

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

So Much More Than a Curriculum

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

This winter our students will be learning about the Taíno, indigenous people of the Caribbean. The Taíno culture developed a very long time ago and in a place that is hundreds of miles away from Boston. In addition to that, many people have never heard of the Taíno. So how does a school engage students in learning about something from long ago and far away?

It begins with a group of educators that exhibit the best characteristics of learners. Our staff decided to focus on the study of the Taíno because many of our students had ancestral ties to this group of people, yet there was little we knew about them. We developed questions about the Taíno and looked for answers. We searched for resources and made a discovery; the story of the Taíno people was difficult to find.

That discovery raised more questions and made us hungry for more answers. Who were/are these people? Where is their story? Why are resources with information about them so hard to find? What stories are told and who is telling them? Why?

Thanks to a grant from the Fund for Teachers, four of our staff members (Joel, Jeanne, Jada and Jenerra) traveled to Puerto Rico last summer to find answers to some of these questions. They walked the land of the Taíno, interviewed people, saw the evidence of their language, viewed their art, and witnessed a celebration of the Taíno. They became connected to the beauty of this people. Fortunately for us, they documented their journey in a collection of books that are now in the school.

Their enthusiasm about what they learned/experienced and thirst for more information was infectious among us all. The stories and pictures they shared sparked our creativity and enthusiasm for

sharing with students and our greater school community. We shared ideas with each other about how students will learn about the Taíno in each classroom, in the hallways, library and other school-wide places.

Over the next few months students will learn facts about the daily life of the Taíno, their geography, and they will also explore bigger ideas using the Mission Hill Habits of Mind. The connections between life then and now, life there and here, examinations of what happened and what could have happened will be part of this curriculum. Students will examine evidence for things that are true, false or unknown.

We all look forward to thinking deeply with your children and celebrating the beauty of people. Mark your calendar for March 28, our next school-wide family breakfast date, to see the work and learning of our students about the Taíno.

~Ayla Gavins

REMINDERS

Thu. 1/16: Spelling Bee

Thu. 1/16, 5:45 - 7:00: Family Council mtg: ***Inclusion***

Mon. 1/20: No School, MLK Day

Thu. 1/23, 6:00 - 7:00: Outside the Lines mtg.

Fri. 1/24: Pajama Day

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Room 108

Choosing a class name is a tradition at Mission Hill School. Each year, every class takes time to find just the right name. For example, our book buddies are Josh's third and fourth graders. They are called the "Clever Cats". Last year, our class name was "The Rocks". This year, we waited until this last week before December break to choose our class name. Our first brainstorm list had 5 possibilities: The Rainbows, The Snails, The Turtles, The Helping Hands, and The Fish. We quickly narrowed it down to four possibilities (because only one person wanted to be The Rainbows). I made a ballot with for the top four choices, and each child and teacher got to vote. We proudly announce our class name: The Helping Hands.

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin
& Donna Winder

Kindergarten

Room 106

This past week I have been working on reports. I have chosen to write narratives for this round of reports. The narrative reports are my favorite. They are a description of the child I am writing about. For my narratives I use a combination of observations, student's work, assessments, and my knowledge of the child. These reports are an opportunity for me to share how I see the children as a whole child.

I laugh so hard as I recall different occasions and questions the children ask. I sometimes I tear up at the amount of growth I have seen in children.

I reflect on how children become part of our community. I share about the struggles and triumphs that we go through together. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoy writing them. I also invite you to write me back comments on the narratives. I hope you all enjoy the break and I look forward to seeing you again in 2014.

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

Room 107

December is a natural time for us to reflect on our few months together. Here is a snippet of what we reflected on:

"I like drawing houses, hearts and my brother. My favorite song is Down by the Bay."

"Playing with Mobilos is easy but making a tower is hard."

"Reading makes me feel dizzy. I like to draw about school, houses, Disney World, Chuck-E-Cheese and Disney XD. My Favorite song is Afunga Alafea.

"My favorite things to do at school are playing, drawing, eating and drinking. Going to sleep for rest time is easy for me."

"My favorite thing to do at school is giving my uncle a hug. I love him."

"I like drawing about space, hurricanes and rainbows."

"I like to read with my friends. I like to write my name all the time. I like to draw my parents because I love them."

"Recess is my favorite...the

monkey bars are hard."

"I love shapes and counting numbers to 100. I love Legos and building rockets."

"Math is nice. I like board games."

"My favorite thing to do at school is dance. Playing with trains is easy for me but building with Kaplas is hard."

"My favorite book is the ABC (Alphabet book)."

"I like the pumpkin."

"I like playing Bingo."

"Reading feels funny because it feels strange. My favorite song is Waving Flag."

"I like stacking blocks high."

"Trains make me happy."

"I like to read. I don't know how to write yet. My favorite book is about Bumble-Bee."

"I am a good friend. I share my things."

Have a great winter break and see you in the New Year.

~Jada Brown
& JoAnn Hawksworth

Room 109

I can't believe it's winter vacation already! Time has flown by for the Original Stars. This past week, we finished the final observations on our compost jars. Some of the items have completely deteriorated and turned into soil! This week, we are learning about recycling and reusing. Each child will be creating something out of a used box or container. I can't wait to see what they come up with! We will also be conducting a fruit dissection. The students will be cutting up some unique kinds of

fruit, and discussing the similarities and differences of what we find inside. I hope everyone has a great break, and we are looking forward to starting our unit on the Taíno when we return!

~Liz Borson

Grades One & Two

Room 204

Welcome back and Happy New Year! I hope your break was all that you wanted and needed it to be. We began our week back by sharing about our time off, reflecting on our work from the Fall and thinking about our new theme – The Taíno!

Now is also a good time for a few reminders:

- Make sure your Magic Learner comes to school dressed appropriately for the weather outside. Sending in an extra change of clothes and socks will be helpful, as we will go outside even during snow.
- Check the snack calendar to see when your week is for sending in snack.
- Remember that homework folders will come home every Friday and be due the next Friday.

We're glad you're back and excited about the work ahead of us this semester!

~Jenerra Williams

Room 205

Last week you heard some highlights from students' experiences with our tree study. This week the rest of the students share out about what they learned or remember about trees.

Shane: "They have roots and suck up water."

Zuhri: "In order for trees to grow they need carbon dioxide."

Euan: "I liked making the classroom tree. I cut out the trunk."

Amos: "When the nutrients from the soil mix with the water it makes a special kind of food for the tree."

Gianna: "The roots suck up water to help it grow."

Kaylon: "Making paper was fun. You get to spin it and make any shape you want."

Anand: "The leaves give trees food."

Skye: "I liked making the classroom tree because a lot of people helped with it."

I am so excited to start our new theme when we get back from break and watch as the students continue to learn by finding evidence and making connections.

~Ashleigh L'Heureux

Room 217

"It's outside time! Not recess, Emma!" I often hear students quickly correct me as they line up for time outside in the morning. As consistently as we can, I take children outside in the morning for at least 10 minutes. While children are moving throughout the morning in the classroom, I know children need many opportunities to move, play, interact with their peers, and spend time outdoors. Now that snow is falling, students are still eager to go outside. Winter provides us with a beautiful opportunity to talk and learn about science – why snow melts, how the ice forms on the slides,

and what happens to some animals when it is cold. We can develop shared experiences of building in the snow to write about in our journals. **In order for our class to go outside, children need to be prepared for the weather with hats, gloves, boots, snow pants, and jackets.** Please make sure your child comes to school with all the necessary belongings so we can continue to enjoy outside time (not recess!) each morning.

~Emm Fialka-Feldman

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

As we jump into 2014, hopefully all have had a well rested, and much needed vacation. Welcome Back! This past week we have gradually slide back into our daily routines and have begun our brainstorming on our new school wide theme.

This trimester we will study the Taino culture. The Taino culture originated in the Caribbean and the people apart of this culture are now known as Puerto Ricans in present time. Students will participate in various hands on activities and conduct research to study the various aspects of this topic. The Role Model Hawks are creating a list of interests we have as a group regarding this topic. We hope to explore with their music, food, celebration traditions/rituals, clothing, and housing.

Be on the look out as we report our findings in a future newsletter column.

~Robert Baez

Room 216

Dear Family Members,

The New Year will begin with learning about the Taíno. Our goal will be to incorporate lots of creations using art. We also plan to create artifacts and explore the contributions of the Taíno and how it relates to our society. I'm sure the students will have lots of fun creating, designing, and applying concepts.

One new idea I'd like to try out is incorporating more of the students' ideas around building our curriculum. I believe the students will be more invested in their work and think they will come up with many intriguing ideas. Many students are great at voicing their opinions and I'm hopeful their wonderings lead to inquiry around the Taíno. I'm looking forward to figuring out how we will assess our progress and what projects will show our thinking about the Taíno. I'm always open to ideas from others, so please feel free to stop by if you have any ideas.

Once again, thanks for your support and we look forward to starting the New Year off with exciting, fun, but rigorous work!

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

Grades Five & Six**Room 210**

This year the student report cards were completed on Google Drive. They were "shared" with students, allowing them to comment, but not edit. We asked

them to write comments about what was written about them. Some students wrote general comments. Many highlighted specific sections and responded to what was said. Here are a few excerpts.

"It's true I am shy and all and in my old school I didn't read or nothing. The kids there are really different from this school. This school has changed me a lot. I've been doing things I never done."

"Wednesday is my favorite day because we have wellness. I really like it because you get to do something fun for a hour."

"This is pretty true and I feel like I can get better at this and I will turn this 3 into a 4."

"I love music, so I feel really happy that we have music."

"1 i don't have time to do my homework. 2 for me means "little kid. 3, I think this 2, has to be a 3."

"Life science water it was fun and cool because we was testing the water and I hope we can do it again because I am good at it."

"This is the best year because I got better and I like it because I'm learning new things and just like Nakia say, keep dribbling and Nakia I'm so happy that you did not give up on me."

"I don't prefer online stuff so that is a lie and you dont know what I think. I wouldn't read a celebrity book or something like that. I just don't like reading, its boring."

"Vocabulary is hard for me and because I don't know how to do it and it was for me last year, and now is still hard for me."

"This was a misunderstanding

because even though sometimes I do rush, it is not because I try to keep up with my friends, it is because I usually want to do something else, like when I start a project and I didn't get to finish and the next day whoever is teaching says that I have to do a packet or something before I get to finish my project. I know I should work on slowing down my work but I do not do this to try to finish faster than my friends."

"Im going to do better this year in theme and I'm going to focus well. I will focus in theme this year and I need to set my goals and expectations because I have a clean slate and I need to work really hard."

"That was only once, I don't do that a lot."

"The people in this school are really cool because in the old school it would be hard to make friends cuz they're all mean and picky and in this school they're not picky—they accept anyone."

"Thanks for noticing....I really appreciate that."

"I like to go to the board sometimes because I learn from the mistakes I do and I know next time I know what I did wrong with my problem."

"Not true."

"If I write for long periods of time, it gets to a point where I don't care anymore, and I just want it to end, like what happened there."

"Love, not favors, LOVES."

"By what u said I was surprised that I got a 3."

"Yea I think you were 100% right on this one and I'm really proud of my self for making a

big improvement since last year, last year i didn't do too good.”

“YES I'm so glad you noticed I really love to write but I prefer to just do it with out [a] prompt, let it flow as you would say :).”

~Nakia Keizer, June Myers
& Katy Laguzza

Room 215

The White Lions have been studying poetry and practicing writing different poetic devices. Each student compiled a beautiful poetry anthology. Before students published their anthologies we looked at different poetry books and identified characteristics. That helped students get an idea of what poetry books look like and what theirs could look like. They worked with Jeanne in Art class to design a cover for their work. Each anthology had alliteration poems, shape poems, magnet poems line lifted poems, and free verse poems. Before break we hosted Robert's class for a poetry workshop! My students shared their favorite poems they wrote and then taught another student how to create his or her own poem. We ended the workshop with students from the 3rd and 4th grade sharing their new poems with the entire group. It was great to see the 5th and 6th graders sharing a new skill and being helpful and encouraging to younger students.

~Sarah DeCruz

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

I'm loving math classes these days. Proportional reasoning with 7th grade, and graphs and functions with 8th grade – great stuff! These topics have that perfect combination of meaty math and meaningful applications. “This is POWER MATH,” I told the 7th graders, who appeared both wide-eyed and skeptical. But then we got to work.

The task seemed straightforward. Here are four quantitative comparisons based on survey data. Talk with your tablemates and figure out the following: What do you know from each form of comparison? What information is missing from each comparison? Is each comparison accurate and effective?

One statement read, “In a survey, three more students said they would buy Jordans.” Brian reacted strongly to this. “But the only thing we know is the difference!” Jonathan felt the statement, “In a survey, 55.5% of students said they would buy Jordans,” was both accurate and effective. He showed that a ratio of 15 to 12 could also be expressed as 55.5%, and he felt this larger number would be more convincing to shoppers.

We were beginning to understand how advertising companies craft ads that will convince consumers to buy a particular product. The type of comparison (ratio, fraction, difference, or percent) mattered

in our gut response to the numbers. We are learning to choose and use quantitative comparisons to solve problems and make decisions. That's POWER!

~Ann Ruggiero

Room 214

No news this week

Hot Topics

Wear Your Mittens!

There are many children arriving at school without mittens or gloves. In this frigid weather, protecting exposed skin is important! Even on warmer days, we go outside to play every day we can. Please make sure your children wear warm hats and mittens every day. If you need mittens, please contact Courtney Bruno.

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.

MHS Students Perform in Community Concert

Our students that sing on Wednesdays after school with Claudia will be in the following performance:

Vocal Ensemble Performance

Date: January 11, 2014 (Saturday)

Place: Community Music Center of Boston (34 Warren Avenue Boston, MA 02116)

Performance time: 2pm

The Snow Will Be Back!

Sample some of the top sledding choices in the Boston area. And hold on tight!

Flagstaff Hill on Boston Common (near the baseball diamond)

The Bowl in Boston next to Jamaica Pond

Larz Anderson Park in Brookline which offers both huge and more modest hills and parking.

Weld Hill at Arnold Arboretum, corner of Walter and South streets in Roslindale with parking on South street and various side streets.

Cory Hill Park in Brookline

Dorchester Park off Adams Street in Dorchester



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