1. PTSA Updates

- The PTSA VPs announced that the PTSA will ask Dr. Montesano to come to an upcoming meeting to address concerns about growing class sizes.

- The PTSA VPs shared the responses they received from Ms. Cazes and Mr. Johnson to questions submitted before the meeting that will not be further addressed during the meeting. Parents should feel free to talk to Ms. Cazes or Mr. Johnson if they would like to discuss any of these issues further.
  
  o Bus monitors were eliminated several years ago due to budget issues, and there is no plan to reinstate them. Hillside's administration advises parents to contact Dr. Montesano to be heard on this issue because it is a district level issue.

  o The fire safety video that was shown to students is the same video that has been used in past years. Going forward, the school will make an effort to give advance notice that this video will be shown (and about other videos with potentially disturbing material) so that parents can determine whether they want their children to see the video.

  o The administration is supportive of school-wide lice checks during the first week of school and periodically during the year. Heather Ben-Zvi has offered to organize the effort. Attendees responded favorably to families contributing approximately $5-10 for 2-4 lice checks that also would need to be subsidized by the PTSA and/or the district.

  o There were concerns expressed over the FLES program. The PTSA agreed to ask the Spanish teacher to present at an upcoming meeting. Ms. Nunez will be presenting on January 10, 2017 at the next PTSA meeting.

2. SEPTA Announcements

- SEPTA announced that Melissa Goldberg has been appointed to the newly created position of Preschool-Kindergarten Transition Liaison. Melissa will serve as point person for parents navigating the transition from preschool to kindergarten, answering questions regarding the CSE process, connecting incoming parents with other SEPTA members who have walked a similar path (in terms of classification, services, etc.), and ensuring that parents have a ‘team’ behind them as they enter Hillside. Families with children entering kindergarten can contact Melissa at mla1414@gmail.com.
3. **Administration Announcements**

- **Allergy Awareness** – Ms. Cazes announced that steps have been taken to make Hillside more allergy sensitive and to make sure that the school is safe for everyone. For next year, Ms. Cazes plans to send placement forms in the early spring, seeking parent input about (1) the environment in which they believe their children would thrive; (2) children that their children do well with in class; and (3) whether parents are willing to have their children placed in a nut-free class. Ms. Cazes explained her hope is to have nut-free classes instead of nut-free tables at lunch. This way children with allergies can sit at lunch with their classes. This year, nut allergy information that explained which foods can and cannot be in the classroom was distributed to families in which children have allergies. Next year, Ms. Cazes wants to be even more sensitive.
  
  o A parent asked how the school can make sure that no one brings nuts, and Ms. Cazes responded that the school can't be sure, which is why the school won't become entirely nut free. She added that the school is asking families to be vigilant and that the school implements special procedures in classrooms in which children have on-contact allergies.
  
  o Ms. Cazes stated that parent education is a priority and that an Allergy Awareness Committee is being added to the district-wide Health and Wellness Committee to facilitate communication between the schools.
  
  o A parent asked whether input will be sought from parents about placement with particular teachers. Ms. Cazes responded that parents specifically will be asked not to request teachers, and she reminded parents to be thoughtful in what they request for their children because too many requests make placement very difficult.
  
  o A parent asked if there will be opportunities to be involved in the Allergy Awareness Committee, and Ms. Cazes responded that anyone interested in participating should contact Maureen Caraballo.
  
  o A parent stated that as a vegetarian family, nuts are a very important part of her children's diet.
  
  o Ms. Cazes reiterated that the school is trying to be nut aware and reminded families to be aware as holiday parties come up NOT to bring nuts into nut-free classrooms.

- **Gym Floor** – Mr. Johnson announced that a new gym floor was installed but hand sanitizer and food/liquids damaged the new flooring. The floor was refinished and lunch was moved to the small gym. Food is no longer permitted in the large gym, which impacts other events. However, the new floor is softer, has cushioning, and is safer for kids.

- **Hillside Enrichment at Recess Time ("HEART")** – Ms. Cazes announced that in response to requests that alternatives to the playground be offered at recess, the school is piloting a program with 2nd and 3rd grade for 4 weeks in February that will be similar to an after-school program but will take place at recess. The school will
seek parents to volunteer to work will small groups of children on various activities. Each group also will be supervised by a school aide.

- Mr. Johnson and Ms. Cazes also announced that the gym can be used during indoor recess for activities, and a schedule will be created so that classes have access on a rotating basis. They reminded families that recess takes places indoors if the temperature is below 23 degrees (with wind chill).

- A parent asked if the Maker Space can be used during indoor recess, and Ms. Cazes responded that there are some classes using the Maker Space while other classes have recess.

- A parent inquired whether the children are permitted to use Chromebooks during indoor recess, and Mr. Johnson responded that they should not, and he will follow-up with lunch and recess monitors to remind them.

4. Social Emotional Learning Update

- Ms. Cazes stated that in response to parents' concern about post-election talk at school and in the community, Hillside administrators spoke to students on a class-by-class basis, depending on need. The message shared was that everyone is safe at Hillside, and we are a community that accepts everyone. The school also observed World Kindness Week, which provided an opportunity to talk about kindness in the classroom, to share books and poetry, recognize kind acts on the Wall of Kindness, and spend time thinking about what it means to be kind. Ms. Cazes stated that it was a very special and warm week.

- Ms. Cazes announced that the faculty is investigating different options for Social Emotional learning. Ms. Cazes and Mr. Johnson talked about creating book clubs and teacher study groups. They want to be purposeful in rolling out a plan for next year. The Building Leadership Team (“BLT”) is identifying core values for Hillside. Jennifer Destin, a parent on the BLT, is working on a survey for parent feedback on core values. Also, faculty and students will be surveyed so collective voices will be heard and a direction can be determined. Kindness Week had a big impact on a kindergartener, according to her mother.

- Ms. Cazes explained that the Hastings Education Foundation sponsored a training for 70 teachers called Border Crossers that related to diversity and racism. It was eye opening for teachers to think through hypothetical situations and share their perspectives and experiences with racism. The mood at the training was heavy because upon reflection many participants realized how many negative situations people have encountered. Administrators are meeting with the Hillside teachers who attended the training to discuss how to bring what they learned to Hillside in an appropriate way. Ms. Cazes explained that the Race Matters committee at
FMS/HHS has created "sparks" and are building questions for Hillside. She explained that "sparks" are questions that can be used to discuss issues of diversity and racism.

- A parent asked when it's appropriate to begin to discuss race, stating that, in her opinion, many kids don't see differences. Ms. Cazes responded that the key is to look at similarities rather than differences. Mr. Johnson noted that his daughters are biracial and recognize differences but accept everyone for who they are. He added that he personally believes that the earlier we begin to discuss race, the better. A parent noted that research supports this, as well.

- Another parent questioned whether students should be signing the school's Code of Conduct, which is written in language that they likely don't understand. Ms. Cazes said that she made an effort to make the Code of Conduct more student-friendly this year, but she believes using the language of the actual Code is important because students will see it frequently.

- Training for Playground Aides – Mr. Johnson announced that he and Ms. Cazes had a meeting with recess/lunch aides in which they walked through a series of hypothetical situations and discussed appropriate ways to react. Mr. Johnson feels that many of the aides realized that they need to get to know students better and earn their respect. During the session, they discussed examples of how to treat students in positive ways rather than being punitive. Since the training, Mr. Johnson has received a lot of positive feedback from students. Mr. Johnson is continuing to work with the aides in a way that supports the social emotional welfare of students.

5. **i-Ready Update**

- Ms. Cazes shared a PowerPoint presentation that is available at https://docs.google.com/a/hastings.k12.ny.us/presentation/d/16xeD3oxWm2cb2gTpmd0TVk42mfDqg3UaiVhLfyxtUJI/edit?usp=sharing and responded to questions given to her in advance by the PTSA.

- Ms. Cazes stated that teachers have found that the data they obtained from i-Ready aligns with the Fountas and Pinnell assessments. Teachers found that they obtained more information from i-Ready than Fountas and Pinnell about advanced learners, and i-Ready also provided good information on skill work (i.e., for struggling kids, it provided information on the areas in which they have strong skills).

  - i-Ready results were available immediately, but the school learned that it is more helpful for teachers to receive printed copies than for the results to be made available only online.

- Ms. Cazes stated that school can be more flexible with the administration of i-Ready in the future. The school learned that i-Ready does not need to be
administered in a single sitting and does not need to be administered to all students simultaneously. "Brain breaks," which are online video games that are offered during the i-Ready assessment, will be turned off in the future. Also, the school will administer ELA and Math during separate weeks in the future.

- Ms. Cazes explained that some teachers told students that if they reached questions that were too difficult, they should guess the answers to approximately four questions to get back to their level. Students who received this advice seemed to struggle less and move faster through the tests.

- i-Ready provided information about students that the school didn't previously have, including students' Lexile scores (Fountas and Pinnell provides guided reading levels). Using i-Ready gives teachers the opportunity to put kids into reading groups quickly instead of doing individual Fountas and Pinnell assessments with each child, which take 20 minutes per child.

- A parent asked if every class has reading groups, and Mrs. Cazes responded that every class has small group reading instruction but not every day. She added that students have an independent level at which they can read on their own at 98% accuracy, and they have small group instruction. In some classes, small group instruction is more integrated with science and social studies in combination with literacy. She suggested that parents speak to teachers about where their child falls in terms of reading level and also how the small group instruction is happening in that child's classroom.

- i-Ready will be given three times a year.

- Mrs. Cazes explained that for math, i-Ready shows where each child is in terms of different elements on math. It also suggests instructional groupings by skills which need improvement so that teachers have information on how to support the children's learning and/or enrichment.

- Ms. Cazes stated that instructional groupings have been made based on the i-Ready results, and the results also indicated where whole-class instruction on certain topics was needed.

- Ms. Cazes stated that teachers feel that i-Ready may be a time-saver and want to continue administering it for this school year. She also stated that i-Ready is intended to be a tool for teachers, and, if teachers do not want it, i-Ready will be discontinued. She added that teachers are feeling positive right now about i-Ready, but they still need more time to assess it.

- Paula Higgins, a third grade teacher and team leader who attended this meeting, stated that she joined the evening to offer a teacher's perspective. She explained that she has a student who had reading issues that were thought to be trouble with decoding. i-Ready showed that decoding was not the issue, and, once the correct issue was identified by iReady and the focus of instruction changed, the child jumped four reading levels. She also noted that the math results showed issues across the grade with subtraction, which has resulted in the third grade team working across the grade on this topic.
A parent asked whether other assessments will be discontinued if the school continues to administer i-Ready. Ms. Cazes responded that if the school determines that Fountas and Pinnell is aligned with iReady, then Fountas and Pinnell could be discontinued.

Ms. Cazes stated that she understands that it is a negative that i-Ready is administered on computers but thinks it may be a worthy trade off if it results in teachers having more time with the kids. She added that teachers are using i-Ready and feeling positive right now, but they will need the rest of the year to figure out if it is worth continuing.

Ms. Cazes stated that this school year, i-Ready will be administered October, February, and June. In response to a parent's question, she stated that it is administered in June because it assesses progress from the beginning of the year. This year, it is important to have the assessment in June to measure whether i-Ready continues to align with Fountas and Pinnell throughout the year. In the future, if they continue with i-Ready, the first assessment will likely be given earlier than October so students can be put in reading and instructional groups as early in the year as possible. In addition, once they have a full year of information, teachers and administrators would be able to decide whether administering the June assessment is necessary.

A parent asked whether data moves with children, and Ms. Cazes responded that the system tracks students' levels so that the assessment can start in an appropriate level for each session.

A parent asked whether there is a way to share results with parents, and Ms. Cazes responded that there is a parent report which can be requested. However, the purpose of this tool is to inform instruction for teachers, not student assessment.

A parent asked whether we are losing something in giving up one-on-one assessments. Ms. Higgins responded that teachers still are conducting fluency checks and other assessments, and iReady may free up time for teachers to perform more targeted assessments. She also noted that a couple of students opted out of i-Ready, but this number was just one percent of both 3rd and 4th graders together.

A parent asked about children being encouraged to guess, and Ms. Cazes responded that they have compared classes in which students were told to guess and those in which they weren't and guessing didn't seem to change the results.

Ms. Cazes stated that teachers generally saw that questions were as appropriate as on the Fountas and Pinnell.

Ms. Cazes emphasized that she wants to do what's best for kids and that the school is not married to i-Ready. In the future, the introduction to the test given by teachers will be scripted, so all classrooms get the same instructions.

Minutes from prior meetings are posted on the Hillside webpage.
A district-wide meeting about the use of technology in classrooms is scheduled for December 14 in the Lloyd Library at the FMS/HHS complex.

The next PTSA meeting is scheduled for January 10, 6:30 PM.