

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

Welcoming All and Staying Balanced

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

Boston Public Schools is close to making a decision about a new student assignment plan. You are encouraged to attend a community meeting about the plans on February 4 from 6:00 to 8:00pm at Orchard Gardens School, located at 906 Albany Street in Roxbury. At this community meeting you can hear the proposals being considered and share your thoughts and questions about them. The External Advisory

REMINDERS

February

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

FAMILY CONFERENCES TO BE

RESCHEDULED

Fri. 2/15: School Closed - staff at conference

2/18 - 22: Winter vacation

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

March

Thu. 3/14, 5:45: Family Council

Mon. 3/18: No School

Thu. 3/28: Family Breakfast
Ancient Greece

Fri. 3/29 No school

Committee, the team making the new plan recommendation, is holding this community meeting.

One of the most recently shared proposals includes mention of Mission Hill School specifically. The specific mention of our school is in relation to honoring the commitment to the Mission Hill neighborhood and balanced demographics in our school. We have City Councilor Mike Ross to thank for his continued support of the residents in Mission Hill.

You can review these plans at bostonschoolchoice.org. Below is my analysis of the three plans under consideration and how each one relates to our school goal of welcoming all and maintaining a balanced student body. *“One option would create ten community-based zones, designed to offer a balance of quality choices no matter where a child lives. This approach would give families lots of options while giving them confidence that their choices are all familiar ones.”*-*Improving School Choice: A Letter From the Mayor*. This plan spans two zones for enrollment into Mission Hill School, zone 5 and zone 8. Parts of Roxbury (including Mission Hill), Jamaica Plain and parts of Dorchester are included in this

plan. Although this plan is not city wide, the reach into Roxbury and Dorchester combined with Jamaica Plain offer a potentially beautiful balance of diverse backgrounds for our students.

“The other options are based on an address-based system with no zones, which tailors school choices for each individual student - ensuring every child has high quality choices on his or her list, including schools that are close to home and others that might be a little further away.”- *Improving School Choice: A Letter From the Mayor*. There are two student address based systems being considered. Both systems would almost entirely provide Mission Hill seats for new students to Jamaica Plain families, no one else. While our current student body would still remain at Mission Hill, this plan works against our effort to have students from different neighborhoods that include a wide range of race, class, religion, language and income.

As I said in my first letter on this topic, whatever plan you support, keep this element of diversity in mind. This is what we are trying to ensure and it calls for us all to speak up. Economic, learning, racial, religious and language differences (among others) are crucial elements to sustain in our school community.

~Ayla Gavins

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Room 108

We are blessed with three new student teachers! They are all part time, and together they will help us, learn from us and teach us. Liying is a student at UMASS and is with us every morning, and on Tuesday and Thursdays she stays all day. Liying has been taking classes taught by Mission Hill School kindergarten teacher Kathy Clunis D'Andrea, so that is an exciting connection. Elisabeth is from Wheelock and she is with us Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays for part of each day. Chelsea is also from Wheelock and she is with us Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for part of each day.

I know that is a lot of new people for "The Rocks" to get to know. I am confident our children will benefit from each student teacher – and the individual strengths that each will bring.

Welcome Liying, Elisabeth and Claudia!

~Geraldyn McLaughlin

Kindergarten 1 & 2

Room 106

Amos, Anna, Eli, Cyrus, and Adler are building in the block area. They are building an Agora. An agora is the name of the markets that they had in the time of Ancient Greece. The students did their research. They found out Ancient Greeks had beans and peas and root vegetables. They discovered The Greeks had figs

and apples. They made replicas of the food using paper and tape. They also made lots of eggs and potatoes.

They took their research and put it into action. The group collaborated on making the agora with blocks.

Anna: We can put the freezer here.

Amos: What?

Anna: We can put the freezer in this space, you know when you go to the market they have freezers.

Amos: They didn't have freezers in Ancient Greece.

Anna: Oh.

A couple of minutes pass

Anna: Ok, we can put the scanners here then.

Our study of Ancient Greece has us thinking about what life back then was like. We have conversations about what they had and didn't have, how they lived their daily life, and what children might have done with their time. Come by and visit our classroom and learn with us.

~Kathy D'Andrea

Room 107

The past few weeks were filled with anticipation and excitement in Room 107 for two reasons. The first is that we have had approximately 10 family presentations! Moms, dads, sisters, brothers, uncles and aunts have visited our classrooms during snack time to tell us a little about where their families are from and to share some of their family traditions. The second reason is that we had our annual school-wide pajama day. For Jo-Ann and me, pajama day is not just a school-unifying activity.

It is a celebration of all that we have accomplished thus far. Consequently, we fill the day with students' favorite things, introduce some new classroom items and just enjoy each other's company. At the end of the day we ask our students what they liked best so that we can prepare for next year. Here is what they had to say:

I liked...

Liam: "... everything... the movie."

Alma: "... that we ate chocolate chip pancakes."

Peter: "... that we watched two (Magic School Bus) movies."

Brian: "... that we watched movies."

Anand: "... when the Magic School Bus transformed into a turtle."

Lucas: "... the cereal and pancakes."

Miles: "... the movies."

Braxton: "... the movie."

Noah: "... the Kix cereal."

Euan: "... the movie."

Rui: "... that I wore a race car pajama."

~Jada Brown

& JoAnn Hawkesworth

Room 109

This week the Magic Dragons began to explore Greek Mythology. After learning about Zeus, the children collaborated to tell this story: Once Zeus was very mad. He threw lightning bolts down to the earth. People ran into brick and stone houses. The other houses shook and began to break. The houses got

full. People were sad. They ran out of their homes and went to Troy. At Troy, they built new houses. But Zeus found them. They hid under strong rocks and stone arches. They worked together to fix the houses and then Zeus wasn't mad. He made it sunny and he only showed lightning bolts when it needed to rain.

~Jenny Goldstein

Grades One & Two

Room 204



A few weeks into our new theme, the Fantastic Crew is fascinated by all that Ancient Greece has to offer. Here are some other things they shared about what they know.

Zeus and Poseidon are brothers. In Sparta they put sick babies on the hillside.

They have clothes that go around their shoulders.

Athena is the Goddess of wisdom and war.

There is a girl with snake hair.

Cronus ate a baby.

The first Olympic Games were in Greece.

They had boats in Ancient

Greece.

They had wars in Greece.

Gaia is mother earth.

They had Greek heroes that killed monsters.

They made statues of Gods.

We also talked about what things we want to find out. These are their questions:

How were the goddesses born?

What do they eat?

What is the most famous myth?

What started the wars?

What were all the building made out of?

Why did they start the Olympics?

I wonder what their schools looked like.

I wonder if there were men teachers.

Did they die or are there still Greek people today?

Do they have game shows?

How did they get around?

I wonder what questions you have?

~Jenerra Williams

Juan Cortez & Lexi Delyani

Room 205

Last weekend Mission Hill adults gathered for our winter retreat in Essex MA to examine what makes our school run. Agreements were made and

disagreements hashed out. There were tender moments as well as difficult ones. We reflected on things that have gone well and made adjustments to things we believe need to improve. When our meeting was done we had a tasty meal and enjoyed each other's company, talking, playing games and other social activities. After a good night's rest we gathered again to continue the important work we are charged with.

Three times a year the staff at MHS comes together to discuss, reflect and make decisions about what happens at our school. It is crucial at a democratically run school that we take the time to look at what we are doing: What is going well? What is not going well? What changes need to be made? This is time-consuming yet critical work that must be done. I considerate it a privilege to be part of a dedicated group who willingly come together three times a year, outside of our school week to tackle ideas big and small related to our beloved school.

~Amina Michel-Lord
& Brenda Lau

Room 217

The story of Prometheus and Epimetheus, in the first Greek myth we have explored, tells of how animals and humans came to be, and how they got ahold of the power of fire. It is Epimetheus who pulls some mud together and shapes it into humans in the image of the gods. Then he breathes on them, and they come

to life. We could try that! the children assert. They call out excitedly the names of the animals they would like to have come alive. What if we made animals and breathed on them, and then they could be our pets! The next morning, I offer clay--from the earth, like mud--out of which to fashion those animals and people. We make mice, snakes, humans, a rabbit; and then we place them carefully on the table and breathe. It doesn't work. Our animals do not move. You blew on it, you didn't breathe on it. It's because it isn't finished yet: it doesn't have ears, a tail, fur... Our work is pushed to include more and more detail, to shape the clay more carefully, to consult each other more openly for advice. The children furrow their brows in concentration, widen their eyes in excited expectation, frown in disappointment; and then they reassign themselves to the task. We have a plastic bin close by to enclose the clay figures, just in case they come alive when we are not looking and try to run away...

~Melissa Tonachel

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

Effort, Progress, and Change!

These three words have become a part of room 207's culture. During the fall, room 207 created year-long hopes and dreams, in which each student indicated a need or skill that had room for improvement.

Becoming a stronger reader, writer, communicator, researcher, artist, friend (peer), and the idea of being kind/inclusive were among the many needs students mentioned. Throughout the year all students in room 207 have made progress towards their goals.

A couple of weeks ago we evaluated our progress during a whole class discussion at morning meeting. I asked students, how do we know that we have made progress on our goal? How has effort contributed to our progress? Has your progress created change in your learning experiences?

Students provided many insightful reasons and thoughts in answer to my questions. I am proud to say that many students in room 207 have become better students; physically, socially, and academically. As a whole, our effort as a group has allowed each student to progress, which has created a positive change to many of the children's experiences within a typical school day. Room 207 will continue to monitor our progress.

~Robert Baez & Shaina Butler

Room 216

No news this week

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

Here is smattering of our End of The Week Reflections. Enjoy.

"SOMETHING THAT WENT AWESOME THIS WEEK IS PAJAMA DAY! EVERYBODY SHOULD BE DOING THIS FOR

EOWR! WHOOOOOO!!!"

"Something that did not go well is today, Friday, we didn't get to do singing or technology!!! I really don't like that what I love about Friday at school was not there! I really don't like that. But I'm glad that we get to use the computer this end-of-the-week reflection!

Yeah, I didn't like that we didn't get to do singing either. It made me quite upset because I like to listen to your beautiful voices."

"My week was awesome."

"Something that went well was the meeting area reorganization because I think it looks better and more organized than before. I also think that people are doing an ok job at keeping it organized. I also think that separating the older and younger kids at recess because then we can be a little rougher when playing football. I learned how to use a template on Friday, and it is nice to be able to not have to rewrite everything each time we do a response."

"Something that went well was Wednesday because we found out it is Kailah's takeover week. I also think the sticky notes on the pictures was a really good idea. I also like how we got to type our end of the week reflections on our google drive. I had fun at recess because we got to play cops and robbers at recess."

"Something that went well this week was p.j. day! This is because I was cozy all day and its like spending the day at home and being lazy. I wonder, how

you felt all day in your p.j.s? I
<3 / love pajama day.”

~Nakia Keizer

Room 215

Being kind is sometimes easier said than done. Sometimes students say things quickly without thinking and it hurts someone else's feeling and they didn't realize it. Other times students use hurtful words intentionally. As a fifth and sixth grade team we have been working diligently to help students see the power of their words, especially when those words hurt members in our school community. Part of my job is to teach students how much their words matter. Part of growing up is finding the power in our voices. It is the responsibility of all adults in our school community to step in and show students how their words affect others. It can't stop there though; we also have to offer them opportunities to change by teaching them replacement behaviors. A few members of the fifth and sixth grade community are taking on a 30-day act of kindness project. Students will brainstorm a list of intentional acts of kindness, get it approved by an adult in the building and write a reflection on how doing this act made a difference and how it made them feel personally. It is my hope is that this experience will show students first hand that it feels better to be kind.

~Sarah DeCruz

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

To introduce our study of Ancient Greece, we watched a slide show depicting the allegorical story of Plato's Cave from *The Republic*. The story helped us to understand that what we perceive or believe to be true isn't always real, and that there is often more behind what appears to be obvious. Referring to a math task from earlier in the year, Maddy made an immediate connection, "It's like the checkerboard problem!" At first it seems obvious that there are 64 squares on an 8x8 board. But then the questions start. Can the squares be 2x2, 3x3, 4x4...? Can the squares overlap? We end up with many more squares than the obvious 64.

We then examined a design that I had made on graph paper. "That's cool," kids said, admiring what appeared to be a curve. When told that the design was created only with straight lines, questions arose. As in Plato's Cave, what appeared to be obvious (a curve) wasn't real. The kids then worked with graph paper and a straightedge to create similar designs.

Next we tried our hands at drawing an equilateral triangle with a straightedge. Kids were surprised that drawing a triangle with three equal length sides was so difficult. We then introduced the compass, the tool the ancient Greeks used to explore the field of plane geometry. Equilateral triangles led us to Sierpinski triangles, a fractal made from

subdividing a triangle.

Use of the compass led to six and 12-petal daisy designs, and a "field of daisies." Getting drafting tools into our hands is helping us to appreciate the discoveries of the ancient Greek mathematicians

~Ann Ruggiero, Laura Nixon
& Kendal Schwarz

Room 214

This week the 7/8 class begins the journey toward writing effective, engaging research papers. Within the Ancient Greece Theme, our students have already identified many topics they are interested in and questions they want to answer. This is fertile ground for developing strong research questions for our latest project. We discussed the criteria that make the best research questions, and found that the best ones are open ended and lead to follow-up questions that would give us a deeper understanding of the topic. Here are some of the research questions we generated:

Why did the Ancient Greeks create and tell myths? - Rianna

How was the decision to go to war made? - James

How did they make their clothes? - Aujanæ

What war tactics did they teach? - Cameron

Were there forbidden foods? - Destiny

What was the Trojan War about? - Hawolul

What type of foods did the Ancient Greeks eat? - Imani

What type of sports did they play? - Selena

How did the Greek language influence other languages? - Ziggy

What type of weapons did they

use? - Jah'Von

Why did it take so long for Greece to unite into one country? - Liam

Where did they get the materials for their houses? - Abdul

Why did they need armies? - Yavi

What city-states had alliances? - Jesse

What did the different types of meals look like? - Madeline

How did the climate affect Greek civilization? - Essence
~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.

Camp Night

Come find out about great camps and summer activities for your kids!

Monday, February 4th, from 4:30 - 6:30 at MHS

There are camps from outdoor exploration to arts and academic & social programs. Many have scholarships or sliding scale fees. Check it out!

Join the Mission Hill School Family Forum!

The Mission Hill School Family Forum is an initiative by school



Ten videos. One year. A public school trying to help children learn and grow. The national conversation we need to be having.

During 2011-12, filmmakers Tom and Amy Valens spent a year at the Mission Hill School, observing, filming, and becoming a part of the community. A Year at Mission Hill is a series of short films, focusing on their year at the school. Each episode examines a particular theme and will be accompanied by a variety of resources for both educators and the general public, alike. Tune in to watch and participate in a national conversation about MHS!

www.ayearatmissionhill.com

parents and caregivers FOR school parents and caregivers.

To join the group:

(1) Request to join by sending an email to MHS Family Forum moderators Naama or Neathery (mizzgee@yahoo.com or neathery99@gmail.com)

Or,

(2) Visit the Mission Hill School Family Forum site, take a look at the homepage, and click the "Join This Group" link to submit a request that way:

<http://tinyurl.com/MHSconnects>

Make Your Voice Heard on School Choice

BPS External Advisory Committee Community Meeting
When: Mon, February 4, 6pm – 8pm

Where: Orchard Gardens K-8

School, 906 Albany St., Roxbury

Description: The EAC wants to hear from you! Please join the External Advisory Committee on School Choice for a presentation on the models under consideration and a summary of the work to date.

If you love Mission Hill School and want to see more schools like ours in Boston, let the EAC and the Boston School Committee know.

Mission Hill School

A Boston Public Pilot School

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