Board Membership

Dear Families, Friends, Students and Staff,

Have you ever considered joining the board (governing structure) of an organization? The other day I learned that there are over 1.3 million non-profit organizations in the United States. Each one has a vision and mission that drives it. Of course there are lots of ways to be involved in a place or a cause that you believe in, being a board member is just one way to help an organization makes its mission and vision come alive.

Each board I sit on has members that are diverse in age, experience, and knowledge of subject matters. Learning is happening at all times as we share our perspectives on different topics and express our interpretation of the mission and vision. I belong to several boards and after each meeting I feel smarter from being in the company of creative and talented people. My admiration for each person also makes me more humble. During each meeting I attend, I think of the Mission Hill community. There is the direct benefit of my learning more about how boards work that applies to our school board. There is also the indirect benefit to our school community. If I become more knowledgeable by learning from the experience of others, I become a more thoughtful and skilled colleague, principal or acquaintance for all of you.

If you are a student, don’t feel that this is an opportunity for adults only. If a cause or organization you care about does not permit students as part of its leadership, start your own student leadership group. Select a topic of interest and ask a few adults if they would join to help you organize (if you need help). What Kids Can Do is a great organization where young people showcase their work and connect to others.

Mission Hill’s next Governance Board meeting is on March 5 from 5:00 to 7:00pm in the art room. Childcare is provided. Will you be there? There are items we need to follow up on such as the building space and plans for a Mission Hill High School. There is on-going work to know about, such as the assessment group that some of our families have started. Our staff will inform us of the teaching and learning they have done well beyond our school walls. At this meeting staffing changes will be announced too. I hope you can be with us to be part of our planning and discussion.


**Kindergarten**

**Room 108**

“Are you a teacher,” Lena asks, as I sit on the rug during goodbye gathering, I pause – silenced by the question. My name is Lucian, my son Shawnmathew is a student at MHS. I am an undergraduate at Quincy College, and I will complete my Early Childhood Education Field Experience in room 108. So... how do I, within the “activity and process of acquiring knowledge, and skill by studying, practicing, and being taught” explain this, to an inquisitive child, who is mutually developing - a minute passes, and I answer. “I’m learning how to be a teacher - I’m a student teacher.” Lena smiles, one of the many welcomes I received from the students in classroom 108, in addition, one of the many reasons, I entered the profession. Over the next 15 weeks, I will learn from your children, and equally important, your children will learn from me.

-Lucian Campbell

**Room 106**

Welcome back! Our study of Ancient Egypt and Nubia is underway, despite all of the days off. The children have showed a great deal of interest in Hieroglyphics. Students have discussed Hieroglyphics in art with Jeanne and practiced writing their names using the ancient symbols. In our classroom, we continued to create and explore Hieroglyphics by laying out large pieces of paper on our floor for children to use as a mural.

We also have begun an exciting new science experiment about mummies. The children are enthralled with the various mummy books in our classroom library. Before the vacation, we began the mummification process of an apple! We placed a slice of apple in four different jars. The control group contained only air. The other three contained baking soda, Epsom salt, and a combination of both. When we returned, the students were excited to see the progress of each jar. Be sure to ask them all about it.

Amidst all of the snow days, I have met with almost all of our families for winter conferences. It has been so great getting to see everyone and share all of the amazing work your children have done so far this year. Thank you all for being so flexible during this weather!

-Liz & Stephanie

**Room 107**

While the numerous snow days have slowed our study of Nubia quite a bit, we have been able to have some meaningful conversations. One such conversation was about a piece of Nubian wall art that our students replicated from a picture of The National Center of Afro-American Artists' Nubian exhibit. As we created this first piece, we asked what they thought was happening in the picture. They said the following:

**Nyla:** The mummy case has designs and there is a light shining on their face...they had to pull out guts.

**Agboola:** The pharaoh is dead and he built the upstairs.

**Max:** They went to the king of Egypt and they got locked in a big tomb and there was no fire for them to see. It was creepy.

**Gerson:** The mummy is lying down and her heart came out.

**Jeremy:** She is sleeping...She got cured and then she was breathing and she spit out the water in the bathroom...

**Josie:** There’s hieroglyphics and she is dead because she wants to turn into a mummy.

-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

**Room 109**

The Rainbow Fire Dragon's have been inspired by the pyramids of Ancient Egypt and Ancient Nubia. Studying the lines, angles, and shapes of geometry have given as a language to work with as we recreate pyramids with different materials. Some of the media we have worked with so far include paper and pencil, wooden unit blocks, legos, and marshmallows and q-tips. Enjoy these photographs of our work!

-Jenny Goldstein
Grades 1 & 2

Room 204
As I write this, Boston has had 100 inches of snow in under a month. With snow days mounting up along with the snow outside the word momentum weighs heavy on my mind. How do we keep some sense of momentum with the Magic Learners after having such fractured weeks of school?

While Polly, Heron and I work on our academic and community plans to help re-establish momentum in our work when we return, there are things you can do to help us as well! Take a look at this list of things you can do to help your Magic Learner stay connected to the work of our community:

- Read every day!
- Try the First in Math online account we sent home.
- Talk about school - our work, friendships, problem solving, upcoming events, etc.
- Have them teach you a song or a game!
- Go outside and have “recess”!
- Practice some type of writing – forming letters, book making, snow day stories, copying from a book, etc.
- Try to stay on our class schedule with snack and lunch.
- Stick to bedtime routines!

Even doing a few of these will help the transition back to our community better for us all!

-Jenerra Williams

Room 205
“I’m King Tutankhamun...what’s that on my arm?!” Nate exclaimed right before falling to the ground. “It’s time to mummify him!” the others shouted. Nate laid down on a long, low table in our classroom. Olivia explained, “They used canopic jars to store organs. They take them out of their body. They take the heart out and put a scarab in.” A small group of children giggled, read books, tried on clothes, wrote down ideas, and started to plan for how they would study and learn about what it was like to live in Ancient Nubia and Ancient Egypt. Euan wanted to learn all about daily life among the Kingdoms of the Nile. He wondered about what they ate, the clothes they wore, and the jobs they had. Olivia was interested in being Isis. She wanted to be a “goddess to bring up the dead.” Zora was curious about how queens got served and wanted to be Cleopatra. Nate wanted to be a pharaoh so that he could be mummified. This group is planning to make some of their own clothes and put on a short play. By the end of their planning one day Zora wondered, “Why do the Egyptians love death so much?”

-Ashleigh L’Heureux

100 inches of snow hasn’t stopped us from continuing our afternoon tradition of outside time! After 20-30 minutes of independent reading (after which I continue to hear, “I can’t wait to come back and read more!” and “Really? That wasn’t long enough!”), we all put gear on to have a safe, warm, and enjoyable time outside. Here are some exciting photos of our time outside. The slides are a hit and even the adults are enjoying the joys of sliding into snow! Families, please continue to send your child to school with boots, snow pants, indoor shoes, gloves, and hats.

-Emma Fialka-Feldman

Room 217
100 inches of snow hasn’t stopped us from continuing our afternoon tradition of outside time! After 20-30 minutes of independent reading (after which I continue to hear, “I can’t wait to come back and read more!” and “Really? That wasn’t long enough!”), we all put gear on to have a safe, warm, and enjoyable time outside. Here are some exciting photos of our time outside. The slides are a hit and even the adults are enjoying the joys of sliding into snow! Families, please continue to send your child to school with boots, snow pants, indoor shoes, gloves, and hats.

-Ashleigh L’Heureux

Grades 3 & 4

Room 207
This week I accompanied Abdi and
Nakia’s fifth and sixth grade classes to the Farm School in Athol, MA. Farm School (a working farm) and Mission Hill have a long-standing relationship that dates back to the early days of Mission Hill—approximately 16 years.

Every class (except K0) visits the farm each year. Kindergarten through fourth grades go for a day in the spring. Fifth through eighth grades go for three days and two nights. This was my sixth or seventh time going with an older class for their overnight stay. While there were some tears the first night, as some prepared to sleep away from family for the first time, everyone mostly recuperated by morning and experienced everything the farm had to offer—working with animals, gardening in the green house, walking in the snow, wood working and meal preparation. Despite the deep snow and frigid temperatures, (-18 degrees early Tuesday morning) everyone had an awesome time. As we packed up on Wednesday, you could tell that kids were looking forward to a hot shower and a GOOD night’s sleep in their own beds but they were also leaving with lasting memories and experiences of the farm and were looking forward to returning again next year— a year older and a bit more familiar and comfortable with the farm. I am looking forward to coming back in April with the Spectacular 16 as we spend the day and create our own Farm School memories.

-Amina Michel-Williams

Room 212
Before the break, the class started to learn more about Ancient Nubia. From our trip to the Museum of Fine Arts, we learned that the region had lots of gold. We watched a few videos that explained how Nubia had more pyramids than Egypt and the children played games that resembled current board game pieces (like the ones from Trouble).

We learned that the Nubians created pottery from mud and discovered iron. We are slowly learning about the relationship the Nubians and Egyptians had, the role of life (some would wrestle and hunt animals), and the artifacts that give us clues into the past (like a drum created from rock). Our next field trip to the Museum will be this week and again on March 12th. We look forward to learning more about the jewelry and statues found in the Ancient Egypt exhibit and exploring the stories artifacts tell us.

-Sarah, Brendan, & Josh

Room 216
It feels like a “welcome back” is due…or should I write overdue! I imagine that families are struggling, like staff and students to get our momentum back. Everyone loves a snow day once in a while but nearly half a dozen and a vacation have had a distinct impact on our work; I never thought I’d hear a child say “no more snow days” but that’s what the kids in 216 are saying. Let’s cheer the fact that we’ve been able to make it through a full week and hope that any more snow only comes on a Friday evening!

Our group had its second visit to the MFA this week and will be going back in March; they love to be out and about and represented MHS in a wonderful manner. This trip focused on Nubian art and jewelry. Please ask your student about our work studying Ancient communities and fractions!

-Alicia & Shaina
Classroom News

Grades 5 & 6

Room 210
A curious thing that Farm School chant is. Twelve years running, some years with multiple groups of kids, it remains the same. What begins as a low, uncoordinated murmur, somewhere along Route 2 West, ends in a more organized, albeit sporadic chant, as we near Athol, MA. By time we get through the center of town, and near the outskirts, a more intentional effort begins to grow.

“Nakia, are we near the hill yet?” one student asks, in an anticipatory tone. The “hill” is Moore Hill Road, which marks the ascent to The Farm School. This is also the place where the full on chant begins.

“Farm School! Farm School! Farm School!” You can hear the love and excitement in the voices as the big yellow school bus awkwardly angles its way up the hill, attempting to navigate the country road. “Farm School! Farm School!” is a constant, only interrupted by a hip-hop-esque ad lib of “uhh” or “what!” skillfully placed in between the refrains. It stays strong until we begin to turn near the horse barn, which is where the chant meets its match... unbridled screaming.

-Nakia, June, Meron, & Elsa

Room 215
By Tuesday morning the faces of students seemed more resolute. I can do this. I made it through my first night; I missed my family, my home, my things that make me me but I am good. I wanted to call home, but I don’t think I need to now.

Another bridge done crossed, the crossing facilitated by Emily (one of the cows), collecting the eggs, going on walks, playing Hide and Seek, making fire, cooking, rolling down a snow hill. I am struck, on my first trip to the Farm School, how the experience makes students dig deeper within and then dig out to find support, connection with peers, farmers, teachers and farm animals. Problem-solving is not a concept, but a way of life here; getting along and being kind are essentials to crossing a symbolic bridge that eventually leads away from their present home to other homes in the world. An attitude; an outlook; a way to get on; a self that has imperceptibly expanded.

-Abdi, Angela & Carlos

Grades 7 & 8

Room 213
Every year In May and June, seventh and eighth grade students present their portfolios to a committee of family, teachers, advisor, and external community member. But portfolios actually “start” on the very first day of school. It is steady day-to-day work that results in a well-prepared and successful portfolio.

At Mission Hill, we know kids want to succeed so we put structures in place to guide them through the portfolio process. Frequent check-ins and interim deadlines, communication with families, a supportive yet no-nonsense advisor,
and collaboration with peers to review work and practice presentations are all part of the process. Admittedly, there are many ways for a student to get off-track. But just as surely, there are adults ready to nudge and push and encourage all the kids to do their best work. But all the support in the world won’t help if a student doesn’t choose to work. We are honest with kids: We offer support and teaching and encouragement, but no one will do the work for you. That’s your responsibility.

What conversations have you had at home about portfolios? What questions do you have? How do you support at home the work your child is doing in school?

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

This week, our class visited the Jamaica Plain Branch Library. As we were getting ready to leave, the mood in the room was mixed. A few students were excited while others were anxious. Those who were anxious tended to be students who had accrued a significant debt to the library and dreaded being told that they can’t check out books. Their anxiety started to rub off on me. The librarian promised me that she would make sure that every student is able to check out a book regardless of their standing at the library, but I started to worry about what would happen if she changed her mind? One of my goals was to help the students build a positive relationship with the library but what if it backfired?

Fortunately, the visit went better than I imagined. Not only did students find books that peaked their interests most of them were genuinely excited about reading these books. Most exciting of all, the students with a debt not only were allowed to check out books, they had their accounts reset so they are starting with a clean slate. Many of us are already looking forward to our next trip in three weeks.

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

Schoolwide News

Important Schedule Change

Due to snow days and the extension of the school to the end of June, the second report card will be sent home on April 2. The Family Breakfast to celebrate the school wide theme (Ancient Egypt & Ancient Nubia) is now Thursday, April 2 from 9:15-10:15am.

Ayla in Washington, D.C.

MHS Principal Ayla Gavins has been invited by US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, to participate in two days of educational sharing, learning and advising next week. She will join 14 other principals from around the country, who have all been identified as innovators in their field. Principals Ed is a new effort by the federal government to learn more about schools around the country by bringing together select groups of principals from a variety of schools.

Family Council News

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

Free Technology Classes at MHS!

Tech Goes Home, a technology skills course, will be offered once again this spring for MHS students (grades 3-8) and a family member. After attending all six classes (15 hours), families may purchase a brand new Chromebook computer for only $50!

We currently have four families signed up and need 12 in order to do the class.

Classes begin on Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at MHS. They will run from 5:00 - 7:30 p.m. for six weeks. See the attached flyer for details. Contact Dani Coleman to sign up ASAP: dcoleman@missionhillschool.org or 617-635-6384 x210

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/teacher/2638507. The project is open until April, 2015.

Good Morning Mission Hill!

There are several screenings of the documentary, Good Morning Mission Hill, coming up around the northeast, including viewings and panel discussions in New Hampshire, New York, Washington, DC, and California. During Teacher Appreciation Week (May 4-8), the film will be broadcast on several television stations around the country. Check out goodmorningmissionhill.com for more information.

DVDs are available for purchase in the MHS main office for $20.
Come join us for Healthy Family Fun Day!

Saturday
March 21, 2015
12:00 – 3:00 pm

Mission Hill School
30 Child Street, Jamaica Plain

We WILL attend

We WILL NOT attend

# of people attending

Student(s) Names: ____________________________________________

Classroom Teacher: ____________________________________________