

Hillside Elementary School Improvement Plan, 2011 - 2014

2013 update presented to Needham School Committee, June 4, 2013



“Hillside is an inclusive neighborhood school, Kindergarten through fifth grade, in Needham, Massachusetts. Our neighborhood has expanded to include a successful METCO program, a growing ELL (English Language Learners) population, and the Early Learning Center II program for students with special needs in grades three through five. Our student body is a diverse, creative, and energetic group of 400 or so students. They certainly make the very most of what we have to offer. Our parents have been thanklessly supportive by funding a steady stream of creative arts programs and educational technology into our classrooms. The teachers and staff continue to develop and hone the best possible curriculum for our students while being ever mindful of the importance of creating and maintaining a healthy emotional school environment. At Hillside, it is important that all children and adults feel safe. Just as important is that we all, students, parents, teachers and staff, respect each other and are treated with that same respect.”

- from our school's website which we encourage you to visit at:

<http://hillside.needham.k12.ma.us/>

Hillside School Council members are community representative, Betty Cantor, faculty members, Maria DeCicco and Nicole LaFace parents, Elizabeth Bloom, Laura Fields and Mary Buffinger and principal, Michael Kascak

Hillside Elementary School Improvement Plan, 2011- 2014

COMMUNITY

Overarching goal: Create and sustain the best possible community for all.

Continuum of Learning

- Using assessment to improve instruction
 - MCAS
 - NPS Math assessment
 - IXL, Extra Math
 - F&P Assessments
 - Literacy consultations
 - Spelling Curriculum
- Standards-Based Reporting System
- Parent Initiated programs
 - "Let's Build" Engineering
 - Literacy Evenings
 - Program on Disabilities (POD)
- Connection Clusters, METCO Mentor Program and Buddy Classes
- Teacher evaluation pilot
- Continued development of SEL
 - *Lost at School*
 - *How Children Succeed*
 - *Wonder*
- Lesley Internship Program

Collaboration and Student Leadership

- Lesley Internship Program
- ELC II Program
- Community Service Learning
 - Student Council
 - Jump Rope for Heart
 - UNICEF Water Program
 - Green Team
 -
- Student Role
 - SSD and Water Brigade
 - Student Council
 - Yearbook
 - Thank you Committee
 - 5th Grade Tour Guides
- Olin College
 - 4th Grade Engineering
 - 3rd Grade POD
- First Lego League
- Connection Clusters, METCO Mentor Program and Buddy Classes
- Hillside/Eliot Basketball Game

Campus

- Hillside/Mitchell Building Project
- HSAC
 - Nutrition grant
- Safety issues
 - SSD
 - Security changes
 - Safe Routes
 - Walk-to-School Initiative
 - Carpool Committee
- Learning Garden
 - Water Brigade
 - 1st Grade vertical garden
 - Composting Project
 - Outdoor Learning Center grant
- Expanded use of technology for global connections

Hillside School's overarching goal is to create and sustain the best possible learning community

for the three groups of constituents that define our institution; our staff, our families, and of course, our diverse, creative, and energetic student population, which includes a successful METCO program, a growing ELL (English Language Learners) population, and the ELC (Early Learning Center II) program for students with special needs in grades three through five.

It is through community building that we can articulate and organize three dynamic goals of our School Improvement Plan. We have spent a great deal of time creating programs and protocols which help us achieve these goals and the sections that follow define and detail some of the projects we have, or will be undertaking, to meet our needs. Our three school sub-goals for the most part mirror Needham's four district goals as follows:

Hillside School Goal #3: Continue to run a safe and successful school program in an aging facility that has inadequate interior and exterior space and is in need of renovation.

District Goal #4: Ensure infrastructure supports district values and learning goals. To build and carry out a sustainable plan for financial, building, technological, and human resources that enables our learning goals and is responsive to student and school needs.

Hillside School Goal #2: Collaboration with our school constituencies, other Needham Schools and other outside institutions to develop and promote student leadership and expanded learning opportunities.

District Goal #2: Develop the social and emotional skills of all students. To ensure that students have the social and emotional competencies that enable them to be self-aware, to have social and relationship skills, to self-manage, and to make responsible decisions.

District Goal #3: Promote Active Citizenship. To ensure students have the knowledge and skills necessary to participate productively in the local and global communities and commit them to action as learners and citizens.

Hillside School Goal #1: Create and improve through regular review, a Continuum of Learning that matches the needs of all learners.

District Goal #1: Advance Standards Based Learning. To refine and continue to put into practice a system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that enables each student to be engaged in challenging academic experiences that are grounded in clearly defined standards.

Note on presentation format: 2013 updates appear in blue italic font and are added below the text of original School Improvement Plan and second year update. Original text for 2011 is in traditional black font and text from 2012 update is in black italic.

Hillside School Goal #1: Create and improve through regular review, a Continuum of Learning that matches the needs of all learners.

Hillside teaching staff values the use of effective assessments to improve instruction in all areas. System-wide curriculum initiatives (such as the new Think Math! program and redesigning of some elementary science units) are implemented with the goal to “consistify” best practices through the five elementary schools while still honoring Hillside’s individual school culture. The Professional Learning Community (PLC) model is the best vehicle to aid our teachers in the use of **assessment data for improving instruction**. Our faculty meeting schedule has been redesigned to provide more time for teachers to meet with colleagues to review our students’ progress on MCAS (<http://hillside.needham.k12.ma.us/main/documents/Our%20School/Hillside-2009-reportcard.pdf>). We have also started to gather and look at data from the system-wide reading assessments from the past five years and will plan to do the same with mathematics data starting next year. Three years ago, Hillside piloted the **Standards-Based Reporting** system now being used in all third to fifth grades in Needham. Standards-Based Reporting better reflects the type of teaching and learning happening in all our classrooms and has also served as an impetus to help our teachers develop authentic assessments which can better inform our instruction. We look forward to expanding this to the lower grades.

Hillside third and fourth grade students have individual accounts to an online program called IXL (<http://www.ixl.com/>). IXL provides additional math practice for children by offering visual representations, word problems, interactive activities, and the opportunity to learn from mistakes by pressing an “explanation” button. IXL can be accessed by students at home or in our classrooms.

IXL skills are aligned to the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework (Common Core), the 2008 Massachusetts Preschool & Kindergarten Learning Experiences, the 2004 Supplement to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, the 2003 Massachusetts Preschool & Kindergarten Learning Experiences, and the 2000 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Because the skills are correlated so well with our state standards, IXL is a natural complement to ThinkMath! and it provides additional preparation for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). To track student skill progress, IXL provides easy-to-read reports and e-mail updates for teachers. Teachers are able to identify “trouble spots” and areas of mastery for their students. - Heather Dummett, Third grade teacher

As a complement to the NPS commitment to on-going professional development in literacy, the Hillside School staff furthered its professional learning with Tammy Mulligan, a literacy consultant (<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/department31.cfm>), who was hired by the NPS to teach two graduate level courses, Teaching Effective Small Group Literacy Instruction for Grades K-2 (summer 2011) and Teaching Effective Small Group Literacy Instruction for Grades 3-6 (summer 2010, 2011). Approximately ten faculty members chose to participate in this learning, as well as the additional voluntary Professional Learning Community work. As a result of the positive learning experienced by these staff members, Hillside School hired Tammy Mulligan to spend two days at Hillside in Spring 2012, working with all classroom teachers by grade level on issues pertinent to their grade level needs. - Carol-Ann Hurley, Literacy Teacher

This year, in anticipation of the new DESE teacher evaluation system which goes into effect for all educators next fall, homeroom teachers at each grade level developed educational goals for themselves (as a grade level team) and their students. They did this by delving more deeply into the data collected from our literacy and math assessments. And as a school, we tried to synchronize grade level schedules to enable teachers and support staff to group students from different homerooms with similar instructional needs. Teachers met in grade level groups to develop plans to address the particular needs of their students based on the assessment data and once again meeting time will be set aside for teacher teams to share both their successes and any concerns that arose while implementing their plans with next years’ teachers at both the end of this year and the beginning of next. Some examples of

actions which came from this vertical grade articulation about the learning needs of students this year included expanding the IXL program to include all fifth graders and reassignment of literacy and Title 1 support.

Hillside's Teacher Support Team (TST) revamped its protocol this year and identified a number of areas we need to address in the near future. Many logistical pieces of the TST process were successfully streamlined, and there are tighter, more accessible systems for documenting concerns and remediation in place. The greatest need we see as an area warranting attention is math support. A budget request for a math coach was granted after the successful pilot of one at the Broadmeadow School and Hillside has just hired a half time math coach for next year. Two other budget requests (and approvals!) will help us in this area as well. The ELL tutors will now be part of Unit A and the teacher leader positions on our TST will now be funded with stipends.

With a goal of "training the trainer" in mind, seven faculty members, one from each grade level and one Special Education teacher will join the Principal in participating in the "Instruction for All Students" course next fall (<http://www.justaskpublications.com/n4allworkshop.htm>). This series of workshops "begins with an overview of the initiatives influencing our thinking as we implement instructional programs that lead to the achievement of high standards by all students. An important goal of the workshop series is for participants to become comfortable with and build skills at using the standards-based planning process." - Michael Kascak, Principal

A viable and dynamic **Social Emotional Learning** curriculum plays an integral part in all children's education. Three years ago, Hillside staff used training from MARC, the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center, to address concerns about bullying in schools. NPS has developed a systemwide **anti-Bully policy and implementation plan** (http://rwd1.needham.k12.ma.us/student_development/Bullying_Prevention). Hillside teachers are implementing this curriculum in all classrooms. We have created and long maintained other curricula and programs to help students develop strong, resilient social skills. These include our METCO Mentoring, buddy classes, and drumming up character program. Our Connections Clusters Program, now in its second year, is the most recent and very successful example of our SEL curriculum.

Hillside School gains a valuable perspective from the educational diversity which our ELC students bring to our school. The skills and strategies which our teachers cultivate for supporting the specific needs of ELC student, inevitably prove to be useful pedagogical approaches for all learners. For example, over the summer of 2010, Hillside and Eliot School staff read Dr. Ross Greene's **Lost at School**, a book about preventing children with behavioral challenges from falling through the cracks (<http://www.lostatschool.org>). Staff then spent a professional day with Dr. Greene's colleague, Dr. Stuart Ablon, the Director of Think: Kids in the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital (<http://www.thinkkids.org/about/who.aspx>). The strategies gained through these experiences are now a part of our teachers' resources.

*The SEL initiatives that continue to be part of our school wide programing include METCO Mentoring, Buddy Classes, and Drumming Up Character Program. Our Connections Clusters Program, now in its third year, continues to be a successful example of our SEL curriculum and very well liked by students. We are also in our second year of using the Collaborative Problem Solving Approach adapted from Ross Green's book **Lost at School** as a vehicle for addressing students' emotional/behavioral difficulties/challenges. Teachers in K-4 continue to teach the "Second Step" curriculum and Grade 5 uses the "Steps to Respect" curriculum (<http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/ssp/early-learning/>).*

This year the Anti-Bullying curriculum, which was piloted last year is being fully implemented at all grade levels. This includes three lessons to teach and practice the concepts of recognizing, refusing and reporting bullying. Incident report forms are being used to report and track potential bullying and problematic situations. Our Hillside guidance counselor presented to the PTC parents these Anti-Bullying initiatives. In addition to these lessons, the media specialist specifically leads two sessions about Cyber-Bullying to all grade levels.

All grade levels are continuing to teach social thinking lessons such as Whole Body Listening and Expected vs. Unexpected Behavior adapted from Michelle Garcia Winner's "Social Thinking" curriculum (<http://www.socialthinking.com/>) in order to create more consistent language in our school. A grant was written to obtain posters and books to teach and reinforce these lessons and the materials are now used in the classrooms in an ongoing way. - Margaret Petrovich, School Counselor and George Goneconto, Second Grade Teacher

Hillside, Eliot and Mitchell Schools' PTCs are sponsoring an evening with Dr. Robert Evans in the fall of 2011. This evening will focus on the importance of **resiliency** in children (http://www.robevans.org/Pages/pubBook_FamilyMatters.htm).

Last November, the Hillside and Eliot PTCs sponsored a well-attended lecture given by noted child psychologist Dr. Robert Evans. Dr. Evans focused his remarks on "the three things children need": (1) nurture, (2) structure, and (3) latitude- the freedom to learn from experience. He emphasized that children are naturally resilient and encouraged the parents present to refrain from leaping to fix things for their children before giving them the valuable learning opportunity to problem solve on their own. He reassured those in the audience that they should put less pressure on themselves because they are already "the good ones. The bad parents don't come to these things!" - Elizabeth Bloom, parent and School Council Member

The Hillside Community continues their commitment to SEL experiences for their students. Wonder, written by R.J. Placio, is a story about Auggie, who has a facial deformity, which chronicles his journey through fifth grade (<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/11387515-wonder>) . This fall, all fifth graders listened to the story and the staff facilitated discussions about the book. The story helped students to expand their SEL by making meaningful connections to the story.

To support our continued community dialogue about fostering resiliency, members of our school Council and grade level leaders read, How Children Succeed by Paul Tough. Tough identifies character traits, such as "grit, self control, and self confidence" that help students to persevere when confronted with academic and social challenges in the school environment. (<http://www.paultough.com/the-books/how-children-succeed/>). The Hillside Community supports opportunities for students that facilitate character development. - Betty Cantor, School Council member

Hillside and High Rock School staff are piloting a **new teacher evaluation system** for the Needham Public School System based on current research and work done by Kim Marshall (<http://www.marshallmemo.com>). Faculty have attended two workshops with Mr. Marshall this spring, 2011, and will continue professional development in this initiative next year.

The model developed by Kim Marshall consists of multiple classroom mini-observations conducted over the course of the school year. The mini-observations are conducted 12-15 times during the course of the year and each observation is approximately 10 minutes. The hallmark of the model of mini-observations is the time the administrator spends with the teacher engaged in a deep conversation about professional practice. Within 24-48 hours of the observation, the administrator and teacher meet to reflect on student learning. The summative evaluation is a rubric-based assessment, completed by both the teacher and administrators, which assesses a teacher's performance based on a number of standards.

The purpose of the pilot is to show the relationship between mini-observations and teacher performance and to determine if a system of mini-observations has a positive impact on teacher performance.

The pilot was implemented at the Hillside School in September 2011 and will continue until the end of the school year. While participation for most Hillside teachers was optional, every teacher evaluated this year opted to participate in the pilot.

On April 5, administrators, teachers and members of the original teacher evaluation study committee will convene to discuss the impact of the mini observation model. A survey will be developed and administered to all teachers and administrators who participated in the pilot to collect useful data as to the effectiveness of the model. - Tom Campbell, NPS Director of Personnel

After a successful pilot, the mini-observation model continued at Hillside and High Rock for staff without professional status and the other half of tenured teachers who were not a part of last year's pilot. The one change made was the use of the DESE model rubrics consisting of standards, indicators and elements that define good teaching. This year, three Hillside staff members also piloted the complete DESE evaluation system. These three colleagues participated in the full implementation of the DESE model developing goals, gathering evidence of student achievement, and being observed using the mini observation protocol. In addition, all teachers in the pilot participated in several focus groups and completed two surveys designed to collect feedback about the pilot. All data collected from the focus groups and surveys will be used to help shape the implementation of the new evaluation model for all educators this September. - Tom Campbell, Director of Personnel

Hillside School Goal #2: Collaborate with our school constituencies, other Needham Schools and other outside institutions to develop and promote student leadership and expanded learning opportunities.

Collaboration with other schools in NPS and our school's own three constituencies, students, staff and families, is integral to Hillside's community as evidenced in many of the initiatives outlined in many of our first and third school goals.

Collaborating with outside institutions is also valued and promoted at Hillside.

Hillside's METCO Friends and Family Program seeks to engage Boston and Needham children in positive, healthy and semi-structured activities on early release days. These activities bring the two Hillside communities together for fun outside of school time. Our goals have been to raise/expand diversity awareness by bringing in different talent (i.e. Guy Peartree) and help children form new friendships that might not be possible throughout the typical school day. The program historically had been funded by a grant money from the Hillside PTC. This year, the program has been changed to include all children even if Needham families had not signed up to host METCO students. We felt the change was important since Hillside has such a large number of METCO students and we realized it might not be possible to follow the model set for the program in other schools, to match every child with a family. We believe by bringing the entire school community together friendships can form naturally without families feeling the pressure to commit to hosting a child in their home every month and parents not knowing the families their children are with each month. This year we continued to utilize the Lesley Interns to assist the program along with the support personnel from Hillside and the many, many parent volunteers from both Boston and Needham. Thank you for being such a welcoming community! - Helen Howard and Rebecca Young, parent co-chairs

The **Lesley@Hillside Collaborative Teacher Training Program** (<http://hillside.needham.k12.ma.us/main/Page%201>) has continued to expand. We currently have nine interns this year and are at capacity for next year. The program is now financially self-supported. The graduate interns are a valuable resource for our school. Their presence at Hillside enables us to lower student teacher ratios (particularly in younger classrooms), be less reliant on outside substitutes, and expanded professional development opportunities to our faculty. It also affords the administration the opportunity to thoroughly review potential candidates for future classroom teaching positions in our school and district. So far the program has produced twenty-seven new elementary school teachers, seven of whom are currently working in NPS.

Eight new interns are scheduled to enter our program this summer. Recent changes in DESE requirements for teaching licensure produced challenges for teacher training programs throughout the Commonwealth and our Lesley@Hillside Collaborative was positioned to overcome two of these challenges with resources already well established in our school. We were able to create and staff a new required course, "Classroom Management and Behavior Support" with our own talented faculty whose course of study is used as an exemplar for other collaboratives. Our ELL program specialist (soon to be teacher) was able to augment the university's ELL instruction course as it transitions to the more stringent ELL requirements for all core teachers. - Michael Kascak, Principal and Program Director

Hillside **Program on Disabilities (POD)** is a long-standing education initiative that presents programming on different disabilities to students at each grade level. The goal of the program is to promote awareness of people who have disabilities, including vision, hearing, physical challenges, learning differences and intellectual disabilities. In partnership with Hillside staff, parent volunteers present one hour interactive workshops at each grade level. In addition, guest speakers visit each grade and speak to the children about their personal experiences with disabilities. Hillside has shared its curricula and resources with the other Needham elementary schools as they develop similar disability awareness programs. - Anne Weinstein, parent volunteer

Hillside POD had an incredible year of reflecting back and pushing forward. We were able to bring back former BU hockey player and disability rights activist Travis Roy to speak to a brand new generation of Hillside students through a generous NCOD grant. Mr. Roy discussed the value of setting and achieving goals

through hard work and perseverance and on treating everyone with respect. Recognizing the increasing role and advancements that technology plays in supporting people with disabilities, we also partnered with Olin College students to create a POD version of Olin's Engineering by Design. We invited two community members from the NCOD, Elaine Saunders, who is blind, and Dale Wise, who uses a prosthetic leg. Our third graders had an incredible Engineering by Design session in which they interviewed our guests, designed and built a model of something to assist them in daily living, and then presented their groups' ideas to fellow classmates, teachers and guests. These two programs rounded out our regular curricula for a memorable year. - Anne Weinstein, parent

Hillside's POD continues to play a vital role in providing our students with a positive experience that educates them about people who have disabilities. This year's highlights were our Engineering by Design sessions as well as Skyping with a Hillside alumnus with a spinal cord injury. With advancements in technology playing an ever increasing role in supporting people with disabilities, we once again partnered with Olin College students to create a POD version of Olin's Engineering by Design. Two community members from the NCOD, Elaine Saunders, who is blind, and Dale Wise, who uses a prosthetic leg, were interviewed by our 3rd grade students who designed, built and presented their models of something to assist our guests in their daily living. Zack Weinstein, a Hillside alum, joined us via Skype and gave our students an amazingly honest and personal insight into the daily life of a quadriplegic and how his disability hasn't prevented him from fulfilling his dream of being an actor. - Michelle Hoffmeister, parent

The Hillside School is represented on the newly formed districtwide **Community Service Learning (CSL)** Committee. The committee is comprised of a representative from each school and is working to gain greater understanding of CSL and its relationship to the schools in Needham. The group is currently working to develop goals and plans for how best to approach CSL in all the schools. In addition, the committee is reviewing the possible development and implementation of new community service learning projects as well as the review and possible refinement of those projects currently in place. Hillside has a proud history of providing many community service and community service learning projects linking our school community to those in need. A few examples of our projects are the UNICEF water project, the sock collection for the homeless and our ties to the Needham food pantry. - *Martha Miceli, teacher and Hillside Service Learning Representative*

In its second year, the district wide CSL committee continues to work on connecting schools, sharing ideas, working on getting the word out about projects in different buildings, educating and supporting staff in our own buildings as well as working and learning together about the many facets of CSL. At Hillside many of our established CSL projects continue. There is a wide variety of projects targeting a variety of support for others. The projects range in scale from large such as the Unicef Water Project (<http://hillside.needham.k12.ma.us/Technology/Water%20Project>) to the smaller scale recent project of collecting goods and items in need for the MSPCA animal shelter, with many projects in between.

As a matter of fact, and as mentioned in a recent Needham Times story, "Hillside's UNICEF Water Project won a state award for Excellence in Energy and Environmental Education, and has expanded each year since its inception. Social media is a new component of this year's program, introduced by parent volunteer Seth Bloom, who helped the school set up a blog about the water project—located at hillsideh2o.tumblr.com—and set up a Twitter account, @HillsideH2O."

We are in the process of updating our list of all projects in the building, some of the continuing "in between" projects are: monthly donations delivered to the Needham Food Pantry, Hat and Mitten Collection, Coat Collection, Sock It To Us~socks for the homeless, on-campus composting and National Jump Rope for Heart (<http://www.aahperd.org/jump/>) which Hillside has participated in for the last eight consecutive years . Each project naturally lends itself to adding new components and tying into curriculum in different ways. - Martha Miceli, Teacher

There have been numerous additions to Service Learning Projects during the 2012-2013 school year as well as continuations of projects done in the past which include: the TAP Water Project (4th grade and 2nd grade buddy classrooms); Jump Rope for Heart (school wide); monthly food drive for the Needham Food Pantry (grade 3); Kindergarten coat drive, mitten/hat drive, 100

boxes of Mac & Cheese collection in celebration of the 100th day of school—all for the Needham Community Council; Hillside Green Team (facilitated by the 4th and 5th graders after school to promote recycling, education, cleaning up parts of Needham and facilitating the walk to school initiative).

New service learning this year has included: Grade 1 indoor garden (which was done in collaboration with the Science Center, intended to donate the food grown but unfortunately, the garden needed to be replanted and better positioned in the school, and we are hoping for a successful crop to donate this Spring!); Random Acts of Kindness (school wide, facilitated in Cluster Connections to promote cross grade positive interactions in the Hillside community).

The Hillside Student Council is in their second year and have started a number of collections including Pennies for Pets (money to go to the Dedham Animal Shelter); Well Wish Notes (notes written by the school to be placed in backpacks for Cradles to Crayons, partnered with a former Hillside student who is now in the 8th grade); Hurricane Sandy Red Cross Collection; Rally for Rosie's Place (advertised for Volante Farms to buy and donate veggies and fruit to Rosie's Place); My Stuff Bags (in collaboration with a NHS student to collect items to go in bags for foster students, toothbrushes, notebooks, etc.); and the newest collection: One Fund Boston (collection for Boston area hospitals, starting 4/30/13).

Future directions include more of the curriculum to go along with some of the community services to evolve the projects into more formal service learning to better enhance students' understanding of their endeavors. - Margaret Petrovich, School Counselor and Community Service Learning Coordinator

As service learning projects continue to grow and develop, a significant new one was begun in 2012, The Hillside Student Council. While this idea is new and evolving, thirteen fifth and fourth grade students are being afforded the opportunity to support our very own Hillside Community as well as reaching beyond ourselves. Most recently they organized a Pajama Drive done in conjunction with the Boston Bruins to support Cradles to Crayons (<http://cradlestocrayons.org/boston>), an organization which supplies clothing, school supplies and toys to homeless and low-income children. This was made possible through a collaboration with a former Hillside student, Liam Cunningham, who now works for Cradles to Crayons. Also, students have written letters like the ones to the PTC asking for more playground equipment or the Parks and Recreation Department asking for the playground to be reseeded. They're now in collaboration with another former Hillsider, Brendan Chambers, working to help him achieve his Eagle Scout status. Many of the ideas that the Student Council pursues come from the Suggestion Box that has been quite a success in giving a voice to the Hillside student community. - Raylene Roberts and Maria DeCicco, Teachers

The 2012- 2013 Hillside Student Council is comprised of twelve members from the fourth and fifth grades. It is proudly in its second year and has proven to be a powerful voice for all members of the school community. Many of the projects that the Council members take on come from suggestions students leave in "The Suggestion Box". This year alone, they collected PJs in collaboration with Cradles for Crayons, collected money for an animal shelter in Dedham, and spear-headed numerous Hillside Spirit Wear days, created bulletin boards, but more importantly, they are practicing their public-speaking and leadership skills. - Maria DeCicco, Teacher

Hillside and Mitchell Schools have also requested that stipends, on par with those at the secondary level, for the elementary faculty who facilitate Student Councils be included in next year's budget. - Michael Kascak, Principal

Students are exposed to science, technology, engineering, and math (**STEM**) programs in the upper grades at Hillside School. In fourth grade, students visit Olin College and participate in evaluating toys built by the first year engineering students. As part of this activity, the college students explain the design/engineering process. Afterwards, the students have the opportunity to tour the labs. Also, fourth and fifth graders have the opportunity to join a FIRST Lego League Team. **FIRST Lego League** is an international organization that promotes science, engineering, problem solving and teamwork. This year, Hillside's Team Lightning had a very good showing at the State Competition at WPI in Worcester. We look forward to forming new teams next year. - *Laura Miller, Teacher*

STEM programs, (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), continues to grow at Hillside School. Fourth and fifth grade have the opportunity to participate in FIRST (For Inspiration of Science and Technology) Lego Leagues (<http://www.firstlegoleague.org/>). Two new teams were formed; the Electrons and the Kreaterz. In late December, the teams presented their robots and projects to the fourth and fifth graders. Furthermore, fourth grade students visited Olin College and participated in evaluating toys built by the first year engineering students. As part of this activity, the college students explain the design/engineering process. Afterwards, students have the opportunity to tour the labs. Also, in fourth grade, Olin students presented two different engineering activities; hovercrafts and wind up cars. Lastly, Olin students gave a workshop to our Lesley Interns and fourth graders on the use of the Lego Mindstorm. - Laura Miller, teacher and School Council member

Another new FLL team was formed this year, 2012-13. The Tech Titans, who participated in their first competition in the fall, is composed of five fourth and one fifth grader and they look forward to competing again next year. The Electrons and the Kreaterz went on to High Rock. In early May, there was a districtwide informational FLL meeting at the high school to reach out to all students and families in Needham. - Laura Miller, teacher

To further enhance the existing science curriculum, Hillside piloted a new program entitled "Let's Build: Engineering Fun for Kids." Designed and delivered in conjunction with Needham's Science Center, Let's Build offers exciting, innovative and age-appropriate engineering activities to our students. Family and community volunteers, fully trained and working in teams, run these supplemental engineering activities in the classroom.

This May, our Kindergartners experimented with the principles of buoyancy by testing materials and using their findings to build boats able to float plastic bears. Second graders reinforced their understanding of wind power by building sails for boats and blades for a milk carton windmill. Next year, the program will expand to encompass all grades, K through 5.

Each spring, Let's Build plans to run an engineering design challenge for each class. Each design challenge is connected to and supports the existing science curriculum. Activities across grades will be unified by a focus on energy sources, such as wind, water power, and electricity. For more information visit letsbuilengineering.org. For photos of Let's Build in action, please visit the Hillside PTC photo gallery at: <https://picasaweb.google.com/118333089499343131556/>

The Hillside Family Engineering Extravaganza is scheduled for October of 2013 with the goal of enhancing and promoting 21st century skills as well as supporting students in the belief that engineering is both accessible and enjoyable. Funded in part through an NEF grant, the Extravaganza will offer about a dozen hands-on engineering activities including "Protect the Egg," "Build Your Own Bubble Wand," "Save the Three Little Pigs," and "The Science of Safety." Families will move from activity to

activity, working together to find and build solutions to each problem. These activities will become reusable “kits” so that the Extravaganza can return to Hillside in future years and/or be implemented by other elementary schools.

The Extravaganza will also include Hillside's First Lego League Team, the High School Girls' Robotics Team, The Hackers, as well as students from Olin College who will display their projects and speak with participants. - Liz Lee, parent and “Let's Build” Co-Chairperson

In addition to the FLL and Let's Build program, a few other STEM initiatives were successfully implemented in a variety of forums at Hillside this year. This year's annual Literacy Night focused on women who write about science with guest speaker, Carolyn Cinami DeCristofano (<http://www.carolyndecristofano.com/childrens-books/>), and a lunch group was established for girls to spend time talking about math and doing math games. Ms. DeCristofano came back to Hillside in early May to coincide with two more STEM events, a PTC-funded visit from astronauts, Suni Williams and Aki Hoshide, and an NEF-funded program, Sky Connection (<http://www.theskyconnection.com/about.html>), which brought an EduTarium (a classroom-in-a-classroom) that enabled our fourth graders the opportunity to “visualize and interact with subject matter of all types in ways that are impossible with traditional learning aids.” The program connected to both the fourth grade science and social studies curriculum maps. - Michael Kascak, Principal

The Hillside Talent Show gives students an opportunity to showcase their talents to peers, teachers and families. Through the audition process, students learn valuable life skills on how to manage expectations and compete gracefully. To build community, the Talent Show provides many opportunities for students to participate in a variety of non-performance roles as promoters, ushers, backstage crew and announcers. The Hillside Talent Show is a popular, long-standing tradition at Hillside. An in-school teacher-run event for many years, it was adopted by the PTC as a new fundraising opportunity in 2011. In years one and two as a PTC fundraiser, the event raised approximately \$1,200 and \$1,250 respectively from ticket sales and concessions. - Karen Dasey, Parent

An example of what teamwork can achieve, the Parent/Teacher Basketball Game is a true collaborative effort—between the PTCs of Hillside and Eliot and the parents and faculty of both schools. The two PTCs share all aspects of planning and executing the event—including coordinating game day activities, publicity, ticket sales, team uniforms, securing facilities and volunteers, purchasing spirit items and securing vendors. The profits are equitably shared. For the players, the game is an opportunity for parents and teachers to interact in a fun and different way, and be a source of pride for the students in the stands. The Hillside vs Eliot Parent/Teacher Basketball Game was launched in spring 2011 to raise money for the schools' PTCs—while promoting the values of teamwork and community. Modeled after the long-running annual game between Broadmeadow and Mitchell schools, the 1st Hillside-Eliot fundraiser was an instant success—generating a profit for both PTCs and drawing over 1,000 fans to the Needham High School gym. The 2nd annual game on March 9, 2012 built on that success, packing the gym to capacity and raising more than \$4,500, a 15% increase over 2011. - Karen Dasey, Parent

In 2013, the third annual Hillside Eliot Faculty-Parent Basketball Game continued to raise money for the schools' PTCs in a collaborative and spirited way. Despite needing to be rescheduled due to a snowstorm, both schools' faculty and families packed the gym to capacity. As parents and faculty provided an entertaining game for the students and families in the stands, one of the

highlights was honoring Ms. Wilcox, the retiring principal of Eliot. Building on the success of past years, revenue from the event increased by almost 15%!

In summary, the uniqueness of each project brings depth and vision to the learning of all our students. The generosity of the Hillside Community coupled with the hard work of students and staff to support these projects speaks to the camaraderie, understanding and the commitment we have to making a difference in the lives of others and supporting our own learning.

Hillside School Goal #3: Continue to run a safe and successful school program in an aging facility that has inadequate interior and exterior space and is in need of renovation.

Hillside parents have organized fundraisers and volunteered to create and maintain ornamental and interactive learning gardens around our campus. The **Hillside PTC Playground Committee** was formed in the summer of 2010 because the current play structure at Hillside, lovingly named the “Green Machine,” is more than 16 years old and in dire need of repair. We began fundraising efforts for the playground by reaching out to neighbors of Hillside School in August 2010, and received a number of very generous contributions. In September 2010, we made an appeal to all Hillside families to donate to the Playground Fund. The response has been phenomenal. To date we have received donations from over 80 Hillside families and from three businesses. We have raised \$20,742.00 to date. We recently met with a representative from Landscape Structures, the company that designed our current play structure, to discuss options for retrofitting the playground. This would involve removing many components that are worn and in disrepair and replacing them with new and exciting play features. We are awaiting more formal proposals from the company and will be exploring many options. We hope to have a new and improved playground installed at Hillside this year. - Joanna Herrera, Hillside parent

The Hillside PTC Playground Committee was formed in the summer of 2010 with the goal of repairing and rebuilding the 16 year old play structure at Hillside school. Fundraising efforts began in August 2010 and through generous donations from numerous Hillside families and neighbors, several Needham community organizations, businesses and even a few national corporations, we were able to raise a little over \$31,000 to retrofit the Hillside playground.

The design phase began in early Spring of 2011. In order to select the play features that would be incorporated into the new structure, we took into account suggestions from Hillside Physical Education teacher, Rob Tatro, and the school occupational therapist, Jill Oetheimer. The new playground components were installed at the end of August 2011, right before the start of school in September. Several of the most popular new play features are the Roller Slide, which provides a sensory sliding experience, the Corner Climber (a rock climbing wall) and the Lollipop Climber.

After covering the cost of the new, retrofitted playground at Hillside, there was a small amount of funding left over. We offered these funds to Mr. Tatro so that he could replace several pieces of old/broken gym equipment and purchase new play items to be used either during P.E. classes or recess. To date Mr. Tatro has been able to purchase two new basketball hoops and two new volleyball standards. He also replaced two pawns in the giant chess set that is used at recess. There is still a small amount of money left and Mr. Tatro is deciding how best to use it for the Hillside children. - Joanna Herrera and Gabi Gutierrez, Hillside parents

Though our building’s infrastructure is limited and outdated, **effective use of technology** remains a high priority. Four years ago, Hillside was selected to be a Smart Showcase School by SMART Technologies, maker of interactive white boards. We were awarded \$25,000 worth of hardware, mostly in the form of SMARTboards. Additional boards were allocated by the ETC (NPS’s Educational Technology Center) and more were purchased through generous PTC grants. We now have SMARTboards in all second through fifth grade classrooms as well as one in our Media center and one portable “floater” for specialists, Kindergarten and the first grades. Last year, the ETC provided us with a portable laptop cart which holds 25 ebooks and includes wireless access to the internet. This year we received a second cart so there is now one on each floor. These carts are used in grades three through five on a regular basis.

The faculty and administrators at Hillside have decided to pilot the use of personal e-reader devices in school for fifth grade students. Students have been using the devices during independent reading time and have taken a survey on Survey Monkey to report on the pros and cons of using e-readers in the classroom. Of the 35 students surveyed, 60% reported that using e-readers has changed the way they read books. The ability to use text-to-speech, the dictionary, highlighting features, and to change font

size all scored high in the survey as added benefits of using e-readers. We also installed mounted SMARTBoard systems to two more classrooms and need just one more to have one in every first through fifth grade classroom. We hope to have the last one installed early next fall.- Maria DeCicco and Michael Kascak, School Council Members

The Green Team at the Hillside School is a growing and thriving group made up of very enthusiastic fourth and fifth graders. The group has grown over the past three years from 10 to 25 children. They have tackled many important green objectives particularly important to their specific surroundings. For example, they have made “No Idling” signs that are displayed in parking and pick-up areas. They encourage and participate in walk-to-school days. They have educated all of the grade levels on ways to cut down on electricity in the classrooms. They have also increased the recycling of plastic and paper through out the school. This year the team worked with the maintenance staff and the teachers to develop a clever reduce/reuse campaign about pencils that are lost around the school. The kids on the Green Team feel empowered by being able to make a difference in their own homes and school. They also feel that they are doing their part in helping the earth and our environment as a whole. We believe in our motto: small changes make a big difference! - *Tracilee Messina, parent and committee leader*

The team started out this school year with a bang. They decorated the bulletin board in the entrance way to the school with examples of what it means to be Green. The children’s commitment is overwhelming. We meet with a teacher, two assistant teachers and 23 students every other Friday before school. They encourage and participate in walk-to-school days. They have educated each grade level on ways to cut down on electricity in the classroom. They have also increased the recycling of plastic and paper throughout the school.

The Green Team has gone beyond the school campus to help the community at large. We have adopted a trail in Needham and will be helping to maintain its integrity. With the Green Teams encouragement the school has been able to reach its goal of having 40 families sign up for the 10% Energy Challenge. This is where families promise to decrease their home energy usage by 10%. The kids on the Green Team feel empowered by being able to make a difference in their own homes, community and school. They also feel that they are doing their part in helping the earth and our environment as a whole. We believe in our motto: “small changes make a big difference!” - Tracilee Messina, parent and committee leader

This year, 2012 -2013, the Green Team is back and more popular than ever. There are 25 students from grades four and five. We meet every other Friday before school. The theme for this year was Reducing your carbon footprint. The Green Team investigated exactly what a carbon footprint means and simple ways for the Hillside student body to reduce theirs. We have an overwhelming population of students who walk or bike to school. For those students who are unable to walk, the playground has a loop that they walk upon arriving at school.

The Green Team was visited by the Environmental Action Club from the Nobles and Greenough School. The children were very excited to see students at the high school level actively and creatively helping the environment. Our Green Team feel empowered by being able to make a difference in their own homes, community and school. They also feel that they are doing their part in helping the earth and our environment as a whole. We believe in our motto: small changes make a big difference! - Tracilee Messina, parent and committee leader

Kindergarten helpers, yearbook committee, the garden watering brigade and school tour guides are some of the **citizenship opportunities** Hillside students look forward to volunteering for when they are in fifth grade. The Student Sidewalk Detail (SSD) has been helping parents drop off younger students safely and efficiently for five years now. This year, this very enthusiastic and diligent group of fifth-graders were featured in a Needham Times article (<http://www.wickedlocal.com/needham/photos/x471105870/Hillside-School-fifth-grade-Safety-Patrol>).

Each year, the fifth grade is honored with prestigious responsibilities, and this year was no different. The proud members of The Student Sidewalk Detail (SSD) diligently monitor the sidewalks as students exit their vehicles. No matter the weather, the SSD is committed to ensuring the safety of all who enter the school. The Yearbook Committee has been hard at work creating exciting pages filled with memories for all whom attend Hillside to cherish. These committees, along with the Watering Brigade, Kindergarten Tour Guides, Kindergarten helpers, and the Thank You Committee help create leaders, mentors and role models. - Nicole LaFace and Maria DeCicco, School Council members

Parents and staff have developed a **Walk-to-School program** to help alleviate our traffic congestion problem. The parent coordinators collaborate regularly with other Needham schools and encourage walking and biking by highlighting the physical and mental benefits and addressing safety issues. We will be doing our first, and hopefully, annual pedestrian safety training for the entire second grade class this spring. Walk Boston (<http://www.walkboston.org/>) is training a set of parent volunteers to take the students on a walking tour around Hillside School and adjacent streets addressing specific safety issues around Hillside as well as general pedestrian safety. - *Michelle Hoffmeister, Parent coordinator*

This summer a storage area will be constructed on the stage in the gym, normal preventative maintenance and refinishing the floors in the gym and on stage will follow. Construction will start when school ends and continue through mid-summer. The floor refinishing will be done during the last weeks of August. Preventative maintenance will be done area by area as each becomes available. We may also have to address a drainage issue in the kitchen. The majority of this work will occur outside the building.

Future building needs of Hillside School are still to be determined. Needham is in the process of awarding the Facility Assessment Contract. This contract will be for the assessment of the Pollard, Mitchell and Hillside Schools. Once the assessment is complete, the contractor will make recommendations to the Town as to what they believe may need to be done at each location to upgrade or improve each site. This assessment is not expected to be completed until the later part of the summer of 2011. - *Chip Laffey, Director of Public Facilities*

We will have quite a list of projects which will be taking place at the Hillside this summer, 2012. Below are the items from the facility assessment and the energy audits which were performed last year.

- Replace all incandescent lamps with CFLs
- Install automatic lighting controls (completed)
- Control external air leakage into the building
- Replace Exterior HID lamps with induction lighting or LED lighting
- Boiler room upgrade (The quantity of outdoor air should be investigated to ensure the proper amount of outdoor air is being supplied to satisfy mechanical code.)
- Floor repair (Media Center and stairwell at the Media Center)
- Install new code compliant guard rails and hand rails at all stair wells.
- Install timers on roof top bathroom exhaust fans
- Insulate condensate tank (completed)
- Replace all existing window Air Conditioning units with Energy Star units
- Provide electrical outlets where necessary – This will not include the installation of additional outlets but rather relocating existing outlets to better suit the space utilization needs. The details on this project will be worked out with the ETC.
- Install lockable cabinets over electrical panels
- Replace a portion of the exterior wall going into the modulars (right side as you walk into modulars)

- Chip Laffey, Director of Public Facilities

Projects scheduled for the summer of 2013 include:

- * Control external air leakage into the building*
- * HID lamps with induction lighting or LED lighting*
- * Install new code compliant guard rails and hand rails at all stair wells*
- * Install timers on roof top bathroom exhaust fans*
- * Install lockable cabinets over electrical panels*
- * Submersible pump to be hard piped to go outside the building*
- * Replace ceiling tiles as needed*
- * Floor refinishing gym and stage*

- Chip Laffey, Director of Public Facilities

The future plan for Hillside School, created jointly by the Permanent Public Building Committee (PPBC) and the School Committee, is updated regularly and can be found at: http://rwd1.needham.k12.ma.us/Hillside_and_Mitchell_Planning/