

# Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

## Going Screen Free

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

What does it mean to go screen-free for a week? It means spending more time interacting with actual people and less time with virtual people. It means slowing down, taking deep breaths and opening your eyes to all that the real world has to offer. It means taking an intentional break from screen entertainment. Maybe you'll get some extra chores done, go for a walk, write a letter, or play a board game. No matter how you spend your extra time, I guarantee you will not regret it. And in terms of extra time, chances are that turning off the screen will give you tons of extra time.

### REMINDERS

#### *April*

**4/29 - 5/5 - Screen Free Week!**

#### *May*

Thu. 5/2 - Spring Concert, 5:45 at MHS

5/6-7 - MCAS for grades 3 & 4:  
Math

5/9-10 - MCAS for grades 5 & 6:  
Math

5/13-14 - MCAS for grade 8:  
Math

5/16-17 - MCAS for grades 5 & 8:  
Science and grade 7 Math

Thu. 5/16 - Family Council mtg.  
5:45

5/20-21 - MCAS make-up days for  
all grades

Fri. 5/31 - Teacher Appreciation  
Day

Did you know that, on average, preschool children spend over four and a half hours a day consuming screen media, while older children spend over seven hours a day consuming screen media, including multitasking (such as playing a video game while texting a friend). It is also true that excessive screen time is linked to a number of problems for children, including childhood obesity, poor school performance, and problems with attention span. In case that isn't enough to convince you, consider this: children with two or more hours of daily screen time are more likely to have increased psychological difficulties, including hyperactivity, emotional and conduct problems, as well as difficulty with peers. For more information of research around screen time, check out the resource page at Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood's website:  
<http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org>.

I urge all Mission Hill School families and individuals to join us for Screen-Free Week 2013 (April 29th – May 5th). This is a national event involving millions of people all over the country. We are sending home pledge sheets along with the newsletter. Have fun planning your screen-free week so that everyone knows what to expect and there are no surprises. What will you do with all that extra time? Let me know how it goes. I'd love to hear! And check out the official Screen-Free Week website at <http://www.screenfree.org>.

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

Hello Friends and Families of The Rocks! For those of you who haven't met me yet I am Elisabeth, a senior at Wheelock College studying Early Childhood Education and I spend three days a week student teaching in your children's classroom. This week was my "take-over" week as lead teacher. We continued our study of physical science by reading a humorous story, *The Runaway Tortilla*. It's about a tortilla so light and fluffy it jumped right off the griddle and rolled away. As we read about this rebellious tortilla rolling through the desert we're going to think about other things that can roll. In the classroom we're going to look at ramps and think about how they can make things roll faster. At home you can look at everyday objects you have around the house and ask your children if they can make them roll. Challenge them by asking them how they can make them roll faster or slower.

Screen-Free Week will take place April 29-May 5. The purpose is to spend seven days with no TV, video and mobile games, or other screens that may be used for entertainment. You may want to start thinking about other activities to do during this time that don't involve screens. For more information and resources visit [screenfree.org](http://screenfree.org).

~*Elisabeth Gross*

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

*No news this week*

#### Room 107

In the past when Jo-Ann and I planned the Olympics, participation was confined to our students only. While we liked having spectators, we knew that all children would rather get involved than watch. Through careful planning and collaboration with Robert, we were able to see our dream of a K-4 Olympics come to fruition just before the break. As we looked out onto the field, we were often surprised by the athletic capabilities of our students (the youngest included) and were impressed by their constant cheering for their teammates. While we collected points, they really didn't matter because our ultimate goal was to create excitement around a common theme in order to build community.

During our closing ceremonies, it was clear that all our students were elated to receive a gold medal for their amazing teamwork. Toward the end of the ceremony, with Jo-Ann's prompting, we sang our *Wavin' Flag* song for the last time. As students did the actions, the youngest to the oldest could be seen clutching their medals with great pride. It truly was a sight filled with jubilation. While Amina publicly thanked Team Robert and Team Jada for planning the events, we have to say that without the permission of the K-4 teachers, none of this would have been

possible. Thank you to everyone who helped out on the field and in the boxing ring, in the gym and at closing ceremonies. Most of all, we thank our athletes who wholeheartedly participated and indisputably gave it their all.

~*Jada Brown*  
& *JoAnn Hawkesworth*

#### Room 109

James takes a brief break from building marble ramps to try something new with the long tube in his hand. He puts his mouth over the top of the tube, and covers the bottom of the tube with a square tile. He lifts the tube and the tile with it. How does that work?

He put it on the tube at first. And he was taking all the air that's coming from it then it sticks on. Air goes in everything so it goes in the tube.... James breathes all the air out. -*Dashawn*

He was sucking all the air to the tube: he was using the air from his mouth to pull it to the tube. -*Maya*

I think that since the tile is smooth like metal, it sticks to the cardboard of the tube and that's how James picked it up. The way it got on the tube is impossible! -*Dillon*

The children then spend some time exploring with tubes and tiles. Through their interaction with the tubes and tiles, children revise their theories. After school, Dillon shows his mother the trick and explains how it works: My breath is so strong that it keeps the tile on the tube and that way it stays on the tube—and when I let

go of my breath it falls.

~Jenny Goldstein

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

Aloha! On vacation my family and I travelled to Hawaii. We spent the week with a former Mission Hill family, giving evidence to our saying, "once a Mission Hiller, always a Mission Hiller". The mom, Kimn, is a teacher too and it was interesting to hear about the education system there. I found lots of parallels to what we are faced with in Boston.

While I was there, their teacher union finally signed a contract that had been in negotiation for over four years. Pre-school is being debated and money is the main factor that keeps it from being fully instated. Curriculum is picked by the people farthest from the children. Testing and how to "prepare" students for it is at the top of teacher conversation.

As I listened to Kimn, read the paper and watched stories on the news, I thought of Mission Hill and felt that familiar feeling of gratitude for where I am as a teacher and as a parent. The freedom to teach is an invaluable luxury. Having the autonomy of decision-making is tremendously important. The shared belief that building relationships (like the one that landed us in Hawaii) is a top priority, is one that is vital to the continued growth and success of a school community. I have returned refreshed, renewed and ready to continue the hard, yet deeply satisfying work of being a teacher at Mission Hill School.

Mahalo!

~Jenerra Williams

### Room 205

During Writer's Workshop this week, the Wonderful Wonderers used only one set of directions and came up with unique works of abstract art. As I called out the directions for the children, they drew what they heard. The Wonderful Wonderers were encouraged to listen carefully to the directions and not look at one another's work while doing this exercise. Here is the set of directions that they had:

1. Draw four straight lines from one edge of your paper to the other.
2. Draw five circles, any size, anywhere on your paper.
3. Draw two curved lines beginning at one edge of the paper and ending up somewhere in the middle of the paper.
4. Fill in three of the five circles.
5. Fill in four areas of your paper however you like (completely colored in, lines, patterns, etc.)

When everyone was done with their drawings, the children signed and shared their work. As they discussed the similarities and differences among their drawings, these are the vocabulary that came up: shapes, images, design, unique, identify, imagine, arrange, straight, curve, similar, different, aware, confused, etc. The Wonderful Wonderers truly enjoyed and appreciated the similarities and differences they found among themselves. Please come by the classroom and check out the drawings!

~Brenda Lau  
& Amina Michel-Lord

### Room 217

On Monday's return to school, the children are abuzz. News, questions, vacation reports, and greetings to friends all happen at once and constantly. The energy of the day is busy and happy and productive. The gecko has had surgery during vacation and thus gets renewed attention. Children write with perseverance and determination about their vacation news, stretching their emerging skills with pencil and paper.

My bike helmet has attracted some interest and elicited some drawings; mostly it's the flashing light in back that's most fun. The story I tell features a helmet that suffered a crack (while my head did not). In the afternoon, we head outside with papers, boards and pencils to survey bike riders and helmets. We record how many riders are wearing helmets and how many are not. Standing at the intersection of South and Centre Streets, we call out enthusiastically as a bike approaches and again as the helmet verdict comes in. Across the street, at 2:50, bells begin to ring, and without any cue from adults, the children quiet a bit to listen and to wonder. As the children take up their noisy count again, the cyclist we're cheering (Helmet!) raises his head and smiles back at us. I think about how biking brings us a measure of peace: quiet transportation, being outside, watching for what comes by, appreciating what people around us are doing, making connections. It is exactly the right place for us to be,

learning together.

(The count? 16 riders wearing helmets, five not.)

~Melissa Tonachel

### Grades Three & Four

#### Room 207

The week of April 15 was a challenging week for Boston and Massachusetts. When the tragic events occurred during the 117th Boston Marathon, I thought of all the victims and then I wondered if anyone I knew; students, friends, families, and associates, was hurt.

Two weeks later a lot of information regarding the what, who, when, and why have been shared through national and local media outlets. In this technological age, all types of information is quickly shared. At times the media negatively portrays aspects of the investigation or event in a way that imposes certain beliefs upon the people/viewers.

I would like to speak upon the negative image with which the Islamic culture and religion was portrayed in some media these past weeks. Since 9/11/01 an American culture of anti-Islamism has been allowed to take hold. For example, several news outlets automatically implied a connection between the bombing and the Islam religion and Muslim culture. When something goes wrong (such as a terrorist attack) we shouldn't assume there is an Islam connection. The act of terrorism can be organized and executed by any race, gender, age, religious group, and all

people (U.S. citizen or not). Our country is as wonderful as it is due to our diversity. We mustn't let the actions of individuals/small groups or random events foster a culture, which we divert us from these ideals.

Last, I want to send the victims and anyone who was affected by this tragic event the warmest hug and love from the MHS community and room 207!

~Robert Baez & Shaina Butler

#### Room 216

As we came back from our spring break, one of the things that I was looking forward to come back to was our literacy periods. In our room, literacy happens in the afternoons right after lunch. Now, this is traditionally a period of time during which any student is ready to call it a day and go home. But for the Golden Rulers our day is not complete without this period. In the last few weeks, everyone has gained the confidence necessary to take the risk of expressing themselves through writing. Students have infused a piece of their personality into every task, whether it is when writing stories, creating characters or delving into the meaning of words with our word study activities.

Coming back to our literacy period meant coming back to many unfinished stories and projects. We will continue to work on thumbprint characters inspired on Ed Emberley's work; we completed school-wide surveys and added pages to the

"100 Joke Book". Soon, these and many other great creations will be ready for publishing and sharing, and new creations will come to complete the never-ending cycle of creating pieces of work that truly reflect a student's creative potential.

~Juan Cortes & Erica Switzer

### Grades Five & Six

#### Room 210

##### A Look Back at Greece

Many scholars have referenced academic pioneering civilizations such as Ancient Greece when trying to learn or teach certain subject matter. Our class recently decided not just to learn from the old school Greeks, but also to become Greek characters ourselves!

As we dove into our learning of Ancient Greece, we decided that the focal point of our studies would be the Olympics, which the Ancient Greeks held in such high regard. We soon learned that the Greeks regarded winning the Olympic games about as being as close to becoming a hero or immortal as a mere human could get.

Our class was comprised not only of Olympic warriors from a multitude of city-states, but of artisans and planners as well. The planning groups each planned a full Olympic day – some consisting of two or more events – as historically accurate as possible. As the events approached, our Olympians trained for their specific events and the crowd grew restless in anticipation.

Finally we held our events.

Heroes emerged, legends were born and fun was had by all.

Five days of events were exhausting but rewarding, and the week was wrapped up by a final feast, fit for the gods!

~*Kyle Ford-Withrow*

### Room 215

Since the start of our physical science unit, the Highlighters have been so engaged in all of the content! For our first experience with science, students explored ways for an egg dropped from a high distance to land safely. With the challenge before them, the Highlighters brainstormed many different methods and materials that they could use to ensure the egg would not break. Using the scientific method, students created a lab report to help document their work. The report had several components; a hypothesis, a description of procedure, and a research section where students were required to use varied research sources to collect information.

Students used a wide variety of materials, from bubble wrap to Rice Krispies® cereal to build their egg protectors. After working diligently to construct their egg armors, the time came to—well—drop them. It was a great success, They dropped the eggs from three different heights, and all the eggs survived! As a class we will now begin to learn about the forces that caused the boxes to drop: gravity and motion.

~*Kadian Simmonds*

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

“I don’t know what I’m supposed to say.” This middle school student expressed what many felt as we returned to school and discussed the events of the preceding week. The kids were trying to get their minds around what had happened.

There was no discussion of the destruction and gore. Their questions and observations were deep as they tried to make sense of what none of us understands.

“He looks like just a regular kid.” What did we expect the bomber to look like? “Is Russia mad at us now?” What did the communication between Russia and the F.B.I. mean? “What countries are our friends and who are we mad at?” Did this incident reflect larger political disagreements between the United States and other governments? As I listened, I was struck by the complexity of the kids’ thinking.

“The superintendent called last night. She said there’d be a moment of silence. Are we going to do that?” We talked about the purpose of a shared moment of silence when a community has suffered, a time to allow ourselves to stop in the presence of others and reflect on what has happened. And when the appointed time came, we were respectfully silent, joining with so many others to remember and honor those who suffered and those who helped during our city’s marathon week tragedy.

Please expect that your kids may continue to have questions as they try to make sense of last week’s events. While there are no ready and easy answers, it’s important for us to have a safe place to voice our questions and concerns.

~*Ann Ruggiero, Laura Nixon  
& Kendal Schwarz*

### Room 214

Our 5<sup>th</sup> annual Science and Engineering Fair was a success! On the Thursday night before vacation, the MHS cafeteria was filled with posters, projects, students, and families. Visitors had a chance to talk to students about their research, see the robots, circuits, and amplifiers they had wired, and the boomerangs they had shaped. Students demonstrated how non-Newtonian fluid responded to soundwaves, and how laminar flow in fluids can be reversed almost perfectly. Other students spoke eloquently to families and teachers about factors that affect chemical reactions, using the “Elephant’s Toothpaste” reaction as an example.

Many projects integrated our students’ design and construction abilities in key parts of the project, such as a large plywood paper airplane launcher, a “wave pendulum”, a plywood and acrylic tube apparatus for demonstrating laminar flow, a large, wooden pin-hole camera, and demonstration boards for illustrating the difference in resistance between parallel and series circuits. It was clear that our students are not only talented scientists and engineers, but also accomplished designers and makers.

Another important high note was that 31 out of 31 middle school

students presented projects 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.

### Teacher Appreciation Day is coming - Friday May 31st!

We need parent volunteers to help make this day special for the ever faithful and devoted MHS staff. These are some of our heroes and this day is set aside for us to show our support and gratitude. Please lend a hand! Families will be asked to send in food and drinks for a teacher luncheon. In addition, we need adult volunteers for lunch and recess duty that day so our teachers can enjoy their luncheon together. We are also looking for volunteers to help put together a simple gift that can be given to teachers on this day. You can participate in the gift by volunteering time or donating financially to the effort.

***We really need family participation for this event.***

Please contact either Neathery Brenzel at [neathery99@gmail.com](mailto:neathery99@gmail.com) or 617-462-4628 OR Amina Michel-

Lord at [amichellord@missionhillschool.org](mailto:amichellord@missionhillschool.org) or 617-797-9180.

Join the Mission Hill School Family Forum! The Mission Hill School Family Forum is an initiative by school parents and caregivers FOR school parents and caregivers, a place to forge connections in and across classroom communities. Staff is welcome, too.

To join the group:

(1) Request to join by sending an email to MHS Family Forum moderators Naama or Neathery ([mizzgee@yahoo.com](mailto:mizzgee@yahoo.com) or [neathery99@gmail.com](mailto: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>  
Please help to grow the forum as a community asset by bringing this invitation to the attention of your MHS friends. It's always a good time to be in touch!



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## Spring Concert

**Thursday, May 2**

**Featuring**

**K - 8 choruses**

**MHS Strings**

**MHS Band**

**MHS Guitars**

**MHS Percussion Ensemble**

**Children arrive at 5:15**

**Performance runs 5:45 - 7:15**

**Come Hear Us!**