

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

Adult Passion and Kid Play

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

What would you set out to do if you knew you wouldn't fail? What new venture would you attempt? That question was asked of me and about 50 other people as we sat together to explore our passions in life. Of course there was a range of responses to that question, but most were connected to becoming a performer of some kind-- singer, dancer, piano player, puppeteer. After some discussion another question was asked. When you were between the ages of 9 and 12 what did you play or choose to do most? As people shared answers to this question I realized something. The passion we have for things as adults was present when we were children. The

things we long to do now were carried out through our play when we were children.

During the ages of 9 to 12 I spent hours and hours drawing. I would sit on my front porch, soaking up the sun and greenery around me. I loved to watch the birds and insects. I was happiest outside with paper, pencil and eraser. I still long to draw, create art and be outside.

How 'bout you? What did you spend hours doing as a child? Do you still long to do that? Is it part of your life now? What is preventing you from doing that something?

What do your children spend their time playing? Will he or she become a talk show host? Run a supermarket? Become an EMT? Play jazz around town? Become a designer? Or an architect?

One thing I've come to realize is that after all the formal schooling is done we recognize that we are still who we were when we were 9, 10, 11 or 12 years old.

Pay attention, parents and guardians. Let your child play.

It helps her/him clarify passions. And remember that a traditional course of schooling isn't always what leads to a successful life. Consider supporting your child in whatever he or she aims to do. In the end she may come back to something she's been wanting anyway, or she may wish that she could.

~Ayla Gavins

REMINDERS

MARCH

3/3-3/7: Letter Writing Week

Thu. 3/6, 5:00 - Governance Board Meeting

Thu. 3/13, 5:45 - Family Council Meeting

Mon. 3/17, No School - Evacuation Day

Thu. 3/20, 6:00: Outside the Lines Meeting

Mon. - Wed., 3/24-26: Grades 5&6 to Farm School

Thu. 3/27, 9:15: Curriculum Breakfast

From the Classrooms

3 and 4 year-olds

Hello Mission Hill School! For those of you who don't already know me, my name is Billie MacDonald and I am spending two days a week in GERALYN'S classroom for my Early Childhood Education practicum. I'm a senior at Simmons College, and I have been accepted to the Masters of Arts in Teaching program next year, also at Simmons. I attended Mission Hill at its previous location, beginning first grade there, the first year it was open in 1997, and continued there through sixth grade. I am really enjoying this experience, and am so glad that I am able to do this placement at such an inclusive school.

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin
& Donna Winder

Kindergarten

Room 106

Outlast Blocks Fundraiser: It's a Wrap!

Great News! With your help, our Outlast Blocks fundraiser is complete. The innovative outdoor building kit will allow our learners to explore a whole new scale of imaginative and collaborative play (these are very big blocks)! Building connections—physical ones among the construction components, intellectual ones between vision, planning, and execution, conceptual ones between inside and outside

learning spaces, and social ones among collaborators—this exciting resource will find its home in the south lot of the schoolyard. As spring arrives, look out also for the hanging Woolly Garden, funded in an earlier campaign last year. It will be set up in the Zen Garden near the school playground. Thank you for your enthusiasm and support in making these efforts a success!

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea
& Naama Goldstein

Room 107

As we continue in our study of the Taíno, 107 has embarked upon the endeavor of creating a small mountain range. We have spent whole mornings and afternoons painting large pieces of paper and gluing on greenery to represent the trees that would encompass the mountains. Jo-Ann and I wanted to make sure that our students understood that oftentimes when people think of mountains, they think of the far away perspective where one can see the peaks and valleys. However, when walking through the mountains the perspective would be likely limited to the surrounding trees. We spoke briefly about what the Taínos might do in the mountains and the likelihood of the existence of caves.

Later, we extended our conversation from the mountains to the sky, an inescapable part of the landscape. In the Taíno culture, as with many cultures, the night sky was important. In fact, we learned that the constellation we know as Orion the Hunter helped Taínos

gauge their seasons. According to the book *Talking Taíno*, the constellation's position was in the sky determined what the Taíno would do with their crops. When our teacher group visited Puerto Rico last year, these two ideas came to life. Not only were we able to see the sacred Cemi (a deity or ancestral spirit, and a sculptural object that houses the spirit, among the Taíno) in the mountainside, we were told that the ball courts (where many important events occurred) were carefully built to align with the changing seasons, such as the summer and winter solstices.

~Jada Brown
& JoAnn Hawksworth

Room 109

Hello Mission Hill Families!

The Original Stars are continuing to learn more and more about the Taíno culture. Now that we know about where they came from, we are beginning to talk about who they are. The children are posing questions about what life was like for the Taíno when they inhabited the Caribbean Islands. They are wondering what kinds of food they ate, houses they lived in, and even what they did for fun! This week we are focusing on the foods the Taíno used to eat, particularly corn and corn meal. We will be using cornstarch (corn was a crop the Taíno people grew and ate) to make a gooey project for our sensory table. Be sure to ask them all about it!

Hope everyone had a great vacation and welcome back!

~Liz Borson

Grades One & Two

Room 204

Because the weather refused to cooperate and all but two of us were unable to make it to the North Dakota Study Group educational conference, last week, we missed an opportunity to preview a rough cut of the MHS documentary *Good Morning Mission Hill, The Freedom to Teach*. Lucky for us, filmmakers Tom and Amy Valens were in Boston during the vacation and several of us were able to see what they have thus far.

It was amazing to see the footage they collected three years ago, which included retreats and professional development meetings, learning in classrooms, our dedication to the social development of kids, interviews, Friday Shares- they caught everything!

Not only were we able to see the film but Tom and Amy asked us for feedback. Was there anything missing? Should they include other things? How will the viewers understand transitions between scenes? What voiceovers are still needed? They took our feedback and will continue to work on the film, which is scheduled to be complete by late spring.

It was astounding to see, on screen, evidence of what we do—the hard work, the planning,

the challenges, the relationships, the happy times and even the struggles. From day to day it is often exhausting work, but I wouldn't do anything else and I would not want to do it anywhere else. I am excited that soon the world will see Mission Hill, my workplace, my child's school, my family. I hope others will be as proud as I am of this remarkable place and the work we are doing here.

~Amina Michel-Lord

Room 205

"It's a keeper!" many students announced during a recent math investigation in first grade. We were measuring paper fish and determining if they were long enough to keep or had to be thrown back in the water. Students worked in pairs and used inch tiles to measure each fish in their group. Each pair was given several different size fish of the same species. Some measured mackerels, others measured perch, and some had alewife fish.

Each species had a different length that made it a keeper. Students recorded their data, including the type of fish they measured, the size of each fish, and which ones were keepers. Students also compared lengths and thought about how many more inches a fish would need to grow to be considered a keeper, or how much longer one fish was from another. The students were so engaged during this investigation and even made connections to our current study

of the Taíno and how they caught and ate a lot of fish. I was excited that students were able to see this connection between the current math skills they were working on and what they had learned about our recent theme topic.

~Ashleigh L'Heureux

Room 217

Family conferences provided me with an intentional time to reflect on the growth of each of the students I have the pleasure of working with this year. As I reviewed each child's work, assessments, and informal observational notes, I was excited to see how the Lightning Dragons are becoming more skilled first and second graders. Students are showing their thinking more clearly in math, labeling their equations to show what they are solving, becoming more confident readers, writing with more details and using periods to help their readers understand their stories.

Students are solving conflicts using their words and are finding ways to take ownership for conflicts they have initiated. While I was eager to share this information with each student and their families, it was particularly powerful to see how much ownership each child had of our classroom and the confidence they showed while reviewing their learning record. While I'd love for families (and myself!) to take more time to pause and reflect with their children, sometimes we need time set aside for just that to make this

important part of learning happen too.

~Emma Fialka-Feldman

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

Welcome back Role Model Hawk families. I hope everyone had an amazing February break. During share time students were excited to share their experiences from vacation. Many of the students went away to other states, such as Florida and Arizona. Others spent time with family during the snowy days in Boston.

Now that we are back in school, we will continue our study on the Taíno culture. Students have been researching various aspects of everyday life. Some of the topics are: housing, clothing, animals, plants/nature, food/hunting, art/music, jobs/schools, and communication.

At the conclusion of their research, students will create a poster presentation and a skit to showcase their findings. We are reaching out to our community for support with materials for building and skits. Any recyclable items such as cloth/fabric, boxes, yarn, beads, and feathers are useful. If you can help please have your child bring these items in starting this upcoming Monday. Thanks!

~Robert Baez

Room 216

This past week we devoured

dishes of food created by our custodian Maria, and by Keisha, who is a parent from our class. I would like to share some of the ingredients they used: Annatto seed achiote, yucca (grated and whole), papaya, mamey, pineapple, squash, rice, corn, and bread made from yucca.

Maria told the students about musical instruments made from a vegetable, and even danced a little bit! Keisha put her own flavor and spice on the food, and it was yummy. A real authentic experience for the students to see the actual fruits and vegetables being sliced open and to taste the delicious smoothies!

On another note, my last day before I temporarily leave will be March 7th and my return date is April 28th. Betsy, Dani, and June will be supporting our room while I'm gone. June is a paraprofessional from Nakia's classroom. Betsy helps with tutoring, music, and this very letter in your hand: the newsletter! Dani is the director of External Affairs and Technology. All three have extensive classroom experience and will be guided by the wonderful adults who are already part of our classroom.

Please feel free to introduce yourself to any them, if you don't already know them. I'd be more than happy to explain more details; feel free to stop by.

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

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

No news this week

Room 215

Every morning students spend thirty minutes writing in their journals. This week students chose their favorite prompt to revise. Prompts have varied from dream vacations to super powers to weekly reflections. We have been working on answering prompts in either paragraph or essay form. Students used a rubric as a guide to help focus their revision efforts. We are all working on avoiding sentences with too many coordinating conjunctions or FANBOYS (For-And-Nor-But-Or-Yet-So), using transition words, and varying our word choice. It's been great to see students rereading their writing and referring to a thesaurus to add a more colorful language into their writing. My goal is that, with consistent practice, students will master these habits and become more thoughtful writers.

~Sarah DeCruz

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

Our last round of family conferences was again amazing. Thank you all so much for rearranging your schedules so that you could be present. If you were not able to come to school, it's not too late. I am re-scheduling conferences before and after school, and can stay

late to accommodate your work schedule. Please call—every family needs a conference.

So many families shared connections to our Taíno theme work. Some students learned along with me part of their family story. In each case, both student and family promised to spend time at home continuing the conversation.

You also shared concerns. “She won’t talk to me about school—just alone in that room on the phone!” “He doesn’t believe that I can help him. I have to solve problems and write in my job, too.” “It’s hard to wait for the high school assignment. I know that decision is on both our minds.”

Several of you left with plans to take a more active role in helping your child meet her/his responsibilities. As we discussed, children this age are rarely able to navigate their school responsibilities without monitoring from home. Don’t just ask about homework; your child should be able to show you the work produced for each assignment. For too many children, electronic social media and gaming time result in not only incomplete homework, but also kids too tired to learn.

Your children again heard loud and clear your expectations for the way they “do school.” To a one, your children heard the equivalent of “Work Hard and Be Kind.” You let them know you cared about what kind of person they were in addition to

what they were learning. Thank you all again for your caring presence.

~Ann Ruggiero

Room 214

No news this week

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.

Extra Clothes Needed

We are in need of clean, gently used sweats and teeshirts in all sizes, to give to kids who need a change of clothes. Seats and tees are perfect, since they fit a range of sizes, are warm and comfortable, and work for boys and girls alike. Please bring them to school and give them to Georgie. Many thanks.

Movie Night—It’s Baaaaaack!

MHS is bringing back our very popular movie night next month. Join us on Friday, March 21st from 6-9 for a family-friendly film, snacks and fun with your buddies. Mark your calendars now, and watch for more details as the 21st approaches.

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