



November 10, 2021

Dear Families,

This letter has information about signing up for our workshops with MetroCenter, food math in class and the numbers behind cold lunch, hiring a new parent coordinator, and the DESSA social-emotional screener.

Invitation to Yearlong Workshops on Building Anti-Racist Community

This year, Central Park East I has a grant to strengthen equitable, antiracist practices. To do this, we are collaborating with the MetroCenter from New York University. MetroCenter is customizing a series of six workshops for families in our school.

The workshops will be remote, participatory, and small, with no more than thirty people attending. These workshops are designed just for families; MetroCenter has created a separate series of workshops for CPE1 staff.

[To sign up for these workshops, click here.](#)

Back at September's curriculum night, I spoke about this series:

Even diverse, progressive schools like ours have to confront the subtle and not-so-subtle ways racism affects our history and our present. While white people in the community have to take on the heavy work of confronting racism, MetroCenter also creates space for families of color to lead that antiracist culture. For families of color, MetroCenter tries to minimize harm and the extra work of explaining, implementing, and enforcing.

CPE1 does better than most schools, but we can do better still. In these times, when children in our school stream police killings and fear for their dad, when we have Asian children who worry that a stranger on the street will sucker-punch their mom, when we have white children who need to

grow up with more sense than most white adults were raised to have, our community better do better.

Building a stronger, more equitable community is hard work. It's vital work. If you feel ready to lead change, [click here to sign up](#).

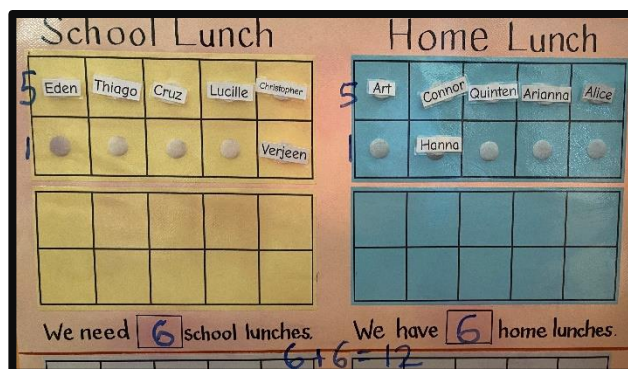
Math and Lunch

On Monday, Cecilia's class went to the courtyard to plan for a new composting program. In this photo they are calculating the how much compost our garden



needs. At CPE1, hands-on, real-world math often connects to food.

Our pre-K and K-1 classes all have morning math routines around which children need school lunch for the day. In this chart, Anika's children connect their names to Velcro on these tens-frames. Some children count the lunch choices one by one. Others already have started using those ten frames to build big math ideas. If you ask how they know that six children need school lunch, they might say, 'I see five on the top, and then one on the bottom.'



This routine builds young children's mathematical fluency and understanding. They are learning a system of ones and tens. Those who start to see a ten-frame as two rows of five boxes or five columns of two boxes are, even in pre-K, *just* starting to understand multiplication.

Now, here's the bad math of real-world lunch. *All school lunch will be cold for most of November, at least.* Each month, New York City public schools need millions of aluminum trays that keep hot food warm enough to meet health codes. Because of global shipping and supply issues, the city cannot get those trays. Cafeterias are rationing their remaining trays because hot lunch is required for pre-K.

Staying in the cafeteria is not an option for us. Grades K-5 have more than 120 children, and they all would have to take their masks off to eat. We have a big cafeteria, but 120 is too many children to keep everyone at least six feet apart.

Cold lunch is unfortunate. For many people, hot meals represent care. If I get an update on when the city will get more trays, I will share it.

Hiring a New Parent Coordinator

CPE1 is hiring a new parent coordinator. Najah is now working in a classroom, and we are looking for the next person to fill this role.

I will share with you New York City's official posting for this job. Please share the job description with anyone you think might be a good fit for the role. Resumes should be sent to [hiring@cpe1.nyc](mailto: hiring@cpe1.nyc).

I am hoping that we can have someone fully hired into the role by the end of 2021.

Update on DESSA Social-Emotional Screener

Last month, I wrote about the Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment, or DESSA. This is the survey that the city is using to assess children's social-emotional health.

The city wants teachers to evaluate students with DESSA by December 4. The teachers are not supposed to involve the children directly. Instead, teachers

reflect by themselves. Teachers are asked how frequently a child displays particular behaviors, such as whether the child would “respond to another person’s feelings,” “show good judgment,” and “learn from experience.”

Let me evaluate *myself* with those DESSA questions. Could I rate myself as “Always” responding to another person’s feelings, showing good judgment, and learning from experience? No, I don’t *always* do those things. So do I “Frequently” show good judgment, or only “Occasionally”? Hmmmm.

DESSA asks about behaviors that are hard to judge. At CPE1, teachers know children very well, and we will work to be thoughtful in our responses. But across the whole city, I worry that teacher bias could complicate results.

On the other hand, we do need to pay attention to children’s emotional development, particularly as we think about how the pandemic has affected them. DESSA provides one more tool.

The choice should be each family’s to make. The city acknowledges that families may opt out. You decide whether your child’s teacher should complete a DESSA survey about your child.

[Please take one minute to opt your child in or out of DESSA.](#)

Thank you.

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) or speak with me.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Feldberg
Principal