

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

Great School

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

I recently had lunch with Deborah Meier. One of the many things we talked about was the launch of the 10 segment film series, *A Year at Mission Hill School*. Our thoughts were positive, however we both had stirring reactions to the school being called “great” in the first episode and in write-ups that we read. We pulled our thoughts apart about what “great” means over lunch.

I have mixed feelings, some discomfort and some joy, about Mission Hill being called a great school. The discomfort comes from what I perceive as the public image of being great- meaning perfect or without flaws. Mission Hill School is far from perfect. My interpretation of great as it relates to schools is not connected to perfection. So why do I feel pressure for everything to be just right when I hear the word “great” connected to Mission Hill School? I can’t escape the thoughts that all of you (families and friends) might be thinking. It’s your daily experience, your child’s daily experience and the communication about both that makes my thoughts restless.

REMINDERS

February

2/18-22: Winter Vacation

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

March

3/14 & 15: Family Conferences

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

Mon. 3/18: No School

Thu. 3/28: Family Breakfast

Ancient Greece

Fri. 3/29: No School

Being a great school doesn’t mean that every kid loves coming to school every day or that parents don’t have complaints. To some degree those things will always be true. We are a community of humans after all—dynamic. In my opinion, a great school doesn’t ignore bumps in the road or queries. A great school has staff that wants to gather more information for the best possible response to things that are not going well.

Great companies, great families, great books and the like are dynamic. Different things can be seen at different times and from new perspectives. That’s how I hope you will view our school. Because each member of our school community brings something to it, it’s never quite the same place. Never static, that’s one of the things I love about it. In that way, it is great.

So what to do about the lingo buzzing about in the world about our school? Do we define greatness in our own terms and embrace it as always moving, changing and messy? Or do

we pull away from the widely accepted idea of greatness and the pressure to be perfect by requesting a deletion of this word? What do you think?

You can find the link to segments one and two of *A Year at Mission Hill School* on our website at www.missionhillschool.org.

~Ayla Gavins

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Room 108

When I heard that Boston Public Schools was calling a snow day on Friday nice and early—Thursday around 12:30 we got the word—my heart jumped for joy. For me, that meant I could drive safely home to New York on Thursday after school, and be with my own sons for the snow day/weekend.

The only downside of spending three snowy days with my sons is knowing that we will be tempted to have too much screen time. In our home, we don't have TV in the traditional sense, but we do watch shows together on the computer. If you've known me a long time, you've heard me talk about the slippery slope of screen time, and the negative effects that screen time can have on children. Did you know that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under two years of age, and only two hours a day for children older than two? It's true. Screen time for children under three is linked to irregular sleep patterns and delayed language acquisition, and the more time preschool children spend with screens, the less time they spend engaged in creative play—which is the foundation of learning.

What can you do to fill those hours—when screen time seems like the only option? Play games, sing and dance, draw with crayons, do chores together, play with simple props (like blankets and empty boxes) and of course,

read books together! If you are looking for ways to reduce your child's screen time, I would love to talk with you about it, just let me know.

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin
& Donna Winder

Kindergarten One and Two

Room 106

Perspectives on weaving

The butterflies discovered that weaving was an important part of the Ancient Greeks' lives. We have started weaving on looms made of cardboard. I asked the students to think about what it was like to weave. Here are Their responses.

"I did good at weaving 'cause I just did it. I had to weave back and forth. I did weaving before at my momma's house. I did a wrong turn and I put it out and it did it right now." -Gianna

"It was hard. I kept on doing the wrong thing. I kept on pulling it too tight. I need to tie all the knots out. I like that I am doing it so good the other times I was weaving." -Cyrus

"It is a little tricky and a little easy because you have to do up down up down. If you just do it down or just do it up you will have to do it all over." -Adler

"Weaving is a little hard and a little easy at the same time. I like weaving. It makes my life a little bit prettier. I have to go over and under over and under and that's not all. I love weaving even though it is a little hard and a little easy."

-Anna

"It was a little hard. I thought that it was a little hard cause when I

was doing it and going forward and back first I didn't know that when I went to that choice I wanted to be finished." -Kaylanie
~Kathy D'Andrea

Room 107

Family Presentation synopsis continued:

Annad's family spoke about India. We started our time together with mom playing the guitar as we sang "I've been working on the railroad" and "You are my sunshine". We then read the story Amritras Tree from a book titled *Earth Tales*. A slideshow of their visit to India where students saw decorated elephants, the Taj Mahal, the festival of lights and traditional dress worn in mom and dad's wedding caught the attention of us all. We finished our time eating naan and rava-halwa.

*Does Zeus change the weather?
Why can't girls go to school?
Why can't girls go to the Olympics? What does Zeus do?
Why can't girls do fun things?
Why doesn't Hades go to Mount Olympus? How many stars are in the sky? Why can't girls go to plays? Why can't girls read? Why can't girls go to places?*

After reading *Hour of the Olympics* by Mary Pope Osborne, it was clear that a common sense of frustration arose among our students concerning the "inequality" between men and women. Gender roles in everyday Greek life remains a quandary to them as they continue to express passionate disapproval. However, they are beginning to find that

myths such as Proserpina and Pluto and Atalanta and Hippomenes depict women in powerful roles.

~Jada Brown
& JoAnn Hawkesworth

Room 109

An Ancient Greece-Inspired
Myth

by the Magic Dragons

Hera got married to Zeus. They were happy until Hera found out Zeus married a lot of people. She was so jealous that Zeus got married to everyone and she was so mad that she couldn't calm herself. She tried everything to make Zeus not go somewhere else and only be hers. She tried telling him "Zeus, I'm really mad." Zeus didn't say anything because he didn't hear her so she decided steel thunderbolts when he wasn't looking from his pockets. Then when Zeus wasn't looking, Hera stole one of his axes and cut off a giant slice of the mountain right above his head. When she was finished she pushed so it would slide down behind his back. She would make him sit down. Before she did that she made a hole that make him go underground. Zeus was really mad. He hung her on a star. And Zeus took her down because he thought she might be good. Then she stole more thunderbolts to throw at his wives. When she realized what she had done started to apologize. And then she married some of his wives and she felt happy.

Zeus was still mad and didn't appreciate her apology. He stole his thunderbolts from Hera to

show her that she did something wrong. Hera got so mad that she hid him in a cave. Zeus breaks the cave with his thunderbolts. He puts Hera in another punishment by hanging her from the stars again. He left her there until she said I'm sorry. She said, "I'm so jealous that I couldn't help myself." Zeus got her down from the star and they hugged each other. Zeus said, "You're the best wife ever."

~Jenny Goldstein

Grades One & Two

Room 204

Though I can't remember the exact number of days we've been in school, we are about halfway through our year. The halfway mark is a great time to stop and review. As Nakia reminds us with his sports metaphors, we need to have a "half time" check in. There are things built into our year that always happen around this time. We check in with families during family conferences. We are doing mid-year check-ins on students' progress. As a staff, we just spent time doing our own half time check in at our winter retreat.

This is a great time to have a conversation with your child(ren) about how they are feeling at school. Here are some questions you might ask:

- What are you feeling really good about at school?
- What is something you are wondering about at school?
- What is still a challenge at school?

It is also a great time to make a fresh commitment or continue

with reading at home every night.

So stay tuned for your conference date (March 12 – 14) and plug it into your calendar. Talk about what's happening at school and what wonderful things will come in the next half of the year. Jenerra Williams,

~Jenerra Williams
Lexi Delyani & Missy Anderson

Room 205

On Monday afternoons during lunch, the first and second grade teams come together to talk about children in our classes. Various specialists join us to give us their perspectives. I really value this meeting time because it allows us to bring questions and quandaries we have about children and to receive a wide range of ideas and opinions from educators with various experiences. Then we all help to create an "Action Plan", a set of steps that a teacher is going to try to implement in hope of seeing change. At a recent meeting a teacher was discussing challenging behaviors that were occurring in the class. By the time our 40 minutes together was over we had helped her come up with a system to communicate unacceptable behavior to the children in the room. We also helped to create a system for children to visit other classrooms when being in their room is either hard for them or hard for others. When we were through I felt we had not only begun to help a colleague try to find solutions for a difficult situation but I came away with some ideas to use in my own practice. I am grateful

that Mission Hill is both a learning environment for children as well as adults every day.

~Amina Michel-Lord
& Brenda Lau

Room 217

Trish Lee is a story collector. She appears in our classroom and immediately begins interacting with the children, appreciating their every offering, watching carefully for clues about their interests, their habits, their stories.

We abandon our plans for the morning and gather for meeting. Trish tells us, *We need a stage*. The children scoot off the rug and it is whisked away. In another moment, Trish has a stage outlined in tape on the floor, the children surrounding it, her notebook out. The magic has begun!

Trish reads us a story told by a child from her home, in England. She pauses as she reads, *Once there was a princess, and a prince—Okay, we need a princess and a prince; will you and you be those?—and the princess went into the woods—We need the woods; can you and you and you be the trees?—and now a dragon...* The story continues and comes alive, the children acting in turn, taking on personas and moving around the stage. Trish brings us another story and then another, and then she invites stories from our group, collecting them in turn. She writes them down, assigns roles, reads aloud, and the delighted children act them

out so that our whole world changes.

~Melissa Tonachel

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

Wow...the Blizzard of 2013 has given New Englanders another meaning for the name "Nemo". Nemo has brought us a wonderful coat of white snow and time off from school/work. We probably won't remember him as a famous Disney character anymore. Now that we are back at school for two days we can't help but get excited about our February break. Yes, we have more days off. Before the MHS staff can begin our vacations, we are all traveling as a group to Detroit for a wonderful conference, the *North Dakota Study Group 2013: Reimagining Education*. During this conference we hope to enhance our knowledge and experiences within various topics related to urban education. We will have the opportunity to document our findings within the conference sessions and by visiting some of Detroit's schools and educational advocacy organizations. We hope to share what we learned and use the acquired knowledge correctly. I encourage community members of MHS to visit the NDSG conference website for more information. www.ndsg2013.org/

~Robert Baez

Room 216

This week, the Golden Rulers started new theme groups. Each group takes on themed projects for two weeks and then rotates to

the next topic. The students will study subjects such as culture and art, family roles, and children's rights through the lens of a child growing up in Ancient Greece.

While observing "the rights of children" group after hearing a section read aloud, I heard one student say to another, "Wait, this cannot be real! There weren't slaves in Ancient Greece, were there?" The first student looked puzzled, re-checked what she had read, looked at him and said, "Well it says there was here," pointing at the page. The students continued to discuss whether slavery could be real, based on what they had read, and came to the conclusion that since the reading seemed to tell the truth about other things, slavery must indeed have existed. Through their discussion, I was able to observe students learning through collaboration and inductive reasoning.

~Erica Switzer

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

No news this week

Room 215

The Highlighters have been busy drafting their own Greek myths. We started by creating a monster through the use of hyperboles, extreme exaggerations. Here is what some of them came up with:

Spiderous was so poisonous when he bites you he turns his victims blue. When he breathes

he webs you into a cocoon then he'll eat you for dinner. Most of the Gods and all the citizens of Greece are afraid of him because he has eaten 20 gods and 1,000 people who lived in Olympia. – Jonathan Arias

Spider-Crabeus lived in the Ionian Sea, not far from the island of Crete. Spider-Crabeus had 30 legs and was 25 feet tall. He was so atrocious that when he talked he made people faint. Also, when he steps on people he crushes them. – Alexa Lopez

Doboto had very sharp claws that can break down walls. He could smash 20 chariots with his head. With his tail he could wrap up 500 people. – James O'Gilvie

The Blasting Broccolius lived in Olympus. He was very strong, with four pairs of eyes, and his arms were more than sixty feet long. He was the king of his kingdom and everyone feared him except for the hero Hercules. – Laneah Holloway

~Sarah DeCruz

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

Each year, I present the 7th graders with a challenge. How many examples of linear relationships can you find outside of math class? I ask the kids to make a prediction. With the whole class contributing, can we find 10 examples, or 30, or even 50? And so the challenge begins.

The study of linear relationships formalizes algebraic thinking and representation for middle school students. We begin to understand

that a linear relationship is based on a constant rate of change between two variables. When you're at the supermarket and buy five pounds of pasta at \$0.89 per pound, that's linear. Driving for two hours at 55 mph to visit Grandma? Again, that's constant rate or linear change. And how about that leaky faucet that you keep meaning to fix? Examining that steady drip could easily become a math problem. Add a lesson on how to change a washer, and your young mathematician can not only document the leak but also fix it.

Please ask your 7th grader to share the examples of linear relationships they find with you. Then visit our classroom to see the display students assemble. This is a math idea that is easy to understand and has an impact on many of our daily activities. So, if it snows for 12 hours at a rate of two inches per hour...that's a linear relationship and also a SNOW DAY!

~Ann Ruggiero

Room 214

"Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and charm and gaiety to life and everything." - Plato

Over the course of the week, I've noticed that the students appeared to be the most productive when we had music playing. I saw heads bobbing in unison, an unprecedented decrease in idle chatter and a chaotic calm that was surreal, almost Zen.

There have been numerous studies that suggest that music is indeed instrumental (pardon the pun) in increasing work performance. In a research study from the University of Windsor in Canada, they found that participants reported a positive mood change and enhanced perception while listening to music at work. They also found a direct correlation between change in mood and increased curiosity. Both happen to be ideal when engaging in creative tasks and work that demands one's full attention.

The type of music you select is key. We listened to Dubstep music. It consists of hypnotic and melodic tones, laced with heavy bass and sub basslines. It seems to engulf the listener and put her or him in a trance-like mood. There were no intricate lyrics or anything that would divert the students' attention away from what they were doing. It's a good idea to introduce the students to something they're not accustomed to hearing. However, it shouldn't be too far outside their comfort zones, as this will become the focus. Try a little Dubstep. It worked for us.

~Chris Barnes & Jacob Wheeler

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.

February Vacation Fun

If you're looking for things to do during February Vacation, check out

Courtney's Corner online through the MHS website under Family Resources. There are free events, full day programs, and other fun activities throughout the city all week long.

Box Tops

Keep those Box Tops coming! MHS collects Box Tops for Education which can be found on many products you may already use. Cut them off the packaging and turn them into Courtney by February 26th to be counted towards this year's total.

Camps

The second annual Camp Night was held just in time before Storm Nemo arrived. If you missed it or are looking for other summer opportunities for your child, please contact Courtney.

Beyond the Spectrum - Art Adventures for children with Autism

The **Artful Healing** Program at the Museum of Fine Arts invites children between the ages of eight and 12 on the Autism Spectrum to explore art and art-making with their parent or caregiver.

Beyond the Spectrum meets one Saturday per month from 10:30 am to noon. During this 90-minute program, children explore the MFA collection with a trained Museum Instructor, then go to a classroom and create their own pasterpiece to take home.

No Child Left Inside

Mission Hill loves to play outside!

Please send your child to school ready to play in the snow at recess, with boots, jackets, hats, mittens and snow pants!
(extra socks are a great idea too)

If your child is in need of outdoor gear, we can help!

Please contact Courtney Bruno at
617.635.6384



Each class costs \$8.50 per child, and includes all materials and museum admission for one parent or caregiver. Discounted museum parking is also offered. Tickets may be purchased in advance and are only available online. Tickets for the current week's class will be available for sale until 1:00 pm on the Wednesday before the class. For more information and tickets, go to www.mfa.org/programs/community-programs/beyond-the-spectrum

Mission Hill School

A Boston Public Pilot School

Deborah Meier, Founder

Ayla Gavins, Principal

20 Child Street

Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

617.635.6384 (office)

617.635.6419 (fax)

www.missionhillschool.org