



Central Park East I Elementary School

March 21, 2020

Dear Families,

In less than three years at CPE1, I have written nineteen letters that used the word *together*. Usually, they sound like this:

Children of all ages sat together.

Instead, many voices together add new meanings and richness.

The same songs we sing regularly, songs that pull us together every Monday morning, hold us together in times of uncertainty.

We are facing long weeks of separation. I still feel confident in togetherness. Our remote learning plans will help us stay closer.

With this letter are overviews CPE1's remote learning. Those plans include an *online* part, where children uses electronic devices, such as laptops and smart phones. Our remote learning also has an *offline* part, where children keep thinking and growing away from screens.

Before you read those overviews, please read below.

Acknowledging Staff

Last Sunday, our city closed schools for students... but told school staff to show up for work. Teachers, paraprofessionals, and school aides had just a few days to plan online curricula and package physical supplies for children. Those whose own children attend public schools raced to find childcare. The city's directives left many feeling disrespected and disregarded. Still, in our school, we got books and learning materials to 97% of CPE1 children, checked in with nearly every family by phone, and created a thoughtful concept for our first-ever online learning program.

Loyalty to the school system did not motivate such hard work during such hard times. Our staff feel solidarity with families, and loyalty to children. That's not about being exceptional employees. Those who work at CPE1 are a group of exceptional *people*.

Goals for CPE1 Remote Learning

The first goal of our remote learning will be to support children emotionally. Period.

Other goals for this time include:

- Helping children continue to think, investigate, and reflect
- Advancing children's foundational academic skills
- Connecting families with resources and sharing strength during stressful circumstances

Emergency Resources

Tina has compiled a list of resources for adults and families. This guide offers suggestions for getting help with food, medicine, mental health, housing, and internet access. We will update the list as more services become available.

We are *all* more worried about taking care of ourselves and our families. If you need information and help, please reach out to Tina (tina@cpe1.nyc), or any CPE1 staff member you choose.

Policy Questions Answered Later

Citywide, the big push now is to start remote learning. We have not received final answers to such policy questions as *What does it mean for fourth graders' middle school applications now that the state exams have been canceled?* Many decisions, such as how schools determine promotion to the next grade, have been left to individual schools.

CPE1 is not rushing policy decisions. We'll focus first on early support for children, and then keep you up to date as more guidance comes out from the city and state.

Predictability in Unpredictable Circumstances

Every family's routine is about to change, but children still depend on routines. Try to hold onto bedtimes and wake-up times for children, try to separate weekends from 'school days'. If children can get dressed 'for school' and work in a consistent area, that can help, too.

Devices and Equity

The city has promised to distribute 25,000 free iPads to students this week, and “up to 300,000” devices in all. We could be taking great steps toward equity for students who do not have tablets and laptops already. Some CPE1 staff still have concerns.

We at CPE1 are not delivering those laptops. We do not control which students will receive the city’s, or when. We have not been told how those decisions will be made. More access is good in theory, but realistically, access is not guaranteed.

CPE1’s online learning never will assume every child has a laptop all day long. We are setting this up so that one adult’s phone, for part of the day, keeps every child connected.

Check Your Phone

We just upgraded our text notification system, remind.com, and now virtually all families will be getting notifications and letters right on their smart phone. If another adult in your family wishes to sign up, please have that person text @kb6gf6 to the number 81010.

Getting everyone on our messaging system will cut down on the amount of paper we send home. That’s one more thing to look forward to once we return.

Deep Breaths and Deep Thanks

I am worried about everyone’s staying safe and healthy and fed. This is a lot for children and grown-ups alike.

At the same time, I am proud. Our remote learning cannot and will not replace the experience students in our school building, but CPE1 staff so far have kept doing what they always do: thinking of children and families. CPE-at-a-distance is still careful, still attentive, still CPE.

These have been emotional days, and I would not want to have spent them with another school.

—Gabriel