

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

AN EVOCATION OF GREECE

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

Visiting Mission Hill School recently, I was struck by a vivid display on a wall just beyond the office: an array of paper mosaics made by third/ fourth grade students, clearly inspired by their current study of ancient Greece. On a nearby wall and along the adjacent hall were more displays of paper mosaics, these by first/second and fifth/sixth graders. Each mosaic was made of small, painted squares of paper pasted onto a 12" x 12" background paper, simulating the ceramic tile mosaics of ancient Greece. Brilliant, decorative and evocative, the displays invited attention and thought. I decided to spend some time looking at the first array of eighteen squares (three horizontal rows of six) by third/fourth graders.

Several characteristics were immediately obvious: No two panels were alike – in color, design,

conception. Each was a child's original creation, though informed in both style and content by classical Greek culture. Seven of the eighteen paper mosaics were abstract designs – circles, squares, radiating and intersecting lines, all of them more or less symmetrical. Another six panels were essentially representational, among them a flower; three palm trees with sea, earth and sky; dolphin, sea, clouds and sun, a double-peaked building with blue sky and red columns.

The remaining five mosaics were somewhere between abstract and representational: a red dome-like structure on horizontal bands of blue, green and red; several suns-like designs and, finally, a fully conceived, well organized mosaic difficult to describe - a curved shape made of light green tiles below a pattern of green and blue tiles regularly punctuated by red ones (possibly a Greek theatre seen from above?).

Blue was the dominant color, appearing in all but two of the eighteen mosaics. Six mosaics had geometric shapes, circles or squares. The most common elements, as far as they were readable, were sea and sun, appearing in some form in eight of the mosaics. Half of the mosaic squares had decorative tiled borders along all four sides.

My thoughts: first, the mosaics were beautiful, individually and as a collection. Sometimes explicitly, sometimes subtly, they evoked ancient Greece –the radiating suns, colors of land, sea and sky, cultural symbols (e.g., temple, dolphin), traditional design elements (borders) and the material itself –simulating ceramic mosaic.

The work on display came from students' deep immersion in a far-off, ancient culture, its history, mythology, artifacts and imagery. At the same time, each design represented a student's "take" on Greek culture expressed through his or her own artistic style and preferences. The project was a vivid demonstration of how art and the curriculum can be integrated, art giving an enduring and deep significance to a new intellectual venture. The images on the wall are not likely to disappear soon from the heads of their creators, those third and fourth grade students.

This, the display of mosaics, is, quite literally, what good education can look like.

~Brenda S. Engel

REMINDERS

April

Sat. 4/6 Steel Pan Concert at
Roland Hayes: 12:30 3:00 -
FREE

Mon. 4/8 School Picture Day

Thu. 4/11 Science Fair

4/15 - 19 Spring Break

Fri. 4/26 - Morning Walk and Talk
with Ayla

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Room 108

The Rocks have been learning about some fables. We have read *The Lion and the Mouse*, (big or small, we can all be kind and work hard) *The Tortoise and the Hare* (keep trying and do your best) and our latest, *The Dog and His Reflection*. Here is a sample of an oral story retold to the Rocks:

A very greedy dog loved to collect bones. Every day, he would walk by the butcher's shop and the kindhearted butcher would give the dog a bone. The dog was very proud of his bones, but all he would do was dig holes in his yard and bury his bones. He loved bones so much that he wanted all the bones for himself; he did not want the other dogs to have their own bones. One day, with a bone in his mouth, the dog came across a lake. He looked into the water and what did he see? He saw his own reflection. But he did not know it was himself; he thought it was another dog with a bone. "I want his bone!" the dog decided. So he jumped into the water to get to the 'other' dog and take his bone. What do you think happened? There was no other dog in the water, just the greedy dog! And guess what happened to his bone? He lost it down the river. The greedy dog no longer had a bone. And he was very unhappy.

The Rocks have learned that we should be happy with what we have. We should not want someone else's things nor should

we try to take them away from our friends!

~Donna Winder
Geraldyn McLughlin
& Angel Nasseh

Kindergarten

Room 106

The Butterflies are poets. We have been reading poems. We have been memorizing poems. Now we are writing our own poems. I introduced the children to Reggie Routman's book *Kids' Poems: Teaching Kindergartners to Love Writing Poetry*. In her book she has poems written by children the same age as in our class. The students were very inspired by the poetry. Without hesitation Amos went off and wrote about one of his favorite topics, skiing. He wrote, "I can ski. I can ski. I can really, really ski." Amos' poem inspired Cyrus to make up a similar poem. Cyrus said, "I can not ski. I can not ski. I really, really can not ski."

Other students wrote about things they loved as well. Gianna wrote about Princesses. She dictated, "Princesses dance. Princesses run. Princess drink. Princesses eat. Princesses eat cupcakes." Roldani has a little stuffed chipmunk that he always has at his side. It was no surprise when he chose to write about chipmunks. Roldani poem, "Chipmunks are nice. Chipmunks are friends with me. Chipmunks are for playing. Chipmunks slide." Come by our classroom and read our poem. They are up and ready for viewing. Maybe, just maybe you might want to share your poems with us too.

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

Room 107

Editor's note: The two-part series on race caused some shifting of planned stories these past few weeks. This issue features a bonus story from room 107.

With anticipation mounting about the upcoming Olympics, the Silver Star Patriots are finding Greek connections everywhere. Several weeks ago Peter's mom shared with me the following accounts:

On a recent drive, Daniel (2nd Grade/Miss Brenda's class) looked out the window and saw flags in front of a gas station. He recognized the American flag but asked, "What's that blue one?" Peter (K2/Miss Jada's class) said, "That's the Greek flag!" Then we noticed that the station was called "Alfa" like the first letter of the Greek alphabet but with a different spelling.

During vacation week we went to the MFA with another family. We made a point of checking out the art from Ancient Greece. Peter's first observation was, "That's the meander pattern!" It was a familiar shape to me, but I didn't know the name of it until then. In the room filled with ceramics, Daniel noted that sometimes the figures are red-on-black and other times they are black-on-red. The difference, he explained, was that the black figure ceramics took an additional step to create. All ceramics started black. The artist then either added red figures and stopped there or created a red background on which to place black figures. This information prompted us to take a closer look.

Two nights ago I noticed that I could see the constellation Orion very clearly. I called the boys out to take a look. "That's the little dipper!" said Peter. The next evening he wanted find the constellations again but it was too cloudy. It is such a treat to learn along with them.

~Lydia Johnson Reynolds
Jada Brown
& Jo-Ann Hawksworth

"Ms. Jada. Are we training today?"

The Silver Star Patriots have been extremely busy over the last few weeks with all things Greek. We have been cooking dishes like Koulourakia, Riganatha, Avga me Domates, White Bean Hummus, Lathenia tis Alikis, Tzatziki, Amygthalota, Tiganites and Milopita. We did some research on vegetables and herbs that the ancient Greeks ate and recently created our own little Greek garden complete with squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, beans and peas. We learned about Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns and decided to build some life-sized replicas to stand a few feet away from our Olympic flag. In addition, our students have assembled and sewn a Greek flag, which now hangs in our classroom. Our brief study of the constellations was extended to the Planetarium at the Museum of Science. While there we were able to see the constellations, hear new versions of myths and, as one student said, "we visited the moon".

While we enjoy doing all these

activities, the one thing our students are the most excited about is planning and training for the Olympics. Most days they request training sessions so we have been practicing the discus, javelin, running, wrestling and boxing in our classroom ring. We have also decided that in order to stay true to the races, we need to build chariots and create horse masks (as we would serve as the spritely horses). While training we not only built weights to make our muscles stronger but we are learning the 2010 FIFA World Cup song for inspiration and to perform at the upcoming opening ceremonies.

~Jada Brown & JoAnn Hawksworth

Room 109

The Magic Dragons have been learning about what it takes to put on a play. The first decision they had to make was what to perform. Should we choose one of our favorite Greek myths? Should we write our own story? The children decided on *Pandora's Box*, and they have been preparing ever since.

The children have owned the whole process. They decided who would play each part. They have used a real sewing machine to help sew costumes. They worked together to paint the scenery—a giant Mount Olympus. They cut, painted, collected, and built paper mache props. They even wrote their own lines!

By the time this edition goes to print, the children will have finally performed for an audience. Break a leg, Magic Dragons! We

look forward to sharing our play with you at Friday Share.

~Jenny Goldstein

Grades One & Two

Room 204

"This is so much fun!" This comment was made last week as we began the process of making our Greek Super Hero dolls. Four stations were set up around the room and the "fun" began. Members of the Fantastic Crew picked felt, drew the top half of their doll from a stencil onto it, and cut it out.

Hands-on projects like doll making bring out interests, talents and strengths that you may not see otherwise. One student traced his doll with great care and interest. He hasn't shown this much interest in much at all this year. He smiled when he was finished - a smile rarely seen from day to day. Another student shared with me that she liked to use "this kinda stuff" (felt) for projects. As she talked to me and waited for a stencil, her hand smoothed out the felt over and over again. She typically isn't a "maker" so this was interesting, new information.

This project has also allowed their imaginations to soar and their minds to entertain the question, "What if...?" What if Joliana's Water Girl really existed and she could make all the water in the world clean? What if Maryam's Tinkle Girl's wand really could shoot out sparkles and cure you of cancer?

A classroom devoid of hands-on work is a classroom that is missing the wonderful

opportunity to allow children to do what they do best – imagine, wonder and create.

~Jenerra Williams
Lexi Deliany
& Melissa Anderson

Room 205

The Wonderful Wonderers have been studying wildlife in the city with Andrew. After learning about the different habitats and the kinds of food wild animals eat, the Wonderful Wonderers were asked to unleash their creativity and imagination to create their own critters. Here are some of the children's creations:

Shawnmathew: This is Old Donkey. It's half old man and half donkey. It has two heads and it lives in the woods and it eats beavers.

Daniel: This is Bigger-smaller-smaller-bigger. It has three eyes, six legs with two toes on four of them and three toes on two of them. It has a very long tail with sharp thingamabobs.

Sofia: This is Fly-horse. It has antlers to protect itself, and is shaped like a deer. It has a long tail and mane. It lives in the heavens and eats different colors.

Laudys: This is Pogg, it's a lion-gorilla-dragon. It lives in the desert. It breathes fire and has an amazing sense of smell. It eats rabbits and coyotes.

Justin: This is Dolly, it's a bunny-dolphin. It lives in water inside a forest.

Ruby: This is Kyd (pronounced cutie). It looks

kinda like a mouse and it's grey except the tail is feathery and the mouth is pointy.

~Brenda Lau &
Amina Michel-Lord

Room 217

A child shows walks her family into the classroom, a folder of work in her hands. She places it on a table and begins the tour: *This is where I...* and, *Over here I can show you...* and, *Do you want to see...?* Adult family members look over their shoulders in my direction to see if it's going okay, if the child is on or off track, if there's something else that's supposed to be happening. *Follow your child*, I want to reassure them, *she knows exactly what she's doing*.

What your child is doing, of course, is being an expert in herself. She's putting herself out there for your review and celebration, she's trusting that whatever accomplishment she feels is wonderful you'll feel is wonderful, too. And whatever work she is less sure of, you will reassure her that she's on a learning path and making progress. She's welcoming you into her life at school, where so many dramas play out, discoveries happen, questions get asked and new things are tried.

Thank you for coming to your child's family conference two weeks ago. If you have not yet been able to schedule a time to do so, please, please do.

~Melissa Tonachel
Chloe Carlton, Carey Goo
& Oginga Walter

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

As we continue to work toward the end of our Ancient Greece unit, we will start to explore the various aspects of physical science, our last theme study topic of the year. Last week our students traveled to the Museum of Science to get a "snap shot" of what physical science means and its properties. The Golden Rulers and the Silver Star Patriots accompanied the Hawks via a private charter bus. During our time at the museum we were able to learn that science is a large topic, which consists of various smaller topics such as physical science. The various hands-on activities that the museum provided, amazed many of the students. By exploring the multiple exhibits students were able to understand that many things we use daily have some science in them. This field trip was the foundation of our pre-thinking stage of physical science as a class. There are various mini-lessons/projects that students will explore and conduct to study these ideas. The Hawks and Mission Hill are excited about our new theme topic! We hope the weather improves so we can conduct many of these projects outside.

~Robert Baez

Room 216

Last week, as a preamble for the upcoming physical science theme, we visited the Museum of Science. We spent the day exploring, discovering and

wondering. As the students interacted with the environment around them, each of them woke up the scientist within. The questions came from all different angles; *how does this work? Why does it look like that? What will make it move faster?* Whenever possible, we took onto the task of finding the answers ourselves. We delved into the information available; we played with the materials in front of us, took notes, touched, pulled, sniffed (YES! Sniffed) and asked even more questions. The best part was that at the end of the day the students didn't even realize they had spent the whole day learning and being scientists! As we prepare for the weeks ahead, we strive to create the same kind of environment in our classroom. One in where each student can awaken his or her natural curiosity. One where questions are made that yearn to be answered and where the process of finding those answers feels playful and exciting.

~Juan Cortes & Erica Switzer

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

ummmmm
Man..recommendations...report cards...theme...snow days....Detroit....processing....Stan!...Farm School, Stan prep, olympic games, (these are just the ones that I remember)....craziness.

When they are unsure what to write about, I tell students to write anything. Whatever pops into their minds. It at least gets

the fingers moving. Pencil or keystroke. My version of that process is above. Theirs reads more like the following:

"...ummm when is recess...why don't we get snack? i'm hungry blah blah blah....."

It feels as if we have been going non-stop for the last few months. Most of it has been good. Just a lot. Farm school was nurturing as usual. Always great to see city kids run around a farm as if they own it. Children kneeling with their tongues stretched out beneath the taps of maple trees.

Detroit was mindblowing. The people. The conditions. The spirit. The resilience. Resilience is what the students showed during MCAS. The same goes for MCAS prep. Proud of them. Snow days were good. But they break up the continuity. A gift and a curse.

The Greek character stories are beginning to take shape. They make for interesting reads. The Olympic planning groups have worked together to shape our five-day event. They are anxious to start the training for their own events.

Report cards give a chance to sit, review, and think about the whole child. Examining observational notes, writing, reading, mathematical thinking, interaction with peers, and work habits. Growth over time.

We have been busy.

~Nakia Keizer

Room 215

No news this week

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

Although delayed a month, last week's round of family conferences was amazing. Thank you all so much for rearranging your schedules so that you could be present.

Students selected work to share with their adult family members. The kids seemed to have clear favorites of what they wanted you to see, and enjoyed the process of sharing their work with you. And so many of you were pleased with your child's work. "I can see that his writing has improved." "I didn't know she could explain math that looked really hard so clearly to me." "I could see her in the name art – her personality is right there."

And it was also good to hear your concerns. "Should he have read more books than this?" "She has a lot of time for technology at night so I'm not sure why the homework isn't finished." "The high school decision is on both of our minds."

Several of you left with plans to take a more active role in helping your child meet her/his responsibilities. As we discussed, children this age are rarely able to navigate their school responsibilities without monitoring from home. For many children, too much electronic social media and gaming time result in not only incomplete homework but also kids too tired to learn.

Your children again heard loud and clear your expectations for the way they "do school." To a one, your children heard the equivalent of "Work Hard and Be Kind." You let them know you cared about what kind of person they were in addition to what they were learning. Thank

you all again for your caring presence.

~Ann Ruggiero, Laura Nixon &
Kendal Schwarz

Room 214

Wow. The 5th Annual MHS Science and Engineering Fair is coming up in just two weeks. Though we still have a long way to go in this short time, (those snow days really set us back) there is some great work underway. I wanted to take this time to share a few of the projects that you will be able to see at the fair on April 11th.

The “Elephant’s Toothpaste Reaction” - A few students are using this dramatic reaction to study chemical reactions and factors that affect them, such as temperature and limiting reactants.

“DIY Amplifiers” - Two different students are building audio amplifiers from their most basic electrical components to learn about building circuits and the functions of resistors, capacitors, diodes, and chips.

“The Effect of Sound Waves on Non-Newtonian Fluid” - Sometimes it behaves like a liquid, and sometimes and sometimes like a solid. It gets really interesting when sound waves are passed through it.

“The Physics of Boomerang Flight” - One of our 7th graders has crafted a working boomerang and has other designs currently in the works. With a solid understanding of Bernoulli’s Principle, he is able to explain why his boomerang actually returns to him.

MCAS, snow days, and family

conferences have set us back this year and left us with a few weeks less than we usually have for these projects, but despite the setbacks we should have some intriguing projects to check out at the Fair.

~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.

Movie Night fundraiser a success!

Thanks to all our parent volunteers and the dedicated work of Bridget Lee and Neathery Brenzel, the first ever MHS Movie Night Fundraiser was fun and profitable! The event pulled in close to \$1000 for the school and brought families from all grades together. Additionally, several families took home wonderful prizes as winners of our raffle.

A special thank you to these parents (in no particular order) that dedicated time during the event and ensured a completely sensational night: Judy Leemann, Sai Samant, Chris Rotti, Diane Abrams, Amy Banzaert, Jennifer Connelly, Eve Sorum, Amy Fleischer, Will

Brokhoff, Ailish Ford, Dennis Murtagh, Jason Brenzel, Velina Batchvarov, Michelle Harper, Paula O’Gilvie, Deb Gregson, John Butler, BPS Chef Ana Martinez, Naama Goldstein, Dani Coleman, Ayla Gavins, Amina Michel-Lord, BPS Custodian Billy Ace, Mauryon Lee, Ulysses Brenzel, Dylan Murtagh, Didi Batchvarov, Amishai Goodman.

Please patronize our sponsors: JP Licks, Bella Luna, Ideal Pizza, JP House of Pizza, Fiore's, JP Seafood, Wonder Spice Cafe, Bukhara, Monumental Cupcake, Cafe Ula, City Feed, Harvest Co-op, Real Deal, Canary Square, Fresh Hair, JP Comics, Boing!, Kitchen Witch, and Salmagundi!

Weather's Changing - check the lost and found!

How do we know spring is coming? The MHS Lost and Found is rapidly filling up with hats, mittens, scarves and other cold weather gear. Please remind your child to collect and bring home outerwear no longer needed. The Lost and Found is located in the main office, to one side of the front desk.

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