1. **Presentation - “Strategies to Support All Learners”**

Facilitator: David Luhman, Director of School Partnerships and Innovative Practices, Southern Westchester BOCES

Ms. Cazes provided background on the Hillside Diverse Book Initiative. As part of this effort, teachers are undergoing professional development including simulation activities to help put teachers in the shoes of diverse learners, and experience some of their challenges and frustrations. The mission of this initiative is to enhance both classroom and school libraries and to put books in the hands of children that represent them in all ways, both at school and in the world.

A number of areas of difference were identified by staff. Three will be focused on this year:

1. **Learning Differences** – Teachers underwent training with Mr. Luhman.
2. **Gender** – Teachers are undergoing training with Center Lane.
3. **Race/Culture** – Focus on inclusion/equity. Teachers are undergoing training with NYCLU in January.

Mr. Luhman provided background on his role at BOCES. His job to work with constituent districts to provide greater access to challenging levels of curriculum for all students.

Mr. Luhman described the experience of a “lower readiness student” – where school is always a worry. In high-performing districts, like Hastings, we tend to value speed but accuracy is more important. Children who struggle with language-based activities may have challenges with expressive or receptive language skills. Children in this category may get frustrated very quickly. This is not because they are less intelligent, but because they have a difficulty with language.

Mr. Luhman shared the “motivation equation” to help teachers/parents understand a framework for helping students who are struggling.

- I have to have some expectations of success.
- I have to see some kind of value in it for me.
Mr. Luhman explained that slower more targeted teaching is more effective.

Mr. Luhman presented a concept known as EDI: Explicit Direct Instruction:
- Explaining
- Demonstrating
- Modeling
- Checking for Understanding – Greater or equal to 80%

Mr. Luhman engaged the group in an “empathy exercise.” The group was given forks, toothpicks and a saltshaker and was asked to arrange them in a seemingly complex balancing structure. First, explanation was given with no demonstration or modeling. No one could complete the task. Then demonstration was provided, but the group still struggled. Mr. Luhman then modeled the task, while also providing individualized help and instruction to the group. He personalized the process and provided encouragement. Approximately 80% of the group could complete the task at this point.

Mr. Luhman emphasized the need to demystify the learning process for kids with learning difficulties and normalize the struggle they may have when faced with a challenging task. He also recommended identifying memorable ways to encode the memory of how to do a challenging task.

Mr. Luhman presented a concept known as SDI: Specially Designed Instruction, which adds to the above concept by providing adaptive strategies for children with learning difficulties. He recommended that children can practice adaptive techniques at home – so that when faced with challenges in school, they are less likely to struggle in front of their peers.

Mr. Luhman emphasized that children who are accelerated learners should also be pushed to next level – everyone should get push they need.

Mr. Luhman provided a handout with specific strategies to utilize the concepts noted above. This handout is accessible on the PTSA website.

2. PTSA Announcements

The HEART Program has only received 1 volunteer to date. It can’t run unless we have more. Please contact any of the PTSA VPs if you are interested in volunteering time during recess for any grade for an indoor alternate activity.

The VPs reviewed ongoing fundraising initiatives:
- 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; and Foodtown

• The PTSA’s final spirit wear sale of 2018 is exclusively online through December 7. Shop for holiday gifts including short and long-sleeve tees, flannel PJs, sweatpants (adult sizes only), sweatshirts, hats and water bottles, while supporting PTSA programming! All profits from spirit wear sales support our schools! Stock is limited so order soon at https://squareup.com/store/hastings-ptsas. Local pick-up will be available beginning on November 30 by arrangement.

Parents are encouraged to participate in fundraising activities.

3. SEPTA Announcements [5 minutes]

The SEPTA VP reviewed recent SEPTA activities and reviewed upcoming important dates:

• Hillside Community Conversation Recap - was held in the morning instead of evening, which enabled inclusion of teacher perspectives. Topics discussed included:
  o resource room
  o reading pullout how it’s going
  o outdoor classroom
  o being able to bring in David Luhman.

• Tuesday November 27th 6:30pm SEPTA General Meeting + Dr. Wilson Needs Assessment

• Tuesday January 22 SEPTA Review Education Night

• Saturday February 9th 7pm SEPTA Trivia Night Fundraiser

• SEPTA Carnival - we are rescheduling for the Spring, date coming very soon.

4. School Updates [Ms. Cazes, 15 minutes]

• Hastings Bond and How it Pertains to Hillside –

Conversations are ongoing about the upcoming Bond vote. The Bond would allow Hillside to build out additional classroom space, as well as build a new cafeteria/stage. Space continues to be a significant problem. Hillside is currently at maximum capacity. This year, the FLES program is traveling classroom to classroom. If student population continues to grow without additional space, it will have an impact on instructional day, resulting in one or more of the possible outcomes: 1) larger class sizes 2) classes sharing space 3) having “specials” travel class to class. None of these options are desirable.
The proposed cafeteria would enable increased food service and provision of hot lunch. It would create a large air conditioned space where two grades at one time could be which opens up the scheduling for the whole school. HEF has helped revitalize the existing stage in the all purpose room. If the Bond goes through, the existing Cafe could be repurposed as a Learning Commons with a new library. There are images of what it could be online. This would be a large space built around learning and literacy. It would include an area for classroom instruction, nooks for reading, maker space and could hold multiple classes at one time. The old library could be repurposed into a music suite. This change would also help also put grade-level teams together in one part of the building.

A parent asked whether the Bond included plans to Air Condition the café. This is not part of the existing plan but could be considered.

A parent asked how many classrooms Hillside needs to alleviate space considerations. Ms. Cazes reported that there are currently 6 sections/grade, which is 30 classes. There is 1 Communications classroom this year, 2 are expected next year. At a minimum, 3 additional classrooms are needed.

A parent asked if BOE is looking into the number of kids coming into district. Some concern was expressed about the proposed eventual rezoning of the waterfront area and building of townhouses. It was noted that this development is likely a minimum of 10 years away, but emphasizes the need for the BOE to anticipate future space concerns, making the current Bond proposal more significant.

A parent asked what the timeframe is for the Bond decision. The BOE expects to put it to a vote this year, then it would take approximately 3 yrs for construction. Ms. Cazes reported her presentation to the Board is online. BOE talking about trailers as a temporary alternative to space concerns but Ms. Cazes views this as problematic in a lot of ways.

- BLT – Homework

The Building Leadership Team (BLT) met. This year’s topic is Homework. The group started the conversation, looking at research on HW. Two children are participating in January’s meeting to provide input. The goal is to formulate a school-wide policy about Homework by the end of the year. It will go on the website.

- Outdoor Classroom Committees Starting

Three committees have been formed to advance the Outdoor Classroom project. The committees include teachers, administrators, PTSA parents and SEPTA parents. Discussion includes an evaluation of recess v. instructional time, and Ms. Cazes noted awareness of this ongoing conversation in the community. Ms. Cazes noted the community’s desire for more recess (expressed by some in comments to PTSA
liaisons) and the need to balance that with State mandated minutes of instruction. There are about 15 minutes of time in the day that are currently negotiable. There are plans to survey the community about its perspective re: HW policy and use of outdoor classroom. Another challenge is the contractual minutes for teachers. Increase recess time would mean more time with monitors not teachers, which is another factor to consider.

There are two other committees related to the Outdoor classroom – one focused on instructional process – what does outdoor education look like and how to bring to Hillside? The third is a design committee. HEF and the PTSA are supporting this initiative.

- **Diverse Book Work**

Ms. Cazes reporting that good conversations are happening at Hillside re: Diverse Book Work (see description above). It has included professional development and learning for teachers. One recent update was about the “months” honoring groups of people: Hispanic heritage month, Black history month, etc. Teachers didn’t feel good about talking about a whole group of people just one month of the year. Teachers have opted to instead focus on a group of people to recognize each month (such athletes, actors, artists, scientists, etc.) representing diverse cultural backgrounds each month. This will start in January.

If you come across a good book appropriate for this initiative, notify Ms. Cazes. The Diverse book committee can evaluate.

- **Curriculum Update**

Literacy is receiving a big push this year. Ms. Cazes has observed growth in reflective practices among teachers – teachers talking about teaching and cited the “unbelievable job” teachers are doing incorporating new techniques into classroom learning.

Social/Emotional Learning – Ms. Snyder has introduced Tier 2 groups this year. If your child is struggling, let teacher or Ms. Snyder know. The 4th grade safety patrol has begun, allowing 4th graders to be peer models.

Mr. DeKams presented on PBIS (Positive Behaviors in School). Final edits from designer (Heather Ben-Zvi) for signage about this program throughout the school. The program will roll out with school-wide assembly. Teachers will be modeling expected behaviors.

**5. Q&A [Ms. Cazes and Mr. DeKams, 5 minutes]**
A parent asked about books evaluated by the Diverse Book Committee that might “land upon child in prickly manner.” Ms. Cazes reported that different points of view are considered on committee and the decision was made by committee that some books could make one individual in “othered” category feel “othered in class” – the decision was made for these books to be included in the school library or classroom library, not as a read aloud. The idea is to give children access to books reflective of their experience, but not to create a sense of isolation within the classroom. The parent asked how teachers prepared/equipped for this discussion. Ms. Cazes noted that is the goal of the Professional Development activities noted above – to better equip teachers for discussions about difference. Teacher awareness level improved this past year.

A Hillside VP involved in the Diverse Book initiative noted that balancing the access to material on their own versus being isolated in a classroom is the goal. The committee has tried to make the experience as safe as it can be for children.

A parent asked about the Bond - are there talks about increasing class size? Ms. Cazes reported that teachers can have up to 27 students in their contract, but the district has never done that. Currently, 24 students is the largest class size we have in third grade. Would be board decision to increase class size.

A parent asked if there is a cap on the number of people in town? The group answered that unless there is new property rezoned (such as the waterfront in the future), there is a physical limit on new construction/the number of houses/space in town.

Minutes from meeting will be posted on Hillside Webpage.