

# VOLNEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MR. CAHILL, TEACHER



JARRET  
AUSTIN



MICKAYLA  
AVERY



MR.  
CAHILL



FRED  
SARKIS



MADISON  
BAUM



HALEY  
BROWN



DAMIEN  
CASE



SYDNI  
CASLER



APRIL  
CORNELL



KYLE  
CRUTCHLEY



KELLY  
HAYDEN



TY  
HODGES



ASHLEY  
HULLER



CORY  
HYMAN



DAVID  
JACKSON



CHASITY-MARI  
LECLAIR



ADDISON  
PICKARD



KAMERON  
PRZYCHODZEN



ZACHARY  
RANIERI



LEAH  
ROWLEE



CAMERON  
SHUTTS



BRODIE  
SNYDER



SHAYLA  
SYKES



ELIJAH  
TURNER



EMILEE  
VANT



MAKALIB  
WELLS MAKALIB



EVAN  
ZIMMERMAN

2016 - 2017 GRADE 6

life touch

027

## Yes Pa: An Educator's Appreciation

William Cahill, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Volney Elementary School

The second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century so far has seen us evolve into a society about *me*. We seem a bit obsessed with celebrity as Kim Kardashian's every move receives more attention than our troops who have sacrificed their freedoms to protect ours. College advisors are stunned at the number of parents showing up on campus to complain about their child's (18-24 year olds) schedule and grades. Employers are worried about the sense of entitlement that many young people entering the work force seem to have and the concept of personal responsibility seems to have long gone the way of the buggy whip. In the world of education, expertise is judged by your net worth not your diploma, and the government thinks of our students as pieces of data rather than children. Many teachers are asking themselves how we can return to a more common sense approach to education and a more selfless society as JFK envisioned fifty years ago? Unfortunately I have the answers to very few of these concerns, but for

the last decade I have used a classroom resource that is as powerful as anything I have come across in my twenty years as an educator.

Thanks to a teammate, eleven years ago I was introduced to *Yes Pa*, the abridgement to the autobiography *The Prisoner of The Truck* by Fred Sarkis. One year later we contacted Fred to see if he would come to our school, and he's been coming to impact the lives of our students ever since. During this time period many states like New York have mandated that schools adopt character education programs (as if teachers had not been teaching and modeling character since the days of the one room school house, but I digress) to help students become good *citizens* as well as students. I have yet to see a character ed program that is as real world, practical, powerful and as impactful as the *Yes Pa* experience is.

If you were to attend any STEM conference, you would hear employers tell educators that they are not looking for workers who had "good test scores." What you would hear is their desire for workers who are; enthusiastic, resourceful, problem solvers, personally accountable, honest, and people who are good team players with high moral standards. *Yes Pa* and the lessons it teaches are a blue print for to teach the character traits that employers are desperately looking for. The three lessons that young Fred learned in the summer of 1938 are as relevant today as they will be fifty years from now, they are timeless.

I read *Yes Pa* every fall with my sixth graders and use it as a road map for academic and behavioral expectations for the rest of the school year. My students annually list learning the life lessons of Mr. Fred Sarkis as one of the highlights of the school year; I could not give it a higher recommendation as an educator, or as a parent.

On a personal note, after ten years of working with him, I am honored to call Fred Sarkis my friend. I love this man, I love his message, and I love the fact that at age 90 he selflessly proves that Tom Brokaw was correct when he named Fred's generation *the greatest*. He could be spending his golden years working nonstop on his formidable tennis game but that would be so un-Fred like. Fred continues to live by the virtues of the *Yes Pa* story, he has goals, he works hard at achieving them, he continually gives back to his fellow man and tirelessly makes lemonade out of lemons. He is the epitome of what we want our students to be; kind human beings who make the world a better place.