

# Mission Hill School News

## Letter from Child Street

### Help Us See Your “Ripe Tomato”

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

January is when I typically start planning for my back yard garden. I decide what I will plant and draw the layout design, what will be planted where. As soon as the soil has thawed, my husband and I turn it over, pull out all weeds and start planting. From that point on, I watch it carefully and give each plant attention. For teachers, this is like summer preparation for the classroom.

This year instead of maintaining only the plants I planted, I maintained every plant that grew (most of them I did not plant). These were mostly tomato plants that grew from the seeds of last year’s fallen tomatoes. There were about 50 tomato plants in my garden! When they started bearing fruit I could easily see the bright orange and red among the lush green leaves. I would

walk through the garden with my basket and collect all the red and orange I could see. For teachers, this is like the first few weeks of school as students begin to show who they are.

One day after I walked through the garden observing each tomato, I turned around and walked back through from another direction. I saw a whole new batch of ripe tomatoes that I didn’t see from the first walk through. The next day I walked forward, turned around walked back the other way, stood on my tip toes to see above the plants and got on my knees to see under the plants. I saw even more ripe tomatoes that I’d missed before. This happens in the classroom too as teachers begin to know each student.

Similar to the way that I circle around my garden looking at it from all angles, our teachers do this with students. I know I am missing tomatoes ready for picking even after a thorough check. Teachers work with students each day, but may be missing information that could help them see each student more fully. They need your eyes and experience to help them see your child. That’s where the beauty of working together

comes in. As parents, there are things you will notice, “ripe tomatoes” that may seem clear as day to you, but that our staff may not see.

Help us meet the needs of your child by pointing out things that are unique or that are important, but may go unnoticed. The more eyes and information we have, the better. Listening conferences are happening now. If you have not scheduled time with your child’s teacher send in a note, call or e-mail as soon as possible. We need all of our “tomatoes” to be visible and tended to.

Sincerely,

*Ayla Gavins*

#### REMINDERS

##### *October*

Through October 11: Listening Conferences

**Thu. 10/4**, 10:15am: Outside the Lines Mtg.

**Mon. 10/14**, NO SCHOOL

**Thu. 10/17**, 5:45pm – 7pm: Family Council Candidate Meet and Greet

**Tue. 10/22**, 6pm – 7pm: Outside the Lines Meeting

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

Our fall school-wide theme is life science, and in our classroom, we are learning ways to take care of living things. We feed the birds at our bird feeder. We feed our two goldfish. Yertle, our Japanese box turtle, needs fresh water and food. And our plants need water – but not too much.

Those are just some of the ways we've been taking care of living things. We fed our Monarch caterpillars fresh milkweed every day. (Luckily, we found a nice local milkweed patch on our way to the neighborhood playground.) One caterpillar formed a gorgeous green chrysalis and we took care not to bang it around or jostle it as it hung delicately in the tank. Once our butterfly hatched, we did our best to feed it honey water, but our butterfly did not eat. We tried for two days, and then I decided that the best way to take care of our butterfly was to let it free. We were sad to let our butterfly go, but happy to see it fluttering eagerly up towards the sun.

What living things do you have at home that your child can help take care of?

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin  
& Donna Winder

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

Last Tuesday, 10 classes from the Mission Hill School headed to the Museum of Science. The younger classes visited the

Butterfly Garden. They were able to see a variety of butterflies. The saw and smelled the flowers and food that the butterflies were eating. Elliot stood so still that a butterfly landed on him.

The older classes went to see Journey of the Butterfly. It is a 3D film about the monarch migration. I heard from many students that they really enjoyed the film.

One student said, "Kathy, they were flying in my face." It was wonderful to see children of all ages helping each other on the bus and train, playing with each other at Science in the Park, and eating lunch together.

To continue our week of butterflies, two monarchs emerged from their chrysalises. We took them to the flowers right outside our classroom. We sent them off with our well wishes. Tafari said, "Have a safe trip and I hope you don't get eaten." Eli said, "Safe trip to Mexico." Yesvirlin added, "Goodbye."

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

#### Room 107

One of our community building exercises is to come up with a set of agreements that we collectively

choose to be our guiding practice. During this time we are purposeful in ensuring that everyone has a voice. This year, when presented with the question of, "What will keep us happy, healthy and safe?" our students rose to the occasion and thought deeply about what their contributions would be. By our conversation's end, we had the following:

No Kicking. No hurting anyone's feelings. Have helping hands and safe feet. No jumping on each other. No putting your hands on each other. No dropping on each other. Keep your hands and feet to yourself. Share. Stop bothering people. Don't make our chrysalis fall down. No hitting. No pinching. No pushing. No fighting people. Use nice words so you don't hurt people's feelings. No biting. Try not to stick things to your face. Keep your hands safe or else people will get hurt. No hitting. Take care of our things. Put things back where they come from. Raise your hand if you have something to say at meeting. Listen to other people when it is their turn to talk.



While we are already holding each other to many of these ideas, our next step is to turn them into encouraging and affirming statements of our expectations. Our final step is to then officially approve them as a class.

~Jada Brown  
& JoAnn Hawkesworth

### Room 109

One of my favorite ways to start the year is to ask families to share a few hopes and dreams for their young child. Their words are always touching and inspiring. They help me envision our year ahead. This year's hopes and dreams are especially dear to me, as I begin to craft my own for my first child, who I will soon meet.

From the parents in room 109:

I hope he finds happiness in life's pleasures, most of which are absolutely free... to be kind and gentle... to know how special he is... to develop a life-long love of learning... to be happy being herself... to be challenged to grow in mind and thinking... to create some cool stuff... to always feel loved... to make new friends... to find the joy in everyday... to have fun... to read and write... to be thoughtful, kind, aware, and curious... that we will always love him the same.

~Jenny Goldstein

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

It is often said that Mission Hill School feels like a family. Perhaps that is because we value family so much. Family conferences are an integral part of

our work together. This first conference of the year is a listening conference, which began this week. At this conference we listen to families and learn more about who they are.

Listening conferences are a wonderful resource. Families are the experts on their children. They have much to teach us! We have heard about exciting summers, new interests as well as thoughts/concerns about the school year. As we listen, we also hear about strengths, weaknesses, triumphs and trials. We have learned about similar behaviors displayed at home as well as school and have discovered that the children we know may not be the same child the family knows at home. Gaining these insights is such a privilege and an underrated necessity in being able to teach children well. When conferences are over we always feel like we have a better sense of each child as a whole.

We have had a good start with our Listening Conferences and look forward to continuing to formally touch base with all our families. If you have not scheduled a conference or need to reschedule, please let us know.

~Jenerra Williams

### Room 205

"Awesome!" a chorus of excited children shouted joyfully as they began to explore our new outdoor play spaces. "This is our ship; watch out for the sharks," Hamse proclaimed as five children walked carefully over log balance beams and hopped from stone to stone trying not to let their feet touch the dirt that was

below them and between the rocks. I watched as a group of students carried out this scenario on one side of the nature area, while another group was playing house in the teepees by the corner. "I'll go out and get food," Chrisvely informed as she left the teepee and gathered some nearby bark and rocks to "feed" the others. At the same time, some students experimented with our log chute while others found worms. I feel so grateful to have this beautiful nature wonderland where the kids can run, hop, climb, balance, experiment, use their imaginations, learn, and explore. We're looking forward to using these spaces throughout the year and letting the students' innate curiosity about the world around them guide their explorations and play.

~Ashleigh L'Heureux

### Room 217

Initially when we entered the butterfly garden at the Museum of Science, the students seemed complacent, quickly walking the path to the exit. I was surprised, as I had imagined the students would be more interested in pointing, observing, and discussing the dozens of butterflies swarming around them. Then after a bit of time and some careful prompting to "use these guides" from some of the volunteers at the Museum of Science, the students quickly turned into scientists classifying butterflies. They were asking questions, using evidence from prior experiences and from the Museum's field guides, and carefully looking throughout the garden to find butterflies.

We left the butterfly garden to enter another room filled with snakes, millipedes, frogs, and other insects. Taking their energy from the butterfly garden, they filled this new space with comments such as, "Check this out!" "This is cool!" "Disgusting!" and "Look, it is way back there hiding." As the first of many out of classroom experiences, this was an important way for me to be reminded of the power of these opportunities for our class community.

~*Emm Fialka-Feldman*

## Grades Three & Four

### Room 207

Last week the Role Model Hawks had a great time at the Museum of Science. Our first theme of the year is life science and we explored many exhibits to continue our pre-thinking around this concept. We also watched a 3D film called, "Flight of the Butterfly", which focused on the life span of a Monarch butterfly and how it travels around the world to survive and reproduce. During the first two weeks of school we had two Monarch caterpillars, which sadly passed away before turning into beautiful butterflies. Luckily, the film allowed the kids to see how the process works. One of our tasks as a group was to identify things in the science museum that had life. Students named bugs/insects, various animals, humans, and many plants. Below are two pictures to give

you an idea of our experience.

~*Robert Baez*



### Room 216

Last Tuesday, we went to the Museum of Science. The students had such an amazing time! I noticed students trying to race against a moving light, students spinning themselves around and around while holding onto a wheel until they got dizzy. Others explored the dinosaurs and listened to information. We even saw a movie about butterflies and their life cycle. The students were completely engaged trying to grab all the butterflies, since it was a 3-D movie.

As we went downstairs my group was fascinated with an old school. Enaisja sat down in the teacher's chair. "Okay class, who would like to come up and read their report to the class?" Jhayden, who realized he was now in a play, smiled to himself and raised his hand. "Yes, Jhayden?" asked Enaisja. "Would you like to come up?" Jhayden walked up to the teacher's desk and proudly said, "Okay class. This is my report. I would like to share my report with you guys. My informational research project is about..."

It's amazing how the world of science can create and inspire creative minds. The day reminded me of all the ways students can access information while still having fun.

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

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 210

At the end of every week the students of room 210 write End of the Week Reflections. They use several prompts to help with their thinking. We will share them in the newsletter once a month.

"One of the things that went well this week was when we did class names. One of my names got really far. I felt really good when everybody voted for it. If it gets chosen I will feel really happy everytime someone says it."

"Something that went well for me this week was math because I worked independent. I didnt call for help, I learned new stratgies I didnt know. I could challenge myself, I could use landmark numbers, place values, I could times two digit numbers."

"A great suggestion I have for the class is some pillows in the corner for the block area. I think this is a good idea because I find that lots of times I want to read in that corner. It would not get in the way of people building because usually people don't build in the corner."

"Something that went well this week was knock-out. Everyone was cheering people on and

when people would get out, they would not get mad. And everyone got to shoot at the hoop. And one more thing that went well was even if you got out, you could go back in..."

"Next week I am going to try to focus more and I will try to get into my work and not get distracted and I will take care of my stuff and be respectful to all of my teammates and be my best self in everything! This is what I am going to try to do."

"Something I want to get better at is reading and writing. (I) should read books in my level. Next week it would be great if someone would find books for me to read. I should practice more writing-give me the letter and i'll write them."

"Something that was hard for me was stepping in when \_\_\_\_\_ was bullying \_\_\_\_\_. I tried to step in but \_\_\_\_\_ would not stop and \_\_\_\_\_ cried. I found out it happened all during recess. It was awful."

~Nakia Keizer

### Room 215

We're working on the musical "Bullies Anonymous" in our class. The musical is about a group of kids who meet regularly to thwart their bullying behaviors. The musical is a comedic take on a serious issue. There are many websites on which you can check the statistics but suffice it to say that bullying is a surrounding factor for many children in grades 4-8. Many of us have a stereotypical picture of a bully in our heads,

but as we work on the musical we're finding that there is no definitive stereotype of a bully or a victim. They/We can look just like you.

We are learning that some kids bully, others are victims, and some children are bullying in some arenas while being victimized in others.

Why take such a big issue and make it into something laughable, we wondered? After talking about it, we still don't know why but we think it has been easier to get into the middle of how it feels to bully or to be bullied. Also, we don't think there is a whole lot of mean-ness happening on purpose in our school, but we don't want there to be any so we're working on ourselves first.

~Letta Neely

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

In Room 213, we started the year with reading aloud R.J. Palacio's book *Wonder*. August Pullman was born with a severe facial deformity. For the first 11 years of his life, Auggie was homeschooled due to frequent hospitalizations as he underwent 28 surgeries. Now, he's ready to start real school and enters middle school at Beecher Prep.

The story is told from multiple points of view. The narrator changes and we hear the same events told by Auggie, his older sister Via, and his new classmates. It didn't take very many pages before we were all hooked.

There is so much for us to think about in this story. What makes you "ordinary"? Who decides? When is it an advantage to be distinctive or unique, and when is difference used against you?

Because of his difference, Auggie suffers a series of aggressions every day of his life. How does he survive? In many ways, he seems like a typical kid. Students identified how Auggie has the support of his family and a close friend, and how he has developed a self-deprecating sense of humor that aims to put others at ease. When we finish the book, we'll share our literary projects with you. In the meantime, ask your child what's happening in *Wonder*.

~Ann Ruggiero

### Room 214

~No news this week

## Hot Topics

### An Added Thank You

Maureen White of Boston Schoolyard Initiative, Ross Miller (public artist) and Ray Delmonico (owner and supervisor) of NELM Corporation for the planning and work done on the new school yards. Their names should have been included in last week's news cover. My apologies, Ayla.

### 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.