

# Mission Hill School News

## Letter from Child Street

### **Rules at School (and for life in general)**

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

Last week I observed two students boarding a school bus together. One child was three years old; the other was 11 or 12 years old. The three year-old, with backpack in tow, climbed into his seat. The older child buckled him into his seat without hesitation and without being asked. Bent over, he looked the younger child in the eyes and asked, "Is that too tight?" The younger child shook his head, no, and the older student walked toward the middle of the bus to his seat.

Watching those two boys reminded me that our school rules and ways of thinking about how we treat one another are not just about things or actions that shouldn't happen, but things that should happen too. Conversation about actions that are helpful, and shared agreements about what we can expect of one another is the foundation of our school culture and climate. You may hear the words *Be Kind and Work Hard*. This is our school motto. It summarizes what we should do at school, and in life in general, I think.

#### **REMINDERS**

##### ***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.

We have two school rules/guidelines that support our motto. Each classroom talks about these rules and what they mean.

1. Treat people the way you want to be treated.

2. Do nothing that stops a teacher from teaching or a learner from learning.

These two rules cover a lot of ground and we (staff) spend time each day teaching children how to live by these principles. Treating people in kind and humane ways and being a positive member of a community are life lessons, not just for getting along in school.

Using Habits of Mind in social situations is one way we assist students in their learning about how actions impact others. When conflict or disruption happens at school it's important that first the whole story is understood (the root of the problem) and then the process for resolution begins. Within each situation is a lesson to be learned.

Similar to family life with siblings, children at Mission Hill are given multiple opportunities to engage with one another, to establish friendships and working relationships. Adults facilitate these connections and coach students as they are learning how to relate to others who may be very different in age, ability and/or character. This too is a valuable skill for life in general.

~Ayla Gavins

#### Habits of Mind:

Connections- Have I seen something like this before?

Conjecture- Could it have been otherwise?

Evidence- How do we know what's true and false?

Relevance- Does it matter? who cares?

Viewpoint- How else might this look if we stepped into the shoes of others?

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

*Step by step, the longest march,  
Can be won, can be won.  
Many stones to form an arch,  
Singly none, singly none.  
And by union, what we will,  
Can be accomplished still.  
Drops of water turn the mill,  
Singly none. Singly none.*

I have to admit, I got choked up singing these words with the whole school at last week's Friday Share. It was the first time the three year-olds joined the rest of the school for this wonderful weekly tradition, and it was my first Friday Share back as a full-time teacher at MHS. The words of the song struck a chord—as I felt a connection to the history of Mission Hill and the future that lies ahead for us in this new space. The three year-olds had a fabulous time! We loved singing along with Ms. Jada's class as they performed *If You're Happy and You Know It* and *Farmer Brown*. We sang along with new songs as much as we could, and waved to siblings and friends around the room.

"There's a lot of people here!" Thatcher exclaimed. "That was fun!" he added, as we walked back to our classroom singing *Step by Step*. All MHS families are welcomed to come any Friday at 9:45 am—and especially on October 26<sup>th</sup>, when it will be our turn to share.

~Geraldyn McLaughlin

### Kindergarten One & Two

#### Room 106

The rectangular table was positioned close to the window. The indirect light hit the table with a warm glow. On the table was a big pot of succulents, a plastic container with some living things inside, colored pencils, and paper. Anna was sitting at the table. Luis kept going back and forth between writing and the science table. A couple of other children passed by to take a look.

The day before I had asked the children what they thought these things were. Tafari thought they were worms, Kaylanie-bugs, Eli-caterpillars, Adler-bugs, Cyrus-caterpillars, Anna-caterpillars and eggs, Shane-sand, and Amos, a centipede.

This day was a day for further observation. Luis came by the table. "Those are baby caterpillars." "They are little tiny caterpillars." Anna looked at him as if to agree. "I think they are caterpillars," she said. Kaylanie raised her voice with excitement, "They are moving." "They are making holes." Amos said, matter-of-factly, as he looked through the Peterson guide of caterpillars, "It's the monarch. The monarch has stripe."

We then brought our information back to the group. All the children agreed that it was a caterpillar. Amos then showed them the picture of the monarch from the book. Ten students were sure it was a monarch and two still need to investigate.

We will be spending time doing

focal observations and using books to find out if, in fact, these are truly monarch caterpillars.

~Kathy D'Andrea

#### Room 107

A picture is worth a thousand words. In the beginning stages of reading, students often rely on brightly colored pages filled with pictures of imaginative characters to help them understand the events of a story. In order to practice this inferencing skill, we recently showed our students a picture of a woman with grey hair sitting in a car outside a house. We asked them what they thought was going on in the picture. While looking carefully and thinking deeply about the image, it was clear that each student created his or her own understandings that varied tremendously from one another. Take a look:

"She is going on vacation to see her friends. She is going to ask her friends what they want to do...piano or drums or something else or violin, all sorts of music."

"...she is going to teach people. She is a teacher."

"She is going home from the barber because she got her hair cut."

"She is going home. She just got home from grocery shopping. She is going home from a big work."

"...She's going to the wedding now and then to the party. She is driving this car to the wedding and a yellow car to the party... she is going to eat some cake. Now she is going to leave."

We will continue practicing our inferencing skills throughout the year.

~Jada Brown & JoAnn Hawkesworth

### Room 109

Our classroom community is coming together beautifully. What a dynamic group of young people! Sophia loves drawing pictures with many beautiful details, writing, and painting at the easel. Jahlimar is very friendly and loving. She draws beautiful pictures in many colors! Jakob loves trains! He is also has a contagious laugh. Dillon loves drawing, constructing, and reading books. James is a wonderful conversationalist. He asks great questions and makes amazing connections. Zora is so passionate. She is a storyteller who loves animals and nature. Kenneth loves to sing and play with his friends at the sand table. Luki draws pictures that tell stories with amazing detail. Joy loves pretending in the dramatic play area, and to be a help to her teachers. Dashawn is animated, expressive, and full of joy. He is very compassionate and helpful with his friends. Emile loves constructing with blocks and Legos, and laughing with his friends at the lunch table. Olivia is dramatic. She loves pretend play, telling stories, and dancing. Maya loves pretending in the house area, singing songs, and making pictures to deliver to her friends' mailboxes.

It's also been wonderful to begin to get to know Marietje, who brings so much warmth and

expertise to our class. Marietje is a keen observer of children, who knows how to listen deeply. She is a wonderful storyteller who delights us with tales of her childhood in the Netherlands.

~Jenny Goldstein

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

As many know and some will find out as they are reading, I moved from eleven years of teaching 2nd/3rd grade to teaching 1st/2nd grade this year. The change for me has already been fun, puzzling, exhausting and amazing! These first few weeks have shown me a lot already about the children in room 204. One important quality I've noticed is that they ALL have wonderful imaginations!



A small group of girls created a restaurant during their first day of dress up. They moved tables, covered them with big pieces of cloth, wrote menus, and donned makeshift aprons from other clothes. Inspired by them, Jarrell and Andrew built a restaurant out

of big blocks and wrote their own menu as well, which included Jarrell's favorite – Buffalo wings. Jhayden tried on every piece of clothing in the dress up chest and finally settled on a grass green dinner jacket. "I am Richard Dawson and welcome to the Family Feud! Twenty seconds on the clock!"

I am looking forward to watching their imaginations grow and spread from the dress up area to our entire learning community.

~Jenerra Williams  
& Amina Michel-Lord

### Room 205

Last week the children read the book, *Duck! Rabbit!* by Tom Lichtenheld. This book introduced children to the concept of optical illusion. Depending on how you look at it, it could be a duck or a rabbit! The children had very different opinions about whether they were duck bills or rabbit ears. Some children even attempted to create their own



interpretations of optical illusion! Daniel drew a picture that looked like a cane from the top and a hook from the bottom. Vitoria's picture of a house looked just like a pogo stick when you turned the page upside down. Depending on

how you look at it, Athena's picture could be a bendy straw in a cup of water or a water pipe that goes underground! Children continued to explore the idea of optical illusions and looked at many ambiguous figures this week. What do you see in this picture?

~Brenda Lau

### Room 217

The gecko arrives in our classroom from her summer stay in a child's home. *What is it?* many children want to know. *It's a gecko*, or: *It's the gecko!* say the few children who knew the gecko last year. I know we have some established animal lovers among us, and this gecko will assure that a few more will bloom. This gecko is a quiet presence, mostly hiding during the day.

We have been engaged in the practice of looking carefully at delicate creatures: the tiny monarch caterpillars that began the year with us have helped the children develop habits of looking without touching, of lowering voices, of asking questions about how creatures look and move and eat. We are developing as biologists. The children bring others into the classroom to show them, a move to expand our community. This practice also offers a provocation for developing as writers, as children write books about geckos. One child holds the book he's written about geckos right up to the glass: *Look! He's reading it!*

~Melissa Tonachel  
Amy Dolman & Ben Hallas

### Grades Three & Four



### Room 207

This year Room 207 and Room 106 will be book buddies. Kathy and I thought this would be a great way to bring the first and second floors of the school together as a community. By paring up my third/fourth graders with K1/K2 students we hope to create a culture of leadership and community bonding. Thus far we have met twice and will continue to do so for the remainder of the school year between 12-12:30 PM every Wednesday.

Both classrooms look forward to this time every week. A student was quoted saying, "When do we have our book buddies again? That was fun." Having book buddies will make reading and role modeling fun!

~Robert Baez

### Room 216

Last week our class began the very important process of choosing a class name. The class brainstormed and debated many interesting names. We began with a list of 102 names generated

from whole class and small group discussions. Then we began exploring the characteristics and merits of these names. We chose to use qualities such as *educational*, *thoughtful*, *helpful*, *strong*, and of course... *fun* to evaluate our choices. Students chose various names to make persuasive speeches about and attempted to convince their peers to support their favorites as we began a process of elimination. Initially, we voted for as many names as we wanted in order to try to reach consensus. After each vote, we eliminated the names with the fewest votes until we got from 102 to 25 to six and finally to the remaining two. This week we will hold a secret ballot vote that will require each student to choose his or her favorite name.

Many interesting and creative names have been involved in our project. We have thought about The Endeavors and The Golden Rulers, there were The Peregrine Falcons and The American Eskimo Dogs, and then The Firecrackers and The Wolf Pack. And, although it did not last through the voting rounds, another name received a very nice endorsement from Lily when she said, "I would like us to be called The Rainbows because they are beautiful and they have all colors, so everyone can find their favorite color in one and I want our class to be like that."

~James McGovern  
Erica Switzer & Jessica Watt

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 210

We are currently in the throes of the first theme, *Near and Dear*, in room 210. We are establishing routines, setting up systems and getting to know one another. As research shows, establishing the tenor of the room in the early stages of the school year can really set the stage for academic and social learning throughout the school year. Which is why I was so excited that we will be participating in the Urban Improv program this fall.

According to their website: *“Urban Improv is an interactive program for young people that uses improvisational theater workshops to teach violence prevention, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Today: this means cyber bullying.*

*The program’s innovative curriculum helps students deal creatively with major issues in their lives. It is truly a rehearsal for life.”*

We have had a long-standing relationship with Urban Improv and are excited to be part of it again. The only difference is that, this year, they have tailored their curriculum to grade specific so in order to accommodate them we are going to separate the grades. Later this year, Sarah will bring the entire 6<sup>th</sup> grade and, beginning October 4<sup>th</sup>, I will be accompanying the whole 5<sup>th</sup> grade class. We are scheduled to leave the school at 9:30 so I hope that families can make the next nine Thursdays

“early drop off” days.

~Nakia Keizer, Kailah Simon

### Room 215

~no news this week

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

“Wait,” said a 7<sup>th</sup> grader. “I thought portfolios aren’t until spring!”

As we end the first month of school, we have already started a process that will mark the end of the school year – portfolios! This week, all the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students wrote letters of introduction or re-connection to their advisors. An advisor is a Mission Hill staff person who does not work directly with the middle school, but advises students on portfolio preparation and presentation.

To answer the 7<sup>th</sup> grade student, I explained that portfolios actually “start” on the very first day of school. It is steady day-to-day work that results in a well-prepared and successful portfolio. On a regular basis throughout the school year, students will be scheduled to meet with their advisor to build a relationship, contribute to the advisor’s school community, and practice sharing their academic work.

Later in the year, we’ll host a Portfolio Breakfast to explain the details of this amazing process to families. Video clips from last year’s presentations will provide evidence of a form of assessment that is personal, authentic, rigorous, and

celebratory.

Note: Please contact us if you have not yet scheduled your Fall Family Listening Conference. Thank you!

~Ann Ruggiero

Kendal Schwarz & Laura Nixon

### Room 214

In the last two weeks, the 7/8 class has enjoyed two trips to Arnold Arboretum. This place is a tremendous resource for our school and our community. Many of my students have been surprised by the fact that this large, natural place is so close to our new building. In fact, it only takes us eight minutes to walk from our classroom to the main gate! This makes so many experiments and observations possible even if we are under the time constraints of a short period.

Sitting by the bank of a small stream, Siobhan and Leylainy made detailed sketches of the redwood trees while Kavon observed a large frog swimming away into the protection of an old concrete culvert. While watching the way the water moved in the stream to form the patterns Jah’Von was trying to capture in his drawing, Ahsad hypothesized that the patterns were created by the sticks and stones that lined the bottom of the stream. Ten minutes later we were back at our tables in the classroom, looking forward to more time in the Arboretum.

~Jacob Wheeler & Chris Barnes

## Hot Topics

### IMPROVING SCHOOL CHOICE COMMUNITY MEETINGS:

This spring, more than 2,300 people

shared ideas for improving school choice and student assignment. Now, BPS has developed several new options and we'd like to share them with you. You are invited to community meetings to learn more and let us know what you think:

- Saturday, Sept. 29 (10:30am-1pm): East Boston High School, 86 White St., East Boston (Spanish interpretation)
- Sunday, Sept. 30 (1:30pm-4pm): Teen Center at St. Peter's, 278 Bowdoin St., Dorchester (Cape Verdean, Portuguese, Vietnamese interpretation)
- Monday, Oct. 1 (6pm-8:30pm): Jackson/Mann K-8 School, 40 Armington St., Allston (Cantonese, Portuguese, Spanish interpretation)
- Tuesday, Oct. 2 (6pm-8:30pm): Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, 75 Malcolm X Boulevard, Roxbury (Cantonese, Portuguese, Somali, Spanish interpretation)
- Thursday, Oct. 4 (6pm-8:30pm): Ohrenberger School, 175 West Boundary Rd., West Roxbury (Spanish interpretation)
- Friday, Oct. 5 (7:30am-10am): Suffolk University, 73 Tremont St., Downtown
- Tuesday, Oct. 9 (6pm-8:30pm): Mildred Avenue K-8 School, 5 Mildred Ave., Mattapan (Haitian Creole, Spanish interpretation)
- Wednesday, Oct. 10 (6pm-8:30pm): Charlestown High School, 240 Medford St., Charlestown
- Thursday, Oct. 11 (6pm-8:30pm): Dever/McCormack School, 325 Mt. Vernon St.,

Dorchester (Spanish interpretation)  
 · Friday, Oct. 12 (6pm-8:30pm): Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, 38 Ash St., Boston (Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish interpretation)  
 (Child care is available at all community meetings except Oct. 5.)

You may also explore the options and fill out an on-line survey at [www.bostonschoolchoice.org](http://www.bostonschoolchoice.org)  
 Contact: Mary Ann Crayton, 635-6771, [mcrayton@boston.k12.ma.us](mailto:mcrayton@boston.k12.ma.us)

#### **What's New with BPS Food and Nutrition Services?**

Check us out at :  
<http://schoollunchboston.wordpress.com>  
 or  
<http://www.bostonpublicschools.org>

#### **Parent- Child Playgroups at Mission Hill School**

For children ages 1 to 5 years who live in Boston  
 Moms, dads, grandparents and other caregivers are welcome!  
 Mondays and Tuesdays 9:30 to 11:00 and 1:00 to 2:30  
 Fridays 10:30 to 12:00, in Room 104

For more information contact Silvia at 617-821-3959 or [srodriguez4@boston.k12.ma.us](mailto:srodriguez4@boston.k12.ma.us)  
**Dismissal**

While we continue to figure out the best way to get all our kids out to the buses, *we are asking that families picking up their*

*children wait downstairs*, in the Family Resource Room, Room 104, until 3:25 and then use 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.

#### **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 use ID Number: 09287. We are now registered under our NEW address in Jamaica Plain. 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 the last name associated with the card. Once you are registered you will earn points from October 5, 2012 until March 28, 2013.

#### **Attention Girls!**

Strong Women Strong Girls started yesterday, Thursday, September 27<sup>th</sup>. 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. Meets Thursdays, from 3:30-5:00, downstairs in the Family Resource Room (104). It's not too late!

## After School Adventures

Our afterschool program has gotten off to a great start! With two brand-new rooms and two playgrounds, *plus* the field, there's plenty of room and lots of activities from which to choose. Take a look at these snapshots of kids enjoying the spaces and each other.



Look! No hands!



Pre-game conference



A slideful of smiling students



We break for bananas

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