



HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON UFSD

MARCH 2021 NEWSLETTER

OFFICE OF
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION
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Dear Hastings Community,

Spring has officially arrived! With this change of season also comes a sense of the evolving landscape of our district. My hope is that the warmth of spring offers a sense of renewal and that the prospect of returning to school as a larger community following our upcoming break brings optimism and joy.

Our faculty members have continued to work thoughtfully and diligently on behalf of learners, and building-level teams have rolled up their sleeves very high to prepare for our upcoming "all in" re-entry. Over the course of approximately three weeks, re-entry was redesigned to ensure a safe, optimal learning environment for students and faculty. Thank you to our amazing teams for their success with difficult conversations, their focused problem-solving, and their creativity as they navigated the new constraints associated with creating "all in" models at each building.

We are very proud of the professional work that our faculty has engaged in this month. Following is the yellow jacket "buzz" from the office of Curriculum and Instruction.

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Hillside Woods

The Hastings Conservation Commission will be receiving 100 seedlings from the Department of Environmental Conservation in either April or May. They have reached out to the district to see if there might be an opportunity to partner for planting and learning. Melissa Shandroff, Science Department Chairperson, Jennifer Spirelli, FMS Principal, Amy Cazes, HES Principal, Robin Farrell, Hillside STEAM teacher, Fred Sandhop, Science Teacher, and I have been working together to determine how each building might be involved in planting as well as authentic experiences that dovetail with the curriculum, leveraging the Hillside Woods for instruction. Pandemic protocols, including social distancing, will be maintained outdoors.

Science Alignment Work

Helen Pashley, science consultant, has begun to work with us again to support 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 supporting the determination of differentiated outcomes for the work of each grade level and demonstrating strong instructional leadership. Thank you, as well, to the building administrators for helping with the logistical coordination for professional learning. To provide a peek into the work that has been occurring, our alignment session for 6th grade began with a priming experience. This experience engaged us in a series of science lesson analyses. Focus areas for analysis included examining motivation for the learning outcomes in the lesson, equitable student engagement with authentic phenomena, development of important ideas connected to the standards, and opportunities for students to share what they know.

Curriculum Hour

Our recent faculty Curriculum Hour was hosted in partnership with Nearpod, one of our web-based instructional resources. This curriculum hour occurred across two separate sessions during the middle of the day. The focus areas for learning included formative assessment tools embedded in the platform, instructional tools that support accessibility and differentiation, and using Nearpod features to support high academic standards for all students.

Mathematics

Greg Stephens, the middle school mathematics department, and I met to talk about the work of the K-12 Mathematics Committee. This began a process of “cross-pollination” of the learning that has been taking place through the work of the committee by sharing the key areas of focus and outlining learning experiences. Together, we are taking steps towards piloting a resource for the upcoming school year. Mathematics committee members and middle school teachers will be included as key stakeholders in the process. Early discussions around course progressions have begun, however no changes will be made to the current trajectory for the 21-22 school year. We will continue to keep the community apprised as this work continues.

Grades 3-8 Testing

The New York State Education Department provided notification of unanticipated flexibility with Grades 3-8 testing if the United States Department of Education waiver of State testing is not granted. Applicable to both ELA and mathematics testing, only student scores on the Session 1, Book 1, test questions will contribute to a student’s total score for the test. No field test questions will be embedded, which has been typical past practice. Session 2, Book 2, testing will be optional for schools. We will not be administering Book 2 in Hastings. The State has indicated that all testing must be done in person. The Performance test has been cancelled from the science exam. Only the science written test will be given.

Regents Examinations

At this time, the Regents are scheduled to be administered. They will only be administered as paper and pencil exams, so students must test in-person. “All remote” students may come to the building for testing. Any student who takes the test will have the score included on their transcript.

NYSESLAT

Between April 19 – June 9, 2021 all English Language Learners will be taking the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). This test measures students’ growth in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Scores from the NYSESLAT are used to determine each student’s overall English language level and the services and accommodations each student is eligible to receive in the 2021-2022 school year. ENL teachers will be in contact to provide specific dates and times for testing.

Professional Learning Committee

The Professional Learning Committee reconvened mid-March to review the revised 2020-2021 Professional Development Plan, which reflects changes necessitated by the pandemic. The Professional Learning Committee will continue to meet monthly for the remainder of the school year. The focus of the group will be to create the 2021-2022 Professional Development Plan as well as plan for next year's Superintendent's Conference Days.

Theatre

Congratulations to our talented faculty and 5th grade students for the recent performance and airing of School House Rock Live! Jr. The performance can be accessed from the home page of the district website by scrolling down to "District Announcements."

**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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