



## IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Monday, January 18, 2016  
*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day: No School*
- Friday, January 22, 2016  
*Family Reading Morning/Pajama Day (see flyer)*
- January 27-29, 2016  
*Mix-it-up-Week @ MHS (see flyer)*
- February 8 & 9, 2016  
*Family Conferences (stay tuned for more info!)*

January 15, 2016

Volume 19, Issue 13

### *What is Inclusion?*

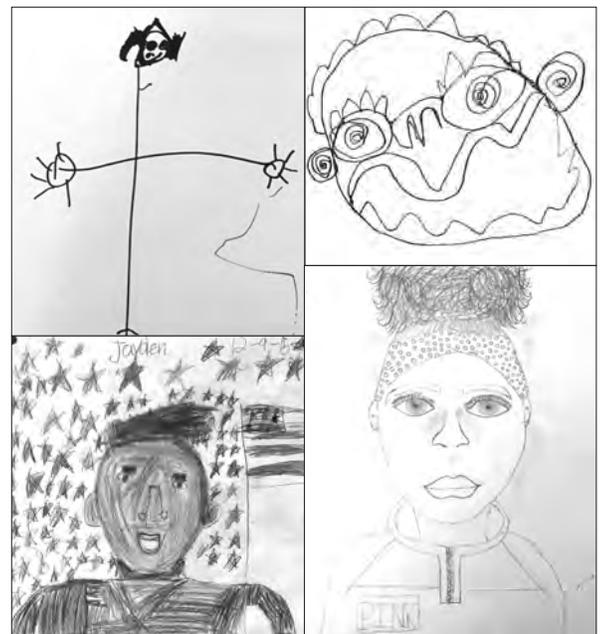
Dear Mission Hill School Friends, Families, Students and Staff,  
Since the enactment of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975 and subsequent reauthorizations, students with disabilities have been prescribed free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. More and more of these students are being served in general education settings, in what is informally called an “inclusion setting.” Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms has been found to have beneficial outcomes for both students with identified disabilities and their regular education peers. It builds fairness, empathy, voice, power, language, and conflict resolution. These are all integral parts of the MHS’ unwritten curriculum-character development.

The Coalition of Essential Schools, which Mission Hill School is a member of, has a set of common principles which states that “The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.” I believe that inclusion of students with disabilities is one of the greatest challenges to public schools and want Mission Hill School to continue to be at the forefront of this important issue of equality.

Inclusion impacts all of us and research shows it is beneficial to all in multiple ways. There are many forms of inclusion, and MHS (and BPS) are endeavoring to find the method that works best for us. You can trust that bumps in the road will happen; yet any changes occur with the benefit of all students at the heart of any decision. We strive to follow one of the key concepts for success in inclusive schools, Universal Design Learning (UDL) which calls for schools to design learning that differentiates among learners’ needs and styles, allowing for multiple paths of access to the curriculum. We are all different and at MHS we celebrate those differences.

Please join us at Outside the Lines if you are interested in participating more in helping us further develop our inclusive school for all students. Outside the Lines is a support group for everyone that works with students (parents and staff). The next meeting will be announced soon.

-Jonathan Bruno  
MHS Learning Coach



*Some faces of Mission Hill: Violet, Justin, Jayden, and Aniya (left to right, top to bottom).*

## KINDERGARTEN

### Room 108

I am blessed with six brothers and two sisters. One of our brothers was born quite sick, and had significant special needs from the beginning. Having a brother with special needs helped shape who I am and what I believe. I learned from an early age that exclusion hurts and that blaming parents destroys trust.

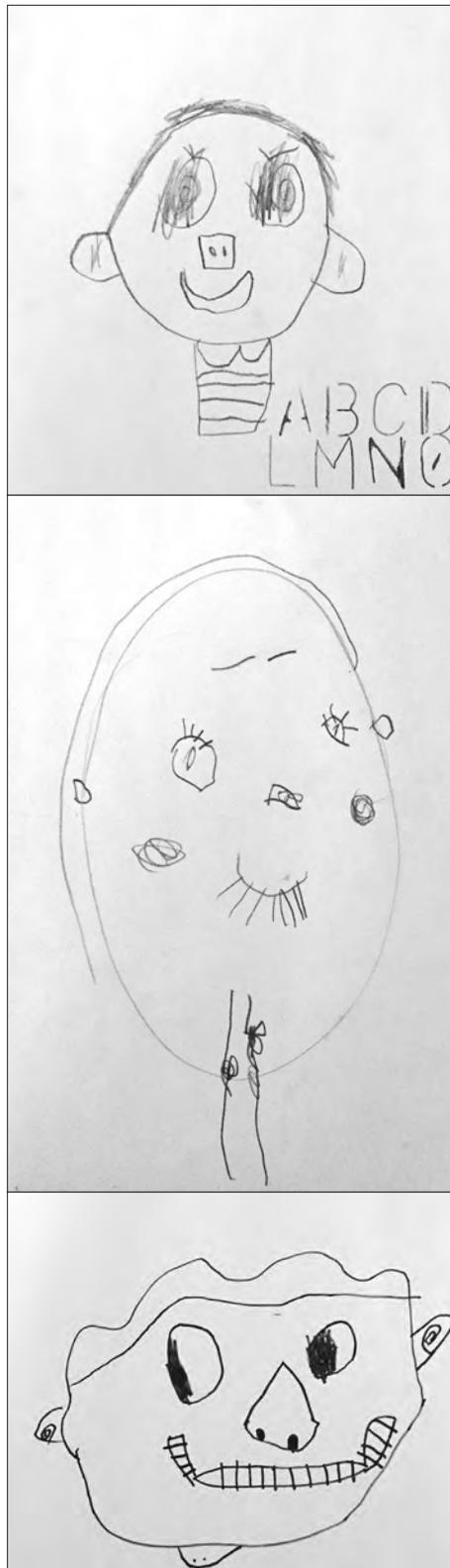
I also learned that there are many ways to be smart and many paths to success. I learned that an IEP doesn't define you, and that uniqueness is to be valued. I learned compassion and patience. And I learned that I wanted to be a teacher. Through my mom I learned about the importance of advocating for your child. I saw how she fought to make sure my brother's class was invited to join the school chorus, and was allowed to participate fully in the school. This was before inclusion, and when special needs students were in a separate part of the school.

I am thankful that MHS is an inclusive place. We are committed to making everyone feel as though they are in integral part of the fabric of our community – because they are. Soon we will celebrate Mix-It Up Week at MHS. It will be a chance to break down barriers, dispel misconceptions, build acceptance and make connections. Be sure to talk to your child before, after and during Mix-It Up Week (Last week in January).

-Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin

### Room 106

I have decided to share this poem with you to celebrate our upcoming Mix it Up week at MHS. It was written by actor, writer and teacher, Digby Wolfe.



Self Portraits of William D, Angelina, and William A. (top to bottom).

### Kids Who Are Different

Here's to kids who are different,  
Kids who don't always get A's,  
Kids who have ears  
Twice the size of their peers,  
And noses that go on for days.  
Here's to the kids who are different,  
Kids they call crazy or dumb,  
Kids who don't fit,  
With the guts and the grit,  
Who dance to a different drum.  
Here's to the kids who are different,  
Kids with a mischievous streak,  
For when they have grown,  
As history has shown,  
It's their difference that makes them unique.

-Kathy D'Andrea

### Room 107

Sometimes it is difficult to step into the shoes of the students we serve or who share a classroom with our loved ones. We may not share the same experiences, culture, class or language. We may not have experienced the same pain they have endured, victories they have celebrated, areas they are still working on. We may not have had the luxury of not having to worry that our basic needs would be met or have the idea churned within us that we are great and can accomplish anything... We may not share a lot of these experiences, but let us not turn them into the barriers they naturally create. While we may not always connect on these levels, there is one basic need that we all have in common—the need to be loved... It's my job to see my students and have others see them for their innate and potential greatness rather than the sum of their visible and circumstantial challenges. For me, it's worth it to take time meeting this basic need,

because without the feelings of love and security, as a teacher there is no platform on which I can then build academically.

*-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth*

### Room 109

Inclusion, in our room, means meeting the needs of all students and recognizing that each person may have differing needs. An example of one activity is “easy and hard”. During a recent meeting everyone thought of something that is “easy” for them and shared it with the group. Some “easy” examples were: writing, to play in drama, to share, to paint, to play tag. We discover that we have many easy things in common. Then on another day, we talk about things that are hard for us and discover two things. We have many hard things in common and some things that are easy for some people are hard for others. The students offer to help each other. ‘That’s easy for me I can help you’ This activity helps students see that everyone has things that are hard for them and enables them to more easily empathize and understand others.

*-Deborah Freeman*

### GRADES 1 & 2

#### Room 205

“Can we play the game a different way?” a student asked one day during math. “It seems like my partner is getting frustrated.” This is just one example of how the children have learned to understand each other’s differences and make changes to their reactions or responses. For some of us, this adjustment comes more easily than for others. Some of the students need reminders each time they interact with their peers while others have figured out how



*Self portraits by Azad, Geneva, Soley, and Cyrus.*

to give just the right level of support to their peers to help them feel welcomed and successful. Learning how to work with and interact with all different types of people is such an important skill that we continue to improve with each new experience and each new person we spend time with. This is why our class has open conversations and reflection times about our work together as a community. How did it go? What worked well in your group? What was hard about working in a group with other people? How did you two work out your different ideas? What could you do if...? Through these discussions children hear from each other different ways of working with a variety of people and different ways to solve problems. Even though we all bring different skills when including others, we are lucky that Mission Hill welcomes many different types of people from whom we can learn.

*-Ashleigh L'Heureux*

### Room 212

For years I have been reading about Mix It Up Day in Teaching Tolerance but have never participated in one. So it will be a really interesting to see it put into practice at Mission Hill on the 27th and the 28th of January. On Wednesday and Thursday at breakfast time children will join other children that they might not had the opportunity to get to know. Children will eat breakfast together and play with kapla blocks for a while before returning to their classrooms for the regular school day. For me, the value of this exercise is that allows children to step out of the familiar to play and get to know someone who may have a different cultural background, a different take on gender or who learns in a way that is different from

them. It supports children and adults in taking that crucial step to true inclusion; seeing the world through someone else's eyes.

-Suzanne Brown

### Room 217

In educational terms, inclusion means providing a least restrictive environment to all students. This more plainly means allowing students with disabilities to be educated and given the opportunity to socialize with their nondisabled peers as much as possible. At Mission Hill School, this means that students with disabilities are included in the general education classrooms for the entire day. They receive pull-out and push-in services from specialists in accordance with their IEP. Teachers like myself, are triple certified in order for this to work. I have my Elementary license, my Special Education license of students with Moderate Disabilities, as well as my English as a Second Language license. You could say I was lucky to have become a teacher when all these licenses were not necessary, because it now means I am not scrambling to get certified while working full time. Teachers that have been teaching for a very long time never had to receive this number of licenses in order to get a job. When I was applying to work last year, there are many job openings that stated I needed to have all of these licenses in order to even get considered for the position. Licensing teachers in order to teach all students, rather than hire the required number of teachers to do the job more effectively, can seem very political and stressful. In my opinion, getting the licenses required is only the first step in working in the difficult, but wonderful inclusion



Self portraits of Adler, Nate, Yeilyvette, and Skye.

classroom. I believe wholeheartedly in inclusion in education. I chose my masters program at Wheelock College because it was the only one I found that really pushed inclusion, the title of the program being Integrated Elementary and Special Education. Other prominent education schools that I found required you to study elementary education for a year, followed by special education in a second year. The two disciplines were never integrated. It's shocking to me that education schools can still have such a narrow mindset of who students in an elementary classroom are. In my classroom I have many students with IEPs, but I have many more students with unique learning needs and behavioral challenges that are not at all documented. A teacher that can only focus on the academic content and maybe how to differentiate it for above, average and lower than grade level expectations is vastly under prepared for today's classroom.

-Kate Needham

### GRADES 3 & 4

#### Rooms 203

Mission Hill School is a growing and changing entity. Every year our staff grows. Our student population gets bigger. Our curriculum grows, sometimes changing drastically and sometimes little tweaks here and there. We are in a constant state of trying, evaluating and adjusting. A decision made today could be changed in 3 months. This is one of the things that makes our school unique and it is also one of the things that can be frustrating. Being a new family or staff member at our school can sometimes leave your head spinning! However, in the center of this con-

trolled chaos, is what's at the heart of our school: including everyone. We are a staff run school so that the voices of all educators closest to the children would be heard and weighed appropriately.

We have an open door policy for all families so that they will be included as much as possible in the education of their children.

We run our classrooms democratically so that all children's voices will contribute to how and what they learn.

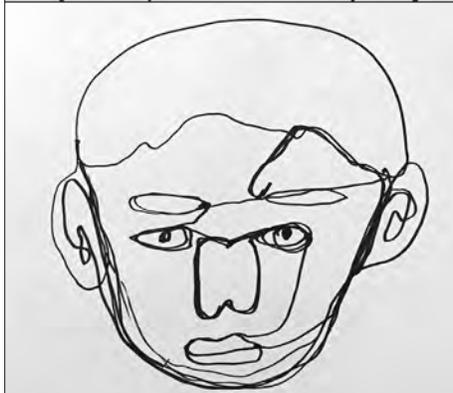
The intent of the school's mission and vision is to be as inclusive as possible. To allow all voices to be welcome, heard and respected. To create a learning community where everyone feels like they belong and they have something to contribute that will be appreciated by others. As stated in the mission it is to "make each other feel more loved and not less loveable."

*-Jenerra Williams*

### Room 204

Inclusion is multidimensional and needs to be observed with an open mind or else it can be seen as "unfair" to those who might feel excluded.

Sometimes students question why I might allow a student to do something that caters specifically to the need of that particular student. There are times when a teacher shows an act of kindness to a student who is troubled or having a hard time, and students do not understand that it's an act of kindness to allow a student to feel included. Instead they feel excluded because they are not given the same treatment and might say, "That's not fair". A student needs the opportunity to feel like he/she is a part of the community regardless of



*Self portraits of Daniel, Melissa and Angel.*

their uniqueness. This is true for all of us. We are all unique in our own way and want to feel like we belong. At Mission Hill helping children understand what they need is part of our work, as well as helping them understand the needs of others.

*-Cleata Brown*

### Room 207

What does inclusion mean? What does it mean to include someone? During a discussion about inclusion, students had many stories and ideas to share. One student shared, "Inclusion is when you let someone else play but you don't let anyone else play." Another disagreed, "Exclusion is when you ask someone if you can play and they say no, and inclusion is the opposite." As we formed a classroom definition of inclusion, we identified that the opposite is exclusion. Students shared stories of when they were excluded and how it felt. I realized how interchangeable these words are and how one person could feel included while another is excluded in the same situation. In an inclusive environment, everyone gets what they need to be successful. We have many discussions that identify the difference between a need and a want. Some students may want to use a computer, while another student needs to use it. In this scenario, a student may feel excluded from the experience of using a computer, while on the other hand, the computer includes another by helping them access content and share their learning. Inclusion is creating a classroom community that accepts and supports everybody.

*-Amanda McCarthy & Amina Michel-Lord*

### GRADES 5&6

#### Room 210

Mission Hill School has always been home to all kinds of people and all kinds of learners. Every child, adult and family member in our school has a story, as well as things that come easily for them, and things that take more time and more work. I am proud of the way our school continues to grow, year after year, in its ability to create rich and robust academic and social lives for every kind of learner.

Through differentiation of instruction, we work to make certain that everything we teach has enough access points for all learners. Oftentimes, this means tapping into each other's strengths. Some of us do better with visual cues. Others benefit from taking short motor breaks. Some shine when demonstrating their understanding through building. While others do so through written words or pictures.

In recent years, the culture of our school and our classrooms has grown even more in ways that reflect our inclusiveness. We talk more openly about what is easy for each of us and what is hard. And we offer help when we see someone might need some. When we notice someone is strong in an area that we may struggle in, we are practicing asking for help. This is true in our book groups in the classroom, at Friday Share, during our math classes, in the art room, and out at recess.

*-Nakia, Manny, & Elsa*

#### Room 215

Why should children of all ages spend time getting to know each other? Why should students of different cultures and intelligences learn



*Self portraits of Gigi, Evelyn, Alex and Cameron.*

together? About a year ago, Letta said very emphatically that Mission Hill School is a school for all children, that "inclusion" doesn't quite express our school's fuller commitment to create spaces where children of all ages, cultures and intelligences are interacting, exchanging, solving problems, relating to one another. We organize recess so that children of all ages get to play one another. We have "Mix It Up" so that smaller groups, across grades, use play to identify common interests and connections. So, why? Because MHS aspires to be a community, and sets a high benchmark for what a community can be: all kinds of people formally and informally getting to know in order to learn from each other.

*-Abdi Ali*

### GRADES 7&8

#### Room 213

When we were kids, my mother had no patience for sibling squabbles. She didn't want to hear "he said, she said" or "but she did, but he did." She had one response to the problems we presented to her. "Open wide your heart. Find a way to fix the problem." Of course, this frustrated us. Each of us always assumed we were in the right and wanted justice meted out to the others. But the process of opening our hearts helped us to close our mouths and think about what had happened. Did we really want to lose these ready playmates? Were we really as innocent as we claimed? What was really at stake?

There are lots of places in the world where "widening hearts and fixing problems" seems like quite a sensible solution. Schools are certainly one of those places. Widening our

## CLASSROOM NEWS

hearts helps us to see with love, not judgment. Fixing problems takes the focus off the people and places it on the materials or systems involved.

Creating an inclusive classroom also involves widening hearts and fixing problems. Making sure no one is excluded, at any time and from anything, and identifying and adapting structures that deny access are part of the work. But so, too, is taking time to see who we are and, with heart wide open, delighting in our uniqueness.

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

### Room 214

I belong here. My goal is for every student in our class to be able to make that statement. To help us get to that point, I provide the space for us to discuss various topics, including our lives outside of school. I also discourage put downs and jokes about differences.

We come from various neighborhood, we are an ethnically, racially and religiously diverse group. So, we learn from each other. We listen when a person explains about a bah mitzvah then attended, visiting a family in New York City or attending a church service. One great sign that we are heading in the right direction is that homophobic and other offensive jokes have just about disappeared from the class.

It's a work in progress but we continue to take steps in the right direction. As the year progresses we've become more aware and accepting of each

other's differences. I anticipate a few more bumps on the road, but we are in a good place.

-Reginald Toussaint



Self-portraits of Ella, Henry and Derricka (top to bottom, left) and Dario, Liam and Jasmine (top to bottom, right).

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

Mission Hill K-8 School  
A Boston Public Pilot School  
[WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG](http://WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG)

20 Child Street  
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130  
T 617-635-6384  
F 617-635-6419



**Mission Hill School**

**MIX IT UP WEEK**

**Make New Friends and Keep the Old!**

**MIX IT UP Week:**

**January 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>**

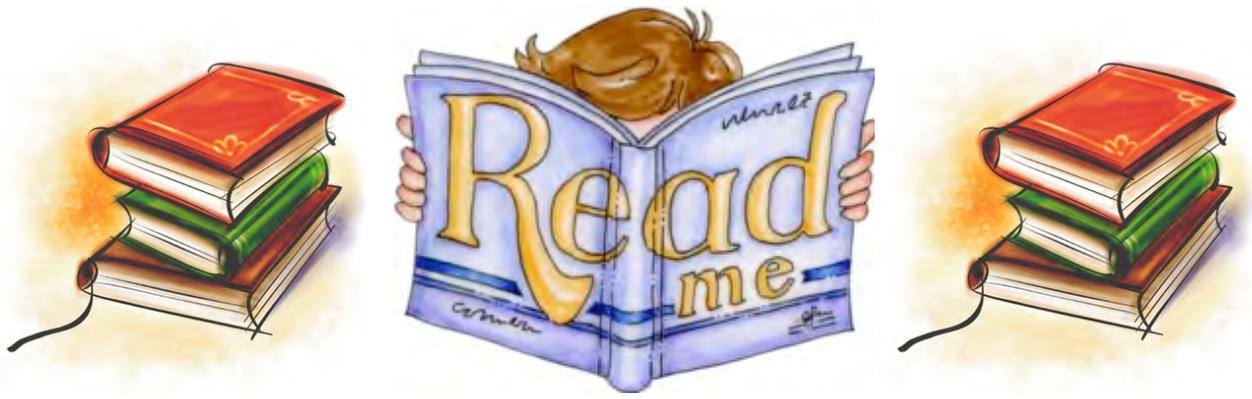
**Classes will host "mixed up" groups of students from different grades on Wednesday and Thursday morning.**

**Try out fun activities. Make posters. Make Friends.**

**On Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup> there will be a special MIX-IT UP slideshow at Friday Share.**

**If you have any questions - ask your teachers!**





# It's Family Reading Morning ...and Pajama Day!

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Come join us and begin your day reading...in your pajamas! Whether you bring your favorite book or snuggle up with one from our collections, we look forward to sharing this special time with you! If your child attends the before school program, reading will begin at 8:00 a.m. in the cafeteria. If your child arrives at 9:15, reading will happen in classrooms. Please consider joining us for this event as well as our weekly Friday Share beginning at 9:40 a.m. in the auditorium.

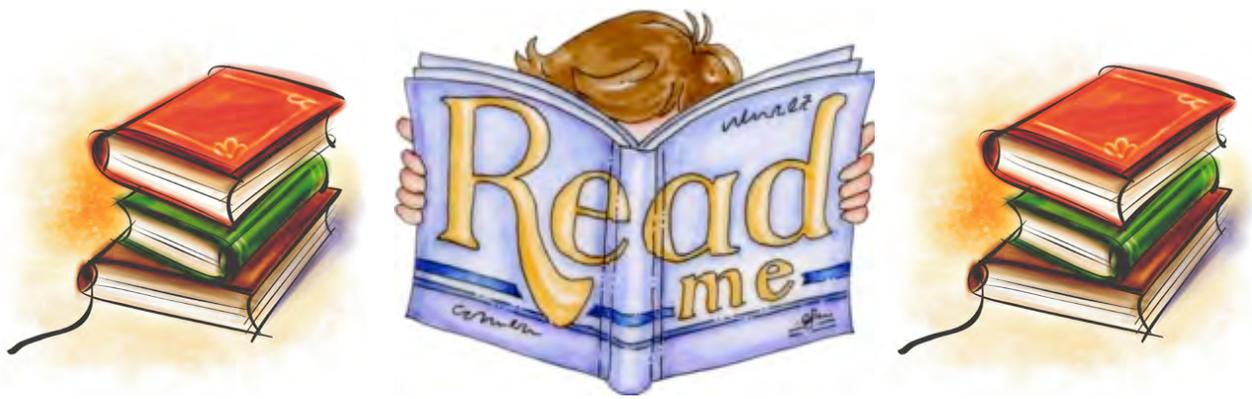
When: January 22, 2016

Where: Cafeteria and Classrooms

Time: 8:00-9:30



Can you think of a better way to start your day?



# ¡Es la Mañana de Lectura Familia ...y Día de Pijamas!

¡Venga acompañarnos y comienzan su día leyendo ... en sus pijamas!  
¡Si trae su libro favorito o se arrima con uno de nuestras colecciones, tenemos ganas de compartir este tiempo especial con usted! Si su hijo asiste a la escuela antes del programa, la lectura comenzará a las 8:00 am en la cafetería. Si su hijo llega a las 9:15, la lectura va a suceder en las aulas. Por favor, considere unirse a nosotros para este evento, así como nuestra semanal Viernes Compartir comenzando a las 9:40 am en el auditorio.

Quando: El 22 de enero de 2016

Donde: Cafetería y Las Aulas

Tiempo: 8:00-9:30



Puede pensar en una mejor manera de comenzar su día?



# Parents/Guardians of Children with Special Needs

The BPS Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SpedPac)  
invites you to attend our

## Special Needs Resource Fair

**When: Thursday, January 28, 2016 6:30 - 8:30pm**

**Where: Leahy-Halloran Community Center**

**(next to Richard J. Murphy School)**

**1 Worrell St. Dorchester, MA 02122**

The fair will host these organizations that provide valuable resources  
and services for children, young adults and beyond:

Adaptive Sports New England	Lurie Center for Autism
Autism Insurance Resource Center	Mass Advocates for Children
Boston Medical Center Autism Program	Massachusetts Family Ties
Boston Sensory Solutions	Mass Rehabilitation Commission
Boys and Girls Club of Dorchester	Partners for Youth with Disabilities
Boys and Girls Club of South Boston	River Financial Group, LLC,
BPS Community Based Health Initiative	SMART Executive Functioning Program
BPS Office of Family Engagement	SenseAbility Gym
Brighton YMCA	Shriver Center UMASS Medical
Camp Shriver	Technology for Autism Now
Child Therapy in Boston	The Women's Table
Easter Seals	Thomas Menino YMCA Hyde Park
Empowering People for Inclusive Communities - EPIC	Toward Independent Living and Learning - TILL
Exceptional Lives	Urban Pride
Federation for Children with Special Needs	Ways 2 Go Travel Training
Franciscan Hospital for Children	Work, Inc.
Harbor Health Services, Mattapan	You're With Us
House of Possibilities	and More....

Childcare is available upon request. Please reserve childcare only at least 3 days prior to each meeting by contacting:

Boston SpedPac at: [email@bostonspedpac.org](mailto:email@bostonspedpac.org) or (617) 297-7335

Spanish translation is available upon request and light refreshments will be served

The Richard Murphy School is accessible by public transportation: [MBTA Trip Planner](#) [Google](#)  
Fields Corner Station – Red Line and the 210 Bus

Meeting Dates for 2015-16 School Year (Thursdays at Richard Murphy School - Dorchester - 7-9pm)

October 1 October 29 November 12 January 28 February 25 March 31 April 28 May 19

Boston SpedPac Contact Info: Email: [email@bostonspedpac.org](mailto:email@bostonspedpac.org) Phone: (617) 297-7335

Website: <http://www.bostonspedpac.org> Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/BostonSPEDPAC> YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/BostonSpedPac>

## Padres / Tutores de Niños con Necesidades Especiales

Hay más de 11.300 niños en los IEP en el Sistema de Escuelas Públicas de Boston (BPS). Tenemos que trabajar juntos para tener una voz colectiva en asuntos de educación especial. El Consejo Asesor de Padres de BPS Educación Especial (SpedPac) le invita a asistir a nuestra Junta General:

**Cuándo: Jueves 28 de enero 2016 6:30 - 8:30 pm**

**Dónde: Leahy - Halloran Centro Comunitario (junto a Richard J. Murphy School )  
1 Worrell St. Dorchester, MA 02122**

# Necesidades Especiales Feria de Recursos

La feria acogerá a estas organizaciones que proporcionan valiosos recursos y servicios para los niños, adultos jóvenes y más allá:

Adaptive Sports New England	Lurie Center for Autism
Autism Insurance Resource Center	Mass Advocates for Children
Boston Medical Center Autism Program	Massachusetts Family Ties
Boston Sensory Solutions	Mass Rehabilitation Commission
Boys and Girls Club of Dorchester	Partners for Youth with Disabilities
Boys and Girls Club of South Boston	River Financial Group, LLC,
BPS Community Based Health Initiative	SMART Executive Functioning Program
BPS Office of Family Engagement	SenseAbility Gym
Brighton YMCA	Shriver Center UMASS Medical
Camp Shriver	Technology for Autism Now
Child Therapy in Boston	The Women's Table
Easter Seals	Thomas Menino YMCA Hyde Park
Empowering People for Inclusive Communities – EPIC	Toward Independent Living and Learning – TILL
Exceptional Lives	Urban Pride
Federation for Children with Special Needs	Ways 2 Go Travel Training
Franciscan Hospital for Children	Work, Inc.
Harbor Health Services, Mattapan	You're With Us
House of Possibilities	y más

La Escuela Murphy Richard es accesible por transporte público :

Los campos Estación Corner - Línea Roja y el 210 autobús

Cuidado de niños está disponible a petición. Por favor reservar cuidado de niños Sólo al menos 3 días antes de cada reunión poniéndose en contacto con Boston SpedPac en: [email@bostonspedpac.org](mailto:email@bostonspedpac.org) o (617) 297-7335

Traducción al español está disponible a **petición** en todas las reuniones y refrescos se servirán.

Meeting Dates for 2015-16 School Year (Thursdays at Richard Murphy School - Dorchester - 7-9pm)

October 1 October 29 November 12 January 28 February 25 March 31 April 28 May 19

Boston SpedPac Contact Info: Email: [email@bostonspedpac.org](mailto:email@bostonspedpac.org) Phone: (617) 297-7335

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