

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Mission Hill

We Built This City

Dear Families, Staff, Students and Friends,

If you have visited MHS recently, you may have noticed a hive of activity in the first floor hall outside of the Family Resource Room. Groups of children color in a large replica mural of the 9 Dragon Wall, while others paste small Chinese and African-themed drawings and pictures under the appropriate letter on the newly-created Wall of Words.

When you make your way into room 101, you are met with a colorful variety of books, maps, and objects all sharing the same African and Chinese themes. And in the middle of all of this, stands the

REMINDERS

April

Fri. 4/6: No school

Wed. 4/11: Science Fair

Thu. 4/12: Superintendent visit

4/16-20: Vacation

central focus of the student work: a large, scale model of Beijing China's Forbidden City. Welcome to Malindi's Journey: The Forbidden City Project, an interdisciplinary, global elementary school project, created by former MHS teacher and BPS New Teacher Developer, Alicia Carroll. The Forbidden City Project focuses on the study of the Forbidden City during the Ming Dynasty. Ms. Carroll developed the project as a vehicle for standards-based learning in a range of academic disciplines in the classroom.

For the next month, Ms. Carroll and a support team of artists, former MHS students, and para professionals will lead students through the task of building the Forbidden City model. Ms. Carroll will work with students in grades K-5 and families of students are welcome to join in

the fun!

There is a website devoted to Malindi's Journey: The Forbidden City Project at Mission Hill School, which describes the entire project in detail. Visit it to read about the extensive curriculum, learn more about the people involved, and see a slideshow documenting the progression of the project.

<http://malindisforbiddencityproject.wordpress.com/>



Sumaya works on the wall of the scale model of Beijing's Forbidden City

From the Classrooms

5 to 7 year-olds

Room 203

Up come Sal with a snigger and a grin,... (x2)

Ground hog grease all over her chin,...

The children screamed and the children cried,... (x2)

"I love that ground hog cooked or fried!,"...

You eat up the meat then you save the hide,... (x2)

Makes the best shoestring that ever was tied,...

Our family presentations continued with Daniel's family. We got an extra special treat because not only did Daniel's mom and dad show up, so did his brother Peter, and their Grandmother and Grandfather. We learned that Daniel's family loves to tell stories of real events. As each person told a silly story about losing teeth, running at church, etc., it was clear their audience was captivated by their every word. The whole family then serenaded us, and then Dana pulled out a small guitar-like instrument to teach us the extremely silly song about a groundhog. We ended the presentation with bellies full of cornbread.

Next up was Maya's mom who spoke to us about family in the United States. She also spoke about her family's roots in the Caribbean. After hearing about many of Maya's aunts and uncles, we looked at some family pictures and read Maya's family book. We heard about some of the holidays her family celebrates and were then able to taste two common Caribbean foods,

avocado and fried plantains. "Mmm! I like the plantains", stated Jessica. Both treats were consumed within minutes followed by several students asking for seconds and thirds. It has been great learning about the families in our classroom.

*~Jada Brown,
& Jo-Ann Hawkesworth*

Room 204

The Parachuting Snails have begun investigating data. They have been collecting and representing data using surveys and graphs. The class started by creating bar graphs to answer relevant questions such as, "What should small construction be today?" and "What book should we read next for read-aloud?" As a class, we used the data to decide what small construction or the next read-aloud book should be. We began to tie our data collection into our *World of Work* bakery theme by taking a poll about what breads we should bake as a class. It was decided by a large majority that the order of breads to bake would be baguettes followed by apple bread and cheese bread. Our most recent graph, "What bread did you like the most?" showed that baguettes were the class favorite, apple bread in a close second place.

During investigations students have begun to practice collecting data on their own by visiting other classes and using surveys. Some sample questions are "Do you like dogs or cats?" "Do you like plays or movies?" and "Do you like fruit?" As a class we have begun to think of relevant questions around which to form research groups so

that the Parachuting Snails can begin a school-wide research project. It was important that the class come up with questions that have meaning to them and can bring about some sort of change. Some of the things we will be researching are "What types of books do Mission Hill students like to read" to be able to tell the librarian what types of books we should have. Feel free to come by the room and see the graphs that we've been creating!

~Heather Markowitz

Room 205

Children are rolling down the hill, rolling and rolling. Shifting their trajectory to miss a tree or to purposely roll over another. Up on their elbows or with arms glued to their sides, depending on the speed they're trying to attain. They are laughing and getting dirty; they are delighting in each other's journeys down the hill and panting as they run back up.

There is a small tree that has been decorated with small wire nests since we were here last. The children wonder who made them, why they are there, if the birds will use them, how they were made.

The fence can be scaled, with adult spotters underneath. The rule is to stay completely on our side of the fence and to only go up as high as you can without feeling scared. The children are thrilled with climbing skills they didn't realize they had, watching each other and offering encouragement and advice.

And the rocks are just good for sitting on and for standing on for

a wonderful view and a sense of power. Children stretch out their arms and shout into the air. It is spring! We are big!

Puddingstone Park sits at the very end of Alleghany Street. Visit it!

~Melissa Tonachel
& Leia Baylor

7 to 9 Year-Olds

Room 201

This week, I've been doing running records, a type of reading assessment, with all of the children. Although we read together and listen to children read all the time, this assessment is a bit more formal. In one corner of the room, I have a table set up with sets of books, papers, and a laptop. The children come over one by one and look at a book I've picked out for them to read. If it feels close to a "just right" book, they'll open it and begin. I follow along on a separate piece of paper, on which the text of the book has been written out. As the child reads aloud, I make marks over each word indicating whether she said the word correctly and if she struggled, how she did so.

What does a mistake tell us? A lot, in fact. What does the child first do when confronted with a word he doesn't know? Look at the picture? Ask someone? Keep going? Does she say "cat" instead of "cow"? That tells me she's paying attention to the first sound in the word, and using another strategy to figure it out. Afterward, we have a discussion about the book to check the

reader's comprehension.

Assessment like this is immediately informative. It tells me what type of progress children have made, what lessons they're picking up on, and what they could use for more targeted instruction. It's also simply a pleasure to sit with children and hear them read!

~Emily Schubin.
Donna Winder
& Lydia Krooss

Room 207

Hi Families! The Lightning Bolts have been exploring their strengths as learners as well as different classroom jobs. As part of this past week's homework, I sent home the multiple-intelligences test. Your student has also taken this test and explored the different types of smart they are. I hope you take it and discuss your strengths with your student.

This week and next week, they are learning about the process of applying for jobs including the application, resume, necessary experience, interview and letter of recommendation. Now that they have read the job postings and tried out each of the jobs, they have applied for the jobs at the "Lightning Bolt Company". I really encourage you to share your own experiences, good or bad, of job searches and applications. Also, please continue to share information about your job or past jobs, as students are continuing to talk about these stories for share.

The Lightning Bolts have also been exploring poetry. Many students have written poems capturing moments in the

classroom. This can be from students working together, to the plants on our windowsill. After literacy, the students share their poems with the class. Each day that we do this, I have enjoyed hearing the wonderful poems the students have written.

~Jesse Begelfer,
Jenerra Williams
& Amina Michel-Lord

9 to 11 Year-Olds

Room 202

Now that March is over, our class has been trying to recover from what I have always believed to be the most challenging month of the school year. There are so many things about March that cause the stress level to rise – MCAS testing begins, Farm School can be a little scary, another report is on the way, and most of all, winter weather has kept us inside for far too long. Too many cold, dark, gray days inside the classroom always make March a little tense. In March, kids get a little less patient with each other. In March, maybe that urge to poke one's classmate that might have been resisted earlier in the year, and will be dismissed later, seems like a good idea. And, in March everyone else's feelings don't seem quite as important as they used to.

Last Thursday we had a conversation about how we were all feeling and what we might need to get ourselves back to a better state of mind. Following that discussion I thought it was time to assign a writing project

that I have given for several years now. We all write two sentences about each member of the class; one that describes something that one really likes about a classmate and another that describes something that we think that classmate does well. It can be challenging to think of something different and meaningful to write about everyone, but when we read what we all have written about each other, the positive feelings that are generated by all the compliments are worth all the hard work.

~James McGovern

Room 206

I have done plays several times over the years with different students and I always have mixed feeling about them. Not about the work or the learning that happens, those things are powerful and evident. Students researching facts, and creating a historical fiction pieces is always impressive. The scripts are often deep, thoughtful and they work incredibly hard on them. Not to mention the learning that happens when trying to synthesize four different opinions, ideas, and struggles.

The hardest part for me is that the acting always seems to pale in comparison to all of the above work. Acting is hard. Especially for pre-adolescents. Especially in front of their peers (or older students). It is hard to get angry at them when kids snicker watching one of their classmates act like an angry emperor. By

the same token, it is difficult to fault a child for not being able to keep a straight face while pretending to be an evil alchemist while their friends watch.

Taking risks, enjoying the acting and doing the scripts justice can be a tricky balance. Between our final Ancient China productions and our work this fall with Urban Improv, this is something we are working on getting just right.

~Nakia Keizer

Grades 6, 7 8

Room 211

On Tuesday afternoon the announcement was made that our sixth grade students were no longer sixth graders. In the course of an afternoon, they had all become mariners! Rowing at MHS, a longstanding and popular middle school tradition, began this week. The program is run by Ed McCabe of the Hull Lifesaving Museum, and combines rowing skills with geography, history, and science. For the next eight weeks, the mariners will explore Boston Harbor and the Charles River by way of wooden rowing boats. Check the school website for more photos!

~Dani Coleman
with Sarah DeCruz

Room 209

Why should we care? What is required of us as human beings when one of us is wronged? And who is "us"? Are some people "us", while others are not?

We took some time from our

planned curriculum studies this week to read about the events in Sanford, Florida, and to discuss the death of Trayvon Martin. We started with articles from various sources, and read in small groups. We shared what we learned and asked about what was confusing.

In an information age, why did the killing of a young black man take so long to be noticed nationally? Why was the man who shot Martin not arrested? If Martin had shot Zimmerman, would he have been arrested? Does the Stand Your Ground law only pertain to guns, or can other weapons be hidden and used? How old do you have to be to be protected by this law? How were images of Martin and Zimmerman used in the media? What was so threatening about Martin's appearance? If he were wearing a suit instead of a hoodie, would he have been shot? In some places, the fashion of wearing low-slung pants is against the law. What stereotypes are associated with articles of clothing (hoodies, low-slung pants, veils)? How do assumptions influence behavior? How do bad laws get made and changed? What is the difference between a riot and a demonstration? Will the Justice Department uncover the truth in this situation?

There are no easy answers to these questions. Or perhaps, to our national shame, there are answers, but ones we voice with pain and anger.

~Ann Ruggiero & Elsa Head

Room 208

“Is there too much buffer solution?”

“I don’t think so, I need it to conduct the electricity so the DNA can get drawn to the other side and we can sort the molecules.”

“But are the samples leaking between the wells in the gel?”

“I don’t know. Maybe.”

“Are you up for trying one more time?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you have more agarose?”

“I have one more gram. It’s enough.”

So went my conversation with Hawolul today, as she wrapped up two and a half hours of work. She had been trying to run her DNA samples through her DIY gel electrophoresis apparatus. (Gel electrophoresis is a method of identifying unknown samples of DNA). Her attempt did not seem to have worked, and we both had a lot of questions. We agreed to both read more on the technique tonight and try again tomorrow. At the end of the day today I was thinking about what had happened over the course of the past six hours. I found that I had a lot of questions left kicking around in my head, mostly about gel electrophoresis. As I searched the web in pursuit of answers, I realized how much I get to learn as a teacher at our school. My focus was not on biology in college, and so I never learned how to perform gel electrophoresis myself. Now I get a chance to understand the process more deeply in order to help my student troubleshoot her

experiment. Through students’ projects I have learned so much more about different aspects of science and engineering that I never had occasion to study before. I am thankful for the great choices our students make in designing their projects since these choices result in so much great learning for them and for me.

~Jacob Wheeler

Hot Topics**Courtney’s Corner**

Check out Courtney’s Corner, outside Room 101, for information on various programs and resources for you and your family.

Rincón de Courtney

Mira la información que esta fuera en el “Rincón de Courtney” en salón 101 para información sobre varios programas y recursos para ti y tu familia.

CAMPS: See Courtney for applications and details about these and other camps

STEM @ NEU

Want to live on Northeastern’s campus like a college student this summer? Do you like doing science experiments and building things? If you’ll be in 6th, 7th or 8th grade next year, register for the NEU STEM summer program. It’s completely FREE.

Boston Explorers

Former MHS teacher Alphonse Litz invites you to spend the

summer exploring Boston with his camp, Boston Explorers. Campers will do woodworking, cook their own food, swim, and explore Boston and the Harbor Islands. Financial aid is available but space is limited.

DEADLINE April 24th.

Spend Summer on the Charles

For as little as \$1 you can spend the summer learning to sail!

Community Boating Boston is for any child 10-18 who can swim 75 yards and has parent/guardian permission to participate. Take sailing classes or just drop in to use the boats during open sailing.

Crossroads 4 Kids Programs

Camp Wing: A safe and supportive community for children ages 7 through 7th grade to develop healthy social behaviors and have fun. Camp Wing fosters children’s development of coping skills, peer relation abilities, conflict resolution and other life skills. The Crossroads for Kids Camp Wing curriculum is specifically designed to provide youth with the proper support and opportunities needed to feel safe and successful and Crossroads for Kids staff are skillfully trained to assist every child in reaching their unique goals. Transportation provided from Boston to Duxbury. Day and overnight programs – day programs for ages 5-16. No family will be turned away because of inability to pay.

Camp Mitton: A small family-style environment teaching children ages 7 -12 healthy ways to cope with stressful situations. This is a specialized and individualized program for children experiencing difficulty with self-image, feelings

of hopelessness and understanding and communicating their feelings in healthy way. This is an overnight program with transportation from Boston to Brewster, MA. No family will be turned away because of inability to pay.

Camp Shriver will get you moving! A four week program for children 8-12, that runs July 9 –August 3, 8:30 – 2:30 M-F and after a \$25 registration fee is FREE. They accept equal numbers of children with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities. Breakfast and lunch provided and transportation to UMASS Boston from the campers’ neighborhoods. **DEADLINE APRIL 13th.**

Book Fair!

Come and see all the wonderful books available for purchase in our school library at the annual MHS Book Fair on Monday, April 23rd through Wednesday, April 25th.

The Book Fair is our main fundraiser. MHS students will visit the fair with their classes and choose a free book to take home. You can also send money in with your child on the day your child's class is scheduled to go to the book fair. A notice will go home before the April break reminding you when your child will visit. Save the dates and spread the word! ***Volunteers needed***-please contact Ann Adams, Library Specialist. aadams@missionhillschool.org or call the school at 617-635-6384.

Kierah Bailey gives Essence Mendez a hand in the boat.



right and below:

MHS mariners row under a bridge in Fort Point Channel.
Rowing in the Crouching Lion with Ed McCabe.



Mission Hill School

A Boston Public Pilot School

Deborah Meier, Founder

Ayla Gavins, Principal

Carol Johnson, Superintendent

67 Alleghany Street

Roxbury, MA 02120

617.635.6384 (office)

617.635.6419 (fax)

www.missionhillschool.org