

# Mission Hill School News

## Letter from Child Street

### Preparing for the Next Growing Season

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

Moments after I ordered seedlings for my garden this past weekend, I wrote to a parent about her daughter's high school admissions. The actions—both related to preparing now for warmer days—came together.

In January and February it's time to plan many different "gardens". Daffodil bulbs were planted in our schoolyard at the same time that our 8th grade students applied to high schools. We will find out the results of both when the days are longer and warmer. Our school budget and staffing template for next year was due at the same time as a new order of honeybees for my hive. Grade 6 students will begin preparing now for spring Recollections, and summer camp applications will be due soon.

As students across the city find out about school assignments and we receive our new student roster,

gardeners will be turning over soil and laying down new mulch for a hearty growing season. In the thick of New England winter, planning for sunnier days can be spirit lifting.

Below are few things happening now (and soon) at Mission Hill to keep in mind so we can have a more satisfying spring and summer:

#### **REMINDERS**

##### ***February***

**2/14:** School Closed for staff conference

**2/17-21:** Winter break

**2/26:** Grades 3-6 to BSO concert - ***Chaperones needed!***

**2/27, 4:00 - 6:00:** Camp Information Night

**2/27, 6:00:** Outside the Lines Mtg.

##### ***March***

**3/6, 5:00:** Governance Board mtg.

**3/13, 5:45:** Family Council Mtg.

**3/17:** No School

- Camp Night at Mission Hill on Thursday, February 27 from 4 to 6 pm. Representatives from our partnering camps will be present with applications and information to help you find the right match for your child(ren).

- Family Conferences just ended. Keep the teacher comments from your child's progress report and family conference handy so your child doesn't forget what the goals are. The next report comes home at the end of March (just around the corner).

- Family Council meets on March 13 to discuss several action-oriented items. Please attend. Your voice and hands are needed to make the work ahead lighter. Tasks include planning for spring

events and next year.

- The next Governance Board meeting is on Thursday, April 4. Attend for the most detailed information about school plans for next year.

- The Boston Public school calendar has been updated. Due to snow days, our new last day of school is June 24 if no more days are lost to cancellations.

I know you've got your personal lists too. Happy Planning !

~Ayla Gavins

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

As the entire school studies the Taíno people, our focus will be “The Nature of the Taíno”. The Taíno believed that if you take care of the earth, the earth will take care of you. It is a natural connection to our fall study of learning how to take care of our animals, plants and each other. We have started our study of the Taíno by learning about the coquí. The coquí is a small frog that is famous for the loud song it sings at night. It is one of the most common frogs in Puerto Rico and it is about the same size as the garden snails we have in our classroom. Many thanks to Jada Brown for teaching us *El Coquí*, the children’s song. Ask your child to sing it to you. (In our class we have a number of families with roots in Puerto Rico, so maybe you know the song already!)

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin  
& Donna Winder

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

For the past couple weeks we have been learning about the Taíno. Our research has turned into the building of a Taíno village in the block area. The children started by recreating the Taíno houses they had seen in books. They are circular and were challenging to build with blocks. They collaborated to figure out

the structure and how to add a room.



From our research we learned that the Taíno in Puerto Rico say beaches, mountains, rivers, and oceans (as well as other area). The students started to recreate those as well. They painted an ocean and added sea life. They painted a waterfall and created a pool and rocks at the base. They also painted a fruit tree.



One day James asked, “I want to make a fire, did the Taínos have fire?” I told him that they did. He then used blocks to create a circular shape. He tore yellow and red paper to create a fire effect. Come visit our Taíno village.

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

#### Room 107

While the excitement around the Taíno is growing, last week we took a small break from researching and constructing our large tree (complete with the coquí tree frogs we love so much). With the information we have already gathered, we wanted students to now think about what they would want to find out next.

Here are a few of their questions that will shape our study in the coming weeks:

“I wanna know if the Tainos were one of the first people to live on the world.”

“What did the Tainos wear? Do the Tainos still live in Puerto Rico today?”

“Were they the first people to grow up? Do the Tainos do yoga?”

“Why doesn’t the Taíno live in Boston? Where do they live?”

“Why do coquíes say ribbit and their bellies get big? How long is the coquí’s tongue?”

“Why do they have stones? How many hairs do they have? How long is their hair?”

“Why do they have animals? Do the Taínos eat meatballs?”

“How old are the Taínos? Who was older? Did the Taíno put water for ice?”

“Were their houses made of sticks?”

“Where do the Taino live in the earth so far away?”

“Where did the Taínos live? It’s kind of hard to think in my head. And what do the Taínos eat? What did they build? Maybe their

house is made of wood and there is

grass on the roof, and windows?"

"How does the coquí get big?"

"Do the Taíno eat chicken, rice, salad and spaghetti and meatballs? Do the Taínos drum?"

"Do they love to play and eat spaghetti and meatballs and turkey and chicken and hamburger?"

"I think they have pots.

"Where do the Taínos make plants?"

~**Jada Brown  
& JoAnn Hawksworth**

### **Room 109**

Hello Mission Hill! The past two weeks the Original Stars have been learning more about the environment and climate of where the Taíno people lived. We have been talking about the rainforest, and what animals are found there. We discussed how these are animals the Taíno people may have seen, and we might be able to see if we went to the Caribbean Islands today. Each student has chosen a particular animal to focus on, and is creating his or her own information booklet. In their books, they can write facts, draw pictures, and pose questions about their rainforest animal.

This week was also family conferences. I hope all of you enjoyed the personalized tour lead by your children!

~**Liz Borson**

## **Grades One & Two**

### **Room 204**

No news this week

### **Room 205**

Family conference time is so much more than just preparing for a conversation between families and teachers, especially the way conferences happen at Mission Hill. It is a time for families to see school and learning from their child's perspective. It teaches students to be reflective about their work and time spent at school. It allows teachers to learn even more about their students.

What do they think is hard for them? What have they enjoyed working on? Where do they like to work best? We are with them all day long and have the opportunity to notice what we think are the answers to these questions and many others, but maybe our perceptions are wrong. We spent some time the past two weeks preparing for family visits. The students were given prompts to think about their experience at school and then they practiced sharing their reflections and tour of the classroom with their peers and teachers. Thank you so much for taking the time to come visit us at school. It is a very meaningful part of your child's learning.

~**Ashleigh L'Heureux**

### **Room 217**

Recently we have had two guests in our classroom – they have brought their talents and expertise to the classroom to help us develop a richer understanding of the Taíno. Rob, Cyrus and Jasper's father and an oceanographer, designed an

engaging presentation on oceans, with a particular focus on the relationship the Taíno had with the oceans. We now have an ocean mural in our classroom where we designed fish to show what we learned from his presentation.

Last week, Maria, a member of the custodial staff who is from Puerto Rico, prepared many vegetables (yucca, sweet potato, corn) and fruits (pineapples, guavas). We had an extensive Taíno Taste Test!

During both presentations, the students brought the Mission Hill habits of mind to life. They asked questions to gather evidence about the Taíno. They made connections between our lives and the lives of people who lived long ago. They developed a sense of relevance about this topic.

~**Emma Fialka-Feldman**

## **Grades Three & Four**

### **Room 207**

This past week the Role Model Hawks have been preparing themselves for the annual family conferences. Students have taken the time to reflect on various aspects of their learning experiences within the Mission Hill walls. To help guide the wonderful classroom tours that took place this past Thursday and Friday students used a form we call the learning record. The learning record contains the following questions: (1) which area do you like best to work at inside of the classroom?, (2) what is something you are working on now?, (3) What is something you feel great about?, and (4) what is

something that is challenging you?

These questions are designed to give families and friends a snapshot of all of their experiences at school.

Their various types of art work, writing pieces, math work, and theme studies work is showcased around the classroom to provide evidence and support their remarks on the learning record and meeting with the teacher. It is always exciting to meet and discuss my students with all of you. I am excited to continue our work together throughout the remaining months of the school year. If there are any questions, comments, or concerns that were not shared at the conference please feel free to contact me directly.

~Robert Baez

### Room 216

Greetings from Room 216, This past week we have been working on what life is like now and in the past, as well as figuring out their roles. Next week, we plan to take trip to the library to find more books on the Taíno. We have been reading a lot of books and researching online, trying to become experts in language, instruments, huts, hunting tools, theater performance, arts and crafts, cooking, and fishing.

We are beginning to find lots of interesting facts, such as what happened to the Taíno and why their history unfolded the way it did. The students have completed their Taíno maps and

they have started creating small dolls and clay huts.

Next week we hope to have a few wonderful guests come in and cook for us! Maria is an amazing cook and works within our school. She has already helped Emma's class with cooking using Taíno ingredients. We also have a wonderful parent in our class who is an amazing cook as well. The students will get a double dose of helping prepare a meal and eating the tasty results.

~Josh Kraus

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 210

No news this week

### Room 215

No news this week

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

Over the years, I've been fortunate to be able to travel with students to participate in educational conferences – Chicago, San Francisco, and, of course, Boston. As a school that embraces democratic principles and actions, including student voice is important at Mission Hill.

Next week, staff will travel to Detroit for the annual meeting of the North Dakota Study Group. Middle school students Yimara Aponte Diaz, Ahsad Harvey, Alexa Lopez Ledesma, and

Jah'von Williams will be part of the travelling team. The title of this year's conference is "Build + Fight = Transformation? Building strategies and connections to fight for justice as we help solve the equation for transformed education."

The NDSG website, [www.ndsg.org](http://www.ndsg.org), is wonderful to explore: history, resources, videos, important statements and visions – your thinking about teaching, learning, and assessing, and participation in social change, will be provoked and enriched. To extend the "equation" metaphor, there are both variables and constants and a choice of operations (actions) involved in working towards a just solution. I'm glad we'll have the experience, vision, and voice of the kids with us when we gather in Detroit.

~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.*

**3rd Annual MHS Camp Night!**

Mark your calendars for our upcoming Camp Night to be held Thursday, February 27th 6:30. Yes, it's already time to start thinking about camps. Camps are gearing up for summer and registration for many of them has already started! There will be representatives from different

camps both near and far for all ages. Something for everyone! Stop by and hear how to apply for financial aid or what transportation is available for the different camps. Don't see a camp there that you're interested in? Our website is also updated with many different programs and will continue to be updated throughout the rest of the year.

**Fill out the Summer is Coming Survey** online for Courtney if you'd like help getting programming for your child.

**Turn in your Box Tops!**

MHS is collecting Box Tops for Education all year long. You can drop off Box Tops at the Main Office, with Courtney in Room 114, or your child's classroom. Remember, each one is worth 10¢, so every one counts! Keep up the great work and turn them in when you clip them from products you use every day. Our next submission date is March 1, 2014, so turn them in **by February 24<sup>th</sup>** for them to count in this shipment. For a complete list of Box Tops products or to sign up online to

support our school, log onto [www.boxtops4education.com](http://www.boxtops4education.com).

**Technology Tip - Common Sense Media**

Did you know that our nation's children spend more time with media and digital activities than they do with their families or in school? As parent and teachers, it is incredibly difficult to keep up with the latest apps, games, websites, books, movies and more. How do we educate ourselves and help our children use technology in safe, healthy and age-appropriate ways? Common Sense Media ([commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org)) is my favorite website for trustworthy information – they are a non-profit organization proving reviews of new media, information on research, and Q&As/blog posts on relevant topics such as: “Sneaky Ways Advertisers Target Kids”; “Parents Guide to Kids and Cell Phones”; “Raising a Reader” and more. Common Sense Media is for parents of preschool children up through teenagers. If you have questions about any of this – find me in Room 108 or email me at [gmclaughlin@missionhillschool.org](mailto:gmclaughlin@missionhillschool.org).

**-Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin**

**Free February Fun****First Friday Open Studios**

Friday, Feb 7 5:00p to 9:00p  
More dates & times (10)  
SOWA Artists Guild  
Boston, MA  
The First Friday of each month,

Guild member artists and others open their studios at 450 Harrison Ave. Boston, MA 02118. Meet the artists in their studios, see great art and buy directly from the artists. The SoWa Artists Guild strives to make art and artists accessible to everyone. Come and enjoy the fun. The event is free and parking is available.

**Best of the Best -Ship Model show**

USS Constitution Museum  
Boston, MA

The USS Constitution Model Shipwright Guild and the USS Constitution Museum present the Best of the Best - 2014 Ship Model Show. Prize winning models from the past 10 annual shows will be featured, with over 100 handcrafted models of all sizes. Explore the intricate art of model. A visit to the Museum and the show is a great way for your family to spend the day.

Learn More -

<http://www.usconstitutionmuseum.org/exhibits/ship-model-show/>

**Family Gym - Blackstone**

Saturday, Feb 8 10:00a to 11:30a  
More dates & times (7)  
BCYF Blackstone Community Center  
Boston, MA

Looking for a free, fun way to be active with your kids? Drop by Family Gym, a play program for families with children ages 3-8 to get up, out and moving together. Family Gym takes place most Saturdays from 10:00-11:30 a.m. at BCYF's Blackstone Community Center in the South End. Family Gym is free and open to all, no pre-registration necessary. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

**President's Day Family Festival**

Monday, Feb 17 11:00a to 3:00p  
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum  
Boston, MA

**Franklin Park Snow Festival**

Saturday, Feb 8 1:00p to 4:00p  
William J. Devine Golf Course  
Boston, MA  
Come sled, build snowpeople, track animal prints in the snow, try out snowshoes, or bring your own skis for a cross country park tour. You can warm up indoors with hot chocolate and board games. "Snow Day" - Saturday, February 22. There will be a winter hike in the woods if there's no snow. All ages welcome! Dress warmly and bring a sled if you have one, we'll have plenty to borrow for those without. Co-sponsored by the Boston Parks Department & Franklin Park Coalition.

**3rd Annual Boston Storytelling Festival**

Saturday, Feb 15, 9:30a to 4:30p  
Boston Public Library - Central Branch: Boston Public Library, Rabb Lecture Hall  
Boston, MA  
Traditional storytelling in the morning, 21st century personal storytelling in the afternoon and 4-5 storytelling workshops happening all day long.

You don't want to miss this great opportunity to celebrate Storytelling as an art form.

**Harvard Museum of Natural History: Massachusetts**

residents are admitted free every Sunday morning from 9am to Noon year-round with proof of residency.

**Free Admission Day at Museum of Fine Arts:**

Saturday, February 8, 2014. Due to Lunar New Year, the MFA is free all day on Saturday! (Also, check out this event at the MFA in the afternoon!)

**Chinatown Lion Dance**

**Parade:** Saturday, February 8, 2014. Enjoy this traditional celebration in Boston's Chinatown with lion dancers, traditional music, food, and more.

**The Great Boston Couch**

**Race:** Saturday, February 8, 2014 from 11am to 5pm in the Prudential Center? Have you ever thought racing through an obstacle course on a couch would be cool? Well, you're in luck! Make sure to pre-register with a teammate if you're interested.

**Free Thursdays at the ICA**

Institute of Contemporary Art  
<http://www.icaboston.org/visit/hours-and-admission/>  
Every Thursday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., general admission to the Institute of Contemporary Art is free.

**The Boston Public Library**

will present free Black History Month Activities at many branch locations.

**Feb. 10, 3:30 South End Branch, 685 Tremont Street**

**The Skin on My Chin:**

Diversity Workshop For Children. In honor of Black History Month, Michelle Chalmers will read her fun, rhyming picture book, *The Skin on My Chin*, that explores diversity, ancestry and conversation about the skin. Children will learn about the sun and the diverse beauty of humanity. A fun craft is included. For Children 6 and up.

**Feb. 11, 4:00 Grove Hall Branch, 41 Geneva Ave. Dorchester**

Boston musician Bill Lowe (trombonist and tubaist) will connect children with Black History Month through music.  
For Children ages 6-12

**Free Tuesday Movies, 5:30 Mattapan Branch, 1350 Blue Hill Ave.**

February 4 - *The Wiz*  
February 11 - *Ruby Bridges*  
February 18 - *Princess & the Frog*  
February 25 - *Akeelah and the Bee*

**Mission Hill School**

*A Boston Public Pilot School*

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