



Central Park East I Elementary School

March 13, 2020

Dear Families,

This morning, all public school principals got a briefing from the chancellor and health department. I am writing to share information, describe what it means for CPE1, and share additional information.

Schools Remain Open

On Thursday, the mayor declared a state of emergency for New York City and also stated that “we are going to do our damndest to keep the schools open.” Nearly all of them are open today, and keeping them open is the plan for now.

If a School Closes for a Day...

If a student is confirmed to have COVID-19, the health department contacts the education department. That school, and any others in the same building, are closed right away. Over the next day, there is a deep cleaning process. The building may reopen after that.

If a school closes for even one day, grab-and-go meals are provided for children at a nearby school. This food is available for children to pick up without having to gather together in another cafeteria.

In the event our school is closed, you may be asked to pick up your child early, from here or possibly another school building. You need to know that information. So...

If you have not signed up for text messaging from CPE1, do it now. Please pull out your phone. Text @kb6gf6 to the number 81010.

Your contact information is especially important now. If your phone number has changed, or if you need to add or change the people who may pick up your child, please email Shelly (shelly@cpe1.nyc) so that your blue emergency contact card may be updated.

If a School Closes for Longer – Learning

Our staff has begun preparing - just in case – for a long-term school closure. The New York City Department of Education has online learning activities. We know not everyone has

internet, laptops, or tablets ready at home. And we know that too much screen time can be bad for kids.

We have begun planning our own ‘distance learning.’ Some classes are sending home packets today. On Monday after school, we’ll be working more to organize books, math activities, and materials that can help your child learn actively at home. All children will end up with personalized baggies that can go home for extra learning if school ends up closing.

If a School Closes for Longer – Basics

The more kids are home, the more money you might spend, and the less money you might earn. Grab-and-go food from the Department of Education won’t feed adults. It’s harder to find food and supplies in stores. And it’s hard to afford groceries for next month far in advance.

CPE1 wants to help with that. Families need food that won’t spoil, such as:

- Peanut butter and crackers
- Canned soup and meat
- Microwave meals that don’t have to be kept frozen
- Just-add-water meals, such as ramen noodles

We want to help families get ahead on preparations. If you can donate some of those items, please leave them in the main office. If you want some of those items for your home, please see Tina or anyone in the school you think would be the right person to help.

On Staying Home

The education and health departments want children and adults to stay home if they feel sick. Absences related to COVID-19 will not affect a child’s admission to middle or high school, and will not be a factor in whether the child can move up to the next grade.

Attendance at CPE1

At CPE1 today, our attendance is low – about 79%. No children are known to have COVID-19. Some children are home due to precautions. We may have a stomach bug going around our lower grades. Families have kept those children home, just as they have been encouraged to do.

Closure in Our School Building

You may have heard that the charter school in our building, East Harlem Scholars 2, was closed for cleaning at the start of this week. Now, Scholars has closed through next week.

Apparently, someone on staff – not a teacher – has been quarantined in New Rochelle for the last seven days. This person was not feeling well, but had not been tested to confirm or disconfirm that she has COVID-19. I do not know of any direct contact between this person and anyone from our school. The New York City Department of Education knows that someone who was in our building last week has been quarantined. The situation has been reviewed, and our building has been kept open.

Precautions from the Department of Education

At my briefing this morning, a goal was set for everyone to take “the least crowded path.” While school buildings remain open, the Department of Education is looking to reduce contact in large gatherings.

It was announced that trips out of the city are canceled for the year. Local trips and assemblies are suspended indefinitely. Here is what that means for us:

- Our fifth grade overnight out of the city must be canceled. (Fifth graders, we’ll talk about this. Adults are disappointed, too.)
- Trips inside the city – Central Park, Orchard Beach, Bronx Zoo – will not be happening for now.
- All-School Sing will not be happening until we hear we can assemble again.
- We may have to make changes to our special graduation ceremony and family picnic.

For our learning and for our feeling as a community, those are major changes. The educators here, and the community of families who support them, are resourceful. We think about options.

This is a lot, and none of it is school as usual. Nothing will be as usual for a while. We know that some children are feeling the stress felt by adults. The only *usual* thing still going here is the way our community gives children’s emotional lives all of the attention they deserve. Even in exceptional times, that won’t change.

—Gabriel