

PTSA Hillside Huddle Minutes - 5/26/20

Communication:

Is there a way to improve the communication formats?

- It is challenging to communicate to families universally in a way that works for everyone; moving forward all communications will have information conveyed in 3 ways
 - As an attachment
 - All in written format
 - In the text body of the e-mail

Online Learning Platform:

I heard the superintendent say that we've invested too much in google classroom and we will use it again next year. How do we plan to address screen fatigues for our Hillside students and re-engage them more positively in the coming school year even if we are looking at some alternative school schedule due to covid?

- Google Classroom is our learning platform and will be moving forward
- Teachers are always looking for new ways to provide instruction
- We can now use Zoom again which provides more opportunities for small group and break-out work
- A survey was sent out to the district for suggestions of new ways to improve the distance learning for all

Special Areas:

Has there been any effort to work with the NYS DOE to find alternative ways for "specials" content to be provided by parents and count towards requirements? For example, we do art and P.E. type exercises every day at home, and it would be great to find a way for those activities to count.

- The school has worked with special area teams to develop curriculum that meets state requirements and is flexible for families
- They have created brand new initiatives:
 - Strong instruction that is enjoyable and time manageable
 - More multi-disciplinary assignments (EX: STEAM/Science joint assignment)
 - Working to find thru lines for families' independent studies
 - Creating meaningful assignments

Will you consider making specials not mandatory (ie, not requiring that the children hand in work, as it is now) as this year progresses toward its end and if there is distance learning in the fall?

- Special areas are required as part of state mandate (100.3)
- The school is working on creating more multi-disciplinary assignments to lessen the workload

Is it possible to have live sessions for music?

- They are starting live music sessions; trying it with the younger grades, working up to the older grades
- The challenge is participation in live specials - less than 5% participation in live sessions – the school is aware that it might be a timing issue
- Working to try and find a time that works best for everyone's schedule

Summer Specials: Will the materials on google classroom be left up over the summer? With busy schedules at work, we have been having trouble getting our kids to do all the "specials" assignments, but the summer seems like a great time to engage in the ones we missed, even though it will not be for any credit.

- Yes - Google classroom content and specials will be available through the summer
- There will not be any feedback or the ability to submit work over the summer because there is no staff to respond
- Melissa (Assistant Superintendent) is also working to create alternative digital opportunities throughout the summer
- DreamBox is one example – it is a mathematics resource for intervention and enrichment

Curriculum Questions

Can subject assignments be combined to make the workday more time-efficient? Or could daily lessons be categorized as MUST vs. electives?

- Kindergarten team lists out priorities
- 1st grade team prioritizes items that need to be submitted with deadlines
- 3rd grade team color codes the ELA, writing and math with stop light colors to tackle first; STEAM and science alternate with social studies
- The school is not expecting perfection; the end of year report card will exclude "exceeding expectations"
- only "meets expectations" in order to relieve pressure on families
- Compassionate grading - the main goal is that learning is continuous
- There are no real consequences of not completing an assignment - Report cards are a communication tool so that everyone is on the same page to build in success as much as possible

How can we create a more integrated curriculum? There is such potential for rich educational experiences in the classroom and online.

- Kindergarten and 1st grade – working on having all subjects go hand in hand
- Reading and writing is working with nonfiction and research so the science experiments are tied to nonfiction as they work with animal adaptations

Looking ahead to next year: are there any curriculum changes or developments expected at Hillside next year? Will Writer's Workshop be further developed? Will the math curriculum be changed and/or improved? Will the specials be the same as this year?

- Writer's Workshop will continue to be a focus; it will be worked on in professional development; looking at learning progressions; how to move a child to the next level of learning
- The district is looking at the math curriculum; working with Greg Stephens (math department chair) and they are putting together a math committee to address the math curriculum
- FLES was part of budget cuts – all other specials will be part of the curriculum next year

Class Size Questions

Understanding that many changes happen with enrollment over the summer, do you anticipate class sizes being larger or smaller next year based on what you know now?

- Class sizes for 2020/2021 are similar to previous years
- Incoming K is currently less than 20/class; 1st-4th is 20-24

2020-2021 School Year Questions

Please do everything possible to let the kids play together. I saw an article about “pods.” They had pods of 3-4 kids who move through the day together with no social distancing. What if a class was a pod? This way kids get as close to normal as they can and if one gets sick it only affects the class.

- The district is creating a re-entry committee comprised of all of the stakeholders including the BOE, district administrators, HTA, CSEA, PTSA, SEPTA, Village of Hastings, etc. to work on a plan
- No answers right now, as committee meets and we receive more guidance from the Governor, the district will put together a plan to share – The committee will prioritize the kids' interactions with the goal to be physically in school in September if allowed

What kinds of efforts will be made in the fall for incoming Kindergarteners and students in other grades to form a relationship with their new teachers if school continues online in September?

- Many pieces that we don't know - During normal years Mrs. Snyder has new student "camp" like activities for all new students 1st-4th.
- Kindergarten does a lot of acclimation and social activities which are all TBD – We hope for it to be in-person but we are working on a virtual option if necessary
- A Kindergarten orientation video was sent to new students made by the teachers to introduce themselves; there will be a Kindergarten orientation for parents - parents have been given the opportunity to ask questions

Workload Questions

Kids with IEP's have a much larger workload than kids who don't. I think for kids with IEP's there should be strong consideration about the workload. All of the related service providers have done an outstanding job of providing services through google meetup. However, having more assignments doesn't help my child learn more, it creates more anxiety and stress. What our kids want, is to connect with their teachers. Can we please just consider backing off on all these assignments?

- Assignments vs. mental health is a very important balance as is the importance of connection with teachers and classmates in live sessions
- Students with IEPs - related services are happening in addition to the normal day so the district is working to consolidate the class work into the special services when possible so kids aren't too overwhelmed with school work and the amount of time it takes to complete all of their assignments
- GOAL is that it won't be more and will be provided within the classroom experience
- Speech pathologist - trying to do more live sessions to cut down on additional google assignments
- 1st/2nd grade teachers are sending a modified schedule for a reduction in the amount of work that needs to be completed/turned in for students with IEPs
- Teachers are collaborating with special services on topics/assignments to help work overlap

School Supplies Questions

How will COVID-19 impact the ordering of school supplies through PTSA?

- School Supplies for the 2020-21 school year are available online through the PTSA at <https://my.cheddarup.com/c/hillside-school-supplies-2020-21>
- So many things are uncertain, but school supplies will definitely be needed, along with funds from the PTSA that provide enrichment programs, scholarships, and much more
- Your purchase will save you money, benefit a local business, and reduce waste
- If anyone from Hillside is interested in working on the School Supplies Committee next year with us, please email esollars@ptsahastings.org. If you know of a family with an incoming Kindergartner(s) for this fall, please spread the word.

Positive Feedback

- Mrs. O'Sullivan's package made 1st grade child's day; the connection to the school and teacher was wonderful!
- First grade team has been amazing!
- 4th grade - Teacher created small book club/reading groups that meet weekly - made it very engaging - better than a large classroom being overwhelming