

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

When We Are Not Looking

Reprinted from 2012

Dear Families, Students, Staff, and Friends,

Pinching a schoolmate, eating someone else's lunchtime goodie, making an unkind face or gesture, melting crayons on the radiator...I could add more to this list of things that kids have done at school while adults are not looking. As much as we strive to see and hear everything, some children are masters at being crafty with naughtiness. That's been true forever. Mission Hill School children are no exception. This letter to you is not about what the adults are doing when these things happen. It's about the kids. Who are they when adults (teachers, parents, caregivers) are not looking? This question is about character and conscience. When no adult is watching would your child pinch a classmate for revenge? Eat someone else's snack? Make fun of another child? Leave a mess behind? If yes, or if you're unsure of the answer, the next question is: what do you and/or we do to redirect him or her?

REMINDERS

December

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.
Fri. 12/20, 3:30: Holiday Break
begins

With the swaying moral compass of each generation and infinite access to images that push the limits of humanity and good decision making, it's important that we all stop and think about who our children are growing up to be inside. It all starts with getting to know who they are.

In my home our dinner table conversation is when we unpack what my child is thinking about and the decisions she made during the day. It's our family time to help mold her developing character so she makes good decisions when we (her parents) are not around. When do you have conversations with your child about right and wrong? About treating others the way he or she would like to be treated? This letter can't replace face to face dialogue, but we want you (parents and guardians) to know what we are doing at school

regarding character development.

Our effort spans from the physical environment to talking things through with children each day. Classrooms have round tables and meeting spaces for student dialogue so children have opportunities to talk things out and approach challenges together. A flag hangs in our corridor that says "Be kind and work hard". It's a daily reminder that to be kind is an action. Acts of Kindness are posted on the wall under the flag. Our Habits of Mind (connections, conjecture, evidence, relevance and viewpoint) are posted in each classroom. When students use the Habits independently, they can avoid getting into all sorts of trouble or come to resolution after something has occurred. An environment for use of imagination and creativity is created by staff. Books, games, art and craft materials, storytelling and a wide range of puzzles keep minds occupied in healthy ways. Remember, Mission Hill has a toy lending library. All items in the toy lending library spark creativity and none require a plug or Internet access.

~Ayla Gavins

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Room 108

For my takeover week, we read the book *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed* and did several activities to recreate/retell the story. We had sung another version of the monkey song, *Three Little Monkeys Swinging in a Tree* and the children really enjoy that song, so I thought I would build on the children's interest and introduce the version of the monkeys jumping on the bed. We read the book and sang the song during Morning Gathering. On different days we used hand puppets, felt board pieces and laminated pieces of the monkey characters to retell the story. We also acted out the story and the children really enjoyed that activity! This is also a great song to practice numbers and counting. I had so much fun during my takeover week and I would like to thank the parents, and especially GERALYN, DONNA, and ANGEL for being very supportive!

~Kate Tejada, Wheelock College

Kindergarten

Room 106

No news this week

Room 107

It was great to see all our families come out for last week's Fall Breakfast. In order to get ready, our students practiced songs and poems to perform and put finishing touches on pieces of work. One of the pieces we

worked on is a felt scene comprised of butterflies, caterpillars, grass, clouds, an apple tree with apples, an egg and a chrysalis. We made up the following stories about the scenery to share with our community.

"The egg opened and the caterpillar got in the chrysalis and the light and the butterfly came out of the chrysalis."

"The butterfly laid the egg on the leaf. The caterpillar came out and ate milkweed and it turned into a chrysalis. When it came out of the chrysalis it dried its wings and then it flew up."

"The egg cracked and the caterpillar came out. Then the chrysalis came out into the butterfly. It just flew up!" "Once there was a little caterpillar and his name was Fred. Then he turned into a chrysalis and he had beautiful wings ... and then an egg."

"Once upon a time there was a little caterpillar. It was a tiny circle egg. Then it popped open. Then there was a chrysalis on the thingy and it turned into a butterfly. It flapped its wings and then it did it all over again. It crawled up the tree and ate 1, 2, 3...13... all of the apples! He (the butterfly) was flying down and he said, "Ahhhh!"

"Once there was a caterpillar that went with his friends to pick an apple and then he went back home. The butterfly was his friend. They went in the chrysalis and there was music in there. They had a party together."

Stop by and answer, "What would your story be?"

~Jada Brown
& JoAnn Hawksworth

Room 109

Hello Mission Hill Families! For those of you who don't already know, Jenny has officially started her maternity leave and will be out for the next few months. I am very excited to begin teaching in room 109, and to become a part of the Mission Hill Community. I have spent the past two years working at the Russell J. Call Children's Center at Northeastern University, and am eager to bring my knowledge and experience into room 109. I will be wrapping up the Life Science unit by discussing recycling and composting with the children. I think learning how to take care of the earth is extremely important, and cannot be taught too early. Even though the Nature theme is coming to an end, these topics will continue to play a large part in my classroom.

I have been warmly welcomed into the Mission Hill School, and am looking forward to my time here.

~Liz Borson

Grades One & Two

Room 204

As students walked in, the "oohs" and "aahs" began. Juan, Kristina and I had begun to hang our rainforest around the room. Adler's large harpy eagle loomed over the middle of us all. "Oh! THIS is a rainforest!" As the final days of our rainforest began to wind down, I started to think about all we hadn't done. All the parts of the curriculum we didn't

"



get to”.

As I asked them final questions about what they learned about the rainforest, those concerns began to fade away. One Magic Learner after the other rattled off fact after fact that they remembered. I was surprised at how many! Some of which weren't in my curriculum at all. As families came into our “rainforest” for the Nature Studies Family Breakfast, they began to emit the same “oohs” and “aahs” the children had. From that point on, there were no more worries about what they hadn't gotten, but joy at all they had accomplished.

~Jenerra Williams

Room 205

Last weekend, I had the opportunity to participate in the Descriptive Review Conference here at Mission Hill. It was my first time experiencing the descriptive review process first hand, and I learned so much about this type of thinking and reviewing. I spent some time

looking closely at a classroom environment and later in the day got to look through one student's entire archive of work. Not only



was I inspired to change things about my own practice or space; I was also able to offer feedback to presenters. Working in small groups we were able to share observations, wonderings, suggestions, and impressions. I was amazed at how our conversations spun more deeply

the longer we talked and how I was able to consider many different perspectives listening to others speak. I am thankful to be a part of a community that takes the time to look so closely and deeply at one particular topic, artifact, or space for a period of time. It also serves as a lesson to us as teachers about how meaningful learning happens when we dig deep below the surface to truly understand something and study one topic for a longer period of time.

~Ashleigh L'Heureux

Room 217

How do we show what we know? Mission Hill is committed to having children show what they know by immersing them in student-directed ongoing projects.

While I am confident that my students could answer fact-based questions about ants in a multiple-choice test, this would most definitely not show all that my students have learned—both academically and socially. This test would not show how they sifted through research materials

to prove that an ant colony has a queen's chamber. The test would not show how students demonstrated viewpoint by making ant costumes and producing a play about ants to show their understanding of threats ants face. The test would not show how students carefully navigated the tensions between creating a realistic ant colony and an imaginative one. They created a storage rooms in the ant colony where ants gather and store food and a room where ants go to release their frustrations safely. Be sure to stop by our room to read our *All About Our Ant Colony* book to learn more about what we built and learned!

~Emma Fialka-Feldman

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

This past week the 4th graders completed an eight-week session with Urban Improv. Urban Improv is an interactive program for young people that uses improvisational theater workshops to teach violence prevention, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Today this means cyber bullying. Here is what children shared about what they liked best throughout this amazing experience with the Urban Improv staff:

Chantal: "I liked acting because you get to pretend!"

AJ: "I liked everything!"

Zachary: "I loved the skits and songs!"

Zack: "Acting out the skits!"

CJ: "I liked the skits and

plays"

Axel: "It was fun and I like when they sang for us!"

Bryan: "I liked doing the scenes and acting!"

Tandin: "I liked watching the acting and also acting myself! It was fun to be in!"

Daniel M: "I like the acting!"

Anais: "It's fun and funny!"

Luisairy: "I liked that they acted for us and that we could do plays too!"

Giselle: "I like the singing and acting! I love how they act!"

Mr. Robert: "I loved seeing how our children used this time to act and learn the idea of empathy. It is important for children to learn how it feels to be in someone else's shoes during positive and negative experiences of life."

We look forward to next year!

~Robert Baez

Room 216

Last week Andrew from the Boston Nature Center came in and taught our class about photosynthesis and the structure of a plant. He came in with a costume and asked for a volunteer to dress up in it. A student volunteered, but was a bit shy and needed encouragement from the class. The whole class burst into applause and chanted for the student to try his very best. The student heard the positive words and began to get dressed up as a plant. First, we learned about the plant's parts: roots, stem, leaves, and petals. Then Andrew explained the function of each part. Next, he described how plants get their energy from the sun. The energy turns into sugar

and is used by the plant. Finally, we sang a song that Andrew created entitled "The Tree Song", to help us remember what we had learned.

Thank you to all the families who came to see Clever Cats' theme work last Wednesday. The students' work was wonderful and we hope to continue the thematic work the next few weeks. On December 12, 13, 19 and 20, we will have volunteers are from 826 Boston with us to help us with our writing. We hope to have a final artifact soon!

~Melanie Centeno, Selina Ruiz
Elsa Batista & Josh Kraus

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

What does it mean for water to be clean? The Smart and Spiffy Warriors have been thinking a lot about water lately. We've analyzed water samples, identified pollutants, investigated pH, and are currently working to invent our own definition of clean water.

Full of questions, ideas, and wearing protective gloves, we set off to the Arboretum last week to test the water quality in one of the small ponds. The pond was shallow, murky, and frozen. Nakia had to break the ice with a large rock so we could collect our water samples. We predicted that the pond water would be dirty. And we were right! Or...were we?

"This water is nasty! Look at how much mud there is." "How is the pH of this water a 7? I thought that meant the water is

healthy!" "But pH just measures one part of the water, it doesn't mean the whole thing is healthy."

Does clean water always look clean? Does dirty water always look dirty? Ask someone from room 210 and find out!

~Nakia Keizer, June Myers
& Katie Laguzza

Room 215

The White Lions just began a new unit on poetry. Every morning after class meeting students work with their table teams to complete a poetry game or challenge. We launched our unit with a rhyme challenge. Students were given a word and had to work together to come up with as many words that rhymed with the original word. When students exhausted words they already knew they were referred to a rhyme dictionary. Another challenge we did involved alliteration. Students timed each other reading alliteration poems (tongue twisters). It was so much fun to hear how quickly students could read these poems and you could feel the enthusiasm and excitement in the room. As a follow up activity students wrote their own alliteration poems and shared them with the class.

I love teaching poetry because it is a genre that is easy for all students to access, and have fun with.

~Sarah DeCruz

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

Last week at Friday Share, five 7th graders delivered prepared speeches to the student body, asking for a vote to join the Mission Hill School Governing Board. At MH, students are one of the constituencies, along with families, staff, and community, that represent us.

Alexa said, "Hi, my name's Alexa Lopez and I'm running for the Governing Board. I've been going to the Mission Hill School since kindergarten, so I've been at this school for a while. If you elect me for the Governing Board, I will listen to all of your ideas, questions, and concerns. Since I have been here for a long time, I know all of the students and teachers. So elect me for Governing Board and I will speak for all of us."

Aujanae said, "My name is Aujanae. I've been at Mission Hill for two years. I wanted to join Governing Board so that I can get people's voice to be heard. I know that a lot of people want to make changes happen to this school. I can help make those changes by making the right decisions and having your voice to be heard. I am a great student and I'm running for Governing Board and I can help you all by making these things happen."

Please welcome 7th graders Alexa Lopez, Elianna Pena, and Aujanae Veazy, who join 8th graders Yimara Aponte, Kaya Fields, and Jesse Zackular, on the Mission Hill School Governing Board.

~Ann Ruggiero

Room 214

With much sadness I write my last newsletter entry. I am moving on and will miss all of you. I will cherish my time at the Mission Hill School: all the caring children, the nurturing adults, and, of course, the singing! In science, we finished our time together reflecting on what we learned together this fall and wondering about the new questions we now have. To celebrate, we made and ate bread and yogurt made by microorganisms much like those that ruled our planet for three billion years.

In Theme and Literacy, we finished up our Wonder projects and have launched into our "This I Believe" projects with the expert help of Chris Barnes.

I may be leaving, but my students will continue on with their learning. I believe they will continue to grow and change into the wonderful adults I know they will become.

Farewell, Mission Hill School!

~Teresa Strong

Hot Topics

Observing School Hours

Parents, please don't come to pick up your child/ren before 3:30 unless you have made previous arrangements with the school. Many thanks!

Observación de las Horas Escolares

Padres, por favor no vienen a recoger a su hijo/s antes de las 3:30 a menos que haya hecho arreglos previos con la escuela. ¡Muchas gracias!

From the library

The Mission Hill book fair is back!

“Do you have some books I can keep, Marietje?” a student asked a few weeks ago.

“All the books in my library, we share with everybody at the Mission Hill School, so you need to bring them back. The book fair will be here soon. Then you can buy some books you can keep,” I responded.

Every child longs to have books they can write their name in, and read over and over again. Do you remember the books you read when you were young? Some of those books may have become very important to you. I had a little book shelf in my room with my favorite books. I could read them any time I wanted. Even when I got older, I still sometimes read the books I loved in kindergarten. Your child can have that opportunity by getting some books from the book fair.

You may also want to buy gifts for family and friends. Book Fair by Book Ends provides quality children's literature at reasonable prices.

See you at the fair!

~Marietje Halbertsma

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.

Have you checked out Courtney's Corner online yet?

There are great resources available for families, and a frequently updated calendar of events that are happening around the city. Go to the Mission Hill website and click on the Family Resources tab to find out about programs and events for your family.

¿Ha revisado la esquina de Courtney en línea todavía?

Hay grandes recursos disponibles para las familias, y un calendario actualizado con frecuencia de los eventos que están sucediendo alrededor de la ciudad. Ir a la página web de Mission Hill y haga clic en la ficha Recursos para la familia para averiguar acerca de los programas y eventos para su familia.

Mission Hill School

A Boston Public Pilot School

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