

# Mission Hill School News

## Letter from Child Street

### **Bringing It Back**

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

The Prospect School in Vermont closed before I ever got to walk through its classrooms or meet the children that attended the school. However years after its closure I got to know the school through photographs, former teachers, and collections of archived student work (art, writing, math, projects) from the school that the teachers presented at annual summer institutes and fall conferences. The conferences brought profound thinkers together to exchange ideas, listen to one another, push one another in thinking, and create art together in ways that affected me profoundly over the years. Each time I attended one of the conferences, I left feeling more complete as an educator and as a human being.

The last fall annual Prospect Descriptive Review conference was about three years ago. In the first year of its absence, I invited colleagues to begin a plan to bring the conference back. I am grateful for the support of those colleagues. As a result of their help, this fall Mission Hill will host a conference on the Prospect Center Descriptive Review Process developed by Patricia Carini. With our first try at this it seemed better to start small, so this will be a one day event held at the school with a limited number of participants.

I share our program for the day with you with hope that you might join us.

#### *Prospect's Descriptive Review Conference*

*At Mission Hill School on November 23, 2013 from 8:30am to 4:30pm*

*Join us as we examine and exercise the power of collective work to see children more fully and examine school environments.*

*Program Welcome 8:30*

*Working Groups\* 9:30*

*Lunch 12:30*

*Working Groups\* 1:30*

*Sharing, reflection and synthesis 3:00*

*Closing 3:45-4:30*

*\*Blocks of time labeled Working Groups are dedicated to the discussion of readings, review of works-in-progress (work you are doing and would like feedback on) and rounds of the Descriptive Review Process (protocol for seeing children, teachers and spaces in a new way)*

You must register if you plan to attend this conference. You may register on-line through our school website at <http://www.missionhillschool.org/2013/10/09/a-conference-at-mission-hill-school/> or in person by contacting Dani Coleman at the school.

### REMINDERS

#### **November**

Sat. 11/16, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm:  
BPS School visit day

Mon. 11/11: NO SCHOOL

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

Fri. 11/15 - Schoolyard ribbon  
cutting

Mon. 11/18-11/2, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grades  
to Farm School

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

Tue. 12/24, Holiday Break begins

~Ayla Gavins

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

Our hollow wooden blocks are now “open” for students to build with during Work Time. In our classroom, we introduce our materials slowly and intentionally – so that students fully understand how to use, care for and clean up the materials.

Kate Tejada, our student teacher from Wheelock College, has been working with small groups of children to introduce them to our hollow wooden blocks. These blocks come in a variety of shapes and sizes - squares, rectangles, triangles and flat planks. These blocks are the largest and heaviest building materials we have in our classroom. With these wonderful blocks, children can create large structures – large enough to climb in and climb on. Stop by and check out how our students are using their muscles and minds to imagine and create large block structures.

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin  
Donna Winder & Angel Nasseh

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

Pumpkin math is a staple each year in my classroom. When I first started teaching pumpkin math I went out and bought the biggest pumpkin I could find. As a class we would see if it sank or floated, weigh it, measure its circumference, and count the seeds inside. I tried to cook that pumpkin when we were finished.

Saying it did not taste delicious was an understatement. I then discovered pie pumpkins. They were much smaller and very yummy. The children formed small groups and made predictions about the above four things. Then as a group they found the pumpkin’s accurate weight, circumference, and seed count. They also tested whether it sank or floated. We collect the seeds. We save some to plant for next year and cook the rest. We also cook the pumpkin. We make some things right away like Ashleigh’s famous pumpkin chocolate chip cookies, but we also preserve some. We freeze the rest so that we can have pumpkin all year long.

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

#### Room 107

A few weeks ago, Room 107 had a slight change in our schedule. Our previous routine had students enter the room at 1:30, put away their lunch items and gather their blankets and pillows for rest time. For the past few months we’ve started rest time with classical music followed by a book on tape. During this time the adults would rub students’ backs to help them rest easier. However, Jo-Ann and I decided that it was time for a change. We were missing the connections we made with our older group of students while reading them chapter books.

One day, instead of putting on a book on tape, we pulled out a book from one of our past favorite series, *Junie B. Jones*.

We wondered about how they would react but as soon as I told them the book title, several students said, “I’ve heard that story before.” or “I have that book at my house!” Within minutes of reading, it was clear they were hooked. Students laughed at Junie B.’s silly antics, repeated certain phrases as requested and got practice foreshadowing what would happen next in the story.

We found that those who needed to rest did so without adult assistance. In fact, I was surprised to see that the student who sat on my lap while I read was not actually looking at the pictures but was in fact fast asleep. Students who didn’t fall asleep were fully engaged in the story and at the end of our rest time, the familiar whine of “One more chapter please?” was inspiring. It just confirmed that there is something magical that happens when being read to that cannot be achieved through the use of a cd or tape.

~Jada Brown  
& JoAnn Hawksworth

#### Room 109

As time passes, my belly grows. The children watch and notice. We are all becoming more interested in babies. It seemed only natural that we would study babies while the Mission Hill community explores life science.

Recently, one child asked, “Do all babies come from their mothers?” We’ve been exploring that very question. A few days ago I asked the children what

they knew about eggs.

Some people eat eggs. —*Evan*

Eggs come out of a mother's body and then later it hatches.

The baby comes out of the mother's egg. It can hatch any day of the week. —*Theodore*

Baby chicks take a long time to hatch- hours to come out of the egg. —*Maya*

Animals that have feathers have eggs. Animals with no feathers have babies out of their stomachs. —*Zora*

Zora's last theory sparked some newer questions. Do all animals that come from eggs have feathers? We soon realized that reptiles, amphibians, fish, and insects come from eggs.

Do babies really come out of their mother's stomachs? It sure seems that way!

~*Jenny Goldstein*

## Grades One & Two

### Room 204

Before we began our rainforest project work this week, we thought we would see what we've learned so far. The question on our morning meeting board asked "What have learned so far about the rainforest?" Here is what they had to share.

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

Indians don't wear much clothes. - **Liam**

Gorillas are big. - **Keysha**

Lions will never live in a rain forest. - **Vitoria**

There are a lot of different kinds of flowers there. - **Arianny**

Snakes don't move that much. - **Maryam**

Gorillas can climb. - **Michelle**

There are a lot of flowers in the rainforest. — **Maya S.**

A snake lives in the rainforest. - **Kaylanie**

Bats cover their bodies when they are sleeping. - **Kelise**

Anacondas squeeze their prey before they eat it. - **Dillon**

Next week we'll share thoughts from the other Magic Learners.

~*Jenerra Williams*

### Room 205

You may have heard your child talk about his or her Project Time Checklist. This is a piece of paper the students receive each Monday that lists the different kinds of learning experiences they have the opportunity to engage in that week. Some things are "Have Tos" which means everyone must participate in that activity. A few examples might be to build a block structure or to do a tree part observation in their science journal. Other parts of the checklist offer students choices. For example, they might be told to choose two writing activities from a list of four choices: handwriting, journal, poem, and teacher prompt. The children are in charge of their checklists and choose which activities they will engage in on a given day. They then check off or place a sticker next to the task after they have completed it. The checklist offers opportunities for students to take ownership over their learning, foster responsibility, and learn something new about themselves as learners.

~*Ashleigh L'Heureux*

### Room 217

"This is the queen's chamber,"

Anna said as she placed a green, plush pillow on a large hollow block. "These are the tunnels where the ants live," added Amari. "I need some rubber bands to make the movie theater for the ants," Mekhai said. Last week, children eagerly began showing their growing knowledge about ants across the various project time choices. Instead of simply reading about ants and observing our ant farms, children discussed what it would look like to bring their understanding about ants into the block and dramatic play areas. In small groups they drew what they could make in those areas. Then they discussed some of the materials they would need to create – including signs to label areas, construction paper, and large pieces of cloth. Each day the children would expand and rethink the work they had done. Children who were not initially part of the building of the ant colony or the dramatic play of an ant-infested picnic would watch, ask questions, or eagerly join in. As more materials come in for children to continue building their anthills and ant colonies, please stop by and see what you can learn about ants from their work!

~*Emma Fialka-Feldman*

## Grades Three & Four

### Room 207

At Mission Hill students learn history and science through 3 school wide themes. Our first theme is life science. Throughout the first trimester we are studying the following topic: Life in the

MHS School Yard and local parks in the Boston Area. The following *essential questions, field experiences, and assignments* are helping us investigate this topic:

- 1) What life exists in our schoolyard?
- 2) What life exists in the Boston area?
- 3) What do plants need in order to survive?
- 4) What do animals/insects need in order to survive?
- 5) What do humans need in order to survive?
- 6) How do plants, animals/insects, and humans relate to one another?
- 7) How do plants, animals/insects, and humans work together to maintain a functional schoolyards and local parks in the Boston area?

*Assignments/Assessments:*

- 1) A model plant
- 2) A poster and presentation on an animal/insects life cycle
- 3) A field guide of all living things observed in our MHS schoolyard and local Boston parks
- 4) Various types of written work. (Journals, Reflective Writing, Poems, Narrative Essays, and related Art Projects)
- 5) A documentation panel answering our essential question. (Final Project)

*Field Experiences:*

- 1) Field trips include Arnold Arboretum, Science Museum, and local Boston parks.

We will share out our findings when we have completed this theme!

~Robert Baez

### Room 216

Every day, our routine includes morning meeting. We sit on the rug in a circle and we discuss social skills. The reason for this is to learn how to become more empathetic, learn to control our anger, and solve problems when they arise. Recently, we have been learning to understand the difference between intentional and unintentional. The teachers begin by showing them how to approach a problem when we think something is being done to us intentionally. The students begin by role playing a scenario.

Two students are throwing a ball and one of them gets injured. There are many reasons for why the student may get injured. The students suggest that perhaps the student doesn't know how to catch, that the size of the ball is the issue, or maybe the velocity of the ball being thrown makes it hard to catch. The student enacts going over and asking a question; "Are you okay?" "Yes, but why did you throw the ball at me so hard?" "I'm sorry I didn't mean to...it was an accident. Can I help you up?" The students are expressing concern, but also trying to understand what was intentional by asking questions. This is not always easy to do in the heat of the moment, but the students are trying to prepare themselves for situations like this when they do arise during the day. The goal is to have students transfer these skills to real life situations and continue to practice as they continue to experience life.

~Melanie Centeno, Selina Ruiz  
Elsa Batista & Josh Kraus

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 210

We missed sharing the our end of the Week Reflections last month. Here are our latest...

"One thing I wish went better was math. I jus got so distracted by coloring in a moustache. I mean, we all have our days but I could have tried a little more to stay on task"

"Next week I am going to try to play soccer, do my homework and pay attention in class. During recess I will play with my friends. I will try to ride my bike at Franklin Park"

"Something I want to get better at is sharing at Friday Share and soccer. I want to get better at soccer b/c I'm new to it and I want o get better at sharing. b/c we have 6th Grade Recollections and it would be good practice projecting my voice and talking slower so people can understand me"

"I want snack for the classroom for our brain will work better and we wont have to be snappy for the whole day. You could send papers home asking the parents. And then we'll hide the snack behind the bushes."

"Something that went well this week is gg (girls group). Our mentor is awesome! And I love the way she writes her name. D'janapha."

"One suggestion I have for the class is that we just use your suggestion of a formula for deciding what the class name will be. Because this process is taking way too long! Another suggestion I have for the class is, if its possible, to change our book-buddy time. It is a hard time of the day to go for

Jenny and her kids. It has been an ok week for me."

~*Nakia Keizer, June Myers  
& Katy Laguzza*

### Room 215

As a school assignment, I shadowed Keyshawn for part of the school day this week. I went with him to fifth grade math because I am usually working with sixth graders. The students were all working on a "Check-In" reviewing volume in cubes. Keyshawn was building a rectangular solid based upon the diameters he was given (3x4x5). It was really interesting to find the math so hands-on and engaging for him. I asked him what he was working toward and he explained that he was using the length, width, and height to estimate the area of cubes that were twice as big, or half as large. In this conversation he stated, "I enjoy math." I asked him why and he responded, "It's fun and there is free time the last ten minutes on Fridays." Although we never made it to the free time because we were so engrossed in the activity, Keyshawn ended the math period with great work. I ended the lesson with a greater insight into activities and strategies that work best for each student that can make math both enjoyable and fun as it was for Keyshawn.

~*Katie Shepardon*

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

Every Wednesday afternoon, two students from Harvard

University teach a digital literacy class to our 7th graders. We started with Scratch, a language that MIT developed to introduce people to programming concepts like code execution, loops, and precision. When we later began to introduce logic and conditionals, the kids recognized connections to math class where we phrase rules for integer operations in "if, then" format.

Next, we learned how to use a programming language called Processing.js. The first week, we reviewed a coordinate grid to understand how commands drew objects on a field. Again, this provided a strong connection to our daily math class. We use number lines for integer work and coordinate graphs for scaling problems. The kids were delighted the following week when they saw a program that used the skills they had learned (making rectangles and ellipses) to create an image of the cartoon character SpongeBob Square Pants. In addition to the coordinate grid, use of variables in programming to alter a set of commands provided another connection to math class.

In the weeks ahead, we'll continue working with Processing.js to develop more sophisticated, useful, and fun programs. Our goal is to learn how to make basic programs, animations, games, and websites.

~*Ann Ruggiero*

### Room 214

In room 214, we are busy learning about astronomy and what scientists believe about the

birth of the Earth and the moon. We have learned about night and day, the seasons, and phases of the moon. Students have been wondering about where everything on our planet has come from—water, air, plants, animals, and humans—and then listening to scientists explain what they believe and why. We are learning how a scientist uses claim, evidence, and reasoning to build arguments that will convince others that their theories are true. We are also learning that theories can be challenged and changed with new evidence and reasonable explanations.

This week, our focus is on rocks: learning the three types, and their positions in the rock cycle. Then we will learn about the appearance of life on Earth, and the creation of soil. Our trip to the Farm School in a week will be a perfect addition to our studies—the most important asset of a farm is its great soil!

~*Teresa Strong*

Every few weeks you'll see a new book exhibit in the library. The school year began with a display of brand new books for every age level and interest, to inspire our children to read something different. We had books about soccer, enchanted princesses, alligators, babies, Harriet Tubman and other exciting topics.

In October, I showed books about music in honor of the expansion of Mission Hill's music program. You could see books about musical instruments, different kinds of music, famous

musicians and composers.

Right now you can enjoy books about our “Life Science” theme. You will find a book about genetics as well as rain forests or bats and bugs.

Recently, I discovered a gap in our collection. Can anybody donate a book about fish in general or fish other than sharks? Mission Hill will be very grateful.

Please use your school library. I would love to help you! If you have a question or suggestion for the library please email me: [mhalbertsma@missionhillschool.org](mailto:mhalbertsma@missionhillschool.org).

~*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.

### Saturday Tutoring

826 offers tutoring most Saturdays from 1-3pm geared specifically to middle and high-school students ages 12-18+. Students can bring homework in any subject, as well as test preparation materials and their own original writing. Registration is required, and an application is available for download online. Once their application is submitted,

students can reserve a space for the following Saturday by calling 617.442.5400. See Courtney if you have questions.

### Brrr!

As winter approaches, we want to make sure all students have clothes to keep them warm. If your child needs any winter gear (coats, hats, gloves etc) please let Courtney know. She can also get extra seasonal clothing for children ages 0-12 on an as needed basis. Check in with her if that is something that will help your family.

### Ropa para tiempo frío

Al acercarse el invierno, queremos asegurar que todos los estudiantes tienen la ropa para mantenerlos calientes. Si su hijo necesita cualquier equipo de invierno (abrigos, sombreros, guantes, etc) Por favor hable con Courtney . Ella también puede conseguir ropa de temporada supletoria para niños de 0 a 12 según sea necesario. Hable con ella si eso puede ayudar a su familia.

### Help With Holiday Meals

During the following months many families come together to share meals and gifts and Courtney can assist any family needing support around getting food on their table or gifts for children. Please do not hesitate to contact Courtney by email [courtney.bruno@bc.edu](mailto:courtney.bruno@bc.edu), calling the school 617.635.6384 or leaving a note in her box. If you have any questions, ask Courtney or let your child's

classroom teacher know.

### Ayuda con Comidas de Vacaciones

Durante los meses siguientes muchas familias se juntan para compartir las comidas y los regalos y Courtney puede ayudar a cualquier familia que necesite apoyo con obtener alimento o regalos para los niños. Por favor, no demore en comunicarse con Courtney. Puede encontrar a Courtney en la escuela o por su correo electrónico al [courtney.bruno@bc.edu](mailto:courtney.bruno@bc.edu) o dejar un mensaje por teléfono en la escuela 617.635.6384 o una nota en su cajón. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta busque a Courtney o déjele saber a la maestra de su hijo o hija.

### An Omitted Appreciation

Many thanks to Diane Abrahms for her contribution of time and great ideas as part of the MHS school yard planning committee last year. I failed to recognize her in an earlier acknowledgement of community efforts to create such a great space.

My apologies,

*Ayla*

### Mission Hill School

*A Boston Public Pilot School*

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