

Hastings-on-Hudson Public Schools



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Dear Hastings Families and Staff,

I figured it out. It took me only nine months to get smart. Here it is: when you are having a tough day (week), go find the good stuff that makes Hastings stand-out. Out I walked, and I quickly recharged. All the good is right outside my office door, down the hall, around FMS and HHS classrooms, and up the hill to Hillside. What did I find? Read on.

Academic Field Day

Wednesday marked another year for HHS's spring tradition of Academic Field Day. From early morning until lunch, students exercised their minds and body in three different 50 minute activities. Over 35 choices were offered, including fashion, weight lifting, meditation and calmness with sand coloring, origami, mind games beyond Wordle, safe international travel, coding, great NY sport moments, film genres, history through musicals, riffing (improvisation), global state of affairs, history of the Burke Estate, country music, jewelry making, improv theater and the art/science of rare coins. I leaned in with the session, "So You Want to be a Superintendent (Maybe)?"

In a demanding high school and community, the morning allowed for a creative, thoughtful, well-organized release, fostering connections among and between students, teachers and administrators. So, whether my group learned much about being a superintendent, we got to know each other better, connecting the varied ideas, perspectives and values that make Hastings sing.

Kudos to Josh Blum, English Department Chair, for guiding Academic Field Day to better connect us.

Ajna Dance Program

Yesterday was a day of unity and cultural exploration at Hillside. The Ajna Dance Program, sponsored by the PTSA, brought students and staff together for an assembly to learn about and try Indian dances from different regions and historical periods. Students and staff alike joined in the dances, learning by doing in a remarkably uplifting way. To quote Katie Concra, Hillside Music Teacher, "the presenters clearly have so much love for what they do, and the love carried through to the children [and adults] who were eager to watch, listen and move while experiencing something new."

The spirit and joy of the day resonated out of Hillside across the district. This is a signature of Hastings: whether immediately or over several years, what starts in Hillside is carried forward by our students into their subsequent studies and experiences.

HHS Spring Concert – A Community Celebration

Last night was the HHS Spring Concert, in-person in the HHS Auditorium, with a full house of family and friends relishing the moving music of the HHS Band, Madrigals, HHS Orchestra, HHS Chorus and HHS Jazz Band. Rigor and richness ran through the program, giving ample chances for each group, and selected soloists, to showcase their talents.

Instead of raising up individuals from the evening, I am inspired to highlight what the gathering signified about Hastings as a community. Each group and soloist, no matter how difficult their piece, was cheered and applauded from across the hall. Names were called out in admiration from many corners, clearly from more than just immediate friends or family. And, when the twenty-or-so seniors received their traditional final concert rose, the entire gathering was one, united through music for each of these students, who largely have been together since their early elementary years.

As one veteran staff member said to me as the evening concluded, “This is what Hastings is all about. This is Hastings.”

Fifth Grade Latin Fiesta

Creative intellectual and physical endeavors were underway today across the fifth grade. Organized by Shannon Mulholland and the fifth grade team, the Latin Fiesta had fifth graders delve into ancient Latin American civilizations. *Read Alouds* flowed into a *Trade Fair* followed by a *Salsa Festival Performance* and the day ended with *Inca Relays* on Reynolds Field. Mind, heart and body were enriched and challenged – another signature of Hastings at its best.

Spring Athletics – Winding Down with Success

Just a short walk for any of us are the fields, diamonds, courts and track where student-athletes have been competing this spring. Athletic Director Drew Wendol has assembled an excellent [**Spring Athletics Update**](#), which deserves a close review. The win and loss records have run the gamut this season. Consistent has been the drive and dedication of the athletes and their coaches. Sport most fundamentally is a powerful means for growth – individually and collectively. It is a path to community – a Hastings community.

A Budget Vote – Next Steps

We all know that the proposed 2022-23 Budget was voted down on Tuesday by a close margin. The Board of Education (BOE) and administration have begun work on potential modifications and revisions to the proposed budget ahead of a second vote, scheduled for June 21, 2022. Details on the extended budget process, upcoming meetings and key dates are listed and

regularly updated on the [**Budget Info**](#) page of the district website. Regular communications will follow from the BOE and administration as we head towards the June 21 vote.

For now, in the spirit of the good news conveyed in today's letter, which touches on excellence and growth in each corner of our district and community, I would ask that we embrace the shared aim of being constructive, forward-looking and mutually supportive. That is what our students need most from us.

Be well.

Bill

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