



Central Park East I Elementary School

March 1, 2021

Dear Families,

New York State gave our school a \$2,000 grant for participatory budgeting. The state education department wanted staff and parents to vote on how to spend the money. Our school leadership team and parent association held meetings. Then, the adults gave our vote to students.

Currently, each class is gathering ideas about what to buy with \$2,000. By the end of the week, children will figure out how to coordinate decision-making with other classes, in-person and remote, of all ages.

Here is part of one class discussion. These fifth graders will graduate in just a few months. They start by speaking directly to their fourth grade classmates:

Anders: I'm just going to say, if you have ideas, especially the fourth graders, especially because you guys are going to have another year with this stuff, is there anything you really would like to build with like, specific materials?

Juliette: You guys should be the ones giving more ideas.

Sunhi: Yeah, this could be like our sending-off gift.

Juliette: We're here, making all these decisions, and getting new stuff, and then we're like, 'Bye-bye,' and fourth graders might be left with stuff they don't want....

Kali: I know Cecilia said we have to consider everyone in the school, so we should probably go in a circle with just one thing that we had, when we were in K/1 or 2/3's or pre-K, because I feel like a lot of the supplies are mainly from our opinion.

Sunhi: I think as 4/5's, we should consider more thinking about the younger kids and if we're over budget, I think we should definitely keep the things that are for the younger kids. Because we're not doing this for us, we're doing this for our school.

Often, the oldest students in a school take the most power. At CPE1, these fifth graders are encouraging their classmates' voices. The oldest students are thinking less about what they want and more about pre-K children need.

Democratic thinking involves more than getting others to vote for your idea. If we adults give children space to talk and think, children can discover that the best course of action usually involves acting for others.

Conferences This Week – 11:00 A.M. Dismissal Thursday

This week, we have family conferences. As always, children reflect on their work before the conference, and they join the discussion about their progress.

If you do not have a time scheduled for a family conference, please reach out to your child's teacher.

To make more time for conferences, all elementary schools end early on Thursday, March 4. **CPE1 ends at 11:00 on Thursday.** Public schools are serving lunch.

Change of Chancellors

You probably heard that Chancellor Richard Carranza announced he is stepping down, and Meisha Ross Porter is stepping into the role. Chancellor Carranza's letter follows this one.

State Exams, Opting Out, and This Year

Last week, the federal education department ruled New York State had to offer standardized exams this spring. So far, we don't know whether or how schools will be held accountable for results of those exams. We don't know whether and how remote learners will receive the tests. We don't know how New York City plans to give them.

Three years ago, Chancellor Carranza discouraged opting out of state exams. He called opting out an “extreme reaction.” Then, on the day before he resigned, Chancellor Carranza said this:

I would say to parents, there is an opt-out and if there is ever a time for parents to consider whether that opt-out makes sense for you, this is the time....

We do not want to impose additional traumas on students that have already been traumatized and then say that we have to test students that are in person and not students that are in remote and it just makes no sense in a pandemic to apply the rules of the past.

The chancellor just acknowledged what always has been true: opting out is every family’s choice. Then, he described state tests as imposed “traumas.” Let that word sink in.

At CPE1, I have tried not to take a side on opting in or opting out of state tests. For me, standing by a family’s right to choose has been more important than encouraging a one choice or another.

This year, it’s different. This year, the exams will be exactly the same; the children are not. Emotionally, this is not the time for standardized testing. So I’m saying this even more directly than Chancellor Carranza: third, fourth, and fifth graders should not take state exams next month.

When the city finally tells us how exams will be given, I will share that information with you. We will give exams in whatever way is expected. Our city does not expect your children to take them.

Gabriel

Dear Families,

I hope you and your families are keeping safe and healthy. I'm writing today with some important news.

After three years leading the DOE, I will be stepping down as Chancellor in March.

I am full of mixed emotions to leave the DOE family. It has been the honor of my career to serve you, and help your child's school and our whole system get closer to reaching its full potential. The strength and resilience of your children—our 1 million students—is awe-inspiring. It is what drove me through this unprecedented crisis, and it is what I take with me as I leave this post. The commitment and support you have shown to your children, and to your school communities, is incredible.

Throughout my career, my guiding light has been the belief that public education is the most powerful equalizer for children. Public education anchors communities. Public education makes it possible for a child who is poor, or who lives in temporary housing, or—in my own case—who doesn't speak English when they enter the public school system to develop their dreams, and then to chase them. Truly, it is public education that expresses the highest ideals of our democracy. My time in New York City has only strengthened this belief, as I have seen it play out time and again, in schools all across the boroughs.

And together, we have seen proof. Our seniors kept breaking their own records as graduation rates and college enrollment kept rising higher, and the dropout rate kept getting lower.

We also made true progress in dismantling the structures and policies that are the products of decades of entrenched racism in the city and country. We have worked to undo segregation and turn "equity" from an esoteric concept to a reality. Every school that no longer screens children for admission, and every district that uses DOE resources to create more space for low-income students, or English language learners, is making this mission real.

We finally brought the mental health of our children into the spotlight and made it a major priority so that every child can feel welcomed, comfortable, and safe in their classroom and school community—especially now, when so many of our students are dealing with unforeseeable trauma.

And, of course, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic we transformed the nation's largest school system overnight in order to protect the health of our students, staff, families, and communities. We have reinvented what it means to teach and learn in New York City public schools.

All throughout, I have been proud to prioritize what's best for kids over what's politically popular. I have never been afraid of hard conversations. I have always believed that we need to set a high bar for every student—and then do what it takes to help them meet it.

You, your children, and the dedicated staff who serve you deserve both continuity and courageous leadership from your next Chancellor. You need someone who knows firsthand the reality on the ground at our schools, and has the talent and leadership to finish the school year out strong and drive towards bringing every child back to buildings in September.

That is why I am so proud that one of the most important leaders in this work will take on the privilege and responsibility of being your next Chancellor: Meisha Porter.

Meisha is a 20-year veteran of New York City public schools, and currently serves as Bronx Executive Superintendent. In this role, she leads community school districts 7-12, covering the entire borough and its 361 schools and 235,000 students. She is a lifelong New Yorker and product of our public schools who first joined the Department of Education as a teacher at the Bronx School for Law, Government, and Justice—a schoolshe helped conceive. After 18 years at the school, where she became Principal, Meisha spent three years as Superintendent of District 11, serving the Pelham Parkway, Eastchester, and Woodlawn neighborhoods of the Bronx. She has been Executive Superintendent since 2018, and in that time, the students of the Bronx have achieved significant academic gains, and schools have gotten stronger and stronger.

Meisha is an unparalleled warrior for our students and our schools. She attended them, she taught in them, she led them, and now she will be Chancellor for ALL of them. None of the last several Chancellors—myself included—have been actively working with our schools, day in and day out, at the time they were appointed. Meisha will break the mold, bringing all her experience, past and present, to support you and your children. You will be hearing much more from Meisha soon, and I will be working with her over the next several weeks to ensure a smooth and productive transition.

More than anything, I am proud to have served you, and so proud of the strides we have made. I don't know what's next for me, but I know I will take the spirit and richness of New York City with me anywhere and everywhere I go.

It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve as your Chancellor. I am grateful to each and every one of you.

Sincerely,



Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education

To view a copy of this document in your language, visit schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies

للاطلاع على نسخة مترجمة من هذه الوثيقة، يرجى زيارة الرابط schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies	এই ডকুমেন্টের অনুবাদকৃত সংস্করণটি দেখতে, schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies ভিজিট করুন	如要查看本文件的中文譯本，請上網到 schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies
Pour voir une version traduite de ce document, allez sur schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies	Pou wè yon vèsyon dokiman sa a nan lòt lang, ale nan schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies	이 문서의 번역본은 schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies 에 있습니다.
Перевод документа находится по адресу: schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies	Para ver una versión traducida de este documento, visite schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies	اس دستاویز کی ترجمہ شدہ اشاعت دیکھنے کے لیے ذیل پر جائیں schools.nyc.gov/messagesforfamilies