



*A National Blue Ribbon District of Excellence*

# Hastings-on-Hudson Public Schools

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**Jenice Mateo-Toledo**  
Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator

January 24, 2022

Dear Hastings Families,

The Hastings on Hudson School District will host Racial Equity Week (2/1/22 - 2/3/22). Each building has designed a day that provides opportunities for students to consider, at developmentally appropriate age and grade levels, how racial equity affects our world. The days were designed with input from diverse stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, students, staff, and community members.

The theme at Hastings High School is “Environmental Justice: Think Locally - Act Locally.” Students will engage in environmental justice issues that are currently impacting Westchester County, especially lower income communities and low income members of wealthier communities. The environment here can refer to indoor as well as outdoor conditions, including the air and water quality of peoples’ housing and/or access to healthy food. Hastings has been a community hit by environmental injustice in previous centuries and decades, which has resulted in high levels of pollution at our waterfront and limited access due to toxins in the water. Students will consider how current practices and policies of Hastings town impact lower income citizens and how our community can have a positive impact on environmental equity. “The Sacrifice Zone,” a thirty minute film will be screened followed by guest speakers, Maria Lopez-Nuñez and Keyon Terry, environmental justice leaders, who will answer questions and provide context to the film. Educators will lead classroom discussions and activities. The afternoon will end with hands-on diverse workshops for students with the goal of taking action.

The theme at Farragut Middle School centers on understanding the ubiquity of media in our daily lives and its impact on race equity and social justice. The overarching goals include:

1. To create a safe learning environment where students and faculty members continue on their journey towards racial and cultural awareness and proficiency.
2. To understand the ubiquity of social media in our daily lives and its impact on race, equity, and social justice.
3. To bolster media literacy skills so that students become more engaged and informed citizens.

Students will participate in various activities throughout the day and listen to a panel discussion on representation and the media. Our panelists include: Wadi Jones, stunt double in the movie *Black Panther*, Yatibaey Evans, Creative Producer of the PBS Series, *Molly of Denali*, Veera Hiranandani, Newbery Honor Recipient (2019) for *The Night Diary*, and Aidan Gemme, Hastings graduate and actor on the CW series *Naomi*.

The theme at Hillside Elementary School is “Never Too Young for Justice.” We have invited City Love to lead an engaging, developmentally appropriate assembly to build community across our differences, talk about race, hope, equity, and belonging. City Love uses a collection of their own children's songs to engage young learners to celebrate the ways in which we are all both similar and different. They name the fact that some of the differences between us carry different weights, and people in our world and our country have not always been - and still are not always - treated fairly, safely, or kindly based on differences like the color of our skin, our gender, religion, who we love, and more. Between songs City Love asks students to pair, share, and share out about their differences and similarities, what it feels like to belong, what it looks like to be an upstander, and discuss how even though many grownups and kids in our country are still learning how to be kind, safe and fair to all people, we can set an example for the world in our classrooms and neighborhoods. City Love’s assembly helps to initiate or sustain developmentally appropriate conversations and shared dialogue in early childhood/elementary classrooms that will help our students make sense of the world they see around them and feel empowered to be the change the world needs. The assembly will include free downloads of the children's album with lyrics, chords and curriculum extensions so that our school community can continue to use songs to build dialogue and harmonize all the voices in the room around values of diversity, equity and justice and belonging in their classroom.

The speakers will be funded through the HEF Speaker Series grant. The movie viewing will be funded by the Race Matters Committee.

We are looking forward to a wonderful week of learning, as we reflect upon how racial equity affects our world.

Respectfully,

Jenice Mateo-Toledo, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator  
Louis Adipietro, Hastings High School, Principal  
Melissa Hardesty, Hastings High School, Assistant Principal  
Jennifer Spirelli, Farragut Middle School, Principal  
Ken Cotrone, Farragut Middle School, Assistant Principal  
Amy Cazes, Hillside Elementary School, Principal  
Michael LaRocco, Hillside Elementary School, Assistant Principal