HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON UFSD

APRIL 2021 NEWSLETTER

OFFICE OF
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION
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Dear Hastings Community,

One of the hallmarks of a high performing system is the strong presence of an inquiry orientation amongst students, faculty, and families. An inquiry orientation is characterized by a spirit of curiosity, a sense of openness, and a hunger to learn more. Students are most effective when they are inquisitive about their learning, when they focus on the learning process rather than performance, and when they can approach mistakes as opportunities to learn. Members of the faculty thrive when they have deliberate occasions to question their practice, wonder about student work, consider the strengths of that work, and plan student-centered experiences to nurture high expectations for all learners. Family partnerships are strongest when there is a commitment to understanding decisions and discourse where perspective-taking actively occurs.

Over the course of this year, I have seen evidence of an inquiry orientation amongst each of these different stakeholder groups. I have seen kindergarteners wonder how they might mix the paint colors on their palette to approximate a particular shade of purple created by a peer. I have seen 5th grade students questioning their own problem-solving process in mathematics when their calculation of the circumference of a physical object they measured did not make sense. I have encountered high school learners deeply engaged in analysis of their fingerprint structure. I have been delighted to see teachers unpack problems of practice with each other within the context of mathematics committee work. I have appreciated families presenting "what-ifs" related to reopening.

Inquiry is a critical element for our success as a district. As we move forward together, we are well-poised to position good questions and a spirit of curiosity at the forefront of our journey as a learning institution as we continue to learn together about students, for students, and from students.

Following is the yellow jacket "buzz" from the office of Curriculum and Instruction.

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- **IXL Pilot**
  The administrators, ELA and mathematics department chairpersons, teachers, and I worked together to initiate a pilot program to explore IXL as a potential district-wide diagnostic screening tool. Having an articulated resource across the K-12 system would support tracking students across grades and buildings, while simultaneously strengthening our ability to support students with a resource that provides formative data and intervention/ extension learning activities. The pilot has begun and we are eager to reconvene in May for feedback from faculty members across the K-12 system. This feedback will guide our next steps.

- **Writing**
  Writing continues to be a key area for professional learning at Hillside. Focus areas for the work have included creating teaching tools to support explicit writing instruction in any setting, supporting writers to attend to letter-sound relationships, spelling patterns, and high frequency words as they add text to the page, and developing learning progressions.

- **K-12 Mathematics Committee**
  The recent work of the K-12 Mathematics Committee was centered on the creation of indicators that capture the group's shared vision around the nature of mathematics learning and instructional approaches to promote mathematics learning. The middle school resource selection work continues to be in motion and is being anchored by these indicators.

- **Science**
  Helen Pashley, science consultant, has been supporting us with alignment to the New York State P-12 Science Learning Standards. Thank you to Melissa Shandroff, Science Department Chairperson, and Robin Farrell, Hillside STEAM teacher, who have been actively supporting the design of differentiated outcomes for the work of each grade level. Thank you, as well, to the building administrators for helping with the logistical coordination.

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- **Culturally Responsive Pedagogies**
  The focus for the most recent Chair Council meeting centered on a continuation of the work around culturally responsive pedagogies. In breakout groups, Council members unpacked a Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard, which contains indicators that can be used when exploring the extent to which resources are culturally responsive in relation to social justice orientation and representation. This resource will become a springboard as we continue our work with Dr. Detra Price-Dennis.

WE CONTINUE TO REMAIN INTERESTED IN YOUR FEEDBACK IN SUPPORT OF OUR COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT. PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO REACH OUT TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AS WE NAVIGATE THE PANDEMIC TOGETHER.

BEST REGARDS,

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