



Central Park East I Elementary School

September 1, 2020

Dear Families,

Today is September 1, and as of 11:01 A.M., the city has *finally* announced the first day of school. Phew. Here is what we now know:

- On **September 16**, *all* students in *all* public school start learning remotely at home
- On **September 21**, students begin coming to school in person (unless they will be learning 100% remotely all fall)

The city today has acknowledged many calls for delays in re-opening to allow more time for setting up a very complex year. It's was not just grown-ups who needed these dates.

At school, we have a morning meeting to look at the day's schedule, because it helps children to know what to expect. When adults can explain straightforward information a little ahead of time, children can prepare. This afternoon, you will have something else to help get your child ready.

Today, you will receive CPE1's health guide for families. The guide covers everything from how the city's contact tracing is supposed to work to how CPE1 will handle water fountains. While the guide is written *to* adults, it is also written *for* children. Most children have lots of questions, even if they are not asking them aloud.

You can start the conversation. If your child is wondering about masks, you will know what to explain. If your child is wondering about the bathrooms, you'll be able to explain that only two kids can go in at a time, and most of the stalls are blocked off for distancing. Even if your child is learning remotely at home, it can be comforting to visualize what friends are doing in school.

Early next week, you also will receive CPE1's guide for remote learning. *All* of our students will be learning at home at least some of the time. The guide will outline such information as how many minutes your child spend learning on screens, what kind of work your child will do away from screens, and how learning at home will connect to our school's wider curriculum.

Staffing Update, Part One

Elizabeth Okoshi, CPE1's new music teacher, was introduced earlier this summer. It's now a pleasure to introduce CPE1's other new teachers.



At PS 105 in Queens, **Gloria Mendoza** taught kindergarten, first, and second grades, and prior to that, pre-K. After several years as a lead pre-K teacher, she earned a special education license, became a pre-school early intervention specialist, and worked with families to support children's development. Gloria long has believed "teachers and students must rely on each other to grow" and help their communities. Now, Gloria she now hopes to promote "CPE1's mission and commitment to children, childhood, families, colleagues, practice, and school."



Ruben Brosbe has been teaching third and fourth graders for the past thirteen years, most recently at PS 194 in Central Harlem. While he has spent the past two years as a specialized math teacher in his old school, Ruben "can't wait" be involved in "CPE's tradition of social justice oriented project-based learning." Young people, as Ruben says, "make the best activists" because they excel at "at helping others, dreaming of new worlds, and saying 'No!' when things are unfair." Ruben has co-founded Teach Resistance, an online community elementary educators dedicated to social justice fighting bias, and of Teachable Moments, a live storytelling event for students and educators.

Staffing-wise, CPE1 is fortunate. While all schools now need teachers for in-person and remote learning, many schools are reducing staff because of budget worries. We have a teacher for every in-person classroom, plus five more teachers who will be working fulltime with children who spend every day in a remote 'classroom.' That means all children, whether coming to school in person or learning at home, will have one core teacher to organize their learning and support their development.

Staffing Update, Part Two

All NYCDOE employees may apply for health accommodations to work remotely, away from the school building. When school re-opens, CPE1 will have four people out.

As paraprofessionals, Alveda and Rachel, will be connecting with children online only. Stephanie will be working as a school aide out of school. Jazmine is planning to teach physical education, in small groups, 100% remotely. (With physical education at home, children can take off their masks, so Jazmine plans to get their heart pumping fast.)

Meeting for Families on Re-Opening

On Thursday evening, all are invited to a meeting about plans for re-opening. We encourage everyone who can attend to be part of this discussion on health and learning, in-person and remotely.

What: Meeting for CPE1 Community about Re-Opening

Day: Thursday, September 3

Time: 6:00

Link: <https://zoom.us/j/95324898367?pwd=ZCtZcnMwZnVpdUVnWU5rTWNweU14dz09>

Meeting ID: 953 2489 8367

Passcode: 123456

By Phone: 646.558.8656

Strike?

The United Federation of Teachers, the union that represents New York City's teachers and paraprofessionals, still is meeting with delegates today to discuss a citywide strike. It has been about fifty years since UFT held its last strike, and UFT does not help striking members financially. Taking steps toward a strike signals how many schools around the city are concerned about real safety issues.

This letter is being written with the assumption the work of schools will continue with no strike. But whether a strike lasts long or even happens at all, it does sound an alarm that should not be ignored.

Application for Learning Outdoors

Last week, the New York City Department of Education sent a survey to complete if they would like to use a city street, a public park, or somewhere else off school grounds for outdoor learning. I applied for us to learn in Central Park's Conservatory Garden.

The Conservatory Garden, near Fifth Avenue and east 105 Street, is a short walk from CPE1. As you can see at right, the Conservatory Garden has a large, flat lawn



where we could set up three giant tents to cover our whole school.

If the city approves us to learn in the park, we would have to consider many logistics. Families who chose either in-person or remote learning might change their decision. There is long distance between applying and actually moving to the park. One way or another, we know being outdoors lowers risk of COVID-19, so it was important at least to apply.

Getting Your Child's Device Ready

All students will be learning remotely, between two and five days per week. Not all remote learning takes place on screen, but *every* remote learning day involves scheduled times where teachers and students will be working together, live online.

Your child needs a device to connect. If you have more than one child, it helps to have a device for each.

New York City is still allowing families to request free iPads. The iPads have built-in WiFi, so that helps your child connect to the internet. To apply for a free iPad, child, call 311 or complete this survey: <https://coronavirus.schools.nyc/RemoteLearningDevices>.

If you received an iPad last year, you must update the iPad to make it work properly. [Click here for directions](#).

Child Care for Remote Learning

Many families need additional childcare when their children are learning remotely. The city allows families to sign up for [free childcare through a program called Learning Bridges](#).

To apply for your child to participate in Learning Bridges, call 311, or [click here](#).

Please watch for the family safety guide later today. Thank you, once again, for so much patience with all the changes and unknowns we're facing together this year.

I hope you can join our meeting Thursday at 6:00.

Gabriel