



# HASTINGS HAPPENINGS

**NEWS FROM HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON UFSD**

September 6, 2024

## A Successful First Week!

### *From the Desk of the Superintendent*

September 6, 2024

Dear Families and Staff:

One week is completed – and I am learning. I was in nearly every classroom the last three days. In case your students are not sharing what they learned this week, let me pass on what I heard and saw. **I learned...**

- About teachers already knowing their students' names.
- About describing oneself in words and pictures—as a way to build connections with new and old classmates.
- About setting academic, personal, athletic, artistic and social goals.
- About speaking in an emerging World Language to describe one's summer
- About learning the syllables in classmates' names by stomping out each syllable (one class tried “Dr. McKersie” – you try it).
- About discerning the author's craft by comparing a classic children's book with more complex literature.
- About an express review of Algebra I to be ready for the dive into Algebra II.
- About the geometry fundamental to coding.
- About “truth, the perception of truth, and the actions on those perceptions” being essential to understanding history.
- About thoughtful comparative political analysis and discussions.
- About science experiments showing what happens when particles collide, with good doses of oxygen.
- About the correct nomenclature for the Periodic Table.
- About music teachers hearing students' favorite composers, pieces and performers—fostering connections.

- About limiting technology use to when really necessary, including the move to have only district-issued devices in FMS and HHS (with exceptions ready to be made at the HHS in a planned way).
- About HES and FMS students knowing that mobile devices are not permitted, and HHS students being reminded that they are to be “pouched” during class, with the plan to have HHS student leaders work with Mr. Clayman and Ms. Hardesty on healthy approaches to phones beyond class.
- About coaches working diligently with scholar athletes to be ready for the fall season (besides observing several practices, I took in a Cross-Country Meet and a Girls Varsity Soccer Game).
- About finding one’s way through a new building, its myriad hallways, with lots of help from students and staff.
- About classroom and school rules, procedures and plans.
- About safety and security being well attended to—by teachers, security personnel and administrators.
- And, most important and present at each step I took this week, about teachers, staff and administrators greeting and guiding students, with smiles, laughter and, yes, necessary firmness.

Not an all-inclusive list, for sure, but I challenge you to use it to see what your students might add.

Now for a communication update. My Friday letters, typically coming out every other week, will this year be the preface to the accompanying Hastings Happenings. I also suggest you keep a regular eye on the [HOH Website](#) and our new push on Instagram and Facebook for district news.

Onward and upward we continue into 2024-25. My goal: keep our energy and spirit for each and every student vibrant until we close on June 27.

Be well.

*Bill*

William S. McKersie, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

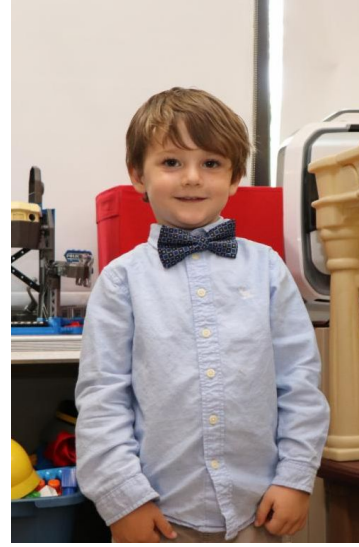
## ***District News***

### **Kindergarteners Meet Their Teachers**

The kindergarten wing at Hillside School was all a buzz as the newest scholars to enter the Hastings district got a sneak peek at their classrooms. During the Kindergarten Meet the Teachers event on August 29, the new students were greeted by their teachers, found their desks, and explored their new surroundings.

After they spent some time introducing themselves to their classmates, they headed to the playground for popsicles, courtesy of the Hastings-on-Hudson PTSA. Here they enjoyed the rest of the evening playing with their new

friends, climbing up and sliding down the outdoor gym equipment.



## First Day Fun!

The first day of school was filled with excitement as students joined their fellow classmates and acclimated to their new schedules. They walked quickly throughout the halls, heading straight to their classrooms, eager to meet their new teachers, while talking and laughing with friends.

“What a fantastic first day of school! It was full of smiles and positive attitudes,” said Principal Scott Wynne.

Teachers greeted their students welcoming them into their classrooms, ready to inspire curiosity and foster learning.

“I want to particularly highlight that in classroom after classroom that I visited, students got right to work, with minimal syllabus overview and a nice mix of fun, team-building activities and diving right into the content of the courses,” said Principal Andrew Clayman.

With the help of Hastings staff students were able to navigate the buildings safely and efficiently. Making the first day a success.

“Each of you contributed in so many ways from assisting students and families in the morning during arrival, to providing joyful classroom experiences for all children, to monitoring for safety during lunch and recess, and of course, teaching our school and classroom rules,” said Principal Amy Cazes in a note of gratitude to her staff.

A new academic year brings with it endless opportunities to learn and grow. It’s a time when students are presented with fresh subjects to explore, new skills to acquire, and challenges to overcome.

“Thank you for the best opening day yet!,” said Principal Cazes.









## Hillside Unveils New Mural

Courtney Dickens, a teacher's aide at Hillside, put her artistic talents to the test when she was tasked with creating the new mural that welcomes students, families, and staff to Hillside Elementary.

The Hillside Building Leadership Team (BLT), made up of teachers, students, parents and administrators, dreamed about a mural that would represent Hillside. "We wanted the mural to show why Hillside is so special- the beauty of our location in Hastings, the inclusivity of our school community, the diversity of learning experiences for our students, and the joy and wonder of childhood. The goal was to create a mural that truly welcomed everyone," said Amy Cazes, principal of Hillside.

The BLT surveyed students, staff, and families to find out what should be included in the mural, working together to collect this information. The ideas were then shared with local muralists who sketched their proposals for the team. Ultimately, Hillside's very own Ms. Dickens was selected as the artist who would best bring the Hillside community's vision to life.

Ms. Dickens used her own version of a grid system to create the colorful image. "I put up different shapes and marks on the space, took a photo of it, then overlaid it on the sketch," she said.

Each shape slowly turned into an image that holds a special meaning to the Hillside community. A yellow jacket sits slightly off center greeting everyone as they enter the building. The words respect, courage, and curiosity are highlighted through a magnifying glass emphasizing the core values of the school.

The mural took approximately two weeks to complete. "10 days of painting, 13 days including prep time and mapping," said Ms. Dickens.

Students on the BLT celebrated the mural over the loudspeaker on Thursday morning. Their proud words echoed through the school, "Stop by the entry mural and notice all of the wonderful learning that happens at Hillside. You might even find our Blue Ribbon! Thank you to Ms. Dickens for her hard work and for sharing her talents

with us!"

## Quick Links

View the latest [Hastings Weekly Updates](#) online!

To view past communications visit the [Hastings Happenings Archive](#)

**Stay up to date with academic events and school closings.**

Check out the [2024-2025 School Calendar](#) for for holidays and breaks!

Check out the [2024-2025 District Calendar](#) for upcoming events.

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