



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Thursday, November 13, 5:45 – 7:00
Family Council Meeting in Library
- Tuesday, November 11, 2014
No School: Veteran's Day
- Monday-Wednesday, November 17-19
Grades 7 & 8 to Farm School (see below)

November 7, 2014

Volume 18, Issue 8

Orientation Reminders

Dear Families, Students, Staff, and Friends,

When introducing prospective parents and caregivers to Mission Hill there are a few things that I always mention. We all know that information given doesn't mean that information has been received. It's a good idea to revisit things. What follows are few reminders.

Students in levels K1-8 will spend a day or more during this school year at the Farm School in Athol, MA. Levels K1-4 will be there for a day trip (arriving back at school around 5:30pm). Students in levels 5-8 spend three days and two nights there. This trip is considered instructional time just as regular classes are. Unless there is a medical condition that prohibits your child from attending, your child is expected to join the class on this trip. Please complete all necessary paperwork for your child's attendance. Your child's teacher will provide this. See page six for all 2014 Farm School trip dates.

Mission Hill is an anti-homophobic school that proudly serves all students and families regardless of gender variance or sexual orientation. Information is available upon request from your child's teacher or Courtney Bruno if you have questions or would like support in conversing with your child about this topic.

Our students and families come in many different arrangements and from many different places from all over the world that bring cultures, races, religions, rituals, and languages that may feel foreign to you. For these reasons, we use the terms family or caregiver instead of parent. We also don't celebrate holidays or birthdays; we celebrate learning instead. If you would like to come to your child's classroom to share with others about your family, customs, or traditions, please contact your child's teacher.

Family leadership also comes in many forms and there are multiple ways to participate. Family Council, Governance Board, Friends of the Mission Hill School, library volunteers, classroom helpers, classroom snack providers, classroom material/toy organizer/cleaners, school fundraisers, and accompanying a group of children to school are just a few examples.

The first Family Council meeting is Thursday, November 13, from 5:45 to 7:00pm. Child care is provided. Please RSVP to Joni by Tuesday 11/11 if child care is needed. Hope to see you there.



Feeding chickens at Farm School. All MHS students, in classes K1-8 spend time at the farm each school year.

KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

In Room 108 we have been enjoying many books about motion by the prolific author and illustrator, Donald Crews. Crews has won Caldecott medals for a number of his books. I have read his books with children for many years - and have found children drawn to the bold illustrations and carefully chosen words. So far we have read *School Bus*, *Freight Train*, *Sail Away*, *Flying Parade*, *Truck* and *Bicycle Race*. We have multiple copies of many of these books - which is good because they are so popular. Some children in our class know the books so well from reading them over and over with an adult, that they can now “read” the books to themselves. Do you have Donald Crews books at home? Can you find some at the public library? Maybe you can help us expand our collection of Donald Crews books related to motion!

-Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin

Room 106

As the Sparkling Birds continue our investigation of water, we have begun discussing the properties of water. During our observations of a water drop, the students watched as we used pipettes to drip water into vegetable oil. But what happened when the drops got to the bottom of the jar? “The water all goes together there. You don’t see little drops anymore.” We also discussed how water “sticks together”. We demonstrated this property by comparing a wet paintbrush to a dry paintbrush. “The bristles are spread out when it’s dry, but they are all together in a little point when it’s wet”. Observing the water and oil led us to wonder

something else. What does dissolve mean, and what dissolves in water? “Dissolving is when you mix and mix and mix and then you can’t see it anymore. It camouflages into the water”. We tested sugar, salt, and oil to see what would dissolve into water. Ask us about what we found out!

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

Room 107

As we explore what it means to be powerful, Room 107 has continued to look at our individual personal power. We have found that not only do we have the power to make others feel good about themselves by being “bucket fillers”, we can make ourselves feel better when certain emotions leave us feeling powerless. Together, we came up with examples of what to do when feeling angry, tired, sad, frustrated, happy, etc. While it would be difficult to share all their “feelings boosters”, here are a few examples.

In answer to the question of what to do when feeling angry, students listed

the following: play in the dollhouse, paint, take a walk or a stroll, take a rest, read a book, breathe in and out, cry, drink water, or dance.

When feeling bored they said the following: pretend to be a spy, lay down on the couch, play Legos, or make peace signs.

Stop by our room to find out more strategies to boost your mood.

-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

Room 109

This week the children have been exploring light with the aid of overhead projectors. Guiding our work was the question, *what happens when you place these materials on the overhead projector?*

The children collaborated while exploring the new tool. They used color paddles to project rainbows, and collections of objects to make abstract designs. Soon they began to put materials together to make representations of people. Following our project time I asked the children to reflect on their experience with the overhead projector. Beatrice shared,



Children in Jenny’s class experiment with light.

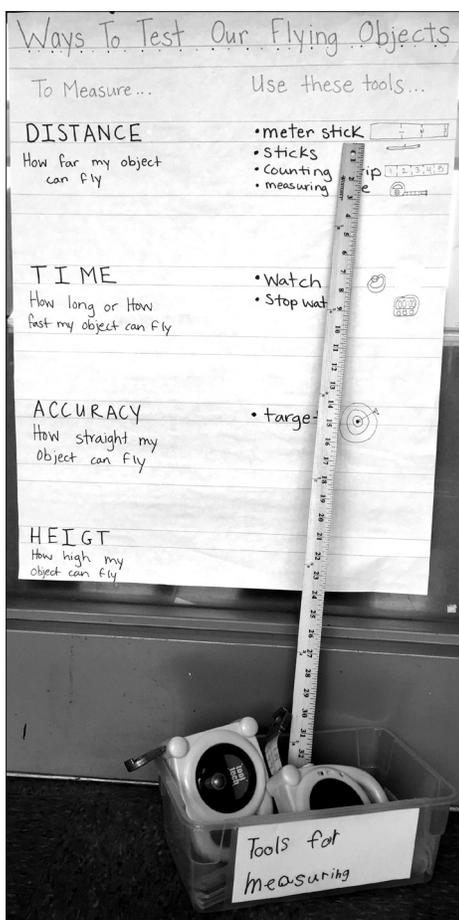
“If you put stuff on the overhead, it projects on the wall. Sometimes it’s colored, and sometimes it’s like shadows.”

With the introduction of this new tool, the overhead projector, the children are beginning to discover new aspects of what happens when light encounters objects in the environment. We will begin to explore shadows and transparency.

Beatrice’s observation will come back around again. I’m wondering: Can shadows have color? What will the children think? What do you think?

-Jenny Goldstein

GRADES 1 & 2



Students in Ashleigh’s class use multiple methods to test their flying objects.

Room 204

The Blackhawks. The Mohawks. The Magic Gryffindor Owls. The Magic Explorers. Last week we began the process for choosing our class name and this week, we narrowed the list to these – the top four. Students have split into four groups and are working on convincing us that their group name is the best name for our classroom.

Each group in answering the following questions: What is a Blackhawk/Mohawk/gryffin/explorer? How are we like a/an Blackhawk/Mohawk/gryffin/explorer? Can you list two reasons why we should have this class name?

They will present the answers to these questions along with a poster the group creates, in hopes that we will all be persuaded to choose their name. Some thoughts include, “Mohawks are awesome and so is our work” and “Explorers find out things and so do we.”

We will complete group work this week and will hold our class name elections next week!

-Jenerra Williams

Room 205

The engineers of Room 205 have started designing, building, and testing flying objects. You may have noticed the runway outside our classroom where students test their ideas and record data. At the end of project time we reserve some time for reflection - one of the Mission Hill Habits of Work. This is a time for students to hear about what their classmates worked on and perhaps become inspired. It is also a time for the students to reflect on their own work and to learn from the ideas of others. Here are some reflections:

Euan: “I think it will go because of the rubber band. I made this one different by not bending the straw. I found out if you stretch it farther, it goes farther. Cyrus found out you can bend the wings to make it go straighter.”

Braxton: “I changed my plane. I added a paper clip for it to go faster.”

Anand: “It was pretty cool. Our group found out the bigger the balloon was, the further it went.”

Adam: “I tried the white straw. It did 3 loopy loops. Then the green straw did 5 or 3 or 2 loopy loops.”

Olivia: “I had my head up and aimed it up and it zoomed fast. Then Emile tried it.”

You can see some of the students’ flying objects on the *Work In Progress* shelf outside our classroom.

-Ashleigh, Kate, & Amy

Room 217

Authentic problems create opportunities for students to synthesize their learning and ask questions in deeper ways. This week students were posed with a playground complication that resonates deeply with being younger students in a K-8 school: how can we design a playground so that even our youngest students can have access to the structures? We brainstormed what is hard to do on the playground if you are shorter and talked about observations we have gathered from watching K students and our siblings play on the bigger playground. Next, we looked at which simple machines might be able to be added to existing structures to make it more accessible. Some students even started designing structures that would not just be accessible to younger students, but play structures that would be accessible

to someone with a physical disability. Stop by room 217 to see the drafts of these plans and the creative ways students are being engineers to solve problems.

-Emma Fialka-Feldman

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 207

Project time is a part of our day where learning becomes integrated. During these first months of school our students have been able to explore the physical science theme within multiple subjects. If you enter the room during this time you might see students making posters with parts of simple machines and others working on vocabulary related to pulleys in science notebooks. In the block area children might be building simple machines using K'nex. For our math component you might observe 3rd and 4th graders working together to solve multiplication problems.

This time of the day allows for kids to access curriculum through different lenses, capitalizing on their talents and inclinations while at the same time pushing them to explore other forms of expression. Furthermore, project time allows young people to work together and learn from each other. Students become independent learners through the daily application of the habits of minds.

-Juan Cortes & Amina Michel-Lord



Josh's class created pro-social signs, discouraging bullying and teasing.

Room 212

This past weekend, I went to a talk by the Dalai Lama around educating the heart and mind. As I listened I considered how the ideas could be applied to the classroom. He discussed how everyone wants to be free of suffering and enjoy a happy life. How does one become happy? He argued when one cares about the well-being of others, then a person will become happy. Part of this learning means we must first have inner peace – a sense of calmness is how the Dalai Lama explained it. Once we are mentally in a state of calmness, we can begin to practice forgiveness, compassion, empathy, and love on a personal level.

How can this idea be applied to the classroom? Well - for one - students are learning to put themselves in other people's shoes, particularly when it comes to problem-solving with one another. Eventually the values will be practiced and passed along to other classmates. Next, students practice these values with other students on a school level, then on a neighborhood level. In this way, humanity begins to change on a societal level. For now, we'll work on a personal level.

-Josh, Brendan, & Heron

Room 216

In room 216 we can hardly believe that it is November. Summer seems like a distant, wondrous memory. Our class continues to grow into a loving, supportive, productive community. We are building momentum, moving towards sustainability, and getting a lot done. The growth over the past few weeks is evident and the aha moments abound.

Stay tuned for words from our friends in Japan! Students there have received our letters, artwork and photographs and are constructing responses as you read this. The project was very exciting and students are looking so forward to a reply that we've decided to also adopt at a third grade class at a local Boston school. Students will write to these new friends at the Conley School in Roslindale and then meet them on a joint field trip at the end of the month.

An additional focus this week is both Relevance and Evidence from our Habits of Mind. Students are asked to use these lenses in all domains but in particular how they work in the mathematical setting and in our writing.

Feel free to ask your scholar, how do you know what you know? They may huff and puff and give you a sigh but hopefully they will then provide you with some evidence!

-Alicia, Shaina & Rachel

GRADES 5&6

Room 210

"Wow! They did all of that just to take a picture?!" "Look at all of those steps!" These comments, along with gasps, oohs and ahs were the reactions of students watching videos of Rube Goldberg contraptions. Ranging in scale, complexity and materials, they were meant to inspire thinking about scientific concepts and engineering feats. Other reactions included, "I see one thing making another thing happen then another thing..."; "Everything is connected to each other"; "I notice that gravity gives all the thing the momentum to connect to the next thing"; "There are lots of chain

reactions”.

Students also noticed the diversity in the materials, and how they were being used. “I didn’t know you could do all of that with K’nex”; “Is that paper!?”; “They used all old toys?”. Some students mentioned the end goals. Others were amazed at how common the end tasks were, taking a picture, making a sandwich, or turning on a light switch. The biggest reaction came from the contraption that sacrificed a laptop computer and started a fire just to turn the page of a newspaper.

-Nakia, June & Elsa

Room 215

For the past two months, our students have been studying the ecosystem. They have planted an indoor garden, simulating an indoor ecosystem, as well as recording data, and making predictions about the growth of the variety of seeds. Finally on Friday, they had an opportunity to go to the Boston Nature Center for a tour with our partner, Andrew MacBlane.

Upon arriving, Andrew provided the students with the rich history of the Nature Center, the Wildlife Sanctuary, and people who lived there before the arrival of the Europeans. In order to make connections to our student’s indoor Ecosystem and the study of living and non-living organisms and their interdependence, Mr. MacBlane conducted an activity where each one of us played a role of either a living and/or non-living organism. As a class, we demonstrated the interaction and interdependency of the organisms in their habitat.

We then embarked on a long walk along the trails, observing, collecting

artifacts of living and nonliving organisms, and studying the water streams. Andrew explained about the negative impact of human’s actions on the ecosystem and the pollution of water streams and rivers by littering. He also explained the importance of preserving wildlife because each and every organism contributes to the balance of the entire Ecosystem.

Thank you to Abdi and Andrew for organizing this unique field trip that connected our students’ class experiences to the actual ecosystem.

-Angela & Abdi

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

Every year on the first day of school, I can count on a certain question being asked. When are we going to Farm School? The annual Farm School trip is one of the most loved Mission Hill experiences, for kids and adults. Yet for new kids and families, the idea of spending time away from home in a very different setting isn’t always thought to be a good idea – until it happens!

Our days are full at the Farm School. Caring for animals, tending the land, preparing and eating wonderful meals, and playing outside in the dark mark our days. Barn work includes feeding the animals and cleaning their stalls. Gardening work might include planting garlic bulbs or removing corn kernels from dried cobs and then popping them – a fine snack on a cold fall day. Forestry work might mean making a huge fire to burn storm-downed branches. Kitchen work draws on the fruit of the land to prepare roasted squash, carrot cake, broccoli pasta, and



Henry running during the kick-off day for the 100 Mile Challenge (see page 6 for more details).

always fresh eggs – the food couldn’t get any better.

The 7/8 classes’ trip will take place Monday, November 17th through Wednesday, November 19th. We’ll spend 3 days and 2 nights at the Farm School, loving every minute of it. Please ask your child for the permission slip and packing list, and call with any questions.

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

On Monday, we had our first fishbowl discussion of the year. Immediately afterward, we debriefed the process. Tobias was the first person to make a suggestion for how to improve the process, “It should be mandatory that everybody speaks at least once.”

The statement startled me. As a young teacher, I struggled with how to encourage every student to speak during fishbowl discussions. I created a grading system that rewarded students who spoke, which didn't necessarily lead to better discussions. Instead, many students rushed to speak once then never spoke again, resulting in a conversation dominated by a few.

I was curious to see how the rest of the class would respond to Tobias' suggestion. Interestingly enough, there was consensus that everybody should speak at least once. I gave students several opportunities to raise any concerns about creating such a rule but they didn't have any. I look forward to the ongoing process for how to improve fishbowl discussions and it's impact on other aspects of our class.

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

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

Adobe Youth Voices

The Adobe Youth Voices program started in early October, and we are now inviting additional students in Grades 4 – 8th to participate. The multimedia technology program focuses on giving students a voice using video, images, spoken and written words or design graphics. A variety of themes are explored (i.e. The Environment, Eating Healthy, Anti-Bullying, etc...). The program meets from 8:00 - 9:00 am on Wednesdays in room 214. For information, contact Carol East-José: ceastjose@missionhillschool.org.

100 Mile Club Challenge

On Tuesday, MHS kicked off the 100 Mile Club Challenge. The goal is to have students and teachers collec-



Billy Buss leading children in song during music night last year.

tively walk 100 miles by June 2015. Students did a phenomenal job. Noteworthy mentions go to Henry Madden (4 miles), Emelia O'Gilvie (2.2 miles) and David Thomas (2 miles). Thank you to all for a successful day. Please encourage your child(ren) to complete their miles at recess, with classroom teachers, or by walking to school. We look forward to completing this challenge as a school community.

-Carol East-José & Laura Golitko

Bake Sale on Election Day!

Many thanks to everyone who donated baked goods and helped to sell the goods at the Election Day Bake Sale.

Six hundred dollars was raised to help support the MHS Family Council! We hope to see you at the first meeting on Thursday, 11/13

from 5:45 - 7:00 pm in the school library. Dinner will be served. Please RSVP to Joni if you need childcare-617-635-6384.

Hooray for Billy!

Congratulations to our music teacher, Billy Buss who is one of 13 semi-finalists in the annual Thelonious Monk International Jazz Competition! The "the most prestigious jazz competition in the world" focuses on a different instrument every year and this year is Billy's instrument, the trumpet! Proceeds from the competition and subsequent gala support jazz education in schools across the country. Keep an eye out for the final results next week.

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

John McDonough, *Interim Superintendent*

Mission Hill K-8 School
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***