

# Mission Hill School News

## Letter from Child Street

### A Bit of Fertile Ground

Dear Mission Hill families, staff students and friends,

A neighbor called the school last week. She lives on South Street, across from the school building, and she wants to plant a tree in our yard. She is expecting a baby this spring, and would like to commemorate the birth with the planting of an apple tree. Knowing that apple trees like to live close together to cross-pollinate, she thought our apple orchard could be a perfect home.

Coincidentally, we at MHS have been talking about how to co-create a vision and plan for our yard with families and community members as we move into the warmer months. When we received the grant to build our two new outdoor spaces, it was conceived as a resource for both the school and the community. A guiding idea behind the project was that natural spaces can serve as open invitations for people to gather, work, and play together. Our children have been using these spaces to play and to work (and to engage in activities where the distinction between work and play does not apply), and now that the seasons are once again changing, much more will be happening outside during recess and classroom project time. But in order for these beautiful spaces to achieve their potential, grown-ups will also have to contribute. Perhaps you can be one of them! We'd like to get a group together to move this forward.

Once we have a team we will organize a time to meet and discuss our ideas. Should we plant an apple tree with our neighbor? Where could it go? Are there other things we should plant? Should we install bird feeders? What kinds of general weeding and clean up need to be done? We will also reach out to other neighbors to see if they want to contribute.

If you are interested in joining us as we think about, plan, and work to improve our yards, please stop in and let me know, or send an email to [bkershner@missionhillschool.org](mailto:bkershner@missionhillschool.org). Whether we

end up planting a tree, installing bird feeders, or just doing general yard work, I look forward to being outside with you soon in a place where work and play are one and the same—and I hope you bring some children!

~Brad Kershner

#### REMINDERS

##### *March*

**Fri. 3/21**, 6 - 9: MHS Movie Night  
Fundraiser

**Sat. 3/22**, 6:30: Fairy Hill Benefit  
Performance  
1st. Cong. Church, Norwood

**Thu. 3/27**, 9:15 - 10:15: Taino  
Breakfast

##### *April*

**Wed. 4/2 - 4/4**: Grades 5&6 to  
Farm School

## From the Classrooms

### 3 and 4 year-olds

#### Room 108

“How do you think the Taíno cooled off their fish?” asked Simona. She had just finished cooking her fish over the open campfire in our classroom. Simona decided the Taíno had probably just waited a few minutes to let their piping-hot fish cool off before eating, so that is what she did. Simona had caught her fish from the pond in our classroom – using a fishing pole she’d made herself.

In our classroom, papier-mâché fish swim in a cardboard pond – next to a campfire made from sticks, bark, papier-mâché stones. Complete with tissue paper flames. Come see our Taíno inspired tableau during the Taíno breakfast on Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup> 9:15 am – 10:15 am.

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin  
& Donna Winder

### Kindergarten

#### Room 106

This week Andrew from the Nature Center joined our class. He brought his guitar and together we sang *The Garden Song*. It was a great way to start a lesson about planting.

Our conversation continued by talking about how much we have been thinking about planting. We shared our study of the Taíno with Andrew, and we learned that they were farmers. We have been inspired to be farmers ourselves. I

even shared that Emma’s class has been growing corn with the students. The students want to see their progress. The children also shared with Andrew about their desire to plant things that will attract animals and insects to our schoolyard. With Andrew we investigated seeds. We looked at seeds of different sizes and recorded them in our science journals.

Next—the plans to create a hummingbird/Monarch Watch way station. We will keep you posted on our progress. To read more about the way station you can visit <http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations/>

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

#### Room 107

Last week, we began building the roof to our *bohio*. As we hoisted it into the air and placed it on the base, our students rushed from where they were playing and exploded with excitement as they all tried to fit inside. Later, while watching the animated book, *Tai*; A young Taíno boy, our students began making connections that we did not anticipate. From the beginning scene, they excitedly proclaimed the following as they pointed to various areas of our classroom:

We made that! It’s a *bohio*! That’s a *cemi*! We made pinchpots! That’s a boat. We made a boat and an ocean! They’re going fishing! The Taíno ate fish? I love fish! They had fire! It’s a *cacique*! Hey we did that! There’s a waterfall! It’s

cassabi...that’s what I was talking about! Hey, it’s a drum! Let me see! He’s sleeping in a hammock!

At times we have wondered just how much our students are taking in about this theme. This was the first time that Jo-Ann and I were able to really witness the output we have heard families share about the discussions happening at home. This animation brought to life all that we have been doing and studying and sparked new interests in arietos (special ceremonies) and the ancient game *Batu* that we have been learning to play. Once they noticed that the players in the *Batu* game could only touch the ball (made of a clump of herbs and spices that were boiled until it resembled rubber) with their hands, feet, knees, arms, elbows, head and chest, several students made the connection that it sounded a lot like soccer. Thanks Gabrielle for going to Puerto Rico and bringing us back the game! It was the missing piece to our Taíno puzzle.

~Jada Brown  
& JoAnn Hawksworth

#### Room 109

*Coming next week*

### Grades One & Two

#### Room 204

“Whoa! What is that?” someone exclaimed as I brought over the large 36 x 36 canvas to the rug. I explained that this would be our section of the mural

that will accompany the first/second grade collaborative myth. There were many questions about how, when and why and as we talked, Kristina suggested that we go look at the surrounding murals in JP the next day. So, we did!

Ashleigh's class had also planned to go, so we set off together. As we walked we pointed out several murals on nearby buildings and even one on an electrical box! Our final destination was the mural painted on the side of The Purple Cactus restaurant. We stood back and took it in. We noticed colors, shapes, the arrangement of pictures. We also talked about the process and how it may have happened. "I think they did all the drawing first and then painted." "I think they painted one color at a time." "I think lots of people helped."

Armed with this new knowledge, we pulled out our blank canvas again the next day. With pictures they had done pre- and post-mural drafts of, we began the process of making our own mural that will share our part of this wonderful story!

~Jenerra Williams

### **Room 205**

*Coming next week*

### **Room 217**

The first and second grade classrooms have finished writing the collaborative Taíno story. Our classroom recently added the conclusion, solving the problem Jenerra's class had written into

the story. The unveiling of the story will be during the family breakfast on Thursday, March 27. Part of this collaborative project is also each class' visual representation of their written contribution. For the next week we will be working on our part of the mural. In order to get ready for this part of the project, we needed to look at what makes a mural a mural. On Friday, we took a walk around Jamaica Plain to look at and discuss the many murals. We noticed how large the individual images were and how the paintings overlapped other painted objects. We commented on the beautiful colors. We will take what we liked about these murals and have that guide us as we make our own visual representation of our written conclusion!

~Emma Fialka-Feldman

## **Grades Three & Four**

### **Room 207**

Hello Role Model Hawk families. Today concluded our first week of MCAS testing. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is a standardized test given by the state at various grade levels. The 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade students are exposed to this test for the first time. The experience creates various types of feelings within students, which can range from being nervous to not understanding the purpose of the test. Students will take another section of this test in May. During these weeks we should provide

the students with enough sleep, filling meals, healthy snacks, water, breaks to have free choice/time, and consistent check-ins.

During MCAS weeks the Role Model Hawks will not have homework and will be given various breaks to release energy outside on the field or inside the gym. Please encourage your child to do his or her best work during this test, because that is all that matters. Each child has his or her own way to showcase knowledge, and this is one of many. Have a great weekend.

~Robert Baez

### **Room 216**

This week, the Clever Cats transitioned into learning about poetry by discussing "What poetry means to us." Some students expressed that, "Poetry is like a song, just with no music." A student added, "You can share your feelings: happy or sad." While we continued talking about poetry, students began debating what they think poetry is. A student shared, "Poetry to me is like a story that rhymes." In response, a student stated, "I don't agree because not all poems rhyme."

As we continue this unit, our hope is that our understanding of poetry evolves through reading new poems, writing our own poems, and discussing our insights on the components of poetry.

On Thursday, the Clever Cats painted as they listened to the poem, *The Apple* by Nan Fry. The

poem allowed students to visualize key words and phrases without knowing the title of the poem. Some students focused on the “crunch of boots in the snow,” which was a metaphor for the crunch you hear as you bite into an apple. After we painted, the title of the poem was revealed and students began to build connections between their painting and the title of the poem. This allowed students to interpret the poem differently. Students expressed that, without knowing the title of the poem, key words in the poem indeed represented the formation of an apple.

We will continue to have discussions about what poetry means through the exposure to different kinds of poetry and authors. As we continue to spark conversations and ask ourselves “What makes a poem, a poem?” we will identify patterns in order to write our own poems in our poetry notebooks.

~Melanie Centeno

## Grades Five & Six

### Room 210

With a week left in our Taíno study, students are hard at work finishing up their research and pulling together their projects. If you had walked into our room this week, here is what you would likely have seen:

A student bent over his computer brainstorm document, puzzling. "I know what I'm

supposed to do, there's just this part I'm having trouble with."

Three students huddled together, strategizing the best way to distribute tasks. Three other students floundering, unsure how to refocus their group from play to work.

One student clicking 'send' on an email to select Mission Hill staff, asking to borrow musical instruments.

Two students in the hall, paint on hands. "You do it. If I do it, I'll mess it up, and it'll be horrible."

Four others on the rug, computers on their laps. An adult is checking in with them about paraphrasing. "Wait," says one student, her eyes closed, imagining a passage in her own words. "Can I say, 'The Dominican Republic is part of Hispaniola?'"

At the end of this unit of study, students will have produced Taíno resources for all ages, including video, website, historical fiction, music, models, picture books, and games—all resources that the school can use in the years to come.

~Katy Laguzza

### Room 215

The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders are taking MCAS on March 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. Students wrote in their journals about how taking tests makes them feel. As a class there is a lot of anxiety and negative feeling about taking tests in general. To help support students, we spent time talking about how the test is set up and strategies to

help take the test efficiently.

Some of the strategies we practiced are: reading the open response question first, annotating the text and going back to find evidence to support your answers. We used MCAS passages some of the time, but we also were able to use theme study texts to help us practice writing open responses. Students read *Fire and the Jaguar*, a South American myth, and worked in pairs to create an A.E.E. chart (Answer, Evidence, Explanation) on chart paper. As a class, we need more practice supporting our evidence with details from the story. I plan on having a special breakfast on both mornings and would appreciate any donations from families.

~Sarah DeCruz

## Grades Seven & Eight

### Room 213

Last week, I shared some student work from the Taíno theme—speeches prepared as part of a role-play trial we are conducting to determine who was guilty of killing millions of Taíno in the 1490s. Here are excerpts from a few more speeches.

Javon: “My name is King Ferdinand. Today I am being charged on multiple counts of murder and conspiracy to murder. Today I have to prove my innocence and my wife has to do the same. Her name is Queen Isabella. The only reason I am on trial is because they

think I sent Christopher Columbus and crew members to steal property and murder Taíno people. I am here to prove my innocence....”

Alexa: “I represent The System of Empire, and I feel that I am guilty, but not fully guilty. What the system of the empire is, are the laws and rules of Spain and the society, what our system said was that it was OK to go explore, and take over lands. Even though our system did make people feel that they needed to take over land to feel secure, which made people greedy, it wasn't us who started it all. Before us the Turks invaded the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt, that whole area. Which showed us that it was OK to have a system like ours. There were also other empires around, that had the same type of system, so why not have a system like that, we wanted to be as successful as any other empire...”

Peyton: “My name is Phillip, I am one of Columbus' men. I was one of the pages who cooked, scrubbed decks and told the time. I think Columbus and the King and Queen should be guilty of murder. He was the one whose plot was to take the Taínos and their Gold. In Columbus's Journal he wrote, “They would make fine servants.... with fifty men we could subjugate them and make them do whatever we want.” That statement is part of the proof of how Columbus came up

with plan to enslave the Arawaks. ... Also, when Columbus went on his last three voyages, the King and Queen gave him even more men and weapons. So they were a big part in his scheme, too. I would also want to talk about the fact that some Taíno killed themselves. The truth really is that everyone killed a Taíno, whether they were a Spaniard, an Italian or even a Taíno citizen. The Taíno fought for their home, well we fought for our lives....”

Different voices, different stories. Who's right?

~Ann Ruggiero

## 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.

### Fairy Hill Performance

#### Tomorrow

Don't miss tomorrow's concert to benefit the MHS music program! Join Didi Batchvarov and other students of the TK Music Studio for their performance of Fairy Hill, March 22 at 6:30. The performance will be held at the First Congregational Church in Norwood, 100 Winter Street. Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$3

for children and may be purchased at the door.

Special thanks to the Batchvarov family for arranging for the revenue from the concert to go to our school!

### Mission Hill Little League 2014

#### Baseball Season Registration:

Register by Saturday, March 22, 2014 and players will have their name entered in a drawing for a FREE iPad mini! Every player must register, every year. Registrations will be accepted for all players, ages 7-12. Players should live, or attend school within the league boundaries, which include Mission Hill, Jamaica Plain, the Fenway, parts of Roxbury and parts of the South End. Cost is \$30.00 per player / \$15.00 for each additional player from the same family.

Registration forms are also available on our website: [www.missionhill-littleleague.org](http://www.missionhill-littleleague.org).

We will also have forms available at our registration locations, in English and in Spanish. Questions? Please call Dennis Pultinas @ 617-739-1489.

#### Mission Hill School

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