



SECOND PLACE WINNERS, MS 50, AT THE MSQI DEBATE TOURNAMENT

The Buzz

Around the Division of Teaching and Learning



Fall 2015

IN THIS ISSUE:

Fall 2015 All-Staff Meeting

"... I want us to embrace the idea that we must learn from mistakes, to grow from them, and to remember that if we are faithful to our task and honest about our process, our errors can become the inspiration that allows beauty to emerge from our work. In essence, our continuous improvement work is what a good, creative, iterative thinker does - engage in a process and make ongoing in-the-moment decisions about where and how we can improve our work. We know that a group of people who do this type of thinking together will be more effective, and ultimately make smarter choices about their work. In so doing, we can fulfill the goal of our Division: by continuously learning together we create the conditions for all schools to improve and accelerate progress for all of all of our 1.1 million students."

- Deputy Chancellor Phil Weinberg, at Fall 2015 DT&L Meeting



See page 2 for additional photos.



MSQI Debate

MSQI had a surprise visit from a City Council member at their recent debate tournament! Read about it on page 3!



Meet Our New Leaders!

Get to know our new leaders in DT&L, [Lamson Lam](#) and [Estelle Acquah](#) on page 8 and 9!

All-Staff Meeting Photos



Operations presents their work in the style of the Price is Right.



The Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Learning (CIPL) asked attendees to make their own origami to learn more about the work of their office.



The Office of Interschool Collaborative Learning (OICL) presented their work in the style of The Voice, featuring singers from their office.



Attendees take part in a process-mapping activity.



Applause!



The Office of Postsecondary Readiness (OPSR) created a video game to present their work.

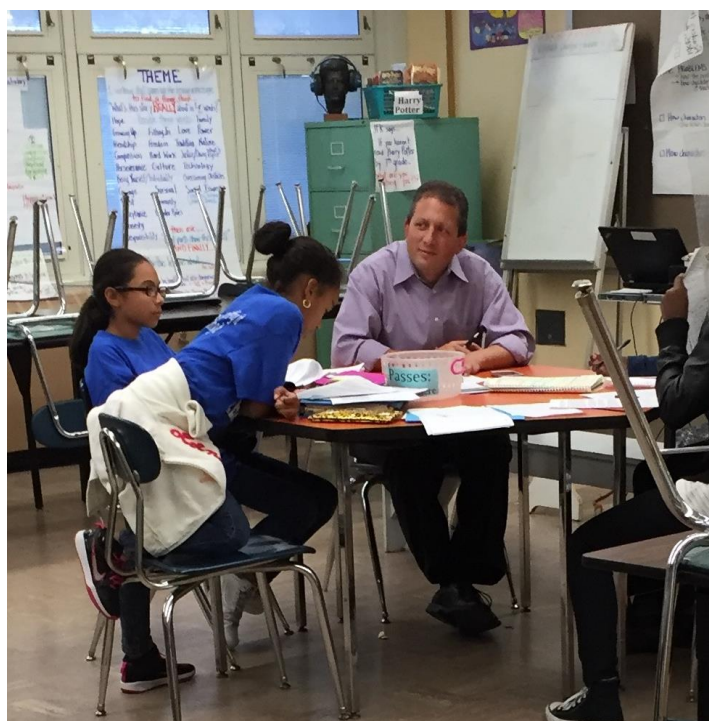
MSQI Debate Tournament

On Saturday, October 17 at JHS 88 in Brooklyn, around 200 students from 17 middle schools attended the first of four Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) debate tournaments. The event was run in partnership by the NYC Urban Debate League and MSQI, part of the Office of Interschool Collaborative Learning (OICL). In competitive public forum style, students debated the resolution: "The benefits of animal cloning outweigh the potential risks," which is drawn from Word Generation, a language acquisition program implemented widely across MSQI schools.

There was a surprise visit from New York City Council Member Brad Lander (see picture on left), who graciously stepped in to judge one round of the debate. The top individual speaker awards went to co-champions Fatima from JHS 118 in the Bronx and Zachary from Hunters Point Community Middle School (HPCMS) in Queens. The top team awards went to the undefeated teams of Zachary & Liam from HPCMS, Carmelia & Isabela from MS 45 in the Bronx, and Mohammed & Hendriny from MS 50 in Brooklyn. HPCMS took first place in the overall team sweepstakes, followed by MS 50, Urban Institute of Math in the Bronx, host school JHS 88, MS 45, and In-Tech Academy (whose team was [featured in the Riverdale Press](#)).

To learn about MSQI Debate's impact on students' reading growth, [read this full evaluation report](#) conducted by the NYC DOE's Research and Policy Support Group. And to see several debaters in action, [watch this video about MSQI Debate](#).

If you're interested in judging a debate in the future, save January 30 and March 5 in your calendars, and reach out to OICL team member [Scott Moore](#) for more information.



OH, BABY!



Congratulations to [Marisa Campbell](#) from the Office of Teacher Effectiveness on the birth of her baby girl, London. Little London was born on September 24, 2015 measuring 20.5 inches and weighing 7.9 lbs. Both mom and baby are doing well!



Congratulations to [Jayadev Merugula](#) from the Office of School Performance on his new baby boy!

DT&L Does Halloween

DT&L celebrated Halloween at the October Monthly Mingle on October 30, 2015. Attendees were encouraged to dress up and show their spunk through their Halloween costumes. See below for photos of DT&L celebrating Halloween!



Salvador Dali ([Sam Milder](#)) and Frida Kahlo ([Ayanna Heaven](#)) recreate this iconic photo of the two artists (right).



The Office of Leadership (OOL) came dressed to impress as different aspects of Improvement Science!



[Chris Casarez](#) the Clown.



[Chris Sandor](#) poses with Eeyore ([Trenton Price](#))

From Pilot to Scale: Computer Science For All

Q&A with Debbie Marcus

A few weeks into the school year, Mayor de Blasio announced *Computer Science For All (CS4All)* as part of a comprehensive vision for equity and excellence across all our public schools. *CS4All* represents a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership to equip every single New York City student with the fundamental skills in computer science we know they need to be prepared for their futures.

Through *CS4All*, we will give all students access to high-quality computer science instruction, guaranteeing at least one unit of computer science to every student in elementary, middle, and high school. DT&L's Office of Postsecondary Readiness will pave the path for this exciting work.

We sat down with [Debbie Marcus](#), the Executive Director of Computer Science Education to learn more:

What do you love the most about what computer science education can do for the minds of young people?

Everything! This initiative is key to how we can enable more and more students to be problem-solvers, designers, logical thinkers, and creators. Students will develop "technological literacy" and will become better acquainted with the technology we use daily. Students will be exposed to hands-on, project based curriculum at every school level and will engage in all kinds of exciting computer science instruction; from building robots and physical computing, to designing websites, apps and even 3D creations, to text or block-based programming. And over the next decade, we will introduce technologies that don't even exist yet. All throughout, our students will be learning lifelong skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity.

Plus, students aren't the only ones who will benefit from CS4ALL. We've worked with many teachers (participating in already existing programs) who had little or no computer science background, and have been re-energized by including computer science instruction in their practice. Through engagement with high-quality resources and professional development, they were able to learn a new content area and incorporate hands-on, project based learning into their teaching.

Tell us a bit about the origins of this huge undertaking.

CS4All is built off of our successful computer science efforts to date, which include the Software Engineering Pilot (SEP), where 18 schools have engaged in a multi-year curriculum and professional development program; the creation of software engineering high schools in Manhattan and the Bronx; the training of teachers in the Blended Learning Institute's Exploring Computer Science high school course; the launch of a new curriculum for the upcoming AP Computer Science Principles exam; school partnerships with several computer science education organizations; and many schools who have developed robotics, coding and other programs all on their own. Which is a long-winded way of saying – we are building on a solid foundation. It's hugely exciting to scale this up to reach the entire City.

What will this look like in schools?

There's no one approach for all schools. School leaders and teachers will determine their strategies to integrate computer science with their instructional vision and internal capacity. Schools may choose to provide semester or year-long courses or to incorporate computer science instruction into their existing courses, such as math, science, art, and others.

How do we plan to train the thousands of teachers we will need?

Over the next ten years, we will develop a portfolio of programs, professional learning opportunities and curricular resources for teachers and administrators to support their implementation. These opportunities will be provided by DOE staff, as well as high-quality partner computer science education organizations. In addition, we will create a foundational document that describes to school leaders and teachers what is required for high-quality computer science at each grade band.

Is your team ready? Can you describe some of the challenges?

We have a fantastic and dedicated team, which has overseen the Software Engineering Pilot (SEP). And we are hiring new staff to support this large undertaking. As for challenges, computer science is a rapidly changing field. So we will need to ensure that we are actively engaging our industry and higher education partners to ensure that our curriculum and professional learning opportunities remain current. And, we are in discussions with the State Education Department and university partners to make sure we align our work with innovations in pre-service teacher training and certification. But, as always, OPSR is up to the challenge and we are excited about the work ahead!

Thanks Debbie and team! Please send any additional questions to cs4all@schools.nyc.gov.

NYC Reads 365



NYC Reads 365 is an exciting new effort led by DT&L's Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning, challenging students to read every single day. Read for pleasure, read to find out, read to argue, read to persuade, read to laugh, read to cry, read to understand, read to forget... **read every day DT&L – 365!**

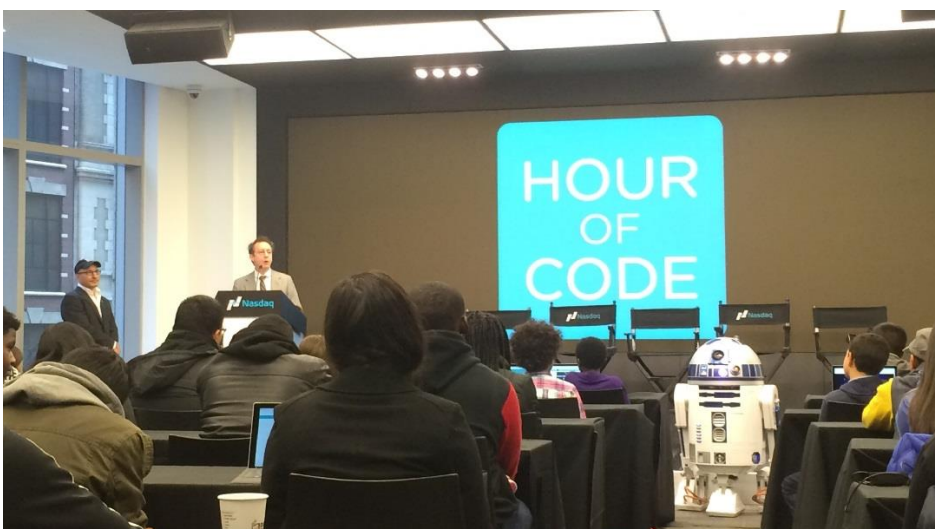
A team of passionate school librarians read hundreds of new books and selected a set of titles for each grade that appeal to as diverse a range of readers as possible. We invite you to share these reading lists with young readers and help them find books that might captivate them. [Click here to learn more!](#)

Share and promote this effort on social media using [#NYCReads365](#)

Happy Reading!



Phil and R2D2 Celebrate Computer Science Week



Deputy Chancellor Phil Weinberg joined students, educators, tech companies... and R2D2?!... to kick off Computer Science Education Week, by engaging in an Hour of Code at Nasdaq headquarters on December 7. An Hour of Code is a one-hour introduction to computer science, aimed at demystifying code and showing students that anybody can learn the basics. Thousands of New York City students took part in an Hour of Code, joining tens of millions of students across the world all throughout the week. As DT&L leads the *Computer Science for All* initiative, Phil expressed excitement for its growing momentum, saying "computer science opens doors and provides new opportunities for our students. Our initiative will create new spaces where students can practice critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration - ultimately becoming lifelong learners."

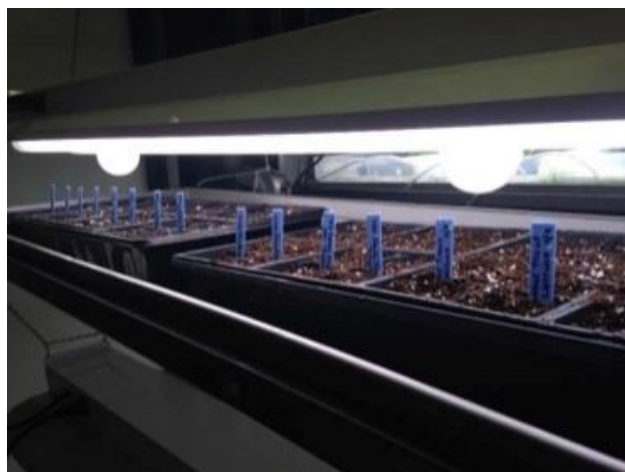
The Environmental Study Center Participates in the 33rd Annual Queens County Fair and Brings Home Best in Show

The Environmental Study Center (ESC) within Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Learning (CIPL) is the proud winner of Best in Show at the 33rd Annual Queens County Fair. ESC staff, in collaboration with over 200 students from all over New York City worked tirelessly throughout the spring and summer caring for their garden—propagating, planting, weeding, tilling, staking—all while learning and enjoying the fruits (and vegetables) of their labor. On Saturday, September 19 all of their hard work paid off.

Starting in late February, team members at ESC began propagating seeds in their greenhouse - squash, pumpkins, tomatillos, ground cherries, peppers, and tomatoes - to name a few. Within weeks, hundreds of tiny little seeds began to sprout.



These sprouts were transferred to larger containers to allow room for their roots to grow and become strong. As the weather became warmer and days became longer the team began to transfer these sprouts to the outdoor farm. First, plants become acclimated to the outdoors through the “hardening off” process. Every morning, a dozen rolling carts were filled with plants and brought outside; this was their first introduction to the sun and wind. Every evening, the carts were rolled back in and each plant was watered. This went on for two weeks. Finally, they were strong enough to be planted in the ground. Carefully, each plant was transferred from its pot to the ground. Each bed was labeled with help from student campers and the team was hopeful the free range chicken that also lived in the greenhouse wouldn’t indulge in the newly planted tender sprouts.



Summer arrived and the garden was in its full glory. Campers, who are public school students who applied to attend camp weekends and school breaks and are selected by lottery, enjoyed endless amounts of bounty as they ate and cooked their way through the rainbow of colors the garden had to offer. Children delighted in being able to harvest their own produce to bring home each day. Ground cherries quickly became a farm favorite and campers asked every morning to go out to the farm and gather them. Campers made beautiful garden markers and proudly placed them in the garden.

All the while, the team was “all eyes” looking around for winning produce. Specifically, produce that was without flaw, vibrant in color and large in size was perfect to enter into the Queens County Fair. A few started to take shape – the kohlrabi really looked spectacular and the pumpkin vines were producing pumpkins that looked to be show worthy. As the Fair

approached, the team decided to enter several items – Long Island Cheese Pumpkins, Mexican Sour Gherkins, Radishes, Kohlrabi, Purple Tomatillos and Butternut Squash. The ESC team harvested “picture perfect” fruits and vegetables, cleaned them, and trimmed them with hopes they would impress the judges. They carefully drove to the fair and entered into the contest.

The next morning was the opening day for the fair. All judging is done before the fair opens so that all patrons can see the award winning produce. As Team ESC entered the tent they were shocked to see all the ribbons they earned! Five blue ribbons and 1 red ribbon! Then it happened – at 1:30 the judges announced the vegetable that won “Best in Show” from amongst all vegetables that were entered. Team ESC’s Long Island Cheese Pumpkins were Best in Show! A trophy and beautiful blue ribbon were bestowed upon the winning pumpkins. Team ESC is very proud of their accomplishments and can’t wait for spring to return again!

For more information about ESC, contact [Christine Mazza](#). We are pleased that the TDCs will continue this great work by supporting 156 schools across all five boroughs in 2015-2016.



We have two new leaders in our division, Senior Executive Director of the Office of Interschool Collaborative Learning, [Lamson Lam](#), and Chief of Staff, [Estelle Acquah](#). Please join us in welcoming them to our division.

Q&A with Lamson Lam



How long have you been in your role?

I officially began as the Senior Executive Director in September, so it's been almost a grand total of 3 months! But I started as a Program Facilitator for the Learning Partners Program in August last year, so I've been with the Office of Interschool Collaborative Learning for a little over a year.

What has been your journey to the DOE?

My father was a professor, my mother was a professor and activist, and I studied sociology at UC San Diego. So education, politics and issues of social justice were a part of my upbringing and my DNA and became a passion of mine as I grew up. After graduating from college, I worked at a group home for youth who were previously incarcerated in the juvenile justice system. This work felt important and meaningful but I also felt that I wanted to try to help kids before they ended up in the justice system, so I decided to become a teacher.

What is your background at the DOE?

I started working for the DOE as a 4th grade teacher and then a Math Coach in the Bronx and East Harlem. After that I took a short hiatus from the DOE to work with the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Mercy College and the Teaching Fellows, before returning to the DOE to work with the Office for Family Engagement and Advocacy (now FACE). I then completed principal training through the New York City Leadership Academy and worked as a principal in Brownsville, Brooklyn. In my last year as a principal, I applied for my school to be a part of the Learning Partners Program because I loved the idea of improving schools by visiting and collaborating with other schools, sharing promising practices, and thought-partnering with other principals. I ended up loving this concept so much, I joined the Learning Partners Team!

What are you looking forward to as you continue in your new role?

My email signature ends with this quote from Margaret Mead: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has,"* and in many ways, I feel truly blessed to be living this ideal through the work of our office on a daily basis. I truly work with that "small group of thoughtful, committed citizens," and I believe that when we do our best work, we are changing the world. At the very least, we are changing how educators conceive of their own professional learning and how they can see themselves as being a part of improving their schools and schools throughout our city. Our motto is that "the answer is in the room." And as a team, we believe that our charge is to help educators and teams of educators to find those answers in their own classrooms, in their own schools, and in schools throughout our system. This is inspiring and transformative work and I look forward to coming to work every day.

What's something that people here don't know about you?

I am from Hawaii and went to the same high school as President Obama. I also have played some semi-professional beach volleyball after college (emphasis on *semi*-).

Q&A with Estelle Acquah



How long have you been in your role?

I am in my third month as Chief of Staff.

What has been your journey to the DOE?

Well, my life journey really started in District 9 in the Bronx...but perhaps a more recent account is more helpful.

Before coming to the DOE, I worked in the health care sector where I held a variety of positions in the non-profit and private sectors, working on national implementation of health care quality and accountability metrics. Despite this, I always led another “work life”, where all my volunteer and pro-bono engagements were with education and youth-based organizations. When I got the opportunity to work in the public school system of the city I grew up in, it felt like serendipity. I feel very fortunate to work here in this position and with Deputy Chancellor Weinberg.

What is your background at the DOE, if you were in a previous role here?

I previously worked in the Office of District Planning as the Director of Brooklyn Planning.

What are you looking forward to as you continue in your new role?

I am looking forward to continuously learning! There isn't a day that goes by that I am not inspired, motivated, and energized by the level of content expertise and the commitment of the people in our Division. It's an incredible honor to work alongside everyone in service of our students. They all deserve so much, and I am humbled at how much we are able to do together on a daily basis.

What's something that people here don't know about you?

Edward Tom, one of the Principals on our DT&L Principal Advisory Committee, was my HS geometry teacher. I also speak Twi – a language native to Ghana. I was a biology major in college. I'm only 5'2.5"! (Actually, that's probably fairly obvious...)

Thank you to Estelle and Lamson for their answers for this feature! Welcome to your new roles!

What's going on in DT&L?

December Monthly Mingle

December 15 – 8:30-9:30 AM – Tweed, 2nd floor conference room

DT&L Holiday Party

December 17 – 6:00-8:00 PM – Brooklyn Borough President's Office Court Room, 209 Joralemon Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Showcase School Visits

The [Showcase Schools program](#) is designed to promote collaborative learning by inviting teachers and administrators across the city to visit schools that highlight promising practices. This year, 24 schools will open their doors citywide to demonstrate and discuss successful strategies in a specific area of learning, as well as the process behind their development. The 24 schools range from pre-K to high schools and exhibit a variety of learning focus areas including teacher development, student empowerment structures, project-based learning, and more.

The Showcase Schools program offers a truly unique professional development experience that allows educators to come away with new strategies and practices that can help to improve student outcomes in their own schools. We encourage educators to attend visits with colleagues to strengthen post-visit discussion and sharing.

Please encourage your networks and schools to sign up today. Central staff are also welcome to attend. **Registration is now open for winter visits from January 6 – February 11, and spring visits from February 24 – March 31.** Please register early as space is available on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information and to register, click [here](#). For questions, email [Showcase Schools](#).

Why We Can't Wait: Critical and Courageous Conversations Series

At Expanded Success Initiative (ESI) we have learned that critical conversations about race, class and gender can support and encourage administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, social workers and all staff to create learning and nurturing environments where *all* students have sufficient opportunities to achieve. Beginning on December 16th, we will host forums where we will come together to examine and to discuss issues of culture as it intersects with race, class and gender.

The first forum will be held at NYU (Kimmel Center – [60 Washington Square South](#) from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.) in partnership with Dr. Eddie Fergus who is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy. His work explores the effects of educational policy and practice as it intersects the lives of populations living in vulnerable conditions. More specifically his policy work extrapolates the relationship between discipline codes of conduct, gifted program practice, and academic referral processes and the educational outcomes of low-income and racial/ethnic minority student populations.

During this forum, participants will receive a copy of and engage in an interactive discussion around the COSEBOC (Coalition of Schools Education Boys of Color) *Standards and Promising Practices for Schools Educating Boys of Color*. Based on current research, the Standards are a set of guidelines intended to assist school districts, schools, and school leaders who seek to develop and enhance schools and programs serving boys and young men of color. It is also a self-assessment tool that can serve as the basis for self-assessment, reflection, planning, professional development, and accountability.

Click [here](#) to register. Contact [Paul Forbes](#) if you have any questions.

Social Educational and Equity Forum

Are you interested in getting involved in the Social Educational and Equity Forum (SEEF)? For more details and to be added to the listserv, email [Terryl Dozier](#), [Danielle Ehsanipour](#), or [Scott Moore](#).

Continued on page 11

What's going on in DT&L? Continued

[OICL 2015-16 Lenses on Equity Speaker Series](#)

The Office of Interschool Collaborative Learning is hosting a multi-session speaker series entitled *Lenses on Equity: The call for equity across our schools, and school-based practices that promote it*. This series aims to build the capacity of school communities to work towards equity in education by showcasing cutting-edge ideas of leading scholars and practitioners, and facilitating dialogue about school-based applications of these ideas. Sessions will explore different lenses on equity, such as identity, resource allocation, curriculum & instruction, school discipline, and community-based solutions. All sessions will address the essential question: *What can we do in our roles as educators to promote equity and create conditions for all of our students to have impactful and transformative academic experiences in safe learning environments?*

You can [register here](#) for the January Session: *Curriculum for Social Justice*, with Dr. Wayne Au. The December session filled up quickly so register now!

[Analytics Club](#)

The Analytics Club hosts periodic talks and trainings about different topics relevant to the analytic work many of us do at the DOE. If you aren't already a member, you can join the Analytics Club using this [form](#).

[Recent Grads Group](#)

Are you a recent college graduate working in DT&L? Would you like to connect with other people in their first years of professional life? Join the Recent Grads Group! For more details and to be added to the listserv, email [Ayanna Heaven](#).

[DT&L Book Club](#)

The DT&L Book Club hosts bimonthly discussions about new books connected to the realm of education. For more details and to be added to the listserv, email [Ayanna Heaven](#).

[Sitting Club](#)

Are you interested in meditation, wellness, and self-care? The DT&L Sitting Club hosts weekly opportunities for colleagues to take a moment out of their day to meditate. For more details and to be added to the listserv, email [Asa Angel](#).

[Introductory Class to Tableau Desktop](#)

We will be offering our first Introductory Class to Tableau Desktop on **Tuesday, January 6 at 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM at 333 7th Avenue, room 802- 8th Floor Computer Lab**.

This class is designed for the beginner who has never opened Tableau or have only opened Tableau once or twice. After this class, students should be able to use Tableau Desktop to start visualizing data. This class covers the following topics: importing data into Tableau, basic graphing capabilities, quick filters and pages, calculated fields, and dashboard actions.

To register for the class, click [here](#).

Do you have an idea for a DT&L group or a professional development opportunity you would like to see happen in the division? We would love to hear it! Email [Ayanna Heaven](#) with your suggestions.