

Welcome to Hillside School

A Parent Handbook
2011-2012

Who's Who: Hillside School Faculty and Staff

Hillside Elementary School

1100 Cornelius Avenue

Niskayuna, NY 12303

518-377-1857, main office

518-377-1099, fax

web site: <http://www.nisk.k12.ny.us/hillside/index.html>

Principal - Dr. Shireen Fasciglione sfasciglione@niskyschools.org
Administrative Asst.- Mrs. Carole Hourigan chourigan@niskyschools.org
Nurse - Mrs. Donna Nappi dnappi@niskyschools.org
Cafeteria Head Cook/Mngr - Mrs. Anatriello manatriello@niskyschools.org
Line Cooks/Cashiers - Mrs. Joanne Tricozzi and Mrs. Kerri Butler
Head Custodian - Mr. Donn Armstrong
Evening Custodians - Mr. Brian Kent, Ms. Karen Lasher
Lunch/Recess Assistants - Mrs. Tina Battaglia, Mrs. Laurie Cooper, Mrs. Yolanda Matura, Mrs. Stacie Rivadeniera

Classroom Teachers

Kindergarten - Miss Allyson Connors aconnors@niskyschools.org
Miss Christine Mathews cmathews@niskyschools.org
and TA Mrs. Gail Dietrich
Mrs. Shannon Rogers srogers@niskyschools.org
First Grade - Mrs. Matilda Barry mbarry@niskyschools.org
Mrs. Mary Burke mburke@niskyschools.org
and TA Mrs. Cathy Amiccuci
Mr. Wade Fisher wfisher@niskyschools.org
Second Grade - Mrs. Jennifer Rafferty jrafferty@niskyschools.org
and TA Mrs. Ann Gallup
Mrs. Debbie Robitaille drobitaille@niskyschools.org
and TA Mrs. Cathy Frank
Mrs. Christina Skumurski cskumurski@niskyschools.org
(by January, Mrs. Mya Sullivan)
Third Grade - Miss Rebecca Grosso rgrosso@niskyschools.org
Miss Jaime Kean jkean@niskyschools.org
Fourth Grade - Mrs. Danielle Druzynski ddruzynski@niskyschools.org
and TA Mrs. Barbara Gorman
Mrs. Carol Herrington cherrington@niskyschools.org

Fifth Grade - Mr. Chris Lasher clasher@niskyschools.org
Mrs. Mary Johnson mejohnson@niskyschools.org
and TA Mrs. Shelley Phillips
Mrs. Chrissy O'Reilly coreilly@niskyschools.org
and TA Mrs. Sharon Bergeron
Mr. Shaun Neely sneely@niskyschools.org

Special Areas

Art - Mrs. Patti Keetz pkeetz@niskyschools.org
Mrs. Janet Manuta jmanuta@niskyschools.org
Media Center - Mrs. Deb Ubriaco dubriaco@niskyschools.org
and TA Mrs. Yolanda Matura
Music - Mrs. Michelle Sausa-Gatta msausagatta@niskyschools.org
Mrs. Theresa Fitzmaurice tfitzmaurice@niskyschools.org
PE - Mr. Darryl Bray dbray@niskyschools.org
Mr. Blake Bellinger bbellinger@niskyschools.org
Ms. Jessica Stanton jstanton@niskyschools.org
Computer Lab, TA Mrs. Joanne Zolner

Instrument Teachers

Band, 5th grade - Mr. Joe Lamb jlamb@niskyschools.org
Orchestra, 5th grade - Mrs. Joan Brown jbrown@niskyschools.org
Orchestra, 4th grade - Mrs. Stacey McClenon smcclenon@niskyschools.org

Reading Teachers

Heather Mason hmason@niskyschools.org
Traci Rizzo trizzo@niskyschools.org

Special Education and Related Services

Special Education Teachers - Mrs. Laura Coonrad lcoonrad@niskyschools.org
Miss. Dawn Dagostino ddagostino@niskyschools.org

Speech Therapist - Miss Susanne Poulette spoulette@niskyschools.org

Occupational Therapist - Mrs. Carol Kahn ckahn@niskyschools.org

Physical Therapist - Mrs. Catherine Vitetta cvitetta@niskyschools.org

FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) (Grades 1-3)

Spanish Teacher - Mrs. Cindy Yetto cyetto@niskyschools.org

E.S.L.

Mrs. Debbie Fennelly dfennelly@niskyschools.org

Explorers (grades 4 and 5)

Humanities - Mrs. Nancy Garmley ngarmley@niskyschools.org

Math Science and Technology - Mrs. M. Hanchar mhanchar@niskyschools.org

Visiting Hillside

We love having family members visit and volunteer at Hillside School! For the safety of our students, all visitors need to check in at the office upon entering school. We ask that you enter through the main office where you will be asked to sign into the visitor's book and take a visitor's badge. Please also remember to sign out as you leave.

In order to keep interruptions to the classrooms at a minimum, we ask that you leave snacks, lunches, lunch money, birthday treats, instruments, or other items forgotten at home in the office. We promise to deliver them in a timely manner.

Absences/Tardies

The school doors open at 7:45 a.m. each morning. Announcements begin at 7:55 a.m. If your child arrives at or after 7:55 a.m., he/she will be marked tardy. The number of absences and times tardy will be documented twice a year for you - once on the spring report card and again on the final report card in June.

When a child has reached an excessive number of days on which they have been tardy or absent, a form letter is sent home. The purpose of the letter is to keep parents aware and informed.

If your child is going to miss school, please call the school at 377-1856 and press three for the nurse's office. Please leave a message stating your child's homeroom teacher, the date and time and the reason for the absence.

Dropping off your children if he/she is not taking the bus in the morning

In order to drop off your child in the morning, enter the driveway, bear to the right, and stop near the flag pole. Please do not drop off students before 7:40 a.m., as there is no supervision before that time. To exit the property, follow the roadway to the bottom of the property (do not do a U-Turn back onto Cornelius).

Picking up your child

If a student is being picked up early for an appointment or by someone other than his/her parent, please send in a dated and signed note in the morning. In order to sign your child out, you will need to come into the office, even if it is at dismissal time. Students being picked up will be sent out with the walkers after buses have left the school grounds. Bus dismissal occurs at 2:10 p.m.

Bus

This year we will continue with the Peaceful School Bus program. The goal of the program is to focus, as a school community, on positive school bus behavior. Students will meet three times this year with students who ride their bus. These meetings include Hillside School faculty and staff and your child's bus driver, when available.

Bus Passes

Bus passes should be sent in whenever your child's afternoon routine is going to change. As an example: your child is going to a friend's house or going to an alternate location for the day. Bus passes are available from your child's teacher or in the main office. When we receive a bus pass from your child, one copy stays in their classroom and the other copy is sent to the office. Your child will give a copy of the bus pass to the bus driver. Students will not be permitted on another bus without a bus pass or note. It is important that these arrangements are taken care of at the beginning of the school day.

Students Who Go to Daycare After School

When your child is not going to daycare either because of illness or he/she is visiting a friend, please remember to call the daycare and let them know so they don't worry when your child doesn't arrive with the other Hillside students.

Snack/Lunch

In every grade there is time for snack. Please remember to pack your child a healthy snack each day. Water bottles are also encouraged, especially in the warm months.

All students have a twenty-five minute lunch, along with a twenty-five minute recess period. Children may buy lunch or bring one from home. To prepay for lunches, send in a check made payable to "Hillside Cafeteria". Put the check in an envelope labeled "lunch money" along with your child's name on it. You can also prepay for lunches at www.mynutrikids.com. Every child is assigned a code and one can simply key in the code to pay for lunch. If they forget their code, the cafeteria workers will look it up for them. Cash is also accepted for individual lunch purchases.

Children may also buy "snack/dessert" at lunch. The cafeteria carries a line of snacks that are available to purchase after all lunches are sold. Students need to

eat their lunch before a snack can be bought. Snacks can only be purchased with cash.

For the most part, students sit with classmates by homerooms in the cafeteria. (Exceptions occur at the discretion of the cafeteria aides.)

There is a "nut free" table for children who are allergic to nuts. There is a separate table for each grade level.

Playground Rules and Going Outside

At Hillside, weather permitting, students go outside to play. We value the opportunity for students to get fresh air and physical activity during their recess break. Please remember to dress your children for the weather. When it's cold they must have hats, mittens and winter coats. If you have an additional pair of snow pants and boots available, your child can leave them at school during winter months. We encourage you to label all clothes with your child's name.

There are some temperature guidelines which help us to determine whether students stay in or go out for recess. If the temperature feels like it is below 15 degrees F (for grades K-2) and below 12 degrees F (for grades 3-5), it is unlikely that students will go outside. It is important to remember that these are guidelines, not hard-fast rules. The principal makes the final determination.

During the first week of school, students are reminded of the rules for the playground. These rules are discussed with students by teachers, CAs, and TAs. The rules are listed below.

Please use the equipment in a way that is safe to you and others!

Remember to:

- Sit and only go down the slides.
- Use the swings for swinging. Please don't jump off of them.
- Climb on the areas that are for climbing, not the outside of the ramps.
- Balls and sports equipment should stay on the field and blacktop areas only.
- Lacrosse balls, softballs, and baseballs should not be used at recess time.
- Proper footwear is required on the playground.

Recess assistants frequently remind students of the rules during recess. A loss of play time may result if a student is consistently not following the rules and/or being unsafe.

Hello Hillside

Hello Hillside is a school-wide program designed to foster a sense of community within the school. The program is student-run (usually, by fifth-graders), and includes birthday celebrations, important classroom and school announcements, and highlights of classroom work. All students, faculty, and staff attend. Parents are welcome to attend, and asked to please sit in the chairs on the outer edge of the gym circle, thereby allowing faculty and staff to sit closest to their students. For the 2011-12 school year, the program will be held once a month, on Mondays, from 1:30-1:55 p.m. Dates are as follows (and are subject to change; please call ahead to confirm): Sep. 19, Oct., 17, Nov. 21, Dec., 19, Jan. 23, Feb. 13, Mar. 19, Apr. 23, May 14. The last one is on June 18th - at 8:05 a.m.

Birthdays

Birthdays are announced during the morning announcements by Dr. Fasciglione. They are recognized at Hello Hillside, as well. Students may come to the main office to receive birthday pencil or bookmark. Summer birthdays are announced at Hello Hillside.

Your child may bring in a special snack to share with the class on his/her birthday. Please check with your classroom teacher in case there are students with allergies or other food restrictions.

We discourage birthday invitations being distributed at school, unless the entire class is being invited. Hillside Directory is available each fall, thanks to P.T.O. volunteers. The directory provides parents with the contact information of students. This should assist with setting up play dates and sending invitations from home.

Chorus

Chorus is offered to all fourth and fifth grade students. It ends at 3 p.m. and parents are responsible for providing transportation home.

Orchestra and Band

Orchestra is offered to fourth and fifth grade students. Band is offered to fifth grade students. Lessons occur during the instructional day. It should be noted that children miss class for lessons. There are a few after school rehearsals throughout the year.

What is A.S.E.P.?

A.S.E.P. is our After School Enrichment Program, organized and run by the P.T.O. Three different sessions run during the school year- typically one in the fall, one in winter, and one in the spring. ASEP classes run from 2:15-3:00 p.m. The fee for ASEP classes varies depending on the class for which your child enrolls. ASEP catalogs come home with students before each session. The catalog has descriptions of all classes, days of the week the classes are offered and registration information/fees.

P.T.O.

We are very fortunate to have such a wonderful P.T.O.! The P.T.O. sponsors a variety of activities throughout the school year including A.S.E.P., listed above. They will have a great deal of information available at the Back to School Nights and there will be an opportunity to sign up to volunteer at P.T.O. events, to provide treats for classroom parties, as well as to sign up to be a member of P.T.O. and receive your Hillside School Directory.

Officers for the 2011-12 school year are:

Co-presidents, Mr. Jim Kokernak and Mrs. Renae Semione
Vice President Academic Activities, Mrs. Dana Donahue
Vice President Social Activities, Mrs. Olga Tsakalacos
Treasurer, Mr. Derek Lecakes
Secretary, Mrs. Tasha Ferguson.

P.T.O. meetings for the 2011-12 school year will be at 7 p.m. in the Hillside School Library:

Sep. 19,	Feb. 6,
Oct. 17,	Mar. 12,
Nov. 14,	Apr. 23,
Jan. 9,	May 7.

Overview of the Curriculum at Hillside

Reading

Reading instruction at Niskayuna incorporates research-based practices that include both direct, explicit instruction and opportunities for students to practice skills and strategies in authentic reading experiences. Teachers plan lessons and units to include whole group, small group, and, in some cases, one to one instruction.

In addition, reading instruction is balanced to include important components of literacy learning including: vocabulary and comprehension development, decoding strategies, building fluency, sight word acquisition, and phonological awareness development. Teachers have access to a variety of instructional tools, materials and resources to design lessons that best meet the needs of the readers in their classrooms. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are provided for students who are in need of additional support, in order to meet the state standards in English language arts.

Instructional goals and teaching are based on the NYS English language arts standards. This year, you may notice some shifts in instructional practices as teachers begin to align their classroom teaching to the new New York State Common Core Learning Standards for English language arts and literacy. For more information on the Common Core standards, go to http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/.

Writing

Hillside, in conjunction with all of the elementary schools in the district, is in the process of transitioning to the use of Writer's Workshop model for writing instruction. The Writer's Workshop model focuses on writing instruction within different units of study.

The Writer's Workshop embraces student choice. Students find the writing instruction extremely motivating. Although they work within the set unit and are responsible for learning three to five predetermined goals within each unit, students have choice as to the topics they choose to write about.

The Writer's Workshop approach is truly differentiated. This means that every child is working at their own developmental level. Although all students receive instruction around the unit goals, they also conference individually with the teacher to insure that instruction is tailored to their own needs.

Students spend about four to six weeks in each unit. During that time they are drafting and revising their writing. At the end of the unit, each student picks one piece that they bring through the complete writing process. Students also publish writing in other content areas on a regular basis.

Mathematics

In the primary grades, students participate in a hands-on approach to learning mathematics. Manipulatives are used to teach concepts and foundational skills. Fact practice begins in first grade.

In third grade, students are grouped based on their mathematical ability. However, ALL students participate in the grade level curriculum. There is no math acceleration in third grade. Grouping is fluid and students are moved within the three third grade classrooms based upon their instructional needs for each unit. Placement in third grade does not solely determine placement for fourth grade.

Early in September, all classroom teachers use data to form math classes. In fourth and fifth grades, students are grouped into either an accelerated classroom or grade level classrooms. Teachers are provided a spreadsheet of data points which assist them in forming math groups. A number of data points are used to determine which students are selected for math acceleration. The data points may include math scores from the previous year's cumulative tests, scores from a beginning of year inventory, chapter test and other classroom test results, scores from both the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), scores from the New York State Math Assessment, and teacher recommendation. Parents will be notified if their child is being offered the opportunity. Academic Intervention Services (AIS) are provided for students who are in need of additional support, in order to meet the state standards in math.

Science

A brief outline of the topics explored at each level is below.

Kindergarten: Five senses, Promoting Good Health, Weather/Seasons, Animals, Sunshine and Shadows, Plants, Water play

First: Seasons/Earth, Sky and Moon, Properties of Matter, Force and Motion, Embryology

Second: Chemical and Physical Interactions, Measurement, Plant Adaptations & Life Cycles, Solar System

Third: Water, Matter, Energy and Life Cycles (using the butterfly)

Fourth: Earth's Landforms, Properties of Matter, Electricity & Magnetism, Simple Machines, Plants & Animals

Fifth: Pond Life, Sound and Light, Looking at Liquids, Minerals

Social Studies

A brief outline of the topics explored at each level is listed below.

Kindergarten: All about me, All About My Family, My classroom Community, Holidays and Traditions

First: Families, Traditions and Communities, Economics, Geography Skills

Second: Communities, Geography Skills, Citizenship

Third: Geography Skills, Countries

Fourth: NYS History and Government, Geography Skills

Fifth: Western Hemisphere, National Government, Geography Skills

Health

All Niskayuna elementary schools follow the same health curriculum. All lessons are done at a developmentally appropriate level. This includes the content and vocabulary introduced and taught. The curriculum is focused around six main units- Bullying and Violence Prevention, Nutrition and Physical Fitness, Body and Growth Development, Self Worth and Mental/Substance Abuse, HIV/AIDS Prevention.

Special Education Services

Under federal regulation, a student who meets criteria for special education classification is entitled to have an IEP written to meet specific learning needs. If you suspect your child may qualify, please contact School Psychologist, Dr. Maggie Williams, or your classroom teacher.

Section 504

Under federal regulation, a student who is deemed to have a disabling condition and who has a life skill impairment may qualify for a Section 504 plan. If you suspect your child may qualify, please contact the principal, Dr. Shireen Fasciglione, or your classroom teacher.

Speech/Language Services

The speech/language pathologist provides services to eligible students for help with articulation delays, stuttering, voice disorders, or language impairments. Mandated services are provided through the Committee on Special Education for students with speech or language disorders. Additionally, speech improvement services are provided at the building level on a space available basis for students with less severe speech or language difficulties.

Explorers Program

The enrichment program at Niskayuna is called the Explorers Program. The program is available to fourth and fifth grade students that qualify. Within the program, there are two different Explorers classes that students can qualify for. One is focused on humanities and the other is focused on math/science/technology. Students qualify for the Explorers program based on a number of data points. These include scores from two standardized assessments- the CogAT and ITBS, New York State Assessment scores, and teacher recommendation. Mrs. Mary Hanchar is the Math Science and Technology teacher and Mrs. Nancy Garmley is the Humanities teacher for the Explorers Program.

FLES

FLES is the Foreign Language for Elementary Students program at Niskayuna. The language taught is Spanish. FLES is taught two times a week, for seven weeks, to students in first, second and third grade. Mrs. Cindy Yetto is the FLES teacher.

Standardized Testing and Assessments

All students are assessed in the area of reading with the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarking Assessment System at the beginning and end of the year. This assessment is formative in nature and helps teachers assess individual students' areas of strengths and weaknesses, as well as plan both small and whole group reading instruction.

Students in third, fourth and fifth grade take two New York State Assessments, one in the area of English Language Arts and the other in the area of Mathematics. These assessments take place at the end of April/early May.

Fourth grade students also take a New York State assessment in the area of science. The science test is given at the end of May/early June.

All New York State Assessment scores are sent directly to the home once scores are provided to us and the district gives the direction to do so. This sometimes occurs well into the summer or even early fall.

Additionally, third grade students are given two standardized assessments. The ITBS is given in the fall and the CogAT is given in the winter. The results of these tests are used in determining eligibility for the Explorer's Enrichment Program and math acceleration.

Homework

Educating a child is a cooperative effort involving both the home and school. Homework is assigned on a regular basis and is considered a valuable part of the instructional program. Homework is designed to extend and reinforce classroom learning, encourage personal responsibility and independence, and develop good study habits. Students, teachers, and parents all have important roles to play in the homework process. Homework is most effective when all three do their part.

In order to ensure a common level of understanding between the home and the school, the following time commitments are being provided as general guidelines.

Kindergarten: parent reading out loud to child - 15 minutes or longer.

First grade: 10-20 minutes daily.

Second grade: 20-30 minutes daily.

Third grade: 20-30 minutes daily.

Fourth grade: 30-45 minutes daily.

Fifth grade: 30-45 minutes daily.

Student Responsibility

- Homework is your responsibility and is a priority.
- Do your best work: be neat, accurate, thorough, and submit work on time.
- Ask questions in class if you do not understand the homework assignment.
- Plan your time and organize materials.
- Use your homework folder daily.

Teacher Responsibility

- Give clear, concise directions and model all assignments in class.
- Assign work that meets the school's homework policy time guidelines and is grade-level appropriate.
- Reinforce previous (not new) learning.
- Keep accurate records and provide timely feedback to students.
- Be accepting of exceptional situations when homework cannot be completed.

Parent Responsibility

- Provide an appropriate time and place for homework.
- Make school the number one priority during the academic year.
- Model a positive attitude.

- Provide support of your child's efforts.
- Know when to stop a child when he or she is struggling and exhausted.
- Communicate with your classroom teacher if your child is having difficulties or working longer than the time prescribed.
- Try to assist your child without doing the work for him or her.