

Hearst Elementary School PTA Meeting Minutes Oct 16th 2025

Principal Hills Reflection on her First 100 Days

Hearst saw large gains in CAPE scores from 2024. Math scores increased by 11% and ELA scores increased by 13% compared with 2024. Principal Hills sees this as a big win for Hearst and reflective of the hard work the staff and students have put in.

During the first 100 days Principal Hills has met one-on-one with all staff members to discuss what they love and feel the focal point of the school should be. She also met with families at events such as Popsicles with the Principal.

Student and staff surveys have been sent out to get more input.

Principal Hills discussed the importance of staff meetings to enable discussion and for staff to give feedback. They recently discussed generational culture and variety within staff to identify commonalities. She believes this all works towards building relationships.

Principal Hills has visited all classrooms to unofficially observe teaching and feels confident that there are passionate teachers. She is also reviewing Hearst's values and data to see if we are who we say we are. Eg. Are we supportive? Do we need to pivot or focus on a particular value?

Hearst's current enrollment is 384– this number means that current staff positions should be secure and the school may get more money to hire more staff next year.

Some grade levels are a little larger than we would like but the staff to student ratio is still OK.

Feedback on students is available for parents and was shared at parent-teacher conferences. If they haven't seen feedback all parents can email the teacher to get the report on their child.

Questions for Principal Hills from community members:

1. Are there plans to increase the number of partner teachers this school year?

DCPS has a rule that they must employ all staff at school, so PTA can't fund a partner teacher. In the past Hearst fundraised to hire a partner teacher but didn't hire one due to DCPS policy change that no longer permits a PTA to provide funds as a grant to a specific school. Last year the PTA ran a mid-year vote to find ways to spend that money eg. After school tutoring and field trip buses.

2. Currently 2nd Grade has large classes eg. 24 kids per class. Given that class size is a metric that predicts outcomes of success, what can we do to help the large classes?

DCPS official class size cap is 25. Space is also an issue. Currently Hearst budget doesn't allow for hiring a 3rd teacher for 2nd grade. Principal Hills believes that next year the 3rd grade will have 3 classes and as will 4th grade.

Also notes that unanticipated enrollments can also factor into the large class sizes. And DCPS staff union negotiated a higher salary rate which impacted Hearst's purchasing power.

Current 1st grade increased from 2 to 3 classes for 2025-2026.

PTA Co-President - Shari Rose - PTA is exploring ways to support afterschool assistance eg. tutoring.

Discussion followed on potential for hiring an extra SPED teacher rather than an extra partner teacher in the future.

In the current 2025-2026 budget Hearst lost no teachers but lost 1 custodian. PTA pays for overtime for the remaining 3 custodians to make up for this loss.

Principal Hills emphasized that early enrollment for next academic year is very helpful for budget and school planning.

Principal Hills – invited parents to email or call her with any questions or concerns

Owl Fund Update - Dave Steadman – PTA Treasurer

Owl Fund Goal is \$100,000, currently at 37%. Started the fund at Back-to-School night and looks like we're ahead of past campaigns.

PTA funds spending - Reimbursement process has been streamlined so teachers get a pre-paid card with classroom funds to spend then submit receipts.

The system was successfully tested to buy pumpkins for community day.

Upcoming events

Community Day – Claire Cinque - Community Day Co-President

Oct 25th 11am-2pm – Posters are made. Lots of things happening, including:

A pumpkin patch, book swap, winter gear swap, sports gear swap, collecting food, cleaning and diaper donations. Plan is to give back to local community

Shark-tank themed 4th and 5th grade entrepreneur fair

Trunk or treat 5-6 cars, kids can wear costume

Food for sale, hotdogs and salads

Need volunteers for day-of help – sign-up sheet will be circulated

Drop off for donations will be available before event starting Oct 20th at arrival and pick up

Screen on the Green Confirmed for Nov 7th – 8pm start - student government will choose film.

December PTA meeting will be combined with chorus concert – also on Zoom

Next Dining Night - Guapos Nov 12th

Book fair – library Nov 17th-19th

Hearst Auction 2026

Currently have 2 co-chairs: Cassie Anderson and Maggie Hart

Date set for Sat April 25th, 1 full week after spring break.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities

- Gear sales coordinator – website is already set up but need a volunteer to manage it. Could start at Community day.
- Open Houses – 12/12, 1/9, 2/6 and 3/6. Need 4-5 people volunteering for each one. 1 person to coordinate and send email to listserv. 1 person to order donuts and coffee. 1.5 hour Fri 8.45am-10am. Especially important at Feb -March open houses.
- Holiday staff lunch – lots of help needed
- Staff appreciation week – May 4th-8th. Need a group of volunteers. Already have 2 volunteers
- 5th grade promotion – have some 5th grade parent volunteers, we also want some 4th grade parents to help on the day.
- Hoot Force – need volunteers