



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Thursday, February 5, 2015
Family Council Meeting, 5:45-7:00 pm
- February 5-6, 2015 (times and dates TBA)
Family Conferences
- Friday, February 13, 2015
Coffee House at MHS, 6:00 - 7:00 pm

January 23, 2015

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Caregiver as Teacher at MHS

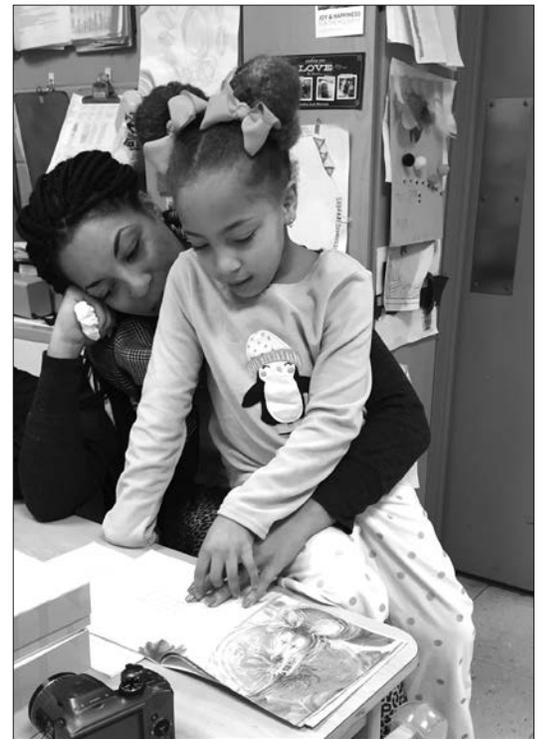
Dear Families, Students, Staff, and Friends,

There has been a recurring theme in our staff conversations lately. Ann and I were struck by the presence of parents and caregivers who assisted with teaching students at a school we visited in the fall. Last week our staff spent some time planning for small math groups across the school. After exhausting everyone we had available to us on staff to lead these groups, we quickly realized that we needed people to come in from the community to work with our students. Finally, this past weekend our staff came together for the annual winter retreat. One of the many things we talked about was our desire to have deeper and more individualized learning for our students. In order for this to work ideally, we need more adults to come in and share their expertise with our young people.

Here is one ask on behalf of our older students. Do you have an hour on Fridays to work with students in grade 7 and 8 for six weeks? Each Friday our middle school students will participate in 45-minute workshops and study groups. The topics include, but are not limited to math, reading, carpentry, and sewing. As a workshop leader you are encouraged to bring what you love to do and share that passion or expertise with our students.

The other opportunity involves working with students in grade 5 and 6 on mathematics. The grade 5 and 6 team is looking for 8 volunteers to run small math groups on topics specified by the teacher. For this you will be needed for an hour and 15 minutes on Thursdays to work with a small group of students from 10:30 to 11:35 or 2:00 to 3:05. Each group will run for approximately six weeks.

There is a wealth of talent and information that our parents and caregivers have. This is a wonderful opportunity to share those gifts with the students. If you are able to volunteer one hour per week please contact Ayla or Joni by phone or e-mail. Feel free to share the attached invitation with trusted adults you know who you think would be a great match for our students. If you could commit some time to working with our students, I think you would really enjoy the experience of getting to know them and watching them accomplish something through your guidance.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ayla Jarvis".

KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

This week, students in Room 108 are continuing to learn about the important and sacred animals from Egypt and Nubia. On Tuesday, students made animal puppets. They also learned about our five senses. We want them to use all five senses with the high order of thinking skills when investigating or observing animals or things around them, just like scientists. For example, children will learn to how to sort and classify animals by the coverings, number of legs, types of habitats, and their movements. Also, they will have to choose a certain animal to be a pet. Students will learn more about animals and the five senses songs as the weeks go by. We were happy when Emma's Mom told us that Emma was singing the *Camel Song* at home many times. For music and dance Mr. Billy, our music teacher, will continue with the animal dance that he introduced last week. We hope to soon have a dance ready for our Friday Share.

-Thuy Truong

Room 106

This week the students in room 106 have been thinking about rivers. What is a river? Our class read a poem called "River" which talks about the river "running". How can a river run? The children observed that a river is long and skinny. "It moves. When you put something in it it floats away." We discussed that a river is always going down a very slight (or very steep) hill. That's why a river seems like it's always "running." This led us to our introduction of the Nile. Why was it important for people in Egypt and other parts of

the desert to live close to the Nile? We are beginning to think about the many reasons the Nile was such an important part of life in ancient Egypt and Nubia.

In other news, the Sparkling birds made ice cream last Friday! We put all of the ingredients into a small bag. Were the ingredients liquid or solid? "Liquid! Because of the milk." Then we put the ingredient bag into a larger bag of ice and salt. Then it was time to shake! The kids had a great time dancing and shaking their ice cream bags. The best part- we got to eat it when we were done! Is it still a liquid? "No- now we have to eat it with a spoon!"

-Liz & Stephanie

Room 107

"How come you are the boss of this classroom?"

As I helped zip student jackets Tuesday afternoon in preparation for dismissal, the above question seemed to come out of nowhere. It was not said in a disrespectful way. In fact, how it was said made it clear that Romeo was grappling with this idea of "institutional power" for a while. The American Medical Student Association defines institutional power as *"The ability or official authority to decide what is best for others. The ability to decide who will have access to resources. The capacity to exercise control over others."* So, yes Romeo. Who put me in charge? Why do I have the power? I am grateful Romeo was brave enough to ask this question because it is only with asking questions do we get answers. With answers, we gain understanding and only with understanding can we challenge the structures that rule our lives. As we delve into ancient Nubian history, my hope is that



A Kindergartener uses blocks and silk scarves to turn himself into a mummy.

students will question who had the power, where that power came from and how it was preserved.

-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

Room 109

The Rainbow Fire Dragons have really latched on to the new theme- discovering the Ancient Kingdom's of the Nile. It seems that by far the most compelling aspect has been mummies. In the block area, children have been building tombs and wrapping themselves in silk scarves and wooden arches to transform themselves into mummies. In our play and stories, mummies come back to life.

CLASSROOM NEWS

This story was told by Emeric:
“Once upon a time there was a little boy and he wanted to go into a cave. And he found one. He wanted one with mummies in it. And he sawed mummies and he went in it. And the mummies came alive! And the mummy touched the little boy and he became a mummy. And he became a mummy. And he never became alive. But one day, he became alive and he ran to his house before the mummy got him and he locked the door!”

The excitement is building in the room is palpable and contagious. I’m excited to begin this new learning journey with the children.

-Jenny Goldstein

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 204

In an effort to get more physical movement in our classrooms during the day and to better integrate all our work, Laura and Carol have come three times so far to our room first thing in the morning to help us warm up our bodies with a short Gymcraftics work out!

It begins with music and the Magic Explorers coming to the rug to join Laura and Carol in a circle. They do a variety of movements to get warmed up and then begin a specific movement routine. Sometimes it looks like dancing, sometimes like an exercise class and sometimes like gymnastics. Whatever it looks like, it is always fun! We are lucky to have two knowledgeable and passionate people helping to instill a positive mindset about keeping our bodies healthy!

These drop-ins will continue throughout the year. Ask your Magic



Wellness Coordinator, Laura, practices Gymcraftics with the Magic Learner classroom.

Learner about the experience!

-Jenerra Williams

Room 205

Last week, our school spent two mornings meeting new people and working together. During Mix-It-Up, students visited other classrooms and we all got to spend time with people we don’t normally see everyday. Our group worked together to create a structure with Kapla blocks that could launch a ping pong ball into a bucket. Then we talked about some of our favorite things and learned that everyone in our group loves animals. We decided to name our group The Animal Lovers and everyone drew a picture of their favorite animal. I especially loved these two mornings as they offered a nice break from our routine, and I made connections with some new children and also got to spend time with some students I had last year.

-Ashleigh L’Heureux

Room 217

There are many models for how to run schools that work for students, teachers, and families. Some schools try to replicate the structure at a business. Some schools have the principal in charge of the decision making. Some schools have no principals and teachers share responsibilities. Some schools have a share of all of these models. At Mission Hill, the school is run based on the principles of democracy -- we all have a voice -- teachers, students, families, and community members. This means, however, that decision making is not always streamlined and it takes time to make decisions and follow up with next steps. Part of taking the time means having multiple retreats throughout the school year. Our staff just came back from our mid-year retreat in Essex. This two-day retreat gave us time to talk, to learn how others are thinking, and to share our thoughts and ideas for

CLASSROOM NEWS

running a school. Part of working in an ever-changing process at an ever-changing time means reflecting and growing from our discussions. I'm proud to be part of a school that honors that process and I'm asking you to reflect on how your voice is shared at Mission Hill. How can you make sure your thoughts and ideas are part our vision? I'm eager to listen.

-Emma Fialka-Feldman

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 207

"Toward these ends, our community must be prepared to spend time—even when it might seem wasteful—hearing each other out. We must deal with each other in ways that lead us to feel stronger and more loved, not weaker and less lovable. We must expect the most from everyone, hold all to the highest standards, but also respect our different ways of exhibiting excellence."

The above is an excerpt from the Mission Hill School Mission Statement. Last weekend we put those words into action. Staff members gathered for our Winter Retreat in Essex, MA to examine our school. Agreements were made and disagreements hashed out. There were tender moments as well as difficult ones. We reflected on things that have gone well thus far and made adjustments to things we believe need improvement. When our meeting was done on Saturday evening, we had a tasty meal and enjoyed each other's company talking and playing games. After a good night's rest we gathered again to continue. This is time-consuming yet critical work that must be done. I consider it a privilege to be part of a



Students worked with Ashleigh's Mix-it-Up group last week, creating their poster.

dedicated group who willingly come together three times a year, outside of our work week to tackle ideas big and small related to our beloved school.

-Amina Michel-Lord & Kristina Voss

Room 212

Why do we study history? What does the past have to do with us today? This question was posed by a student and got me thinking as we currently are learning about Ancient Nubia. I think when studying Ancient civilizations, asking how it is relevant is important for understanding our reasons for continuing to study the content.

One reason to study ancient civilizations is to unpack human experience. We want to understand forces that impact our current lives. Sometimes these forces can be difficult to find or invisible. Another reason is to increase critical thinking skills. Additionally, we want our students to be informed citizens within their communities. This will add to their habits of mind and create their voices. It's great to have an intellectual challenge when diving into an unknown civilization and making new discoveries! Finally, I

think it is interesting hearing the stories of the past and discovering the perspective of who's telling the story.

- Sarah, Heron, Brendan, & Josh

Room 216

We are happy to say that we are well on our way to learning about Ancient Kingdoms of the Nile. It's taken us a bit to settle down after our much needed three-day weekend but we are now back on track. As hard as we tried, we hope our little charges took some time this past Monday to think about the importance of the day.

We launched our theme by exploring what we know and what we "think" we know about Ancient Kingdoms and it feels like a lot of work will center around opening our minds to expand beyond the idea of Egypt and Egypt alone. In addition, we've categorized our questions and wonderings and are using our class-generated questions to narrow our focus of study. Students are working in pairs to determine their groups study focus and create ideas for culminating projects.

-Alicia & Shaina

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GRADES 5&6

Room 210

Coming next week...

Room 215

In Math class we are currently learning how to calculate sales tax and percentages using real world problems. Some of us are struggling, others are learning faster than others, but together we are determined to succeed. In Room 215, no one succeeds individually, but we all do collectively. Through cooperative learning we teach one another and help those students who believe that they can't learn math. To this end, we are working in pairs and small groups to discuss best strategies to solve the same problem. We have also learned how to incorporate the four habits of work in our problem solving to best help us organize our thoughts. But most of all, we have learned how to persevere and give up when faced with a word problem. The power of cooperative learning, sharing with one another, will expand the possibilities for everyone to succeed in math.

We invite families to join room 215 to help support math. Thank you!

-Angela, Abdi & Carlos

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

Why is Martin Luther King Day a national holiday? What is MLK's message specifically to 7th/8th grade students? What would MLK's response be to the world today?

We started our week considering these questions. The kids were a little puzzled by the second question. Was there a message specifically for them? I told them about King's speech,

What is your life's blueprint?, given at a junior high school in Philadelphia in 1967. The metaphor of a blueprint, a plan or guide to follow while building, is one we can understand. We plan to spend some time with King's words considering his message and how to respond.

Here are a few quotes to discuss with your child: *"This is a most important and crucial period in your lives, for what you do now and decide now at this age may well determine which way your life shall go..."* *"Now, each of you is in the process of building the structure of your lives. And the question is whether you have a proper, a solid, and a sound blueprint." ...* *"Number one in your life's blueprint should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your own worth, and your own somebodiness. Don't allow anybody to make you feel that you are nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth."*

We'll continue working on our own life blueprints in the week ahead.

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

Toward the end of a recent history class one of the eighth graders bellowed, "That's racist!" It was the perfect response to our current topic of of study.

We are learning about colonial America's transition from a labor force made up of mostly English indentured servants to enslaved Africans. The fact that slavery of any kind was not a part of colonial America is one of the hardest things that we must grapple with as a nation because it reminds us that it was a deliberate decision to enslave a group of people simply because of the color of their skin. It is the epitome of

racism.

My task as teacher is to help students move past the initial shock and anger of learning about our the start of race-based system of slavery and help them think about the questions that it raises about this country's past, present and future. Specifically, in what ways does it challenge or affirm our deeply rooted beliefs about race.

-Reginald Toussaint, Carol East-Jose, and Manny St. Vil



Seventh grader, Asmani, learns to snowboard during Chill, held at Wachusett Mountain on Wednesday nights throughout January and February. Chill is a free national learn-to-snowboard program, sponsored by Burton Snowboards. MHS middle school students have been participating for over 10 years. Chill provides everything free of charge during this six-week program (including coats, pants and gloves!). The New England Baptist Hospital provides boxed lunches for all 10 participants each week. Stay tuned for more photos of our students learning to snowboard!

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SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

826 Boston Writing Workshops

February vacation is just around the corner, and 826 Boston has a fun-filled week ahead full of creativity and critical thinking. Join them during school vacation for a series of free and engaging writing workshops for youth of all ages! <http://www.826boston.org/workshops/>

Outside the Lines

MHS family members Amy Fleischer and Bridget Lee are restarting Outside the Lines, a family support/advocacy group for kids with special needs at MHS. All are welcome. The first meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 28, 2015 at 6:00 pm in Room 203 (across from the main office). Childcare and snacks will be provided. Contact Bridget or Amy for more information: bridgetelee@gmail.com, a.fleiscino1259@gmail.com

MHS Online Family Forum

Did you know that the MHS online family forum is a GREAT resource for parents, caregivers, and staff? We'd love for you to join us today! Get to know the community better, stay informed about exciting school celebrations, accomplishments, and fundraisers, join initiatives, as well as get and share news and plans. To join, please email Amy Banzaert (parent of Eli in Jenerra's class) amybanz@mit.edu.

Cold Weather Reminder

Please remember MHS students of

ALL ages play outside as much as possible. Remember to send your child with layers and appropriate clothing, according to the day's forecast. If they enjoy playing in the snow, please send them with an extra change of clothing for that day. If you need extra gloves, scarves, or a jacket for your child please let your child's teacher know or call Courtney at 617.635.6384. We are happy to assist in any way we can.

Family Council News

On Thursday, February 5, 2015 a working Family Council Meeting will be held at 5:45 pm. All MHS families are members. Come, have some dinner, meet some new friends and get involved. Childcare and dinner provided. Please RSVP to Joni 617-635-6384.

Save the Date: March 20, 2015, from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Mission Hill Third Annual Movie Night! More info TBD.

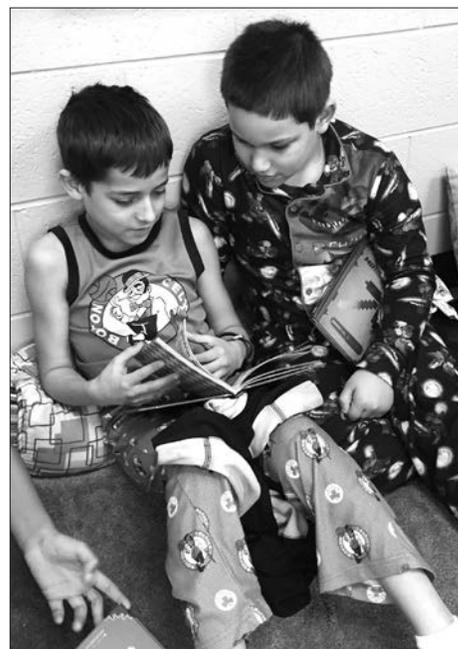
Ping Pong, Anyone?

Wellness Coordinator Laura Golitko has a project up on DonorsChoose.org to purchase ping pong tables for MHS Wellness. Check it out at <http://www.donorschoose.org/we-teach/2638507>. The project is open until April, 2015.

Lost and Found

There are several large bins in our Lost & Found area (adjacent to the main office). Several winter coats, hats and gloves are included in this large collection of wayward clothing. Please stop by or contact your child's teacher if he or she has lost anything.

Images of Pajama Literacy Day



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



Saturday, March 21, 2015



SPRINGfest

Come join us for Family, Fun & Health Awareness Day!



Prizes/Raffles/
other Incentives!!



Activities!!

Volunteers Needed. If interested, please email ceastjose@missionhillschool.org,
asilva@missionhillschool.org or lgotilka@missionhillschool.org