



# ALL SOULS SCHOOL

PARENTS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2022



## THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

# New Beginnings

All Souls School:  
Where community inspires  
creativity, learning,  
and imagination



# DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

## COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Jennifer Vest, Ed.D.,  
Director, All Souls School



One afternoon in early May during dismissal, one of our 2B students joyfully shared with her mother, “We let the butterflies go today!” As she skipped down Lexington Avenue headed home, she cheerfully chatted about seeing the butterflies fly out of their temporary home and off into the skies of New York. Listening to this interaction, I thought to myself how this child would herself be “flying away” from All Souls in a few short weeks, ready to take on the adventure of kindergarten at a new school.

All Souls School is often referred to as a “bubble” in the hustle and bustle of the city...or in extending the metaphor of our butterfly release, a chrysalis or cocoon. (Fun fact I learned as a kindergarten teacher many years ago—butterflies come from chrysalids, moths from cocoons). A warm, nurturing, safe place for young children to make their first transition from home to school, with teachers and staff who deeply care for the social and emotional well-being of their students. At All Souls, the hurried pace that children experience during their daily commute, is slowed to their speed, in an environment specifically designed for them. A predictable routine, familiar faces, and developmentally appropriate choices enable our students to settle into a space that allows them to be young children.

Over the past two years, as we have lived through the Covid-19 pandemic, All Souls School has truly been a “cocoon” for our children, providing a safe and healthy environment when many other places were not available to them. Through the dedication

of our teachers, staff, parents, and trustees, as well as the facilities team of All Souls Church, we were able to reopen our school in September 2020, and remain open through the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. Our operations were significantly altered in many ways, and we have especially missed having parents in the building. However, as a community, we truly demonstrated how All Souls School prioritizes its children in all that it does, resulting in two successful years of in-person learning.

This May, we have a renewed hope in the “new beginnings” we will experience this summer and next school year. With vaccines available for our 5-year-olds, and better understandings of the virus, we look forward to working towards more “typical” school operations next fall. As we bring the school year to a close, and reflect on upcoming transitions, we joyfully anticipate the next steps for our students and families. Whether moving on to a new school for kindergarten, or moving to a new classroom at All Souls, our children are ready for the transition. They have demonstrated to us that they are flexible and resilient, and we will follow their example.

It is such a gift to be the leader of All Souls School. I am continuously awed by the devotion of our community and the joy of our children. Thank you for being our partners during this truly special time of your children’s lives—we are so grateful you have chosen to entrust us with them.

# ALL SOULS, ALL VOICES

A walk down memory lane...

An interview with Matti and Thomas Bisenius

By Emily Bisenius, 2B class

We feature an interview between a current student and a parent who also attended All Souls. Here we spotlight a conversation between Matti and Thomas Bisenius, age 7, who are first grade students at Dalton, by their sister, Emily.



**Emily:** Thomas, Matti, would you like to do an All Souls interview with me?

**Thomas:** Ok.

**Matti:** I guess...

**Emily:** What's your favorite food on the Dalton menu?

**Thomas:** Pizza!

**Matti:** Waffles, sometimes they give us brunch for lunch.

**Emily:** What's your favorite color and why?

**Matti:** Red! Because I love red.

**Thomas:** Green! Because it's the color of trees... and money!

**Emily:** What was your favorite thing about All Souls?

**Thomas:** My favorite was the class field trip when we went on the ferry.

**Matti:** Me too!

**Emily:** What's your favorite place at All Souls?

**Matti & Thomas:** The roof! Of course!

**Emily:** What's your favorite thing that you miss about All Souls?

**Thomas:** I miss the hamster (who passed away), I miss sleepy time and I miss Banjo Bill.

**Matti:** I miss the reading couch, I miss the teachers and I miss the hamster too.

**Emily:** What is your favorite thing about Dalton?

**Matti:** Art class and library time and the afterschool STEAM program.

**Thomas:** Math class and library time and Physical Education.

**Emily:** Okay, Thomas and Matti what is your favorite thing to do with your family?

**Thomas:** Go to the park and play on rocks and skiing and golf.

**Matti:** Play games like cricket on the lawn and board games at home.

**Emily:** What's your favorite song?

**Thomas:** Old Town Road.

**Matti:** Grandma got run over by a Reindeer.

**Emily:** What are your favorite things in the world?

**Thomas:** Captain Underpants books, soccer, skiing and the arcade in East Hampton.

**Matti:** Going to Chelsea Piers for bowling and the arcade, Kozmo (my big squishmallow) and Hammy our hamster.

**Emily:** Thomas and Matti, I hope you read the interview and thanks for doing the interview with me!



# ALL SOULS, ALL PRESENT

## GIVING BACK ON VALENTINE'S DAY

The All Souls community came together once again this year to work in collaboration with the All Souls Soup Kitchen. Children in several classes decorated lovely Valentine's cards for guests visiting the Soup Kitchen around Valentine's Day.

Giving back to our community is an important element at All Souls School. We feature several events during the year for the participation of children and families in giving back. Many thanks for the school administration for organizing this event for the children!



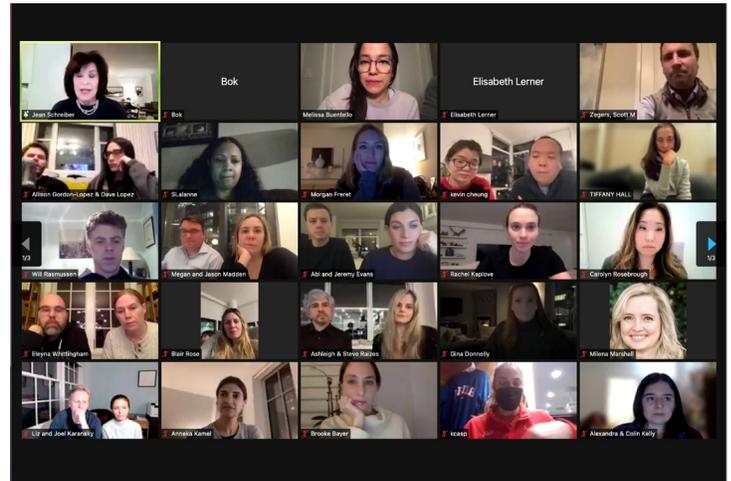
# ALL SOULS, ALL PRESENT

## GUEST SPEAKER SERIES

After a year of hiatus, the Parents Association (PA) was proud to bring back its Speaker Series

In consultation with Jennifer Vest, and other members of All Souls' wonderful leadership, we determined the theme for the reinstatement of our guest speaker series, should be "A Return to Normal". With all the trials and tribulations that the All Souls community faced in the past two years, we thought it would be a welcome change to spend a few hours with everyone to discuss how "normal" used to look and how "normal" looks now. The goal was to provide a survey course to best help our kids, parents, and school find new, healthy, and better practices in the "new normal".

With that goal in mind, the PA was thrilled to start the series with a special guest to All Souls, Rebecca Dowin-Kipnis. Rebecca joined the All Souls community by way of Northside Center for Child Development and a grant through ThriveNYC for Mental Health Consultation services which was secured by our director, Jennifer Vest. Rebecca assisted with the students in the classroom in addition to working with the All Souls faculty and staff in-and-outside the classroom. Rebecca provided insight to the parent community by discussing various early childhood development topics with a focus on how we as parents can help to raise/educate our young children in a Covid environment. Rebecca discussed what the new developmental benchmarks may be and how we can help



our children reach and exceed them.

Rebecca was followed by Professor Victoria Risko. Professor Risko was an instrumental figure in Jennifer Vest's doctoral program at Vanderbilt University. Professor Risko is one of the United States' leading experts in children's literacy. Professor Risko was kind enough to walk the parents through the various ways we can help encourage our kids to explore books and words, as well as point out a few choice pieces we should all include in our library. Professor Risko's energy and enthusiasm served as a much welcome reminder that our public libraries are all open and await our kid's enthusiasm for the great works.

The culmination of our "Return to Normal" year will be a lecture by Deborah Solomon. Ms. Solomon is an expert in the development and care of infants and young children. Based on the results from a school-wide survey, Ms. Solomon will be giving remarks specifically tailored to the questions and concerns expressed by parents in the All Souls community. She will assist all of us to help raise a confident and resourceful child as we "Return to Normal."

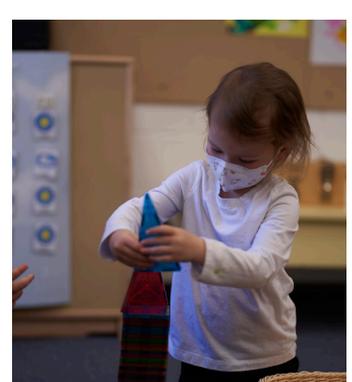
It has been an honor and a privilege to help set up this lecture series. It could not have been done without the help of the entire All Souls administration and the parent body. Have a wonderful summer and the PA looks forward to putting on similar events next year.

*Written by Fred Isquith, Parent of Nolan Isquith, 2A*



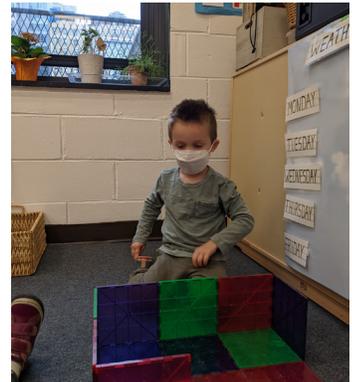
# CLASS 4A M/W/F

Teachers: Emily Diaz  
Nikki Slesin  
Megan Taylor-Wolfe



# CLASS 4A T/TH

Teachers: Emily Diaz  
Nikki Slesin  
Megan Taylor-Wolfe



# CLASS 4A PM

Teachers: Emily Diaz  
Nikki Slesin  
Megan Taylor-Wolfe



# CLASS 4B

Teachers: Amita Mehta  
John Perlich  
Oren Rosenthal



# ALL SOULS, ALL VOICES

## THE TEACHER SAYS...

An Interview with Amita Mehta, Class 4B by her grandson Arhaan, Class 2B



### Arhaan and Amita had a lot of fun learning about each other's favorite things to do and eat...

**Arhaan:** What is your favorite thing to do in your classroom?

**Amita:** It is the meeting time with the children. When I do the meeting, we talk and everybody gets to share and I like to listen to what children tell me, their news from home, from the weekend, from vacation, and their ideas.

**Arhaan:** My favorite thing to do in my classroom is when I get to go to the blocks or boxes. I like to build there.

**Arhaan:** What is your favorite chocolate?

**Amita:** My favorite chocolate is Cadbury milk chocolate.

**Arhaan:** My favorite chocolate is ALL the chocolate!

**Arhaan:** Where did you grow up?

**Amita:** I was born and grew up in Mumbai which is a big city in India. Just like New York City, it is a big city. I grew up there and went to school there and then I came here when my son was born in 1985.

**Arhaan:** What do you do when you're not at school?

**Amita:** I like to cook, read, do yoga, go for walks in Central Park, and play with my grandchildren.

**Arhaan:** What is your favorite book?

**Amita:** I like most of the books I read because I always learn something from every book. I think my most favorite children's

book is the Giving Tree. And I like books by Lucy Cousins. She writes great books with beautiful illustrations.

**Arhaan:** What is your favorite fruit?

**Amita:** My favorite fruit is apple.

**Arhaan:** My favorite is pineapple.

**Arhaan:** What is your favorite kind of plant?

**Amita:** My favorite plants are all the plants that I grow in my home. Orchids, basil, tomatoes, and chili peppers.

**Arhaan:** What is your favorite holiday?

**Amita:** My favorite holiday is Diwali.

**Arhaan:** What is your favorite thing to do on Diwali?

**Amita:** On Diwali, I like to make a rangoli which is a floor painting with sand and we like to light lamps, diyas. We also make good food, invite people from our family home for dinner and eat together and celebrate.

**Arhaan:** My favorite holiday is Christmas because I get to spend time with my family and my cousins and I get lots of presents.

**Arhaan:** Do you like to travel and where is your favorite place to go?

**Amita:** I do like to travel. My favorite place to go is to India to see my family there and my friends there because I grew up there. If I want to go to relax and have a vacation I like to go to the mountains. My favorite mountains that I have visited are the Himalayas.

**Arhaan:** Where is that?

**Amita:** Himalayas are the mountain range to the north of India. It has the highest/tallest mountain in the world called Mount Everest.

**Arhaan:** What is your favorite color?

**Amita:** Yellow.

**Arhaan:** Why?

**Amita:** Because it reminds me of light and sunshine.

# KID'S CORNER

Here's a fun craft project inspired by Spring



## What you need:

- paper tube (toilet paper roll, kitchen towel, paper roll...)
- green paper or green paint
- wiggly eyes stickers
- scissors
- glue



Paper roll crafts are perfect for open ended creation – just place a whole bunch of colorful papers, paints and other craft materials on the table and let the kids get creative.

Cut a long strip of green paper, as wide as the paper roll.

Also cut 2 pairs of legs and a pair of “eyes” out of green paper.

Make sure the “eyes” are a bit larger than eye stickers.

Glue the green paper around the paper roll.

Glue the green eyes on the inner side of the paper roll. Stick two wiggly eyes stickers.

Draw facial details with black marker.



Glue on front and back legs. Your paper roll frog craft is ready to hop away!

*Adapted from easypeasyandfun.com*

# ALL SOULS, ALL INSPIRING

## CREATIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM

See how All Souls lives its mission of "building on each child's strengths, interests, and experiences."

Early in the school year the children in 2B were interested in a book series we had been reading, The Monster series by Ellen Blance and Ann Cook. Each time we read a new book the children wondered if there would be another book in the series.

We explored the character of Monster, who he was, what he looked like and we invited children to think about what other adventures there might be about Monster. Before too long the idea came up the children could write their own Monster stories.

In December 2B had to go remote for many days, but we continued to keep this curriculum alive via zoom. When we returned to school in January we jumped right back into this project so that all children could write and illustrate their own Monster story.



The idea developed to put all the books into a Monster Library in our classroom. Some children painted about Monster, while some children made a banner to decorate the library.

The children wanted to bring their Monster stories home and wanted to be able to invite families to visit the Library to see all the books. Shelagh even wrote a song about Monster! We were able to invite parents to come to the Library.

This curriculum weaved together many different curriculum areas, but it was driven by the passion the children had for this unusual character named Monster.





# CLASS 3A

Teachers: Emily Ehmer

Elizabeth Gibbons

Ilana Sherman



# CLASS 3B

Teachers: Jackie Jediny  
Noah Wright  
Ilana Sherman



# CLASS 2A

Teachers: Alida Burry  
Laura Senie  
Joann Kim



# CLASS 2B

Teachers: Elise Teichert  
Joann Kim  
Shelagh Naughton-Schuil



# ALL SOULS, ALL VOICES

## THE TEACHER SAYS...

An Interview with Nikki Slesin by Susannah Cermak, Class 4A PM



All Souls teacher Nikki Slesin connects with her student Susannah Cermak through their shared love of food and fun...

**Susannah:** I am so excited to learn more about you, Nikki!

**Nikki:** Me too!

**Susannah:** What is your favorite thing to eat?

**Nikki:** My favorite thing to eat is pizza!

**Susannah:** I love pizza too! What's your favorite animal?

I think you have a doggie, right? I have a dog too. He's a pink stuffy. His name is woof woof. I love woof woof.

**Nikki:** Good memory! I do have a dog! My favorite animal is a dog. I also love horses!

**Susannah:** What's your favorite color?

**Nikki:** My favorite color is orange. What about you?

**Susannah:** Red!

**Nikki:** Red is a great color too!

**Susannah:** Do you have a favorite vegetable?

**Nikki:** I really like carrots. Do you have a favorite vegetable?

**Susannah:** I love carrots and Broccoli!

**Nikki:** Good one! I love Broccoli too.

**Susannah:** What do you like to do when you get home from school?

**Nikki:** I usually walk my dog first and then go for a run. I am actually training for the New York City Marathon! What about you?

**Susannah:** I love playing with my brother and taking a bath. I also love reading stories with my mom and dad before bed!

**Nikki:** What is your favorite story?

**Susannah:** Ira Sleeps Over! What about you?

**Nikki:** I have a bunch but I love The Very Hungry Caterpillar!

**Susannah:** I love that book too! How do you get to All Souls?

**Nikki:** I walk. I live two blocks away! What about you?

**Susannah:** I take a stroller and go on the board. Sometimes when my mommy or daddy picks me up, we get hot chocolate!

**Susannah:** How long have you lived in New York?

**Nikki:** I have lived in New York for 29 years.

**Susannah:** Wow! What is your favorite part of living in New York?

**Nikki:** Good question! What I love about living in New York is how many things there are to do all the time! Central Park might also be one of my favorite parts of New York. What about you?

**Susannah:** I love the sand at the playground!

# ALL SOULS, ALL TOGETHER

## THE ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

*The Parents Association sponsored an annual Pancake breakfast...*

Is that the smell of pancakes in the air? Of course! On Saturday, March 5th, the All Souls community met for their traditional Pancake Breakfast thanks to our amazing Breakfast Chairs Dan Diasio, Justin Spiegel, Jim Ligtenberg, and David Potterbaum.

As one of the most beloved events of the year, the children received goodie bags the day before filled with pancake mix, a squeeze bottle, a whisk, a spatula, and a kids apron. Bright and early on Saturday morning, with hungry stomachs in tow, all the children began making their pancakes.

There were some wild, messy, but amazing designs when it comes to these pancake



endeavors while the Little Maestros provided great musical entertainment for our future All Souls chefs and culinary families. The morning was filled with loads of singing, dancing, and of course stomach stuffing and eating fun.



Our All Souls parents enjoyed it because, for the first time ever, we don't have to cook breakfast or entertain our kids! The All Souls children loved it because pancakes taste more delicious when eaten with their fellow schoolmates! All in all, it was a very productive morning filled with eating and fun for everyone in the All Souls community.

# ALL SOULS, ALL INSPIRING

## PARENTS AS SUBS

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See how All Souls lives its mission of "nurturing community that fosters experimentation, a love of learning, and respect for others."



Throughout this year, I've been super lucky to be a "parent-as-sub." Each day I've spent in the classroom is full of highlights (too many to capture here!), and I'm continually amazed by the ability of each teacher to help our children develop special friendships.

For our youngest children, the early days of friendship are simple: sitting close at meeting time, holding a classmate's hand, or noting that a friend is absent from school. The teachers expertly spot the early signs of interest and facilitate the steps necessary for our children to develop sweet bonds with each other. For older children, friendships are on full display in the classroom. For instance, I've seen these children

work together to build elaborate transit systems—they share pieces, ideas, and the joy of each child's train chugging along the finished track!

It has truly been a privilege to witness firsthand what we all know—the teachers are our community's greatest strength. They are so special and it is so awesome to see them in action with our children (and even play a small role in the classroom). It reminds me how lucky we are to be part of this wonderful community!

# ALL SOULS, ALL INSPIRING

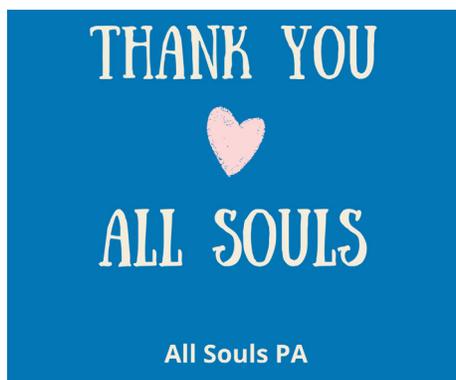
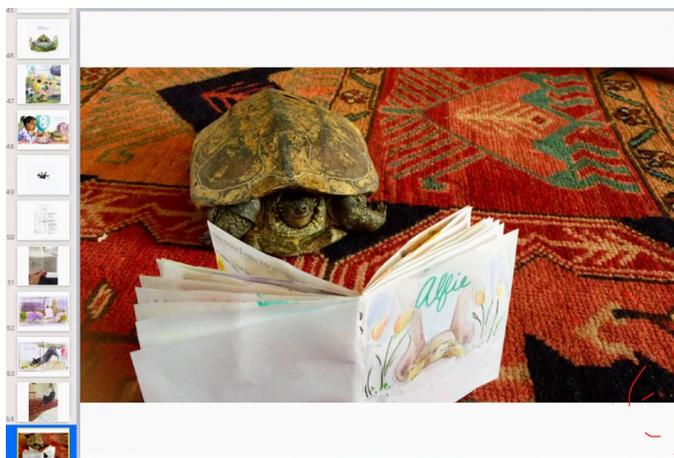
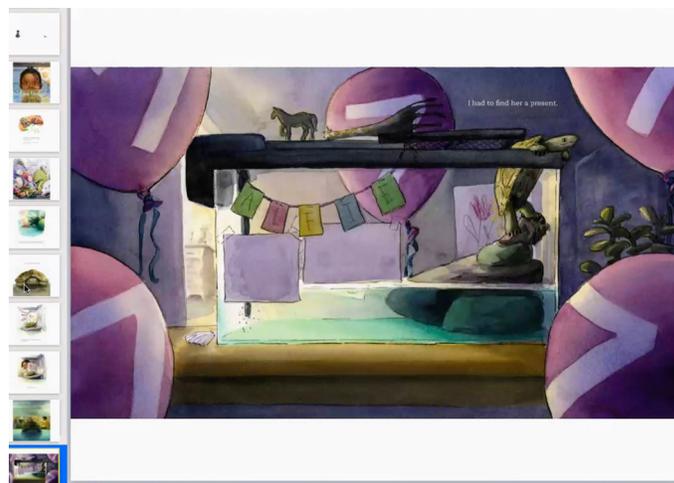
## ANNUAL BOOKFAIR

### Celebrating the Beauty of Books and Reading

After a two-year hiatus, the All Souls PA Book Fair was back! The event supports our school's library by providing an opportunity for families to purchase and donate books to the library. The event, organized in partnership with local bookstore Book Culture, ran from April 16 to 30. The generosity from our school community was inspiring. Families bought more than 100 books for the library, and the library wishlist was "sold-out" early! Additionally, 25 percent of each purchase benefited All Souls.

A highlight of the book festivities was a virtual event featuring author-illustrator Thyra Heder. Thyra shared her creative process, read her award-winning book "Alfie" (The Turtle that Disappeared)" and introduced the audience to the real-life Alfie! Among the virtual audience were families of current students and those joining All Souls this Fall.

The PA Book Fair is a beloved school tradition that highlights the joys of reading. Per custom, every book a family buys for the All Souls Library is labeled with a bookplate attributing the book as a gift from their student. Many parents and kids have commented on the delight of coming across the name of a former or current student they know. Members of the 2022 Book Fair were Jelena Prosevski, Amy Malone, Miyoung Lee, and Michelle Khuu. Mari Schermeyer, our wonderful school librarian, served as advisor. Thank you to the school community who made the event a success!



# ALL SOULS

## BOOK SELECTIONS FROM OUR LIBRARIAN, MARI SCHERMMEYER

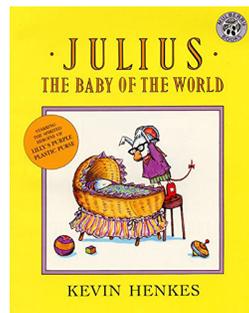
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Facing "New Beginnings" can be daunting for a young child. At these moments, reading a book to your child can help him/her to cope and to manage his/her fears and anxieties by giving him/her an opportunity to speak about his/her concerns in a safe and comfortable environment with a loving parent/adult.



**"The Kissing Hand"**  
Written by Audrey Penn

School is starting in the forest, but Chester Raccoon does not want to go. To help ease Chester's fears, Mrs. Raccoon shares a family secret called the Kissing Hand to give him the reassurance of her love any time his world feels a little scary. Mrs. Raccoon kisses Chester's hand and tells him that whenever he misses her that he should put his hand ("The Kissing Hand") to his face. Since its first publication in 1993, this heartwarming book has become a children's classic that has touched the lives of millions of children and their parents, especially at times of separation, whether starting school, entering daycare, or going to camp.

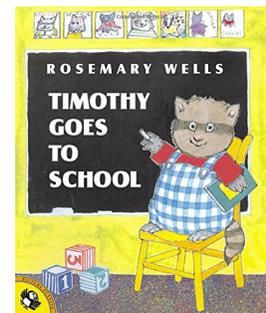


**"Julius the Baby of the World"**  
Written and Illustrated by Kevin Henkes

The baby of the world is anything but that to his big sister—until Cousin Garland dares to criticize him. When baby Julius is born, his parents think he is just perfect. "Julius is the baby of the world," they chime as they kiss him and admire him. But Lilly is Julius's older sister, and she knows differently. "I am the queen," says Lilly. "And I hate Julius."

Poor Julius. And poor Lilly, because her selfish behavior is making her miserable, too. Can anyone persuade Lilly that her brother really is the baby of the world?

This funny picture book classic from the beloved Kevin Henkes explores sibling rivalry and children's sometimes fragile self-esteem in a real and approachable way.



**"Timothy Goes to School"**  
Written and Illustrated by Rosemary Wells

Timothy is very excited about starting school—until he meets Claude. Claude sits next to him, and he wears all the right clothes, says all the right things, and garners all the praise from his teacher and classmates. Timothy is feeling down, until he meets a girl who's having the same problem with her seatmate. After Timothy makes a new friend. He realizes he is no longer jealous of Claude.



# ALL SOULS

## OLD SONGS FOR NEW BEGINNINGS BANJO BILL GORDH

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During this period of new beginnings, when it seems that every time we have finally begun, we need to adjust and start on another new beginning, it is reassuring to children to sing old songs that they know and can sing together. Singing a song at the same time at school brings everyone together even if they can't hear each other. They are aware we are all singing and though I still have not been able to be at All Souls in person, the children know that I see them and celebrate their engagement.

Though much of what we sing are traditional folk-songs from around the world and old favorites by the likes of Woody Guthrie, Malvina Williams and Tom Paxton, they are still fresh open songs. **Today is Monday** goes through the days of the week and things we can eat. We use the foods that Eric Carle illustrates in his picture book so it will match their experience with it. Still, the song is open and we may sing it another time with the offerings of the different groups. Our latest new beginning is that though we are on Zoom and cannot have class microphones on during the Sing, we can pause. How do we use the



pause? I invite one class to unmute and give an idea we will work into the song. We then sing that and I invite another group to unmute and offer another idea. So an old traditional song like “What Shall We Do When We All Go Out” can be about the children’s answer to that question. Each class offers a place we might go and what we will do and we sing it. Each session, there is at least one song that incorporates the children’s ideas into a song. We do it with Tom Paxton’s “Going to the Zoo” when they suggest zoo animals and what they are doing; likewise with the traditional song “Bought Me a Cat”, and offer animal sounds for the broken car horn in the story I added to the Woody Guthrie song, “Take You Riding in my Car”. It’s a joyous occasion.

The community sings along as we begin again.



## WHAT WE DO WITH WHAT YOU GIVE TO THE ANNUAL APPEAL

Want to know where your donations go?  
Here's a quick list of the funds that support our school:

**Unrestricted Needs Fund** As a not-for-profit institution, the school depends on donations to this fund to help support operating activities.

**The Nikos S. Kefalidis/Gunner Johannsen Tuition Assistance Fund** Fully supported by contributions from parents and friends, as well as the proceeds of the Annual Benefit, scholarships are awarded on the basis of need by a non-parent committee of the Board of Trustees.

**The Dr. Jean Mandelbaum Fund for Faculty Development and Enrichment** This fund allows teachers to attend professional conferences, pursue educational interests, and receive short-term, no-interest loans.

**The Director's Fund for Children's Special Needs** Started with a large donation from a school family, this fund: helps provide consultants (such as speech therapists, psychologists, and social workers) to the staff; adds materials or personnel to the classroom when special circumstances arise; and provides the Director with the ability to meet unexpected needs appropriately and promptly.

## ALL SOULS ONLINE

Visit [www.allsoulsschoolnyc.org](http://www.allsoulsschoolnyc.org) for an array of information from downloadable forms, class pages, the school calendar, and many more photos.

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## THE NEWSLETTER TEAM

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