



Central Park East I Elementary School

January 17, 2020

Dear Families,

It's been too long since I wrote about Harlem Family Institute (HFI). HFI is a quiet presence around our school, but HFI's work has been crucial for so many.

Harlem Family Institute provides emotional support for children and their families. HFI is a private program that prepares regular adults to make psychotherapy available all around Harlem.

HFI is special in many ways:

- **HFI is free.** HFI does not ask about insurance or how you would pay. There is no cost for any CPE1 family.
- **HFI works comprehensively.** HFI does not rush people out. If it benefits a child to stay with HFI for months or even years, the relationship will continue. HFI can work with individual children, whole families, or both.
- **HFI has its own space.** The HFI play room is on the third floor of our building, up above CPE1. The room is filled with toys, games, art supplies, and comfortable places to sit. It's a homey space for just one child at a time.
- **HFI keeps confidentiality.** They don't work for or share information with the school or government. They won't give a diagnosis. What happens in HFI's safe space stays there.

Lots of CPE1 children and families already know HFI well. If you would like to talk about whether HFI would be a good fit for you or your child, the director is Michael Connolly, and he is very available to families in our school. You can reach out to him directly at 646.479.2573.

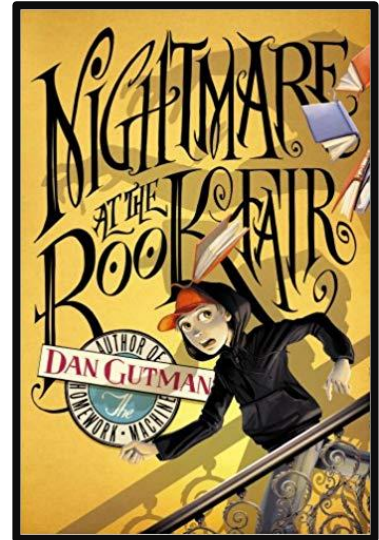
Family Workshop – January 22 – 6:00 P.M.

Harlem Family Institute will facilitate our next workshop for families. It will be interactive. The focus will be communicating emotionally with children, particularly through play.

Children often work through emotions while they pretend and play. HFI will help us think about how we can support children in this expressive work.

Book Swap – January 22 - 24

Today, I came to school with about fifty gently used children's books. One of them is pictured here: *Nightmare at the Book Fair*. When I have worked in other schools, book fairs really did feel like nightmares. A large publishing company would sell books... and glittery plastic. I had to watch children put books back on the shelves when they realized they hadn't been given enough money to buy all of the literature they wanted to read. I've seen children leave the book fair with nothing. Why would a publishing company that already owns the rights to *Harry Potter*, *Captain Underpants*, and *Wonder* ask children to associate reading, school, and cash?



CPE1 does not do that. We have book exchange. Families donate books they know they won't read again. *Every* CPE1 child goes home with free, new books. Book exchange gives our children the excitement of choosing and reading new books.

Next week will be my third book exchange at CPE1. I think this is the third time I've written about the heartbreak of most schools' book fairs and the wisdom of CPE1's cashless book exchange. I'll try to resist writing about it next year. But even if I don't write it, I'll just whisper to myself that CPE1's book exchange understands what a school community should be all about.

—Gabriel