



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Friday, February 13, 2015
Coffee House at MHS, 6:00 - 7:00 pm
- February 16-20, 2015
Winter Break: NO SCHOOL
- February 23-25, 2015
Farm School: Grades 5/6
- Wednesday, February 25, 2015
Outside the Lines 5:45 - 7 pm (see page 6)

February 6, 2015

Volume 18, Issue 17

Important Mission Hill Updates

Dear Families, Students, Staff, and Friends,

With all the interruptions in our school days, communication can get spotty. It's not easy to keep lines open even when we do have school everyday. This week's news is an effort to connect a few dots.

School Budget for 2015-2016: Our school budget increased by about 8% over last year's budget. The extra funding provides room to cover cost of contracted salary increases for staff. It also allows us to add more time and staffing to our Learning Coach position and middle school team while keeping all other positions intact.

Building: In December the Superintendent met with about 40 MHS families to discuss the future of the school's location and whether we would continue to share our current building. Since then the Superintendent announced that another site has been selected for the Margarita Muñiz Academy to move into. However, the renovations on the new site won't be complete for another year. Our two schools will share our building for another year with more students than we have now. Making this work will require some very creative thinking and planning.

Assessment: A group of families have met several times to become more informed and to share information with others about the nature and number of assessments that teachers are required to give students. This group promotes the message Less Testing More Teaching, a campaign created by Citizens for Public Schools. See the attached save the date flier for an upcoming conference on alternative assessments.

Inclusion: Nakia and Abdi (grades 5/6 teachers) have organized a Teach-In. During the Teach-In students will sign up for information sessions about certain inclusive topics. The goal is to educate our students about how other people live, work, learn and see the world, and to see these differences as worthy of recognition, not exclusion. *Outside the Lines* is making a comeback thanks to MHS family members, Amy Fleischer and Bridget Lee. Come share resources or support with other parents and caregivers of children with special needs and their advocates. The new date for the first meeting is February 28 (see page 6 for details).

Learning Coach: Welcome our new Learning Coach, Whitney Mims. We want to express our gratitude to our former Learning Coach, Gina Stefanini, who created many relationships with students and families. Notes, cards, and art for Gina will be collected in the main office and will be delivered to her. Please have your child bring in messages by next Wednesday, 2/11/15.

Staffing: Every staff member at Mission Hill School has an annual contract. In January of each year it is determined whether the school and individual staff members are a good match. Announcements about staff stays and departures will be made in the first week of March. Your support to find and review candidates for MHS openings will be appreciated.

KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

In the art room last week, our students were introduced to the hieroglyphic alphabet, and in our classroom the students tried to write their first names by matching, cutting, and pasting the hieroglyphic letters below each of the letters in their first name. This week we move towards a Social Studies Connection. Children will begin to learn how the Ancient Egyptians lived their everyday life back a few thousand years ago. We will continue learning about the way Ancient Egyptians families worked and played at home. Students will design and make Egyptian sandals (with adults' help) based on various pictures that they see in books. They will learn how to measure their feet and cardboard using measuring tapes and rulers. This project may take quite sometime to finish. They will have fun through learning.

-Thuy Truong

Room 106

With all of the snow days, it's hard to believe February is already here! Over the past few months during our class rest time, we have been reading different chapter books. So far, we have read *Mr. Popper's Penguins*, *Charlotte's Web*, *The Trumpet of the Swan*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and are currently reading *The BFG*. The students are always eager to find out what happens next in the story, and are answering questions and making predictions every day. During *James and the Giant Peach*, we learned that all soil has passed through a worm's body at some point in time. Instantly excitement passed through the room. "We planted seeds in soil with



Pajama Literacy Day in Room 107

Andrew (from the Boston Nature Center)! We have to tell him!" Seeing the students make these personal and relevant connections is one of my favorite parts of teaching, and I still break into a huge smile every time it happens. And to add to the excitement, Andrew brought worms for us to observe the following week!

-Liz & Stephanie

Room 107

"Is today pajama day?" Pajama day is one of the most anticipated days of the school year. It is the one day that we (students and adults) can wear our pajamas and join in the festivities that have become a tradition in our room over the years. As students entered the room last Thursday, the parade of pajamas began! We had Spiderman, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Elsa, Minions, Hello Kitty, Owls, Foxes, Mini Mouse, Star Wars, Pillsbury Dough Boy, hedgehog slippers and glow in the dark and

footie pajamas! Once everyone arrived, we began with a banquet-style cereal share (students brought their favorite cereals from home) followed by chocolate chip pancakes (made by parent Christen). After our meal we had our regular dance party to what else but the "Wavin' Flag" song? We ended the day as excitedly as we began. After a conversation about Nubian crops and planting beans in connection, students began a barrage of suggestions that included; "We should make a Nubian garden." "We should build a pyramid." "We should make a river!"; to which we responded, "We'll see."

-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

Room 109

Last week the Rainbow Fire Dragons met their two new teachers, Meira and Angelina. We are so excited that they are here to learn with us this spring.

Meira Soloff is thrilled to be working

with the students this spring and to be learning with the Mission Hill School. She is student teacher from Tufts, working on her M.A. in Early Childhood Education from the Eliot Pearson School of Child Study and Human Development. Originally from Chicago, IL, she now lives in JP. When not at school she thinks about social justice in early education, cycling, and ukulele playing.

Angelina Amato was born in Boston and raised in Wilmington, MA. She is currently attending Wheelock College where she is double majoring in Early Childhood Education and Human Growth and Development. She is very interested in learning more about how a pilot school is run, and with that, to learn about Ancient Nubia.

Please join me in welcoming them!
-Jenny Goldstein

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 204

This week, we explored the Nile as we read the book, *Story of the Nile*. We used our imaginations as we “paddled” up the Nile, as we learned that the Nile River flows to the North.

Our watery adventure begins at the source of the Nile River in a region known as Nubia. The book reports that the source of the Nile is the Ripon Falls at Lake Victoria, although, this source has been disputed. We will investigate to find out the true sources.

We went through the Sudd swamp land, where crocodiles and hundreds of birds and different kinds of fish live, and the city of Khartoum. It is also the point where the White Nile and Blue Nile meet.

Shortly thereafter, we ran into our first cataract. Cataracts are shallow parts of the river with rocks and boulders rising up from the riverbed. We had to maneuver our boats carefully because cataracts are the main obstacles for boats sailing on the Nile!

As we continued our trip, we came upon the Abu Simbel temples, which are two huge rock temples located in the Nubian village. We stopped at the marketplace in Aswan before ending our journey, along with the Nile, at the Mediterranean Sea.

-Polly Wing

Room 205

I was anxious and excited to return back to school after so many snow days! My time away was calm, peaceful, fun, and reflective. We’ve been talking a lot about the MHS Habits of Mind and Habits of Work this year in room 205. These days at home offered a nice opportunity for reflection. I thought about how much our class has grown as a community in the past few months and also thought about the work that needs to be done to continue to foster this growth. I thought about children who learned to do new things, those who showed a different side I hadn’t seen before, and kept busy planning for our Kingdoms of the Nile study. Although I enjoyed staying in my PJs, sipping hot cocoa, and going sledding I am ready to be back and excited to support and encourage all the learning that will continue to happen in room 205. Did you take time to reflect as you admired the snow covered trees or blanketed white streets?

-Ashleigh L’Heureux



The game Senet.

Room 217

After writing about artifacts that we would bury, the class spent time examining artifacts that archeologists and others have found exploring the ancient ruins of Egypt and Nubia. We now had a clearer understanding of how artifacts could help us learn about people who lived long ago. The class discussed over ten pictures of artifacts answering the same questions: *What could it teach us?, What does it tell us?, What does it make us wonder?, What was it used for?.* We looked at what some students decided was jewelry. Students shared how they thought people long ago used jewelry to make themselves “look fancy.” We looked at another object and students wondered whether it was a fish bone or a sword. We looked at a picture of an object where students thought it could be a 3D map, a block, or a chess set. A few days later as children explored books about Ancient Egypt and Nubia, a group of students eagerly shouted, “We found it! It is actually a game. Look! Here is the picture we saw.” As historians and researchers they had used tools in the classroom to help them understand people who lived long ago. We have a lot more to learn about this game, Senet, but we are well on our way!

-Emma Fialka-Feldman

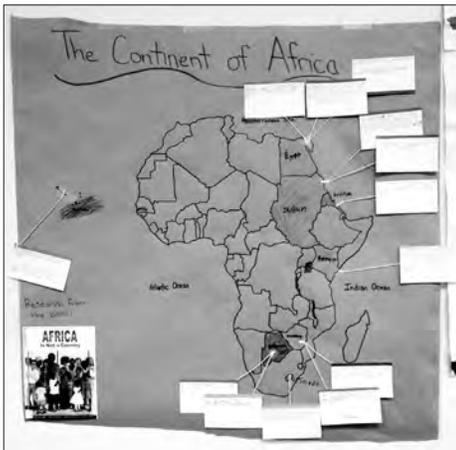
CLASSROOM NEWS

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 207

The spectacular 16 are hard at work digging into Nubia and ancient Egypt. Students have explored texts, drawn hieroglyphics, and studied maps of both ancient Egypt and Nubia and modern Egypt and Sudan. Last week students learned about the difference between a country and a continent as a way to ground their learning of Nubia and ancient Egypt. We read excerpts from the book *Africa is Not A Country*; then in small groups students wrote about what they had learned about countries of their choice. On a large map of Africa, students located and labeled their country and added information cards about what they learned. Many students have chosen to continue their research and writing during literacy and are excited to see our map grow along with our knowledge of the continent of Africa!

-Kristina & Amina



Room 212

What is progressive education? What does it look like? I am going to the National Institute of Progressive Education Network this week and look forward to deepening my understanding of progres-



Third and fourth graders created clay tiles during their visit to the MFA.

sive education. I've learned that there is no definitive definition of progressive education. However, there are hallmarks or patterns that emerge within progressive schools. I've noticed educators honoring the whole child first. A belief of the goodness and capabilities of the child, collaborative work driven by interests, experiences and a sense of justice, valuing the process just as much as the product, inspiring learners, the education engages voice, being mindful and self-reflective, intelligence using critical thinking skills and character are all important. One of the wonderful ideas of being within a progressive school is the idea that meaningful learning can occur during, while and after creating projects. It is my hope students are constantly learning, reflecting, appreciating, observing and taking positive risks. I look forward to learning more and will

share with anyone who is interested!
-Sarah, Heron, Brendan, & Josh

Room 216

Room 216 had a wonderful time at the MFA with Josh's class last week. What an amazing visit and tour of the Egyptian and Nubian collection. We're committed to going back as soon as we can. A big thank you to Brendan who did an amazing job capturing our trip through photos and kudos to our amazing students who displayed exemplary behavior riding the T. Huge thanks to Chris who runs the kitchen for preparing bagged lunches for us sort of last minute.

Not only were we able to split up into three small guide-led groups, but we also had our own art activity following the tour. Our kids were able to create unique clay tiles with Hieroglyphics (which they had already been introduced to through

CLASSROOM NEWS

Jeanne in Art class) and the tour guides were super impressed with the students' constant singing of the "Mummy Song" (they requested the lyrics). Guides were also impressed with the questions students posed – although this was part of the launch of our study MHS kids already have tremendous background knowledge.
-Alicia & Shaina

GRADES 5&6

Room 210

Coming next week...

Room 215

ChemLab has begun! We are mummifying apples by using a lot of table salt (sodium chloride, NaCl) and baking soda (sodium bicarbonate, NaHCO₃). We are predicting how the salt and baking soda are reacting with the apples. Predictions are recorded in students' self-made ChemLab notebooks, as fruit flies multiply in Room 215.

Mummification is an ancient practice among the Nubians, and we enter our studies of our theme, Nubia, through the sciences. What sciences did the ancient Nubians practice? is one of our guiding, research questions.

We articulated safety agreements - "use materials for what they are made for"; "don't make fun of anyone," etc. Each student has a lab partner; students take turns recording and combining different substances. Getting organized, planning with lab partner, communicating and communicating and being patient are very important to our chemistry work.

-Abdi, Angela & Carlos

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

The storm last weekend didn't deter us. Our class gathered on Saturday at the Strand Theater in Dorchester to see the BAA production of *In the Heights*. To prepare, we read the first

act of the play in class and listened to the musical numbers. Students were assigned roles, and were pleased to recognize each other's characters and speeches on stage. Here are some of the kids' comments about the experience.

"It was a very good and professional play. You wouldn't even think the performers were in high school. It was a funny, and fun performance to watch. I'm glad I went." "I was very surprised by how much I enjoyed *In the Heights*. It was really good." "I enjoyed *In the Heights* because it was something that I've never seen before. It was new and fun. Being with classmates made it even better because most of us had our own role." "I loved the play *In the Heights*. To be honest, I won't even remember half of the words I'm (my character) supposed to say. Anyways, I can picture myself as Kevin on stage. So I really enjoyed it." "I liked it. *In the Heights* was funny. It also makes me think about life. This book inspired me a lot." "I love how it was a model of real life made funny."

It is safe to say the power of drama infused us. We'll find a way to put it to use.

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

As part of the high school application process many of the 8th graders wrote essays that asked them to reflect on the question: What makes a good school? As their teacher, I was obviously curious about what they had to say. I was comforted by the fact that their view of a good school is similar to mine. The essays included comments such as: School is a place where students bond together like a community.



Family Conferences were well attended, despite the terrible weather and snow days!

CLASSROOM NEWS

A good school must make academic classes that fit to the student's needs, Having a support system in the school is a major part in being a good school.

Two clear themes were apparent throughout the essays, good schools build community and support their students. Unfortunately, these themes are absent from the national debate about how schools should be structured as they debate tends to focus on test results and "accountability." It's comforting to know that the people that matter the most, the students I teach, and I are on the same page.

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

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

Outside the Lines

Amy Fleischer and Bridget Lee are restarting *Outside the Lines*, a family support group for kids with special needs at MHS The new date for the first gathering is February 25, 2015. 5:45-7:00 pm in room 203. Contact Amy or Bridget for more information: fleischer.06@comcast.net or bridgetelee@gmail.com.

Family Council News

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

826 Boston Writing Workshops

February vacation is just around the corner, and 826 has a fun-filled week ahead full of creativity and critical thinking. Join them at 826 Boston during school vacation for a

series of free and engaging writing workshops for youth of all ages!

www.826boston.org.

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!

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 (limited space available!) 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/we-teach/2638507>. The project is open until April, 2015.

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.

Lost and Found

There are several large bins in our Lost & Found area (adjacent to the main office). Coats, hats, gloves, and many other items 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.



Students of all ages are creating Cartouches using Hieroglyphics spelling their names in art class with Jeanne.



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

Save the Date!

Beyond MCAS and PARCC: Alternative Assessments that Work

What: *Conference on Alternative Assessments featuring teachers and students*

When: Saturday, March 21, 2015, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Where: Mission Hill School, 20 Child Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Why: Standardized testing is crushing education in Massachusetts, often turning schools into little more than test prep programs, failing to improve teaching and learning, and damaging many students. Better alternatives exist! These include the New York Performance Standards Consortium, a network of public high schools in which students show their knowledge with performance tasks, and many Boston Public Schools that use projects and portfolios. At this conference, teachers and students will share what they do, why they do it, and how it improves student engagement and learning.

Who: Sponsored by FairTest, Citizens for Public Schools, Boston Teachers Union and Massachusetts Teachers Association. Presentations by the NY Consortium and Boston area schools. In addition to workshops, we will provide an opportunity for individual teachers to share their performance assessments and a space for teachers to seek help in assessment design.

Free and open to the public! Teachers, students, parents and interested members of the community, from Boston and beyond, are welcome.

FairTest
The National Center for Fair and Open Testing

**CITIZENS
for PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**



MTA
Massachusetts Teachers Association



**QUEST and the
Citywide Parent Council
present**

**THE BPS BUDGET:
How it works and
how families and students
can make a difference**

**Sunday, Feb. 8th, 2015
3pm – 5pm**

**Urbano Project, 284 Amory Street
(the Brewery), Jamaica Plain
(Look for signs and call 617-448-5990 for directions.)**

Spanish translation provided.

**Childcare provided upon request. Contact QUEST
(Quality Education for Every Student) at
qualityforeverystudent@gmail.com
or CPC via heshanbw@gmail.com .**

**THE VOICES OF STUDENTS AND THEIR
FAMILIES NEED TO BE HEARD**

**WHERE THE \$
COMES FROM:**

Who pays for what?

**HOW DECISIONS
GET MADE:**

**Who decides what to
fund and what to cut?
How do they decide?**

**FUNDING FOR
BPS:**

**Why don't the city and
state spend more for
public education in
Boston?**

**CREATING
CHANGE:**

**What actions should
we take to make sure
our schools get the
funds they need?**

MHS is excited to announce Tech Goes Home!

Tech Goes Home is a FREE technology skills course!

- Offered to students in grades 3-8
- A family member (18 or older) MUST participate with each student
- A total of 6 classes: each class is 2 ½ hours in length
- Every family must complete 15 hours of instruction
- Families who complete the course may purchase a brand new Chromebook computer for only \$50 (one per family)
- Qualified families may also be able to receive significantly discounted High-Speed Internet Service
- A year-long subscription to Rosetta Stone online English classes is included for all participants

Classes begin on Wednesday, March 18, 2015 at Mission Hill School.
They will run from 5:00 - 7:30 p.m. for six weeks.

Class Dates*

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Wednesday, March 25, 2015

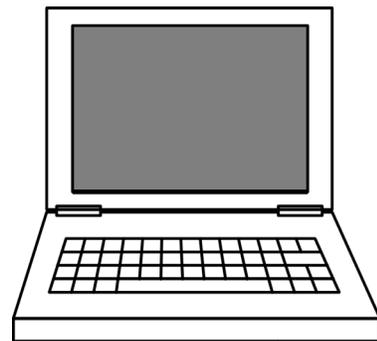
Wednesday, April 1, 2015

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

*Make up date: Wednesday, May 6, 2015, 5:00 - 7:30 pm



Please contact Dani Coleman for more information or sign up:

dcoleman@missionhillschool.org

617-635-6384

Room 203 (across from main office)

www.techgoeshome.org





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