



HILLSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to the 2019-2020 school year! Our faculty and staff join me in extending a very special welcome to our new Hillside families. We are excited to embark on this educational journey with you and your family and look forward to wonderful years together!

The following staff changes have occurred for the 2019-2020 school year: **Ms. Annunziato**, Kindergarten and **Ms. Ippolito**, First Grade ICT. In addition, we would like to welcome some fabulous, new team members who we are certain will be wonderful assets to our Hillside community: **Ms. Jaime Bragg**, 1st grade; **Ms. Lisa Levine**, 2nd grade; **Ms. Danielle Brennan**, 3rd grade ICT; **Ms. Amanda Bromberg**, 3rd grade leave replacement; **Ms. Melissa Vigada**, Communications 3-5; **Ms. Amanda Peisel**, 4th grade; **Ms. Linda Tam**, 4th grade; **Ms. Venetta Davies**, 4th grade ICT; **Ms. Gabriella Sokol**, 4th grade ICT leave replacement; and **Ms. Jada Dickens**, Math Intervention Teacher.

This year, school begins on Tuesday, September 3rd. As always, parents may drop children off when our supervision begins at 7:50 AM. **Please do not drop students off before this time, as there is no supervision available.** All students, K-4, are expected to arrive no later than our start time of 8:30 AM. For the first few days of school, we will meet our kindergarten students in the school library to ease them into our routines. Please feel free to walk your kindergarten student to the library; however, we encourage you to not linger, as prolonged goodbyes can be difficult for our youngsters. Know that we have skilled staff on hand to support our children in this special transition.

We have a wonderful year of learning ahead of us! Our five-year Balanced Literacy initiative will be entering its third year of implementation. We have successfully rolled out our Reading Units of Study, complete with Reader's Workshop, Interactive Read Aloud, Guided Reading, Shared Reading, Reading Conferences and Strategy Groups. All of our teachers have been trained around best practices in balanced literacy with a focus on reading. This year, our teachers will be working to roll out our Writer's Workshop. The philosophy of Writer's Workshop aligns with our vision for all students' learning to be individualized, meeting them in their zone of proximal development. All grades, K-4, will be implementing new Writing Units of Study to support the growth of our blossoming writers. We encourage your partnership at home by orally recounting stories of memorable events, milestones or experiences that your child has had, which your child can then tell in written form. We look forward to sparking the joy of writing in our entire community!

This past school year, we purchased hundreds of diverse texts for our classroom and school libraries in order to provide windows (where students learn about others in our community and the world) and mirrors (where students see themselves) in texts. We focused on the lenses of race and culture, gender and learning difference, infusing a wide array of books into our literacy curriculum. This school year, we will be advancing our Diverse Book work to continue our vision of ensuring that Hillside is an equitable environment for all. Building upon our collection of diverse texts at Hillside, teachers will be supporting student conversations during multicultural interactive read alouds on racial and social justice. We are committed to developing student understanding of the diverse world in which we live.

In our prioritization of the whole child, we have worked diligently over the past two years to improve social-emotional learning at Hillside. After rolling out our Second Step curriculum for all students, we added tiered individual and group counseling support for youngsters. Our Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) team worked collaboratively toward communicating clear expectations for many of our shared spaces at Hillside, teaching into the expectations and providing signage as reminders for all (Thank you to HEF for our AMAZING poster maker!). This year, we will be implementing a school-wide recognition program to celebrate positive behaviors at Hillside furthering our promotion of our core values of Respect, Courage and Curiosity.

Thanks to Sadie Ratcliffe, incoming third grader here at Hillside, we will be welcoming students back to school with a new theme:

Just like paints on a palette, we all make the picture complete!

This theme will be woven throughout the school experience- our birthday photo booth, special events, assemblies and even Field Day! We anticipate a colorful year!

In an effort to ensure that all parents receive our [Summer Mailing](#) regardless of location, we have again put it online on our webpage. Please click on the hyperlinks in this letter for easy access. We have included a [Summer Mailing Document List 2019](#) outlining the documents that need to be completed and returned on the first day of school to your child's classroom teacher.

We have worked together with our PTSA to ensure safer arrival and dismissal procedures at Hillside and will continue to review and improve our systems. Please refer to our [Transportation Procedures at Hillside 2019](#) to familiarize yourself with our four modes of arrival/dismissal: Bus, Independent Walker, Student Pick Up or Circle Pick Up.

The home-school partnership is a critical component in ensuring your child's success. We will continue to communicate with you often through our Constant Contact blast which you are automatically enrolled to receive upon registration. Additionally, please look out for our monthly newsletter, *News from the Hill*, beginning in October. This newsletter shares all of the wonderful learning happening at Hillside!

I also encourage you to get involved in our parent groups including PTSA and SEPTA. On September 3rd, our PTSA will sponsor a [Back to School Meet and Greet](#) for parents in the Hillside All Purpose Room from 8:30-9:30 AM. At this time, you will have the opportunity to meet other Hillside parents and learn more about all that our parent community does to support Hillside. We are very grateful for this partnership!

Additionally, please save the date for our Back to School Night on September 5th for Grades K-4. On this evening, our teachers will provide you with detailed information about your child's grade level curriculum, classroom routines and expectations. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to get to know your child's teacher(s) and the exciting learning experiences that lie ahead. More details to follow!

I know that you are anxious to receive your child's placement for the new school year. Placement will be shared on the Parent Portal the last week of August. A blast will go out informing you of the date and time of release. If you have not yet registered on the [Parent Portal](#), please do so. In the meantime, please access the [Grade Level Supply Lists](#) on our webpage under *Announcements*. Additionally, your child will receive a letter from his/her teacher before school begins welcoming him/her to the new classroom. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

In preparing for the start of school, I encourage you to read through our [Parent/Student Handbook](#). This tool will share Hillside's procedures and policies that have been designed to ensure a successful and safe learning opportunity. This year, please note the addition of our [Homework Guidelines](#). These guidelines were created by our Building Leadership Team, comprised of teachers, parents, students and administrators, based on current research, survey results and community feedback.

I am confident that our 2019-2020 school year will be a very special one. Please feel free to stop in, call, or email me to discuss any concerns, suggestions, or ideas to make the Hillside experience the best it can be!

I look forward to seeing you in September!

Warm regards,

Amy Cazes
Principal