



## IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Friday, November 4  
*Friday Share: Theatre Share!*
- Tuesday, November 8, 7:00 am to 7:00 pm  
*Election Day Bake Sale at MHS*
- Thursday, November 10 @ 5:45 pm  
*Family Council Meeting @ Dudley Library (see pg 6)*
- Friday, November 11  
*Veteran's Day: NO SCHOOL*

October 21, 2016

Volume 20, Issue 5

### *Assessment Conversation*

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

A portion of this letter is reprinted, the original written several years ago. At the last MHS Governance Board meeting I mentioned an assessment group that met several times and took action regarding local assessment policies. As promised at the meeting I am sending the invitation again.

*I am sitting in a second and third grade classroom thinking about some of our students that were given a test today. The students in front of me are reading and writing. Their teachers are listening to them read and talking with them about their writing—a wonderful way to assess a student's reading and writing. The test some of our students took earlier is called the MEPA (Mass English Proficiency Assessment). It's similar to MCAS, but for English Language Learners. In Massachusetts if English is not the student's first language or if there is another language spoken in the home, the child must take two MCAS style tests.*

*The teachers who gave the MEPA to our students looked exasperated. I did not see the students, but I can imagine how they felt. The test is long and in some ways difficult for native English speakers. Will we as teachers and family members really get a sense of the academic language our children know and use from the score on the MEPA? I doubt it.*

*Next week MCAS begins for our students. I understand the need for external assessments. However, this state test goes to far (too many children, too many items, too much to lose, too much attention paid to scores). Recently I had a conversation with Christina Brown from the Center for Collaborative Education. She's leading an effort/body of work called Building Quality Assessments. We wondered together about what a different assessment system could look like that would provide school communities with information about student progress to affect individual students, families and schools.*

*Consider your response to some of the questions we tossed around:*

- *Can we create an assessment system with standards higher than the state standards that are relevant to the student and family?*
- *How do we keep students and teachers at the center of assessment?*
- *What level of standardization is needed to be accepted by the district or/and state?*
- *What types of growth measure should be reported to our Governance Board?*

Are you interested in thinking about answers to these questions together? If you are please call Tiffany at the office number 617-635-6384 or email Ayla at [agavins@missionhillschool.org](mailto:agavins@missionhillschool.org)

### KINDERGARTEN

#### Room 108

Music has always been a part of my classroom - and my life. Music helps bring people together, and to feel connected. We sing at Morning Gathering and at the end of the day. We sing when we wash hands, take a walk, clean up and more. Some students have learned some of the lullabies on our rest time CDs. Each year we have students who sing quietly along as they relax. And of course, the fabulous Mr. Billy comes with his guitar every Wednesday and leads us in song and movement.

With this particular class something amazing is happening; the students are using music in their play in a way that connects them to each other - without the adults prompting or leading. Outside students use the pots and pans to set up percussion sessions. As many as six students will gather and drum for 20 minutes or more, using sticks for improvised drumsticks. Other days, groups will gather using the flat Outlast planks as air guitars and pretend keyboards - jamming to music they alone can hear. Inside the classroom, in our rocking boat, groups of 4 students will squeeze in, start rocking, and sing a medley of songs they have learned so far this year. These are just a few examples. If you have a favorite song you want to teach us - please let us know!

-Geralyn B. McLaughlin

#### Room 106

I held up a picture of a person and asked the students, "Who is this?" The students made a guess. Ideas were, the President of the United States, a mom, the president, Donald Trump, and Hillary Clinton. I



Marissa starts the drum circle.

asked them, "How are we going to find out who this person is?" The students came up with three ideas. "We should ask people who this is." "We should print out the picture and show it to them." "We should ask them, "Do you know her name?" Students visited upstairs in small groups. They carried clipboards, a picture, and a piece of paper for people to write on. They then collected their information. They came back down to class and shared their findings. "Almost everyone said, "It's Hillary Clinton." "98% of the people surveyed said the picture was of Hillary Clinton. I then said, "Ok, most people said it was Hillary Clinton. "How will we know for sure who she is? I need a primary source." Danae shared that when they had been in Reginald's room she saw a picture of the same person with the name Hillary Clinton on it. We learned that the picture was in fact Hillary Clinton.

-Kathy D'Andrea

#### Room 107

"Apples were on the trees and I grabbed them!" - Yarian

There is an inexplicable happiness that apple picking brings every year. However, we knew we were cutting it close this year, canceling our reservation with one orchard after hearing how the drought had affected their crops, and finding a new place. We just wanted there to be apples on the trees, ripe for student picking and we found it this year in Carlson Orchards.

When our reservation was booked, the weather forecast projected rain throughout the day. However, as we rode up Harvard, all we could see were blue skies. The weather was warm. The children sang *Farmer Brown* over and over. We marveled at our tractor ride and the tons of apples we saw on the trees. Students happily filled their bags with apples after our tour and, while we told them to save the apples to share with their families, some just could not stop eating those apples! In our reflections students said:

"We got to ride on a tractor and eat some yummy apples!"

"The apples were rolling off the bus and getting squished!"

-Jada Brown & Kenisha Epps

#### Room 109

One element of our work this week has been beginning to study our names. It is an intersection of project work and literacy work. As we study our names, we look at what is the same and what is different. This mirrors and integrates the work we have done as we have studied ourselves within the context of our classroom community. We notice that some of the names have the same letters at the beginning or the end or in the middle, some are long and some are short, and some sound the same in

parts. We've experimented with name puzzles, name portraits, looking at names in songs, and beginning to write letters in our name. Soon we'll use the names as a jumping off point for creating a classroom word wall. We'll put these interesting words (names) on the word wall as our first familiar words. The words can also be found in lists at the drawing and writing center and charts we are building for our walls.

-Deborah & Stephanie

### GRADES 1 & 2

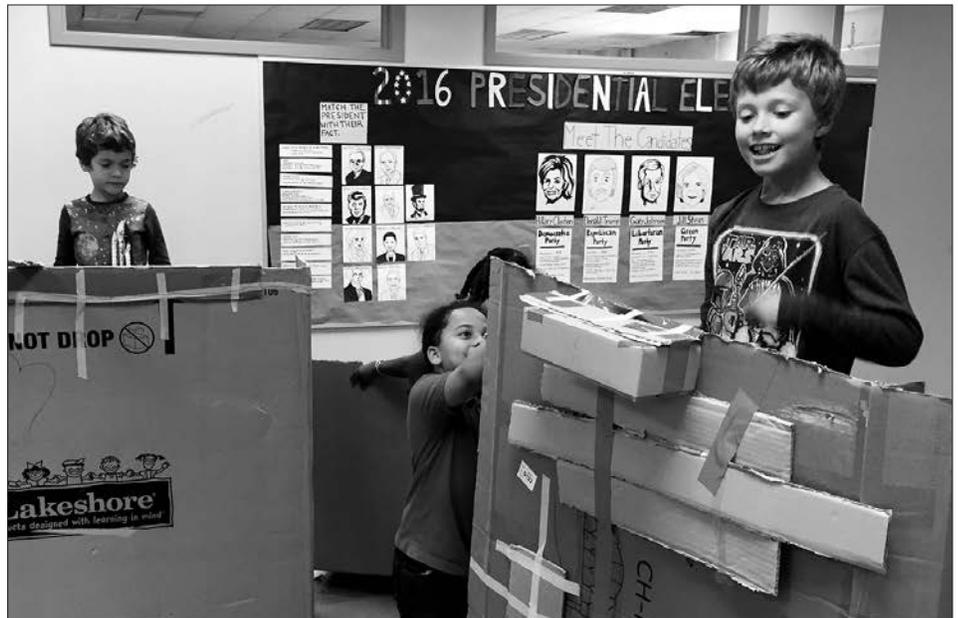
#### Room 205

During project time the students learned about the American Flag. They have also made American Flags at the art table. While at the art table a few students said they wanted to make a flag for the country that their families were from. To allow all students to participate in this project, we had a morning question "Do you speak another language?" and a morning message "Let's think about where our families are from." During morning meeting we sang our Good Morning song in Spanish and then we all shared what other languages we spoke (if we did) and where our families were from. Then during project time, the students made flags of the countries their families were from. If they didn't know, they made American flags. Soley made a Haitian flag, Beatrice made the flag of England, and there were many more. At closing circle students shared their flags.

-Nicole Miller, Student Teacher

#### Room 216

*"Team Rocket, we have a problem. Yesterday, after school, someone came into our classroom and ate the*



Theo, Gabriel and Theo construct a courtroom from cardboard to be used in a mock trial.

*Dragon Cookies we baked yesterday."*

Normally, this would be the start of a serious conversation and potentially some consequences. Instead, this was the beginning of Team Rocket's first ever mock trial! "Anna from Jenerra's room and Nate from Cleata's room will stand trial in about a week, so it will be your job to prove them innocent or guilty." This led to many questions:

"Who gets to be the judge?"-Gabriel

"What if somebody framed Nate?"-Natalia

"Are we going to give them a sentence?"-Theo

We are doing so much preparation for our trial that it has taken up our Project Time and Quiet Work Time for the entire week! In Project Time, students are building all of the components of a courtroom, such as a witness stand and a class seal. In Quiet Work Time, they are working as lawyers and judges to go over evidence, read through depositions, and consider the best argument to make at the trial. This mock trial will help

prepare our class for our learning about the Supreme Court, which will continue to the end of the theme. We look forward to sharing the results of our mock trial with you next week!

-Danny Flannery & JoAnn Hawkesworth

#### Room 217

For the past three weeks, the United Kates have been working with Andrew MacBlane from the Boston Nature Center. Andrew comes in every Tuesday afternoon to teach us about living organisms. We are focusing on insects but can shift to other topics of interest as they arise. It is such a gift to get to work with him. So far we have learned a song about insects... it's so tough, thorax and abdomen, with the help of its exoskeleton... , searched for bugs in the play yard, and filled out observations in our journal. This week, Andrew brought in a corn snake named Sammy for us to hold, touch, and observe.

-Kate Needham

#### Room 203

J and J's Geniuses! This is our new

official class name. After a thorough process, we voted last Friday. There were some very persuasive campaign speeches given, because initially, Diamond Miners had the most interest. There were tears from a few kids when they realized their choice did not win. However, it was a good real life example of the voting process. We don't always "win" with our vote, but the bigger idea is that our voice is heard.

This won't be the last time we have the opportunity to vote. We will continue to use our voter registration cards/ID to vote on different aspects of our day like what snack we should have or which book we should read for read aloud. As we dive more deeply into the meaning of democracy and the documents and structures that support that in our country, it is our hope that students will understand better the role they have to play as citizens of our classroom and the larger world.

*-Jenerra Williams & Ji Yun Park*

### Room 204

The third grade Math Whiz Room 204 has taken on the challenge of finding different strategies to solve multiplication word problems with multiples of 2s to 12s. They have been practicing their mental stamina to persevere through challenging tasks and using their "number sense" to figure out the best way to solve for the product of an equation. During one challenge, writing an equation to match a multiplication word problem, Gimar looked at me after many attempts to write the number eight in the equation and said with a smile, "Writing 8 is soo frustrating". He then continued with much effort to complete his challenge! Many students have voiced that one of their goals

this year is to get better at math by working on knowing their multiplication tables, so far they are off to a good start at meeting that goal. Some students have taken on the challenge to go beyond two digit multiplication and stretching their number sense!

*-Cleata Brown & Mayra Rivera*

### Room 207

On Friday our fourth grade students go to Urban Improv, while third graders are left to explore. We are lucky to be in a great location with a lot to learn from the neighborhood that surrounds our school. We started our exploration on a walk to the Arboretum with the intention to paint the beautiful fall foliage. While walking we discussed plants, cars, our neighborhoods and each other's interests. As we entered the Arboretum, our focus was quickly changed as Danny led us down a path. Jasmine shared that her family had walked down the path before.

All of a sudden, a chipmunk zoomed by. "Woah," said Cole. "Look at that!" Juju exclaimed. "There is another one," Zyel shared while moving towards them. "Look," said Jasmine, "They are chasing each other." Juju, Cole, Jasmine, Zyel, Danny and I



*Above: Jordan holds a corn snake from the Boston Nature Center. Below: Children from the United States of Kate class observe the corn snake eating a mouse.*



*Dionte and Jonathan enjoy Carlos' work for Inktober, a world-wide challenge to create ink drawings during the month of October.*

became fascinated by the amount of chipmunk sightings and their behavior. They zoomed, jumped, chased, hid, stood still and much more. Before the thought of painting even crossed our minds, we had to head back to school for lunch. We all agreed because of our excitement that we will go back to the arboretum another day and continue to explore....Maybe next time we will paint.

*-Amanda & Amina*

### GRADES 5&6

#### Room 210

Every Friday afternoon the students in room 210 do what we call the "End of the Week Reflections." Students are free to write about what is on their minds, but also have a list of prompts in their notebooks that they can use if they need to. The prompts include: "Something that went well this week was...", "Something that I think would improve the class is..." and, "Something I learned this week..." We will dedicate one newsletter a month to sharing students voices through excerpts of their reflections.

One thing I want to get better at is being faster on the computer .

"One thing I want to get better at is



*Gianna voted!*

ignoring people that start problems." "Something I want to get better at is math because I really don't get what there talking about when it's time to do our classwork."

"Something that went well this week was Math. I really enjoy math with Abdi. This week we learned about least and greatest common factors, divisors, and multiples. This year the work is actually challenging, so that is fun."

"Something I learned this week was in 1971 women where aloud to vote."

"Something I learned this week was about Colin Kaepernick"

"Something that did not go well was I put my hands on someone and I didnt mean to"

"I would feel more comfortable if I would become a changed boy"

*-Nakia & Manny*



*Gimar works hard at math.*

#### Room 215

Before we went down to theatre on Tuesday, we talked about what we wanted to improve about our work and how we wanted to make better use of Allison's time with us. We see Allison once a week and we want to do as much as we can to develop as actors. Class was quite good, and it got stronger as we did some short dialogues, written by us and then performed. With Allison, students are beginning to see that there are different kinds of theatre, to appreciate the craft of acting and the collaboration and the trust needed to pull off a good scene. There are roles to be played as performers, as writers and as members of an audience. There's the warm-up which precedes everything and which is necessary. For me, it is a sheer joy to watch different, expansive qualities open up in my students. The arts have that magic to open up parts of us, and with practice and on cue these parts may grow so we are fuller, more awake and confident.

So glad that theatre is on the weekly schedule!

-Room 215 (still voting on a class name), Carlos & Abdi

### GRADES 7&8

#### Room 213

“Do you think I have the scale right?” “Do all the words in my dictionary have to be real words, or can I make some up?” “Look, I made Max a pair of boots and sneakers. And here’s the pyramid Freak gave him.” “Can I write about what happens to everybody, the way they do at the end of a movie?” “Can I paint the dining room? I already made the table and chairs.” “I made the bulkhead that’s the entrance to the down under. I found a picture online.” “What could I make people out of?”

We’re wrapping up our first literacy project based on the beginning of year read aloud of *Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick. There are four parts to the project: literary analysis, creative writing, scene study or personal dictionary, and reflection. Kids have been working steadily and seem pleased with their work. Our focus now is on finishing, and then revising and editing to make a clean product. We look forward to sharing with you.

-Ann Ruggiero, Elsa Batista & Letta Neely

#### Room 214

During closing meeting, the conversation shifted to the fact that Student A had been overly aggressive with his classmates earlier in the day. When I asked them what would be an

appropriate consequence, a student replied, “that’s up to you Reginald.” The response kind of surprised me. Which led me to ask the group, “Do you think that adults should decide on consequences for students and students should always accept it?”

After a few seconds, Zack responded, “Well, last year, one thing Abdi would do is ask a student who was out of control to do their work in another class.” Eventually, we came to the agreement that we would ask Student A to work out of the class for one day and he needs to apologize to the class before returning.

These kind of conversations are really important in building the kind of democratic community we want. Yes, the adults in the room are in charge. However, I’ve learned through the years that accountability should be a group effort.

-Reginald Toussaint & Frances Pearce

### SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

#### Mindfulness at MH

This year, all kindergarten through eighth grade classes at Mission Hill School will have mindfulness in instruction.

Mindfulness can be described as “paying attention to what is happening in the present moment, without judgment. Mindfulness instruction is completely non-sectarian and science-based. I will be teaching several classrooms at a time, over the three trimesters of the school year. Classes meet twice a week for six to eight weeks.

Look for occasional articles about

Mindfulness and the MHS program in future editions of this newsletter. There will also be a new Mindfulness page on the MHS website (<http://www.missionhillschool.org/mindfulness>), where you can find links to articles, resources, and activities to do at home. Please visit!

If you have questions about the mindfulness program, feel free to contact me. I am so pleased to be working with the Mission Hill School family.

May you be happy, healthy and peaceful,

Betsy Caruso

#### Message from Family Council

The Family Council needs three caregivers to serve on the Governing Board to represent our diverse families. The Governing Board meets quarterly and makes decisions on policy and budget for the school. The board includes faculty, student, community, and family representatives.

If you are interested in serving as a family representative for our school this year, please contact Ari Montgomery ([arijoy@gmail.com](mailto:arijoy@gmail.com) or 352.214.5692) by Friday, October 28th. If elections are necessary, the family council will contact families again before our next, November 10th, meeting. The next Governing Board meeting is December 15th.

**NEW LOCATION:** The next Family Council meeting will be on November 10th at 5:45pm at the Dudley Branch Public Library (65 Warren St, Roxbury, MA 02119).

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

Mission Hill K-8 School  
*A Boston Public Pilot School*  
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