

# Mission Hill School News

## Letter from Child Street

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

I felt like a groupie. Moments after Angela Davis, the famous women's rights activist, finished speaking to the audience at the Progressive Education Network (PEN) conference in Los Angeles, I rushed out into the lobby with my 4 books in hand for her to sign. I had been waiting for this moment since mid summer.

Last year Tom Little, the head of PEN, visited Mission Hill School. He was on a mission to visit 50 progressive\* schools across the country. His observations and interviews at each school would become part of his research and writings for a new book about the current state of progressive education. Tom invited me to speak at the PEN conference. I humbly accepted the invitation.

I write to you now from my hotel room, leaving Los Angeles in a few hours. I don't want to leave without reflecting on the conference and sharing some thoughts with you. Tom Little notes that Mission Hill School was one of a handful of public schools represented at the conference. Most schools were private schools. Many public schools are bound to district, state and federal mandates that require

### REMINDERS

#### **November**

**November 10 - 13:** Netherland Visitors

#### **HOST FAMILIES NEEDED**

**Mon. 11/11 - NO SCHOOL**

**Wed. 11/27 - Early Dismissal (1:30)** for Thanksgiving break

**Mon. 12/2 - School re-opens**

curriculums that don't foster imagination and testing that promotes stress to be perfect or feelings of inadequacy for children. As a public school free from many of these requirements, Mission Hill needs to maintain our connection to other progressive public schools. We also need families across the city to demand more schools that put the child at the center of the work.

Angela Davis reminds me that even more important than learning facts that can be easily found in a book or on the internet, children need to learn how to ask good questions that lead them to being well educated. They need to be able to imagine. The Mission Hill habits of mind are a good example of this. She also alerted us as parents, educators, extended family and community members who look out for and protect our children, that we must speak against the privatization of our public schools. Private corporate funding and decision-making are eroding our public school system. If this continues, an education free and available to everyone could be a thing of the past. When private funding replaces funding from taxes, the general public loses control.

There's much more to say than the 500 or so words of this letter will allow, including words from Debbie Meier. I'll close by saying that my faith that people are ready to stand up for schools and classrooms that enhance the natural talents of children and resist an education for our children that has been stripped of critical thinking, joy and student voice has been recharged. For us at Mission Hill, these are things we cannot take for granted. I hope we (our school community) recognize and are ready to stand up and protect what we have.

*~Ayla Gavins*

\*Progressive Education: Prepares students for participation in a democratic society, maintains a culture and environment centered around respect for children, and has social justice principles.

## Host Families Needed - Can you help?

There are 12 teaching students coming from the Netherlands as part of a group that visits MHS every year. Can your family host one or two lovely young Dutch people from Sunday afternoon to Wednesday morning, 11/10-11/13? Share your culture with new friends and learn a little about education in Holland. Email or call Dani Coleman for more information: dcoleman@missionhillschool.org, or call 617.635.6384. Thank you!

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

"I'm going to get dirt and rocks and sand," declared Simona as she worked on building a "worm house". "The red ants bite but the black ants can't," she explains to her friends as they carefully construct the worm house from found objects in our nature play space. "So we can't go by the red ants." Nearby, others are stacking pieces of wood for a "campfire".



KO Campfire

A few feet away, Yassin sees a bee on a purple flower. He calls to me excitedly, "Look! The bee is checking out the butterfly's flower." Yassin is closely investigating the garden area where we released our butterfly a few weeks ago. "Ohhhh!" he gasps, "It's so beautiful."

Every day we are outside for an hour. On our schedule, we call it

simply "Outside". In every way, our outside time is an extension of our inside learning time, as the children play, run and explore. Our



Wren works on the worm house

children are building so many skills: observing, creating, problem solving, communicating and sharing ideas - along with gross motor skills as they carefully balance and move along the logs and rocks. I can guarantee you will be reading more about our adventures in this new and inspiring space.

*~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin,  
Donna Winder  
& Angel Nasseh*

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

*~No news this week*

#### Room 107

"Is it done yet Ms. Jada? I'm so hungry." "Can you write down the recipe for this so I can make it at home?"

Since our apple picking trip, we have chosen to make some yummy apple recipes. Our first was apple cinnamon oatmeal, followed by an apple caramel cake. For apple butter, our students chopped the remainder of our farm apples over the span of an entire project time. As they chopped, apples sporadically slid across the table and every so often our choppers would succumb to the urge to pop an apple into their mouths. By the end, not only was our crock-pot filled with diced apples, but many of our students had learned the value of clean hands and had greatly improved in controlling their apples on their cutting boards. Although we spoke about how long apple butter would take to cook, having the room filled with the amazing smell of warm apples, cinnamon and vanilla made all our students hungry and I was whoered with a barrage of questions about when it would be done. As it continued to cook the next day, we not only worked on our patience but kept busy chopping some store-bought apples for our homemade applesauce. That Friday, as the

last of the bus kids were being called, Juel and I took a quick taste of the apple butter. “Mmmmm!” he said, “This is so good!” We hope everyone else will enjoy it as much as we did!

~Jada Brown  
& JoAnn Hawksworth

### Room 109

~No news this week

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

Last week we began to dig into our nature science focus: the rainforest. Why the rainforest? This is why: “When we reached the trail we began a 40 minute hike through the beautiful El Yunque rainforest that led us to another breathtaking waterfall – La Mina. Before we knew it, we were climbing down into the cool waters of the fall! As we left the park, tired and wet, our familiar car conversation began as we thought about how we would share yet another amazing experience with our students and colleagues. As we did, there was unanimous agreement that it would never be forgotten.”

Being in the Puerto Rican rainforest this summer was a life changer! How can I share that with my students? We are at the beginning of a journey that I hope will teach them about different aspects of the rainforests, why we should know about them and inspire them to want to see it for themselves! To read the complete excerpt and blog for “Team Taino” go to:

<http://teamtaino.blogspot.com/>  
~Jenerra Williams

### Room 205

A unique machine appeared in our classroom last Tuesday. Students made predictions when asked, “What is this?” and “What is it used for?” Suggestions included a water pump, an apple crusher, and an apple cider maker. When asked for evidence to support their predictions some shared that they used this machine last year; they were making connections and drawing on prior experiences. Others noticed the sharp blades inside a small box near the top and thought they could be used for crushing apples. Another child noticed the crank and that’s why he thought it might be used to pump water. Once they saw a few more clues of other items I had brought with me: a bag of apples and cups, we narrowed our predictions down to an apple cider press. We continued to make predictions about how to use this machine – what to do first, next, then, and last. Once we figured it out, the results were delicious! There has even been some talk about having an apple cider shop in our classroom!

~Ashleigh L'Heureux

### Room 217

One routine during our morning meeting is “sharing”. In this five-minute activity, students share something about themselves. Students have shared work from last year, Lego pieces, stuffed animals, favorite books, and things they have made at home. This simple routine will continue for the entire school year as an opportunity for our class

community to get to know each other.

An important element of “sharing” is learning how to ask questions and make comments. After someone shares, they ask their peers for questions or comments. While students can initially be drawn to making a comment like “I have that at home too!” or “It is cool” we are working on making comments that are specific to the student and topic they are sharing. We are also working on asking questions that really help us learn more about the item a student has shared. In this short daily routine, students are developing skills that are important to being contributing, respectful, attentive community members in our classroom.

~Emm Fialka-Feldman

## Grades Three & Four

### Room 207

During the past two weeks I have been meeting with each family individually (30 minutes) for our first family conference of the year, which is known as a listening conference at Mission Hill. It was a joy meeting all of the mothers, fathers, grandparents, cousins, and siblings. At Mission Hill we believe that it takes a village to raise a child and it was clear that the Role Model Hawks have a support system.

The goal of a listening conference is to provide a snapshot of how the child is doing thus far and to listen to the families’ suggestions, questions, or concerns.

Throughout this discussion students are asked to describe themselves as learners and to identify a goal they would like to work on over the course of the school year. Family members are asked to do the same process on their child. This unique conference requires both the child and adult to be present. As a teacher it is great to have an honest conversation about the student with family members so that I can learn how to best serve their needs. I look forward to future conferences throughout the school year.

~Robert Baez, Ms. Amanda  
& Ms. Shaina

### Room 216

This past week the Clever Cats – our classroom name – went to the Arboretum twice. We are starting to observe more closely and beginning to write more on what we see, while learning what makes a good observation. It was great to see many students looking at the leaves, rather than drawing the whole tree. Many students are learning to compare some of the other leaves they have drawn in the past. Through exemplars being shown in class, we are hoping the students begin to label and write down meaningful ideas and thoughts.

On Friday, we had a guest from Japan join us for our trip to the Arboretum. The students love the fact that they get to observe the plants from the pond. There are many intriguing insects and amphibians, which will lead to learning more about the relationships between the

animals and plants. I'm really happy to see the progress being made and feel there aren't enough times we can go as a class!

~Melanie Centeno, Selina Ruiz,  
Elsa Batista & Josh Kraus

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 210

The fifth grade recently had our first trip to Urban Improv. Urban Improv's mission is "to promote positive youth development as a catalyst for violence prevention and social change...the program strategically uses improvisational theater to provide young people a realistic and compelling forum to engage in self-exploration, practice self-expression and critical decision making."

The first day we were responding to a scene depicting a child who was new to a school and had his name mispronounced by his teacher. He went on to be the subject of ridicule by most of the kids except for one who he made a connection with, or so he thought. A day later in the cafeteria the usual kids were being mean and the other child did not take the opportunity to stick up for the new student, who he actually kind of liked. Our students were then thrust into the position of playing the role of this child.

Many of us struggled for the words or strategies to successfully bring the groups together and/or assuage the child being teased. It really illustrated just how difficult a position that is to be in as a person, let alone a child. I am looking forward to our continued

development of language, confidence and strategies over the next eight weeks of the program. Additionally, I plan on sharing the students' reflections on their experiences as well.

~Nakia Keizer, June Meyers  
& Katy Laguzza

### Room 215

We just finished our first unit in math and I asked the 6<sup>th</sup> graders to reflect by answering three questions:

What do you like about math?

What types of math problems can you solve easily?

What do you need to work on?

Here is what they said:

"I am enjoying math more and more as I begin to understand it.

I get very excited when I am doing problems that are challenging. I have really enjoyed our last unit, Prime Time, especially prime factorization. Class is fun and I usually look forward to it." - Aneli

"I like how everyone is learning at their own pace so everyone understands." - Evelyn

"I liked when we were counting the pumpkin seeds; it was very fun. Another thing I liked was when we got to make posters." - Fenalleli

"I think I am great at prime factorization. I also think it's cool because you can write it as an exponent." - Nadia

"I need to work on long division" - Alex, Phoebe, Aniya

~Sarah DeCruz

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

In 7<sup>th</sup> grade math class, we are well into our work with integers, the set of positive and negative whole numbers and zero. We are recognizing that this is a topic with a lot of real world connections. Do you receive an allowance? Do you owe any money? Is the temperature going up or down? And how about those Patriots? Did you follow yards gained and lost in last week's game?

We worked with number lines to understand opposites (numbers an equal distance from zero, like 18 and -18 or 5 and -5). The number line also helped us to understand which direction we moved (more positive or more negative) when adding integers. We developed rules for addition of integers, and used the inverse nature of addition and subtraction to also learn a procedure to subtract integers.

Then it was on to multiplication, first seen as repeated addition. We developed rules for multiplication of integers, and used multiplication/division fact families to extend the rules to division. Next up was the integer product game, where we played with a partner and tried to get four squares in a row by combining integer factors. You may also have played this game at home – if your child did her/his homework! Please ask your child to give you a mini math lesson on integers – you'll be sure to find a use for them.

~Ann Ruggiero

### Room 214

~No news this week

### 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.

#### Stop and Shop A+ Rewards

There's still time to register your Stop and Shop card and designate it to Mission Hill School. Then, every time you shop, your purchase total is rounded to the nearest dollar and used to calculate school earnings – free money for Mission Hill, just for buying your groceries! This does NOT affect your gas rewards in any way! Register at: <http://www.stopandshop.com/apl> us and use ID Number: 09287. If you would rather send your stop and shop card number (13 digits) and last name that the card is registered under to Courtney and have her register your card for you, please email her at [courtney.bruno@bc.edu](mailto:courtney.bruno@bc.edu). Once you are registered you will earn points from October 4, 2013 until March 20, 2014.

#### Kids with Asthma Can Swim

This is a FREE program for Boston children with asthma ages 8-13 made possible by the generosity of Children's

Hospital combining asthma education and swimming lessons to improve health and well-being of children with asthma, while having fun!! Saturdays from 12:00 to 3:30 PM starting on Saturday October 19, 2013 through December 21, 2013 at the Mildred Avenue Community Center Pool - 5 Mildred Avenue, Mattapan, MA 02126. For more info or to register call The Mildred Ave. Comm. Center pool at 617-635-1328 to pick up a registration form and sign up or Email Dirk at [Dirk.Bovell@dorchesterhouse.org](mailto:Dirk.Bovell@dorchesterhouse.org). \*\*\*Space is limited to 15 kids! \*\*\*

#### Family Council

Congratulations to Amina Michel-Lord and Amy Banzaert, our new Family Council Co-Chairs, Leticia Torres, our new Secretary, and Bridget Lee, our new Treasurer, who each ran unopposed this year. Our first meeting will be on Thursday, November 14<sup>th</sup> 5:45-7:00. We hope to see you there!



When children pretend, they're using their imaginations to move beyond the bounds of reality. A stick can be a magic wand. A sock can be a puppet. A small child can be a superhero.

-Fred Rogers



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