



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Thursday, October 30, 5:30 - 6:30 pm
Assessment meeting with Ayla in Library
- Friday, October 31, 2014, 9:45 am
Friday Share: Ann, Juan, & Jada
- Thursday, November 13, 5:45 - 7:00
Family Council Meeting

October 24, 2014

Volume 18, Issue 6

High Standards and Fair Testing

Dear Families, Students, Staff, and Friends,

Last year around this time our Governance Board composed a letter that began with these words: *We, the Governance Board of Mission Hill K-8 School, respectfully request that the School Committee continue to exempt the Mission Hill School from district-mandated standardized tests.* The letter was sent to the school committee and relevant Boston Public School officials. I worked with the BPS Autonomous Schools Network and our staff held a united stance on the power and use of multiple meaningful assessments.

More and more people across the nation are talking about the unreasonable amount of time children spend taking standardized tests in schools and the negative impact of the test scores on learning, teaching and schools in general. Fair Test, a Boston based non-profit, has been organizing people nationally and locally to push back and change testing policy to protect teaching and learning time and remove high stakes.

Recently the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) passed Resolutions for High Standards and Fair Testing. I see this as a huge step in turning the focus back to teaching and learning in BPS, away from comparing people by test scores. Below is an excerpt from the resolution that outlines important action steps for us all. I encourage you to read the full document available in classrooms and on our school website.

For Federal Advocacy

The BTU will lobby Senators Warren and Markey and Boston-area members of the House of Representative to support efforts to reduce federally-mandated standardized testing and eliminate their punitive uses.

For Union and Community Advocacy

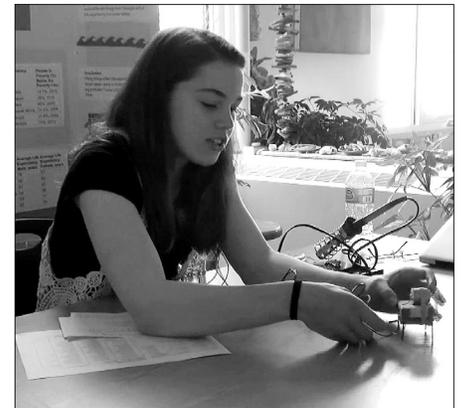
The BTU will contact the Mass. Teachers Association and other organizations concerned with improving education for all children to seek their cooperation in advancing these proposals.

For Local Advocacy

The BTU asks the School Committee and Superintendent to stop imposing tests on schools beyond those required by law, including the PARCC and district mandated assessments, and consider setting a limit to the number of instructional days that can be lost to testing each school year. Furthermore, the teachers and educators who work directly with students in each school should discuss and decide which of the available tests will best help children learn. The school system should reinvest any money saved by minimizing the use of these standardized assessments in professional development for educators in the theory and practice of alternative assessments including, performance assessment, portfolio assessment, and documentation.

*Portions of this resolution were adapted from the AFT and Boston Truth Principles of Unity: See www.bostonedtruth.org for the full principles.

Please join me for conversation and information about assessment at Mission Hill School and what's happening beyond our school walls on **Thursday, October 30 from 5:30 to 6:30pm** in the school library. Childcare provided. Please RSVP by calling the main office at 617-635-6384.



Maddy O'Brien presents a science project during her Graduation Portfolio last Spring. Portfolios are just one alternative assessment used at MHS.

KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

At 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday mornings something wonderful happens in Room 108. Our speech therapist Kaila and our occupational therapists Anne and Chelsea join us for “SPOT” (Speech and Occupational Therapy) groups. SPOT activities help all children practice important skills, such as small motor, speech, language and social skills to name a few. Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and general education students all benefit from these small groups. They enjoy the exposure to the new materials (putty, tongs, books and games) and the challenges these materials pose. Positive social interactions are supported and facilitated by the adults as the children work, play and learn. A few times a year, we will all travel to the SPOT room upstairs for “Friends to SPOT week”. And sometimes our general education peers will join small speech and/or OT

groups upstairs in the SPOT room. If you have any questions about SPOT, please let me know.

-Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin

Room 106

The past few weeks in Room 106 have been all about apple math! Leading up to and following our trip to the apple orchard, the Sparkling Birds have been using apples to help us think about all different kinds of math. We baked an apple pie and took a class vote on who did and did not like the pie. Then we made a bar graph out of our findings. We also graphed which kind of apple was our class favorite, Fuji (red), Granny Smith (green), or Golden Delicious (yellow). We read *Ten Apples Up On Top*, learned a poem called *Ten Red Apples*, and then played “How Many Apples Make Ten”? We also used real apples as stamps to make apple-print patterns. We will be sharing all of our hard work this week at Friday Share! For those of you who aren’t able to make it, please stop by 106 and take a

look at our math wall.

Our door is always open,

-Liz Borson & Stephanie Batista

Room 107

While using our senses to reflect on this year’s much-anticipated apple-picking trip, these were the topics of 107’s drawings: *I drew the rain and the apple tree. This is me holding an apple and eating it. I heard an apple fall...I had a bag I was putting my apples in. I touched apples and picked apples. We were in the rain playing and jumping in puddles. I saw apples, leaves, flowers and a sign that had apples on it. The apples tasted good.*

We then thought about the steps it took to go apple picking. Here is our first draft: Ask your mommy. Bring your mom or dad. Bring a lunch. Go potty. Get on the bus. Listen to the teacher. Stay with the group. Find an apple hanging on a tree. Pick the apples. Put the apples into your bag. Eat the apple. Don’t eat apples on the ground. Have fun! Eat lunch. Put the apples in a cider maker... slurp the juice. Put the apples in the fridge and people will eat it.

-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

Room 109

What is the connection between literacy and the arts?

The teachers and children at the Opal School, a Charter School in Portland, Oregon, are researching this question with a daily routine they call Story Workshop. I recently discovered their work and I am completely inspired.

Stories are a big part of our learning in Kindergarten. In our classroom we tell stories, listen to stories, act out stories, and play stories every day. I’ve shared my learning about story



An apple picker from Room 107.

workshop with the children, and we are so excited to begin this work.

This Tuesday we all gathered on the rug. I explained that we all have stories to share, and that it was exciting for me watch and listen for their stories every day. Every afternoon, when Khi rolls playdough into the form of a snail, Khi has a snail story to share. I noticed that Theodore loves to play cats in dramatic play. I asked, "Theodore, do you have cat stories to share?" Theodore smiled widely and beamed, "Yes!"

The children then began to share the stories that they noticed...

Moxie and Simona bake cakes at the light table; William A. drew a story about a rainbow; Evan tells a story about four little pigs; Beatrice and Kaia make paper doll fairies and mermaids; Théo, Emeric, and Malachi build boats in the block area and play fire sharks.

We are collecting these ideas as inspiration as we begin to discover for ourselves connections between literacy and the arts.

-Jenny Goldstein

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 204

As I look out the window, a myriad of things pass by: farms with horses, rows of orange pumpkins, and the beautiful New England Fall foliage seems as if it is putting on a show just for us. It is all so beautiful. This ride has become a part of our fall tradition – apple picking at Shelburne Farms in Stowe, MA.

Though the weather forecast was gloomy, we were determined to go! Upon arrival our farmer showed us some of the animals on the farm

– a goat named Sweet Pea, a llama named Lady, two donkeys, and a trio of Alpacas. We then climbed aboard our tractor hayride that took us to the orchard. Just as the tractor stopped, it started to rain. It was a warm fall downpour but there were apples still to be picked!

Some time later, soaked to the bone and bags full of apples, we left the orchard and went to have lunch. We were completely soggy, but not our spirits! Laughter and smiles followed us as we boarded the bus and enjoyed a yummy cider donut as we began our journey home. I am already looking forward to next year.

-Jenerra Williams



Apple pickers from room 204: soggy, but happy.

Room 205

The Lego Champions of room 205 recently opened a new Lego story set. It comes with various pieces used to make different characters, settings, and scenes. Before the students used the pieces to craft stories, we sorted and organized all the pieces. I wish I could have shared the full recording of their reactions and comments as we explored this new story writing tool, but here is a short piece of their conversation:

Anand: "I could make a ninja with

this! Where should the chains go?"

Lukas: "What is this?"

Anand: "Axes!"

Lukas: "These are all like tools. It should go here."

Milo: "Oh a play snake, my mom would get so freaked out if she was here."

Anand: "Studs, these are like studs."

Milo: "The wheels. The wheels go in here."

Anand: "What, fire swords?!? There's fire in here!"

Lukas: (fire breath sound)

Milo: "Fire and canes! I have props and sticks."

Lukas (singing): "Everything is awesome... Come on boys."

The others joined in (singing): "Everything is awesome, when you're part of a team."

Milo: "I can create anything with my imagination!"

Anand: "Oh, there's so much space helmets!"

Milo: "Here's where the bread and plates go."

Anand: "Oh look I have a song - everything is bananas when you're eating a banana."

Lukas: "My magic wand will destroy everything, mwahaha."

Stop by or check in with us to see some of the stories the students have created after being inspired by this wonderful Lego set.

-Ashleigh, Kate, & Amy

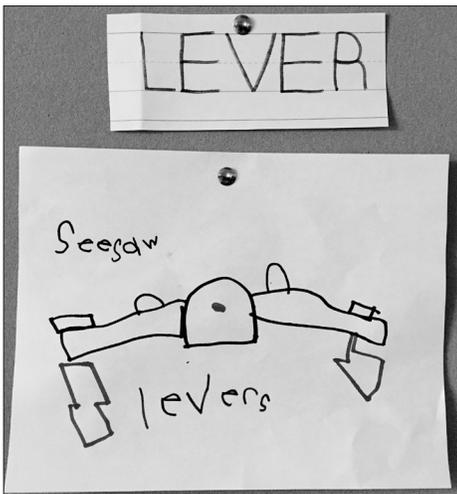
Room 217

The school wide fall theme is physical science. Our class (now named the Hilarious Hilarios!) has recently begun exploring simple machines. As engineers and scientists, we will be studying the following questions: what makes our community work and what helps people move and live in our communities. After starting

CLASSROOM NEWS

the school year talking about what it means to do things independently and interdependently, we already have a foundation for learning more about why we might need help (or tools) to do some things. We will be carefully exploring our school and community to investigate challenges in order to design and build simple machines to support work in our communities. A recent field trip to the Waterworks Museum has already set us on a path to identify simple machines that help bring us clean water, including screws, pulleys, and inclined planes. Student work identifying simple machines is beginning to be displayed in our classroom. Be sure to stop by to see how our learning grows overtime.

-Emma Fialka-Feldman



An example of a simple machine from room 217.

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 207

“THE FIELD TRIPS! What a gift to your class getting into the real world.” These are the words that a visitor wrote to me after spending some time in our classroom and hearing about the different field trips that we have planned for this first part of

the year. When our class goes outside and into the world we can see how the learning starts to make sense to our students. This year we are lucky enough to have many opportunities to bring our learning outside of the classroom. We will be learning about nature at the Arboretum for our Nature and Me explorations. For our physical science theme, we started with an exciting field trip to the MSPCA. We will continue our explorations with the Museum of Science and several scavenger hunts around the city to look for various simple machines in the community. We are all looking forward to the many opportunities that we will have this year to explore and learn around the city.

-Juan Cortes & Amina Michel-Lord

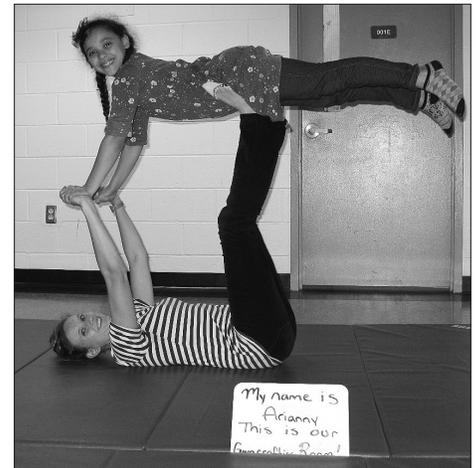
Room 212

Here at Mission Hill School we celebrate each other's differences and support one another. As part of community building, we work on listening, identifying and understanding each other's feelings. This is crucial to putting oneself in another person's shoes. During our morning meetings, we discuss pictures of faces that express emotions. Recently this week, students acted out scenes of intentional versus unintentional behavior. “*That was intentional because he didn't apologize and was smiling about the fact that he hit someone,*” one student remarked about a skit.

One community project we plan to take on is creating signs within our classroom that encourage pro-social behaviors and discourage teasing and bullying. It is incredibly important to make sure everyone feels safe and can focus on the learning. Another suggestion was for some to take a

stand for one another by telling others to stop the teasing if they see it or hear it. Still one community member suggested we could tell others how we feel, tell them to stop and go tell an adult if there wasn't a change in the behavior. Be on the lookout for posters in our room!

-Brendan, Heron & Josh



Arianny from Alicia's class shares her love of Gymcraftics with a Japanese pen pal (shown with Wellness Coordinator Laura).

Room 216

We are well on our way to writing our first drafts to our Japanese pen pals. The class is super excited to share news and photos about our classroom. Amber wishes we could write our letters in Japanese! The class loved seeing photos of the area in Japan where Rachel's brother lives. Arianny wanted to share her work in Gymcraftics and Dalia decided to show of the gym and our amazing art space. We don't have the names of our pen pals yet but soon....

We have also been working on multiplication in room 216 and how it relates to what we know about addition. There are many strong mathematicians in Grades three and four.

CLASSROOM NEWS

Our community is solid, although always progressing and we're happy to report that most students have been present every day so that has been wonderful!

-Alicia, Shaina & Rachel

GRADES 5&6

Room 215

Last week students began their field studies by visiting the Arnold Arboretum, with the objective of observing nature and completing field journals about an Ecosystem they have been studying in class for the past couple weeks. Our young future scientists were able to observe, gather information, take important notes and draw pictures of what they had observed so they could complete their field journal write-ups upon returning to class.

It was a great experience for our students who have embarked on this unit of field study, which is connected to a larger thematic unit with Andrew MacBlane from the Boston Nature Center. Andrew has helped create an indoor garden planting with our students.

After the field observation, students returned to school with a better and clearer understanding of what an Ecosystem is. Learning about habitats, environments, and how each living organism contributes to the balance of an ecosystem outdoors in nature made it easier for them to define the terms they had already learned in class. A big thank you to Abdi for organizing this field trip and making this experience possible.

-Angela & Abdi

Room 210

Here is the latest installment from some of our End of Week Reflections: "Something that I learned this week



Seedlings sprouting in room 215.

was how to do music on a tablet with Billy. Next week I'm going to try to do even more complicated music on the tablet. One great suggestion I have for the class is to try and make music all together. One thing I wish went better was music (class) because everyone kept talking and we could not pay attention. I would feel [sic] more comfterbul [sic] if music class was a little different."

"I am excited about the weekend because maybe I am going to the Cambridge mall to buy more clothes and shoes and go to a boat tour around Boston."

"Something that went well this week is...My family confrence [sic] because Nakia learned a lot about what I want to learn this year. Also things I want to get better at. Plus my Moms talked and they told him some stuff. I think this is going to be a good year."

"Something I learned this week was how to do a stress ball. It's really fun to do. I might do it at home with my sister and my mom cuz [sic] in my house it can really help."

"I learned how to do a little bit more times (multiplication) in math. I also learned how to write a little bit more. I wrote about Water Country. I want to know how to type faster."

-Nakia, June & Elsa

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

This week in 8th grade math, we learned a problem solving strategy called "guess-check-generalize." Often, after people are comfortable using symbols to solve equations, it is hard to figure out how to write an equation to represent the math in a context or story problem. Yet we often have an intuitive sense of how to solve the problem. Enter Guess-Check-Generalize.

First, take a guess and check if it is correct. Keep track of your steps. What math did you do? Take another guess, and again record your process, the steps you took to check if your guess was correct.

Here's where our strategy changes from the more common Guess and

Check approach. We don't want to keep guessing until we find the solution. We want to use what we know about variables to generalize. So instead of taking another guess, we apply the same steps to a variable and write an equation.

Consider this problem. A person travelled from Boston to Washington at 60 mph. The return trip took one and a half hours longer traveling at 50 mph. How far apart are Boston and Washington? Francisco shared his approach and guesses. Knowing that the distance of both trips would be the same was a key understanding to writing an equation.

Tackling word problems can be challenging, but what better way to put our new equation solving skills to use!

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

"We rotate around the sun, everybody knows that!" replied one student, after I asked whether or not the sun orbits the earth or the other way around. Then I asked them to provide evidence that we orbit the sun. The room became quiet, as they searched for such evidence, the evidence never came.

As part of our study of physical science we're learning about the solar system and how our understanding of the solar system has changed over time. We started by looking at illustrations of how some of the first astronomers believed the universe was organized. Many students were shocked to believe that we use to believe that the earth was the center of what was then understood to be the universe and everything else rotated around us. Some students said it reminded them of how people used to believe the world was flat.

We will spend the rest of the week looking at the work of the early astronomers and creating our own illustrations of the solar system.
-Reginald Toussaint, Carol East-José & Manny St. Vil

GOT NEWS?

Do you have news or information that you would like to share with the MHS community?

Email submissions to
Dani Coleman:
dcoleman@missionhillschool.org.

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

School Bus Opt-Out

Is your child assigned to a school bus that he or she does not ride? If your child will not use the school bus service please complete the Yellow Bus Service Opt-Out form attached. Thank you.

Singit! Chorus

Community Music Center of Boston is offering a FREE choral to MHS students in grades 4-6 on Wednesday afternoons. For more information, please contact CMCB at 617-482-7494.

Brrr!

As fall approaches, we want to make sure all students have clothes to keep them warm through the winter. If your children needs a new, warm, winter coat please let Courtney know. She will be getting new coats for any child that needs one in October (infants and siblings too). Call, email, or stop by Room 114 to let her know what sizes your family needs. She can also get extra seasonal clothing for children ages 0-12 on an as needed basis. Check in with her if

that is something that will help your family.

Family Council Positions

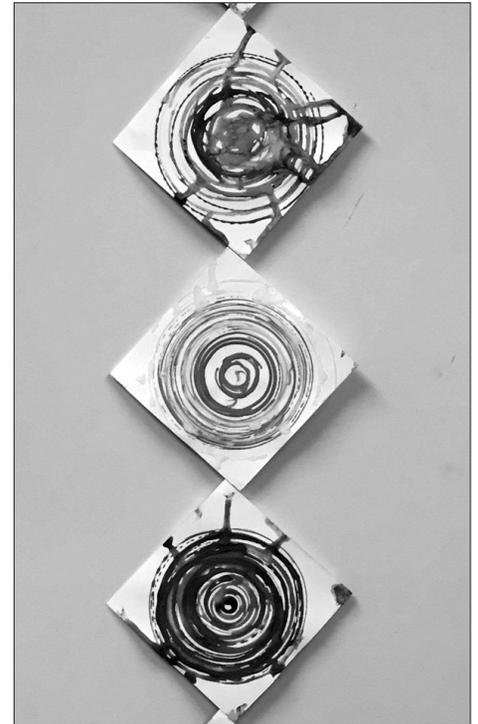
The first Family Council meeting will be held on **Thursday, November 13th 5:45 – 7:00**. Dinner and childcare are provided. Please rsvp to Joni in the main office by Tuesday, 11/11 if childcare is needed.

Good Morning Mission Hill Premieres!

Save the date for two exciting premieres of the *Good Morning Mission Hill* documentary! More info to come in next week's News.

Wednesday, 12/10/14, 6:00-7:30 pm
Boston University
College of Arts and Sciences
General public invited: FREE!

Thursday, 12/11/14 6:00 - 7:00 pm
MHS Auditorium
MHS Families only!



As part of Physical Science, students have been creating spin art, using salad spinners and contraptions made of old fans. They are currently hanging colorfully throughout the school.

Ayla Gavins, *Principal*
Deborah Meier, *Founder*

John McDonough, *Interim Superintendent*

Mission Hill K-8 School
A Boston Public Pilot School

WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG

20 Child Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
T 617-635-6384
F 617-635-6419

SY14-15 Yellow Bus Service Opt-Out Form

STUDENT NAME _____ STUDENT ID.# _____
STUDENT DATE OF BIRTH ____/____/____ PARENT NAME _____
SCHOOL NAME _____

PLEASE NOTE: After opting-out yellow bus service, if a parent/guardian informs us that he or she instead wishes to reinstate yellow bus service, reassignment to a yellow bus may take as long as one month, a student's bus stop may be as much as one mile from their home address, and/or their bus ride may be longer than one hour.

YELLOW BUS SERVICE OPT-OUT

Check the below box if and only if you wish the BPS Transportation Department to remove yellow bus transportation service for your student. By checking the box you acknowledge that you will NOT receive yellow bus transportation services.

YES – I WISH TO OPT-OUT OF YELLOW BUS TRANSPORTATION SERVICE FOR MY SON OR DAUGHTER. I UNDERSTAND THAT MY SON OR DAUGHTER WILL NOT RECEIVE YELLOW BUS SERVICE.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT USE ONLY

DATE RECEIVED: _____ DATE PROCESSED: _____ Effective Date: _____

APPROVED [] NOT APPROVED [] Reason _____ T.O. _____

**“another splendid
piece of work!”**

*Alfie Kohn, award winning
writer on children and schools*



The freedom to teach
**GOOD MORNING
MISSION HILL**

The freedom to learn

“A remarkable and inspiring film!

**What you see in this film is
real learning.”**

*Nancy Carlsson Paige,
founder, Defending The Early Years*



Mission Hill School Premiere!

Thursday, December 11, 2014

6:00 - 7:30 pm

MHS Auditorium

For MHS Families



a new film by Tom and Amy Valens.
creators of *AUGUST TO JUNE: bringing Life to school*