Hastings-on-Hudson Public Schools

27 Farragut Avenue, Hastings-on-Hudson, New York 10706
Tel: (914) 478-6200 Fax: (914) 478-3293
www.hohschools.org

A National Blue Ribbon District of Excellence

MEMO

TO: Board of Education Trustees

FROM: William McKersie, Ph.D.

DATE: January 8, 2025

RE: Farragut Wing Water Damage Update

We are providing the Board of Education with two updates on the Farragut Wing water damage. The first is from Melissa Szymanski regarding instructional and classroom decisions and arrangements. The second is from Maureen Caraballo regarding facility remediation.

We look forward to reviewing these updates at the January 8, 2025 Board of Education Meeting.

January 8, 2025

Farragut Wing Water Damage Update: Instructional Space and Curricular Resources

Farragut Middle School

Logistics regarding use of space following the damaged Farragut Wing of the middle school was determined at the building level, with opportunity for input by the full Leadership Team. While some 17 classrooms needed to be shifted, concerted efforts were made to keep classroom reassignments as streamlined as possible. The goal was to keep grades 5-8 together as a middle school family, keeping each grade together as much as possible, and ensuring that students in need of additional instructional support and/or accommodations had spaces to meet their learning needs.

All middle school faculty met immediately upon their return to school on Monday, January 6 to discuss preliminary plans, receive input and new ideas, and finalize use of space. This meeting included a recap of an optional faculty meeting that occurred on the preceding Friday (1.4.25), a review of information sent in previous communications, a review of the new proposed schedule and room utilization plans, and ideas for welcoming students back to school. Problem solving took place about each of these topics. The faculty also began thinking about logistics beyond the first week.

Student schedules have been updated in eSchoolData. Teacher schedules and room assignments have been formalized. Most teachers have been assigned to one or two classrooms. Almost all teachers must now share spaces, alternating instructional periods with their colleagues unless the student group is small enough to warrant concurrent use of the space. These changes are not ideal for a number of reasons. Teachers have largely lost the use of dedicated spaces for children. This impacts how student instruction can be facilitated, storage and availability of teaching resources, and dedicated spaces for planning and meeting. For example, currently, about 2,000 boxes are being housed in the Farragut Gymnasium. Teachers must go back and forth for needed materials. Small group instruction must now occur simultaneously, though separately, in shared spaces. While we will do our best to minimize any background noise resulting from contiguous instruction, additional concentration on the part of students may be needed to filter out distractions. An already very cramped building now has staff and students situated uncomfortably, though compliantly. Since many teachers will be sharing classrooms, having Academic Coaching will be more challenging to schedule. Teachers will rotate use of the classrooms to provide academic support from 2:45-3:15. Teachers will let students know when Academic Coaching will be available for each of their classes and the room in which it will take place. Locations for the 7th

and 8th grade Advisory Program are to be determined. The Farragut Gym, as our resource storage location, is no longer available for use. The Auditorium is now being used as a classroom. Therefore, on cold or wet days students will have access to the Library or will need to remain in the cafeteria. We will continue to look for other options for students, but are limited in space.

Despite these challenges, we remain optimistic and are doing the best we can. As needed, space usage and planning will be iterative once we have a better understanding of how students are experiencing the shifts.

Most importantly, at this early point in a difficult phase for the district, everyone in Hastings should applaud the dedication of FMS employees to quickly coalesce around solutions to new classroom, teaching and office arrangements. From the moment staff arrived on Monday until students came to school on Wednesday, teachers, aides, monitors, support staff, administrators, building and grounds personnel and security have rolled up their sleeves—literally—to help each other be prepared.

Hillside Elementary School

As outlined in a January 3 letter to the FMS community by Scott Wynne (and subsequently shared district-wide by Dr. McKersie), we decided to not move students to Hillside for multiple reasons, including:

- Unfair impact on K-4 students due to overcrowding and impact on programming;
- Need to collapse and shift K-4 specials out of classrooms and onto carts;
- 5th grade teachers and students would be in a separate facility from their existing administrators;
- 5th grade classes would need to be spread throughout the building, undermining teacher coordination and teaming;
- Inability for 5th grade students to have all of their special area classes;
- Inability for 5th grade students to access after-school activities;
- Difficulty for 5th grade students accessing appropriate special education, guidance, counseling, psychological, and social work services;
- Requires 5th grade lunch period at 1:30 p.m.; and,
- Problematic traffic congestion at drop off and pick up, as well as limited parking for staff.

District and building administrators gave the Hillside option careful consideration, but these negatives far outweighed any benefits. The exercise underscores that Hillside would require significant capital investment and facility modifications to be viable educationally for an additional grade of students.

Special thanks to the many Hillside Elementary staff members who came to the Farragut Complex on Monday to support the middle school teachers to locate and inventory their instructional resources and set up new classroom spaces.

Hastings High School

Seven high school classrooms are now being used for 43 periods for middle school instruction, requiring high school teachers to shift out of their spaces. Some of the classrooms being used in the high school do not receive the middle school announcements. Middle school staff who have been relocated there will be provided with a written copy of the morning announcements each day. Period 1 teachers will recite the Pledge of Allegiance and read the morning announcements to students. Classrooms being used in the high school will not hear the middle school bells. Teachers will be using the clocks on their computers to synchronize the dismissal of students. Leniency will be given to students who now have to travel farther distances in order to get to class. In order to ensure that student interactions are appropriate in the hallways, teachers, administrators and monitors will be supervising the hallway transitions, especially for our students using classrooms in the high school and transitioning between buildings. Interactions between middle school and high school students will be minimized, with close monitoring by high school and middle school administrators. We also have added several hallway monitors adjacent to rest rooms and other hallway locations.

Nevertheless, the high school staff has responded with grace to help support the classroom and instructional needs of their middle school colleagues and students. We all should be appreciative of their camaraderie in this difficult phase.

January 8, 2025

We wanted to provide an update on the ongoing flood damage remediation and repair efforts in the Farragut Wing of FMS. Below is a summary of the progress made and the next steps planned:

1. **Current Work and Progress:**
    - RENU has been working diligently six days a week to address the damage and advance the remediation process.
    - As previously reported, during the week of December 26th through January 3rd, the team:
        - Packed and stored all materials either in the Farragut gym or at an off-site location.
        - Removed all lockers and furniture.
        - Began the demolition of each floor, including lighting, drop ceilings, initial wall layer and initial flooring layer(s).
    - This week, RENU continued removing flooring and demolishing areas as directed by our insurance company's onsite representative and the hygienist.
    - A complete walk-through was conducted of the facility (attic to basement, and to each and every room, closet, etc.) today by RENU, insurance representative, hygienist team, LAN Associates, Bill, Maureen, Scott and Joe. Purpose was to determine the next set of demolition work and the timeframe.

2. **Upcoming Work:**
    - In preparation for the next phase, RENU plans to:
        - Remove plaster and all ceilings.
        - Scrape plaster walls.
        - Remove any and all sheetrock or other items damaged and deemed unsalvageable.
        - Remove all classroom cabinetry and doors – all require replacement due to water damage.
    - We are awaiting the final report on the condition of the plaster ceilings, though our current understanding is that all plaster will need to be removed.

- To proceed on removal of plaster on the ceilings, they require the final moisture report, which we anticipate receiving shortly.

3. **Additional Efforts:**
    - We continue to work with our architects to determine the appropriate insulation for the attic and explore heating options for the space.
    - We are engaging our own fire suppression specialist to assist with an internal investigation into the failure of the sprinkler system that contributed to the damage.
    - We will work with LAN to determine if any work originally considered for the Bond within the Master Five-Year Plan (BCS) would now be addressed as part of the repair of the Farragut Wing. We will keep the BOE appraised of what emerges from this analysis.

4. **Ongoing Coordination:**
    - Weekly meetings will continue with Bill, Maureen, Scott, Joe, RENU, LAN, the insurance adjusters, and hygienist team to review the scope of work and the schedule.
    - All parties are committed to progressing with the remediation efficiently and thoroughly. While conscious of the need to return students and staff to the Farragut Wing as soon as possible, we have to ensure that the remediation and repairs are completed with detailed care to mitigate against any future safety or health concerns.
    - We will continue to keep the Board updated on significant developments.
    - We will consider appropriate times for general updates to staff, families and the community. A primary communications vehicle will be the dedicated webpage on the district website.