

**Hastings-on-Hudson
Regular Board of Education Meeting
Tuesday, January 23, 2024**

Members present

Silvia Robles
Alexander Dal Piaz
Damaris-Lois Lang
Doreen Bucher
Maureen Lennon-Santana
Theresa McCaffrey
Jodie Meyer (arrived at 6:27 pm)

[Click here for YouTube link to Meeting Video](#)

1. OPENING OF MEETING

A. Call to Order

- Meeting called to order at 6:07 pm by Alex Dal Piaz, Board President

2. STUDENT REPORT

A. Student Report

Student Liaisons were not in attendance at this meeting. They submitted the following written report:

Elianna Carvalho:

One Acts:

The High School One Acts were on January 11th and 12th and they were absolutely a success! The performances were SO funny and all ticket funds were donated to the Hillside Restoration Project and the Hastings Food Pantry. We are sad to say goodbye to seniors Erik Ghalib, Lionel Muench, and Maya Tadmor who have been running the One Acts for the past couple of years. We thank them for everything they have done! Brava!

Costello Day:

January 20th was Winter Homecoming in which there were four basketball games in honor of beloved coach, John Costello. It was such a great day full of school spirit!

Senior Internships:

During lunch on Friday, January 19th the seniors had their first meeting to talk about senior internships! We learned how the process will work, important dates, and everything we need to know to get started.

Sports:

An exciting sports update...

Keith Capuano was named All New York State Football Class B Defense Fifth Team! Congrats, Keith!

Kai Dirksen:

Midterms week is this week! All members of the high school have been busily preparing for their tests this week. Good luck to everyone!

The Regeneron Science Talent Search winners were just announced earlier this week, two of whom are seniors from our Science Research program: Justin Baldassare with his project on Ovarian Cancer and Jacob Goldman-Wetzler with his project on flashcard optimization.

There was a second Club Fair this week, and all clubs set up tables to promote their activities. Many clubs got new members just in time for pictures to be taken later that week!

The 3rd and 4th grade concert was recently, and it was a huge success! The winter concert is a Hastings tradition for all age groups in music, and this year (like usual) it was a hit.

3. PRESENTATIONS

A. FMS Action Plan Update

Scott Wynne, Kamillah Dawkins and Melissa Szymanski presented the school's two-year plan, emphasizing a focus on immediate fundamental issues to enhance the student experience at FMS. The plan is rooted in the ideals of the "Portrait of a Hastings Learner," Hastings commitment attributes, district goals, and the New York State culturally responsive sustaining education framework. The approach involves extensive research from the Association of Middle Level Educators. The plan aims to strengthen FMS academically and foster a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment for students.

[Click here to view the slide presentation](#)

B. 2024-25 School Year Calendar Recommendation

Dr. McKersie presented the recommended school calendar, which involved extensive outreach and feedback. The calendar includes two superintendent conference days in August, starting school after Labor Day, recognizing cultural and religious holidays, and incorporating feedback from the recent Calendar Survey. The calendar reflects efforts to balance recognition and school attendance. The board expressed support for the calendar and discussed survey findings, suggestions were made for improvement for future surveys.

[Click here to view the Introduction of Recommended 2024-24 School Calendar Memo](#) (links to recommended calendar and Calendar Survey Results presentation are included in memo)

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Public Comment

1. Alex Sounias 14 Euclid - Commented on the calendar discussion regarding cultural and religious observances and the policy regarding give-back days for unused emergency closure days.
2. Dorothy Neagle - 19 Terrace - Commented in support of making the DEI Coordinator an Administrative role.
3. Amy Nichols - 35 Mt. Hope - Commented in support of making the DEI Coordinator an Administrative role.
4. Laura Heisler Mitton - 45 Chestnut Drive - Commented in support of making the DEI Coordinator an Administrative role.

5. REPORT FROM SUPERINTENDENT

A. Update & District Highlights

Priority District Updates

HHS Principal Search Process

I continue to work with the [Advisory Committee](#) on reviewing the top semi-finalists to be the new HHS Principal. Two candidates have been invited back to meet a second time with the Advisory Committee—the first was on Wednesday, January 17; the second will be on Wednesday, January 24. The second visits have been designed to provide the Advisory Committee the opportunity for informal discussions with each candidate about their vision, priorities, experiences and potential to lead HHS. While I will make the final decision on the recommendation of a finalist, I want to give the Advisory Committee ample opportunities to provide me feedback on the top candidates. I intend to bring the recommended finalist to the BOE no later than February 13, 2024.

The six roundtables I conducted in November-December 2023 with high school students, faculty and parents continue to serve as a touchstone in my consideration of the top candidates. I shared the [Roundtable Themes](#) with the BOE and community on January 3, 2024. My aim is to appoint a principal who can secure the successes of Mr. Lou Adipietro and, as he would wish, advance HHS to even higher levels of work, especially in light of what high schools need to be doing and providing for all students as we move deeper into this century. The ideal candidate: a forward-thinking instructional leader, with intellectual and interpersonal acumen, who is dedicated to the growth and well-being of all students, and fosters collaboration and partnership among faculty, administrators and families.

Announcing the New District Website

We are pleased to announce that we have launched a new website. This redesign was a collaborative effort among several staff members and district partners over the course of the last year. We have listened to families, students and staff about necessary improvements to the website. Read more in [yesterday's announcement](#).

Hastings-on-Hudson SEPTA - Grants Awarded to Hillside, Farragut & HHS

The money raised from this year's Family Carnival will be going directly into classrooms. Grant applications were submitted by district educators and awarded to all three schools. [Click here](#) to read yesterday's letter from SEPTA, which includes a list of the grants awarded.

School Updates

Hillside

National Board Recognition - Emily Isidori

Emily Isidori, a first-grade teacher at Hillside Elementary School, recently received National Board Certification, the most respected professional certification in education. The National Board Certification was designed to develop, retain and recognize accomplished teachers and to generate ongoing improvement in schools nationwide. Stay tuned for Ms. Isidori's "Staff Spotlight" in an upcoming *Hastings Happenings*.

First Grade Peace March

First graders concluded a unit on Civics with a Peace March on January 12. A tradition instituted many years ago by first grade team leader Maria Gunther and retired first grade teacher Leigh Galanis, the event honored the life of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by spreading messages of peace and unity throughout the school. As featured in my [1.12 Community Update](#), Maria Gunther shared the following description of the event:

As a culmination of our civic work, the First Grade classes honored the life of Dr. Martin King, Jr. with our very own Peace March. As first graders marched through the hallways, they carried signs with their own messages for peace. Some ideas included were: No Bullying, Be A Part of a Community, Use Kind Words, Include Everyone, Respect Everyone, and so many more. We were joined by retired teacher Leigh Galanis, who played her guitar as we sang, "We Shall Overcome," "This Little Light of Mine," and "Light a Candle for Peace." We were thrilled to be welcomed by the entire Hillside Community with such enthusiasm. We hope this lesson resonates with all.

Winter Chorus Concert (Grades 3-4)

Led by Hillside music teacher and Hastings alumnus Doug Friedman, students in the third and fourth grade chorus performed a concert for their families in the Multipurpose Room last week. The students were accompanied by Anna Marie Epstein on the kongos and Jon Riss on the piano. Two students introduced each of the songs. [Click here](#) for a video clip, with more coverage to follow in the upcoming *Hastings Happenings*.

Farragut Middle School

Student Activities Club Organizes Clothing Donation

Members of the Student Activities Club (grades 7-8) spent the week before the Holiday Break collecting and packaging clothing items for donation. The items were donated to Ferncliff Manor's School for Adaptive & Integrative Learning (SAIL), a nearby residential school for students with special needs.

Middle Schoolers Host Holiday Card Fundraiser

Students from Larry Cerretani's Daily Living Skills class at FMS showcased their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit by hosting a successful holiday card fundraiser for the school's staff. The initiative aimed to develop valuable skills applicable to pre-vocational tasks, while simultaneously supporting the pet therapy organization, Hudson Valley Paws for a Cause.

Hastings High School

Two Students Named Scholars in Regeneron Science Talent Search

It was recently announced that two Hastings High School seniors—Justin Baldassare and Jacob Goldman-Wetzler—were named Scholars in this year's Regeneron Science Talent Search. This is one of the nation's most prestigious science research awards for high school students. Communications Associate Jackie Saviano spoke with Justin and Jacob to learn more about their research projects, inspiration, and future plans. The [1.18 Hastings Happenings](#) included an interview with Justin. Stay tuned for this week's issue, which will include Jacob's interview.

Westchester/Rockland Junior Science & Humanities Symposium (WR-JSHS)

Sixteen Hastings Science Research seniors won awards at the 2024 Westchester-Rockland Junior Science and Humanities Symposium (WR-JSHS) at Yorktown High School this past Saturday. Our seniors competed with 376 students from 39 schools.

Five Hastings seniors are moving on to the Upstate Junior Science and Humanities Symposium, which will be held at SUNY Albany from February 28-February 29, 2024.

- **Jacob Goldman-Wetzler** placed 1st in the category of Behavior with his project, "Investigating the Impact of Optimal Flashcard Creation Principles on Memory."
- **Maya Madajewicz** placed 3rd in Earth and Environmental Science with her project, "Monitoring Changes in Seismic Wave Transmissivity Through Transverse Faults with Ice as a Proxy."

- **Sonya Lasser** placed 3rd in Computational Biology & Bioinformatics with her project, "Carbapenem-Resistant Enterobacterale Infections in Hospitalized Patients During the Covid-19 Pandemic."
- **Justin Baldassarre** placed 3rd in Cell and Molecular Biology with his project, "STING-rich Ciliated Cells Protect the Fallopian Tube from Early Transformation in the Development of Ovarian Cancer."
- **Owen Linder** placed 4th in Engineering and Technology with his project, "Determining the Efficacy of a Hypothetical Roundabout at a Suburban Arterial Intersection."

Four Hastings seniors placed 5th in their regional rooms:

- **Leon Wang:** Knockout of the GPR75 Receptor Protects C57 Mice Fed Choline-Deficient Diets from Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease
- **Lionel Muench:** Exploring the Effectiveness of Haptic Feedback to Simulate Music Listening
- **Maya Tadmor:** Investigating a Trauma Informed Care Framework in Hospice and Palliative Care Centers
- **Paul Sliker:** Utilization of Biochar to Accelerate Aerobic Decomposition and Increase Compost Quality in the Presence of Plastic and Microplastic Pollutants

Seven Hastings seniors placed in the top three in their local rooms:

First place –

- **Alexa Polakoff:** Using Fibroblast Growth Factor Receptor as a Therapeutic Target in Inflammatory Breast Cancer
- **Shira Oppenheimer:** Hudson River Water Quality: Correlation with Economics and Proximity to Wastewater Treatment Plants
- **Bianca Arnon:** Testing Models for Relativistic Jet Emissions in Blazar 1ES 2344+514

Second Place –

- **Miles Hamilton:** Reconstructing Late Pleistocene Changes in the Western Equatorial Pacific Thermocline and Analyzing the Viability of Coarse Fraction as a Temperature Proxy
- **Tess Humphries:** The Association Between Iron Deficiency Anemia and Mental Health Disorders in Women

Third Place –

- **Sawyer Dolgins:** Exploring the Viability of Invasive Wood Species as an Alternative Material for Skateboard Deck Manufacturing
- **Mia Christie:** Impact of Different Land Management on Levels of Soil Organic Carbon, Biodiversity, and Aggregate Stability in Suburban Soils

Please join me in congratulating these seniors for their outstanding achievements.

Second Annual Valley Cup

On January 6, in collaboration with the Long Island Quiz Bowl Alliance, Hastings High School hosted its Second Annual Valley Cup. Read more in the [1.11 Hastings Happenings](#).

6. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

A. Report from Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction

Presented by Melissa Szymanski, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction:

POHL: Authentic Learning

As outlined as in the FMS Action Plan, there will be a curriculum inquiry in all major content areas this year. This will include Art, ELA, Courageous Conversations, Mathematics, Music, Science, Social Studies and World Languages. To align the inquiries with our goal of moving the Portrait of a Hastings Learner forward, "authentic instruction" will be the framing lens for each. Over the past two weeks, pre-planning work has been taking place in partnership with the Department Chairpersons. The Department Chairpersons will now be working with their departments to engage in the inquiry process.

Gender Work (FMS Professional Learning)

Melissa Szymanski, the three building principals, Jenice Mateo-Toledo, Cindy Greenberg, and the Hastings Rainbow Families have been working together with our thought partners from Centerlane to design professional learning for the middle and high school faculty. This preparation work concluded last week. Based on previous faculty input that was provided through an anonymous survey sent by Central Office following previous work with Centerlane, our intention was to design professional learning that was increasingly specific to Hastings. Input about challenges faced at school was gathered from Hastings students. We then designed authentic professional learning scenarios for members of the faculty to actively work through together with the input of our Centerlane thought partners. The results of an anonymous evaluation following the learning session indicated that our faculty unanimously agreed or strongly agreed that the professional learning was a) relevant and informative, b) presented clearly and in an organized manner, and c) contained practical examples, techniques, or language. Participants further indicated that the presenters were

knowledgeable, well-prepared and created a safe environment for participants.

B. Report from Business Official

Presented by Maureen Caraballo, Business Official:

State Aid

Governor Hochul presented the first look at her proposed State budget this week. Although there is an increase in the overall State's budget for education funding, there is also a recalculation of aides which reduces aid to "higher" wealth districts and increases other lower-wealth districts at a higher rate. In the proposal, Hochul proposes ending the "hold harmless" clause that has been part of state school aid for decades. That provision has meant that school districts could depend on getting at least as much school aid as in the previous year. As a formula, results normally would rise and fall, but the "hold harmless" practice prevented any school district from receiving less aid than in the prior year. There is also a large allocation in the State budget for Pre-K which has been all but impossible for us to access. My colleagues and I will be meeting with our local representatives to share our concerns about some of what is being proposed and the impact on school districts in Westchester County.

7. BUSINESS

A. Business Items

1. Approve the use of Reserve for Liability Claims, to increase the budget in the amount of \$130,000 for Special Education Settlements.
2. November 2023 Information Technology Internal Audit Report and District Responses.
3. Warrants.
4. Stipulation of Settlement.
5. Approve the use of tax certiorari reserve to increase budget in the amount of \$38,381.25.
6. Recommendation to award contract to PBDW Architects to create Master Plan, concept A and B, \$126,500.
7. Recommendation to award contract to PBDW Architects, Engineer/Sustainability, \$8500.
8. Budget Transfer.

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the business items.

Motion by Damaris-Lois Lang, second by Doreen Bucher.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

B. Placement and/or Services for CSE and CPSE

RESOLVED, that upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools and the Committee on Special Education and the Committee on Preschool Special Education, the Board accepts the classifications and arrangements for the placement and/or services for the 2023-2024 school year:

CSE: 11451, 11905, 7286, 12430, 10421, 12598, 11490

CPSE: 12749

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Committee on Special Education and the Committee on Preschool Special Education, the Board of Education accepts the classifications and arrangements for the placement and/or services.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Damaris-Lois Lang.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

8. PERSONNEL (CONSENT AGENDA)

A. Approve Consent Agenda

Resolution: RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 8B through 8D as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 8B through 8D as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Doreen Bucher, second by Damaris-Lois Lang.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

B. Appointments

1. Michael O'Mahony, appoint to Per Diem substitute district wide effective January 24, 2024 for the 2023-2024 school year.
2. Schedule B requests as per attached spreadsheet. ([Enc](#))
3. Douglas Friedman, appoint for a second year of Music leave replacement at Hillside Elementary School for the 2024-2025 school year. MA, Step 2, \$71,872. Certification held: Music - Initial.
4. Salvatore DiCioccio, appoint to position of Teacher Aide, Column IA, Step 5, effective January 22, 2024.

Resolution: RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the appointments.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 8B through 8D as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Doreen Bucher, second by Damaris-Lois Lang.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

C. Retirement

1. Christina Repp, Social Worker at Hastings High School has provided notice of resignation for the purpose of retirement effective June 28, 2024.

Resolution: RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accept the retirements.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 8B through 8D as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Doreen Bucher, second by Damaris-Lois Lang.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

D. Amendment

1. AshLeigh Addarich, district wide Per Diem substitute. Amend appointment to Permanent Building Substitute teacher at Farragut Middle School effective February 1, 2024 for the 2023-2024 school year.

Resolution: RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the amendments.

RESOLVED, to approve agenda items 8B through 8D as contained on the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

Motion by Doreen Bucher, second by Damaris-Lois Lang.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

9. MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes

1. Approval of Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of January 9, 2024.

RESOLVED that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of January 9, 2024.

Motion by Doreen Bucher, second by Damaris-Lois Lang.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

10. POLICIES

A. Second Read

Policies for Second Read:

1. 8130.2 - Workplace Violence Prevention
2. 6240 - District Investments
3. 6240-R - Investments Regulation

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education adopt policies.

Motion by Doreen Bucher, second by Maureen Lennon-Santana.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

11. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT

A. Second Public Comment

- No public comment

12. AGENDA REVIEW

A. Agenda Review

Meeting Topics for February 13, 2024:

- Initial Budget Presentation
- 2nd Read of Calendar
- Academic Growth and Performance Update (Mid-Year Update) focused on grades 3-8

13. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

A. Comments

- Dr. Lang - acknowledged a board comment and expressed support for recognizing diverse holidays on the calendar. She suggested a transparent approach with a basic calendar and a link for additional cultural holidays.
- Theresa McCaffrey - raised concerns about the lack of outdoor recess time for middle and elementary schoolers due to weather and suggested providing choices for students.
- Alex Dal Piaz - addressed incorrect claims about falling enrollment and clarified that overall district enrollment is increasing. He also mentioned upcoming housing developments and their potential impact on student numbers.

14. ADJOURNMENT

A. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Doreen Bucher, second by Damaris-Lois Lang.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Silvia Robles, Alexander Dal Piaz, Damaris-Lois Lang, Doreen Bucher, Maureen Lennon-Santana, Jodie Meyer, Theresa McCaffrey

Melissa DeLaBarrera

Submitted by:

Melissa DeLaBarrera

District Clerk