



## IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- April 20-24, 2015  
Spring Break: **NO SCHOOL**
- Monday, April 27, 2015  
*Grades 3&4 to Farm School*
- Tuesday, April 28, 2015  
*Grades 1&2 to Farm School*
- Tuesday, May 5, 2015  
*School Picture Day!*  
*Tres Gatos Music Fundraiser (see page 6)*

April 10, 2015

Volume 18, Issue 25

### *Outside the Lines, Meeting #2*

Dear Friends, Families, Students and Staff:

I don't know how many people were there, but it felt like nearly 40. We sat in a circle of tension, hope and curiosity. Parents and caregivers came with concerns and willingness to support one another, staff members were present to hear and help resolve issues, and external staff (Sped PAC and BPS) came to assist in problem solving. With each of our roles so different and our passionate feelings about children with disabilities, conflict seemed inevitable. Bridget and Amy (parents) framed the opening of the meeting in a way that named our purpose for gathering and made the space safe for dialogue.

We heard some hard things from the hearts of parents. The biggest issue being that students with reading disabilities have been underserved at our school. This was not a secret among our staff or among parents/caregivers with individual struggles. It was, however, the first time we began to grapple with this dilemma as a collective group—families, staff, district and advocates.

When a problem is put on the table, it's easy to cast blame, point fingers, and reach for an easy fix. I am guilty of doing all three of those things regarding the issue of addressing reading disabilities in our school. Truth is that it's a much more layered dilemma and not the fault of any one person or any single moment where we have failed. So how do we break free from this tangled web?

During the meeting we discussed short term and long-term resolution to our issue of not properly addressing troubled readers. In the short term, our Learning Coach, will begin full time instruction with students. Someone new will come in to manage IEP meetings and all the paperwork that goes along with services. This model will continue into next year. The Special Education department will conduct an audit of service delivery hours and staffing. This information will be helpful to us so we can determine whether staffing adjustments need to be made and in what ways. Staffing decisions and professional development lead us to a longer-term solution.

The meeting lasted more than an hour. A lot was accomplished. And it's clear that there is a lot to do. We are better together, but it will take thickened skins on all sides to stay the course and make our school a better place for everyone. I hope the meeting left everyone with the impression that we can come together instead of going astray to share our difficulties, that we can talk through possible solutions and hold each other accountable for the welfare of our students.

\*Building Bridges, Author Unknown

**\*Building Bridges**  
Building bridges  
between our divisions.  
I reach out to you  
will you reach out to me?  
With all of our voices,  
and all of our visions.  
Friends, we could make such  
sweet harmony.

## CLASSROOM NEWS

### KINDERGARTEN

#### Room 108

How amazing it was to have so many families join us for our curriculum breakfast celebrating our work from our study of *The Kingdoms of the Nile*! Students were able to show and talk about projects including our Nile mural, broad-collar “Nubian necklaces”, mud bricks, Museum of Fine Arts book and documentation panel, paddle dolls and more. We learned about farming and fishing along the Nile, and showed families how we went “fishing” in our rocking boat using our homemade paper-mache fish. We also had lots of plants to show that we have been growing. We ended with singing three songs: *Alice the Camel*, *The Itsy Bitsy Bean Seed* and *A River is Flowing*.  
-Geraldyn McLaughlin



Lena with her Nubian paddle doll at last week's curriculum breakfast.

#### Room 106

This week, the school will begin its new unit *The Struggle for Justice: The African American experience*. This is such a huge topic to tackle with

students who are so young; at first I was finding the task to be daunting. However, after meeting with some other kindergarten teachers and spending some time on my own thinking about the topic, I decided to approach it using something concrete that students could use to help them think about and discuss the larger social aspects of the new unit. Biographies. The children in room 106 will begin to read different biographies, focusing on those of strong African Americans who have made a difference. My goal is to empower students to make positive changes in their lives and the lives of others using words and actions.

-Liz & Renee

#### Room 107

It was great to see our families come out last Thursday for our Family breakfast. The Princess Dragon Hot Wheels put together a program that they thought would make their families proud. Donned in headdresses, jeweled collars, Nubian garb and golden cuffs, we began our program by showcasing our drumming skills. We shared that one of the beats we often play during meetings is a common Egyptian drumbeat. As they performed their welcome song (*Afunga Alafea*) for families, students remained focused and did a great job staying on beat. Next, we sang a song from an Egyptian short story about a camel who loved to sing, “Salome the camel had 5 humps...”. Our students were tickled with the last portion of the song where the camel had no humps because he was a horse. They figured their families would get a kick out of it too. Our last piece was *A River is Flowing*, in connection to the Nile. Later in the day, Keith approached me saying,



Emma hugs her Nubian paddle doll.

“We forgot a part.” And we did. We were all supposed to share one thing we knew about Nubia. Now we must find another way to have them share.  
-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

#### Room 109

Jenny's class celebrated the end of their studies about the Kingdoms of the Ancient Nile with a joyous rendition of *Down by the Nile* and welcomed families to see the mummy and view the documentation on our wall. Families noticed how heavy the case was and were inspired by the painting and the engaging process the students went through. This week Jenny has been taking time with her family, so student teachers Angelina and Meira and para Stephanie have been stepping up to support. During a recent story share, the whole class participated in acting out a child's story about a boy in dinosaur land. Everyone had a role including a volcano that “trembled,” modeling new vocabulary expertly.  
-Angelina Amato, Student Teacher



Artifacts from the Magic Learners classroom display at the curriculum breakfast last week.

**GRADES 1 & 2**

**Room 204**

As families came in to see our work during the Kingdoms of the Nile family breakfast, Magic Learners were proud and excited to show their work. Families, other students and different staff came in to celebrate our learning. It was a busy and hard working week and half and the results were wonderful. Below are a few pictures of our finished work.

We are moving into our last and final theme for the year *The Struggle for Justice: The African-American Experience* next week! It too promises to make us think, be inspired and produce thoughtful and meaningful work.

-Jenerra Williams

**Room 205**

Eyes grew wide as we stepped inside The Bigfoot Research Institute at 826 Boston. A bee hive hung from the ceiling, bones were spread across a desk next to a magnifying glass, not to mention the real, live tarantula in a tank that the kids

were instantly drawn too. What a cool place to inspire creative ideas and writing, I thought. We had just arrived for a storytelling workshop and were greeted by Nakia, our story facilitator. She told us about Mr. Klobberstein, the angry publisher that we had to please with our story; then it was time for the kids to gather some props and pose for an author photo. Soon, we got right to work brainstorming ideas and working together to write an original story. Mr. Klobberstein called in from time to time through Skype to check in on us; in the end he was very pleased with the book we created. We hope you enjoy *Boogey Bee's Wonderful Beats* as much as he did! Each child got to write their own ending to the story and take home their own published copy of the book. This field trip was so engaging and inspiring. We are ready to continue working on our small moment stories in class; we wonder what Mr. Klobberstein would think of these!

-Ashleigh L'Heureux

**Room 217**

"I lost another tooth," Cole said as he walked over to the bench. "Do you have it?" I asked. "No," he replied, a bit glum. We did what we do in first and second grades when kids lose teeth-we walked to the nurse, got a treasure chest (even without a tooth to put in it), and talked about what happens when the baby teeth fall out. Then we returned outside.



Students in Ashleigh's class writing a story at 826 Boston.

## CLASSROOM NEWS

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Cole eagerly shared with his classmates that he had literally lost his tooth. He didn't know where it was on the playground. Children started announcing, "Cole can't find his tooth! We must find it!" Suddenly zombie tag and swinging on the monkey bars stopped. All 18 children in the class started looking for Cole's tooth. Piles of wood chips were picked up to examine closely. Feet and sticks taped at piles of snow-mush. Eyes looked closely. A few minutes later, Rui said, "Here! It's right here." Wedged between the tracks of the bridge on the play structure was Cole's tooth. Children gathered around to make sure it could be safely picked out of the wedge. Losing a tooth may just never have the same meaning again.

-Emma Fialka-Feldman

### GRADES 3 & 4

#### Room 207

Mission Hill is a singing school. We sing weekly at Friday Share, our schoolwide gathering (this is one of my favorite times of the week!). We sing in our classrooms. We even have an adult chorus who is a group of self-selecting adults who occasionally come together to share our love of singing.

Periodically this spring I will share some of my favorite Mission Hill songs. Ask your child to teach you the tune and sing along at home!

#### *Step By Step*

Step by step, the longest march  
can be won, can be won.

Many stones can form an arch,  
singly none, singly none.

And by union what will,  
can be accomplished still.

Drops of water turn the mill,  
singly none, singly none.

#### *Building Bridges*

Building bridges  
between our divisions.

I reach out to you,  
will you reach out to me?

With all of our voices.  
and all of our visions.

Friends, we could make such  
sweet harmony.

-Amina Michel-Lord & Kristina Voss

#### Room 216

A few things to know about our group in room 216: The class favorite Mission Hill song is *Waving Flag*.

Our students are resistant to singing as a group in class. They organize dances spontaneously when music is on in the classroom.

As a teacher, singing has always been part of my classroom routine. Our students are teaching me something new about the importance of feeling music and moving to it vs. just making music. This is on my mind

as we move into a new theme full of stories told through song. Given the dancers in our class, I can't help but imagine a performance being part of the culminating work. Music, dance, costumes, puppets and dolls—all ways to tell a story. What stories will we tell? How we will tell these? These questions are for our students. I'll share their responses as we begin to study a segment of American history, the struggle for justice through the lens of the African American.

-Ayla & Shaina

### GRADES 5&6

#### Room 210

By Wednesday morning our ancient Nubia projects were ready for display, but the room was not. We had our morning meeting, but the conversations were focused on Henry's concern that we are always playing the same games during our



*The search for the missing tooth (see Room 217).*

## CLASSROOM NEWS

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physical time in the gym, which excluded some, and Zack's request that we create a prompt box, where students write creative prompts for morning meetings. Prompts have ranged from, if you could make your own cereal to if you could design your own backpack. I was really into the discussion that I kept forgetting to shift it back to talking about how to prepare the room. Jada and Joanne were bringing their students, who are our Book Buddies, and next day was the family breakfast!

As a class we had visited Ashleigh's students' museum. We were impressed by the attention to detail, the transformation of a classroom into a museum. Ashleigh and I had been collaborating on Nubia, and I wanted to make time to interview her about her process with her students.

I announced that we had guests coming, and that we should make decisions about how we are going to get our room ready. Suggestions were made - we each take a section of the room to organize and get ready. Quickly books returned to the bookshelves, games were back in their boxes, the vacuum cleaner was humming, tables were getting cleaned, artists' statements were printed and glue to construction paper. I looked around and said to myself, this is a community, this is what it looks like when individuals have shared goals and have different means to reach them, this is connected to life.

-Abdi, Angela & Carlos

### GRADES 7&8

#### Room 213

This is a hard time of year to be an 8th grader. The end is in sight, but there is still so much work to do. Some students were accepted to their



Seventh and eighth graders work on their paddle dolls in the art room.

high schools of choice, while others were rejected. BPS school assignments were delayed so acceptance at non-pilot schools is still a mystery. Kids feel ready to move on, yet uncertain about what lies ahead.

As adults, we can reassure and encourage them but that's not quite what kids need to hear. We are fortunate that at Mission Hill our graduates visit often and keep in close contact, on-line and in person, with their friends here. They provide the evidence, the living proof, that 8th graders do indeed transition to high school and start a new phase of life and education. The Friday Share song, "Make new friends," rings true at Mission Hill. Kids graduate, but continue to support their "old" friends with the wisdom of being a year older.

I really appreciate the role our graduates play in supporting their friends. It is special to see how they continue to grow even after their Mission Hill days have ended. As the saying goes, "Once a Mission Hiller, always a Mission Hiller." Thank you, graduates!  
-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

#### Room 214

The following comments were overheard during a recent art class on creating paddle dolls:

"I need to add more hair"

"Yamilett, that is way too much hair!"

"I added a V for Vampire, then I wanted to add lines but I messed up so I'm going to make it into a solid block"

"Look, I put a slick Hieroglyph"

"I gave him dreads because I used to have dreads"

"Dude, you just sat on glitter"

"I didn't know what to do with the hieroglyph so I just added it and drew around it"

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

### SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

#### Spring Music Concert Save the Date!

Join us for an evening of music with your amazing MHS children! The concert will feature choral performances and selections from our wind, string, guitar and percussion ensembles. Refreshments, a raffle and special gifts will be provided for

## SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

those in attendance! Save the date on your calendars!

Where: The Mission Hill School Auditorium

When: Wednesday, May 20th 2015, from 5:00 - 7:30pm

### The FOMHS Music Program Campaign Needs Your Support!

The Friends of the Mission Hill School volunteer fundraising crew has launched a new campaign to keep our music program going strong. Please consider a donation at any level, and please share the campaign with friends and family!

Hear all about our goals by visiting this web page:

[bit.ly/MissionHillMusic](http://bit.ly/MissionHillMusic)

### Music Fundraiser at Tres Gatos

On May 5th, the Jamaica Plain restaurant, Tres Gatos, will host a fundraiser evening for the MHS Music Program. Come get some dinner and hear music teacher Billy Buss perform. A portion of the evening's proceeds will be donated to support music education at our school. This is an adult-only event. Contact Bridget Lee for more information: [bridgetelee@gmail.com](mailto:bridgetelee@gmail.com)

### Get your Camp Physical!

Don't forget that summer programs ALL require a medical examination by a licensed physician within 12 months preceding the program. This is a state requirement for all children attending camp, so book your child's appointment now. Remember, Nurse Georgie needs updated copies of physicals as well, so drop a copy in her mailbox after your appointment.

### Family Council News

All families at MHS are members of the Family Council! Contact Co-Chairs Bridget Lee or Rachel Goldsmith [rachego@mindspring.com](mailto:rachego@mindspring.com) with questions or for more information.

### SWSG is collecting tabs for Ronald McDonald House

The students in the Strong Women, Strong Girls group are fundraising to help provide housing for those in need as part of their spring service project. They would appreciate any help collecting can tabs these next two weeks. Find tabs on all kind of cans: soup, vegetables, soda, juice, cat food, fruit etc. You can drop them off in the pink SWSG box in the office.

### Hiring Updates

We are in the midst of interviewing candidates and observing lessons for the open positions for the 2015-2016 school. Emma Fialka-Feldman, Grade 1&2 Teacher, will not be returning next year. Candidates are also being considered for this open position.

### Images from the Ancient Nubia Curriculum Breakfast



Ayla Gavins, *Principal*

Deborah Meier, *Founder*

John McDonough, *Interim Superintendent*

Mission Hill K-8 School

*A Boston Public Pilot School*

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