



October 24, 2021

Dear Families,

This letter has more information about the screeners selected by the city for all schools, Halloween at CPE1, and no-school days next week.

## **More on Screeners**

### **Reading and Math Screeners, K-2**

For kindergarten, first grade, and second grade, the city has chosen a short assessment called Acadience.

With Acadience , teachers sit alongside individual children. Acadience reading checks how children recognize letters and sounds in kindergarten in first grade, and then how they read full stories in second grade. Acadience is timed. It takes three minutes for kindergarteners, five minutes for first graders, and eight minutes for second graders.

Acadience math is similar, with short one-on-one checks for individual children. Math takes three minutes for kindergarteners, first grade four minutes, and second grade four minutes. First and second graders also have a five-minute check they take in groups.

### **Reading and Math Screeners, 3 - 5**

For third, fourth, and fifth graders, iReady has been selected. iReady is given on laptops to a whole class, all at once.

iReady is essentially a multiple-choice test given on computers. Not everyone gets the same questions. The more a child's answers match the test's idea about the correct answer, the harder the questions become. This keeps going until the program figures out the child's 'level.'

iReady is not timed, and it takes longer than Acadience. Children can pause in the middle and come back if they need more time. We are giving children 45 minutes to start; those who are not done within that time can come back to it the next day.

### **New Social-Emotional Screener**

The city has announced a new screener. This one is a questionnaire about each child's social-emotional development. It is the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA). After this letter is one prepared for you by NYCDOE, which explains:

The DESSA asks questions about areas of social-emotional functioning including decision making, relationship building, confidence, and others. This tool will be completed by someone who knows your child really well—in most cases a teacher.

NYCDOE's original letter says that you should write to me if you wish to opt your child out of the social-emotional screening. I simplified this to a quick yes-or-no survey. [If you wish to opt your child in or out, just click here.](#)

### **What Happens with Screener Results**

The city's reading and math screeners are being used three times this year: fall, winter, and spring. NYCDOE collects the results.

Apparently, the results will not be used for evaluating teachers or schools. We have not heard exactly how the results will be used by the city system. Schools are expected to look at the results themselves to provide additional support as needed. Formal assessment numbers can help with that, but of course, our goal is to know each learner well enough before we get formal results.

### **Halloween at CPE1**

Halloween at CPE1 is an old-fashioned celebration. Really, it's a celebration of childhood – wholesome, never scary.

This year's celebration happens after lunch this Friday, October 29. Here are the basics:

- Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade bring costumes to school.
- Older children and adults do **not** have costumes in school.
- Home-made costumes are encouraged.
- Costumes are **not**:
  - Scary
  - Violent
  - Full masked
  - Superheroes
  - Princesses
  - Carrying weapons
- Young children parade in costume, cheered on by older children.
- The youngest kids parade outside in the neighborhood.
- Younger grades gather after the parade for treats (no candy) in the school yard.

Some of what we celebrate is the joy of pretend and imagination. Of course older children (and adults) love that, too. CPE1 saves the costumes and parade for younger children so that they feel seen as they pretend; many older kids will be putting on costumes after school, but in school, they are the audience for the younger children's parade, which helps them reflect on how they are growing.

Not all students or staff participate in Halloween. We always make space for this, with class discussion if anyone is not dressing up. Understanding that some in our school have different traditions is part of the richness of being in community.

### **Schedule Changes Next Week**

On **Tuesday, November 2**, children will not be coming to school. Across the city, staff meet for professional learning. (This happens again on June 9.)

A few years ago, this was a day off for children. Now, the city and state expect children to learn remotely, without their teachers being present. There will be work in Google Classroom. Children 'attend' remote school to be marked present for the day.

Remote learning without teachers can feel awkward, but I appreciate this change. State law requires 180 days of school. School calendars have added three observances in recent years: Lunar New Year, Eid al Fitr, and Juneteenth. The

remote days let schools honor these days without starting too early (this year, we started late) or running into July.

Family conferences also happen next week. As always, elementary schools dismiss early one day to allow for conference time. On **Thursday, November 4, school ends at 12:00.**

Please read ahead for the city's letter about DESSA, the social-emotional screener.

Gabriel

October 24, 2021

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We understand just how challenging the past 18 months of the pandemic have been for you as parents, families, and caregivers. We are in awe of the work you have done, and continue to do each and every day, to support your child(ren) and we thank you for your continued partnership with us. Our work together is more important than ever as we strive to ensure your child thrives this school year and beyond. To further support you, our teachers, counselors, and social workers as champions of your child(ren)'s academic and social and emotional needs, are excited to let you know about a wonderful opportunity in our school this year!

Research has consistently shown that developing the social and emotional skills of students helps them to succeed academically, gain confidence, and be happier. Social-emotional learning, or SEL, includes developing relationship skills, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and optimistic thinking.

To identify and support the social-emotional growth of all children in our school, we are excited to be administering a strengths-based SEL screener, known as the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA). The DESSA asks questions about areas of social-emotional functioning including decision making, relationship building, confidence, and others. This tool will be completed by someone who knows your child really well—in most cases a teacher.

The responses we gather will help us provide targeted, highly responsive support to each individual student. Perhaps most importantly, the tool enables us to build on each student's strengths while identifying the social-emotional skills they need to further develop. Once our students' growth areas are identified, we can create highly responsive plans to target and enhance those skills in the most appropriate manner and settings.

The results of this screener will not be included on report cards, will not have any impact on grades, and will not be used to make any diagnostic or evaluation decisions. The results will be stored securely in an online portal that meets the DOE's strictest privacy and security settings and will only be viewable by your child(ren)'s teachers and select school staff such as the principal or counselor.

The information gathered from the DESSA screening tool will allow us to provide the very best support to your child and will be beneficial to their overall success, both inside and outside of school. Families will have an opportunity to hear about their student's SEL skills during family conferences.

We are excited to implement the DESSA in November.

If you do not want a staff member to complete the DESSA screener for your student, please [click here](#).

If you have any questions regarding social-emotional learning or the DESSA, please feel free to email ([gfeldbe@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:gfeldbe@schools.nyc.gov)) or speak with me.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Feldberg  
Principal