



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- November 16-18, 2015
Grades 7&8 to Farm School
- Thursday, November 19, 2015
Family Council Meeting, 5:45-7:00 pm
- November 25, 2015
Fall Curriculum Potluck Breakfast 9:15-10 am
- November 25, 2015
Early Release: 1:30 pm
- November 26-27, 2015
Thanksgiving Break: NO SCHOOL

November 13, 2015

Volume 19, Issue 8

Better Food Student Group

Dear Mission Hill Students, Families, Staff, and Friends,

Every year students express disappointment about the school food's flavor, variety and appearance. I think this topic is an annual campaign item in student Governance Board election speeches. Years ago our school community took action by renovating the cafeteria, hiring a chef and partnering with the Farm School for food delivery. Since then, there have been many changes. The BPS food service team has completely changed and our school relocated. But through all that change, our students have held a steady voice on the topic of food variety and quality.

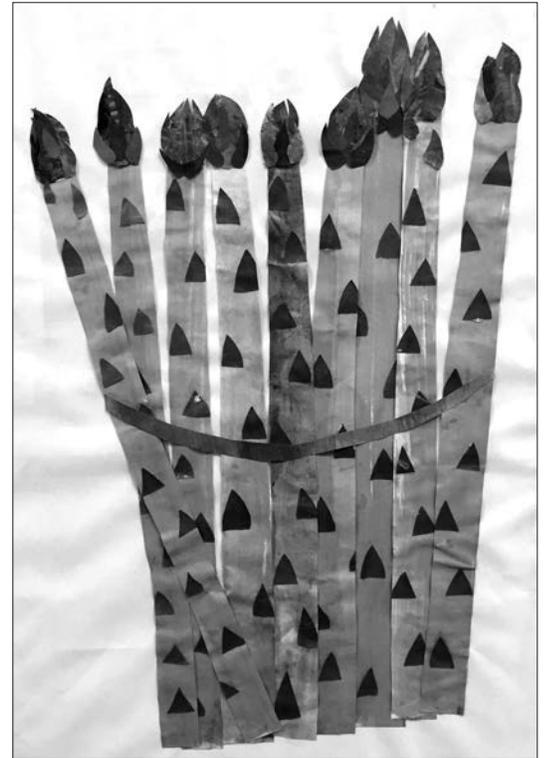
A group of students in grades 5&6 that want action met with me recently on the topic of improving the school lunch. We decided to request a meeting with our cafeteria manager and his supervisor. Not only did the manger and his supervisor agree to meet with us, they also invited the nutrition manager and the procurement manager.

To prepare for the meeting our Better Food Student Group (our student action group) surveyed 56 students in grades one to eight. They learned that MHS students like some of the regular menu items, such as the salad, pizza, peanut butter and jelly, chicken nuggets, burrito, burger, broccoli, cauliflower, grilled cheese sandwich and sweet and sour chicken. Our student researchers had to change the general claim made about no one liking the lunches to one that was more accurate.

They represented their peers by stating what is and is not liked about the lunches. The Better Food Student Group made requests for a greater variety of whole fruits and vegetables. They made requests for specific dishes to be served more often. They also requested a salad bar and to be included in future taste tests. The food services department is considering all of these requests.

There were other requests. Our students asked for desserts, egg rolls, French fries, meals sold from restaurants, juice and strawberry milk. It was explained to them that those sugary drinks and deep fried foods are not permissible because they contribute to childhood obesity. This was disappointing news for them, but a relief to me.

Overall we felt successful. I was impressed by how responsive the food services department was to our meeting request. They were great listeners and gave us honest feedback and answers. The Better Food Student Group is giving all these requests some time. As one team member said, "Let's wait four weeks and see what happens."



KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

One of our favorite books these days is *Are you a Snail?* by Judith Allen. The book is beautifully illustrated by Tudor Humphries, and is filled with information about snails. The book also compares snails to human children. This comparison gave us a chance to introduce Venn diagrams as a way to compare to things - in this instance snails and humans. One difference is that snails have shells and humans do not. Humans have hair and snails do not. And here are some things that humans and snails have in common: two eyes, mouths for eating, eat leaves, poops. Stop by and check out our Venn diagrams.
-Geralyn, Donna & Kyra

Room 106

This week we headed to the New England Aquarium. We wanted



Emily carefully observes a snail.

to investigate shorebirds and the penguins. Penguins as you know, are not from Boston, but are living at the NEA. We arrived in time to meet the penguin expert. She told us stories about the African penguins that live there. We watched volunteers scrub the islands that they spend most of their time on. We saw some molting and others preening.

As she asked if anyone had a question, the hands of the Flying Birds Class shot in the air. Simeon whispered, "I know the answer to this question but I really want to ask it." Ok, I said. Simeon continued, "Is a bird still a bird if it swims?" The penguin expert smiled and replied, "Yes." She continued, "What is something that only birds have?" Warlin yelled, "Feathers!" "Yes," she said, "birds have feathers."

I asked how these flightless birds got to the NEA. She shared that some were born here, some were injured and could no longer live in the wild and others came from zoos. We also got to know the rockhopper penguins and the little blues.

-Kathy D'Andrea

Room 107

"I liked the butterflies tickling me."
-Avian

Last week we visited the Museum of Science. As we did with the trip to the Franklin Park Zoo, each animal we visited, we tried to determine whether they first grew inside of their mom or inside of an egg. We saw dinosaurs, frogs, cockroaches and praying mantises. Most importantly, we got to see what our classroom creatures would have turned into if they had survived...BUTTERFLIES! There were so many of them in the Butterfly Garden! Some



Jack sprays the snail habitat with water while Danae watches.

enjoyed landing on our students and teachers! We then visited the Hall of Human Life where we saw how tiny we were as we grew inside of our moms and witnessed the wobbly first steps of a newly hatched baby chick! When asked what they liked most, students said the following:

I liked...

Nikaye, Vidania & Wren: ... seeing the butterflies.

Ava: ...the light race.

Jonathan: ...the dinosaurs.

Emma: ... the copy of the dinosaur's footprint.

Jeremy: ...pushing the cube. I am too strong!

Agboola, Dixon, Jayden, Shona: ... the ball race.

Josie: ...laying on the bed of 1000 nails

-Jada Brown, Jo-Ann Hawkesworth, & Cristina Noonan

Room 109

This week our fall study moved to pumpkins. We are beginning to think about pumpkins, read about pumpkins, and observe them closely. As we read about the pumpkin life cycle we are noticing similarities to the apple life cycle that we focused

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on earlier this fall. It is interesting to see the parallels and begin to notice how many plants, trees, and other parts of nature culminate their season in the fall and also get ready for beginning again in the spring. Right now we are reading books and doing observational paintings and drawings as well as thinking about pumpkin questions. Soon we will cut a pumpkin in half to really get a good look at the inside and study the seeds.

Students completed their second self-portrait of the year and are already noticing changes in their observations of themselves. We will complete a series of self-portraits over the year. You'll see them on the bulletin board over our book area.

-Deborah & Stephanie

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 205

Stay tuned next week!

-Ashleigh L'Heureux

Room 212

This week the children have been hard at work especially during Writer's Workshop. During Writer's Workshop the children have been looking at taking a moment from their lives and stretching it across a



Wren and a butterfly.



Josie lays on a bed of 1000 nails!

few pages. We have been discussing how pictures can help us plan and tell the story and how we can plan with our finger to help us remember what we want to say and where we can put the words. This has been a new and big step for our first and second graders and it has been exciting to see children become invested in their stories.

Just as a reminder-homework goes home on Friday and is due back on Friday. Please have your child keep the packet stapled together (there have been missing papers) and have your child complete the packet in pencil. When marker is used, it bleeds through the paper and becomes difficult to read. When a child writes in crayon it can also be difficult to read. Thank you for your help with this!

-Suzanne Brown

Room 217

Our gardening theme is in full swing. We are learning about plants in gardens in a huge variety of ways. We visited the Boston Nature Center, Shelburne Farm, and Drumlin Farm to learn about gardens in Massachusetts. Students are carefully observing plants and artistically

representing them in tempera paint, crayon, colored pencil, and water-color. Our classroom now houses a full grow light so we can watch plants grow right in our classroom. The recycled material vertical garden in our window has presented some challenges. Our newest attempt involves drilling holes in the recycled materials for string to tie through. Some of our new vocabulary includes germinate, imbibe, seed coat, root, and shoot. Room 217 is working on learning a new poem during morning meeting called Mother Earth:

Mother Earth, Mother Earth
Take the seed and give it birth.
Father Sun, gleam and glow
Until the roots begin to grow.
Sister Rain, Sister Rain
Shed thy tears to swell the grain.
Brother Wind, breathe and blow
Then the blade, green will grow.
Earth and Sun and Wind and Rain,
Turn to gold, the living grain.

-Kate Needham

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 203

This past weekend I was in Minneapolis for the first ever Teach-



Children from room 217 visited Drumlin Farm.

er Powered Schools conference. It was a conference that pulled teachers from around the country that teach in, have started, or want to start teacher-powered schools. In others words, schools like Mission Hill where teachers are in charge of making decisions for the school.

This conference was the culmination of work that has happened over the last 18 months between myself, The Center for Teaching Quality, and eight other teachers from schools like MHS. The nine of us met via video chats to discuss different elements of teacher-powered schools (i.e. governance, evaluation, student success, etc.) which resulted in a manual of discussion starters for people who are in or beginning the process of starting their own school.

I gave two presentations on the MHS Peer Review process and had the opportunity to meet and talk with some amazing educators! My most powerful connection was with two young black women looking to start a school in Memphis, TN on the heels of losing their jobs after

their school was closed for low performance. Instead of leaving the profession or throwing their hands up, they threw their hats into the ring and are starting a school! We will be keeping in touch as their journey unfolds.

The passion and dedication I saw in them and other teachers there was energizing! If you would like to know more about the conference, the discussion manuals and more you can go to www.teachingquality.org.
-Jenerra Williams

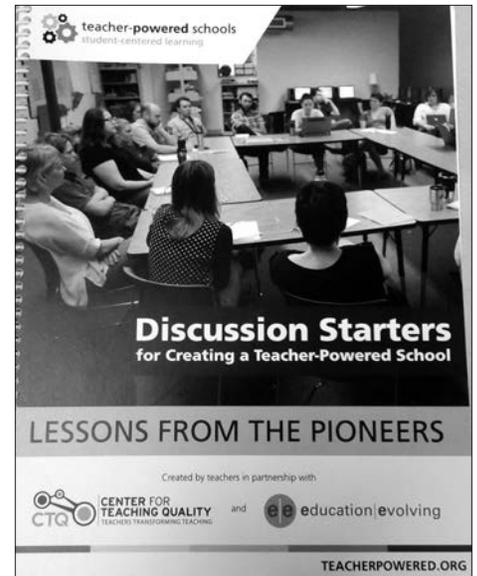
Room 204

For the past few weeks the 3rd grade math class in room 204 has been exploring the question, how many ways can we solve multiplication problems? Students have been practicing solving multiplications using different strategies such as a 100's chart, skip counting, grouping things, and arrays. This week as students demonstrated some of these strategies during a ten-minute math session, I was moved by two particular children. They eagerly volunteered to go to the board and solve the combinations 5×9 and 9×5 . I was so impressed that I quickly snapped a picture of one student who generally needs a lot of support in math but was able to take the risk to stand up in front of his classmates and stick it out as he attempted to solve the problem. The student and I have been working on sticking it out or persevering through difficult tasks during any given time and he showed that he is making strides, step by step!

-Cleata & Nelly's Math Class

Room 207

During literacy, Michelle decided to write a descriptive paragraph about



the teachers and students in room 207. She proudly shared it at the end of the day and wanted to share in our school newsletter. Here is her journal entry:

“Today I will tell you the name of my friends and how I see them from my viewpoint. Kevauna is funny. Dillon is smart. Arianny is nice. Jahlimar is Beautiful. Miss Amina is a singer. Miss Amanda has a smile that lights up the classroom. Destiny is cool. Amos is silly. Sara likes the color purple. Ezra is interesting. Amber is fabulous. Lenardo is amazing. Tyler always has an idea in his head. Lucas likes reading books. Euan wears sandals almost everyday. Anand likes playing with legos. Justin likes everything. Xavier likes snack. Aahmonyea likes recess. I like all my friends.”

-Michelle (a student in room 207)

GRADES 5&6

Room 210

All of the 5th graders (our class combined with Abdi's class) have been participating in Urban Improv this fall.

According to their website: “Ur-



The FireFlies among the fire-evoking leaves of autumn at the Arboretum.

ban Improv is an interactive program for young people that uses improvisational theater workshops to teach violence prevention, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Today: this means cyberbullying. The program's innovative curriculum helps students deal creatively with major issues in their lives. It is truly a rehearsal for life."

We have had a long standing relationship with the program and are excited to be part of it again. We used to go as a mixed age class however two years ago they begin to ask us to come as a grade band to better fit their tailored, grade specific curriculum. Later this year, Abdi will bring the entire 6th grade. I'm looking forward to seeing children explore through improvisation and role playing.

-Nakia, Manny, Elsa, & Alanna

Room 215

The "Four Seasons" Musical Art Integration Residency Workshop has started for the FireFlies. Every Thursday, through December, at 10:30am, we will explore our nature

science theme through the music. The Italian Baroque composer, Antonio Vivaldi published a set of four concerti for the violin in 1725. The "Four Seasons," the most popular of Vivaldi's music, were composed with his own poems, creating a musical narrative for each of the seasons, spring, summer, autumn and winter. The musical arts-residency is led by Shishi Zhou, a graduate student and violinist at the New England Conservatory. Shishi assigned us our first task, take pictures of what autumn feels like and choose music that evokes these feelings. The FireFlies are ready - their creative, full-bodied sense of the music would make Vivaldi smile. Here's a link to Shishi's virtuosic skill with the violin, <https://soundcloud.com/shishi-zhou>. Play the Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" at home as well. *-The FireFlies, Carlos, Cindy & Abdi*

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

One of the Mission Hill Habits of Mind is present in a big way in 8th

grade math class as we work with multiple representations to model contextual and abstract mathematical relationships. Conjecture asks us to consider, "How could this be different? Could there be another way?" We can use words, drawings, tables, graphs, and algebraic rules to describe the relationship between two variables. We ask ourselves and each other: What would the graph of this data look like? What are the allowable inputs? Which representation is most useful and why?

Usually, students have a clear preference for one form of representation. Many like the security of a table, others the flexibility of a rule. Some appreciate the big picture view of a graph, others the detail of a drawing. The challenge for us is to recognize when a representation that is not our preferred one provides the information we need in a better way. We grow our minds when we allow ourselves some discomfort with a graph or a rule. Kids are beginning to recognize they can work more efficiently when open to using multiple strategies and tools to solve problems.

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

We spend at least 20 minutes each day writing in the form of a freewrite. The prompt is often drawn from our whole class text, *The House of the Scorpion*, but it also an opportunity to think about a topic that is relevant to the class. Recently, we've been reflecting and writing on ways to improve the class in order to make it a place where each student is comfortable and are able to work at

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

their best.

The most surprising pieces of writing were the responses to the prompt, “as a student, I have the right to...” Some of the responses were thought provoking and reflected the students values and their views of a healthy classroom culture. It was surprising to me that three students said they had the right to respect their teachers. I had taken it for granted that respect for adults is a an expectation, a given, I had never thought of it as a right.

We will incorporate these ideas into a class constitution and continue to revisit them throughout the year.

-Reginald Toussaint



Eighth graders Autumn and Asmani present about portfolios to visitors from the Netherlands. MHS hosted over 50 visitors last week.

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

Curriculum Breakfast

Come hear about and see the Life Science topics we have been learning about over the past few months. It's a potluck, so bring a dish to share with our community.

When: November 25, 2015

Where: K-Quad and 2nd Floor

Time: 9:15-10:00

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. With winter weather coming, please send in an extra change of clothing. If you need extra gloves, scarves, or a jacket for your child please let your child's teacher know or contact Courtney through the main office.



Ayla Gavins with founding principal Deborah Meier, at the FairTest Deborah Meier Heroes in Education award ceremony, honoring Lani Guinier and Nancy Carlsson-Paige. Read more about the event at www.fairtest.org.

Ayla Gavins, *Principal*
Deborah Meier, *Founder*
Tommy Chang, *Superintendent*

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