

# Mission Hill School News

## Letter from Child Street

### Help Wanted... Students Pitching In

Dear Mission Hill School Friends, Staff and Students,

Our students have always been willing to lend a hand at school when needed. There's proof of this when Acts of Kindness are read at Friday Share each week. Generally, when adults ask for volunteers students are eager to do the task without even knowing what it is. I gave this part of our school culture—adults asking for help from students and students eagerly stepping forward to assist—some thought.

I wondered. Is there a benefit to students to have a lasting job vs. a single volunteer opportunity? Would this also benefit the school? What skills would develop for students and adults if adults shared more school responsibilities with students? Would students feel more a part of running the school if they took on new roles? How could strong Habits of Work (plan, persevere, produce, and reflect) be developed through volunteering over time? Would students and adults have new opportunities to interact and develop relationships?

These questions led me to creating and introducing Mission Hill School jobs for students. The jobs are real school needs, nothing fluffy or made up. Here are a few of the job titles: *Winter Conference Coordinator, Kindergarten Lunch and Recess Monitor, Interview Committee Member, Afternoon Bus Helper, and Friday Share Leader*. There are more. Since the announcement about the jobs was made at Friday Share two weeks ago, there's been a continuous flow of applicants coming by the office.

Students must complete a job application that includes reasons why he or she might be a good candidate for the job, and at least one reference. Students will be interviewed, then invited to jobs that best fit them and the school needs as determined by the interview committee. Interviews begin next week. I'll let you know how things turn out. Future parts of this experience for students include a "staff" meeting and "company" picnic. This is a great opportunity for you (parent or teacher) to discuss parts of the process to apply for a job. Show your child/ren what a classified ad looks like. Show him/her/them a resume and talk about the interview process. Each part of this process has opportunities for learning and understanding how things work in the world.

~Ayla Gavins

#### REMINDERS

##### **November**

**Sat. 11/23**, 8:30 - 4:00: Descriptive Review Conference @ MHS

**Mon. 11/18-11/20**, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grades to Farm School

**Thu. 11/21**, 6:00 - 7:00: Outside the Lines Mtg.

**Wed. 11/27**, 1:30: Dismissal for Thanksgiving Break

##### **December**

**Thu. 12/5**, 5:00 - Governing Bd. Mtg.

**Fri. 12/6**, 6:00 - Coffee House

**Tue. 12/3**, 5:30 - 7:00 pm: BPS School visit day

**Wed - Fri. 12/11 - 14**, Book Fair

**Wed. 12/11**, 10 - 11:30 am: BPS School visit day

**Thu. 12/19**, 7 - 8:30 am: BPS School visit day AND

6:00 - 7:00: Outside the Lines Mtg.

**Tue. 12/24**, Holiday Break begins

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

Taking care of each other and taking care of nature have been two major themes for us this fall. Did you know that we have one turtle, two fish and three snails in our classroom? We work hard every day to take good care of these creatures and maintain their healthy homes. As we take care of them, we are also learning new science-related vocabulary words such as: "habitat", "observe" and "magnifying glass". As for taking care of each other, we practice every day using kind words and helping hands. This week, we have a new friend to take care of. Dixon Denny is three years old and this week he joined our class. Please help us welcome Dixon and his family to the Mission Hill School!

*~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin  
Donna Winder & Angel Nasseh*

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

This week we investigated pumpkins. The children broke into small groups and used yarn to find the circumference of the pumpkin. I asked, "Where should we cut the string?" Jasper pointed to a spot on the yarn. I cut. We then used the same piece of yarn and wrapped it around the pumpkin again. It did not go all the way around. We had cut it too short. We tried again. This time the children pointed to the spot where the two pieces of yarn met as they wrapped around the

pumpkin. After they had cut the string I asked, "How are we going to find out how long it is?" Eli said, "We need a ruler." The children realized that the string was longer than the foot-long ruler they had been using. The children got up and added more rulers and put them end to end. They then counted the inches on the ruler. We shared our findings with the other groups. We discovered that the four pumpkins in the class had similar circumferences; 17, 17 1/2, 18, and 19 inches. Next week we will share our findings about sinking and floating with pumpkins.

*~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea*

#### Room 107

Last week 107 decided to take advantage of what might have been our last warm day of autumn. We decided to extend our research about the life cycles of different living things to the zoo. There, we planned to hypothesize about each living thing's beginnings (seed, egg or mommy's belly). As we approached each animal exhibit, students were confident when voicing their opinions. For example, while at the ostriches, most students guessed that the large birds emerged from eggs. However, while looking at the lions and tigers (and one peeing camel) the results were split. Many students insisted that they came from eggs while others argued that they came from their mommy's bellies. While encountering the snake exhibit in the rainforest pavilion, the results were unanimous. When asked where snakes emerged from, they all yelled "Eggs!" and ran to see

what they could see. Though it rained on us a little, even that was turned into an adventure as students stepped in puddles and tried to catch raindrops on their tongues. After arriving back at school, we reflected on our zoo experience through drawing. Our students said the following:

"I saw a fish!"

"I made a snake."

"I drew a snake hitting another snake."

This is...

"...the zebra. The line is the fence."

"... the lion at the zoo."

"... the family of snakes."

"... turtle in the water."

*~Jada Brown*

*& JoAnn Hawkesworth*

#### Room 109

Big announcements from 109. We finally decided on a class name! From here on out we will be known as *The Original Stars*. Zora explains why, "Because we're like superstars."

The other news is that I will be starting my maternity leave a few weeks early. Wednesday, November 27 is my official last day for a few months. I feel so blessed to be bringing my first child into this community. I can't wait to visit the school with him next spring!

We found a wonderful teacher to spend the winter with our class. Her name is Liz Borson and she will be here full time starting on Monday. Please help me in welcoming her!

*~Jenny Goldstein*

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

In our last newsletter we shared what some of the *Magic Learners* have learned about the rainforest. This week we are sharing what the other half of the class had to say.

What I learned about the rainforest so far is...

Harpy eagles were three feet tall and six feet wide. - **Adler**

Tigers are white. - **Maya M.**

When anacondas eat they slither to it and they have to squeeze it first. - **Aahmonyea**

Bats are black and scary. -

### **Roldani**

Anacondas eat mice. - **Peter**

The rainforest gets so wet. -

### **Shirley**

All grown up tigers eat meat. -

### **Alejandro**

There are poison frogs in the rainforest. - **Fatemah**

When anacondas are in the water you can see the water moving. - **Rafael**

I didn't know how many vines can be in a rainforest. - **Typrese**

Next week? Pictures of our rainforest progress!

~*Jenerra Williams*

### Room 205

It's time for us to revisit our questions about trees that we generated several weeks ago and think about which ones we have found answers to and which ones still require more research. It's time for us to start thinking about how we will show what we have learned about trees. For some, this can be a challenging task. We have all learned so much through our observations, explorations,

experiments, questions, books, and talking with experts, but figuring out how to access that knowledge and present it in a meaningful way can feel overwhelming at times. The students have started to work together to research various questions about trees.

Collaboratively working on a team has not only allowed the children to share in similar learning experiences, but has also helped students socially as they negotiate, share ideas, and find ways to use each other's strengths. They have started to make a classroom tree, write a book all about trees, and develop some seed experiments. We're looking forward to sharing all our hard work with you at the family breakfast coming up!

~*Ashleigh L'Heureux*

### Room 217

Learning how to manage our time and make priorities are some of the skills that students develop as they engage in project time. Each day as project time choices are shared, students are also reminded of the "have to" for the day. A "have to" is something that students must complete before the end of project time, including handwriting practice, journal writing, or Friday reflections. When students go to the choice board to sign up for their first choice, some students eagerly sign up for the "have to" first. Others sign up for dramatic play, blocks, or another choice. After they finish their "have to" they check their name off of a list. Students complete these activities at different rhythms, but by the

end of project time every child has thoughtfully done this work. I encourage you to talk to your child about their "have to" for the day to learn more about something they worked on during project time!

~*Emma Fialka-Feldman*

## Grades Three & Four

### Room 207

*The Role Model Hawks* want a class pet and we need your help to determine which animal/insect we should choose. During the first couple of months of school we collectively brainstormed some ideas. This week, the children wrote proposals and drew pictures to campaign for their individual preferences. We have a wide range of ideas: fish, guinea pigs, snake, turtle, hamster, birds, rabbit, frog, and various insects. By mid next week we should have our final answer. However, we would like our school community to provide the Role Model Hawks with feedback to help our class make our decision. So, we created the following questions to help frame your feedback.

1) Which animal would you suggest the Role Model Hawks pick from our list?

2) Is there another animal/insect you could suggest, which is not on our original list?

3) Which animal/insect do you believe will provide the best learning experiences within a classroom atmosphere?

4) Please share any ideas, thoughts, or suggestions regarding this topic that you feel will help to our class with this

process.

All feedback can be sent via email or a written note. My email is [rbaez@missionhillschool.org](mailto:rbaez@missionhillschool.org). We look forward to your responses.

~Robert Baez, Ms. Amanda  
& Ms. Shaina

### Room 216

Greetings from Room 216, As you may know we are working on life science—specifically plants and what they need to survive, the relationship between plants and animals, and the value or purpose of the plant/animal. We are working on creating multiple drafts of specific species found in the Arnold Arboretum: drawings and writing about the plants. Each student is responsible for writing about the plant/animal, creating a final drawing (colored pencils or crayons) and a photograph. We hope to have final drawings done in frames (hopefully two per student!)

I encourage any parents or anyone who may be reading this to help support our writing about the species. We will be working with 826 Boston next month. There will be only time for six sessions and the time will be from 1:30 – 3:00. The days could possibly be Tuesdays and Thursdays. If there is anyone who may be able to volunteer their services to help with our descriptive writing, it would benefit the students!

If you would like to contact me, the email address is [jkraus@missionhillschool.org](mailto:jkraus@missionhillschool.org).

Thanks again for any and all support!

~Josh Kraus

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 210

A few weeks ago I wrote about sharing some student reflections from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade Urban Improv visits. Here are a few from a session on decision making and peer pressure. Each session also has a feature song that connects to the theme. The song was

“Take care of yourself, for your own sake  
Your life is controlled by choices you make  
When there is trouble, do you follow along  
Do you just agree, or do you stand up strong?”

“I have had peer pressure on me before. I was at the beach with a friend and he wanted me to jump off the rocks...at first I refused, but then I gave in and did it...”

“I was sitting down eating and I heard some people say—I wasn't with them, but I heard them say—‘I dare you to steal that lighter and run’...”

“I stand up strong because I don't want to do things that are bad when I grow up so that's why.”

“Well, last year someone told me to punch someone in the face and I told them I'm not going to do it because I don't do those things. So they said I was not cool but I didn't really care about it.”

“...I know people that have been pressured. Somebody was telling people what to do, kind of like a bully, so they would listen. I

stood straight up and I said ‘don't take advantage of them.’”

“I have not had peer pressure on me but when I was in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade when people would always say ‘he told me to.’” and Ms Jenerra would say that, “if s/he told you to jump off a bridge would you do it? So I never would do anything bad if someone told me to.”

“I can agree to do stuff that I know are bad for me like one time I stole candy from a store but I got caught by it falling out of [my] pockets, I was really scared and I had to pay for it. I really didn't stand up strong at all...”

“If you don't stand up for yourself the experience of peer pressure will be longer and harder.”

~Nakia Keizer, June Myers  
& Katy Laguzza

### Room 215

It feels good to be a new student at MHS because I'm making new friends and learning a lot. Last year I was a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at the John Winthrop School. My mom and I chose this school because my old school ended at 5<sup>th</sup> grade and my mom wanted me to come here because she thought this was a good school and it would help me. At MHS teachers are kind and helpful.

My favorite subject is math because every day in math I learn something. This year we've practiced multiplication, division, fractions, and decimals. Currently, I am making a math game with David that combines the rules of baseball and multiplication and division. The

board is going to be a baseball field and each player pulls a card and answers the problem on the back of the card. To make it to first base you need to answer a single multiplication or division problem. To make it to second base you need to solve a double digit problem. Third base is more challenging because you have to solve a triple digit problem. To make a home run you need to solve for  $n$ . A trick to solve these problems is to use the inverse relationship. That means for multiplication you divide and for division you multiply! We got the idea for the game because we both like baseball and were excited that the Red Sox won.

*Written by Alberto Polanco,  
edited by Sarah DeCruz*

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

One of the biggest worries voiced by 8<sup>th</sup> graders, almost from the first day of school, is stated as, "I want to get into a good high school!" We support kids and families in that process, and are confident that there are many fine Boston Public School choices for our students when they leave us in June.

Our first step is to do some research. Using the BPS website as well as anecdotal information from our graduates, students identify pros, cons, and questions about the various high schools. We then sift the data and identify priorities. This is an individual process. While one

student wants to play football, another will want a choice of art classes. Afterschool debate team (think college scholarships), or multiple foreign languages (think job opportunities in an increasingly global world), graduation rate, student:teacher ratio, size, extra curricular activities, class offerings, location, hours—so many factors to consider.

Next, we look at application requirements. For some schools, some combination of an essay, transcript, interview, and letters of reference are required, while admittance to others is based solely on the assignment lottery. Students are encouraged to consider many possible options because there are no guarantees that the first choice school will be available.

We'll visit a few schools in the coming weeks, but families also need to take advantage of early morning and evening visiting hours to explore this important next step. Please read the high school information your child has access to, and talk about the process and your priorities.

*~Ann Ruggiero*

### Room 214

This week, we investigated the question: "When does life show up on Earth if we compare the entire history of the Earth to one year?"

We used strips of receipt paper to map out the 4.6 billion years that scientists believe the Earth has existed. This is what we saw. From mid-February to mid-October, or 3 billion years, only

single celled organisms lived on Earth. After that—one billion years ago—came the multi-celled organisms. Then 475 million years ago, or November 23 on our timeline, plants start growing on land. By mid-December, or 250 million years ago, the dinosaurs arrived, and they ruled the Earth until they disappeared after 250 million years—or 65 million years ago. Scientists have found evidence of humans dating back to 250,000 years ago—or 11:31:43 PM on our timeline. Where do we fit in? We are a small fraction of a second on our timeline.

Students have begun doing research on their own, investigating a period in Earth's History that fascinates them the most. When you get a chance, ask them about what they have learned about our planet and its history.

*~Teresa Strong*

### From the library

There are so many different ways to look at the same book. I was very happy when Sarah and Nakia asked me if some reading groups from their classroom could have their discussion in the library.

The group from Sarah's class is reading *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli. They talked about the chapter they'd read, asked and answered questions, and explained more difficult things. Then they did research. One student wanted to know more about homelessness, and another was investigating the racial issues mentioned in the book. I helped a few students find information on Jerry Spinelli.

Six children from Nakia's class are reading *Chasing Vermeer* by Blue

Balliett with me. A game called pentominoes plays a big role in the story. Since the Mission Hill School did not own a set of pentominoes, we decided to make some. And who was Vermeer? The art theft in the book reminded one student of the big heist at the Gardner museum. The students wanted to find out more. Our library had a book about Vermeer with all 36 of his paintings in it, including the one that is in the book.

I hope to welcome more reading groups to the library, and to help them find out the information they need to understand and enjoy the book they are reading. Have fun!

~*Marietje Halbertsma*

## 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.

### Free Thanksgiving Dinner

Tavern in the Square in Allston, Central Square, and Salem are hosting their annual FREE Thanksgiving dinner on Thursday, November 28th from 11:00-1:30. Dinner is open to all, focusing on the elderly, those who are homeless, and families that may be struggling in these difficult times. No reservations

necessary.

### Acción de Gracias Cena Gratis

Tavern in the Square en Allston, Central Square, y Salem, celebrará su cena anual de Acción de Gracias GRATIS jueves, el 28 de noviembre, de 11:00-1:30. La cena está abierta a todos, centrándose en las personas mayores, a los que no tienen hogar, y las familias que tengan dificultades en estos tiempos difíciles. Ninguna reserva necesario.

### THANK YOU!!

The Family Council was able to raise over \$1400 from our two Election Day Bake Sales. The proceeds will help to cover dinner and childcare for our Family Council Meetings, Teacher Appreciation Day, Field Day and other school-wide events. Thanks to EVERYONE who sent in baked goods and worked the tables. We appreciate your generosity very much!

~*Ms. Amina*



### 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](http://www.missionhillschool.org)