



# Early Steps Celebration 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**Thursday, May 18, 2017**

The University Club  
New York, NY

Early Steps  
540 East 76th Street • New York, NY 10021  
[www.earlysteps.org](http://www.earlysteps.org) • 212.288.9684



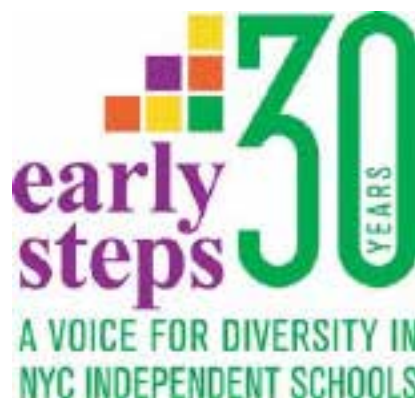
# **Horace Mann School**

and all of our Early Steps  
students and families,  
past and present,  
join in celebrating

**Early Steps'**

30 Years

*as A Voice for Diversity  
in NYC Independent Schools*



## Letter from our Director

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Dear Friends,

For nearly three decades, it has been my joy and responsibility to guide the parents of children of color through the process of applying to New York City independent schools for kindergarten and first grade, helping them to realize their hopes and dreams for their children.

While over 3,500 students of color entered school with the guidance of Early Steps, it is humbling to know that the impact has been so much greater. We hear time and again how families, schools and lives have been transformed as a result of the doors of opportunity that were opened with the help of Early Steps. Doors where academic excellence is the norm and children learn and play with others whose life's experiences are not the same as theirs, benefitting all children.

We are proud of our 30-year partnership with now over 50 New York City independent schools who nurture, educate and challenge our children to be the best that they can be. They couldn't be in better hands!

Tonight we honor four Early Steps alumni. These accomplished young adults all benefited from the wisdom of their parents who knew the importance of providing their children with the best possible education beginning in Kindergarten. We are so proud of all they have accomplished and they are true role models leading our world to a better future full of hope and promise for all people, no matter the color of their skin.

I want to thank each and every one of you who believed and gave of your time, your talents and your resources. Your faith in us means that yet another generation will have the opportunity to become true global citizens. Your continued support will help guarantee that tomorrow can be a better day for all of us.

Bless you and have a wonderful evening!



Jacqui



© 2012 Victoria Jackson Photography

## Letter from our Board President

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Dear Friends of Early Steps:

Today we celebrate the 30th anniversary of Early Steps. During those years, this extraordinary organization has placed more than 3500 deserving children in independent schools. These children, children of color, might never have made it through the labyrinthine application process, interviews, and school visits without the help of the dedicated staff at Early Steps.

Tonight we also honor the alumni of Early Steps. Hundreds of them are now making their mark and making a difference in the world at large. They are doctors, lawyers, business professionals, artists, scholars, educators, and every imaginable profession in between. Their accomplishments confirm that the Early Steps mission of creating diversity in the early years is a steppingstone to opportunity. And opportunity for children of color creates opportunity for all children.

Society has come a long way since the founding of Early Steps. There is greater diversity in schools and greater acceptance of children of color. But our society still has a long way to go to achieve racial equity and justice. Children of different races going to school together from their first years, with teachers who promote an anti-bias curriculum, is especially beneficial to the furtherance of this journey. Early Steps has taken society farther along the path to a brighter future.

Congratulations and a long life to Early Steps!



Lydia Spinelli  
President, Early Steps Board of Trustees



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## Our Story

**The EARLY STEPS mission** is to promote racial diversity within New York City independent schools. We accomplish this by increasing the enrollment of children of color beginning at the kindergarten and first grade levels.

The EARLY STEPS program was created by the Independent School Admission Association of Greater New York (ISAAGNY) in response to the needs of schools and families. Independent schools want to increase their racial diversity. Parents of children of color seeking quality education for their children want guidance and support through the process. EARLY STEPS is a resource for both.

In our first year, 1986, EARLY STEPS assisted 35 families and enrolled 18 children of color in independent schools. Since then, our growth and impact on New York City independent schools has been dramatic. In September 2016, our 55 member schools enrolled 172 children of color at the kindergarten and first grade levels. Over the past thirty years, over 3,500 children of color have attended independent schools because EARLY STEPS was there to guide their parents through the challenging independent school admissions process.

The true impact of the EARLY STEPS program in New York City independent schools is immeasurable. The entire community benefits from the richness of the shared experiences gained when many cultures live and learn together.



MASTER OF CEREMONIES

**Sheinelle Jones**

Co-anchor of NBC News Weekend TODAY

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

**Lydia Spinelli**

President of EARLY STEPS

Director, Brick Church School

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Jacqueline Y. Pelzer**

Executive Director Early Steps

PRESENTATION OF THE TRUSTEES AWARD  
TO OUR HONOREES

**Jordan Baker-Caldwell**

**Stella Heyliger-Mulatu**

**Morgan Monaco**

**Ijah Mondesire-Crump**

BENEFIT COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS TOAST

**Dan & Paula Lascano**

**Mark & Dawn Ostroff**

**Corrente Schankler & Nathan Hunt**

### Sheinelle Jones

Sheinelle Jones is a co-anchor of NBC News' "Weekend TODAY" and a mid-week correspondent for "TODAY". She is also an anchor on weekend editions of "MSNBC Live."

Since joining TODAY in October 2014, Jones has covered a variety of human interest stories, including: the 50th anniversary of "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Alabama; Ryan Ferguson, a young man who spent 10 years in prison for a crime he did not commit; Betty Reid Soskin, an African American woman who is the country's oldest living park ranger; and backstage interviews at New York Fashion Week.

Jones is also a contributor to the TODAY Parenting Team, a multi-platform community where she shares about her life as a "multi-tasking mom" and interacts with viewers around the country.

Prior to joining TODAY, Jones served as co-host of FOX's Emmy Award-winning morning show "Good Day Philadelphia" where she reported local, national and international headlines

She is a member of the National

Association of Black Journalists, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and The Links Inc., an international group of women devoted to enriching the lives of families in their communities. Jones, who comes from a family of educators, takes a special interest in activities involving education.

Jones graduated from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism with a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism and Spanish. She and her husband live in Manhattan with their 4-year-old twin son and daughter and their 7-year-old son.





## 30th Anniversary Alumni Honorees

### Jordan Baker-Caldwell

was born in New York City and raised with the kinetic streets of Harlem as his backdrop. As an artist and metal sculptor, his works evoke questions about gravity, structure, balance, and the human body in relation to space. His sculptures have been described as figurative, organic forms juxtaposed with modern, neo-cubic abstraction. Jordan is interested in the way people interact with his work, and how that interaction has the power to reshape perception.

In 2016 Jordan made history with the installation of his 9-foot piece “Ascension” in the heart of New York City, making him the

first African American, and the youngest artist ever to have a permanent metal sculpture in Midtown

Manhattan. Ascension is located on the corner of 36th Street and 9th avenue.

Jordan’s work has been featured at the National Metal Museum, the Museum of Arts and Design (MAD), and currently his 15-foot sculpture “Golem” is on permanent loan at Harlem Hospital, on display in the Mural Pavilion. Jordan currently lives and works in New York City.



### Stella Heyliger-Mulatu

attended preschool at West Side Montessori School and was accepted to The Town School as a kindergartener. Stella graduated from The Town School in 1998 and moved on to Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School. Her sister, Faith, followed in her footsteps, attending all three schools as well. After graduating in 2002, Stella attended Vassar College where she majored in Africana Studies. There, Stella discovered a passion for African history and the Black Diaspora. After graduating from Vassar in 2006, Stella was recruited by The Town School to serve as an associate teacher in both first and third grades, and so began her

teaching career. Stella was fortunate to fulfill her lifelong dream to live in Africa while expanding her teaching experience, when she volunteered to serve as an after-school and summer camp program coordinator, English teacher, and social worker at an orphan care

center in Hawassa, Ethiopia. During her two years at the Hawassa Children’s Center Stella met and married her husband, Fitsum Mulatu. They returned to the United States to raise their son, Zelalem, who is now a first-grader at The Town School. Resuming her teaching career stateside, Stella taught first grade at Storefront Academy in Harlem, a tuition-free private school, for three years. She returned home to The Town School in 2012, accepting a position as a co-head teacher for the first grade, teaching in the very classroom where she herself was a first-grader. Stella remains steadfast in her career path and is near completion of her Masters of Arts in Early Childhood Special Education from Hunter College. It is Stella’s dream to return to Ethiopia one day and open an elementary school that utilizes the best of her varied teaching and learning experiences. Stella is grateful for all of the opportunities that have opened up for her as a result of her education in New York City private schools and hopes to one day open doors for others who have not had that same access and opportunity.



## 30th Anniversary Alumni Honorees

### Morgan Monaco

is the Associate Director for Project Management at the Mayor's Office of Operations, the City's performance measurement and management office. She has over ten years of government experience at the intersection of environmental sustainability and social justice. During her tenure at NYC Parks, she oversaw PlaNYC environmental sustainability initiatives and directed the MillionTreesNYC campaign to plant and care for one million new trees across the five boroughs. In her current role at the Mayor's Office, she helps to ensure that government remains accountable to its residents by increasing operational efficiency and by managing broad-reaching equity initiatives. She has helped to create OneNYC, which combines sustainability,

equity and resiliency policy into one plan for NYC's future. Working with an array of agencies, she provides strategic insight and project management leadership to design and implement policy.



Morgan has a Master's in Public Administration and Non-Profit Management from NYU Wagner, as well as a B.A. in International Studies from Vassar College. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two cats, Raymour and Flannigan.

### Ijah Mondesire-Crump, M.D.

is a Bronx native. After attending kindergarten at a public school in the South Bronx, he was chosen to participate in Early Steps, a program that promotes diversity in NYC independent schools. He attended St. Bernards School from first grade to eighth grade, where he developed a love for the natural sciences. In 1998, he matriculated to Riverdale Country School where he continued his studies of the natural sciences, but also took a particular interest in research methodology and the scientific process. He

matriculated at Harvard in 2002, where he was an Honors Biology major with a minor in Health Policy.

Ijah attended medical school at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, and continued his medical training as an intern in

the Department of General Surgery of the joint for the St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospitals system. Since that time, he has been working at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, in the Brain Tumor Center, the department of Neurosurgery, and the Department of Surgery. He currently works as a clinical research coordinator in the department of pediatric ophthalmic oncology. Throughout his career, he has been heavily focused on research publication and has authored articles in the fields of AIDS research, Neurology, and Ophthalmic Oncology.

He enjoys backpacking and frequents the Catskills, among other outdoor activities. He is involved in CERT NYC (Community Emergency Response Team). Professionally, he is looking to leverage his medical degree either as a clinician or within healthcare venture capital, administration, research, or consulting.



## ***Early Steps Member Schools***

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Alexander Robertson School	The Hewitt School
The Allen-Stevenson School	Horace Mann School
Bank Street School for Children	The Ideal School
The Birch Wathen Lenox School	International School of Brooklyn
Blue School	Little Red School House & Elisabeth
The Brearley School	Irwin High School
Brooklyn Friends School	The Mandell School
Brooklyn Heights Montessori School	Manhattan Country School
The Browning School	Marymount School of New York
Buckley Country Day School	Metropolitan Montessori School
The Buckley School	The Nightingale-Bamford School
The Caedmon School	The Packer Collegiate Institute
The Calhoun School	Riverdale Country School
The Cathedral School	Rodeph Sholom School
The Chapin School	Saint Ann's School
City and Country School	St. Bernard's School
Collegiate School	Saint David's School
Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School	St. Hilda's & St. Hugh's
Convent of the Sacred Heart	St. Luke's School
Corlears School	The Spence School
The Dalton School	Speyer Legacy School
Dwight School	Staten Island Academy
East Woods School	The Studio School
Ethical Culture Fieldston School	The Town School
Friends Seminary	Trevor Day School
Grace Church School	Trinity School
Harlem Academy	Village Community School

## ***Auxiliary Member Schools***

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The Brick Church School	The International Preschools
Chelsea Day School	The Jack and Jill School
Church of the Epiphany Day School	The Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church Day School
Epiphany Community Nursery School	Resurrection Episcopal Day School
The First Presbyterian Church Nursery School	West Side Montessori School

## THE EARLY STEPS BOARD

honors and thanks

# Jacqui Pelzer

**for her 28 years of extraordinary and ground-breaking leadership in dramatically changing countless lives by opening new doors for children of color and new possibilities for the schools they join.**

**We are deeply grateful!**

We also thank her dedicated staff:

Dani Glaser, *Development Director*

Ajanna Brockenbaugh, *Program Officer*

### PRESIDENT

Lydia Spinelli, *The Brick Church School*

Alan Berk	Dan Lascano
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# Donors

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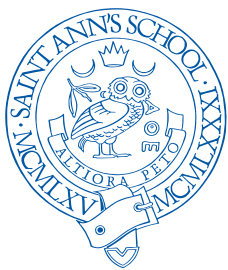
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*We express our sincere  
thanks to those whose  
generous contributions  
reached us after press time.*

**TheDaltonSchool<sup>®</sup>**  
celebrates Early Steps on its  
30th anniversary and its  
commitment to equity  
and diversity in the  
New York City  
independent school  
community.





## SAINT ANN'S SCHOOL

We are a co-ed independent,  
non-sectarian day school  
offering instruction to students in  
preschool through 12th grade.



Congratulations and thank you  
for 30 years of enriching the lives of  
students and partnering to support  
independent school diversity!

**Grace Church School**

[www.gcschool.org](http://www.gcschool.org)

JK-Grade 8, 86 Fourth Avenue | Grades 9-12, 46 Cooper Square



## Be the girl

who succeeds on her own terms,

whose intelligence and curiosity propel her,

**who authors her own story.**

Confident and comfortable in her own skin,

she feels the true joy of accomplishment

and finds fulfillment not in the reactions of others, but in herself.



# THE HEWITT SCHOOL

be the girl beyond

NYC's K-12 school where each girl is known and empowered to achieve her best.

[hewittschool.org](http://hewittschool.org)

**LREI  
IS PLEASED TO  
CONGRATULATE  
EARLY STEPS  
ON 30 YEARS OF  
EXCEPTIONAL WORK  
WITH YOUNG  
CHILDREN OF COLOR.**



LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE & ELISABETH IRWIN HIGH SCHOOL | 272 Sixth Ave. New York, NY 10014 | 212.477.5316 | [lrei.org](http://lrei.org)

# Riverdale

Mind • Character • Community



*Learning and Living with Purpose*

Congratulations to  
Early Steps on its  
30th anniversary!  
We salute tonight's honoree,  
Ijah Mondesire-Crump, M.D.,  
Riverdale Class of 2002.

**Lower School:** 1 Spaulding Lane, Bronx, NY 10471

**Middle & Upper School:** 5250 Fieldston Road, Bronx, NY 10471

**www.riverdale.edu**

**Facebook:** @riverdalecountryschool | **Twitter:** @RiverdaleCS | **Instagram:** @riverdalecs |

# *Happy 30th Birthday to Early Steps!*



*St. Bernard's School is honored to have been  
a part of Early Steps since its inception.  
Congratulations to Jacqui and her staff for  
30 wonderful years.*

*We are proud of our graduate and honoree,  
Ijah Mondesire-Crump, M.D.  
St. Bernard's Class of 1998.*



# Columbia Grammar & Prep School

Small School Feel, Big School Opportunity



## Welcome to CGPS!

Columbia Grammar & Prep School is more than a school, it's a community. It's a much-needed oasis in the midst of the city we love. Behind our doors you'll not only find a rigorous academic curriculum and state-of-the-art facilities, but also a place where you're truly known. You'll find a supportive, vibrant learning environment where teachers stay late to tutor and parents come early to connect. You'll also find a place where each student's unique needs and learning styles are met, and where social responsibility, citizenship, and good character are as important as intellectual success. It is possible to have a close-knit community in the middle of uptown Manhattan.





## **Congratulations!**

We would like to congratulate Early Steps on 30 years of supporting, nurturing, and growing diversity in independent schools.

**Sincerely,**

Your friends at ERB  
[www.erblearn.org](http://www.erblearn.org)

## Have you heard about AABL?

AABL (Admission Assessment for Beginning Learners) assesses verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, early literacy, and mathematics through an engaging iPad interface that helps educators make informed admission and placement decisions for PreK - Grade 1.

**Learn more about AABL at**  
[www.erblearn.org/aabl-for-schools](http://www.erblearn.org/aabl-for-schools)



## THE SUMMER STEPS BOARD

*thanks*

# Jacqui Pelzer

*for her vision, inspiration and leadership that has helped us achieve our dream of providing low income four and five year old children a summer program that will prepare them for optimal success in independent school kindergarten classrooms.*

*We are deeply grateful!*

Harry van Dyke, Chair  
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Darin White Eydenberg  
Linda Greenberg  
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Lydia Spinelli, Director  
Suzanne Studier-Feldman  
Margaret Warden  
Claude Wasserstein

ST. HILDA'S & ST. HUGH'S  
congratulates Early Steps  
on 30 years of diversity leadership  
in New York City independent schools



In 1950, our founder, The Rev. Mother Ruth, established St. Hilda's & St. Hugh's to unite children and families from all cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds so that they might learn from one another and about one another. She believed that a multicultural school community had the power to change the misconceptions and fears that divide people from one another.

We strive to fulfill her mission every day.

Thank you, Early Steps, for sharing this vision  
of living and learning together.



**ST. HILDA'S & ST. HUGH'S**

Morningside Heights, New York City • [www.sthildas.org](http://www.sthildas.org)



# 30 YEARS OF GREAT BEGINNINGS!

*The Brick Church School  
Congratulates Early Steps  
and thanks Jacqui Pelzer  
for her outstanding leadership  
and dedication!*





# THE BROWNING SCHOOL CONGRATULATES EARLY STEPS ON 30 SUCCESSFUL YEARS!

Founded in 1888 as a college preparatory school for boys, the Browning School continues its commitment to the goals of John A. Browning: The pursuit of academic excellence and a lifelong love of learning, the belief in the dignity of the individual, and the development of personal integrity and responsibility to the broader community. The Browning boy develops amid these values. The Browning alumnus is a good citizen, sensitive to the needs of others, and respectful of divergent yet informed opinions. He is, in the best sense of the word, a gentleman.

The Browning School strives to create a diverse community in which all members are safe, respected, and valued. We believe that in actively promoting a diverse learning environment, we are fostering intellectual, social, and emotional growth for all. Recognizing and pursuing diversity, however, are not enough; we seek to transcend mere tolerance of differences and aspire to a celebration of the varied appearances, abilities, perspectives, and values that characterize our community.



Congratulations to  
**Jacqui Pelzer**  
and Early Steps

For 30 years of  
extraordinary service  
and making a  
huge difference  
in the lives of children,  
families and schools  
in New York City.

LISE & MICHAEL EVANS

# Village Community School

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Thank you, Early Steps,  
for ensuring that  
Village Community School  
fulfills its mission to be  
“an inclusive  
environment where  
diverse experiences  
and perspectives are  
essential to the rigorous  
education we provide.”

## Congratulations on your 30th!

The VCS Board  
of Trustees

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TO OUR FRIENDS AT EARLY STEPS

*Congratulations*  
ON THE OCCASION OF YOUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT  
THE BREARLEY SCHOOL





The Chapin School Community  
wishes to extend its deepest gratitude  
to EARLY STEPS and is  
so pleased to share in its  
30th anniversary celebration.  
**CONGRATULATIONS!**



*The Spence School  
salutes the  
30th anniversary of  
Early Steps  
and celebrates our  
shared commitment  
to equity*





# The Town School

From the Faculty, Staff, Parents, Students,  
and Board of Trustees at The Town School,

**Happy 30th Anniversary to Early Steps,  
with special congratulations to  
honoree Stella Heyliger-Mulatu  
and Jacqui Pelzer!**

Thank you for bringing so many wonderful  
families to Town over the years.

We are proud to share our home with you, and  
we look forward to many more years of partnership!

**Town.**

**Joy with  
purpose.™**



**Best wishes to Early Steps  
on your 30th Anniversary.  
You are a valued voice for diversity  
in NYC independent schools.**

**Congratulations to honoree, and  
Trevor Day School Alumnus,  
Jordan Baker-Caldwell '97.**

**You are an important artistic voice  
in our world and we are honored to be  
a part of your journey.**

**T R E V O R**

*An independent, Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 coeducational day school, Trevor Day School educates college-bound students to achieve academic and personal excellence in an inquiry-driven, idea-rich community. Trevor celebrates diversity of thought, experiences, and culture; promotes compassion, collaboration, courage, and creativity; and develops in children a recognition of their own unique potential as lifelong learners and leaders who act as responsible global citizens in our world.*



## Ethical Culture Fieldston School

Congratulations on 30 years of making a difference in students' lives.

We are proud to partner with you on your mission to promote racial diversity within New York City independent schools.

Looking forward to celebrating the next 30 years!

*Jessica Bagby, Head of School, and the Ethical Culture Fieldston School community*

**Early Steps is such an integral part of the New York City  
independent school community.  
It's been an honor to be on this journey with you.**



***Congratulations  
on 30 incredibly important years!***



**David R. Trower  
and  
The Allen-Stevenson School**



# BHMS




CONFIDENCE  
LEADERSHIP  
INDEPENDENCE  
CURIOSITY  
COLLABORATION

Congratulations to Early Steps  
and its dedicated supporters for  
leading with action to bring racial  
and socioeconomic diversity to  
our lower school programs for the  
past 30 years!

Best wishes from all of us at **BHMS**

185 COURT ST, **BROOKLYN**, NY 11201

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

 /BHMSNY  @BHMSNY  @BHMSNY



Trinity School

**Congratulations EARLY STEPS  
on your 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

Trinity is proud to be a member school and to support your wonderful organization. We share in your commitment to diversity and are honored to be in partnership.

Wishing you many more successful years!

CONGRATULATIONS

**Early Steps**

**Jacqueline Pelzer**

**The Board of Trustees**

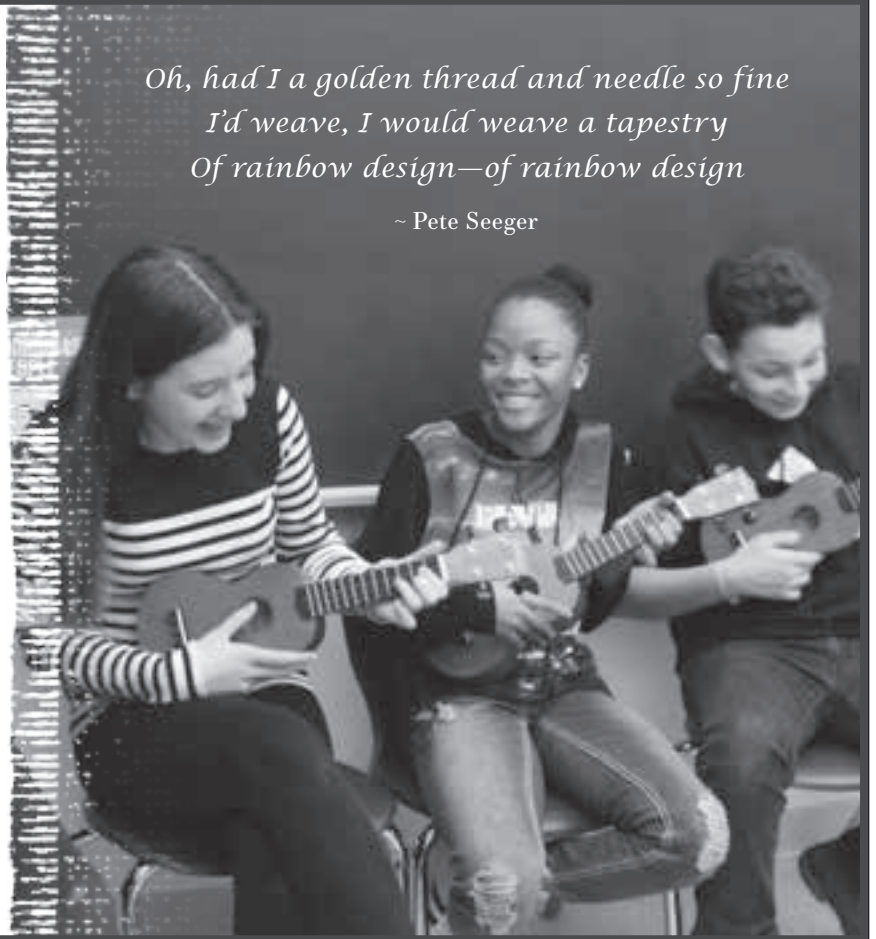
for elevating the lives of its  
families and member schools  
for the past 30 years



117 West 95th Street  
studioschoolnyc.org

*Oh, had I a golden thread and needle so fine  
I'd weave, I would weave a tapestry  
Of rainbow design—of rainbow design*

~ Pete Seeger



THE  
**PACKER**  
COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

*Packer congratulates*  
**EARLY STEPS**  
*on its 30th Anniversary!*

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# *Best Wishes to Early Steps on Your 30th Anniversary*

Bert Asbury  
Ajanna & Lamont Brockenbaugh  
Sherry Coleman  
The Early Steps Staff  
Tasha Elsbach  
Liz Fernandez  
Corey Glaser  
James Glaser  
Melanie Kahn  
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Susan Silvershein  
Sidra Smith  
Matthew Stuart, Caedmon School  
Henry W. Thomas, Jr.  
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Josephine Salvador  
Caroline Tarbell Smith  
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The Calhoun School  
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on its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,  
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on thirty years of leadership and service.

Congratulations to  
**Jacqui Pelzer and Early Steps**  
on three extraordinary decades  
promoting diversity and  
ensuring access for our youngest  
children to New York City  
independent schools. It is an  
honor to celebrate with you.

---

**Diane J. Hulse**

*Retired Head of School  
Executive Coach and Consultant  
Hulse Leadership Development*

CONGRATULATIONS TO  
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