



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Tuesday, November 4, 7:30 - 3:30 pm
Election Day Bake Sale (see page 6)
- Friday, November 7, 9:45 - 10:15 am
Friday Share: Music
- Thursday, November 13, 5:45 - 7:00
Family Council Meeting

October 31, 2014

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K-8

Dear Families, Students, Staff, and Friends,

The other day one of our teachers commented on how many upper middle class white families in our school shared desires for their children to attend one of the Boston exam schools. In each case the family intended to end their child's time at MHS prematurely to attend one of the exam schools. K-8 schools across the district experience this white flight in the upper grades. The impact of this segregation on children and the school community is worthy of reflection and discussion.

When a family decides to leave and send their child to another school for grade seven it's like the cake that we've carefully provided all the ingredients for doesn't get to bake. From the school perspective, we put a great deal into our students (and families) and the early departures are disappointing. The empty seats of students who leave us, make space for wonderful new students to join our community. But having too many new students can challenge the continuity of the work we are trying to do.

Our middle school program, grades seven and eight, is designed to build upon the seven or eight years of schooling at MHS. Middle school students are members of the school Governance Board. They become part of decision making for the school and represent the student body voice. The portfolio exhibition that all grade seven and eight students are required to present is stylistically similar to a scholar's dissertation in the way students must defend their work and learning to a committee. Students are prepared because of the K-6 ways of sharing work that lead up to this community ritual and learning experience.

In grade eight students participate in the Apprentice Learning Program run by Helen Russell. Younger students learn to be responsible community members, follow through on work and commitments, and reflect on who they are as learners. These habits are applied in Apprentice Learning. In the program students go off site to a local business where they are supervised as they take on tasks set by the organization. Research and decision-making skills are applied when students begin to research high schools and make well informed decisions about the next steps in their schooling. The research involves gathering information from a variety of sources including visiting schools. How to sort through options and present one's best self will serve students well as they seek higher education settings or employment. What one will contribute to a new school community or workplace is something students begin to think about in the final year at MHS.

Despite all that's given to foster strong relationships and a learning environment, some families can't seem to survive the temptation, rumors and lure of a competitive school setting. If there is a natural drifting apart as people change, why does it fall along racial and economic lines? Something to think about.



2014 K-8 MHS graduates, Gavin and James. Gavin is now a freshman at Boston Community Leadership Academy and James attends New Mission High School.

CLASSROOM NEWS

KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

Last week children and teachers in room 108 made the applesauce in class. We love to pick apples from our little orchard at our outdoor playtime. Last Tuesday, we picked about 15 medium size apples that were way up on the top of the apple tree. Ms. GERALYN had an idea after seeing so many apples. She said instead of eating the fresh apples, which we do many times, children should learn how applesauce is made. So she brought in an apple peeler and a crock pot and asked me to cook with the children while she was out. This was a test for me. I love to cook Vietnamese and vegan food but never cooked applesauce before in my life...yet, I did it! It was a success! Most of the children and adults in the class liked it. I made a quick survey and the result was 82% loved the applesauce and 18% didn't like it. Let me tell you, I was very excited and I would happily do it again.

-Thuy Truong

Room 106

The Sparkling Birds are fully immersed in our unit study about water. The students have been using eyedroppers to observe water drops. They have dropped them onto flat surfaces, curved surfaces, and even into oil. We also began conducting a science experiment using the scientific method, a process that professional scientists use every day!

Question: What happens to a cup of water if you leave it outside?

Hypothesis: "It will spread out", "It's going to dry up", "There will be more because maybe it will rain".

Procedure: 1. Fill a cup with water.

Make it colored so it's easier to see.

2. Make a line on the cup to show where the water was when the experiment started.

3. Check the line every day to see what happens.

Stop by room 106 to see our conclusions!

Our door is always open,
-Liz Borson & Stephanie Batista



Adrianna and Camden peel apples from the playground orchard.

Room 107

For the first few weeks of school, Room 107 has been busy having fun with math. We have engaged in sorting activities, explored how to use the calendar, made representational drawings of groups of objects, played some strategy games, dabbled in writing equations based

on the day's attendance, and have been counting every chance we get. Most recently our focus of looking at, taking, discussing, and reading the results of classroom surveys has not just been building students' math skills but their voices as well. While doing surveys, it can often be challenging for students to share their honest opinions/observations versus following that of their peers. This was evident while completing our first survey that asked "Is the sun powerful enough to pop popcorn (using the sun oven)?" While 13 students answered, "Yes", only one answered "No". After completing the experiment, we were all surprised that the popcorn kernels had not popped! While we have learned many things about surveys, our most important lesson has been that it is ok to be the only one who thinks something different. In fact, it is quite powerful!

-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

Room 109

Story workshop is up and running in room 109. The big questions that are guiding our work as teacher researchers include What stories do we hear children telling in their play? What might inspire them to tell new stories? What materials can we offer the children to reflect their interests and help them tell their stories?

The children helped make a list of materials that they could use to tell stories in our classroom: color paddles, felt, blocks, dramatic play, light table, paint, puppets, words, doll-house, felt board, markers, crayons, our new collection of beautiful stuff, friends.

During story creation time, Kaia, Ella, Moxie, and Beatrice have been busy cutting pieces of felt and fabric

CLASSROOM NEWS

and assembling them into little scenes. Theodore and Emeric have been acting out restaurant stories in dramatic play. William Dickey and Simona are retelling the story of the Three Little Pigs while asking, how could this story be different? Avian is drawing and telling a story about a Tooth Fairy. Théo is creating a story about our rainbow tree.

I look forward to sharing the children's stories as they unfold!

-Jenny Goldstein

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 204

Yells of delight, laughter, giggles, oohs and ahhs – these sounds were emitted by both children and adults alike as the largest bubbles most of us have ever seen were sent floating into the air above us. Jada, Jenny, GERALYN, Abdi, and NAKIA's classes gathered outside on the field for our special guest, James Ditcher, a professional bubble maker!

As a part of our bubble study, I invited Mr. Ditcher to join us. With simple tools and a great attitude, James made a variety of different bubbles – large round bubbles, long bubbles, multiple bubbles at the same time, big bubbles with small bubbles attached and more! As we watched, room 204 came up with our



Alicia's class visited the JFK Library (see page 4)



Professional Bubble Maker, James Ditcher, impresses students with his bubble-making skills.

own ideas of how to replicate Mr. Ditcher's bubbles.

Back in our classroom, we brainstormed a list of materials and possible procedures for how to do these wonderfully big bubbles ourselves! Our list included string, bamboo, straws and more. Stay tuned for what we came up with!

-Jenerra Williams

Room 205

Room 205 explored the force of THRUST with flying objects this week. Please enjoy the photographic evidence of our exciting experiments on page four!

-Ashleigh, Kate, & Amy

Room 217

Relevance is one of Mission Hill's Habits of Mind. This requires students to ask: why does this matter and is it important? During our study of simple machines, we have begun to look closely at how simple machines have helped make

our communities more accessible. Guests from the Boston Center for Independent Living (a civil right's organization that provides services to people with disabilities by mostly people with disabilities) visited our classroom to talk about how many people with disabilities use simple machines to gain access to the wider community. They shared how laws changed to make our country more inclusive, including a law that makes all public places have ramps (or inclined planes). Students were given various tools to explore and made predictions about how they tools were used. Always relating back to our essential question, students shared why they thought these tools helped people live in our community. Cyrus and Rui explored a tool that helps people of shorter stature reach items that would otherwise be inaccessible.

-Emma Fialka-Feldman



From top to bottom: Zora gets ready to make a balloon jet. Lukas, Milo, Anand, and Nate count down the launch of their flying object. Amos launches his rubber band jet.

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 207

On Fridays, fourth graders attend workshops at Urban Improv. Urban Improv offers “an innovative approach to experiential learning that uses structured, interactive, topical improvisation focused on real-life challenges and choices.”

Our workshop begins with the Urban Improv adults singing a song and doing a skit. The songs and skits have a theme; self-esteem, healthy nutrition habits, and peer pressure are a few examples. During the skit they stop and ask several kids to join in, giving them an opportunity to express their thoughts about the topic. When the skits are done we have a more in-depth conversation, which allows students to personally connect to the topic. Lastly, the kids are put into four small groups. Three of the groups along with their Urban Improv adult, create a skit, along with costumes to perform for the rest of the groups. The fourth group gets to use various instruments to make music for the skits.

Each week fourth graders are engaged and learn about important topics while they have a blast acting and making music.

-Amina Michel-Lord & Juan Cortes

Room 212

We finally have a class name! I'd like to review the process of how we came to our class: Fantastic Fourteen. Students brainstormed ideas and we voted on the names. Once we got down to the final three, we had a secret ballot. The students voted on Lego Bluejays, Chippy Chipmunks, or Fantastic Fourteen. Then someone mentioned if adults were going to vote and we had a discussion as to

why or why not adults should vote. I put out an email to parents to ask them for feedback on how we should vote. One suggestion was to have another secret ballot for the class to vote on whether adults should vote. The class overwhelmingly felt adults should vote on the class name. During the whole process, voices were strong, quite a few defended their answers well and tried to persuade the class of their opinions. They learned that the process can be a messy one, to fight for what they believe in and persuasion isn't always an easy skill. It was a great learning experience for us all and hopefully one that can be revisited. Don't be surprised if our class name changes again!

-Brendan, Heron & Josh

Room 216

Wish you were here! Over the last week we had two unique experiences that we wish all could share. The Tufts Trunk players came to visit last week. Trunk is a non-profit college student-run group that writes and performs their own shows for local schools. A big thank you to Inka's mom for helping us feed the hungry college students with a homemade Finnish treat and other classroom families who helped us to raise \$50 for Trunk's charity of choice: The Children's Room, a local organization that provides safe, supportive communities for grieving children and families.

The show was a lovely chance for students to practice being an audience and being entertained. Lastly, the kids were able to ask the Tufts students about college and they seemed fascinated to know that they could study acting in college.

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Our other exciting adventure this week was our visit to the JFK Library and the weather couldn't have been more beautiful! While there we toured the Library and participated in a program that celebrated the important role singing played in the civil rights movement. Students acted out vignettes that included sit-ins and then sang accompanying songs like "We Shall Overcome" and "This Little Light of Mine". When talking about the last the program director asked a question about its title. Olivia said "maybe it means (brown) people want to shine their lights just as bright as the white people" and Ezra said "they want peace to shine". "Out of the mouths of babes..."
-Alicia, Shaina & Rachel

GRADES 5&6

Room 215

Our Math Board is up - thanks to Lindsey Caputo, an arts and education major at MassArt. Over the past few weeks we have had Professor Beth Balliro's students helping us develop a visual imagery of community building. More on that later. I'm excited about the Math Board, a space to display students' work and to ponder our narratives with numbers. Teaching sixth grade math involves digging into students' self concepts as math learners, and quickly arriving at feelings of exasperation: "I am not good at math!" "I can't do math!" Mathematical thinking is no different than any other kind of thinking; the closer we get to math conceptually the closer we get to a basic human need to give order and meaning to experience. And yet math learning is often confusing and alienating. Angela and I are listening to our

students' stories with math. And, thankfully, numbers also have a narrative: who created ratios? When did humans find fractions necessary? Stories that answer these questions and more will be on display shortly. We will also document how MHS Habits of Work, forethought, perseverance, production and reflection may improve how we see ourselves as math thinkers.

At home, sharing stories of learning math will enrich our Math Board.
-Abdi & Angela

Room 210

All of the 5th graders (our class combined with Abdi's class) have been participating in Urban Improv this fall.

According to their website: "*Urban Improv is an interactive program for young people that uses improvisational theater workshops to teach violence prevention, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Today: this means cyber bullying. The program's innovative curriculum helps students deal creatively with major issues in their lives. It is truly a rehearsal for life.*"

We have had a long standing relationship with the program and are excited to be part of it again. We used to go as a mixed age class however two years ago they begin to ask us to come as a grade band to better fit their tailored, grade specific curriculum. Later this year, Abdi will bring the entire 6th grade. I'm looking forward to seeing children explore through improvisation and role playing.

-Nakia, June & Elsa

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

This week we finished reading



Giselle and Anais act out a scenario during Urban Improv.

A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park. We reviewed our theme understanding and essential questions: Change happens because ordinary people notice problems and respond. What do I believe? How do my actions tell others what I believe? We watched videos in which Salva Dut, whose story is told in the book, explains how he responded to the problem of access to clean water for his father and others in his country. Salva, an ordinary boy forced to leave his home at a young age, returned determined to find a solution to the water problem. He started Water for South Sudan so that more people would have the stable life that a steady source of water allows. After Salva works with a village to dig a well, the people build schools, markets flourish, and children dream of becoming leaders and doctors and engineers.

A Long Walk to Water alternates between Salva's refugee story and Nya's life in a village without clean water. Students are exploring this strategy of telling parallel yet connected stories by writing poems for two voices. We look forward to sharing our work with you.

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

There was a lot of commotion in the classroom as the experiment proceeded, students sprayed water in their boxes to mimic rain. They then sprinkled ground coffee to stimulate pollutants. There were changes in the water. Students asked, "Why did the water changed to green or yellow and some remained clear?" "Why did some of the coffee floated instead of sinking?" Some students quickly stated that the changes in the water were a representation of water pollution.

We've started our study of the Charles River watershed with Andrew MacBlane of the Massachusetts Audubon Society. We worked on our first experiment that demonstrated how water becomes polluted. Throughout the year we will examine the water quality of the watershed by testing various sites. Our first site visit will be the Jamaica Pond. We will provide updates of our findings in this space throughout the year.

-Carol East-José, Reginald Toussaint, & Manny St. Vil

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

BTU Parent 2 Parent Conference

The BTU is offering a FREE conference for families and educators to encourage and promote family engagement and collaboration. Breakfast, lunch and childcare are provided!

ed! Saturday, November 8 from 8:30 am - 3:00 pm. Contact Jessica Tang at 617-288-2000 or jtang@btu.org.

Apprentice Learning

Over the last six weeks of preparatory classes we have watched as the first group of Mission Hill Apprentices assessed their talents and abilities, and use that information to inform decisions about the types of jobs or careers they may want. In addition, Apprentices have practiced the skills necessary to communicate that to their employers. It has been a pleasure working with them and we hope everyone will join us in asking these students about their apprenticeships working alongside some inspiring community professionals. Placements for this group include:

Nazareth Child Center
Early Childhood Education care
 Polka Dog Bakery
Retail pet food and supplies
 New England Baptist Hospital
Healthcare
 The Pet Shop, Allston
Retail exotic pets
 JP Comics
Retail graphic arts
 Fresh Hair
Hair & beauty salon

Bake Sale on Election Day!

The Family Council is holding a bake sale down in the polling area of the school building on Election Day. Please drop off individually-wrapped baked goods in the Resource Room (223) on the morning of Tuesday, November 4th. We also need parent volunteers for any amount of time between 7:30 am - 3:30 pm. Please email Bridget Lee with questions: bridgetlee@gmail.com.

Family Council News

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, 11/11/14 if childcare is needed.

Good Morning Mission Hill Premieres!

Two exciting premieres of the *Good Morning Mission Hill* documentary!

Wednesday, 12/10/14, 6:00-7:30 pm Boston University

Kenmore Classroom Bldg., Rm 101
 565 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston
General public invited: FREE!

Thursday, 12/11/14 6:00 - 7:30 pm MHS Auditorium

Now open to the public!



In their study of simple machines, Cyrus and Rui explore a tool that helps people of shorter stature reach items that would otherwise be inaccessible (see page 3).

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

John McDonough, *Interim Superintendent*

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 A Boston Public Pilot School

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**Thursday, 12/11/14
6:00 - 7:30 pm
MHS Auditorium
Now open to the public!**

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