



INSIDE Hillside

a publication of the
Hillside Public Schools

Fall 2018



Test scores improve in nearly every subject and grade since 2015

HILLSIDE students are performing at higher levels on standardized tests, according to data recently released by the New Jersey Department of Education. In fact since 2015, the percentages of students scoring at or above expectations (considered passing or higher) has increased in virtually every grade level and subject on exams from PARCC, the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers.

The most significant areas of growth were in grades 3-8 (see below).

Also notable is that 85% of students taking

Algebra I at Walter O. Krumbiegel Middle School met or exceeded expectations on the PARCC exam. (Algebra I is considered to be high school-level math.)

“The community, board of education, staff, and students should be proud of the educational strides of the past four years,” said Dr. Antoine Gayles, superintendent of schools. “There’s more work to be done. But by focusing on innovative teaching methods, investing wisely in instructional technology and resources, and setting high expectations for kids, we’ve taken an important step.”

Since PARCC and other state-mandated tests are only administered in grades 3 and up, other indicators are used to measure skills and knowledge at the early elementary level. One recent assessment revealed that **85% of kindergartners and first-graders are reading at or above grade level.** This powerful statistic does more than show that the district’s literacy program is getting kids off

to a good start in school. Early reading ability sets the foundation for all future education; studies show that it is a reliable indicator of academic achievement later in life. Early reading success has also been shown to increase a student’s motivation to learn.

The Developmental Reading Assessment used by the district measures reading level, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. The DRA helps teachers personalize their instruction to meet the individualized needs of each student.

“The community, board of education, staff, and students should be proud of the educational strides of the past four years.”

Dr. Antoine Gayles
Superintendent

PARCC scores:

Percentage change in students meeting or exceeding expectations since 2015

	English/Lang. Arts	Math
3rd gr.	+32%	+58%
4th gr.	+45%	+63%
5th gr.	+3%	+7%
6th gr.	+65%	+26%
7th gr.	+77%	-5%
8th gr.	+23%	+116%

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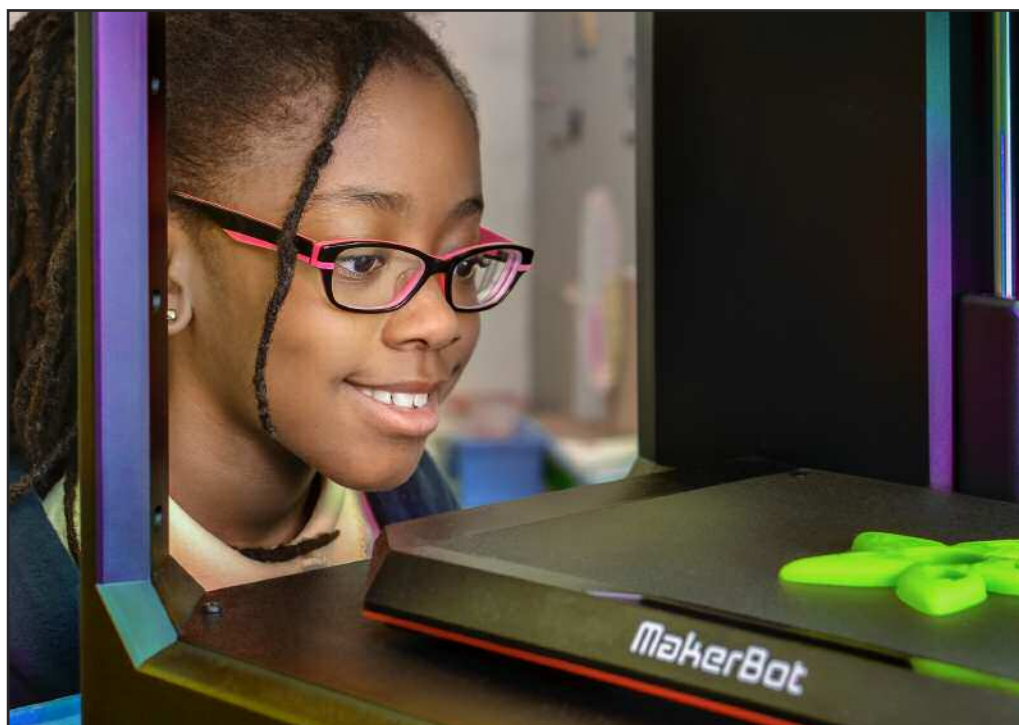


YOUNG ENGINEER: Makayla Barnett, a kindergartner at A.P. Morris Early Childhood Center, constructs a tower in the school’s new STEAM lab. The lab provides age-appropriate activities in science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

Innovation lab harnesses creativity

page 2





Kendi Little-Tree prepares to grab a fidget spinner that was just made in a MakerBot 3-D printer

NEWSBRIEFS

Getting a head start on college

College has come to Hillside High School. In a partnership with New Jersey Institute of Technology, the high school is offering a college-level algebra course and a college-level humanities course. A student receives three NJIT credits for each course passed; the credits can be transferred to virtually any college the student attends in the future.

The content isn't a watered-down version of what's offered at NJIT. The HHS teachers use the same curricula, text books, and even the same tests.

Musheerah Gill, the HHS English teacher who teaches the humanities course, piloted the NJIT partnership last year.

"This really is an incredible opportunity for students," Ms. Gill said. "The program introduces them to the high expectations and demands of college, yet the material is delivered by teachers they know in an atmosphere they're comfortable in. It's a perfect way for them to transition into college life."

HHS is now finalizing details to offer a business course through Union County College, beginning February 1.

Field renovation completed

The replacement of the field at Woodfield Stadium has been completed. The home of Hillside High School's athletics teams had its grass surface replaced with all-weather synthetic turf.

A \$15,000 grant from the Investors Foundation, the charitable arm of Investors Bank, is helping to offset the cost. The majority of the project is being paid for through the district's capital reserve fund (money earmarked exclusively for facilities improvements).

A ceremony was held on November 3 to commemorate the installation of the new playing surface.

Making a real world connection

Eighth-graders from Walter O. Krumbiegel Middle School are experiencing a taste of the real world at New Jersey Institute of Technology. The 21 students meet each Saturday for eight weeks to solve "real world" scenarios with NJIT professors and graduate student coaches. The project-based learning assignments are in a variety of topics including game development, Android app creation, web development, building computers, and intro to programming.

NJIT's Real World Connections program is designed for high-schoolers. The WOK eighth-graders are the only middle school students participating.

Where dreams become real

THE Innovation Learning Lab at Hurden Looker Elementary School is a place where third- and fourth-graders can let their imaginations run wild. It's a place that harnesses student creativity and fuses it with STEAM – science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

This year, new equipment has been added that will allow students to take their creativity to another level. Two dozen new Chromebooks, a Makerbot 3-D printer, a LEGO wall, and sewing machines that can spin conductive thread to power LED lights are just some of the high-tech tools students have at their fingertips.

"The opportunity to have something in

their heads, figure out the processes to realize it, and turn those ideas into something tangible is truly a life lesson," said teacher Marta Tran. "It teaches kids to apply knowledge in a creative way. As a school district, we need to push students along the right path so they have great futures and STEAM is what's driving our society today."

In September, Mrs. Tran asked her students to imagine projects they'd like to build during the year. She plans on helping as many kids as possible turn their ideas into actual creations. Whether it's a 3-D dinosaur with articulation, a light-up necklace, or an LED unicorn pencil case, the Innovation Learning Lab can make dreams come true.

Georgia on their minds

THE World is Our Classroom club at Walter O. Krumbiegel Middle School is planning its next annual overnight trip: Atlanta, Georgia. Set for April, the adventure will immerse students in the city's pivotal role in the Civil War as well as include visits to famous Atlanta companies such as Coca-Cola and CNN. Tours of Spelman College and Morehouse College are also on the itinerary.

"We're trying to show students life outside of Hillside and outside of the metropolitan area," said social studies teacher Ashley Pryce, the club's adviser. "When students actually experience the world, it makes education more meaningful. They're able to make connections to what they've learned in the classroom and see the possibilities that life can offer."

The club will soon begin fundraising to help offset the cost of the trip. A candy sale and movie night are planned.

Last year, the club spent three days visiting Washington, D.C. More than two dozen WOK students, mostly seventh-graders, participated in a whirlwind tour of the



Members of the World is Our Classroom club sit on the steps of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C.

nation's capitol. Afterward, the students spoke at a Hillside Board of Education meeting about their experiences and how the trip enhanced their learning.

Dual language program begins

Grant-funded initiative provides daily instruction in both English and Spanish

A NEW initiative at A.P. Morris Early Childhood Center is helping the district's youngest students reap the cognitive benefits of learning to speak and read in more than one language.

“It meets the needs of our community and will help our students become proficient readers.”

April Lowe
A.P. Morris principal

The dual language program provides three-year-olds in Pre-K with literacy and math instruction in both English and Spanish.

Mondays through Thursdays, students in the two classes receive half of their instruction in one language in the mornings and the other half of their instruction in the second language in the afternoon. On Fridays, the students rotate among small learning stations and complete hands-on assignments in both languages.

“We are so excited to be able to offer this program to Hillside students,” said April Lowe, principal of A.P. Morris Early Childhood Center. “It meets the needs of our community and will help our students

become proficient readers.”

Throughout the United States, dual language programs are becoming more and more popular – not just for instruction that incorporates Spanish but for other foreign languages as well. Educational research clearly shows the intellectual, cognitive, social, and cultural benefits. These are seen both in students whose primary language is English and also in students considered English language learners.

Studies also show that English learners in dual language programs reach English proficiency faster and at higher rates than peers engaged in other types of programs.



At A.P. Morris, the dual language program is being funded through a \$200K state grant. Ms. Lowe applied in July and was notified of the award in August. Planning was completed in September and the program began on October 1.

Kids teach kids at GW

Students at George Washington Elementary School became teachers for a recent lesson.

Samiyah Hogan, Zachary Orelie, and Victoria Stewart taught their classmates the concepts and organizational methods to compare and contrast – key principles in the fifth-grade language arts standards. The fifth-graders watched YouTube videos, read online articles, and reviewed their teacher’s PowerPoint presentations before developing their own written plan.

“Samiyah, Zachary, and Victoria put so much time and effort into designing a thorough lesson, and they taught it with confidence and compassion,” said teacher Saudia Ransom. “They felt such a sense of responsibility for making sure their classmates learned the material. Teaching the lesson helped them master the concepts, too.”

The three young teachers ended the lesson with an activity. They gave their students lists of the features of footballs and basketballs, then tasked the class to compare and contrast the features using the method they taught.

Throughout the rest of the year, the class will regularly use the skills learned in the student-taught lesson. They’ll compare and contrast nonfiction articles, themes between pieces of literature, characters, settings, and plots.



Top, Samiyah Hogan teaches part of a lesson to her classmates; **above**, Isaiah Jean-Marie and Joel Bravo work on a group assignment to compare and contrast



HHS sophomore Vania Evora works in the garden

Learning the basics of gardening

Grants from Lowe’s and Union County College allowed Hillside High School students to learn gardening basics over the spring and summer. Now, with additional grant money, the program is expanding. The school’s engineering club is designing an indoor hydroponic garden and automated watering system.

Several dedicated students came to school nearly every day over the summer to care for the tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, cucumbers, herbs, and spices. More than 30% of the grown produce was donated to local organizations including the Community Food Bank of New Jersey and the Hillside Senior Citizen Center.

Merging technology and creativity

Robotics project lets sixth-graders learn programming and use their imaginations

ROBOTS recently helped students in George Washington Elementary School's technology

course learn the basics of programming and explore their creativity.

Using items from around the house (e.g., paper towel rolls, bottle caps, Lego pieces, painter's tape), small teams of sixth-graders constructed mazes and obstacle

courses that the Cue robots would have to navigate. Then using tablet computers, the students programmed the robots to move and perform other activities. The robots switched colors, changed facial expressions, played prerecorded sounds, and even

played games.

Students were given free rein on the design of their challenge and its complexity. One group recorded itself whistling and had the robot play back the whistle as it went through the maze. Another team had its robot apologize every time it ran into an obstacle.

"Hands-on lessons such as this merge creativity and technology," said teacher Nancy DaSilva. "Students also learn that perseverance and teamwork will help them overcome challenges, and will enable them to turn those challenges into innovation."

Later in the school year, the students will be doing other tech activities such as working on video game design, making magnetic slime, designing and constructing a roller coaster for marbles, and designing paper circuits.

The Cue robots are on loan from Kean University.



Benaïad Amoah and Niyana Williams plan the course that their robot will navigate

“Students also learn that perseverance and teamwork will help them overcome challenges...”

Nancy DaSilva
Teacher

School tackles bullying

CALVIN Coolidge Elementary School has teamed with the New York Jets to tackle bullying and promote positive behavior. The school is participating in New York Jets Tackle Bullying, a program that raises awareness and provides tools for educators to prevent bullying.

Part of the initiative is the Upstander of the Week program which rewards children throughout the tri-state area in their efforts to combat bullying of all kinds. One student every week from Calvin Coolidge is chosen as an Upstander for demonstrating respect or kindness, or discouraging negative interactions among their peers. Each student receives a Jets Upstander of the Week t-shirt, recognition on the team's social media platforms, tickets to a home game, and accolades with his or her photo on MetLife Stadium's digital screens during the game.

Guidance counselor Jeanie Ruban, an avid Jets fan and season ticket holder, attended a Jets anti-bullying seminar in August. She was so impressed with the New York Jets Tackle Bullying program and Upstander of the Week program she decided to bring them to Calvin Coolidge.

"The students can't wait to be caught doing something good," said Ms. Ruban. "They understand what it means to be an Upstander,



Xavion Silva is honored at MetLife Stadium

that is to stand up for someone who needs help, maybe they are being teased or bothered. Our students understand that it's okay to stand up for themselves and for others."

Upstanders named so far are Oluyemi Cole, Nylah Garnett, Bryan Gonzalez, Cristan Joseph, David Opoku, Xavion Silva, and Janiya Womack.

New security measures added

THE school district has taken additional steps this year to keep students and staff safe. Four **armed security guards** and two **unarmed guards** have been added to the security team. More **security cameras** are also in place to monitor buildings and school grounds. These latest measures bolster the district's already tight security protocols.



Two new programs are helping students and staff play roles in keeping schools safe. SchoolGuard was recently introduced to simplify the reporting of building-level emergencies. The app allows all approved staff members with Android or Apple phones to easily report intruders with the touch of a button. The app simultaneously speed-dials 911 and alerts all other school staff members of the emergency.

In addition, the district is implementing Say Something, a violence prevention program led by several family members who lost loved ones at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Say Something teaches students in grades 6-12 the ways to recognize the warning signs of an individual who may be a threat to themselves or others, and instructs them to say something to a trusted adult.

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