



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Friday, April 1, 6-9:00 pm
Family Movie Night!
- April 4-15, 2016
Bike Week @ MHS! (see page 6 for details)
- Friday, April 8, 2016
Dress Like Your Favorite Book Character Day
- Friday, April 15, 2016
Schoolwide Rollerskating Trip to Chez Vous

April 1, 2016

Volume 19, Issue 21

Learning While Dancing

Dear Mission Hill School Friends, Family, Students, and Staff,

Earlier in the week our staff had a conversation about dancing. There used to be more dance opportunities at MHS. Just about any Friday afternoon you could hear the music stopping and starting as a classroom played freeze dance. If you came in early (before the kids) you could see teachers doing the Cupid Shuffle, a line dance, to get the day started with movement and a catchy tune. Children created dances on their own time that they performed for schoolmates at Friday Share. Where has all the dance gone?

One place that it lives is with the 5th and 6th graders. This week many of us had the privilege of watching the students show the ballroom dances they've learned. The Merengue, Foxtrot, Rhumba, Tango and Swing dances filled our cafeteria. Family members and teachers proudly watched our students carry out each dance step with their own energy and personality. It was beautiful on many levels. Many thanks to Brooke Langway, the dance teacher from Traveling Danceport, for teaching our students these classic dances.

After watching dancers at the last music Friday Share, Amina proposed that we have an afternoon dance session. Students will be invited one Friday afternoon to dance free style and to learn some new moves. This promises to be a great opportunity to learn while dancing.

And how about you? When is the last time you danced? I hope it wasn't too long ago. And if it was, I hope you'll turn on some music, relax, and let yourself go. Dance at MHS is making a comeback.



KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

Please enjoy these pictures from The Otters' trip to the Museum of Fine Arts!

-Geraldyn & Donna

Room 106

The class has been spending time observing our crickets. We have been watching them, reading about them, and learning facts. It seems as though the more we watch and learn, the more questions we have. Here is what the class has said are facts about our crickets.

1. They are brown.
2. They have wings.
3. They hop.
4. They eat pears.
5. They have triangle eyes.
6. They are 1 inch.
7. They have stripes on their back.
8. They have antennas.
9. They chirp.
10. They use their wings to make a noise.

The children have decided that we will put these facts into a book. We will be laying out the pages, adding illustrations, and hopefully uploading it to the website for everyone to see. Do you have a cricket facts you would like to share with us? Please share as we are eager to learn more.

-Kathy D'Andrea



Drawing crickets in room 106.



The Otters visit the MFA!

Room 107

Over the past few weeks, our study of China has brought us out of the building seeking Chinese influences in our world. Our first exploration brought us to the Arboretum in search of Chinese trees. Our second adventure brought us to the Franklin Park Zoo. There we completed a scavenger hunt that incorporated animals from the Chinese Zodiac as well as those mentioned in stories we read. Whether it was the bamboo that lined the rainforest or the cocka-doodle-doing roosters, the Golden Seahorses were making real connections. As we walked, students suddenly began cheering in excitement. The adults were unaware, but in time realized that the children had discovered the Chinese inspired bird sanctuary (a structure we passed on our last visit but this time saw with new eyes). On our third trip we explored the Chinese collection at the MFA. We saw porcelain, sculptures and beautiful scrolls. We employed some Visual Thinking Strategies to several paintings but the highlight of our trip was getting to enter the Chinese house. We saw beautiful furniture and got to sit in its courtyard. Several students were disappointed to leave but we promised to make it back by the end of the year.

-Jada, Jo-Ann & Mary Beth

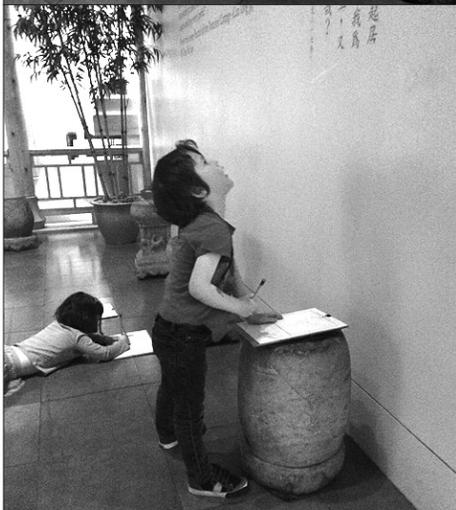
Room 109

As part of our study of Ancient China we visited the China exhibit at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. It was very exciting to see some examples of ancient scrolls (something we've been studying) and especially fun to see one of them featured a dragon! We have also been working on a classroom dragon that lives on our wall (each morning we wonder if it came

CLASSROOM NEWS

alive and flew around in the night). Perhaps the most engaging room for the class was an exhibit of furnishings from an Ancient Chinese house. The children loved looking at each “room” and noticing details, such as dragons carved into wood, finding bamboo and brushes similar to those used in art class, and speculating how the furniture was the same or different than in their homes. At the end of our exploration, we sat on the floor of the gallery and made drawings on our trip boards of something interesting we’d seen. Snack on the grand steps of the museum was a nice end to our trip.

-Deborah Freeman



Students in room 109 visit the MFA.



The Golden Seahorses find the Chinese-inspired bird sanctuary at the Franklin Park Zoo

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 205

This week, the Tiny City wrapped up their investigations of ancient China by performing their play, *The Magic Paintbrush*. The story itself is based off of a popular ancient Chinese legend appearing in many of the books we read this winter about a paintbrush that makes its creations come alive. We also had the opportunity to engage in a series of explorations that investigated fruits native to ancient China. Students enjoyed tasting, touching, smelling, and exploring apricots, peaches, cucumbers, and citrons. Students noted a variety of similarities and differences between the fruits they explored. Kaia and Sarah noticed that apricots and peaches taste similar, while Emil and Cyrus were surprised to find that their cucumber resembled a cylinder. Overall, it is always rewarding to see students so engaged in these types of explorations.

-Sarah Murphy, Student Teacher

Room 212

So much is always happening here at Mission Hill, so please make use of the yellow paper that was sent home with last week's homework to keep track of the events. The exciting news from our room 212 is that we have finally chosen a name for ourselves. After much debate and an edge of the seat voting process we are now known as the D.J.s. This was a slightly controversial choice as there was concern that people might think we were copying Jenerra's class which is the D.J Room but in the end the kids decided there was enough of a difference that there would be no confusion. The kids are enjoying their new name and now with the excitement of the Curriculum breakfast over there will be time to make a sign.

-Suzanne Brown

Room 217

Who doesn't love geometry? There is something so satisfying about making a pattern block design, a block structure, or a wooden train track fit



Nyla uses pattern blocks to create a design.

together just right. Our newest math unit is making student excitement during the math block feel infectious. Kids are showing and telling each other what they notice and create in a state of wonder and excitement, not often achieved in math talk without a teacher's guiding question.

Everyone is getting excited about different aspects of geometry. Some children love learning and saying the new words like trapezoid, hexagon, rhombus, sphere, and prism. Others love moving around pattern blocks to fill hollow shapes, reminiscent of our study of tangrams. Most children have latched onto the possibilities of pattern block designs, especially when creating permanent versions of their work using construction paper versions of the shapes, scissors, and glue. This week began our study of 3-dimensional geometry. It doesn't get much better for a math teacher than students realizing that our block area is full of rectangular and triangular prisms for them to play with, and describing them as such. Play on.
-Kate Needham

GRADES 3 & 4

Rooms 203

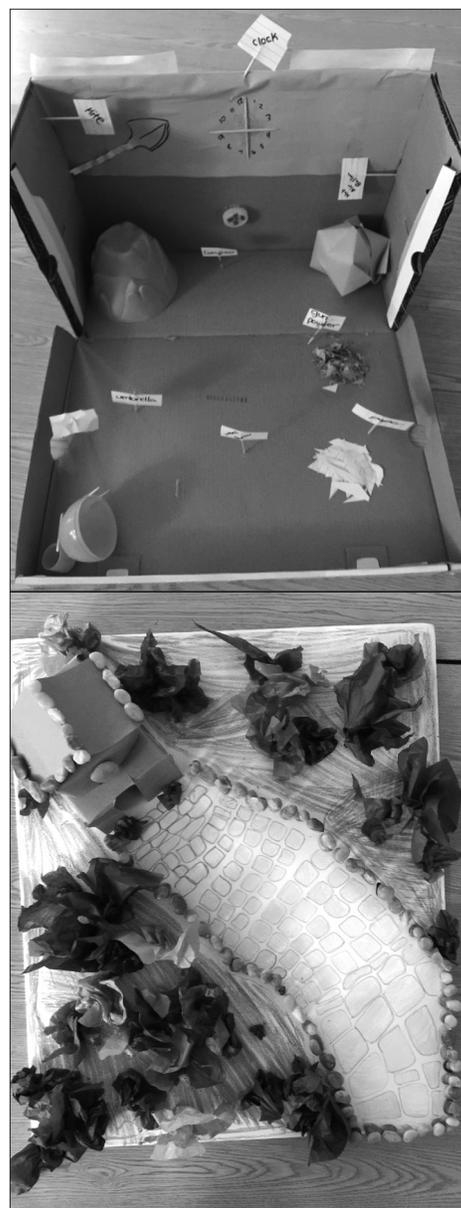
One of the important parts of teaching and learning at Mission Hill is helping to prepare pre-service teachers. Every year I host at least one and

most times two or more students from local colleges and universities who are preparing to become teachers. Currently I have student teachers visiting my classrooms from Northeastern University, Wheelock University, Boston University and Wellesley College. They come watch, they try things, they make mistakes, they watch some more and they try again. I enjoy being able to inform, mentor and encourage those who want to enter this amazing career. It is an awesome responsibility to help shape someone's philosophy of teaching, to help clear up misconceptions, to help them see children and families in a new light and to help them find the passion for teaching, just as someone helped me. Teaching pre-service teachers is something I enjoy immensely and hope to do more of in the future both inside and outside of Mission Hill School.

-Jenerra Williams & Mychaela Kelly

Room 204

The last few weeks the Bee Squad has been reflecting on our freedom of choice and the responsibility that come with making choices. When asked the question "How do your choices affect the future?", students shared that sometimes when we do not make the right choices it can cause the loss of privilege. Students shared that poor choices can hurt others and that sometimes it is not safe when we do not make the right choices. Our conversation was inspired by students who entered the community later in the year and needed to understand how our community works at Mission Hill; while there is freedom to choose, we need to be reminded that freedom comes with responsibility and that the choices we make affect others. As we



Ancient China theme projects from the Crispy Leaves' classroom.

go forward into the final months of school, we hope to see our students working to help each other make the right choices so that they can have a positive effect on their future.

-Danny Flannery, Student Teacher

Room 207

As our second theme comes to an end, we reflect on the hard work that has happened. In the beginning of the theme, students were exposed to many elements of the Ancient

Chinese culture. They then used the background knowledge they had gained to inspire their work. Students were inspired to be architects, chefs, clothing designers, cartographers and researchers. They immersed themselves in these role to create integrate pieces of work. During curriculum breakfast, they shared the work they had created and the process. While walking around our classroom, friends and families saw a home influenced by Chinese architecture, two Ancient Chinese garments, cook books, informational books, a replica of the Great Wall of China, maps and more. We are excited to continue to incorporate student passion and interest into the World of Work theme.
Amanda & Amina

GRADES 5&6

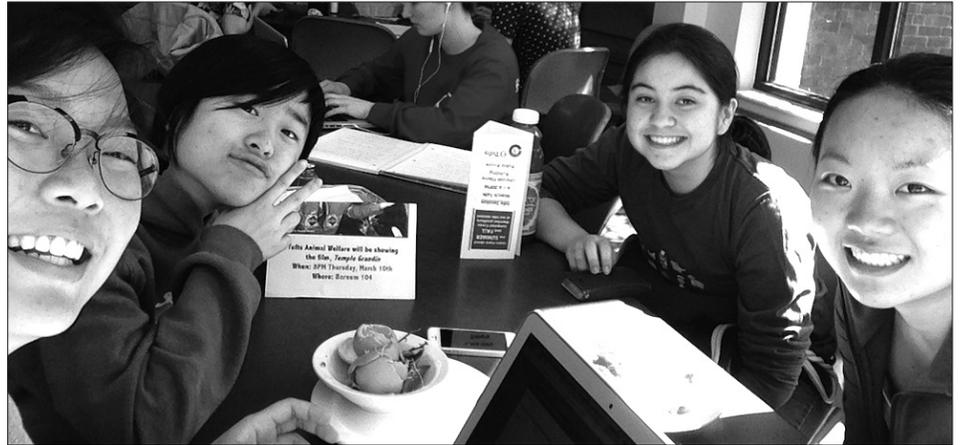
Room 210

The Crispy Leaves have been working on self-selected and guided Ancient China research projects. We'll tell you more next week, but until then, here are two nearly completed projects.

-Nakia, Manny, & Elsa

Room 215

"Ask a question you have about being Chinese," was the prompt on the board. Each member of the FireFlies picked up an index card, and here are some of the questions: What time is it in China? What are the famous spots for Chinese New Year? Do you get bothered about being Chinese? Do you have to be born or know the language to be Chinese? What kinds of stereotypes do people say about being Chinese? Is there black Chinese people? How does it feel to be Chinese in Boston? Amanda Ng Yann Chwen, a Tisch Scholar from



Students from Tufts spent time with the Fireflies.

Tufts University who has been helping us with our high school design, arranged to have her friends join her to answer our questions. Amanda, a Malaysian Chinese who has never been to China, described how the Chinese food she is used to eating is less sweeter and less intense than what is served in Boston. Anna, a Chinese-American from San Francisco, California, recalled never feeling accepted as an American in the U.S., and as Chinese while traveling through China. Elizabeth, Taiwanese and White American from Silicon Valley, California, talked about how stereotyping hurts. Fan Li, an international student from Shanghai, explained Chinese stereotypes of white Americans and the plight of Africans living in Guangzhou, China. Their answers complicated our questions about being Chinese; Fan Li, who did not have think about being Chinese in Shanghai, had to confront this question when she started college in the U.S. After Tuesday's conversation, a friend said to Amanda, "The FireFlies probably have a more nuanced take on being Chinese than many college kids at Tufts."

-Abdi & Carlos with the FireFlies

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

Last month, we shared the struggle we were having as a class connecting with Ji-Li Jiang's *Red Scarf Girl*. It feels good to report that we persevered in the struggle and have a new appreciation for political structures we didn't understand and deep empathy for the experiences of the people at that time.

After re-watching the video where the author Jiang recounted her story of growing up during the Cultural Revolution, Keyshawn wrote, "I feel bad for Ji-Li because she had to go through all of that. She was just a little kid. I would run away if I were her."

In one of her reader responses, Autumn noted a character's strength after pledging support to Chairman Mao. "I like how she said that because it shows how dedicated she is to the revolutionary culture." Autumn also explained one of the concerns of the Revolution. "Class status meant like how poor or rich someone is. Someone who has a desirable class status might be someone who's poor or middle class. Someone who might have an undesirable class

status might be upper class because they already have what they want money wise. Ji-Li needs to remold herself because she's upper class and her grandfather is a landlord."

Kenya wrote, "The Four Olds are: old ideas, old cultures, old customs, and old habits. Chairman Mao wanted the Four Olds destroyed because he felt like they could never succeed at building a strong socialist country until they were destroyed."

Evelyn made a connection between the book *Red Scarf Girl* and our article of the week about the Boston Public School student protests. "In RSG it's the youth taking the lead in the Cultural Revolution. Here the students decided to take action as well. In both situations the kids are using their power and responsibility..."

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

We are writing short stories and they're really good. One of my goals this year is to build student's writing fluency and stamina. We write almost daily, responding to a variety of prompts. We turned some of the responses into longer pieces. For the most part, I've chosen the topics we write about but now I'm turning the choice of topic over to students.

Students were not left completely on their own. We read a couple of short stories as a model and used graphic organizers to help us organize the structure of the plot but the rest was left up to students. They chose the topic, settings and the conflict that the characters must overcome.

The stories are coming along and

I've really enjoyed reading them. Not only are they well written but every story has an element of suspense and/or tension. We've only written one draft so far, I'm really looking forward to the finished product. I will share some of the stories in future newsletters.

-Reginald Toussaint

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

BNC Spring Swing

This year's Boston Nature Center Spring Swing honors MHS teacher Kathy Clunis D'Andrea, as "an outstanding and committed educator in Boston Public Schools and a BNC supporter". The fundraiser features food, beer and wine, a live auction featuring fabulous trips, and a creative auction highlighting the nature-inspired work of 40 talented area artists. Funds raised support youth education programs and Boston Nature Center's Scholarship Fund. The event is on June 5, 2016 from 3:00 -6:00 pm.

Sing It!

Sing It! is a community chorus program presented by Community Music Center of Boston and hosted by MHS on Thursday afternoons from 3:30-4:45. The chorus is open to any child in grades 3-6 who loves to sing and is motivated to participate. It's not too late to join us and Sing It! For more information, please contact: Courtney Bruno, courtney.bruno@bc.edu or Jennifer Rathbun, at krathbun@cmcb.org. We offer pro-rated tuition and financial aid is available.

Boston Bikes

Boston Bikes will be teaching students in Grades 1-6 bike safety and how to ride April 4-14! Each class will participate in learning the safety skills necessary to ride and then practice riding in the school parking lot (closed to cars). Older grades will utilize the nearby bike paths. In order to participate you must have a signed safety waiver. *Please contact your teacher asap if you need an extra copy.* Children will not be permitted to bike without a signed waiver by a guardian.

Summer programs

Deadlines are quickly approaching for summer programs. August Scholars (grades 2-5) and TEEP (grade 6) have deadlines BEFORE the April vacation. Both programs are academically focused and also provide enrichment opportunities. Applications for both have already been sent home, if you are interested please contact Courtney or your child's teacher asap. Applications need to be returned to Courtney and are sent in in the order they are received. Each program requires a brief interview and accept students first come/first serve. A third free academic program, Project ALERTA (grades 3-5 for ELL and/or Latinos) is also first come/first serve and applications have gone out for that program as well. It's best to apply early, through Courtney, for these and many other programs. You can also check out Courtney's Corner on the MHS website for more info about summer programs and beyond.

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

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