Despite a strong science magnet program, families in the neighborhood of Edward Bleeker Junior High School were known to falsify their addresses to keep their children from attending school there. “The problems we have been addressing are low parent attendance at school meetings and events and an old, negative, unfounded reputation that continues to plague the school,” said Principal Valerie E. Sawinski. Determined to change perceptions, she and her staff held a Science Sensation Family Festival to showcase Edward Bleeker’s exemplary science program and teachers, and thus ease parents’ apprehensions.

Project organizers targeted families of students who would be attending Edward Bleeker as 6th-graders, inviting them, along with current students, to the science festival, which featured hands-on experiments and exhibits sponsored by the Center for Architecture, the Queens Zoo, and the Queens Botanical Garden. A *Sharing the Dream* grant paid for advertising and supplies, and science-themed take-away bags for children. Two-hundred twenty-five families participated in the wildly-successful event. In the spring, 44 children and their families toured the Center for Architecture and participated in interactive building projects. “It was wonderful way to introduce families to an institution that none of them had visited before, and to encourage them to make use of vibrant educational and cultural institutions in New York City,” said Sawinski.

Community perceptions of Edward Bleeker are beginning to change, thanks to the Science Sensation festival and field trip. Applications for the science magnet program have greatly increased, and neighborhood families zoned for Edward Bleeker have expressed to Sawinski that they feel more confident about sending their children there. Sawinski wants to make the Science Sensation an annual event and plans to invite additional partners, such as the Hall of Science, to participate.