

PTSA Parent Meeting

AGENDA

Tuesday, May 7, 2019

Hillside Library

6:30 PM

1. Presentation – Wait Until 8th – <https://www.waituntil8th.org/> - Wait Until 8th is an organization that advocates for delaying Smartphone usage by children until 8th grade.

Darrah Feldman, a Hillside parent, presented to the group on Wait Until 8th. She reviewed the research on the benefits of delaying smartphone usage by children until at least the 8th grade. Smartphone usage in younger children can impact sleep, social relationships, time and involvement in other activities, and increases the risk for cyberbullying. The organization allows parents to take a pledge to wait until 8th grade at a minimum to get their child a smartphone. This does NOT apply to flip phones or other simplified devices that are just for calling/texting. The issue of concern is unfettered access to apps, the Internet, and social media. Once 10 parents in a grade have signed the pledge, it is considered “active” and the organization will email the group so that the parents know who one another are and can support one another and spread the word.

A handout on the program was provided and can be accessed here:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58938b9fbefafb25099e8c5b/t/5a6223ac8165f5f4de0ab5e3/1516381100324/Wait+Until+8th+parent+information+packet.pdf>

You may also email Darrah Feldman with questions at darrahfeldman@gmail.com.

2. PTSA Announcements

- Please be reminded of ongoing Fundraising efforts for the PTSA:
 - Box Tops (please collect and send to the Hillside Office)
 - Oliver’s Labels (visit www.oliverslabels.com/HOHPTSA to purchase labels for school or camp and 20% goes to your PTSA)
 - Amazon Smile (designate PTA New York Congress 18-205 Hastings-On-Hudson PTSA); DeCicco’s
- Committee Updates were presented:

Inclusion Working Group (IWG)

The IWG is a subset of the PTSA – anyone can join from any school and all are welcome.

Dr. Detra Price-Dennis is presenting a hands-on workshop on racial literacy May 8th 7-9p in the Hillside Care. This is the last planned speaker for this year.

The IWG has been working on the Diverse Book initiative, creating tools on how to discuss issues of diversity with children.

The Be Yourself Club is a kid-driven club, and has started to create an impact at Hillside. The club came up with positive affirmations and posted them in the bathrooms in Hillside. The kids designed t-shirts, sold them at farmer's market to raise money, and donated \$1000 to an environmental group that they chose. Next, they are posting positive affirmations at Farragut Middle School. They want to continue the club at Hillside next year and are looking for a way to make it happen at FMS next year.

There is a Multicultural book fair at end of month and a festival June 1 – all parents should have received pre-order forms. Authors will be visiting classrooms.

Culture and Arts Committee

The Culture and Arts Committee is a group of parents that volunteer to bring in arts programming to schools and they may fund field trips in future. If anyone wants to join please contact Melissa Sbrega at mjdsbrega@gmail.com.

RISE

Rise is a Community Organization of parents and educators engaging in dialogue about race and racism. They work with the district and community to promote equitable actions as a district, such as increasing the diversity of teaching and admin staff, examining hiring practices for potential bias, increasing professional development opportunities and developing a protocol for unconscious bias issues. If you'd like to get involved, please email info@hastingsrise.com.

PTSA Executive Board Slate for 2019-2020

The Nominating Committee of the PTSA met in April. It included three members of the PTSA Executive Board and three members of the community at large. The following slate of Vice-Presidents for Hillside were proposed:

Hillside

VP - Emani Davis

VP - Dorothy Neagle

VP - Becky Henderson

VP - Tanya Rynders

This slate was presented to the Parent Meeting. No objections or comments were noted.

3. SEPTA Announcements

The SEPTA Carnival will be June 2nd at Hillside.

The SEPTA Spring General Meeting will be June 19th.

4. School Updates

Ms. Cazes and Mr. DeKams presented the following updates:

- Spanish and Music – Based on ongoing conversations this year about improving the FLES program, Spanish will be offered next year for 1st through 4th grades twice per cycle. It will not be offered in Kindergarten next year. The Hillside Music program is not changing. Students at all grades will continue to have music twice per cycle and the orchestra, band, and chorus offerings will continue.
- Master Scheduler – In August, a Master Scheduler (scheduling consultant) will assist Hillside with improving how the day's schedule and transitions throughout the day are managed, with the goal of making the best use of the available time.
- Building Leadership Team (BLT) - The BLT has, this year, focused on the topic of Homework. There is one more planned BLT meeting this year and it will focus on finalizing a HW policy for Hillside that will be in place for the 2019-2020 school year.
- Outdoor Classroom Committees – the Outdoor Classroom Committees are finishing their work for the year. There will be two spaces - one in the current bird garden and the other on the back playground. The PTSA will grant some funds towards this initiative.
- Diverse Book Initiative – this project continues and has been ongoing all year. Part of the project has been the provision of professional development to Hillside teachers on the topics of learning difference, gender identity and expression, and race and racism.
- Positive Behavior in School (PBIS) – Ms. Snyder and Mr. DeKams are meeting with students to discuss the transition between recess and lunch, with the goal of minimizing noise and promoting positive behavior during these times. They are also meeting with lunch monitors and aides, to help better support students and limit negative interactions with staff.
- The 4th grade play is weekend of June 7th. This year, children will be allowed to participate as ushers, which is a great option for kids who do not want to be onstage but who want to be part of the project.
- Ms. Cazes noted that Hillside is in the process of hiring approximately 10 teachers, including Special Ed positions, leave replacement and building sub positions. There are open positions due to several staff retiring and an added position as well.

5. Q&A

A parent asked about how the anti-bullying sessions with Donnie from the Hastings Rec Center fit in with the Social Emotional Learning curriculum offered by Ms. Snyder. Ms. Cazes reported that they are aligned but that she would raise the issue with Ms. Snyder and Donnie to ensure this continues.

A parent noted that Sew Can You, the project formerly known as “Senior Sewing,” where Hillside children do a once-a-year sewing project with Senior Citizens from the community, is in need of new volunteers to help. To find out more about what’s involved and how to help, please contact Hillside parent Susan Lovely at jsjlove24@gmail.com .

A parent asked if children currently in 4th grade will have 5 or 6 sections in 5th grade next year. Ms. Cazes reported that there will be 6 sections. There have also been 6 sections proposed for Kindergarten next year, based on enrollment.

A parent asked about the budget proposal for literacy and math coaches. Ms. Cazes noted this was not for Hillside, however, Hillside is proposed to get a math RTI (Response to Intervention) specialist for next year.

A parent asked about whether there will be an elimination or reduction of aides in Kindergarten classrooms. Ms. Cazes reported there is no planned reduction of aides in kindergarten general education classrooms, as aides were restored for Gen Ed classrooms in the budget. Kindergarten ICT classrooms will have teaching assistants. Now they have a teaching assistant AND an aide. No aides are being lost – they are being re-allocated. There will be typically two ICT classes in every grade, though it can vary depending on need.

Minutes from meeting will be posted on Hillside and PTSA Webpages.