



Central Park East I Elementary School

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Dear Families,

Back in June, I sent a letter saying that Casey, Kerry, Rubén, and Zack expected to move on to new schools. All four did. After that letter came another change. Reyes had the opportunity to teach a few minutes from his house. And yesterday, Marisol wrote to families that she may be leaving to teach in Yonkers, close to her family. There are more details about that below. First, it's a pleasure to introduce:

- Tia and Amanda in pre-K
- Tara in K-1
- Jazmine in physical education



You already might have met **Tiadisa Nuñez**. Tia came to CPE1 at the recommendation of our old friend Bruce Kanze. This past spring, she began volunteering and substitute teaching in our pre-K and K-1 classrooms. After weeks of observing her interactions with children, we asked her to stay. Previously, Tia spent nine years as a pre-school teacher on the West Side at The River School. She and Patrice worked together over several days last spring, and they will be teaming up this year in pre-K.



"I'm a teacher because of my teachers," explained **Amanda De Leon**. "They fostered my artistic development and helped me figure out who I am." Amanda has been a lead teacher in several pre-schools, most recently at Creative Steps in the West Village. But teaching art and activism in the same Lower East Side after-school programs that nurtured her as a child, as well as her ongoing connection with her old teachers at the Earth School, drew Amanda to progressive public education. Amanda will join with Alveda in our other pre-K class.

Tara Whitmore will become the special education teacher for our two K-1 classrooms.



She began her career in pre-school at Dorothy Day Early Childhood Center. More recently, she served as a special education teacher in integrated collaborative teaching (ICT) classrooms on the West Side at PS 84 (first grade) and PS 145 (second grade). Asked what she would want her new school community to know about her, Tara replied that she is “passionate about special education.” She feels strongly about supporting young readers, and stronger still about supporting social-emotional development. “That,” explains Tara, “is what drove me to CPE1.”



Thirteen different candidates were called about our physical education position. **Jazmine Love** is the only one who knew right away to call the principal by his first name. That’s because Jazmine *graduated* from CPE1. She grew up right in the neighborhood, took violin lessons with Opus 118... and never played sports as a kid. But in the middle of successful career in human resources, after Jazmine discovered the power of fitness and wellness, she wanted to inspire children to discover it for themselves. Jazmine says it’s “surreal” to do that in her old school, but feels delight in coming home.

Planning for 4/5s

Yesterday, Marisol sent an email to many members of our community saying she might be taking a job in Yonkers. Yonkers reached out to Marisol in the final week of July, and we began working on a back-up plan. At the very moment Marisol sent her email, our hiring committee was interviewing (for a second time) an exceptional teacher who dreamed of working at CPE1. But just before he said yes, the weight of leaving his current school fell on him. He wanted more time to honor promises he made to colleagues and children. Such a principled decision speaks to his character. It also means he won’t be coming to CPE1 this year.

Where does that leave us? If Marisol ends up back at CPE1, she’ll go back to her old classroom. We’re also working on our next back-up plan.

I hate such uncertainty four weeks before school. Families, rightfully, want to know what to expect. I’ll be writing once details are firm.

Others Not Being Announced

We have a new, fulltime occupational therapist who will be fully on staff by the first day of school. This is very good news. We're still waiting for some paperwork to finalize before a formal introduction. Look for that later this month.

This letter also will not announce someone new for music. It's easy to hire a music teacher, but hard to find what our community craves: a curator for CPE1's music program. All School-Sing – the only work all of our children regularly create together – Lower School Sing, and concerts must contribute to the development of children's attention to detail and quality; it's not enough just to sing. We auditioned music teachers in the spring and summer, but haven't found our curator. We're not done trying.

As of now, children will have a little more art and physical education. I'll sit with K-5 children in the first days of school to explain that choice. I think they'll understand.

Hope in New Faces

I looked back at old Department of Education statistics. Historically, our school hired one or two teachers per year. But, in the two years before I came to CPE1, our small school, with just eight classrooms, hired *twelve* new teachers. That flash-flood of hiring has not fully subsided: last year, 70% of our teachers had three or fewer years at CPE1. We're still hiring our way back.

So why do I feel so hopeful as I write?

First, I've never been part of a more deliberate hiring process. Our hiring committee started interviewing candidates in March. Dozens came to visit. Promising candidates were came back for formal interviews. (Our formal interview scenarios were so challenging that the committee joked we'd never hire anyone.) The rigorous interviews led to demonstration lessons and more informal discussions with the committee. Those new faces above spent *hours* with us. We observed their approaches to community and collegiality, to listening and learning.

I also find hope in our shared work. Marilyn and Patricia organized an orientation for Amanda and Tia, complete with advanced reading, video study, and collaborative

discussion. Our four pre-K and K-1 classes will do almost everything together this year. The old CPE1 adage, *These are all of our children*, will be fully supported. Marilyn and Patricia are planning a similar orientation for our other new teachers. And later this month, we're bringing back the tradition of an out-of-town staff retreat. We're traveling upstate to plan together and be together.

Ongoing uncertainty left me dreading this letter. But I know the only reason we're not fully hired is because we maintained high standards. Mostly, I'm celebrating those new faces above. Every day, teachers, old and new, are here on the second floor, working not just in their own classrooms, but each other's. We're nervous and excited and full of belief. That feels just the way August should.

-Gabriel