PTSA Parent Meeting
Tuesday, April 25, 2017

1. PTSA Announcements
   a. Used Book Fair, April 27 -29 at Hillside. Students will visit during the day with their teachers. Evening Preview on Wed, April 26 from 6pm – 8pm. You can buy books, games and get your old books appraised by River Run.
   b. Picnic for incoming kindergarten families – June 2 at 3:30pm at Hillside
   c. PTSA Board Elections. There is still time to volunteer if you are interested. Please let anyone on the Board know.
   d. GaGa pit – With funds from Box Tops 4 Education collected by students at Hillside, Student Council voted to buy a GaGa pit for the playground.
   e. HEF Gala – Sign up and come on May 6 at 7:30pm at Captain Lawrence Brewery.

2. SEPTA Announcements
   a. First SEPTA Potluck on May 7 at 4pm (RSVP to Jennifer.h.destin@gmail.com)
   b. Final SEPTA coffee of the year on May 18, 8:30am at Hillside

3. Digital Citizenship Presentation (Ms. Nedwick)
   a. Digital Citizenship means being appropriate, safe, and responsible online.
   b. Common Sense Media is a site great for parents and teachers. It provides guides, reviews of movies, apps, etc. and, for educators, a scope and sequence K – 12 curriculum with lessons and interactive activities.
   c. ISTE Nine Elements to Digital Citizenship – This is the Common Sense curriculum that will be taught to all grades K – 4 during library next year. Some lessons were piloted this year to see which are best suited to each grade.
      i. Some discussion of phone use will be included.
      ii. Hillside has access to databases that provide students with resources that are ad-free and good sources of information. Look on the Hillside library site for Novelnewyork.org under the educator tab or kidsinfobits (2-5 grades) for articles, encyclopedias.
   d. A parent voiced concern that with the push in curriculum for kids to read non-fiction that fiction is being left out. The parent hopes that Hillside will still have fiction play a prominent role. Response from Ms. Nedwick and Ms. Cazes: Both love books and want to see all kinds be devoured by children. Children will still check out books! Administration wants to do its due diligence to teach students about technology, but this is not at the expense of literacy and reading time. It is in addition to it.
   e. K – 1 will continue to have Maker Space in Library next year.
   f. 2 – 4 will have Maker Space with a new STEM teacher. Maker Space will also house the science classes led by the STEM teacher.
   g. A parent shared that in 5th grade, students are expected to research on
their own and do not know where to find good resources. They do not have library at FMS, so there is a gap between what is expected and what they actually know.

h. A parent mentioned wanting administration and teachers to be sure that students are not just shown a digital citizenship video and then thought to understand the messages. Ms. Nedwick said they always discuss the issues as well.

i. A parent asked that Ms. Nedwick send home communications and guidelines to parents – basic information about rules for technology at home, whether parents should have their children’s passwords, etc.

j. Another parent suggested Hillside also send home to parents the technological skills students should have at each grade level.

k. A parent added that in 5th grade students are exposed to much more in the technological world. They need to be explicitly and more deeply taught about proper use of technology in their lives.

4. Administrative Announcements (Ms. Cazes)
   b. STEAM Fair – Now June 5, 2017. Hillside attempted to make it earlier in the year as requested last year by parents, but more families signed up when the date was rescheduled.
   c. School safety – The school is not allowed to announce drills ahead of time because the state mandates they not be. This way students are more prepared for a real event. Ms. Cazes will continue to send announcements after drills have been conducted.
   d. Drinking fountains: Two new water-filling stations were installed and one more will be installed. Any fountains that were found to have lead are not used for drinking. They have either been closed or are only used to wash hands. You can definitely send your children in with water bottles. They can be refilled at the new stations. This cuts down on plastic bottle use, too.
   e. Assistant Principal (AP) and Teacher Hiring Process: Hillside is currently hiring an AP, classroom teachers, a school counselor, a STEM teacher, and a social worker. Administration is using the OLAS system and reaching out to universities to look for a diverse applicant pool. First, Ms. Cazes screens applicants, and some come in for panel interviews with teachers and administration. Finalists will give demonstrations in a classroom and writing samples. Many stakeholders will be involved in the interviews for the AP position. Final candidates are recommended to the superintendent for hire. Teachers who currently have temporary appointments (such as leave-replacement positions) also are interviewing for any such positions for the next school year. Ms. Cazes wants to be sure she gets the very best people in front of our students. Ms. Cazes is hoping to have many of these people hired by the end of the school year. (Over 500 people applied for
f. Senora Smith has extended her maternity leave and will not be back next year.
g. A parent wondered how much Hillside is looking to diversify the staff. Ms. Cazes answers that the goal is to bring in the best candidates. It is not always easy to tell from the resume if the candidate is diverse, but every effort and lots of outreach is happening to bring in a diverse applicant pool.

h. Student Placement for Next Year – Ms. Cazes thanked parents for following the guidelines for the placement letters. Teachers will be using the letters to create the class lists. Then, Ms. Cazes and Mr. Johnson will go over them. Specials teachers will also look at the groupings. Last, the classroom teachers will look at the changes made and give any last input.
   i. Placement will come on the Student Portal in August. The date is to be determined.
   ii. If you know families who have incoming kindergarteners, please tell them to sign up on the portal over the summer. A person has to approve their requests, and this takes a few days. This is how parents will get their children’s teacher placements and report cards.
   iii. Contact Michele Porter porter@hohschools.org if you have any issues setting up your Parent Portal.
   iv. Ms. Cazes emails a weekly communication every Friday. If parents are not receiving them, contact Jeanine Genauer, GenauerJ@hohschools.org
   v. A parent worries that she cannot mention not wanting a teacher like her current one as that teacher will see her letter. Ms. Cazes said it is actually more beneficial to write in the letter about what you do want – the qualities of the teacher that would benefit your child.
   vi. A parent asked if the form could be done online. Ms. Cazes said it cannot as it is too much printing for the office to do. A parent will look into making forms that we could type into online, print at home, and then submit.

i. Nut Free Classrooms – Many parents commented during the school year on both sides of this issue. Hillside classrooms are entirely nut free. Nuts will continue to be permitted at lunch time and larger nut free tables will be added to accommodate additional kids to make the nut free tables less socially isolating.

j. Core Values and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) (Ms. Cazes)
   i. Second Steps is the new SEL program that will roll out next year. Teachers have already begun their training.
   ii. The Building Leadership Team (BLT) decided that next year will focus on these three core values: respect, courage, and curiosity. It seemed all the other values brought up in surveys and discussions
fit under the umbrella of these three. At another BLT meeting, they will put language around these values and a logo that goes along with this. The values will be promoted through all that is done at Hillside.

k. Vision for English Language Arts (ELA) (Ms. Cazes)
i. Ms. Cazes’s ELA presentation to the Board of Education on literacy is posted on the HOH District website (http://www.boarddocs.com/ny/hhufsd/Board.nsf/Public#Arpi18th meeting). Her slide presentation can be found here: http://www.boarddocs.com/ny/hhufsd/Board.nsf/files/ALLSHH5AE24F/$file/Board%20Presentation%204-18-17.pdf
ii. The new program is in response to the need for a consistent, growing, purposeful direction in ELA.
iii. Ms. Cazes is looking for ways to take a successful school further toward excellence.
iv. This is a five-year plan that invests in teachers to be successful. Professional Development involving consultants will help teachers learn, demonstrate, plan, and coach. Training will take place over a few years in order to avoid overwhelming teachers and to get “everyone rowing in the same direction.”
   1. Year 1: Create curricular units with teachers guided by consultants. Units are laid over skills. During the year, the consultants will help teachers roll out these units. The focus will be on reading workshop and conferring.
   2. Year 2: Continue reading focus with small group instruction and assessing reading levels.
   3. Year 3: Writing units laid over skills will be created.
   4. Year 4: Small group instruction and next steps.
   5. Year 5: Word study, vocabulary, and grammar focus
v. To develop the units, skills, and next steps, Ms. Cazes had consultants assess the current curriculum by looking at student work and talking to teachers and administrators. Here is what they found:
   1. Teams work collaboratively as a grade level. The challenge is working vertically to align their goals across grades.
   2. Teachers have a willingness and openness towards learning. Teachers like the idea of having a common goal, vision, and a consistent belief around ELA.
   3. Whole class instruction is a strength. Now teachers are ready to individualize instruction, so each child is working at his or her level.
   4. Teachers use Fountus and Pinell to assess students. Next, they can work to use those assessments to inform how and what to teach the children.
vi. Where do we want to be?
1. Teachers: Want a common language and structure, vertical alignment. Each grade builds upon the last.
2. Parents: Looking for a flexible instructional environment where classes are individualized for their children’s needs. Want the hands on, authentic learning experiences.
3. Students: Want more chances to read and write independently. They also want it to be fun.

vii. How do we get there?
1. Over the years, “reading wars” evolved between two philosophies—phonics (part to whole) learning vs. whole language (learn by doing, but rules not taught). Balanced literacy blended and balanced these two ideas. Hillside is going to use balanced literacy.
2. Teachers at Hillside do know balanced literacy but may define it differently. So, they have PD about this to be sure everyone is on the same page.
   a. **To:** Teacher giving instruction > interactive read alouds, mini-lessons, stop and chat
   b. **With:** Teachers and students read the texts together. They may read the same piece several times but look for different things—punctuation, vocabulary, etc. Why the author did what he or she did.
   c. **By:** Students have a chance to actually do the work with the teachers present.
      i. Word Study – K – 4 will have one program rather than different ones in various grades.
      ii. Reading and writing workshops – run and done by kids. It takes time and is developed with practice while being facilitated by the teacher.
   d. Ms. Cazes stressed that this plan is all about investing in Hillside’s teachers. Research shows that one-off professional development opportunities tend not to have lasting results. Teachers implement changes at a much higher rate if they have in-classroom coaching, and that is the model Hillside will use.
   e. A parent wanted to know what specific instruction there will be for teachers to learn more about learning disabilities. Teachers should have a sense of whether a student is a struggling reader vs. a reader with a disability. Ms. Cazes replied that teachers will be very clear about benchmarks. If the learner is not progressing, that will raise a red flag. RTI will still be
in place to review any cases. A reading specialist will be at Hillside to intervene when needed. The key to the new program is that it can meet students where they are and see that they progress. The consultant team has a special background in special education.

f. A parent suggested choosing books for building-wide reading (i.e. a shared text for K-4).

g. A parent said she is a bit sad that her child will be gone by the time the new program is fully rolled out. Ms. Cazes reminded the group that the school is very good right now. There are limitations to doing this faster as we cannot just put in tons of substitutes and train the teachers. This will take time.

h. A parent mentioned that there was huge support from Hillside teachers at the Board of Ed meeting where Ms. Cazes presented this program. They spoke in support of it and wanted it to move ahead right away. The parent is truly pleased as this shows Ms. Cazes is meeting the needs of teachers and parents.

i. This year, two teachers from each grade level will work on first units and give them to teachers before they leave for the summer. There will be clear unit goals with skills sent home. There will be independent reading in the classrooms with support – a reading workshop model.

j. A parent asked where else these programs have been used. Ms. Cazes answered that many places in Bergen County and Westchester have used this consultant firm. Ms. Cazes had previous experience with this team. Teachers have now met the team twice.

k. A parent said this all sounds great, but what about specials and math and science? Ms. Cazes said literacy permeates every other area. Without a solid base, we cannot improve the other areas. We will keep growing. We will never be done, but we are moving in the right direction together.

l. A parent asked if teachers can go into other teachers’ classrooms to assess and learn from each other. Ms. Cazes said teachers need to feel supported in order to feel comfortable with this. If teachers are trained to go in looking for certain goals this could work.

m. A parent who is a teacher in another district
applauded Ms. Cazes’ presentation and said there is very sound pedagogy behind everything she is proposing.