

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

The Role of Parents in Math Learning

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

At some time in your life you probably had math work that made you wonder, What is this for? Like most schools, Mission Hill teachers present math problems to children for them to work through. Connie Henry, our math coach, asked staff, "Why do we pose mathematical problems to students?" The answer we got behind is to uncover the mathematics in the problem and to learn something new. This is a shift for many of you, parents/caregivers, who grew up with a focus on right or wrong answers. It means that math at school is about understanding and becoming fluent with a few central ideas before learning algorithms (tricks to solve a problem) and short cuts. When you work with your child and he or she arrives at an answer, look at the work he or she has done and ask yourself why the answer is wrong or right. The learning is in the work/thinking more than the answer.

Of course there are math problems that are too easy or too difficult for children. Neither of those

REMINDERS

May

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

June

6/3-7, Grade 8 portfolio presentations

6/9-14, Grade 7 portfolio presentations

Thu. 6/13, 10:30-12:30: All School Rollerskating at Chez Vous

Mon. 6/17, **School in Session!**

provides the "right" stretch needed for learning, as Connie said. Math work should not result in tears. Students should be able to do the work independently (discounting other factors that get in the way) and also struggle a bit. Here are some tips for you at home when doing math homework with your child:

- Make the math problem easier or more challenging by making the numbers in the problem smaller or larger.
- Draw pictures or a number line to illustrate what is happening in the problem.
- Use hand gestures when talking about what is happening in a math problem.
- Ask your child to think out loud while solving
- Ask your child questions instead of giving solutions

Here are specific math ideas you can work on to support your child:

In kindergarten, practice and expose your child to flexibility with numbers. Count with your child in different ways (forwards and backwards). Give your child opportunities to count objects whenever possible. Play games that involve putting numbers together and taking them apart in different ways (5+5 make 10, for example. How many ways can you make 10?).

When students enter second grade, reinforce that the number ten is what our number system is based on. Ten can be used to organize math thinking. Ask your child to do math mentally (without pencil and paper) for practice applying the use of 10 with his or her flexibility with numbers.

For middle school students, focus on the number one or seeing a group of things as one whole. This is essential for understanding how fractions work. Ask your child how he or she would divide or provide something equally to a number people or animals? How much (using number) would each person or animal get?

~Ayla Gavins

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Room 108

"It keeps falling down. It's hard to balance."

"I figured out that the big balls are too heavy. The track breaks when we use them."

"The little marbles work best on this track. They can do the loop-da-loops."

"I have an idea!"

These are just a few snippets of the amazing conversations that have been happening in room 108 as "The Rocks" work and play with the concepts of balance and motion. They are interacting with the materials (wooden blocks, balls of many different types, marble runs and plastic tracks that I borrowed from my sons' Hot Wheels collection) and interacting with each other as they investigate and create. Sharing ideas and materials is hard work, and we have been impressed with all the discovering that has been happening with our young scientists.



At home, you can try building a ramp for balls you have – recycled materials and found

objects can be great for this (cardboard tubes, pieces of wood, cardboard boxes, etc.). Have fun as you create and investigate.

~*Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin*

Kindergarten

Room 106

Last week was wild. On Thursday we headed to the Farm School in Athol. Right about now you might be asking yourself why Athol? It is a long way to drive, but so worth it. The Farm school is a working farm. They have cows, pigs, sheep goats, and chickens. They also have acres of fields where they grow fruits and vegetables.

We have a very special relationship with the farm. Almost every child that goes to Mission Hill goes to the farm. The farmers have watched our children grow. They have seen them come from the time the students were five year olds til they graduated. As the children get older their responsibilities increase. When we go we collect eggs, give the cows feed, pull weeds, as well as other chores. The older children build hen houses as well as major garden preparation.

This relationship is special because children get to see where their food comes from and the amount of work it takes to succeed. They also get to see themselves and one another in a different light. Children find confidence in themselves as they realize that this is a place they thrive. A child who is quiet in the classroom may very easily be the leader at solving a

construction dilemma.

The farm is an amazing place. The verdict is still out on who gets more excited to go to the farm, the students or the teachers.

~*Kathy Clunis D'Andrea*

Room 107

It is that time of year again! Last Thursday we took our annual trip to the Farm School. As we pulled around the bend singing "Farmer Brown" and chanting "Farm school!" it was clear that the excitement had risen to new heights. Our students peered out the windows of the big yellow school bus to see smiling farmers, a bunkhouse, a barn and vast fields. They filled their lungs with the wonderful smells of the farm as Reid boarded our bus and introduced us to "Quiet Coyote". After a short lunch with our fabulous farmers, we were off on our own individual adventures. The great thing about the farm is that over the next 10 years, each time our students visit they will leave with a new life-changing experience. This year our students left with an amazing encounter with an animal they may never have expected to be in contact with. Who knows what next year will bring? But for now, let us revel in the excitement of their proclamations during their very first time on the farm:

"Piggies!"

"Are those goats?" "No they're sheeps."

"... speaking of slobbering...I just licked myself."

"Don't be scared. You can brush

him [the cow]."

"I liked that Venus [the goat] licked my hand."

"Is that poop?"

"Aww. He's so cute!"

"Diany is hugging the baby goat!"

~Jada Brown
& JoAnn Hawksworth

Room 109

It's been a while since I've shared a story, even though we are still telling, listening, and acting every day. Here is a recent tale of good conquering evil told by Zora, age five.

Once upon a time there was a witch. She was not evil, but her friend was an evil sorcerer. And he was evil. One day, long ago, her friend did a big spell. He turned one of the babies of the town into a monster. And the witch tried to control the baby but she couldn't. Then she remembered her magic power to turn monsters into nice babies. As soon as she got it, she turned the monster right into a baby again. The end.

~Jenny Goldstein

Grades One & Two

Room 204

"They are all different, just like we are different. Your bike becomes a part of you – like we are a part of each other."

Nathaniel, a Boston Bikes partner, made this connection for our kids as he and his partner Kamel came to introduce the program to us and prepare us for riding with them for the next two weeks. He asked why we liked

bikes, where we liked to ride and what we did to stay safe. Some of the Fantastic Crew answered, "I like bikes because you can ride outside," "I like to ride at the park," and "You stay safe by wearing a helmet."

Last week was our final week of riding and boy what an adventure it was! When we began, about half of our class didn't know how to ride. Some were afraid to try. We had four days of being on bikes and I am happy to say that with a little help, a bit of courage and a lot of encouragement 18 of the 19 Fantastic Crew members now know how to ride a bike! I



am so proud of them all. Our experienced riders had a ball and our new riders have changed a piece of their lives forever because as the old saying goes, "Once you learn how to ride a bike, you never forget."

~Jenerra Williams

Room 205

No news this week

Room 217

The bike people come and offer us many days of enthusiasm and the most sensitive and effective instruction. Seven children move from thinking they need training wheels on their bicycles to being

certain they do not, pedaling confidently around tennis court and field! Over the course of our biking days Nathaniel and Kimel have come to know important things about each child and their appreciation of the young cyclists is obvious. We are hugely grateful for their time and expertise, creativity and good humor.

Other adults have done the same, every day, and they deserve our recognition. As student teachers, Ben, Amy, Chloe, Carey and now Oginga have offered the Friendly Monkeys--the children and me--their full energy and thoughtfulness as they begin to know themselves as teachers. I love this process of watching young adults and children develop ways of being together through teaching and learning. Together, they come up with new ideas, and they try things I might not. Student teachers bring their own perspectives. And while I may challenge them, I recognize that they offer us an enormous gift every day. I am thankful, and am wishing them all many years of joy with children as they travel down this teaching path.

~Melissa Tonachel

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

Last Friday, the Hawks took a field trip to the Boston Nature Center (BNC). Andrew, our BNC representative, invited us for the 2nd time this year. During our visit we participated in a nature scavenger hunt, during which students had to look for the following things; a chewed leaf, a



yellow flower, a butterfly, a bird's nest, an insect that jumps, a good smell, a flying bird, a bee, a rabbit, and two other items (which the student could



pick to add from their own observations).

At the Boston Nature Center there are a couple of trails to choose from and the Hawks decided to pick the Rabbit Trail. During our scavenger hunt we decided as a group that we should be quiet, walk slowly, and find creative sitting spots to successfully search for our items. After our scavenger hunt we had a beautiful lunch as a group in the main building of the BNC and played in the nature playground until our bus arrived

or dismissal. Thanks Andrew and BNC for a wonderful time!

~Robert Baez

Room 216

The time we all had been waiting for is here. We are full speed into our physics unit and, fittingly so, we have been learning about roller coasters! Who would have thought that studying roller coasters could be as much fun as riding them? Through group sketches and discussions we have begun thinking about what makes a roller coaster fun, exciting and safe at the same time. This week we have been exploring the question of how can we use speed to fight gravity? As a class we explored ideas of gravity, speed and weight and how these affected each other as a marble rolled down the loops and drops of our very own roller coasters. Experimentation and amazing discoveries have been our tools in order to delve deeper into these concepts. The most exciting part has been to use our newfound knowledge of these physics

f concepts to improve the design of our roller coasters and make miniature versions that have could stand proud next to the most complex and professional roller coasters!

~Juan Cortes & Erica Switzer

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

No news this week

Room 215

Rowing!

The Highlighters' study of applied physics continues as we move from bikes to boats. Our class will begin a month-long series of classroom-based lessons and on-the-water experience with Ed and the crew from the Hull Lifesaving Museum. Students will learn the mechanics of rowing, boat safety, navigation and teamwork in the Boston Rowing Center's beautiful pilot gigs. These boats are not the typical "rowboat" we think of, nor are they the slender shells that race in the Head of the Charles. Rather, they are broad-beamed and stable, with six oarsmen/women arranged alternately, three on each side of the boat. The oars, called "sweeps", have wide squared blades, designed for maximum propelling power. Under the guidance of a *coxswain* (pronounced "cox'un, or sometimes shortened to "cox"), the students will learn to literally "pull together" as they steer their boats. It takes coordination and attention to get a gig moving smoothly, but when it happens, it's a wonderful sight! We love this activity and

will post photographs here in the coming weeks. *Square on the Ready* everyone!

~Betsy Caruso

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

This is a tough column for me to write! I'm at the end of my time student teaching at Mission Hill, and I am sad to go. I was watching all of my students on the stage the other day during rehearsal for the spring concert, and it hit me how much I will miss all of you! As you've been learning about algebra and ratios and all sorts of good stuff, I have been learning how to teach, and you, the students, have been my teachers. I want to thank you all so much for the honor of allowing me to teach you, and to your families - you have awesome kids! I have been continually awed by the mixture of fun and insight that they bring to the classroom, and my favorite classroom moments have just been listening to their thoughts and ideas. Highlights of my year include the visit to Farm School in October, reading in book groups and listening to my group's insightful questions about the Holocaust, morning meetings, and getting to lead teach math for both the 7th and 8th grades. I'm off to finish my graduate degree, get married, and find a job for next year, but I will keep the lessons that you've taught me in mind! Thank you again for everything.

~Laura Nixon

Room 214

First successful rocket launch at the new school!

Under bright sun and a clear blue sky, 8th graders launched bottle rockets in the center of the ball field in back of the school. They were cheered on by our Book Buddy group (Jada's class), 3rd and 4th graders in a wellness group, and members of the custodial staff.

The rockets are made from two-liter soda bottles that are inverted and modified with poster paper, cardboard, hot glue, and duct tape to have stabilizing fins, a nose cone, and evenly distributed weight. At launch time they are filled halfway with water and mounted on a launch pad that allows them to be pressurized using a bike pump. After pressurization, the student pulls a string that releases the stopper holding in the water and pressurized air. A stream of water is fired out of the bottom of the rocket, accelerating the rocket into the air at an amazing rate. Past rockets have reached heights over 80 meters (262 feet)!

Students use the rockets as a model system to study concepts like Newton's Laws of Motion, Pressure, Friction (air resistance), Bernoulli's Principle, velocity, acceleration, and even a little trigonometry when we determine the heights we reached.

~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.

"I had a great time riding bikes with Boston Bikes. NOW WHAT?"

Bike Week is May 11-19! And Boston Bikes is celebrating on May 17th from 7-9am at Boston City Hall Plaza.

Sign up for a Youth Enrichment Services summer day trip! They offer day-long mountain biking trips to a state park! Visit <http://www.yeskids.org> for more info.

Go to Camp Harborview, a summer day camp that offers a variety of activities, including biking; must be 11-14 years old as of July 1. <http://chvf.org/>

Join Bikes not Bombs, an organization in Jamaica Plain that offers boys & girls (12-18) the chance to earn a bike while learning mechanics. They also offer girls-only programming. If you want to do more with biking, Bikes Not Bombs offers a lot of different opportunities! www.bikesnotbombs.org

Get your camp physical!

Don't forget that camps all require a medical examination by a licensed

physician within 12 months preceding camp. This is a state requirement for **all** children attending camp, so book your child's appointment now. Remember, Georgie needs updated copies of physicals as well, so drop a copy in her mailbox after your appointment.

¡Obtén tu físico para campamento!

No olvide que todos los campos requieren un examen médico por un médico autorizado dentro de 12 meses que preceden al campamento. Esto es un requisito estatal para todos los niños que asisten al campo, así que reserve la cita de su hijo ahora. Recuerde, Georgie necesita copias actualizadas de exámenes físicos, así que deje una copia en su buzón de correo después de su cita.

Last call for eye exams

New England Eye On-Sight's mobile van will be coming to our school on Tuesday, May 28th. If your child either failed the vision screening here at school or hasn't seen an EYE doctor in the past year, please call Georgie or Courtney to set up an appointment asap.

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 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>
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!

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 must have 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 or 617-462-4628 OR Amina Michel-Lord at amichellord@missionhillschool.org or 617-797-9180.



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