



Central Park East I Elementary School

May 25, 2022

Dear Families,

Let's start with the joy.

On Thursday, May 26, starting at 6:00, we're having an adults-only discussion of the Thirteen Principles of Black Lives Matter, and how those principles live in our school. We have outside facilitators leading our discussion of the Principles.

At 6:00 on Thursday, join the Zoom conversation here:

<https://nycdoe.zoom.us/j/95141932811?pwd=T1RHWnRlXlRzK2FKUGU3eTNFUT09>



Above are just two of the posters our fourth and fifth graders created, illustrating one of the Thirteen Principles that resonates for them. As you can see, these principles both celebrate the present and re-imagine the world as it ought to be.

That's children visualizing the world as it should be. And yet....

Responding to School Shooting

Yesterday, nineteen children and two adults were killed in a shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Maybe Uvalde will not be remembered like Buffalo, as an act of racist terrorism. Still, 90% of the children at Robb elementary are Latinx. Families of color already have to think too much about how racism can hurt their children. And now, again, there's violence in school, which is supposed to be a place where families trust their children are safe. This violates the peace families deserve.

When events like this happen, CPE1 prepares for whole-class conversations. The school developed an approach back when TV news was everywhere, and tragic events wallpapered every screen. Now, you may not turn on the evening news, but even a pre-K child can see your phone without your realizing it. We adults don't always begin the conversation, but if one or more children bring it up, we are ready.

At CPE1, these whole-class conversations about events in the world have follow a familiar structure. We ask children to share what they know, saw, and heard. They sit in a circle, speaking one at a time. After each child has shared, adults clarify any important, factual misconceptions in what the children said. Then, adults respond to children's questions and wonderings. One adult takes notes so teachers can share children's words with families in a message home at the end of the day. (If you don't get an email tonight, your child's class probably didn't talk about Uvalde.)

I'm grateful for our staff's courage and emotional honesty as they guide children through those difficult discussions. Giving space for the questions, confusions, and fears children hold inside them makes children safer.

And we need our children to be safer.

Strength and Healing in Community

On Thursday night at 7:00, at the end of our Black Lives Matter discussion, please stay for a community care vigil. We are going to acknowledge this moment of violence, and check in on how we're feeling. Please be part of this, too.

After this Thursday night, please come back for two more conversations. On June 2, at 6:00, we talk about strength and solidarity among families of color and white allies. This work connects beautifully to our family discussion this week. And then, on the morning of June 3, please stick around after drop-off for an informal, community coffee.

This violence leaves me so sad – for those children in Texas, for their families, and for the violence here, too. I'm glad we can come together Thursday night.

Gabriel