

# Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

## Weekly Newsletter

### Dear Mission Hill School Friends, Families, Students and Staff,

Each week for the past 16 years Mission Hill staff has written a letter to families friends, students and other staff members. We call this weekly letter to all of you our Mission Hill School newsletter.

This is the second of many Mission Hill School newsletters that we will send to you this year. Reading the newsletter is an important part of keeping up with what's happening at Mission Hill. If you don't have time to read each week, save the newsletter until you do have time to read. The newsletters are also archived on the Mission Hill School website:

[www.missionhillschool.org/resources/newsletter](http://www.missionhillschool.org/resources/newsletter).

### REMINDERS

#### *September*

Thu. 9.27, 5:00: Governance Board Mtg.

#### *October*

Oct. 1 - 12: Listening Conferences

Mon. 10.8: Columbus Day - no school

Thu. 10.18, 5:45: Middle School Parent Night - Healthy

Decision Making

Thu. 10.18, 6:00: Friends of Mission Hill Mtg.

In the early days of the school, teachers wrote individual letters to families that were sent home with children once per week. Each letter was posted outside the school office so everyone in the school who came by could read the class letters. Several years later, teachers decided to combine the letters into one weekly newsletter. Its readership has evolved from in-house school community members to international educators, interest groups, and friends of the school.

Topics in the newsletter include information about your child's classroom, news from other classrooms, hot topics in education, a focus on some element of education, and news about the school as a whole. This year, some of our cover letters will be letters from the past. Letters from the earliest days of Mission Hill's existence will appear about once a month, to provide an understanding and context from the founders of the school—valuable reading.

You are welcome to submit writing to the newsletter. Please send in announcements or other writing to Betsy Caruso at

[bcaruso@missionhillschool.org](mailto:bcaruso@missionhillschool.org).

Of course the newsletter is not the only way information is shared. Check in with your child's teacher, if you haven't already, about other ways to learn about your child's experience at school.

~Ayla Gavins

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

For many of our friends in Room 208, this is the first time they have been away from home and in a group setting. It is a big job learning how to be a part of a group – learning many new names, making friends and learning how to share. To help us in this work, we have all agreed to use Kind Words, Helping Hands and Safe Feet. We use these words all day long, as we help children learn what to do at school. For example, if a child has used their hands to hurt someone by pushing or grabbing, then they must fix the situation by using their hands to help that same child. This might be by offering a hug, or offering to help rebuild a block structure, or whatever the particular situation calls for in a logical way.

Already, we are seeing an abundance of helping hands and kind words. Children are already learning to ask for things nicely, “May I please have a turn?” instead of grabbing the toy they would like. They are offering toys to each other asking, “Would you like to play?” and pitching in to help clean up after meals and work time. At home, you can use the copy of the visual we sent home (Kind Words, Helping Hands, Safe Feet) to have a conversation with your child in the morning before school – as a reminder – or when your child returns home – as a reinforcement. We thank you!

~Geraldyn McLaughlin

### Kindergarten 1 & 2

#### Room 106

I want to take a moment, before things get too busy, to introduce you to someone. His name is Brendan and he is a paraprofessional. He is working with us in room 106. After Brendan graduated from high school in Boston, he joined City Year. He spent two years with City Year. Those two years were at the old Agassiz School.

During this time he realized he had a passion in working with children. For the last eight years in his been working for Boston Public Schools. He has come full circle to the old Agassiz building and now found a new home at Mission Hill.

Brendan shows great pride in being the best he can be. He has made instant connections with children in our class. He builds with children, makes patterns out of pattern blocks, and listens to them read. He has a great way of letting children explore while letting them know they are safe.

Brendan will also be helping out with before and after school, so I am sure you will get a chance to meet him.

~Kathy D'Andrea

#### Room 107

It has been about twelve days since school began. However, we have fallen into a nice routine that sometimes makes it feel like we have been in this space for several months. Our students have been busy building relationships in and across classrooms, creating multi-course meals with play-dough,

experimenting with volume in the water table, painting masterpieces and experimenting with patterns and spatial relationships using pattern blocks and snap cubes. They have been building great ships and airports with blocks, creating fully functional train stations, reading and making numerous books, inviting people to puppet shows and working on building their muscles by riding tricycles and exploring the playground structures. While taking a stretch after waking up from a nap, one of our students even alluded to enjoying rest time saying, “Rest time is GREAT!” At times there have been misunderstandings but, as a group, we have shown the willingness to forgive each other of making the “not so great choices”. Overall, the energy in the classroom is overwhelmingly positive. Students are excited to be at school and are eager to learn. Jo-Ann and I cannot wait to see all the places we will go, the people we will meet and the things we will try in the months to come.

~Jada Brown,  
& Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

#### Room 109

We arrived to school Friday morning to find two of our caterpillars tucked under milkweed leaves hanging in a J shape. The children knew what would happen next. All day long, we watched the caterpillars in anticipation. When would they molt one last time and become a chrysalis? What would the

“chrysalis dance” look like? As we watched, and waited, we spent time with the smaller caterpillars, feeling our skin tickle as they crawled across our hands, and drawing detailed pictures.



Finally, just after lunch, a change began to happen. A caterpillar that had been hanging still all day began to move and pulse. The children all gathered around and watched in awe as the skin split, and the bright spring green of the pupa emerged. The children wondered, “Do you think it hurts?” and “Do you think that the caterpillar is scared?” As we packed up to go home for the weekend, I couldn’t help but feel that we had just witnessed a miracle together. One of many that I look forward to this year.

~Jenny Goldstein

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

For the first time since we began at Mission Hill, 13 years ago for me and 12 years for Jenerra, our ENTIRE class is new

to us. We spent last week getting to know our first and second graders, and already we have a good sense of who likes what:

Alejandro, Marquell and Rafael like playing with Legos.

Amari and Hamse like the trains.

Andrew and Joliana like to draw.

Arianny, Enaisja, Victoria and

Jhayden love to dress up in the dramatic play area.

Dalia likes to play Mancala.

Jarrell and Melissa like making books.

Kalea and Zayna like to play with Kapla Blocks and marbles.

We are very excited about our new class and as we get to know everyone better we continue to be excited about what lies ahead for all of us this year.

~Amina Michel-Lord  
& Jenerra Williams

### Room 205

Finally!! After twelve days of school, Room 205 is beginning to look more like a classroom! Last week during meeting time, children thought that the classroom could use more decorations and be more personalized before Curriculum Night! I could not agree with my children more, so this week’s activities have been focused on creating a sense of belonging and ownership of our beloved Room 205.

Speaking of promoting a sense of ownership in the classroom, have you noticed that our class meeting rug is GONE?! Some children suggested that we should sit in chairs during meeting times. Since MHS always strives to nurture children the best

democratic habits, the class voted during closing meeting on Friday. Almost everyone voted for chairs against rug! The class decided that we would use chairs for meetings for one week and come back to evaluate our decision as a group. Please feel free to join us in our new seating arrangement for meeting time and ask the children what they think about this big change!

~Brenda Lau

### Room 217

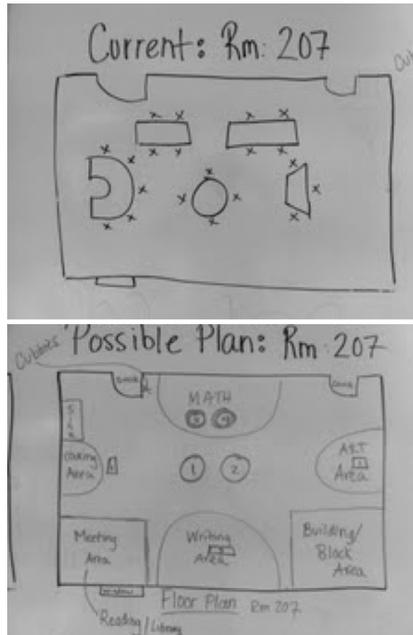
Among the objects most interesting to the children is a lamp—small and white with an adjustable, snakelike arm. It is trained on the monarch house in order to better see the tiny caterpillars as they eat and move. Some children notice that they can make shadows move in the circle of light it casts on the wall; suddenly we have puppets coming from the writing/drawing table, colored and cut and taped to popsicle sticks borrowed from Jenny’s class, and telling dramatic stories. We move a table in order to shine the light on a broader wall and accommodate more children. The children talk passionately about what they understand about how light, shadow and distance work together. We are all just beginning to get to know each other, and that is happening in joyful exploration of ideas, materials and space as we build our classroom together.

~Melissa Tonachel

## Grades Three & Four

### Room 207

On week two of school, Room 207 has done some planning for how to set up our classroom. Starting the school year with limited resources allowed the students to become apart of the



process of classroom set up. Students reflected on the various aspects of their previous classrooms and wrote about what they hope to have in the new space. Having a cooking area was a favorite of the students. When they had shared all their ideas, we collaborated in groups on four possible floor plans for our working space. Students then shared their group floor plan. After sharing their floor plans, we created one that we all agreed on. We hope to set up our classroom as items continue to arrive. Thanks and Gracias!

~Robert Baez

### Room 216

The beginning of this school year has been so very interesting. We all knew it would be. The promise of the new building has become the reality of the new building. All in all, the space itself has been fun to get to know. Navigating the hallways, using the library and cafeteria, and enjoying the outdoor play spaces have all been enjoyable and exciting. Our classroom itself is still not what it will be. New furniture and supplies have been ordered and are still en route. My expectation is to have four activity centers set up; an art center, a construction center, a science center, and a physical activity center in the hallway outside our classroom. Along with these areas I expect to have two bookcases against the walls in the meeting area for books. There is a great deal of work yet to be done, even without worrying about missing furniture. For someone like myself that has always believed in the importance of one's environment, this transition has been hard – I want everything ready now – but we are getting closer. Thank you for your patience and support as we put the pieces together.

~James M<sup>c</sup>Govern,  
Jessica Watt & Erica Switzer

### Room 206

With the newness of the building and the all of the other "circumstances" surrounding our first weeks I realized I neglected to say who I was. So to borrow a line from Jay-Z, "Allow me to reintroduce myself...!" This is my 11th year at the school, 8th year

as a classroom teacher, and first with the 5th/6th grade combination.

I am a Taurus, I like to go on long walks, and my favorite color is not an individual color at all, it's a family of colors, earth tones to be exact. All kidding aside, I am really excited to be teaching a new age group and in a new building. I spent years student teaching with high school and middle school and really missed what 12 year olds bring to the classroom.

This year year is going to be a really exciting year in a number of ways. I am honored to be working with the children in your families and look forward seeing and meeting you all soon.

~Nakia Keizer, Kailah Simon

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 215

I am proud to introduce my fantastic class, The Highlighters! They chose this name because students said they wanted to be the "highlight" of each other's and other people's days. They've done a nice job living up to their name so far. Students have said in morning meeting that are, "excited to be here," and I'm feeling similarly. They continue to be enthusiastic about being in our new space, and have been engaged in the lessons and activities we've done. We are working toward putting on a production of the reader's theatre play *Toe Stomper and the Caterpillars*. There was such an overwhelming request for roles

that Asmani suggested there be understudies so everyone could get a chance to play their favorite characters. I decided that we should put on two productions for younger classrooms. This week we continued to rehearse our lines, practice following stage directions, and create props. I'm excited to see their performance and share it with other members of our school community.

~Sarah DeCruz

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

Each Friday afternoon, middle school students complete a reflective assignment called Week-in-Review. We take time to consider what went well during the week and what was challenging, and also to set some goals for the following week. These excerpts from our first reflection on September 14<sup>th</sup> describe some of the challenges faced.

Something that is challenging for me is: ... some of the work because over the summer I started forgetting some things. ...doing some of the math work, but I go back to what we did in class and I finished my work with those ideas....sitting next to one of my best friends in math class because I'm tempted to talk a lot when I'm not supposed to. But, we get a lot of work done still.... the homework because it was a little difficult.

The material we are learning in our different classes is something that can be challenging at times. ... A thing

that has been challenging is getting back to learning. Learning math and science is different from learning how to dance. ...The biggest thing that is challenging for me is keeping my mouth shut when other people are talking. So that's one thing I improved on. ...Playing basketball was a little challenging because it was hot and I kept missing the hoop.

~Ann Ruggiero, Kendal Schwarz & Laura Nixon

### Room 208

Despite all of the complications we have experienced receiving our materials from the old building (still waiting for workbenches and some equipment) as well as our new furniture (still waiting for that too!), Workshop is up and running! Students have been very busy brainstorming project ideas for the year, sharing them and beginning the planning process. Peer reviews of project plans help students fine-tune their projects before they come to me for final approval.

The depth and creativity of our early lists of project ideas has been impressive and refreshing. Project ideas so far have included: studying the effects of road salt on plants and local bodies of water, planning and cooking a meal for the governing board meeting, studying the history and systems of Lamborghini engines, building workout equipment for the classroom/hallway and studying the effectiveness of different workout schedules,

learning Spanish and producing a short skit, and studying and modeling the formation of the Moon. This is just a small sample of ideas from a very creative and excited group of young people. Come visit the Workshop and watch as the ideas start to take shape.

~Jacob Wheeler & Chris Barnes

## Hot Topics

### Dismissal

While we continue to figure out the best way to get all our kids out to the buses, we ask that families picking up their children come in through the Carolina Ave. main doors and wait downstairs, in the Family Resource Room, Room 104, until 3:25 and then precede up Stairway A (the main entrance stairs straight up to the office) and into the classrooms. This will help us get the bus kids down Stairway B and out to the buses on time. Please be patient with us as we work this new system out.

### Music Lessons Starting

Music lessons will begin the week of October 1<sup>st</sup>. Students in grades three and above may sign up for free lessons on flute, clarinet, trumpet, saxophone, violin, viola, cello or guitar. Students in grades five through eight may sign up for percussion/steel band. Sign-up packets will come home today (September 21<sup>st</sup>), and are due back at school by September 28<sup>th</sup>. For more information, email or call Betsy Caruso, bcaruso@missionhillschool.org, 617.635.6384.

### Courtney's Corner

Check out Courtney's Corner 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” para información sobre varios programas y recursos para ti y tu familia.

### **Attention Girls!**

Strong Women Strong Girls will be starting on Thursday, September 27th. It is a FREE mentoring program for girls in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Work with college age mentors to learn about women’s history, gain leadership skills, and build self-esteem. Meet Thursdays, from 3:30-5:00, downstairs in the Family Resource Room (104). See Courtney for a registration form asap.

### **Stop and Shop A+ Rewards**

It’s time to re-register your Stop and Shop card and designate it to Mission Hill School. Then, every time you shop, your purchase total is rounded to the nearest dollar and used to calculate school earnings – free money for Mission Hill, just for buying your groceries!

Register at:

<http://www.stopandshop.com/aplus> and us ID Number: 09287. We are registered under our old address in Roxbury, but if you use our id number we’ll come right up. If you would rather send your stop and shop card number (13 digits) to Courtney and have her register your card for you, please email her at [courtney.bruno@bc.edu](mailto:courtney.bruno@bc.edu), with the 13-digit number and last name associated with the account. Once you are registered you will earn points from October 5, 2012 until March 28, 2013.

### **Wish List**

We would like to purchase a rug and two runners for our Friday Share space. We are looking for donations to help pay for these items. Please see Jeanne Rachko or Geralyn McLaughlin. Thanks!

**Mission Hill School**  
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