

2021 Annual Town Report: Hildreth Elementary School

Harvard Public Schools continued the challenge of balancing safety and educational needs during a world-wide pandemic as we started the year 2021. Hildreth Elementary School continued with hybrid and remote models of education through the end of the 2020-2021 school year with additional adjustments to class sizes. The year began with half day in-person instruction followed by remote classes in the afternoon four days a week, with one fully remote day on Wednesday. Families who had chosen to be fully remote continued in their remote classes 5 days a week. Remote families were also given the opportunity once a month throughout the spring to switch over to the hybrid model if they desired. Hybrid families could switch to remote learning at any time. March began with a transition to 5 half day in-person school days with remote classes in the afternoon for hybrid students, with full day in-person school days beginning in April. Throughout all of these transitions, students and staff were required to remain masked while in the building and were given many opportunities during the day to go outside and take a mask break and eat snacks and/or lunch.

Hildreth Elementary was grateful to pioneer the Safe Schools COVID testing program due to the hard work of dedicated community members, district nursing staff, donations from the Harvard community, and the support of the Harvard School Trust. Weekly testing for staff and students with consent began upon the return to school in January and continued throughout the rest of the year with funding eventually coming from the State level. Weekly COVID testing has been successful in identifying asymptomatic cases within the population of our elementary school and providing peace of mind to many staff and community members.

Construction on our new building continued throughout the beginning of 2021 with staff tours of the new space beginning in April. Teachers were able to tour their new classrooms to begin envisioning the move to the new space. The HES Community began to pack and prepare for the move in earnest at the end of April/beginning of May. Students toured the building to see their new classrooms and familiarize themselves with their new surroundings on the last day in our old building. Friday, May 14th was a day off for students and a last packing day for staff as the movers began to move boxes over to the new building. Staff then had the herculean task of unpacking and having the new building ready for students the following Wednesday, May 19th. Students entered the building on their first day with wonderment and awe and began settling into their new routines, ending with a ribbon cutting ceremony in which several students read poems that they had written about moving to a new school. We are so grateful to everyone who helped with the move and helped give tours for families and community members.

COVID restrictions in the spring limited many of our regular activities, but teachers and administration pivoted and were still able to creatively plan students enrichment opportunities. Our annual Nature's Classroom trip for 5th graders was held instead as a "Nature's Classroom on Wheels" and instructors came to our school to spend several days with the 5th graders outside exploring the surrounding conservation land and Bare Hill Pond. Many of our other regular programs such as the Discovery Museum and Plimoth Plantation were also able to offer our students virtual programs in place of the usual trips. We are so grateful for the PTO and Harvard Schools Trust who once again jumped in to help support us with these types of events.

The 2021-2022 school year began fully in-person with no remote options for learning. Our students came back, some after being away from physical school for over a year. HES had a larger incoming class of Kindergarteners this year and so an additional Kindergarten classroom was added for a total of 5 classrooms with a decrease in one 1st grade class for a total of three classrooms. All other grade levels remained consistent with 4 classrooms each. COVID spacing rules have been adjusted from 6 feet distancing to 3 feet distancing making it easier to have our classrooms at full capacity and children are allowed now to play outside without their masks. We are also excited that our playground has now been completed and the students can utilize that instead of crossing the street to the Library field.

HES had several additions and changes to our staff in the 2021-2022 school year. Kristina Lazaro moved from 1st grade, to be the Kindergarten teacher in our 5th classroom. Alison White also moved back to Kindergarten after teaching Pre-K for a year. Lauren Campanello moved back to Pre-K after teaching in the SAIL program and Alexandra Kelley was hired in her place. Sharon Correnty, moved over to The Bromfield School and we welcomed Mindy Apple as the new art teacher at HES. She has already dug right in and helped to support the PTO with their annual Square 1 Art fundraiser, raising \$5,000.00 over their initial goal. Associate Principal Dori Pulizzi accepted another job and left the district at the end of the school year. After a very competitive search with many quality candidates, Melissa Niland was hired to take on the role of Associate Principal. Mrs. Niland has been in the district for 23 years, primarily as a Kindergarten teacher. She has combined her historical knowledge of HES, teacher input, and new ideas rebuild our school 'norms' after two very unusual school years. Kat Pellerin, who was with us last year as a student teacher, was hired to replace Melissa as a Kindergarten teacher. Fourth Grade teacher Joan Accorsi retired at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Alison Wicks, who had been formerly teaching the additional 4th grade remote classroom was hired permanently in Joan's place. Tanya Hickey joined the district nursing team to help with the additional nursing demands of the year. Additionally, Administrative Assistant Lorelei Galeski retired at the end of this year and will be greatly missed. HES was also happy to welcome Alison Orrechio, Jenna Rigon and Molly Moynihan as learning assistants this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Josh Myler
Principal, Hildreth Elementary School