



Central Park East I Elementary School

October 23, 2019

Dear Families,

At every New York City subway station, a ride costs \$3.00. But, if you try to ride for free, depending on where you are, the costs may not be the same. Transit District Twelve, in the Bronx, covers the 2, 5, and 6 lines. Transit District Two starts at Penn Station and runs south through Lower Manhattan. Look to the left to see how many people each transit district arrested for fare evasion over the last twelve months. The Bronx district has *nine times more* arrests.

Fare Evasion Arrests		
Year & Quarter	D2 Manhattan	D12 Bronx
2019 – Q2	9	103
2019 – Q1	27	208
2018 – Q4	29	221
2018 – Q3	13	166
Total	78	698

Do you believe Rangers fans *never* jump Penn Station turnstiles after the game? Does *every* stock broker heading home after happy hour pay full fare at Wall Street? Of course those things happen. But when the choice is between a paper summons or handcuffs, fare evaders in Lower Manhattan are six times more likely to get the smaller consequence. Think about all those arrests in the Bronx. Now ask yourself how the downtown transit district arrests less than one White fare evader per month.

When a rule is enforced unevenly, when only some communities catch the harshest consequences, you question the rule. Last winter, New York State identified 35 elementary schools in our city for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) status. Our school is among those 35. Back in March, I wrote:

For every White student in these 35 schools, ten are Black and eighteen Latinx. Collectively, 93% of students in these CSI schools are, in the words of state accountability, “economically disadvantaged.” The percentage of students living in shelters is *three times higher* than the citywide average.

As with fare evasion, CSI is a tale of both enforcement and leniency. When deciding each school’s accountability status, state policy counts students who do not take exams as if they got the lowest possible score. Two years ago, 80% of our students didn’t take the test; we became CSI. Yet schools with even higher opt-out rates escaped CSI. Last year, I wrote about their statistical advantage:

New York’s accountability formula gives no credit for students who score at the lowest level of its exams, and extra points for scoring at the highest level. On 2018’s statewide math exam, “economically disadvantaged” students were almost three times more

likely to count for no credit; “not economically disadvantaged” students were more than twice as likely to count for extra credit. Consider one downtown middle school where more than 96% of students opted out. Four test takers were “economically disadvantaged,” and fifteen test takers were not. That school avoided CSI.

There are whole districts in wealthy areas Long Island with opt-out rates higher than ours. A 600-student school in our city had just nine test-takers, and seven of them were “not economically disadvantaged.” These schools all avoided CSI.

On Thursday night, I received an email from our own New York City Department of Education. It said that all CSI schools now must give third and sixth graders a computer-based test, MAP Growth, three times this year. Students are expected to take the first test by November 15. The city wants “consistent, mid-year data in order to ensure that teachers and school administrators have the information they need to differentiate instruction.” The city also wants superintendents and borough offices to “have the data they need to appropriately tailor supports and supervision for schools.”

As you can tell from my subway statistics, I appreciate data; I know data can advance learning. Today, Stephanie attended a training about the technical side of these computer-based assessments. We will have laptops ready. We are giving the assessment.

And also....

This is the first time our CSI status has led to new work for *children*. CSI is statistically uneven, and families in *all* schools deserve the choices non-CSI communities enjoy. For these new computer-based assessments, what I promised last year has not changed: our school fully supports all families’ decisions, whether they opt in or opt out. Think again about the subway arrests that did *not* happen downtown – equity starts with flexibility.

We’ll talk together about this at our next **community coffee**, which will be this **Friday, October 25, at 8:35** in the library. If you have a third grader, your thinking will be valuable to share. As always, whatever you choose, your school will stand by your choice.

—Gabriel