



Central Park East I Elementary School

September 8, 2021

Dear Families,

We have more hiring news to close out the summer.

Earlier in August, we were seeking a new teacher for our 4/5s classroom. Later, Rasheeda requested a release to transfer to another school. Patrice moved from being a paraprofessional at CPE1 to a secretary in a high school in the Bronx. I'm happy to introduce three people we recently hired.

Sarah Abouemira will be teaching 4/5s. She began her teaching career in Central Harlem, at PS 133. When asked about why she teaches, Sarah describes herself as a child: "I was always the shy, quiet student." She remembers teachers who opened their classrooms to her during their free time, and adds, "I always try to be that teacher for my students as well." She is excited to come to a school with project-based learning, and looks forward to "working with students to explore their creativity."

Andrea Donkor comes to our 2/3s after ten years as a special education teacher in Brooklyn's PS 256. She will call on experience as a second and third grade ICT teacher as she prepares to co-teach with Abby and Phyllicia. Andrea says she is "passionate about real- world learning" and diversity, two features that drew her to CPE1. She also might be the first teacher in school history who is dedicated to weight-lifting, a discipline she says taught her that "small steps lead to huge success."

When we discovered that we needed a paraprofessional, our hiring committee called **Justine Pitre**. Earlier, we watched Justine support students in their project work, and her connection with students was clear. Justine comes to CPE1 from another small, progressive school: East Village Community School.

Welcoming Sarah, Andrea, and Justine just about completes our 2021-2022 staff. I've never been part of such careful hiring. Between April and August, our hiring committee interviewed 57 candidates and observed over a dozen demonstration lessons. Those numbers speak to commitment in finding the right people for CPE1.

First Days and Holidays

Students' first day of school is **Monday, September 13**. On the first day and every day, we start officially at 8:30.

Children will enter through the school yard on East 106 Street. We will have breakfast for all students between 8:00 and 8:20.

All public schools are closed for Yom Kippur on **Thursday, September 16**.

Pre-K and Kindergarten Early Dismissals

As always, pre-K and kindergarten have shorter days to begin the year. On **Monday, September 13** and **Tuesday, September 14**, pre-K will dismiss at **noon**.

On those days, **kindergarten** will dismiss at **12:15**.

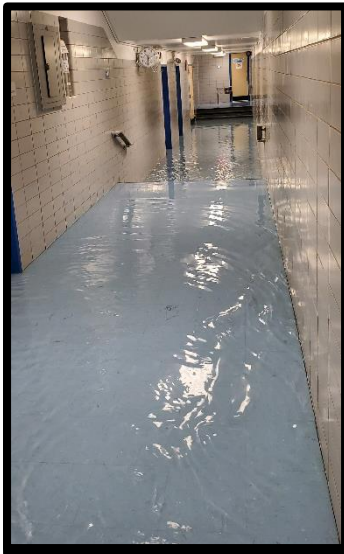
Pre-K and kindergarten will be dismissed from the courtyard on Madison Avenue.

Recording of Safety Meeting

Thank you to everyone who was able to participate in last week's safety meeting for families. If you could not be there live, we recorded the discussion. [Please click here to watch.](#)

Effects of Storm on Our School Building

Last week's powerful rain affected our school building. This photograph was taken outside the cafeteria at about 10:30 Wednesday night.



CPE1's floor was not damaged. The first floor and the basement flooded. Thousands of gallons of oily water had pumped out of the boiler room by a HazMat crew. Our fire alarm system had to be fixed. Our custodial staff stayed in the building for nearly two days straight. The building was closed for five days.

The building closed out of concern for air quality. Water knocked down about half of tiles on the cafeteria ceiling. As is the case in many schools from the 1950s, the glue behind our tiles contains asbestos. That asbestos can be dangerous if it is exposed.

The morning after the storm, trained technicians sealed cafeteria. They removed all exposed asbestos. Dehumidifiers ran for days to

dry out the air. On Monday, the building passed tests for air quality. We meet state and federal safety standards.

About half of our cafeteria ceiling is being replaced. The ceiling is getting new sheet rock with new tile – and no asbestos. We are back on schedule to have the cafeteria for the first day. *If* the cafeteria is not ready for the start of the year, CPE1's breakfast and the high school's lunch *might* be to on tables in the school yard.

We are very lucky that the damage in the building has been limited. We also feel pressured. Officially, teachers are not required to come to work until September 8, but every teacher was spending time setting up classrooms before the building closed down. Being kept out of the building for several days feels difficult.

By October, we'll think less about the days we lost. For now, we have just a little more time to prepare.

Deep Appreciation for Summer Work

As I just wrote, no teacher is required to work in summer, but all of them did.

At 7:00 on Friday night, at the start of a holiday weekend, Marilyn and Alveda were meeting remotely with a new pre-K family. The family agreed to have Abby, Andrea, and Phyllicia – three teachers new to CPE1 – observe. At the end of the family interview, the teachers met to discuss the process, and Marilyn followed up with some written notes.

That Friday night meeting is a story of CPE1 educators striving to know children and families. It's also only one of many summertime examples of staff working hard and working together.

This has been a tough summer for getting ready. Distancing creates new challenges for organizing classrooms. Most teachers could not set up their classrooms until August 25, after the end of the Summer Rising program. Marilyn's, Patricia's, and Eunice's rooms did not have Summer Rising. They worked in their rooms in July so they could spend August generously supporting colleagues. Similarly, Cecilia was in her classroom by 7:15 on the first morning after Summer Rising. We had not hired Sarah yet, but Cecilia knew the way she set up her space would guide a new teacher. Alveda spent long afternoons re-organizing closets and supporting Anika and Hansel cleaning and arranging their classrooms.

In most schools, individual educators to set up their individual classrooms. Here, the emphasis is on a responsibility we share: *we* have to be ready for *all of our* children.

I wish the building has not closed so everyone could have chosen to do more work. I never would trade the spirit a group of educators determined to work together.

Gabriel