

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

Three Books Worth Reading

Dear Mission Hill School Friends, Family, Students and Staff,

During the winter break I read 3 books that I thought you might enjoy. The first book is titled *Democratic Education in Practice: Inside the Mission Hill School*. It was written by Mathew Knoester, a former Mission Hill School teacher. The book documents much of Mission Hill's history, theory and practice. I appreciated how easy Knoester's book was to read as he addressed complex issues. This book provides great language for explaining how things work at the school and why. *Democratic Education in Practice: Inside the Mission Hill School* can be

purchased at the school. If you'd like a copy see Dani Coleman or Joni Davies. It can also be purchased online at www.barnesandnoble.com and at www.amazon.com.

The second book I recommend is a book that is read by our middle school students. The title is *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. I found it on my daughter's bookshelf and decided to read it. The writing is beautiful. Each poetic short story evoked a different feeling in me. Knowing that our middle school students read this book, connected me to them as I read more. All the while I was reading, I wondering how they responded to different parts of the book. This book is available in most bookstores and great as a shared book between parent/caregiver and middle school child. It's also available online at www.barnesandnoble.com and at www.amazon.com.

Naama Goldstein, a Mission Hill School parent, wrote the third book I read and recommend. When I put out a call for short stories that would be great for our students to read, Naama responded by giving me a book of stories that she wrote. I was thrilled to learn that she was an author and had a published book. Reading the stories in her book, *The Place Will Comfort You*, I felt like Naama was sitting next to me telling me these stories. Through her stories she brought me into her culture, one I'd like to learn more about. Knowing an author adds a dimension to reading that feels luxurious. *The Place Will Comfort You* can be purchased on line at www.barnesandnoble.com and at www.amazon.com.

Let me know if you read any of these books. It would be fun to talk a bit about any one of these books. Happy reading!

~Ayla Gavins

REMINDERS

January

Mon. 1/21 - NO SCHOOL: MLK Day

Fri. 1/25, Pajama Day!

February

Thu. 2/7, 4:30 - 6:30 - Camp Night

2/7 & 2/8 - Family Conferences

Fri. 2/15 - NO SCHOOL (Staff conference)

2/18 - 2/22 - WINTER BREAK

Sat. 2/23, 11:00 - 4:00 - MassArt Family Day

2/27 - 3/1 - Grades 5 & 6 to Farm School

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Room 108

We read our new book *Germes are not for Sharing*, by Elizabeth Verdick, just as the virus began to attack our classroom. This fun book helped teach us why it is so important to wash hands after blowing your nose, before you eat, and after you use the bathroom. We practiced sneezing into our elbows – and covering our coughs that way, too. We practiced washing hands—making sure we used soap! – and even sang a song as we washed. (To the tune of “Where is Thumbkin?”) “Tops and bottoms, tops and bottoms, in between, in between. Making lots of bubbles, making lots of bubbles. Now they’re clean. Now they’re clean.”

Still, with all our precautions (bleaching tables throughout the day, cleaning door knobs, etc...) many of us in Room 108 have been caught by this terribly yucky stomach virus. With all of this yuckiness, came one HUGE act of kindness – and that was Ms. Donna stepping in to lead our healthy classmates in my absence. Thank you, Ms. Donna!

~Geraldyn McLaughlin

Kindergarten

Room 106

On our first day back we starting our day by trying to understand some new words. I asked the children, “What do you think the word Ancient means?” Shane said “Mean”, Kaylanie “Running away”, Gianna “Skiing”, Cyrus “Running away from home”, Amos “A long time ago”, Eli “Running fast”, and Adler said, “Subway crash”.

Other students were not sure to even guess. I asked them how we might find out what it meant. The students made four suggestions. 1. Ask questions. 2. Ask someone else. 3. Ask someone else what they think. 4. Find another word that kind of looks like it. Anna, Gianna, Cyrus, Eli, and Brendan went to ask the question, “What do you think the word Ancient means?” The asked Joni, Ayla, Brenda, and Jenerra. They told the students that it meant a long time ago and very old. We were on our way. When the children came downstairs we shared their findings with the class. I shared our class dictionary with the class. We looked up Ancient and were excited to find that we had the correct explanation.

I then asked another question. “What do the words Ancient Greece mean?” Gianna said, “Long time ago there was a man in a bush”, Cyrus “Someone lived a long time ago”, Amos “A city buried deep down under the earth” Anna “something even older than the word Ancient”. Again I asked, “How can we find out what Ancient

Greece means?” Together they came up with a variety of different answers. They suggested: ask questions, find people who are smart and ask them, look at books, go to the library (MH and BPL), go online, and my favorite; If your mom is smart you can ask her. We will keep you posted about our research.

~Kathy D'Andrea

Room 107

After our visit to the John F. Kennedy Museum and Library, Room 107 reflected on what they saw through art. Below are some of their recollections.

I drew the ...
 “... torn flag and the bus. I like it. The flag was in the war.”
 “... (first lady’s) fancy dress, the red carpet, the United States Flag and the necklace and the bus. On the back I drew John Kennedys wife’s suit.”
 “... American flag outside in the big room. It was a giant flag. The blue is very cool to me.”
 “... replica of George Washington’s sword. He was the general.”
 “... John F. Kennedy. I drew about the oval office that we saw. There was a desk and an American flag.”
 “... whale’s tooth and the American flag. There was boat on the whale's tooth.”
 “... bus. We got to ride on the highway. I drew the first t.v. and it showed the President doing a speech. I drew the American flag.”

“... Oval office. I saw a desk and I put decorations on.

“... war on the boat. Their boat got cracked in the middle and John F. Kennedy swam until he found a boat that could save him. He saw a boat and he swam with the life jacket of his friend in his teeth and he swam for hours. He found a boat but it took him a long time. They got on another boat. One of the guys got a coconut and John F. Kennedy got the coconut as a present.”

“... torpedo. It was part of a ship that John F. Kennedy was on. I drew the table in the oval office and the torn flag. I drew a necklace and George Washington’s sword.”

...“I remember the coconut.”

~Jada Brown
& JoAnn Hawkesworth

Room 109

"When are we going to have book buddies," some of the Magic Dragons asked Jenny last fall. Finally, after winter break our Cinco y Seis buddies from Nakia's class are coming to our classroom every Thursday morning.

We spent the first two weeks getting to know each other by playing together in Jenny's classroom. We showed the big kids our favorite play areas and toys. While we were playing we made new friends. The big kids taught us many fascinating new tricks, like making rainbows on the wall by letting the sunlight shine through prisms, or building really tall towers in the block area that don't fall over. It was a lot of

fun! In the process we figured out who was the best match with who. Everybody found a buddy, and that made us very happy!

Last week everybody got together with his or her special friend. Each Magic Dragon picked a book from the classroom library to read with a buddy. In most cases the older child read to the younger one, but there were some teams that turned the roles around. All children talked together about the story they read, and the connections they made between the story and their own experiences. We studied the pictures and pointed at things we noticed in them. It was very exciting! We are looking forward to many more Thursday mornings with our new big friends. Hooray for book buddies!

~Marietje Halbertsma

Grades One & Two

Room 204

This week we continue with our new math classes. Though we have had a lot of absences due to illness, we are managing to gel as a 2nd grade math community.

On our first few days together we played games, got to know each other and created our math agreements. Some of our agreements are: to work hard more than talk to your friends, respect each other and have fun.

Likewise, we set goals for ourselves. A few goals set were: "I want to make a math tiger game", "I want to count higher numbers" and "I want to learn how electricians use math." Each day before we begin, I instruct

everyone to put on their "math hats" to help them use their math minds well. As a special surprise, Lexi made everyone a real math hat of newspaper and wrote their goals on the front!

With agreements made, goals set, and math hats on, we are ready for the many new adventures and challenges that lie ahead. Hold on to your "hats"! Here we go!

~Jenerra Williams

Room 205

Last week we began in-depth conversations about our new Ancient Greece theme. The long ago and far away themes are sometimes challenging for six, seven and eight year olds, because trying to understand the concept of Ancient (someone said Ancient was the 1970s) as well as grasping the notion of land outside of Boston, Massachusetts and the United States is difficult.

We started with talking about what we think we know about what Ancient Greece means:

- Ancient means very old:
- Before we were born
- Before we had phones
- Before dinosaurs
- People made mummies
- Reminds us of Ancient Egypt
- Boys wore armor
- Greece is a place
- They had pottery and used sand as paint
- Athena is a goddess of war and wisdom

Next, we brainstormed what we would like to learn about Ancient Greece over the next several months:

- What is a Minotaur?
- Did they go to school?
- What kind of food did they eat?
- Did they drink water or milk?
- What kinds of games did children play?
- What were their shelters/structures like?
- What kinds of materials did they use to make shelters/structures?
- Are there other gods and goddesses?
- What other mythical creatures were there?

Stay tuned as we flesh out this stimulating, thought-provoking theme.

~Amina Michel-Lord
& Brenda Lau

Room 217

Four children lie on their bellies beneath a table. One child sits in the rocking chair with a board on her lap. Still others are scattered about at various tables. In each area is a collection of colored pencils (in a basket, in jars, scattered on the floor). Each child has chosen a writing pencil; many fuss over how sharp the pencil, the presence or absence of an eraser, elbow room. There is a lot to organize just to get started. It is writing time.

What to write, and how? Do you start by drawing pictures? Telling the story aloud and thus deciding where to begin? Do you sound out the words, or do you need someone by your side to help you get letters on the page? When do you decide that you are finished working? What

if you are told to keep going, then what?

How does a person become a writer? How do we choose what stories to tell and how to tell them? For young children, who are imagining and telling stories all the time—in their paintings, in play, with blocks and in conversation—there is a tricky transition of considering an audience. There is a revelation that the story isn't just being told; it is also being received by someone else. For me, their teacher, there is a balance to achieve between preserving the spontaneity and pleasure of storytelling while pushing children to consider the interest of the audience who wants more detail, who needs to be able to read it, who desires a story to last a while.

~Melissa Tonachel

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

On Fridays, students in room 207 have continued to work with Andrew, a Boston Nature Center representative, on various hands-on planting projects. When you arrive at our classroom doorway on the second floor of the school you will see a growing lab, which provides lighting to our plants. The various seeds being grown are green beans, basil, peas, and spinach. Each week, students water, observe, and record growths or planting errors in their Boston Nature Center field journal. When plants have died or not grown as predicted, students will redo the process of planting a

seed of their choice. This has been a great experience for all students. As we enter the New Year, students will begin to study various animals and their life spans. Room 207 will provide you with updates regarding our animal investigations.

~Robert Baez



basil seedlings growing

Room 216

The Golden Rulers have begun our new unit, Ancient Greece: The People and Their Stories. We started last week reading myths about gods, goddesses, heroes, and monsters. We have begun learning about the geography of the region, making maps and trying to get a sense of where the important locations could be found. Most of all, we have been exploring the different way of thinking that is required of a historical researcher learning about a culture that had a very different way of looking at the world—for example, the need for students to suspend their sense of judgment. “People in Athens are the good guys, they had democracy and the Spartans were all soldiers who were mean to their kids,” is a fairly commonly made point

when young students compare the two city-states. But I remind them that as historians, we cannot judge either culture by our standards if we are going to understand them. The “democracy” that the people of Athens enjoyed was not like our own, these were real people with real problems. The Spartans had their own standards that they lived by, these kept them strong and safe for many years. In history, it is rare that there are “good guys” and “bad guys” and even when one could take such a position it is most often a matter of perspective. This way of thinking is intimately connected to the Mission Hill Habits of Mind and an important step in our students’ educational growth.

~James McGovern

Erica Switzer & George Merrill

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

No news this week

Room 215

Over the past few weeks, students in the 5th and 6th grade have been working on strengthening our skills in literacy and in math. We are working in small groups to practice double digit multiplication and long division. We enjoy practicing our skills and seeing the improvement in our work because of it! In literacy, we are working on constructing meaning from a text and we are creating an original play based on our book *Adventures of the Greek Heroes*.

We are working hard on editing and practicing our play and plan to perform the finished product to our younger friends in the Kindergarten classrooms. We hope you will see us soon!

~Kadian Simmonds

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

Why give homework? As a teacher, I give homework for a couple of reasons. Students need an opportunity to practice strategies learned in class, whether math problem solving, close reading of a text, or writing a summary or reflection. Students also need opportunities to make decisions independently about which method is most appropriate, how one idea connects to another, and what resources to use when stuck.

Why do homework? When students do homework designed to enhance learning, they become more accomplished at the assigned tasks. They develop the ability to problem solve, to think independently, to stretch their brains, to make decisions, to plan, and to manage time.

Why monitor homework at home? When families monitor their children’s homework, they are helping to develop work habits and responsibility along with learning. At the middle school age, families are not expected to do homework with a child. But they do need to provide a time and place for work, and check that the work is done. Every child is different. Until you know your child can

be independent, it is not enough to ask, “Did you do your homework?” You need to see the homework.

Homework is not busy work and it is not punishment. Assignments are carefully chosen to support learning. We need your help. Please make it a nightly habit to check homework status with your child.

~Ann Ruggiero, Laura Nixon
& Kendal Schwartz

Room 214

Room 214 has really entered the world of Ancient Greece. We have been reading original myths written by our students recently, and they have been very entertaining. They teach lessons about topics like greed, differences in strengths and weaknesses between people, and the importance of heeding warnings. The stories follow the format of Greek myths, teaching important lessons or explaining natural phenomena, and while some of them take place in Ancient Greece, others take place in modern times in a variety of locations, giving us a fresh perspective on this type of story.

Other projects in the works right now include a large-format Greek alphabet (each letter fills an 8 1/2” by 11” sheet) that will span one of the walls of the classroom. The letters are shown in capital and lowercase and are labeled with their names so we can learn to recite the alphabet. A knowledge of the Greek alphabet can come in handy, especially in science. A map of Ancient Greece is almost complete, covering an entire bulletin board in the hallway. One of our students even used a translating program so that the places on the map could be shown in English and Greek. Another group is creating an

illustrated family tree of the Greek gods and goddesses.

Come visit Room 214 for a glimpse into the world of Ancient Greece.

~Jacob Wheeler & Chris Barnes

Hot Topics

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.

Second Annual MHS Camp Night!

Mark your calendars for our upcoming Camp Night to be held Thursday, February 7th 4:30-

6:30. Yes, it's already time to start thinking about camps.

Camps are gearing up for summer and registration for many of them has already started! There will be representatives from different camps both near and far for all ages. Something for everyone! Stop by and hear how to apply for financial aid or what transportation is available for the different camps. Don't see a camp there that you're interested in? Talk to Courtney about getting more information.

Keep those Box Tops coming!

MHS is collecting Box Tops for Education all year long. You can drop off Box Tops at the Main Office, with Courtney in Room 114, or your child's classroom. Remember, each one is worth 10¢, so every one counts! Keep up the great work and turn them in when you clip them from products you use every day. For a complete list of Box Tops products or to sign up online to support our school, log onto www.boxtops4education.com.

MassArt Family Day

Join us for Family Day on Saturday, February 23, 2013! Visitors of all ages are invited to drop in any time to enjoy art-making, writing, guided conversations, games, and take-home creations. Best for ages four and older.

11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Bakalar & Paine Galleries
South Hall, 621 Huntington Avenue

Near the corner of Huntington Avenue and Longwood Avenue

Recycled materials needed for Greek art projects

Please send in your toilet paper rolls, paper towel rolls, white sheets or fabric, and clean, empty two-liter bottles. We will turn them into columns, models of the Parthenon, vases and other Greek art.



Mission Hill School

A Boston Public Pilot School

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