

PTSA Parent Meeting

AGENDA

Monday, March 11, 2019

Hillside Library

6:30 PM

1. H.E.A.R.T.

- a. Despite our best efforts we did not get the volunteers needed to make this program a success. If a parent would like to offer time to this in the future, please email Kevin Doyle at doylecb@gmail.com. The PTSA hopes to reinstate this program next year.

2. Fundraising

- a. The PTSA continues ongoing Fundraising efforts:
 - i. **Box Tops** (please collect and send to the Hillside Office)
 - ii. **Oliver's Labels** (visit www.oliverslabels.com/HOHPTSA to purchase labels for school or camp and 20% goes to your PTSA)
 - iii. **Amazon Smile** (designate PTA New York Congress 18-205 Hastings-On-Hudson PTSA); **DeCicco's**; and **Foodtown**
 1. PTSA VPs noted that some people are reporting that Foodtown staff do not seem to know how to set up this process. The PTSA VPs will get more information on the process and report back at the next parent meeting.

3. SEPTA Announcements

- a. **SEPTA Hillside Community Conversation** (formerly SEPTA Coffee) is Thursday March 21 at 6:30 at Hillside.
- b. The new date for the **HHS Community Conversation** is Tuesday March 26 at 6:30 in the high school library.
- c. The **SEPTA Carnival** is June 2 at Hillside.
- d. A reminder for **Annual Review** time, parents can reach out to SEPTA reps or go to our website for the parent resource guide. Feel free to email Barbara Rizzo at brizzo77@me.com.
- e. Anyone interested in **volunteering** to be a liaison or on the SEPTA board for 2019/2020 school year please reach out and email us at Hastings.septa@gmail.com

4. School Updates

- a. **Emergency Dismissal and Procedure Update** – After the toilet backup in January, the Emergency Response Team got a lot of great feedback. The Team has been meeting weekly since then. Some key updates to the procedure include:
 - i. If the All-Purpose Room has inflatables, alternative pickup location must be planned.

- ii. Any adult picking up a child must be on that child's emergency contact list. Reminders were sent to all parents requesting updates to emergency contacts to include neighbors, babysitters, etc. so that there are no issues in an emergency.
- iii. The internal staff protocols being improved. Staff members have updated roles. Communication about emergency dismissals have been drafted and can be updated quickly with specifics to go to all parents in the event of an emergency.
- iv. There will be no busing in the event of an emergency dismissal in the future, as Hillside staff cannot always account for the location or ETA of buses and during the toilet emergency this aspect of the dismissal became very confusing and challenging for staff and parents alike. It is safer and less confusing for all to have children picked up directly at Hillside in the event of an emergency.
- v. In the event of an emergency dismissal requiring evacuation, Hillside students will walk with staff to the High School, and the emergency pickup protocol will take place in the HS gym.
- vi. A parent asked question about whether emergency updates can be texted in addition to emails/calls. Ms. Cazes has confirmed with Jeanine Genauer in the District office that all phone numbers in the Blackboard Connect database are now set to receive text messages. As a result, everyone should receive text messages in an emergency situation going forward.

b. Building Leadership Team Update

- i. The Building Leadership Team (BLT) conducted a survey of teachers, students and parents about Homework. Data expert and parent Bessie Wilkerson analyzed the data and presented the findings at the parent meeting. The findings were sent out via e-blast to all parents, and are also posted on the [Website](#). All parents are encouraged to review the presentation.
- ii. The response rates were high:
 - 1. 94% of students at Hillside completed it – 4th graders took a leadership role and went to K, 1 2 classrooms and partnered with the younger children to help them fill them out.
 - 2. About 50% of parents completed it.
 - 3. 98% of Hillside classroom teachers responded.
- iii. There is a lot of detailed information in the presentation including Parent, Student and Teacher feelings and beliefs about HW, time spent on HW, stress level related to HW, and topics covered by HW. The overall value of HW was also considered by each group:

1. The majority of respondents support homework with
 - a. 76% of parents finding some or many benefits,
 - b. 60% of teachers finding some or many benefits,
 - c. and 62% of students rating it as positive or neutral.
 - d. There was general consensus that HW reinforces skills at school and that it can be important vehicle for communication between parents and teachers.
2. **Based on the entirety of the feedback contained in the presentation, the BLT will make a recommendation for a school-wide HW policy to be implemented next year.** The BLT feels it is important to include a discussion of values in this policy, acknowledging that families value academics, social time, emotional wellness, and other factors related to HW in different ways.
3. Parents asked several questions about the presentation:
 - a. A parent asked about the philosophy as educators when there are battles about HW. Ms. Cazes encouraged parents to note the difference when the child is struggling with the content and unable to complete it (in which case it should not be forced and a discussion should be had with the teacher) versus a child is who able to complete the work but struggling behaviorally (a different conversation, possibly with child and/or teacher).
 - b. A parent asked if there was consistency across each grade in HW content. Ms. Cazes reported that in general the content is similar, though it may not be exactly the same assignment on the same day. The BLT guidelines will help support consistency within grades.
 - c. A parent asked why teachers seemed the least positive about HW in the findings. Ms. Wilkerson reported that there are detailed comments in the responses that help support these findings, but for confidentiality purposes those comments are not being reported widely. However, the BLT is considering all comments and feedback as part of the guidelines for next year.
 - d. A parent asked why there is no stress on vocabulary development until the 4th grade. Ms. Cazes reported that in K, 1 and 2 it is really about developing automaticity with sight words.

However, the committee will consider this feedback in its discussion.

- e. There was discussion about the fact that independent reading is always encouraged and is separate from any guidelines about time spent on HW.
- f. There was discussion about the fact that HW is not typically given in Kindergarten, except for occasional family projects and optional sight word practice.
- g. A parent reported that her 4th grader only sees math and ELA HW come home, no science, social studies or writing assignments. Ms. Cazes reported that teachers across the grades should be giving the same types of assignments and that a specific discussion with the child's teacher might be helpful. Ms. Cazes also noted that writing has been a weaker spot in the curriculum and enhancements to the writing curriculum are planned for next year.

5. Space Constraints at Hillside and what is being done

- a. Ms. Cazes reported that the Bond passed and noted it as a major accomplishment for the community.
- b. For next year, though nothing is finalized as enrollment is not yet set, the current plans are to keep two music classes per letter cycle. FLES is also remaining part of the cycle, but it may be K-4 or just the intermediate grades. Budgetary conversations are ongoing at the BOE level.
- c. Many learning spaces are smaller than new codes require for new construction. The building is safe in terms of building and fire codes, but for educational space, some of the spaces are limited. The new construction enabled by the Bond will improve space constraints. In the meantime, the school is considering several proposals. One is that the Learning Lab for Special Ed classes will share space, but this presents a schedule challenge that needs to be worked out. The goal is to make sure everyone has ideal learning space.
- d. The stage in the APR has been turned into classroom. This will be the PT/OT suite. It will enable freeing up another space which can be used for instruction.
- e. A parent asked about when PE is held in the classroom, and whether more movement-oriented things can be incorporated. Ms. Cazes clarified that this only occurs when there is a rare, one-off special event occupying one or both gyms, and it is too cold/wet to go outside, such as during the recent Used Book Fair. If the gyms are

unavailable due to a special event, the preferred alternative is always to go outside.

6. Outdoor Classroom Committee Updates

- a. Ms. Cazes reported that the Recess and Instructional committee has finished its work and is recommending an increase of lunch/recess time only if it does not negatively impact the students' educational experience. As a result, it is the committees' hope, that the Outdoor Classrooms will provide students with an alternative to increased recess time and typical classroom instruction.
- b. The Design Committee is now looking at how to use the space. Multiple outdoor learning spaces in other districts were researched. The Instructional Process Committee looked at how to use the space and the committee determined there will be two outdoor spaces – one near the current bird garden, which will function like a classroom space, and then another Sugar Pond. That space will have Picnic tables, game tops and be used for collaboration time. It will also likely have a Lending library, a bridge, sensory path, touchstones. The Design committee met once and is started to determine what the spaces will look like.
- c. The PTSA granted funds to initiate this project. At least one of the spaces should be ready for use by next year.
- d. A parent asked how scheduling for use of the outdoor classroom will be done. Ms. Cazes explained that it will be similar to the maker space, where it's a blend of scheduled time and additional opportunities to sign up.

7. Diverse Book Initiative

- a. Ms. Cazes reports the Diverse Book Initiative continues to go well. There are several parent members on committee, including some new members.
- b. A consultant named Diane Goodman will be meeting with teachers for Professional Development on 3/22 regarding implicit bias; she has already done this training at FMS. After the staff session, the inclusion working group and Hillside leadership will work together to bring a similar presentation for parents as well.

8. Bond Results

- a. The Bond passed. Ms. Cazes reported that now work begins on precisely how space will be allocated and that this is an opportunity for the community to work together to create the best learning environment possible for our children.

9. Recess and Positive Behavior In School (PBIS) Initiative

- a. Mr. DeKams gave an update on recess during the winter months. Recess (including morning early bus recess and afternoon late bus recess) is held outside unless the real feel temperature is below 27 degrees (district guideline). Mr. DeKams checks the temperature throughout the day and makes real-time decisions prior to each recess

period. If the real-feel temperature is below 27 degrees, recess is held indoors.

- b.** Other conditions such as ice on blacktop might also be cause for an indoor recess.
- c.** Recess is blacktop only if fields are very muddy. Goal is to get kids out every day.
- d.** During Pizza Friday last week Mr. DeKams and Ms. Snyder met with students to review hallway and stairwell expectations: facing forward, silent passage, respecting personal space of others. Ms. Snyder is helping with the rollout of PBIS, which promotes a common language for teachers and staff members to encourage positive behavior in the students.

10. Q&A

- a.** State tests for Grades 3 and 4 are upcoming - April ELA, May Math. Details to be sent out soon.
- b.** Construction related to the Bond will begin Spring 2020.

Minutes from meeting will be posted on [Hillside Webpage](#)