



March 28, 2022

Dear Families,

I will not be in school this week. I have tested positive for COVID-19.

My last day in school was Friday, March 25. I probably caught the virus at home, since one of my children was positive before me. Just to be safe, unless your child has had COVID in the past three months, this is a good time to use one of those home testing kits we distributed earlier in the month.

So far, I am feeling well enough to type a letter. If I am symptom-free by the weekend, I will be back in school on Monday, April 4.

## **Welcome, Shawna**

I am overdue in introducing a new staff member.

**Shawna Hansford** is our new teacher of English as a New Language. On Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays, Shawna (pronounced Shwa-na) is joining Hansel's, Phyllicia's, and Sarah's classes to support multi-lingual learners who qualify for English as a New Language services.

Shawna began her career twenty years ago, and returned to teaching this month after pausing to complete her doctoral degree. Previously, she served as an assistant principal in a District 75 special education school in Brooklyn, and before that, as an instructional coach out of the District 75 central office. She recently co-founded an education blog

called Strategies Matters. Shawna describes herself as a “fierce advocate for children” who encourages them to be self-advocates. Shawna adds that she is “super excited about learning and growing” at CPE1.

## **Music Update**

This past winter, Mingie announced her pregnancy to children (they are excited) and to families. Her leave is scheduled for late May.

To keep music going over the final weeks of school, CPE1’s very first music teacher, Barry Solowey, will return to the music room. All classes will have music with Barry once per week, on either Mondays or Wednesdays. On Fridays, some classes will go to the music room for work with Basha Alperin, a frequent substitute at CPE1 who also teaches drumming.

Barry will focus primarily on choral singing and vocal technique. Mingie has been communicating with Barry and teaching children songs from the CPE1 song book, so the transition from music with Mingie to music with Barry should be smooth.

## **Mask Update**

Last week, the mayor said at a press conference that masks will become optional for pre-K, starting April 4. Since that press conference, the city Department of Education has not mentioned masks and pre-K.

Sometimes, press conferences get ahead of formal policy. However, the gist of what a mayor announces at a press conference usually goes into effect. We may hear some caveats about masks and pre-K this week, but masks *probably* will be a choice for pre-K, starting on Monday.

As with masks for older children, some families will want to remove pre-K masks, and some will want their children to keep wearing them. If you have a pre-K child, please let Anika or Marilyn know your preference.

## **Graduation Update**

On the morning of Tuesday, June 21, fifth graders will graduate outdoors in the school yard.

Because the pandemic is hard to predict, several nearby high schools and middle schools have planned outdoor graduations. Our school yard, one of the biggest in East Harlem, will be hosting nine separate ceremonies. We will have a high-quality sound system and a tent big enough for 600 chairs and.

The tent and chairs will be set up on June 16, which means we will not have use of the school yard for the final days of school. We starting to plan around that. Losing the yard for those days is hard, but a return to in-person graduation for so many schools will make this a worthwhile trade-off.

Barry has supported many CPE1 graduations. This June, he will be rehearsing with fifth graders.

I'm looking forward to getting back to school. See you next week.

Gabriel