

# Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

## Taking Time for Science

Dear Families, Students, Staff and Friends,

We're into eight weeks of intensive study of science (minus the hours devoted to tests). An eminent scientist once told me that the heart of science is just sitting, observing, and being amazed. Or lying on one's back in the summer looking at the sky, awestruck. The proper scientific mindset is a mixture of awe and puzzlement.

And don't forget about those Mission Hill Habits of Mind: *What does this remind me of? Is there another way of seeing this? What's the evidence? What else do I know about this? Is there a pattern? Could it be otherwise? How does it fit?*

We've studied science in many ways already this year, but now it's at center stage. See page 2 for details on who's doing what. For a change, we're not all studying the same thing.

### **May**

Get your camp physical!

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

Wed. 5/29, 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!

Wed. 6/19, Exhibitions all day, Art Show 5:45 - 6:30

Fri. 6/21, Coffee House, 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Tue. 6/25, Graduation. 10:00

Wed. 6/26, Field Day

6/27-28, Early dismissal, 1:30

### **REMINDERS**

Science is not just about knowing the Scientific Truth. It's about being experimental- in a disciplined way. Every day is a kind of experiment. We've never lived it before. We try different strategies, predicting how things will turn out and reflecting on whether we should have done something else. There are some days when I think the experiment has been a complete flop. I'd have been better off just staying in bed. But most days I see some pluses and minuses and feel that I've learned how to do the next day better.

Scientists don't have a much better track record than the rest of us. Most experiments are not a success! But scientists keep more careful records, collaborate with each other in a more formal way, and engage in what novelist, Richard Powers calls "controlled looking." Finally, they have some discipline -specific rules for what kind of evidence counts.

But it involves a lot of just "messaging about" - as Frog (of Frog and Toad) would say. Playfulness is the hallmark of science. There's not much distinction in science between work and play- which is also true of Mission Hill School. You can't get at important truths unless you let your mind wander a bit, explore unexpected things, ask odd questions, don't hurry yourself, stick with it, and talk things over with your friends to see if it makes sense to them.

Use this time to do science at home. The kitchen is a great place for science experiments. Ditto for the back yard, the sky, the street, the store. It's fun to read about science and scientists too. It's amazing how recently discovered are things we now take for granted- that air has weight, that voices can travel thousands of miles "through the air" that we can "make" electricity, that a heavier-than-air object can fly.

Finding metaphors sometimes helps us make sense of complicated things. It helps me, for instance, to think that air is like a body of water (if we were fish),

~Deborah Meier

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

One of our favorite things to do these days is watch the birds at our bird feeder. We installed the bird feeder over the winter, and it took many weeks for us to see any activity. At first we only saw birds very early in the morning, before the children had even arrived at school. As winter turned to spring we began to see many more birds at our feeder. Initially, when one of our students saw a bird he or she would get excited and run to the window—resulting in the bird fleeing immediately. Eventually, the children learned to be quiet observers, and were able to watch the birds as they ate. We have spotted nuthatches, chickadees and more.

As our bird feeder has gotten busier, we have had to replace the suet/seed mix more often. We are going to expand, and add more kinds of bird feeders. We are happy to accept any donations of suet squares, thistle or songbird mixes. Thanks!

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

What is surface tension and how does it affect movement?

The Butterflies have been building structures with a particular challenge in mind. They needed to get a ball from one side of the rug all the way to the wall. They first started using Duplo tubes. One group, no

matter how hard they tried, could only get the ball halfway down the rug. They worked as a team to try different strategies with the same structure. Some of the Duplo tubes are curved. They angled the base of the structure so that when the ball came down it hit the bookshelf and rolled along a small strip of floor next to the rug. They cheered with great success.

The students shared that the rug was, “stopping the ball” and “slowing down” the ball. They demonstrated both strategies to the class. We discussed why we thought this was happening. The students believed that because the floor was smooth, the ball went faster and farther.

We continued to test this theory. We made a ramp in the meeting area. We had a smooth ball and a ramp. We wondered, would the ball travel down the ramp faster with or without cloth covering the ramp? Children made a variety of predictions. We discovered that the ball went faster without the cloth covering the ramp. Our friend Helen was the timekeeper and she did an amazing job. Next week, watch for the column on surface tension on the ball itself.

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

#### Room 107

The Silver Star Patriots spent last week exploring the power of air. They constructed paper airplanes and learned about the forces (drag, lift, etc.) involved in flight. In addition, students completed a boat-making challenge where they had to make boats out of foil that could carry cargo and be moved across the water with air. We were

even more excited when Jacob's class (our book-buddies) invited us to observe them testing rockets they recently built. The Silver Star Patriots were thrilled to find out that “air” was the major contributor to the rockets' flight. Later that day, students made the following comments:

“... It was really, really, really, really cool looking at the rockets fly really, really high...almost to the top of the school.”

“... It was so cool because the airplanes went all the way up and then it came back down. It went ‘Bam!’ and it went up and then it went down.”

“We said 1, 2, 3. We said, ‘Pump it! Pump it!’ Someone put the rocket ship up and the water went down and it came down near to us.” “We watched the rockets and the airplanes. They shot off with water in it and it was really cool that Jacob could show what happened when it shot up. I liked seeing my book buddy.”

“It was almost gonna explode!”

“A rocket ship!...It flew and the water splashed us. It went BAM!” The rockets went up to the sky because water blasted it. It was half water. When they pulled the string it went up into the sky.”

“... Some broke. One rocket went very high and one didn't go very high. Jacob was pumping the air into the rockets. “

“... We did rockets! The blue one went really high and it hit a bird. I saw! The orange one blew up and landed on the sand. The boy who was fixing the white one that blew up with tape, he kept saying numbers.”

~Jada Brown  
& JoAnn Hawksworth

### Room 109

*No News this week*

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

"What happened there?" one of my students inquires as we pass a construction site where workers are digging up ground to lay pipes. As I answer his question I realize that so many exciting things have happened already, and we haven't even gotten to the Farm School. Monday was our annual trip to the farm. Instead of focusing on the farm experience itself, I'm choosing to share some highlights from our bus ride there. Hamse looks and smiles at the skyscrapers we pass in Copley Square. "I saw the field where the Red Sox play!" says Amari. "That's the ocean!" says Rafael as he points to the Charles River. Melissa (the student) points out her home to everyone as we pass by it. Someone in the back shares that Letta lives in a building we see. Dalia shows Jarrell and Marquell where the "old school" used to be as she cranes her neck to look out the bus window. Melissa (the teacher) shares with her class the field where she gets their monarch caterpillars every fall.

What to most seems like an ordinary bus ride for students is in a teacher's eyes a place full of learning. A place to make connections to the world beyond themselves and memories that will last at least until next year,

when the question may be asked again, "What happened there?"

~Jenerra Williams

### Room 205

On Monday, the first and second grade classes boarded a school bus that took us to the beloved Farm School. We all have memories that will last a long time. Here is a snap shot of the Wonderful Wonderers' awesome day:

**Kelise:** I liked the baby sheep. They were so fluffy.

**Elias:** I liked the chickens because they fly.

**Janira:** I liked the little cow inside because he was calm and I got to pet him.

**Justin:** I liked the sheep because they were furry.

**Maya:** I liked the goats. They were cute and cuddly.

**Amber:** The baby sheep were cute.

**Athena:** I got to touch the baby lambs. They were cute.

**Vitoria:** I liked seeing the baby goats. They came right up to me.

**Justin:** I liked the sheep because they were fun.

**Amishai:** I liked that the chickens would not get off their eggs.

**Bob** (Amishai's dad): I liked the baby goats. They seemed to like the attention from people and I liked the sound they made.

**Sofia:** I like being with the baby goats. They were cute and cuddly.

**Richard:** I liked the baby bulls. They were nice.

**Abidemi:** I liked all the animals.

**Daniel:** I liked pulling into the driveway and yelling "Farm School!"

**Ruby:** The goats liked to bite stuff.

**Nancy** (Ruby's mom): The goats were surprisingly soft.

**Ceva:** I liked that I got to pet the baby cow.

**Ms. Brenda:** I liked the baby cow.

**Ms. Amina:** I loved meeting the newest calf, Eric. He was adorable.

~Amina Michel-Lord  
& Brenda Lau

### Room 217

"A baby sheep is out! Oh! It's a dog, it's coming to us!"

What's most amazing at the Farm School is bearing witness to children's discoveries about a new world, being with them as they describe the unfamiliar through the familiar, coaxing them to try, to trust that the chickens won't peck, that the green leaves will taste good. They learn new vocabulary, sample new foods, gaze upon a landscape so different from the ones in which they live. On the bus ride to the farm one child asks, "Are we going out to the countryside?"

The lambs were born just days ago. We sit in the grass of the sheeps' enclosed area, watching babies follow their mothers and listening as they call and mothers respond; we see the land through the eyes of just born animals. As the farmers remind us to move slowly and quietly, to assure the farm of happy, laying hens, the children have time to wonder. "The egg is warm! It is so warm! Feel it!" The farmers don't just instruct, they invite us to be part of this place and to feel connected to it.

Some children arrive with expectations based on previous

experience from one farm or another. Other children see all of this—animals, greenhouses, gardens, tools--for the first time and hunger to touch and name and eat every detail. It's a beautiful day. It's painful to leave.

~Melissa Tonachel

### Grades Three & Four

#### Room 207

Oh how we love the Farm School!! This week the entire 3rd and 4th grade student body continued a Mission Hill tradition by spending a day at the Farm School located in Athol. Every year children at Mission Hill (All Grades) are excited to explore and learn about the various aspects of farm life. When children are there they participate in the following activities: (1) making nametags out of tree branch slices, (2) feeding animals: lambs, sheeps, cows, and pigs, (3) they pet and interact with animals: goats, pigs, frogs, and dogs, (4) they take a nature walk to see the various parts of a farm including the pond, and (5) they get to sample fresh vegetables grown in the greenhouse. Tuesday was an amazing day and we couldn't have asked for a better field trip. We would love to thank the Farm School staff for their wonderful instruction and leadership during our visit!

~Robert Baez

#### Room 216

"I don't know why, but smaller things go faster," muses Kenya. "Anything that is heavy drops fast," exclaims Caleb. We have

continued to explore our roller coasters with tubes, marbles, tunnels and tape. The Golden Rulers find ways to create and work together to mold the roller coaster to have as many tricks as possible while allowing the marble to safely ride through them all. As we are creating and working together, students question what is happening. Why does this bend not work? Where is the marble? How can we make it go faster? How many loops can we do? Hey, does this work? These are some of the many questions we are starting to hear and ask one another as we continue to construct our physics project. We hope to respond to these questions with answers of our own as we continue to create in room 216.

~Erica Switzer & Juan Cortes

### Grades Five & Six

#### Room 210

Bicycles are magnificent machines. The build. The way they work. The opportunities they present. Bike week was a success for the Cinco Seis class. We learned bike safety, how to ride in a large group, and the signs of the road. We were also reminded of the gift of exploring on a bike.

Our final ride of the two week program landed us at 67 Alleghany Street. The original Mission Hill School. After laboring up the incline of Oscar street we rounded the corner onto Parker Street and pushed up Alleghany. The kids were quiet. We all just stood outside staring at the now unused building. It

looked sad. Someone mentioned going into the school yard but I told them there was a lock on the gate. "Nakia!, we don't need to go in that way, we have our own way of getting in" one student said in a tone that suggested amusement and disaapointment in my naivete. I nervously agreed and kids proceeded to ride along the fence near the basketball courts, perched on the wall that runs parrallel to Parker Hill. Once inside the oppening the once-subdued group came alive. Most of them exploded from their bikes and raced around the black top. Random screams and laughter filled the space in the way it had not seen in awhile. By now many of the students were playing on the modest play structure. "Oooh yeahh I can't DUNK now, I'm a beast!" exclaimed one happy basketballer. "Look, I can touch the top bar now without jumping!" yelled another student, delighted with her growth spurt. I stood and watched and thought about how much more space kids have to play now than they did before. The climbing structure looked like a bunch of old pipes compared to what we have at our new buidding. I was quickly brought back to earth through the sililoqy from one of the students. "Nakia look at all of this..eveybody is happy, nobody has to force us to play we are just playing. We have a slide now but we didn't need a slide back then, we made our own slide. Wondering how far she'd go with her stream of consciousness waxing about the

days of old I just listened without commenting. She went on, "SEE, look at that, we used to share! This was a jungle gym AND people played 50 on it...." She was interrupted by a young man who proclaimed that the football field was the location of "the best moment in his life". "The field has lines Nakia!" At this point I had to chuckle, references to the ol' gridiron is a known weakness of mine. He went on to describe in detail a time when he first got to the school and played football on a whim and made a interception at mid-field. This was enough to elicit handshakes and fist pounds from the older kids. "I will never forget that day"

As we sat on our bikes heading south at the intersection of Alleghany and Parker, the spot where students emptied and loaded the school buses, the loquacious young lady wasn't finished yet. "See, we weren't all cramped up for buses, we used to just walk down to the corner and get on peacefully". Old memories can be the fondest...even if you only recall the best parts.

~Nakia Keizer

### **Room 215 Reflections from Rowing on the Boston Harbor**

Monday was our first day rowing as a class. At first, we were a bit overwhelmed. The ocean—even if it is just the harbor—is a BIG place. It could have been a little scarier but luckily for us, four of our students had prior experience



from rowing with Boston Explorers last summer. We needed four boats and each of the more experienced students was in one of them. It is amazing how much you can learn in just a few hours if you concentrate. And believe us, if you don't concentrate in rowing you're either going to stand still, go around and around in circles or just fall out of the boat! We returned to school tired, excited and ready for the next time! What follows are some reflections from our first day:

"The shells are deadly"  
 "It's a good workout"  
 "It was hard to keep the green part between the two stick thingies"  
 "It was fun once I started listening"  
 "It was fun leading my group and I had a good time"  
 "I liked the view"  
 "Thanks for teaching me how to row"  
 "It was fun, except I got wet"

"I wish I wore different shoes"  
 "Can't wait till next time"

~Letta Neely

### **Grades Seven & Eight**

#### **Room 213**

Wow! I can't believe the year has flown by so fast! It seems like only yesterday that I was meeting everyone for the first time on that hot day in August when all we had were chairs. This year has been such an amazing growing and learning experience. I am so grateful to have met everyone at Mission Hill, and thankful for their undying support and advice throughout my time here. While I was here with the main goal of learning how to teach mathematics, I'm coming away with so much more. My favorite part of the year was getting to know all of the wonderful students in both the 7th and 8th grades at Mission Hill. I am excited to see where they take their brilliant minds and I look forward to hearing from them in the future. Congratulations to the 8th

graders and good luck to both grades next year! As I was told at the beginning of the year, once a Mission Hill-er always a Mission Hill-er, and I look forward to seeing you all again soon!

~Kendal Schwarz

### Room 214

Lately I have been aware of how much our students love to work together, and how well many of them are able to do it. I was struck by the fact that when the 8<sup>th</sup> graders were building rockets, all of them chose to work in small groups, though they had the chance to work alone. I had assumed that a lot of kids would want to build their own rockets, and had prepared enough materials for that to happen, but instead students chose to team up to collaborate on the design/build process and troubleshoot together.

Recently I had the opportunity to work with 7<sup>th</sup> graders on some

math work while Ann was administering the MCAS to 8<sup>th</sup> graders. I passed out the work, assuming that it would be a quiet work period. It started that way, but soon a low murmur grew. I quickly realized that rather than social talk, kids were helping each other to understand problems and question each others strategies and answers.

There are few situations our students will encounter in the world beyond school that don't require some degree of collaboration. It's great to see them forming strong skills and habits in this area early on.

~Jacob Wheeler & Chris Barnes

### Hot Topics

Thank you all for your generosity with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Socitey's **Pennies for Patients** drive. We collected and donated a total of \$302.97, which included 5,042 pennies!

### *The date for Teacher Appreciation Day has been changed to*

*Wednesday, May 29<sup>th</sup>!* 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](mailto:neathery99@gmail.com) or 617-462-4628 OR Amina Michel-Lord at [amichellord@missionhillschool.org](mailto:amichellord@missionhillschool.org) or 617-797-9180.

### **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.

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:

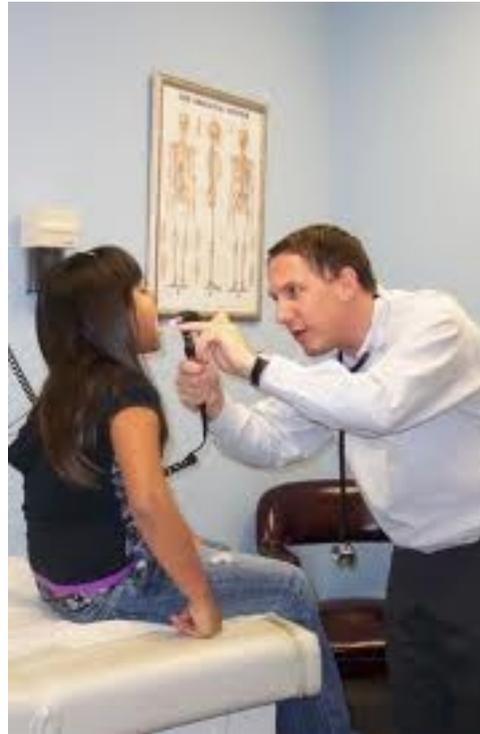
(1) Request to join by sending an email to MHS Family Forum moderators Naama or Neathery (mizzgee@yahoo.com or neathery99@gmail.com)

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!



It's OK to stick out your tongue at your doctor!

**Mission Hill School**

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