

IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- December 15-17, 2015
MHS Book Fair! (see page 6 and flyer for details)
- December 17, 2015
Governance Board Meeting 5-7 pm
- December 24, 2015-January 4, 2016
Winter Break: NO SCHOOL
- Tuesday, January 5, 2017
Students return to school

December 11, 2015

Volume 19, Issue 11

Do We Tell Our Children?

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

As a caregiver there are times when there are tough decisions to make about whether to share information with our children or not. Our friends at Urban Improv helped us think through this when they joined our Family Council meeting in November. They set up a role-play scene for us that involved a young person being frightened about the recent tragedy in Paris. Some of our families felt it was best to reassure the child that they are safe, would not be harmed. Others felt it was best to tell the child that a tragedy could happen anywhere. Since that night and the news about Paris, there have been three other stories about awful events happening in the world-Mali, Colorado, and California. Not to mention local violence. The news of violence just keeps coming. I found this posting on the *Rethinking Schools* website helpful as a guide for you and our staff.

Talking to Children By Educators for Social Responsibility

Should children watch coverage about tragedies and warfare?

It depends on the age and maturity of the children. Parents may decide that some shows and topics are inappropriate. However, if children are going to watch programs about the event, we recommend that a parent or caregiver watch with them. Afterwards, talking together about reactions to the coverage and feelings about the event in general can help children make sense of a seemingly senseless tragedy.

How can I judge if a child is ready to talk about difficult events?

Most children from age four to five and above would appreciate talking with adults they trust. In the media there is daily discussion of difficult topics, and it is likely that children know about them. However, it is also quite likely that they have some confusion about the facts and the magnitude of the danger they personally face. They often have mistaken information, questions, and some strong feelings. Often children are hesitant to share their questions and fears with adults. For this reason, we recommend that adults open the way for children to talk about their concerns.

How do I open up the subject with children?

The key word here is LISTEN. Most experts agree that it is best NOT to open up a conversation with children by giving them a lecture - even an informal, introductory lecture - on the particular tragedy that is on the news. Don't burden children with information they may not be ready for. The best approach is to listen carefully to children's spontaneous questions and comments, and then respond to them in an appropriate, supportive way. Let children's concerns, in their own words, guide the direction of the discussion.

Excerpted from "Talking to Children about Violence and other Sensitive and Complex Issues in the World." For the complete article see <http://esrnational.org/resources/understanding-world-events/>. Winter 2001 / 2002



Self portrait by Arianny.



KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

"It's a happy face!" To continue looking at our fall focus of "taking care of ourselves and others" we started a mini unit on emotions. To explore emotions on Monday, we made felt faces with various pieces in order to create and explain an emotion during small group. We also noticed that you can create a sad face by turning one of the smiles upside down. We ask you, what's your happy face?

-Kyra Freedman, Student Teacher

Room 106

This past week was leadership week for The Flying Birds student teacher, Sam. We began our week by reading *The Day the Crayons Quit* and talking about the feelings of the crayons. We thought about how we could make our dramatic play into a crayon box to act out the book. We made signs, posters, pictures, and costumes, all to aid in our reproduction of the book. We also had the pleasure of having the students of Room 109 join us for the week, starting on Tuesday. This allowed us to share our learning with more people! We learned about bird feathers and their purposes, which are not just for flying! We also did some graphing about everyone's favorite colors using our crayons. We also read *The Day the Crayons Came Home* and a poem about *The Crayon Box that Talked*.

We had a great week together filled with building blocks, play dough, writing, and art.

-Samantha Peters, Student Teacher

Room 107

It was nice last week, seeing our families eating, mingling, and viewing the work children have

been doing over the past several months. I remembered Amina writing in a newsletter piece that often when students are asked what they have done in school, the answer is frequently "Nothing". In Kindergarten, it is often, "I played and I slept." However, our family breakfasts allow families a better picture of what is really happening. This time around, for 107 it meant that families were able to see our Watch me Grow books, surveys, butterflies and spiders done with Jeanne and Henry, field trip reflections, journal entries, individual and shared stories written and illustrated by students, bean plants, a representation of the butterfly life cycle created with Rachel and then taste our homemade apple butter and cornbread poppers. We ended the morning together with a short performance that included poetic recitations of *The Little Plant*, *Eggs, Eggs, Eggs!* and our *Bucket Filler* promise. We then sang the butterfly life cycle song and viewed a slideshow of our time together.

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

Room 109

Stay tuned next week!

-Deborah & Stephanie

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 205

In math, we began the year by counting basic numbers. The students soon mastered this and we continued on with our learning. The Tiny City could now be known as the Sticker Station headquarters. At the Sticker Station, we practice word problems using strips of stickers. As we have looked at a variety of stick-

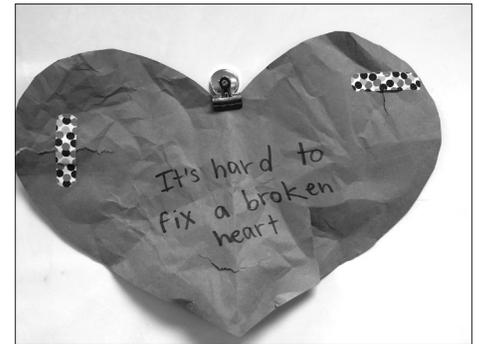
ers, students have learned multiple strategies, such as cubes, number lines, and drawing pictures to figure out tough equations. You all now know who to contact if you get into a sticky situation with stickers!

-Samantha Summers, Student Teacher

Room 212

Stay tuned next week!

-Suzanne Brown



Room 217

Room 217 has been working on living the Mission Hill Way: being kind and working hard. It's very difficult to work hard if kids aren't being kind. There has been some unkind language and actions happening on the playground and in the classroom. We had class meetings to talk about what our individual actions do to the community.

I brought a large, purple, construction paper heart to a morning meeting. I pretended to be a kid and started saying things that could hurt my feelings throughout the day. Maybe my friend didn't play with me at recess. And then I got left out during project time in the block area. Then a kid in my class yelled mean words in the room. Then someone ripped my drawing and didn't say sorry. With each piece, I crumpled or ripped my heart a

little bit. When someone said sorry I put a Bandaid on the rips or tried to flatten the paper. The children saw how the blemishes never went away. When kids get their feelings hurt they might be able to feel a little better, but the crumples in their heart can never go away completely. We now have the heart hanging in our classroom if anyone at Mission Hill needs a reminder that it's hard to fix a crumpled heart.

-Kate Needham

GRADES 3 & 4

Rooms 203

This week Room 203 began swimming for Wellness! As they came in Tuesday morning, they were all excited about going for the first time. We had them change into their suits right away and when it was time to go there were smiles all around. With a quick snack in hand, they walked over to Curtis Hall with Nelly and Danny, got instructions from the lifeguard and the fun began!

Later that afternoon they reflected on their time at the pool and as they spoke I was clearly able to hear and imagine how swimming at Wellness was not only good physical exercise, but could also be a pathway to bigger things as learners. Zuhri and Anna shared about the shark game they played with others and I saw inventors. Peter shared about the chair he made of pool "noodles" and I saw a designer. Typrese shared that he did a somersault and I saw a gymnast. Lukas talked about how he pushed, pulled and rolled up a noodle to blow water from one side to the other and I saw an engineer. Kimberly talked about how her body was cold when she first got in but warm when she got in again and I saw a doctor. Rui



Community Garden drawings by Yeilyvette, Liam, and Noah (top to bottom)

shared that he was trying to teach his best friend Luis how to swim and I saw a teacher.

They are looking forward to the next Wellness sessions at the Curtis Hall pool and I am looking forward to all the wonderful things that will emerge from each one.

-Jenerra Williams

Room 204

"No Pesticide", "Save the Bees" and "Use Natural Fertilizers" are part of the discussions that the Bee Squad have been facilitating as they think about how they can contribute to a thriving environment. This week a group of activists set out to research some facts about safe community gardening. Noah described a one fact about community gardens as "green spaces that are cared for", he also shared that "Most bugs in your garden are actually helpful and trying to kill them all sometimes makes more problem". Liam found out that "many pesticides products are toxic to cats and dogs and other pets", so we should be careful what we use in our gardens. Yeilyvette discovered that we should "Practice smart watering" while Shirley and Gianna decided that they would commit to using more organic gardening methods and will not use chemicals. The Bee Squad will continue to research and find ways to protect and support their environment.

-Cleata & Shaina

Room 207

As we come to an end in our nature theme, we asked students to reflect on their experiences and things they have learned. Here are some of their thoughts:

"I learned about photosynthesis and where water vapor went. I used to

think clouds were just big floating things. I now know that they are just visible water vapor that is coming together and getting ready to precipitate.” - Amos

“I want to grow tomatoes so we can eat them for snack.” -Kevauna

“I like theme work because I have never seen a rose. Well I have for the holidays, but I have never seen them sprout. I am glad that I got to draw pictures of roses. I am excited to see if it really grows like how I draw them.” -Jahlimar

“First our group wanted to plant grapes, but then we watched videos about grapes and we didn’t know anything about grapes. We found out that they take two years to grow and we only have 180 days. Then, Amber and Jahlimar already wanted to grow roses. We found out that they could grow in the summer or fall. So we grew them and it was a big success because we had a lot of work.” - Anand

-Amanda McCarthy & Amina Michel-Lord

GRADES 5&6

Room 210

Book Fair Excitement

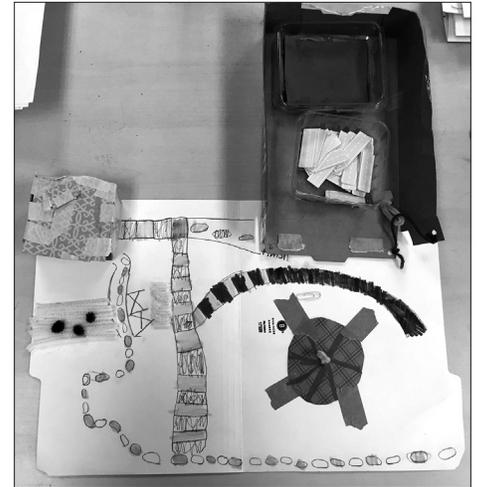
People are most excited about this (MHS book fair). It’s the most important thing of the year. People like to buy books, whatever they like. They can read them at home or at school. I love action, chapters, and all kinds of books. That’s why I’m really excited about the book fair. How can we have the most successful book fair? What do kids need to know? They get to explore the books first. It’s good to get to know the books before you buy them. Also, bring less than \$20 to spend at the book fair. That’s enough to get more than one

book. Parents/caregivers, I want to tell you that you can come in the late afternoon. You can also buy a book for yourself at the book fair. You can volunteer to help kids find books they are looking for or books they might like. Have a great time at the book fair because I know you will love it. If you don’t have money you can get a slip with the cost written down and then get the book the next day.

-Anais Brito, student in the *Crispy Leaves* classroom

Room 215

The *Crispy Leaves* clear the dance floor for the *FireFlies*. For the next 10 weeks, in 20 lessons, we will work with dance instructor, Brooke, to learn the Foxtrot, Merengue, Rumba, Tango, Waltz and Swing. We are participating in the Dancing Classrooms program, inspired by the documentary, “Mad Hot Ballroom,” which tells the story of eleven-year-old New York City public school children learning ballroom dancing. (please watch it on YouTube). Brooke, who worked with MHS years ago, started her own program in 2009 because of this movie. Here’s the story Brooke shared with me when I asked about her work: “I stopped teaching last year because my father and brother passed away. Then during the summer my dance instructor asked if I would be interesting in teaching again and gave me the contact info for someone looking for an instructor. I couldn’t believe it, it ended up being for the same program as *Mad Hot Ballroom!* I’ve watched the film many times with my students and it was a program that changed my life years ago and now I was going to be part of it! They sent me to NYC for a week in July to learn their syllabus



Shawnmatthew and Amari’s math game.

and it was amazing. I’m so so grateful to be a part of it and I don’t have to do all the running around like I did when I had my own program. Now I can focus more on teaching and the kids!” (www.dancingclassrooms.org.) -*The FireFlies*, including Carlos and Abdi

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

“But I did my story. And I shared it!”
“Did you use the comments to revise? How about editing?”
“Oh..... Is that all I have to do?”
“Let’s look at your assignment sheet.”
“You mean I have to do all of this?”
“Yes, there are many parts to the *Wonder* project.”

Versions of this conversation have been happening a lot in Room 213. For many 7th graders, keeping track of the requirements for a multi-part project is hard work. The 8th graders encountered this last year with their first big project, and have been heard to say, “Oh, it’s like...”

We are helping kids to break the assignment down and schedule when they will work and how much time they will need. Planning is an important skill to learn, and one young

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

adolescents need help with – at school and at home. Please check in with your child. The blue double-sided assignment sheet explains what needs to be done. The projects are coming together nicely, but as the end of the term approaches the time to finish is now!

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

As the conversation intensified, Leah interjected, “But Reginald, it’s the same as you! Your mother and father made you but if God didn’t want you to be born you wouldn’t be”

Then Derricka added, “it’s the same as that (jade) plant over there, it’s a clone of another plant but it’s a real plant. Matt’s a clone but he’s human just like us.”

We were responding and making connections to a section in House of Scorpions where two of the main characters are trying make sense of what will happen to Matt (a clone) when he dies.

“You don’t have a soul, so you can’t be baptized. All animals are like that. I think it’s unfair and sometimes I don’t believe it. After all, what would heaven be without birds or dogs or horses?” (p. 159)

I was somewhat surprised that the consensus of the class is that although Matt’s a clone he is as human as any of us. I have always thought that since clones are created by scientists they do not operate under the same laws of nature. However, that conversation has pushed my thinking and makes me question many of my assumptions.

-Reginald Toussaint

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

MHS Book Fair needs volunteers!

We still need people on Tuesday and Wednesday, between 9:30 am and 4:30 pm. Jobs include set up and break down, sales, customer service, and bookkeeping. If you are able to volunteer, please sign up online from the MHS website homepage: www.missionhillschool.org

Questions? Please email Marietje at: mhalbertsma@missionhillschool.org or call the school at 617-635-6384. We hope to hear from you and thanks!

December Governance Board Meeting

You are and have always been welcome to attend our Board Meetings. Please consider this your official invitation to come out and meet our board members, hear a little about important conversations in education, learn about ways to support our school and hopefully consider being a member in the near future. We consider your presence valuable, so both dinner and childcare will be provided. Please RSVP for childcare at 617-635-6384.

We hope to see you there!

When: December 17, 2015

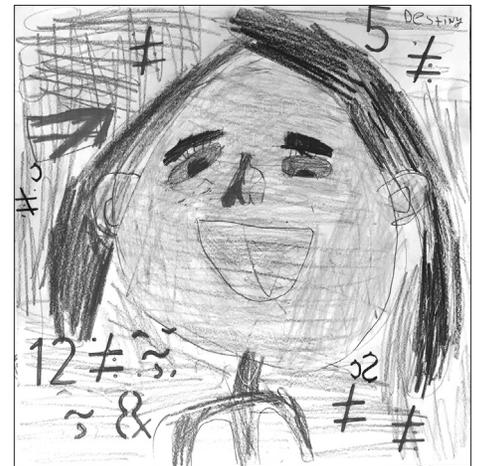
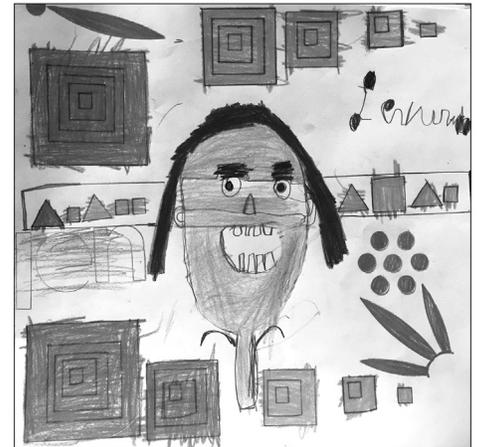
Where: Art Room (Room 211)

Time: 5:00-7:00 p.m.

Return of the MHS Coffee House!

Join us on Friday, December 18th for the fifth annual, “Show Me What You’re Working With” Coffee House! The multi-age show will feature singing, dancing, gymnastics, and more! Families are encouraged to join us in the Auditorium from 6:00-7:30 pm.

Faces of 3rd & 4th Grades



Self portraits from Amanda & Amina’s class.
Lenardo, Destiny, and Anand (top to bottom).

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