



April 1, 2021

Dear Families,

It's Thursday in the middle of spring vacation. As of this morning, the city's health department expects our school building to re-open on Monday, April 5. **In-person school starts again at 8:30 on Monday morning.**

We must come back carefully. Recently, on a warm Thursday after school, a CPE1 student saw me outside and ran toward me. She stopped suddenly and slowly covered her mouth with her hands. She didn't want me to see that the adult behind her had taken off her mask. The temperature and number of vaccinated adults may be rising... but four CPE1 children, including three aged six or younger, are still in quarantine after testing positive. To keep school open and keep everyone safe, we have to keep up with protocols.

Vacation Travel Guidelines for In-Person Students

Today, New York State implements new travel guidelines, but the city has not changed guidelines for returning to in-person school.

If your child learns in-person, these rules are still in effect:

- Students must quarantine if they spent more than 24 hours outside of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, or Vermont.
- If your child traveled outside of those locations, your child must:
 - Take a COVID test before coming back to New York
 - Stay at home at least three days after returning to New York
 - Take a COVID-19 test on the fourth day back in New York
 - Get a test result that shows the child does not have COVID

If your child does not take a COVID test before returning to New York, or if you travel outside of the United States, your child will have a longer quarantine before returning to in-person school. To see all of the scenarios, please visit <https://healthscreening.schools.nyc/>.

Deadline to Switch from Remote to In-Person

For pre-K through high school, the citywide deadline to switch to in-person learning is coming up. The final day to opt into in-person is Wednesday, April 7. To switch, go to <https://www.nycenet.edu/surveys/learningpreference>.

Last Day to Apply to Pre-K

Friday, April 9, is the final day for families to apply to 3K and pre-K for September. Children who do not complete applications by the deadline go toward the back of each school's waitlist. To apply on time, please go to <https://www.myschools.nyc>.

Conversation with Deborah Meier – April 13 – 5:00 PM

Back in 1974, a small group of teachers founded Central Park East. Deborah Meier became the school's first principal, and her thinking and writing continue to influence public education, especially at CPE1.

It's always a treat to hear Debbie speaking and thinking in public, and this conversation has special meaning for us. Debbie and Professor Bruce Kanze (veteran CPE teacher, former principal of CPE2, stalwart friend of CPE1) will be discussing how to promote equity and democracy in children's learning. They will examine lessons from our school's past to think about all schools' future.

City College is hosting this special Zoom discussion. [Click here to reserve your space.](#)

A Little More Democracy with Children

The week before vacation, representatives from our in-person and remote classes met for a third time to decide how to spend our \$2,000 participatory budget grant. This meeting followed talking, debating, and letter-writing in classrooms.

We intentionally gave them no guidance for their decision-making process. *They* created the process. *They* figured out how to communicate across classes. *They* decided what was important and fair. Getting what you want takes talking and persuasion; democracy takes listening. That the final plan funded ideas from both pre-K and 4-5s says a lot about how effectively CPE1 children listened.

Read ahead for a letter I wrote to all of our classes about their final choices. My first letter to them about this process asked them to reach a fair decision. My final letter explains why I think their final choices turned out fair.

I appreciate such beautiful democratic thinking. Enjoy these final days with a break from school.

Gabriel



March 24, 2021

Dear Children,

On Monday afternoon, class representatives reached an agreement how our school should spend our \$2,000. Here is what they decided:

- **Replace all swings.** We will get new swings and strong chains. We have only five swings now. Soon, we will have six. Swings will cost about \$450.
- **Get one water bottles for each student.** We will have new water bottles that every student can keep in school. Our bodies need water for good health. Also, we will throw away fewer cups, which is better for the environment. Water bottles will cost about \$350.
- **Buy a sewing machine for the 4-5 project room.** Our oldest students need a better sewing machine for complicated projects. A sewing machine will help them be efficient. A sewing machine will cost about \$300
- **Get new materials for work time.** For pre-K, K-1, and 2-3, we will use the rest of the \$2,000 for work time supplies.

Children decided not to spend the money on only one idea. I think that is a fair choice. We have balance. The sewing machine and work time supplies can improve classroom learning; the swings and water bottles help the school in other ways. The 4-5s will get a sewing machine for their projects, and younger students get supplies for their projects.

Another fair decision is to make sure the swings can work for everyone. Some classes said the swings should hang at different heights to fit small, medium, and big kids. Also, we can share swings with the other schools in the building. We are using some of our money to help other students.

Finally, children found good reasons to say no. For example, if we bought yoga mats for every student, there would not be enough money for much else. Kids decided against a tire swing because they did not want to lose space for regular swings. Besides, as Charlotte's class said, fixing the regular swings "would be short, but putting in tire swings would take a long time." Sometimes, if we cannot say yes to everything, we have to find fair reasons to choose something else.

Now that we reached these decisions, there are just a few things more to think about:

- **What work time supplies should we order?** The 4-5s are getting a sewing machine for their projects. What

do pre-K, K-1, and 2-3 classes need to help their projects?

- **Is each class getting a fair share of the \$2,000?** Next year, we will probably have two pre-K classes, two K-1, two 2-3, and two 4-5. Will each class get about the same amount of money?
- **Does *fair* mean *same*?** Does every class have to get the same amount of money for things to be fair?

It took a lot of talking, planning, and working to reach these decisions. I am glad so many children were thinking so carefully. I just asked three challenging questions. I am would love to know what you think.

Thank you for your work.

Gabriel