

***U.S. Department of Education***  
***2022 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program***

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [ ] Title I [ ] Charter [ ] Magnet [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Amy Cazes  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Hillside Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 120 Lefurgy Avenue  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Hastings-on-Hudson State NY Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 10706-2099

County Westchester County

Telephone (914) 478-6270 Fax (914) 478-6279

Web site/URL https://www.hohschools.org/Domain/8 E-mail cazesa@hohschools.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. William McKersie E-mail mckersiew@hohschools.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Hastings-on-Hudson Union Free School District Tel. (914) 478-2900

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Alexander Dal Piaz  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

## **PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2016 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 or 2021.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. The nominated school has, or is subject to, a nondiscrimination policy (provide either a link to the policy or submit a text of the policy), is committed to equal opportunity for all students and all staff consistent with applicable law and does not have any outstanding findings of unlawful discrimination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s nomination and/or rescind a school’s award if unlawful discrimination is later discovered.

12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

**The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's nomination and/or rescind a school's award if one of these eligibility requirements is later discovered to have not been met or otherwise been violated.**

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the current school year (2021-2022) unless otherwise stated.

**DISTRICT** (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools. For charter schools: If a charter school is part of the public school system, information should be provided for the public school district. If a charter school is considered its own district or part of a charter district, the information provided should reflect that.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools. **Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not for the district.**)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- Urban (city or town)
- Suburban
- Rural

3. Number of students in the school as of October 1, 2021 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	46	50	96
1	52	56	108
2	54	49	103
3	67	61	128
4	62	55	117
5	1	0	1
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	282	271	553

\*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0.3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 4 % Asian
  - 2 % Black or African American
  - 15.2 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0.9 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 65.3 % White
  - 12.3 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2020 - 2021 school year: 7%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

<b>Steps For Determining Mobility Rate</b>	<b>Answer</b>
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	19
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2020 until the end of the 2020-2021 school year	18
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	37
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2020	553
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.07
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Hungarian, Portuguese, Ukrainian, Spanish, Russian, French, Italian, Korean, Tagalog, German, Hindi, Punjabi, Chinese

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %  
13 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 2 %

Total number students who qualify: 9

8. Students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504: 13 %  
73 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services with an IEP or 504 should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <u>4</u> Autism                  | <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities                 |
| <u>1</u> Deafness                | <u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment                 |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness          | <u>31</u> Other Health Impaired                |
| <u>0</u> Developmental Delay     | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability          |
| <u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance   | <u>27</u> Speech or Language Impairment        |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment      | <u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury                |
| <u>1</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 6
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	2
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	31
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	24
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	27
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 10:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2020-2021	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017
Daily student attendance	98%	97%	96%	96%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2021.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 1999

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school’s mission or vision statement.

Hillside Elementary School is committed to doing what is best for kids every day. With a focus on meeting each child's individual needs, we differentiate instruction using a student-centered learning model. Staff members work collaboratively to reinforce our core values of respect, courage, and curiosity celebrating the uniqueness of our students and school community.

16. Provide a URL link to or text of the school’s nondiscrimination policy.

All students have the right to be free from discrimination by District staff or students on school property or at school functions based upon their actual or perceived race (including traits historically associated with race, such as hair texture and protective hairstyles like braids, locks, and twists), color (a person’s pigmentation, complexion, or skin shade or tone), weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity and expression) or sex.

17. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

## **PART III – SCHOOL OVERVIEW**

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Hillside Elementary School serves all Hastings-on-Hudson children in grades kindergarten through four. Hillside is located on 22 acres of wooded property, adjacent to the 48-acre natural woodlands, Hillside Woods. Our unique location allows us to incorporate learning with a focus on nature in our outdoor classroom, our Hillside garden, and through our seasonal nature walk program, which includes parent volunteers. Our students and their families enjoy being a part of the Hillside experience and we aim to include families in their child's learning as much as possible.

Our school has been working on a Balanced Literacy initiative for the past five years, integrating a balanced approach in both reading and writing. Teachers have attended frequent professional learning experiences to better understand the components of a balanced literacy program and have worked collaboratively to create curriculum that best meets the needs of all learners. Together, teachers have visited classrooms, practiced new instructional techniques, reflected on practice, and revised curriculum and instruction as new learnings emerged. With a special focus on meeting the unique needs of each individual learner through small group work and conferring, teachers have been developing learning progressions so that each reader and writer has next steps for growth.

Technology is also used at Hillside to enhance the curriculum. Computers and interactive whiteboards are installed in all classrooms and iPad carts are available to Grades K and 1. Additionally, Grades 2, 3, and 4 have 1:1 Chromebooks, allowing the seamless integration of technology into the strong curricular program. Whether collaborating in a Google Doc or presentation, researching on the internet and/or writing in a blog, Chromebooks are one of the many tools students have at their fingertips. Our special areas have also infused technology into the curriculum. For example, as part of Hillside music's Hip Hop unit, students are using internet-based resources to learn and develop skills to compose lyrics and freestyle rap. They work both independently and collaboratively using the technology tools available. At Hillside, technology is used to foster an interactive learning environment.

Hillside's core values are Respect, Courage and Curiosity. These values are the focus of instruction along with our social-emotional learning program, Second Step. All students receive explicit instruction in social skills in order to foster a kind and successful learning community. To further demonstrate our core values, Hillside empowers student leaders and recognizes the importance of student voice in the educational experience.

Our Safety Patrol program, open to all fourth graders, invites students to serve as role models. These students wear vests to identify themselves, welcome students during arrival, and help during dismissal. Fourth grade students are also elected by their peers for the Student Council. They organize events that demonstrate gratitude for Hillside community members, and plan activities that bring awareness to environmental issues, such as our week-long Earth Day celebration. Elected representatives are also provided leadership opportunities in our lower elementary classrooms. Student council is a wonderful way for students to build leadership skills, grow empathy for others within the community, and put helpful and creative ideas into action.

Fourth graders produce our school newspaper, "The Hillside Insider." Student reporters choose areas of interest to write about, such as students who make a difference; teacher interviews; movie, book, and travel reviews; and more.

Third graders also have leadership opportunities. Third grade students elect their peers to our Building Leadership Team (BLT), which is made up of two parents, two teachers, two administrators, and two students. This group works together to make decisions for our school.

Finally, all K-4 students are invited to participate in our annual school theme contest to find a new school theme that links our community and is prominently displayed outside our school's main entrance.

At Hillside, we also work to build an inclusive environment by focusing on race and culture, gender

diversity, and learning differences. We have developed our Fourth Grade Sparks curriculum, which addresses identity, intent vs. impact, stereotypes, race, racism, and bias through classroom reflective lessons. We have been leaders in the region as we work toward a greater understanding of gender and gender inclusivity. Working with each grade level, our school counselor provides annual lessons on gender, focusing on pronouns, the gender spectrum, and respect for all.

We are committed to educating students in the least restrictive environment and at Hillside, each learner gets what they need. Our classrooms are vibrant spaces with flexible seating, differentiated learning tools, and a recognition of the wonderful differences that make us unique. It is our shared goal for every student, staff member, and community member to see themselves reflected in our school and to feel welcome and valued at Hillside. We emphasize the beauty of the diversity in our community and how all of us together make our school special.

## **PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

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### **1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

#### **1a. Overall approach, which may include overarching philosophy or approaches common across subject areas:**

At Hillside, we believe in a student-centered approach to learning. We focus on the gradual release of responsibility and ensure that students are active participants in their own learning. Our philosophy is that students are most successful when they are exposed to direct, explicit instruction with modeling, followed by the opportunity to practice with teacher guidance and/or a partner, and finally demonstrate their learning through an independent practice experience. During independence, teachers serve as a support, either in small groups or during 1:1 conferences to meet each child where they are and move them forward in their learning. Teachers use ongoing assessment to make instructional decisions that support each learner and end their lessons with a reflection, partner share out, or exit ticket which help teachers plan for future instruction.

New York State Learning Standards are addressed through our curricular units of study. In all curricular areas, teachers provide scaffolded support based on students' levels of ability and readiness for learning. This may include 1:1 conferences, small group instruction, reteaching of lessons, graphic organizers, or other materials. This ensures that children are working at their own level with the goal of meeting, or exceeding, grade-level standards.

During the pandemic, Hillside made a quick shift to online learning. In a matter of days, Hillside teachers were trained in a myriad of online tools and transformed classroom learning into an online experience for all. Using Google Classroom, teachers posted instructional videos, tutorials, guided practice, assignments, resources, schedules, materials, supplemental videos, and more for students and families to access at home. Our educators reviewed online resources that both supported instruction and allowed for differentiation in practice. Teachers experimented with different ways to meet with students virtually as a whole class, in small groups, and individually. This expedited our technological learning, both as a staff and a community. Consequently, technology has become a tool that all stakeholders now rely upon to provide greater access to student learning.

#### **1b. Reading/English language arts curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

In English Language Arts (ELA), we have worked in partnership with a consulting team over the last five years to create and design original units of study that align to the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards. Our balanced literacy curriculum with units in reading, writing, and language study have been constructed with a focus on the foundational skills necessary for each grade level. We have had a keen eye on the vertical alignment of our ELA units, ensuring that there are no repetitions or gaps in our curriculum: Each grade builds upon the language and structures of the previous grade. We have seen a marked improvement in students' reading and writing success as a result of our cohesive curriculum.

Hillside teachers have focused on creating and delivering mini lessons, leading strategy groups, facilitating guided reading groups, conferring with students, and utilizing ongoing assessment. During conferences with students, teachers are able to collect ongoing, formative data on students. Pre- and post-assessments and a student reflection component allow for children to recognize areas of strength and areas for growth.

Teachers have ample planning time to ensure that grade levels have the proper materials and resources for all units. To include parents in their child's learning, teaching teams have created parent/guardian letters for each unit.

For Word Study, we use Foundations for Grades K-2, which is from the Wilson Language family. It focuses on systematic phonics and spelling, as well as shared reading. The program gives students the opportunity to apply learned skills directly into text. The intermediate grades utilize the Words Their Way program. This program provides students with instruction in vocabulary and word meaning, in addition to offering further

practice with encoding and the necessary exposure to traditional spelling patterns. This program also provides differentiated experiences so that students learn in their zone of proximal development.

In Reading, we ensure that students' eyes are on print and all grades have independent reading time to foster a love of literacy. Primary students build word-attack strategies and develop stamina through reading fiction texts, where they become familiar with characters and story elements, and non-fiction texts where they build comprehension and expand content vocabulary. As students transition from learning to read, to reading to learn, instruction aims to develop students' ability to analyze and synthesize texts of varying genres in order to make inferences and draw conclusions.

In Writing, students work on building their writing stamina, while engaging in a variety of writing genres such as pattern books, personal narratives, how-to books, opinion writing, and informational writing. Students engage with each step of the writing process, generating ideas, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing their writing. There is a celebration at the end of each writing unit when students have created a published copy of a composition that has been revised and edited over the course of multiple sessions. Writing portfolios move with students from kindergarten through fourth grade as a reflection of growth and progress.

### **1c. Mathematics curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

In Mathematics, teachers address the New York State Next Generation Learning Standards. Our K-4 math curriculum focuses on problem solving skills. Throughout all grade levels instruction moves from concrete examples with the use of manipulatives, to a representational level, and finally, to the abstract level. Topics of study are scaffolded with this method in mind. The "doing" stage allows students to manipulate objects to better understand the concept. Next, the "seeing" stage allows students to see a representation of the object in the form of an array, drawing of a picture, or tallies. Lastly, students are guided to the symbolic stage where teachers use algorithms and operational symbols to apply their learning.

Students are given a daily application problem. This is based on the approach of Read, Draw, Write (RDW). In RDW, students are asked to read the problem and visualize a picture in their minds. Next, they draw a picture to represent what they hear and envision. Then, students write an equation and solve the problem, and they finish the exercise with a sentence that answers the question. This process sparks conversation and is used as a warm-up to help students think about the concept of the day. At Hillside, we place emphasis on representing real-life word problems through pictures, numbers and words.

In the daily Mathematics lesson, we continue with the gradual release of responsibility. First, the teacher models a problem. Next, students and teachers work through a few problems together, and students then work independently to practice the concept. The strategy of Think-Pair-Share is a staple during instruction. This allows students to think independently, work problems through with a partner, and then feel confident to share out to the group. As students work independently or in partnerships, teachers often pull small groups to differentiate instruction, based on the needs of students. Lessons end with exit tickets to check for understanding. In addition, each module has a mid-module and end-of-module assessment, plus regular fluency sprints to provide increased opportunities for students to show what they know.

Students are also given the opportunity for extension problems, math games, and math projects. For example, during the first grade geometry unit, students design a creature using various geometric shapes. During the third grade fraction unit, students may use paper plates to make "pizzas" or create a fraction flip book. Games are a big part of reinforcement and practice K-4, not only for math review and enrichment, but as a social/emotional component.

Online resources such as DreamBox help to supplement learning at the student's individualized level. Teachers are able to track progress and monitor areas where students may need more support. This digital resource, along with assessments, sprints, and exit tickets, help plan and guide instruction. Teachers provide reinforcement and enrichment based upon individual needs. All concepts are taught using a variety of methods and strategies, allowing students the opportunity to use the approach that feels right for them.

## **1d. Science curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Hillside created a STEAM classroom with the support of a specialized teacher to ensure that all teachers were supported in delivering the New York State P-12 Science Learning Standards in their classrooms. This teacher, in combination with grade level teachers and a science consultant, revised the curriculum in 2021 in all grades to ensure every standard was being met with hands-on, student-directed learning opportunities where our learners can grapple with unexplained phenomena, pose explanations, and develop their understanding.

For example, in kindergarten, we study weather and climate, matter and forces, and explore interdependent relationships in ecosystems. Extension activities include visiting a local farm in order to deepen students' understanding of interdependent relationships.

First graders study light and sound, patterns and cycles in space systems, and inheritance of traits for survival. Students enjoy making up-cycled instruments in order to observe sound vibrations in action.

Second grade students learn about the properties of solids, processes that shape the earth, and biodiversity. They then study robotic toys, HexBugs. By watching these gadgets move on their own and with these materials, the students create HexBug Habitats with the same set of solid materials they have investigated previously.

Our intermediate students in third and fourth grades deepen and extend much of their learning from their primary grades, as this is part of the grade bands derived from the standards. In third grade we study forces and motion, climate and extreme weather, and inheritance of traits for group survival. As a celebration of forces and motions, we learn about Caine's Arcade in order to create our own school version of cardboard games, with attached explanations of the force and motion concepts addressed. Fourth graders study energy transfer, weathering and erosion, and internal and external structures of living things. Our learners create their own Rube Goldberg machines as a way to synthesize their learning around energy transfers.

Our STEAM teacher continues to serve as our lead science thinker and a liaison between grade levels.

## **1e. Social studies/history/civic learning curriculum content, instruction, and assessment:**

Hillside follows the New York State Social Studies Framework. Each grade level has created comprehensive units to support young learners' engagement in geography, history, culture and society, civics and government, and economics on an age- and grade-appropriate basis. Students enter Hillside learning about themselves within society, and as they move through the grades, they expand their awareness by looking at family, local, state, and world communities.

In Kindergarten, students learn about themselves and their families, school community, holidays, traditions, and geography. In first grade, students focus on being responsible citizens, compare families of long ago and today, learn about holidays around the world, community, economics, and geography. As students move to second grade, they study citizenship, mapping skills, directions, communities (urban, suburban and rural), environment, and American symbols. Third grade curriculum introduces countries around the world, with a focus on how where you live affects how you live. In fourth grade, students study what life was like in New York during each time period from prehistory through the Civil Rights era. We look at multiple perspectives, ensuring that our stories are told thoroughly and from the vantage points of many peoples and cultures.

At Hillside, we have a Current Events Specialist who visits third and fourth graders monthly for an update on worldwide news. Each presentation is grade-appropriate and includes 7-10 news stories, representing the biggest news stories over the past month. The session begins with the most substantive and challenging (but age-appropriate) topics, proceeds to stories that include international news, elections, human interest, science, discovery, animals, exploration, space, art, or sports, and usually ends on a positive and humorous note. There is also an opportunity for discussion and students' questions to further their understanding and connection to the stories. In addition to keeping children informed about their world in an exciting way, the

guiding principle of this program is for students to be curious, respect differing viewpoints, and feel empowered to engage with their community and the world as active and empathetic citizens.

**1f. For secondary schools:**

**1g. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:**

**2. Other Curriculum Areas:**

The purpose of the elementary Visual Art program at Hillside is to have students think and create like artists. The curriculum focuses on a student's search for meaning and understanding of their artwork and the artwork of others. Students attend a general art class once in a 6-day cycle. Students are introduced to the creative process through aesthetics (the elements of art, principle of design, visual thinking strategies, and object-based art history), through an art discipline (painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, ceramics, mixed media, etc.), through the material of art (pencil, crayon, clay, paper, paint, sculpture material, water color, etc.), through art or cultural ideas (art historical figures and art movements, various cultures - African, Chinese, Inuit, Hudson River Artists, etc.), and/or through contemporary social and personal issues (content-rich contemporary art).

Hillside Physical Education strives to create a physically-literate individual by using the Physical Education National Standards, with students attending three times a cycle. The curriculum is based on the three domains: Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor and instruction is age appropriate. The Hillside physical education program provides a comfortable environment for students to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthful activity. Additionally, the program takes pride in incorporating families into the curriculum with an open invitation to participate in multiple events such as Field Day, an Obstacle Course Night, and Family Dance Night. This allows for students to turnkey the skills they have learned to their families.

The Hillside music curriculum follows the National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, which focus on engaging students through singing, movement, listening, reading, and composition. Incorporating multiple pedagogical methods, students develop skills that are the building blocks for more advanced instrumental, theoretical, and industry related music studies. Students attend general music classes twice a cycle. Both third and fourth graders can participate in chorus and fourth graders can join our band, orchestra, and the Little Kids Rock guitar program. Areas of study that make the Hillside curriculum unique include film and folly scoring, sea shanties, hip-hop, and romantic and modern repertoires. These include Saint-Saens's "Carnival of the Animals," Copland's "Billy the Kid," Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf," Rimsky-Korsikov's "Scheherazade," and Mendelssohn's "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

The library media center is the hub of literacy at Hillside. Our collection reflects the most current literature and is diverse and inclusive. Students visit the library media center once a cycle. There, they engage in lessons that align with the NYS Information Fluency Continuum Standards and the (American Association of School Librarians) Standards. Lessons are literacy-rich and encourage discussion and collaboration with peers. Students engage with technology for research and inquiry and use multiple technology platforms to present information and provide feedback to peers. As part of the library curriculum, students engage in a sequence of lessons on Digital Literacy that focus on critical 21st-century skills. Topics include digital footprint and identity, privacy and security, and media balance. The library also hosts a variety of schoolwide literacy events, such as author visits, World Read Aloud Day, and a March Madness book competition. These events provide all students in the school with common learning experiences.

Our STEAM program was established to meet the new science standards while also preparing all of our learners for a changing world through collaborative, hands-on learning experiences designed to start students from phenomena-based questions towards deeper understandings of how our world works.

### **3. Academic Supports**

#### **3a. Students performing below grade level:**

Students who are performing below grade receive support through the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) process. A three-tiered system that includes both Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), MTSS targets a child's academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs. It is not a specific curriculum or program. Through classroom interventions, and/or small group instruction with a specialist, MTSS is designed to support the needs of all students.

Our school uses many assessments to gather information about all students. Benchmark assessments are given three times a year. The universal screeners used are the STAR assessment, the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, and a local Early Literacy Profile in Kindergarten. Students entering Kindergarten are given the Developmental Indicators for Assessment of Learning 4 (DIAL). In addition, ongoing informal classroom assessments are given to monitor students' progress. To assess our students' social-emotional growth, the teachers and students complete Panorama's Social-Emotional Learning Assessment.

Hillside has a Problem Solving Team (PST) consisting of administrators, psychologists, the school counselor, speech and language pathologists, reading and math specialists, occupational therapists, and classroom teachers. The PST meets two times in a six-day cycle to discuss the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students and make recommendations of interventions for support. These interventions are goal driven, provided in a small group or at times, 1:1, and progress monitored. Cycles of intervention last between 6-8 weeks, after which time students are reassessed to determine growth or next steps.

There is extensive support for students who are struggling or performing below grade level. WIN (What I Need) is a time in the day when targeted interventions take place in all classes. Small group instruction is given by the classroom teacher and/or specialists based on specific goals, and students' progress is monitored. In addition to interventions during the school day, Hillside was fortunate to receive federal grant monies that allows us to implement the Hillside Learning Program, before and after school targeted interventions, for students who require additional support.

#### **3b. Students performing above grade level:**

Using data from our universal screeners and classroom assessments, teachers can ensure that all students are being supported at their level. Students may be placed in advanced book clubs or confer with their teacher on an extension topic. In addition, several enrichment activities are offered as a means for students to further explore content areas and deepen understanding. For example, students may be provided additional reflection materials for reading, logic puzzles for mathematics, or problem-based learning activities. All students have access to several digital programs to enhance their learning, including DreamBox, Zearn, Epic, Reading A to Z, and The Hillside Digital Library.. Our students performing above grade level are encouraged to delve into topics of interest and academic exploration.

At Hillside, we believe that every child is capable of higher order thinking and that every child deserves access to rigorous curriculum and instruction. Consequently, we launched our STEAM program, an exploratory program that provides enrichment opportunities for all students. In STEAM, students are provided with tools and resources for problem solving and tasked with finding solutions to everyday challenges. For example, students learn about the forces that affect the changing shape of our earth, and they then create plans to prevent or reduce erosion in our local community. Additionally, after learning about the ways in which animals can change the environment to better meet their needs, our kindergarten scientists make homemade bird suet and use upcycled tea cups to hang the feeders. We use open-ended engineering experiences that connect to students' own lives and communities, such as the second grade study of interdependent relationships in ecosystems when we visit a town restaurant with its own garden, explore the different herbs and vegetables growing, plant harvested seeds from the garden, and then create pizza using the tomatoes grown in that restaurant's garden.

### **3c. Special education:**

We have a variety of instruction, interventions, and assessments, ranging from the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) transitioning to Kindergarten through fourth and fifth grade. For rising Kindergarten students, we consider their needs prior to Kindergarten screening and CPSE-CSE Transition and decide as a team which evaluations will give us information needed to make accurate recommendations.

Reading support is delivered outside of the classroom as a daily “pull out” program with dynamic grouping. Orton-Gillingham based programs are used to target students' discrete skills in decoding and encoding. In Reading Instruction, children are grouped according to their specific goals and needs. Goals are closely monitored and adapted as needed. The team meets weekly to determine if changes need to be made to groupings based on student progress and performance. Teachers are trained in a variety of specialized reading programs. Appropriate programs, including Extended School Year, are matched to students who receive reading instruction to meet their specific needs.

Our Integrated Co-Teach (ICT) classrooms teach in a variety of heterogeneous stations such as team teaching, station teaching, parallel teaching, and alternative teaching with opportunities for homogenous groupings as needed. Students are provided with their individualized accommodations and modifications through small group, differentiated instruction.

Students are given the opportunity to thrive in their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and can receive their related services as a push-in or pull-out service. Every class is equipped with sensory tools, and all students have access to sensory rooms, as well as the hallway sensory paths. Each classroom is also equipped with Phonak Audio systems, sound systems that help students to hear clearly and prevent teachers from having to project their voices.

Hillside’s in-house psychologists provide services for students who have counseling goals on their IEPs. In addition, psychologists administer standardized assessments, which highlight a student's strengths and weaknesses. Hillside also has a school counselor who provides building-level interventions for students with and without special education services as part of the MTSS process.

A district-wide behavioral specialist consults with teachers and provides necessary support to teachers for students. Many teachers at Hillside are CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) trained and are given the tools to identify and deescalate situations. This provides a safe environment for all students at Hillside.

### **3d. English Language Learners, if a special program or intervention is offered:**

There are many special programs and interventions offered for English Language Learners.

At Hillside, we have two main assessments given to our English as a New Language (ENL) students. As a department, we administer the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test twice a year to measure English language growth over time. This information is used to determine the need for scaffolds. The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) exam is given each spring by New York State to measure English language proficiency and determine the number of minutes for mandated ENL services the following year.

Testing accommodations include bilingual glossaries, exams in native languages, extended time, and separate testing location. Additionally, the assessments are provided in the student’s native language or an interpreter is hired for high-stakes exams such as the NYS ELA/MATH/Science exams. Considerations are made for student accents and pronunciations when scoring English measures and appropriate interpretations are provided when words are mispronounced.

ENL staff provide push-in and/or pull-out services based on the individual needs of the student. Classroom teachers collaborate with ENL providers to develop goals, design lesson plans, structure assessments, and scaffold instruction for all students in the classroom space. Vocabulary instruction and native language support are provided to ensure language acquisition and understanding of curriculum content. ENL teachers

are a resource providing ongoing and research-based professional development to teachers and other school personnel, as needed.

ENL teachers continuously acquire new knowledge regarding best practices. Students are provided ongoing and appropriate instruction to increase Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), or academic language. Native language scaffolds are used to support conceptual understanding and bridge the transfer of language. Scaffolding language includes paraphrasing key words, paragraph frames, sentence starters, visuals, modeling, use of realia, and graphic organizers. The goal is to teach content and language to ensure that high expectations are set for all learners.

Our district provides families with communication (phone, e-mail, text message, etc.) in their preferred language. We have an in-house translator for our Spanish-speaking families. Interpreters are hired for other languages as needed. We host ENL nights for families to meet each other and to learn about the resources available to them both at school and in the community.

**3e. Other populations (e.g., migrant, homeless), if a special program or intervention is offered:**

## **PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE**

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### **1. Engaging Students:**

We work to promote a positive environment by explicitly teaching academic, social, and emotional skills including kindness, conflict resolution, emotional management, growth mindset, friendship, bullying prevention, diversity, gender identity, career education, and personal safety. All lessons align to American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Mindset & Behaviors standards and are research-based.

A growth mindset is fostered in children as soon as they arrive at Hillside. Within each reading and writing unit, students work through learning progressions. At the end of each unit, students are provided with the opportunity to reflect to see how they have grown. We celebrate the power of “YET” and even use the language of “Not yet shown” on our report card, recognizing that each child is moving along their own continuum of learning. At Hillside, students know that each staff member is there to help them grow and learn.

Recognizing that students are the best models for other children, we created our fourth grade Safety Patrol. These volunteers meet to discuss the school environment and how they can foster a sense of belonging in our school. Students model social skills in their skits at school-wide assemblies where they create scenarios and act them out to support student understanding. Safety Patrol also visits K-3 classes as guest readers to build rapport with young students. We count on our intermediate students to show our primary students the Hillside way. Students in Grades K-3 look forward to the opportunity to be a member of the Safety Patrol and give back to the community.

Safety Patrol also works to be “bucket fillers” and spread kindness. Under the direction of our school counselor, they plan a Kindness Week each year. During Kindness Week, each day has a different theme, such as Thankful Thursday where students write notes of appreciation to all staff members and recognize their contribution with a Kindness Cart of goodies. Safety Patrol also promotes inclusivity by developing themes for multiple Spirit Weeks during the school year. Theme days are child-friendly and fun including Pajama Day, School Spirit Day, When I Grow Up Day, etc. Our Safety Patrol models the clothing of each day through posters and a video that they share with all Hillside students who learn about the special themed days.

During COVID-19, our school restructured our schedule so that all students could attend school daily either in the morning or afternoon session. We also offered a full-day option to our kindergarten and first graders, our students with IEPs, and our ENL students, as we recognized that engagement and consistency mattered most for these learners. Teachers worked to ensure that all students were able to participate in daily videoconference lessons, whether they were in person or remote. In addition, teachers incorporated break-out rooms and social experiences for the students to keep them connected to one another.

### **2. Engaging Families and Community:**

Hillside recognizes and values our parents/guardians and our community as partners in educating our children. Hillside works closely with our PTSA and SEPTA (Special Education PTA) organizations and hosts regular meetings to share information, brainstorm ideas, discuss initiatives and improvements, and develop programming. Every community member is encouraged to attend, as there are opportunities for engagement and questions. Parents put out a call for agenda items prior to the meetings to identify community concerns. Even during the past two years, which have felt very isolating in some respects, we have worked together to create dynamic meetings with break-out rooms and small-group brainstorming sessions. A recent session focused on the topic of bringing back the joy to our schools for students and staff alike.

The PTSA also supports our schools through the Building Leadership Team where parents, teachers, administrators, and students come together to discuss timely topics. This year, our Building Leadership Team (BLT) is working on planning a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for our newly constructed cafeteria and

classrooms, which will open this spring. This event will bring the community together to celebrate the building that is a result of years of visioning, collaboration, and commitment from varied school and community stakeholders.

At Hillside, our families are an extension of our school. We plan many events during the school day to include parents and guardians: classroom read alouds, grade-level holiday parties, curriculum celebrations, field trips, nature walks, and end-of-year picnics. We also host after-hours events to celebrate our community including a Back to School Picnic, where families have a chance to meet each other, a Newcomer Dinner, a Family Dance Night and Parents as Reading Partner experiences. All of these opportunities allow for parents/guardians to be a part of their child's school experience and fosters a strong home-school partnership.

At the community level, we have partnerships with multiple organizations that support our students' and families' needs. There are a few options for after-school programs to support families with childcare needs: Hastings Community Center, Add Water and Stir, and ASPIRE. Our local Gilda's Club has been a resource to us in supporting our families who are dealing with a child or loved one with cancer. In addition, our students work to give back to the community. Hillside's Safety Patrol organizes a Coat Drive each winter for local families in need, while our Hastings Teachers Association runs a Food Drive to provide food items to a local pantry. In addition, various grade levels work toward community service through special projects. For example, first graders organize a Pajama Program during the holiday season to provide children in need with a warm pair of pajamas and a book to read. We work to teach our students that our Hillside community and our larger Hastings community need love and care from all of us.

### **3. Creating Professional Culture:**

Hillside Elementary School creates a collaborative environment where teachers feel valued and supported. Teachers are provided time to meet as grade level teams to discuss topics related to curriculum, teaching techniques/strategies, pacing of lessons in each subject area, new curriculum materials implemented in the classroom, MTSS data, and special events. Each grade level team has a designated team leader who effectively communicates important information to the rest of the team members. In addition, grade level teams are given common planning time during the prep periods so that colleagues can meet and collaborate.

Hillside is very supportive of students' needs and wants to ensure that all faculty members have the necessary training to be successful with educating our students. Teachers have participated in training on race and bias, gender, and learning differences. In addition, professional learning is continually offered to our team in areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and resources. New teachers are also given the opportunity to work with tenured mentors to help them acclimate to the routines and policies of Hillside; they also have monthly meetings with administrators to build relationships and learn about the culture and expectations of the school.

Hillside hosts an annual Intervention Cafe for teachers where special education and ENL teachers, occupational therapists, speech and language pathologists, physical therapists, psychologists, and counselors share interventions to support all students. Modifications, accommodations, and positive behavior systems are shared with all teachers to implement in their classrooms. Teachers are provided ready-made materials that they can take with them and adapt as needed. There is also a digital share folder where teachers can access the tools, as needed.

When we transitioned to virtual learning, we recognized the need to stay in close communication. Our school leadership team consisting of building administrators and team leaders met twice a week to communicate new information from administration and provide mental health check-ins with all teams. Teams worked collaboratively to move curriculum into the virtual environment, rethink lesson delivery, share best practices and resources, and provide emotional support. In the early stages of the pandemic, teachers divided the subject areas and recorded lessons that were shared across the grade level. This experience truly opened classroom doors, as teachers were literally viewing the instruction of their colleagues.

In addition, teachers were given the opportunity to participate in multiple professional learning sessions. Google Classroom was the primary connection to deliver information to families. Training in Zoom and Google Meet for video conferencing was initiated, along with various resources that would assist in continued learning. Some examples of these resources include Zearn, DreamBox, and other EdLaw 2-d compliant resources.

Hillside Elementary School makes sure our teachers have the opportunity to grow professionally and collaborate often. We are committed to providing our team with the necessary resources to do what is best for children.

#### **4. School Leadership:**

The leadership philosophy at Hillside Elementary is to empower all stakeholders to contribute to a school that reflects the values of the village of Hastings-on-Hudson. Through distributive leadership practices, faculty and community voices inform responsible and actionable steps within the classroom, grade, building, and community. Educators embrace and are supported to pursue passions. This creates authentic learning environments where students experience and benefit from the full potential of their teacher's craft.

Educators at Hillside participate in various committees to further the education and development of the students. When the need arises for curriculum review or a systems change, voice from those responsible for implementing the change are critical. They are the most impactful to implementing change, and closest to analyze and respond. One example was the Reopening Committee during the 2020-2021 school year. Different models were presented by district administrators with one model, AABB, selected for all school levels. However, the model was not optimal for the elementary school students due to lack of consistency. The committee, composed of teachers, staff, and building administrators, developed an alternative half-day model that afforded all students daily access to their teacher. This model was approved by the board and the impact was immediate. Our universal screener data this year reflects a small, yet manageable group of students in need of intervention. This further demonstrates that our team made the right choice for student learning.

The wealth of highly effective professionals at Hillside breathes life and excellence into the school community. The administrative team is organized to supervise and support this educational experience. The Assistant Principal (AP) oversees student discipline (in partnership with families, counselors and support staff), attendance, supervision of lunch monitors, scheduling, day-to-day student contact and support, which include lunch and recess visits, and the necessary communication with staff and parents. This allows the Principal to focus on visioning, curriculum and instruction, building culture, communication with staff, parents, and community; collaboration with administrators across the District, Rivertowns, and region; professional learning, school safety, and day-to-day building decisions. In addition, the Principal heads and participates (in addition to AP) in various committees like the Problem Solving Team (PST), which handles Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports; the Committee for Awareness, Representation, and Equity (CARE) comprised of staff and parents to further our equity and inclusion work; our New Teacher Mentoring to guide new teachers in their first year; EDC Leadership Team (consisting of team leaders), Building Emergency Response Team, and Building Leadership Team (consisting of students, parents, and faculty), among others. In addition, building level administrators maintain close partnerships with our PTSA and SEPTA organizations with the goal of seamless communication. Together, the administrative team supports and maintains building culture, safety, and advocacy for all to succeed.

#### **5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:**

Hillside Elementary School is devoted to prioritizing and addressing the diverse needs and backgrounds of students, families, and staff. It is essential that all members of our school community feel celebrated and honored for who they are and the cultures they represent.

Our Hillside team collaborates with our in-district Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion coordinator to establish vertical articulation that fosters an understanding of culture and community. Each grade level has dedicated time to work together to enhance our curriculum to reflect all cultures in our classrooms. During this time,

educators share mentor texts and create culturally relevant and grade-appropriate lessons.

Each grade level addresses components of the Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education Framework (CR-SE) created by New York State within individual classrooms. All teachers have lovingly built classroom libraries that mirror the many different family structures, cultures, and backgrounds both in Hastings and the greater global community. In addition, each grade at Hillside devotes time to celebrate customs and traditions of cultural groups and countries around the world.

Hillside celebrates Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) History throughout the year. This year, we held our first Racial Equity Week planned by our Committee for Awareness, Representation, and Equity (CARE) composed of teachers, administrators, and parents. Each day, our Safety Patrol began with morning announcements, spotlighting children who are changing the world by challenging injustice. Classes were provided with a Choice Board of activities including a scavenger hunt of “Gamechangers”, a scientific video demonstration on the science of diversity, sports and games from around the world, a diverse booklist, puzzles, and a playlist of songs whose messaging focuses on togetherness, voice, and love.

In addition to our focus on racial equity, Hillside also celebrates gender diversity. Recognizing the growing need for a deeper understanding of the gender spectrum, we created a Gender Team composed of teachers, administrators, psychologists and our school counselor. The Gender Team participated in a multi-day training program and then turnkeyed the learning to both the staff and community at large. Providing this initial learning was instrumental to our communities' understanding and appreciation. We also work with parents in the community to better understand our gender expansive youth so that we can continually adapt to meeting their needs. Important steps that we have taken toward further inclusivity include the creation of an all-gender restroom, reframing our terminology from “boys and girls” to “friends,” choosing classroom texts with non-binary youth as characters, and enhancing our visuals that represent gender expansive children. We are proud of our commitment to ensure that each Hillside child feels affirmed in their identity.

## **PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

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At Hillside Elementary, a culture of respect, curiosity, and acceptance is embedded throughout the school day, from the playgrounds to the classrooms. Students are encouraged to take risks, ask questions, and communicate openly with both adults and peers. For our district's youngest learners, social-emotional learning is an instrumental component to our school's success.

Hillside Elementary School is committed to supporting the “whole” child. We recognize that the social-emotional well being of our students is critical to their availability to learn. In classroom communities, educators get to know their students as individuals beyond the learning environment. While some classes have a daily feelings check-in, others designate a star student of the week to highlight individuals and their accomplishments. There are also peer-to-peer conversations that include the sharing of opinions, thoughts, and feelings. Students are explicitly taught how to be active listeners and participants in discussions. Students also learn how to respond thoughtfully and respectfully to one another using accountable talk within a safe, comfortable and accepting environment.

Hastings parents are dedicated partners in their child's schooling. There is an open line of communication with parents to support their children in all aspects. There are various parent groups that represent our diverse population which provide families an opportunity to be heard and also to learn about others.

Communication between classroom teachers and the school counselor is frequent and ongoing. Monthly lessons with the school counselor as well as the social-emotional curriculum within the classroom, help build self awareness, problem solving skills and inter- and intra- personal skills. Students are able to apply this learning in a variety of situations. Each month there is a focus on specific characteristic traits. By wearing a particular color on a given day in our Colored in Character initiative, students and staff join together to take a stand against bullying and spread a message of respect, courage, curiosity, and kindness.

Hillside prioritizes social-emotional support and dedicates resources to it. Our staff includes psychologists, a behavioral analyst, and a school counselor. These mental health professionals build relationships with our students allowing them to feel safe, cared for, and ready for learning. Critical at a time when student socialization has been limited, additional staffing has also been provided during recess to encourage prosocial behavior and problem solving.

Hillside adapts its social-emotional learning programs and resources as children and children's needs change over time. Our supportive school and Hastings community help to provide a safe home away from home for all students to grow, make friendships, learn, and thrive.