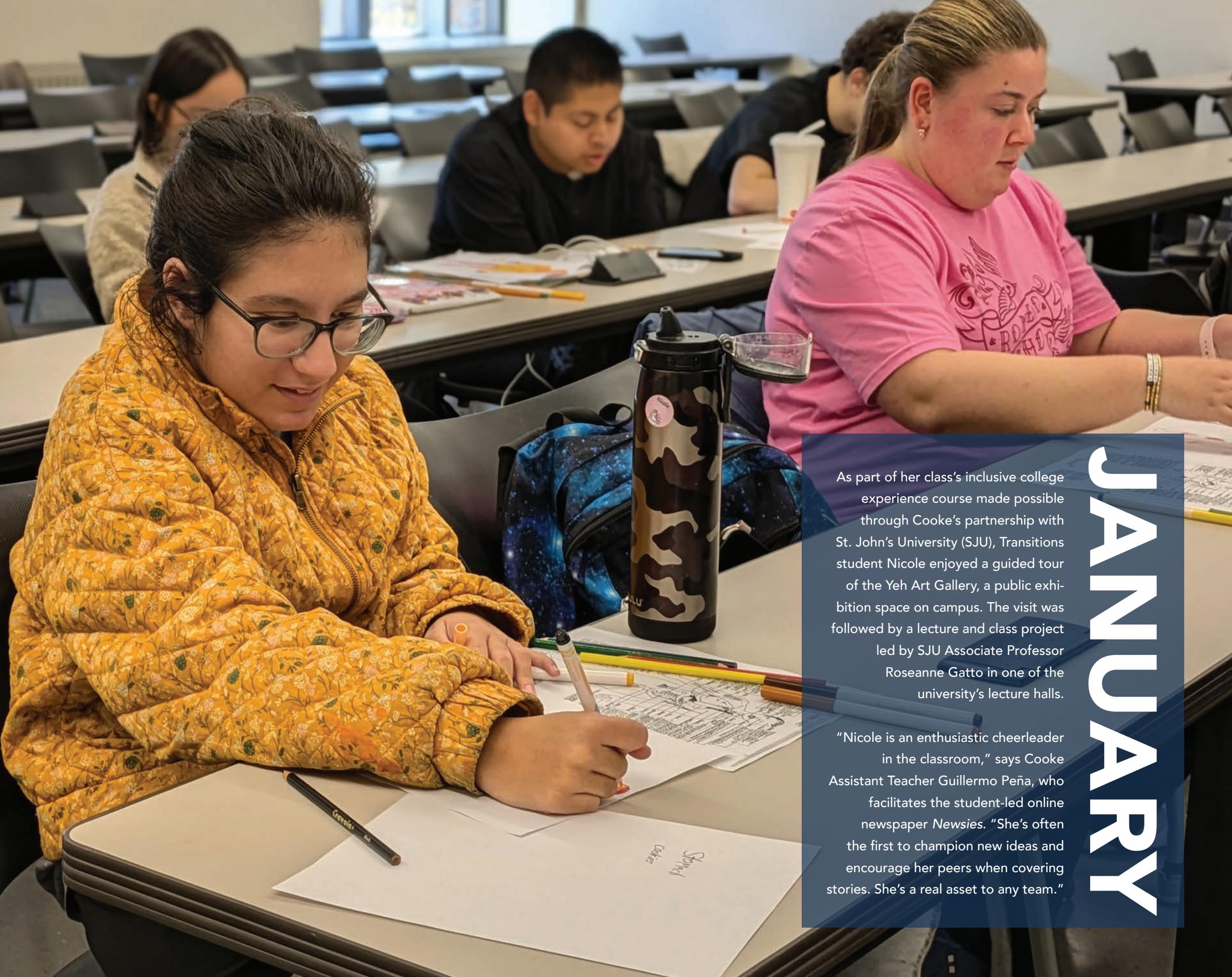
Cooke Upper School students are mentored on best practices for handling worst-case scenarios by reenacting them with their Occupational Therapists. They work in small groups of two or three, on commercial streets near campus in East Harlem.

What is the best course of action if you are lost and your phone is dead?

Students are taught to follow a series of steps:

1. Identify a friendly and safe person to ask for assistance. They can usually be found serving the public in retail stores, groceries, and restaurants.
2. Avoid anyone who might not be safe. (Julie Greenberg and other teachers will sometimes pose as a questionable character offering the student candy or puppies to follow them away from safety, so students can practice saying, "No!")
3. Take note of any street signs or major landmarks that would provide clues to your location. If you do not see any, ask the safe person for your location.
3. Show the ID on your lanyard to the safe person and ask to use their phone. Call the school's number on the back of your ID.
4. Tell the Cooke receptionist on the phone that you are lost and where they can send a person or ride to pick you up.

"Knowing how to get from one place to another is just the start. For our students, it's just as important to learn how to stay calm, think clearly, and adjust when something unexpected happens along the way."—Julie Greenberg, M.S., OTR/L
Occupational Therapy Department Chair



As part of her class's inclusive college experience course made possible through Cooke's partnership with St. John's University (SJU), Transitions student Nicole enjoyed a guided tour of the Yeh Art Gallery, a public exhibition space on campus. The visit was followed by a lecture and class project led by SJU Associate Professor Roseanne Gatto in one of the university's lecture halls.

"Nicole is an enthusiastic cheerleader in the classroom," says Cooke Assistant Teacher Guillermo Peña, who facilitates the student-led online newspaper *Newsies*. "She's often the first to champion new ideas and encourage her peers when covering stories. She's a real asset to any team."

JANUARY

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



I
WINTER BREAK
 School Closed

2
WINTER BREAK
 School Closed

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5
SCHOOL RESUMES

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13
SCHOOL PICTURE DAY
 Upper School

14
SCHOOL PICTURE DAY
 Lower and Middle School

15
PARENT WORKSHOP
 Madison Avenue

16

17

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19
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY
 School Closed

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22
FAMILY FORUM

23

24

25

26
STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
 No Students

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29
K-12 PARENT SOCIAL
 Madison Avenue

30

31



"We serve home-cooked, culturally-relevant dinners three nights a week and provide daily senior lunches as well as a food pantry. The work is vast," says Olivia Haskin, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator at the Food Bank For NYC. "Volunteers and interns like Kayla play a vital role in making it all happen."

Cooke student Kayla says that her favorite part of her internship at the Food Bank is helping people. "Kayla not only plates and serves lunch to our senior clients. She also notices and welcomes new volunteers, helps them get oriented with their apron and locker, and makes them feel part of the team," says Olivia. "Repeat volunteers like Kayla help build a true sense of community, both among each other and with those we serve."

FEBRUARY

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
I	2	3	4	5 PARENT WORKSHOP Madison Avenue	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 WINTER CONCERT Lower & Middle School Madison Avenue	13 CULTURAL EXTRAVAGANZA Transitions	14
15	16 PRESIDENTS' DAY School Closed	17 MID-WINTER BREAK School Closed	18 MID-WINTER BREAK School Closed	19 MID-WINTER BREAK School Closed	20 MID-WINTER BREAK School Closed	21
22	23	24	25	26 FAMILY FORUM BLACK HISTORY DAY CELEBRATION Transitions	27	28



Kayla's warmth and leadership at the Food Bank mirror her presence at school. "Kayla demonstrates kindness every week in Brave Space," says Eliana Glatt, Cooke Director of Auxiliary Programs K-12, referring to Cooke's lunchtime club for LGBTQ+ students and allies. "She asks her friends and community how they feel, how their week has been, and lends a helping hand to her teachers and friends when needed. Kayla stands up for her quieter friends and often asks if they need her to speak up for them." Kayla exemplifies the spirit of Brave Space as well as the Cooke community culture at large, "a safe place where everyone can be themselves, share their stories, and build connections!"



Transitions student, Sophia, worked as a sous chef for Jae Lee, Chef Proprietor of Nowon Restaurants, one of the generous donor chefs at Cooke's 2025 Food for Thought Gala. Every year, Students assist in plating and serving signature dishes for the event's strolling dinner and present the official Cooke gift to the chefs.

"I loved Sophia's big heart," says Jae. "She gave me gifts with such kindness. It brightened my day."

MARCH

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

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PICTURE DAY
MAKEUPS & SENIOR
PORTRAITS
Madison Avenue

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5

PARENT TEACHER
CONFERENCES
Noon Dismissal

6

PARENT TEACHER
CONFERENCES
(REMOTE)
No Students

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PARENT WORKSHOP
Madison Avenue

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FAMILY FORUM

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EID AL-FITR
No School

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SPRING PSA
MOVIE NIGHT
Madison Avenue

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SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL AND ATTEND
THIS YEAR'S GALA!

Purchase your tickets now for the 2026
Food for Thought Gala on May 6 or
consider becoming a sponsor for the event.
See cookeschool.org/gala or the qr code
above for more information.



APRIL

"Dandy Farmer® | The Bonsai Shop's owner and manager, Matthew Puntigam, expressed high praise for Cooke Transitions student Jason during his internship. In addition to his strong work ethic, "Jason has acclimated and learned a lot," says Matt. "And he has added so much to the culture of the store, more than I could possibly have imagined. Prior to his arrival, I thought that I had created an open and diverse atmosphere. There's a part of you that has to soften and know that the boundaries you create to protect yourself can also imprison your mind. Jason has succeeded in bringing our growth to another level."

Cooke's strength-based approach with a focus on kindness often attracts like-minded internship sponsors and partners. Jason instantly connected with Matthew and the other employees at The Bonsai Shop in Fort Greene.



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



Jason and his manager, Matthew, were featured in an episode of New York Live, NBC Channel 4, highlighting the shop and his internship.

I

2

SPRING BREAK
School Closed

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SPRING BREAK
School Closed

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SPRING BREAK
School Closed

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SPRING BREAK
School Closed

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SPRING BREAK
School Closed

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SPRING BREAK
School Closed

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SPRING BREAK
School Closed

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PARENT WORKSHOP
Madison Avenue

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HEALTH AND
WELLNESS DAY
EARTH DAY
Transitions

23

FAMILY FORUM

24

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SPRING MUSICAL
Madison Avenue

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CAREER DAY
Transitions



Check out the news segment!



Gallop NYC managers shared that not only is JB a hard-worker and kind to his co-workers, he is also kind to the menagerie of animals that he encounters in his role. Last summer, he secured a paid position at Gallop's stables in Howard Beach where working alongside horses, cats, dogs, and a chicken were all part of JB's day on the job.

MAY

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
					I STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Noon Dismissal SPRING FLING Grades 8-12	2
3	4	5	6 FOOD FOR THOUGHT GALA	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15 PARENT WORKSHOP Madison Avenue	16
17	18	19	20	21	22 SPRING CONCERT UPPER SCHOOL Madison Avenue	23
24	25 MEMORIAL DAY School Closed	26	27 EID AL-ADHA School Closed	28 FAMILY FORUM	29	30
31						



"Hailey demonstrates compassion and kindness for her classmates and teachers daily. When she notices a peer needs a helping hand, she will often offer support. When I was sick and returned the following Monday, Hailey asked me if I felt better as soon as she spotted me. She enjoys going to the sensory gym with [Lower School Occupational Therapist] Megan Dygon and often asks classmates if they want to join. Hailey not only shows kindness by supporting others, but by being inclusive in our community."

—Becca Ramdass,
Head 3/4 Teacher

JUNE



Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

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PROM
Grades 11-12

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STAFF PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
No Students

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STAFF PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
No Students

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MOVING UP
CEREMONY
8th Grade

12

GRADUATION
12th Grade

13

14

15

GRADUATION
Transitions

16

FIELD DAY
Transitions

17

18

LAST DAY
ALL STUDENTS
Noon Dismissal

19

JUNETEENTH
School/Offices Closed

20

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SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL!
A fiscal year-end donation
by June 30 qualifies as a
tax-deductible contribution
on your 2026 taxes.



JULY

At the conclusion of a six-week workshop series at the School of Visual Arts (SVA) for their Community Arts elective, Transitions students Hercules and Sara volunteered to help their art teacher, Yilkari Castillo, organize the art supplies in the Transitions classroom.

"Hercules loves to organize, and he's really good at it," says Yilkari. "Art supplies can easily become chaotic. Hercules has offered to help throughout the year, but this was a major overhaul requiring two full class periods."

Hercules and Sara approached the task with care and precision. When sorting the markers, for example, they tested each one for freshness, then grouped them meticulously by color and brand. Hercules suggested best practices for the organizational process, and the two became friends. "Their interactions had been brief during their elective prior to this organization project. I know that things went well because when they were finished Sara made Hercules a friendship bracelet," says Yilkari.



Sunday

Monday

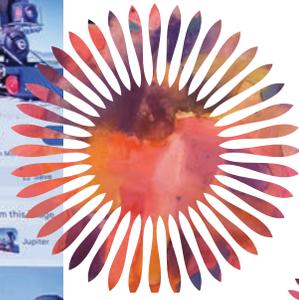
Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



I

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INDEPENDENCE DAY
School/Offices Closed

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AUGUST

Both structured and spontaneous expressions of support are characteristic of the extensive rehearsal period for Cooke's annual musicals. At the conclusion of each rehearsal, time is set aside for students to share compliments and words of encouragement to their peers in a community setting. Every performer receives recognition, regardless of the size of their role. Within this culture of genuine connection, students also freely express admiration and appreciation for one another.

"The first time Judah heard his best friend, John, singing during rehearsal, he was so excited and surprised!" says Omni Hornedo, Director of Student Support Services and one of the performance directors. Judah was a member of the chorus and had not seen John, who played Shrek, perform until halfway through the year. "He was so proud of his friend. During dress rehearsal, I heard him say, 'John's singing is so good, I'm going to cry.'"



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

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Thursday

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Saturday



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In addition to practicing community safety and exploring the vibrant East Harlem neighborhood while planning Cooke Summer Academy's (CSA) first offsite learning experience of the summer, Cooke Director of Curriculum, ELA & Social Studies, Ana Holly also intentionally pursued community building goals. Each class traveled to Harlem Meer in Central Park to retrieve their designated letter and enjoy a picnic lunch together. Back at school, classes decorated their letter and then everyone gathered in the gym to assemble the full message: "COOKE SUMMER ACADEMY!" The student-created signage was proudly displayed high on the walls of the gym for the remainder of the summer.

COOKE SCHOOL AND INSTITUTE

(Lower, Middle and Upper School K-12)

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COOKE TRANSITIONS

(Ages 18-21)

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