



**P.S. 59
THE
HARBOR
VIEW
SCHOOL**

Carol Mongiello Principal

Valerie Sanchez Assistant Principal

April 15th, 2020

Dear Harborview School Families,

My name is Randy Topper and I am very excited to be joining the team at PS 59 as school social worker. This is not exactly the way I envisioned beginning my time with the school community, but folks who know me know that I am always saying we need to be flexible, so I will follow my own advice.

Allow me to share some of my background. I grew up in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. I attended Wayne State University in Detroit and earned a bachelor's degree in theatre performance. After moving to New York, I worked as a traveling actor, performing in productions for young audiences all over the country. I then came back to New York and co-founded IlluminArt Productions, a company that has been performing and educating at PS 59 for several years. I served as artistic director of IlluminArt from 2009-2018, when I earned a master's degree in social work from The College of Staten Island. After receiving my masters, I took the position of Clinical Director of Project Hospitality's SHINE Center. In addition to my professional positions, I have been a volunteer with Camp Good Grief of Staten Island for 8 years, providing free weekend retreats for young people ages 6-16 who have lost a parent or close relative. My most important jobs are those of "Daddy" to my two daughters and "partner" to my wife.

Eventually, as things transition back to in person learning, I will be introducing myself to the students and staff of PS 59. Together we will be working to maximize the social emotional learning potential of our community as well as working to keep PS 59 an exciting and welcoming place for our diverse student body. I will be meeting with students individually and in small groups to provide support for their emotional growth. I will be meeting with classes in conjunction with their teachers to help maintain peaceful learning environments. I will also be meeting with families to provide connection to resources and social services within our school and within the larger community of Staten Island.

In the meantime, I will be working with the administrative team at PS 59 to provide supportive services to families through teleconferencing opportunities. I will also be working on videos promoting self care and stress relief for both parents and kids that will be posted to the school website.

I know that these are unusual times and that parents are being asked to join forces with teachers in ways that they may not feel prepared for. I just want to remind you all that you are doing wonderful work in difficult times. Please be kind to yourselves and don't worry too much about having the "facebook perfect" distance learning routine. Make sure to manage your own anxiety and engage in self care. If I can be helpful in any way, please feel free to email me at rtopper@theharborschool.org.

Best,
Mr. Randy
(Randy Topper, LMSW)