



August 10, 2021

Dear Families,

The first day of school is five weeks away. Before we I share news about summer hiring, here's a quick update about health.

Health Update

This summer, the city's health and education departments have given no new guidance. They seem to be waiting on whether the pandemic gets better or worse. For now, all school will be in-person, every weekday.

Whenever the official guidance arrives, you still will need more information. By early September, I will give an update on our health preparations. CPE1 still will do more than what the city requires: we'll keep more windows open, administer weekly COVID tests to more children than the city requires, and communicate about health concerns in our building hours before form letters are sent to you.

Staff Update

Let's start with changes involving familiar staff members.

Simone will be leaving CPE1. She was offered a new job yesterday, just minutes before the deadline for teachers can transfer schools. Because of this timing, we are not ready to announce the teacher who will take Simone's place with fourth and fifth graders. We hope to have someone in place very soon; it's helpful for children, especially, to know the name of their new teacher.

Rachel also is changing schools. This summer, she took a job as a paraprofessional in a high school much closer to her home.

With Rachel's exit, **Najah** will become a paraprofessional. Najah's many years as a CPE1 student, parent, and parent coordinator have given her deep insight into classroom practices in our school. She will apply that knowledge in Patricia's K-1 class. At the start of the year, Najah's official title still will be parent coordinator. As soon as our system allows, she will shift fulltime into a paraprofessional position, and we will hire a new parent coordinator for CPE1.

Stephanie also will make a change. After four years as a school aide, Stephanie will become CPE1's fulltime secretary. Stephanie has been preparing for several years, and recently completed her secretarial certification. She'll be busy, versatile secretary, taking on new roles, such as registering all new students, and keeping some old duties, such as providing tech support for families.

Laurie is returning as our speech and language teacher, but not until December 2. She just had a beautiful baby. We have requested that another speech teacher is assigned to us this fall so that we can maintain required special education supports. I hope we can announce NYCDOE's plans before the first day of school.

Tim Lively will return to CPE1 as our visual arts teacher. Tim taught art, brilliantly, for more than a decade at CPE1. Starting in November, Tim will be in the art studio on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Every class will work with him.

We open this year with two people assigned for additional help.

NYCDOE has returned **Darrell Shoub** to CPE1, where he provided extra support and coverage last year.

Donna Montaque has been assigned as well. Donna is an assistant principal who has worked in several schools around East Harlem, most recently nearby at PS 108. She was a science teacher before that. Donna has a reputation as a very organized administrator, which could be a great help during her assignment at CPE1.

Finally, we hired new teachers. After 51 interviews and eleven demonstration lessons, our hiring committee has selected four teachers to begin at CPE1.

Anika Baxter Tam has been close to CPE1 since she was a child. Before sending her children to our school, Anika attended herself. Now, as a teacher, she “cannot imagine working anywhere else.” To her new pre-K class, she brings “deep respect for the way young children think” and “enthusiasm for the work of childhood.”

Selena Hinojosa will be a special education teacher working with Patricia’s and Hansel’s K-1 classes. After teaching in Queens and the Bronx, Selena is coming home to East Harlem, where she was born and raised. As a child in the neighborhood, she began studying martial arts. Today, she has two black belts, plus all the “courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit” she learned in her dojo. Now, she is excited for the learning environment of CPE1, which “celebrates the uniqueness of each child while allowing them to inquire.”

At the end of **Abby Sayre’s** demonstration lesson in front of CPE1 children, a third grader had a question. “Can you come back tomorrow?” asked Yehonatan. Abby is, in fact, coming back to work with a 2-3 class. She has taught in a bilingual classroom in the Bronx, and for the last five years, taught first and fifth grades at Manhattan New School. She also has been a teaching artist. She says joy is “essential” in school, and “creating fun, engaging and dynamic experiences for kids is the best way to get them excited about learning.” As a poet outside of the classroom, Abby is a poet, she shares “love of language and storytelling” with children.

Joining Abby, Rasheeda, and Winnie in 2/3 will be **Phyllicia Bryan**. Phyllicia is entering her fifth year teaching. She describes herself as passionate about “diversity, equity, and literacy.” What led her to CPE1 is “students learning by doing and having choices through project-based learning.” She says she cannot wait to sing with children.

I’ll keep you updated with more staffing news later in the summer. For now, I am very happy to welcome (or welcome again) our staff for next year.

Gabriel