

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

This Year to Next

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

About a week ago our staff walked through the school building after school. We walked through rooms and into closets. We stood in the hallways and looked at the walls. We sat in chairs and on the floor, taking it all in and considering how each space is viewed and used by our students. Finally, we came together in one space and talked about the purposefulness of the materials in each space and the school culture we wish to instill in our students regarding respect for the school environment. Last August we moved into the building in such a hurry. We still have not tended to all the things we'd like to do. After giving attention to each space we took some time to revisit or initial plans and began preparation for next year.

It's so timely that chapter 10 of the A Year at Mission Hill School video series has been released while we are reflecting on this year. Chapter 10 is the last one in the series and shows the ending of our 2011-

REMINDERS

Tue. 6/26: Graduation, 10:00

Wed. 6/26: Field Day

Thu. 6/27: Half day

Breakfast and lunch served

1:30 dismissal

Afterschool closes at 4:30

Fri. 6/28: Half day. Breakfast only

1:30 dismissal No afterschool

2012 school year. In this last episode the joy and pride of accomplishment from the children comes through. The dedication, thoughtfulness and turmoil of dealing with outside factors on the staff's part is seen and heard. What an important year to capture.

This year also has been captured in photographs, in writing, through art, in our hearts and in our memories. So many interactions and so much learning happened this year. Many thanks to you, parents, volunteers and contributors, who helped us claim a new building and make it Mission Hill School. Reflection on this year has built excitement among staff about next year. We plan to tend to many things we were not able to get to this year.

When we return in the fall a revitalized outdoor space and some new faces will greet you. Our teaching teams for next year are as follows:

K0: GERALYN McLaughlin and Donna Winder

K1 and K2: Jenny Goldstein and Ann Adams*, Jada Brown and JoAnn Hawksworth, Kathy D'Andrea and George Merrill

1 and 2: Jenerra Williams and Juan Cortes, Emma Fialka-Feldman**, and Ashleigh L'heureux**. Amina Michel-Lord and Brendan Thomas will work in each classroom.

3 and 4: Josh Kraus** and TBD, Robert Baez and Shaina Butler.

5 and 6: Sarah DeCruz and James McGovern, Nakia Keizer and June Meyers

7 and 8: Ann Ruggiero and Teresa Strong**.

Chris Barnes will work with both 7 and 8 classrooms.

This is the last newsletter of the school year. You will hear from us in August about your child's classroom assignment and necessary forms to complete. I wish you wellness, joy and a wonderful summer.

Peace,

Ayla

*Ann Adams and Marietje Halbertsma are trading places. Marietje will be in the library.

** New MHS teacher

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Room 108

Where is your favorite place to visit at Mission Hill School? That was the question I posed to The Rocks this week. You might be surprised at how many different spaces the K0 class has been on a regular basis this year. Some of our favorite places are: The circle driveway for riding trikes; the Art Room with Jeanne; Friday Share; SPOT (the Speech and OT room); the BIG playground (we only went there a few times) and Ms. Jenny's classroom.

My favorite place this year has been our own classroom, Room 108. It is where we have built a community of young friends – playful and imaginative friends who are singers, artists, engineers and scientists. It is a place where we have practiced being safe, helpful and kind. It is where we have learned that the Mission Hill Way is to “Be Kind and Work Hard”. Ms. Donna, Angel and I are all thankful to you for sharing your amazing children with us. We will always remember this special year. Have a fun and safe summer – playing, reading, building and pretending as much as you can!

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin

Kindergarten

Room 106

As the year comes to an end there are so many things I am grateful for. I so appreciate the children I teach and the children

in our school. They are filled with curiosity and wonder. They are challenged by the teachers, the students, and themselves. They use their voices to express their ideas and dislikes. I appreciate that they challenge me and always demand my best.

I am also grateful for the staff at the school. Every person here is an important part of Mission Hill's success. It is the reason they all feel like our students and many of the students feel like they have many teachers. It means a great deal to make a school feel like a family and I am glad that everyone works so hard to make that happen.

I so appreciate our families. This year we welcomed more than 75 new students to Mission Hill School. Almost all of them were students younger than second grade. It is the first time since the school was founded that we have had that many students. Our new home *feels* like home because the families of our students, new and old, helped that to happen. Thank you for all the hard work.

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

Room 107

The final piece to our study of Air was purposefully connected to the beginning of summer. When asked what people eat during the summer, most of the Silver Star Patriots shouted “ICE CREAM!” Well, imagine the amazement when students found out that, without air produced in the churning process, ice cream would not be ice cream. Soon after that conversation, Shirley said, “We should do something for the school.” Then,

last Friday during Friday Share Braxton said, “I want to make ice cream today. I think we will.” The ideas of making and eating ice cream, as well as doing something for the school, seemed to excite our students. We eventually landed on an ice cream shop to be debuted at yesterday's Air Extravaganza complete with bubble blowing, airplane making, balloon games, etc. However, there was work to be done and limited time.

First we gathered information on our community through surveys about favorite ice cream flavors. While reviewing the first round of results, we noticed that many of the flavors like pistachio, maple walnut, Moose Tracks and butter pecan contained nuts. After a student with a nut allergy proclaimed, “I can't eat those!” the rest of the class decided that those flavors should not be an option because other people may have similar allergies.

We then used the non-nut flavors for another round of surveys and the vote results were as follows: Coconut- 38, Peppermint- 7, Cookie Dough- 49, Toffee- 19, Oreo- 35, Bubble Gum- 6, Chocolate- 15, Cotton Candy- 10, Raspberry- 41, Strawberry- 57, Caramel- 65, Chocolate Chip- 20. Flavors with the most votes became a part of our menu. Mint Oreo was added in honor of Ecoteer Day, almost everyone loves Vanilla and for those who cannot eat ice cream, snow cones were an option. In two days all the ice cream was made from a simple Greek ice-

cream recipe whose main ingredients are six whipped egg whites, 16 oz of whipped cream and two cans of condensed milk. While our study is finished, the questions keep coming because when talking about snow cones someone asked, “Do you need air for water?” Have a great summer!

~Jada Brown
& JoAnn Hawksworth

Room 109

I struggle to describe what the past year has meant to me—especially without the time or distance needed for a little reflection... I suppose a good place to start is with gratitude:

- For the children, who filled each day with joy, and had so much to teach; for being inventors, artists, storytellers, peace makers, scientists, and mathematicians; for inspiring each other; for inspiring me.
- For my colleagues: passionate, brilliant, and the hardest working group of people I have ever known. For supporting me through tough times; for challenging me where I needed to grow; for helping me see what is possible when we all work together.
- For families: your trust, collaboration, and all the help, big and small, make our work possible.

I am so thankful I teach in a school where I can do what I know is best for the 15 young souls in my class. A place where I have the freedom to create, explore, make mistakes, and grow.

I am so thankful for our

community.

~Jenny Goldstein

Grades One & Two

Room 204

As we gather for morning meeting, Amari reminds me that we need to change our summer vacation countdown from 10 to 9 days. As I changed the number to nine, I thought about how much time has truly passed. It is amazing how fast the days go by and how quickly they change. After the meeting we did a writing assessment. To show them how much they had grown as writers, I began to show journal pages from the beginning of the year versus our recent work. They were amazed at how much their and their classmates work had changed. From strings of letters that didn't make sense to full sentences. From drawings that were not recognizable to detailed illustrations with color.

This is just one example of many that illustrates the tremendous growth we have seen in the kids and in ourselves. I am proud of all the hard work, the thoughtful conversations, the acts of kindness and the care that the Fantastic Crew has given over the year. As you read this, there will only be five days of school left and our minds will be turned toward the summer sunshine, relaxing and spending time with our family and friends. I wish you the best summer ever and thank you so much for a “fantastic” year!

~Jenerra Williams

Room 205

We have finally come down to the last week of school. I would like to thank all families for the continued support throughout the year and the Wonderful Wonderers for giving me such an awesome and memorable year.

Abidemi: Thank you for your infectious smile, it always brightens up my day.

Amber: Thank you for always bringing fun to whatever we do.

Amishai: Thank you for always keeping me on my toes.

Athena: Your amazing problem-solving skills will take you a long way.

Ceva: Thank you for always looking after your friends.

Daniel: Thank you for being so silly and goofy. Your sense of humor lifts our spirits.

Elias: Thank you for greeting me with your biggest smile every day.

Janira: Thank you for being so caring and considerate.

Jovanni: You are a superb Lego builder. You have inspired so many friends!

Justin: Thank you for not being afraid to make mistakes and always give it your best.

Kelise: Thank you for spreading the joy everywhere you go.

Laudys: You always have good stories to tell!

Maya: You are such a great friend and an effective problem-solver!

Ruby: Thank you for spreading the sunshine everywhere you go.

Shawnmathew: You build such magnificent block structures that always leave us in awe.

Sofia: You are an amazing artist. Your paintings have inspired many friends!

Vitoria: Thank you for giving me a hug whenever I need one.

~*Brenda Lau*

Room 217

The children are moving up the long hill with determination, their legs pumping the pedals and their backs pushing for more force. They teeter and swerve, a few stand. Each child stops at some point along the way for a break in the shade, or to wait for a friend or for a signal from me to keep going, keep going! Two months ago, a few of these children were just weaning from training wheels; others are more experienced and secure. But this hill is a challenge for all of them, and they keep track of each other, as they climb in a shared endeavor. The road winds around in a spiral, so we can't see the top, and when we get there, they express jubilant disbelief. They humor me by looking at the view, but what they really want is to go down, the well-earned prize for an uphill bike ride. As we descend, I think about the books these same children have written about how to ride down a hill, how to turn and steer, how to stop when you need to.

This ride around the Arboretum is the culmination of our bike study. By now we all have learned some things about how bicycles work and especially about how our bodies work on them. Each child's learning has been particularly tailored to her or his development as physical

exertion meets intellectual puzzling. What does it feel like to do something in a new way? What happens when we put these parts together? What do I do when I am frustrated? How many times can I try again? What are my strategies? What difference does a slight adjustment make? What can I learn about how someone else is doing it? Our ride on a gorgeously sunny morning is a metaphor for all the learning that has been happening this year, for the children, and for me. Determination going up the hills, care coming down, and the joy of doing it together.

~*Melissa Tonachel*

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

Wow...the last week of school is approaching! It has been a great year. In my first year back at Mission Hill it was great to be a part of the changes. Moving into our new space and continuing the Mission Hill traditions was an amazing thing to be a part of. The new experiences, which the students have created this year, will always be remembered as the first year in Jamaica Plain. Due to our move we were able to extend our Mission Hill family to a larger population. It has been great to meet amazing people.

The Hawks have been amazing this year as well! It has been real, challenging, fun, and educational in our classroom. We created a comfortable environment where students could make mistakes and learn from them. Each Hawk member has become a better

student and person this year. I hope that my Hawk students and families have enjoyed it as much as I did. I have learned so much this year and because of that I am a better teacher and person today. I look forward to continuing my work with the remaining Hawk members and our new members. Enjoy the summer and be safe. Read, write, build, communicate, create art, travel, and play!

~*Robert Baez*

Room 216

No one in the Golden Rulers could have imagined that this year would turn out to be an unprecedented year full of adventures. As with any community we had ups and downs throughout the year. We celebrated great accomplishments, both individual and as a group. We also had some hard moments this year, like goodbyes and other challenges. Throughout the good and the not so good the Golden Rulers always showed the enthusiasm and resilience to keep moving forward and make the best of our days together. I have seen the amazing growth that everyone has made on many levels. Writers, mathematicians, and scientists came to life this year in our room, but the biggest growth for many has been as human beings.

For as much growth as we were able to see in the kids, I feel that it was we teachers that grew the most this year. Thanks to the Golden Rulers I have grown as a person and as a teacher. I couldn't have asked

for a better school and group of kids to start my career a teacher. I will take the time spent with the Golden Rulers in my heart for long time.

~*Juan Cortes*

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

Man...what a school year. New spaces. Different grades. No furniture. Lots of adjustments. All in all it has been productive. In continuing with the theme of using this forum for student voice. Here are some excerpts from reflections that the Cinco Seis's wrote this year.

Have a wonderful summer!

"I am proud of myself for making it through sixth grade"

"Some things I want to work on are scaring people and writing with more focus"

"I think I'm smart because I can understand things deeply...I think I'm a good leader because I can talk and be nice to people who I am not friends with."

"I am creative by building blocks and drawing pictures."

"This year our class did the Harlem Shake (video). That was the only excuse I could ever make up in order to bring my box head to school."

"The hard part about this year was staying still, I'm a hyper kid I like to stand up a lot. Now I keep still by going to the O.T. room. The O.T. room is the room you need when you're tired or hyper."

"At the beginning of the year I didn't like writing as much as I do now. I didn't like writing

much besides fiction. Now I am capable of writing many different genres."

"Three words I would use to describe myself are 'debater', 'majestic' and 'friendly!'"

"The hardest thing about this year was balancing my work and social habits. One reason is I would try to make people work without being bossy."

"I am mostly always positive because I don't like to think negative and I like to see people happy."

"I am super proud of myself because I made it all the way through sex-ed (with boys!) without barfing."

"This year my favorite theme was Ancient Greece. It was my favorite because I love the way they devoted themselves to the Gods."

~*The Cinco Seis's*

Room 215

This has been quite the year for the Highlighters! From finding out that Sarah would be welcoming a baby boy to welcoming a new teacher. We have shared so many experiences and it has made our class grow in such a major way. I would like to take this time to say thank you to each one of my Highlighters who stayed true to their class name and were the highlight of my days at Mission Hill. It was a difficult transition to lose their lead teacher in the middle of the year and welcome a new face, even if it was one they were used to seeing. These students did it remarkably and Sarah would be proud to see

their transformation.

I have made lasting bonds with these wonderful students and plan to visit Mission Hill in the future to see their progress. It has truly been a wonderful year at Mission Hill and I am very appreciative of all the support and kindness that has been shown to me over the months. I can say I have truly learned and accepted the Mission Hill way and will continue to do my best of being kind and working hard.

~*Kadian Simmonds*

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

As the school year ends, colleagues from other schools have asked me how Mission Hill adjusted to the move to a new building. Ten months ago, we gathered in Room 213 and started the year in a bare room with chairs and clipboards. Gradually, furniture and books and supplies arrived and we created a space in which we have learned and grown.

Are we still Mission Hill? Yes, but we have evolved. Changing location, adding space, and increasing our student and staff numbers have affected us. But the intangibles remain: a community that cares deeply about each other and is committed to support and challenge each other so that we continue to grow as learners and as human beings.

I want to sincerely thank our families for sending your children to us. They are the reason we are here and why we care so much about getting our work done right. I have learned from and with each child,

and I hope we are both better off for our time together. With summer vacation, I lose my daily time with your children and I'll miss them.

To our graduates, I say this. Please remember that the Mission Hill Habits of Mind and Work, and the Mission Hill Way (Be kind, work hard), are intended to be guides for life not slogans for school. They will travel with you to new contexts. You can trust these habits and mindsets to steer you in a good direction. As you move on, you remain a part of our community. Represent us well, and stay in touch.

I hope school vacation will give you a chance for more family time. Enjoy, and have a wonderful summer!

~Ann Ruggiero

Room 214

Well, this is my last newsletter column for a little while. As many of you know, I will be taking a leave of absence for the next school year in order to pursue some of my interests outside of teaching. After eleven years of teaching middle school, I am feeling a strong desire to spend time working on my own projects. I will be moving out to the western half of the state to an old farmhouse I have been restoring. Some friends and I will be working out there to create an open space for invention, art, citizen science, and other creative endeavors. I described it to my students as "Workshop class for adults."

I am so grateful for my time in

Boston and at the Mission Hill School. I would like to express my deep gratitude to my students (present and past), their families, my colleagues, and our wider school community. You have all taught me so much about what is possible in working with young people and so much more. Thank you Mission Hill School, and see you soon!

~Jacob Wheeler

Hot Topics

Riding for a Cure

Melissa Tonachel (1/2 teacher) will be riding 190 miles in the Pan Mass Challenge this August to remember Jennifer Boyd, MHS parent who passed away last summer. You can donate to her ride at <http://www2.pmc.org/MT0169>. Thank you!

Win Red Sox tickets

The annual Read Your Way to Fenway summer essay contest is underway. Young people between the ages of 5 and 17 become eligible to win three tickets to a Boston Red Sox game after reading a minimum of three books and writing a brief essay about their favorite. Applications and essays are due to any Boston Public Library location by 5 p.m. on Friday, July 26. This year's Read Your Way to Fenway game is on Saturday, August 17, versus the New York Yankees.

Museum Passes

Boston Public Library cardholders can borrow passes to museums and other local attractions for single-day use. Participating museums include the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of Science, New England Aquarium, and Boston Children's Museum. Visit our museum pass page to view all available passes across the library system and choose your pick-up location.

Collect Box Tops this summer and turn them in when we return to school in September.

Remember, each one is worth 10¢, so every one counts! Keep up the great work and turn them in when you clip them from products you use every day. For a complete list of Box Tops products or to sign up online to support our school, log onto www.boxtops4education.com.

**HAVE A
WONDERFUL
SUMMER!**

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