



## IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- September 29-October 12  
*Listening Conferences (teacher-scheduled)*
- Monday, October 10  
*No School: Columbus Day*
- Friday, October 14  
*Friday Share: Art Share*
- Friday, October 21  
*Friday Share: Deborah, Kate, & Nakia's Classes*

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October 7, 2016

Volume 20, Issue 3

### *Eat, Play, Rest*

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

At Friday Share last week audience members had the privilege of hearing the speeches given by our students running for MHS Governance Board seats. In each speech a promise was made—better food for lunch, music for students while working, a longer recess and lunch period. Each speech had its own flavor, but the recurring student promise was for more recess time. After Friday Share a parent told me that her kids had been talking about the shorter recess at home. As is the Mission Hill way, our staff will listen to our students on this issue and consider changes that are reasonable and in the community's best interest.

I thought it would be helpful for you to hear the backstory for our change in recess timing. There are a few other recess changes (age group configuration, play space boundaries, increased supervision) that the students didn't mention that are helpful for you to know about too. More about those changes later.

The sequence of play, eat, rest established for our youngest students is now true for all students. For years, half of our students in the school would have lunch first while the other half recessed first. Then the two halves would switch places. It made logistical sense. There's one important factor that we left out of that arrangement—what we know about the human body. Regardless of age, our bodies need to digest our meals. Running around or doing other similar activities right after lunch isn't the best thing for any of us. Think about the last time you exercised after a meal. Your body made a choice about where to put its energy. Along with our bodies, our minds benefit from rest after a meal to allow for digestion and refresh for the afternoon work ahead. Adding rest time takes some of the lunch or play or academic time.

The start times for recess are staggered now. If we are all having recess first, we have to enter the play spaces at different times to avoid crowding and supervision challenges. Classroom based staff bring children out to play where the staff on duty are ready to greet them. The younger children start and the older students follow. One unintended consequence of this is that the classrooms of younger children have more flexibility with the amount of playtime than the classrooms of older students do. The playtime of students in grades 5 to 8 is bookended by the time grades 1 to 4 leave the playground and the time the cafeteria closes. I think this is the new pinch our oldest students feel and are speaking about. Some classrooms have added a morning or afternoon recess. Because students benefit from movement breaks throughout the day, this has been a successful solution instead of adding 10 minutes to the existing recess time. In response to our students and their concerns about playtime, equity regarding recess is an area that needs to be ironed out. I look forward to the joint discussion among students and staff.

### KINDERGARTEN

#### Room 108

How do the K0 students use their voices within the wider whole school community? This is a question I have been thinking about as it relates to the fall theme Who Counts? One way that we have already contributed is by voting for the new 7th grade student representatives to the Governing Board. The 9 candidates gave their speeches at Friday Share last week. Later that morning, the candidates came to our classroom to meet the new K0 students in person. It was a chance for the K0 students to see the candidates up close, interact with them, play with them, and have a better sense of who they were voting for. After the 7th graders left, each K0 student worked with Donna to cast their vote on the picture ballot. That is just one way our students have used their voice in the school-wide community - and we will be looking for more!

*-Geraldyn & Donna*

#### Room 106

Stay tuned next week!

*-Kathy D'Andrea*

#### Room 107

After singing our alphabet song last week, we spoke briefly about the picture of queen Elizabeth under the letter Qq. The fact that there are real queens and kings surprised many students. As I explained that as one way of ruling and that in the United States we do things differently, Xander said, "Yeah. We have presidents." That opened our conversation and I began to realize just how much many of them knew about what was going on in the political arena.

Several students knew the names of



*Tato plays with Rowan while making a "campaign" visit to the K0 classroom.*

the candidates and shared their feelings around who should win. As we took a look at pictures of past presidents, when we got to one of President Obama, many students yelled out in recognition, "I know that man! I've seen him before!" A few gave his picture a little hug and a kiss. I then asked them what they noticed about all the presidents. They realized there were no babies, children or females (though many were not convinced about the ones wearing wigs). We then spoke about the idea that if Hillary Clinton became president, she would be the first female to hold that office. One student whispered, "I hope she wins."

*-Jada Brown & Kenisha Epps*

#### Room 109

This week, as some students put finishing touches on their self-portraits, we began work on studying our classroom community.. We have

our classroom agreements posted on our wall. We reached these agreements after a long process. We began by opportunities for each person to state any rules that they thought we should have. We did this for a couple of days until we had a long list. Next we cut up the list into strips and thought about categories for the rules. We ended up with categories such as rules about bodies, rules about things, rules about outside, etc. Then we looked at the rules in each category and came up with one rule that would cover the things in that category. And, finally, thought about a way to state what we "could" do instead of what we could not do! "Listen to the teachers", "Walk inside", "Be nice and kind to the things in the classroom", "Be kind and play with the friends in the class", "Work hard", "Be careful outside"

*-Deborah & Stephanie*

### GRADES 1 & 2

#### Room 205

One morning I hung up an outline of a map of the United States of America without any words or labels and asked the students, "What is this place?" They were eager to respond. Here is what they offered: "It's the universe, it's countries, the U.S.A., it's the Earth, the planets, it's Boston, it's America, the world, it's the states, it's North America." I then shared that I noticed they all had so many different ideas, and I asked them how we could find out what this place is for sure. Some students suggested going to an airport and asking a pilot, another child shared that we could look on a globe, a different child suggested looking at a map, and one more child thought we should call the news and ask them. During project time, Eamon and Agboola looked in an atlas, which Eamon explained is a book of maps. Eamon found a map in the book that matched the shape of the outline we looked at as a class. At the end of project time, Eamon shared his evidence with the rest of the class to prove that the place in the picture is the United States of America. As we continue to explore more about our country and democracy, the class has been very interested in making maps and learning about places in our world.

-Ashleigh L'Heureux

#### Room 216

How do we build a strong classroom community? We have spent a lot of time over the past month working to develop friendships among students and learn the routines of first and second grade. Much of this work occurs outside, where we play community games together. Some of

these games focus on learning about each other, such as "The Cold Wind Blows." Other games have students work cooperatively and discuss ideas together, such as "Group Charades" and "Secret Handshake." But if you asked students which their favorite games are, they would probably say "Fishy Fishy Cross My Ocean" or "Zombie Tag", which are fast paced games where everyone gets to run around and get their energy out. In addition to community games, we have also taken trips to the Arnold Arboretum and the Rocket Park. These have been great times to enjoy each other's company and be in nature. It has been wonderful getting to know each other so far this year, and with continued work our classroom community will surely be strong.

-Danny Flannery & JoAnn Hawkesworth

#### Room 217

How does someone get elected? Room 217 held an election for class jobs. After writing our Class Constitution, we needed to create important jobs for our classroom to continue to function well. We want our union to be made up of hard working, kind, empathetic kids. We created a list of possible jobs that citizens of our class could do. We then nominated our friends that we thought would do particular jobs well. Emeric said "I think James would be a good table cleaner because he is really excited about it, and I think he would do a good job." Yediel said "I think Julia would be a good librarian because she likes books and she reads a lot". Wren said "Jordan would be a good block-arian. He is good at taking care of the classroom, and in Jada's class he was



top: Nataliah gets to know her "constituents"  
bottom: Ms. Donna assists Marissa with voting.

really good at it." We each then voted on ballots, one at a time, to find out who the majority of students believed would be good at each job. We then tallied up our results and elected our friends to new jobs.

-Kate Needham

### GRADES 3 & 4

#### Rooms 203

"Is this name relevant?" I asked this

question as we went down the list of class names that we brainstormed. We are in the middle of the process for electing a new class name for ourselves. This year we decided to tie the process to our “Who Counts?” theme. We began by coming up with a list of possible names. Then we asked one question about each name: Is this name relevant? After eliminating some names, we began to vote down to our final options. We had 5 finalists: Jenerra’s Jazzy Jammers, Diamond Miners, Computer Kingdom, Green Dragons and J & J’s Geniuses.

The next steps will be for students to self identify a name and work in groups to do research on the name and write a persuasive speech to present to their classmates. The point is to influence the community vote and end up with the name their group thinks is most appropriate for us!

We will begin hearing speeches next

week and will vote on Friday, October 14th. Stay tuned for the election results!

*-Jenerra Williams & Ji Yun Park*

### Room 204

We have been working hard on our Literacy skills and projects to help us make connections to our learning, which include discussion, writing, reading and art activities related to our current theme. Our activities are focused on “Who Counts” which include discussions about voting and how it works. After reading an article on how voting works and the book *Class President* by Luis Sachar, students learned that no matter who is running for president, as citizens we should exercise our right and responsibility to vote for what we believe is right. One student shared that her family do not vote but after this week’s discussion on voting one thing parents can agree on; as citizens it is our right to vote and share

our voice about who runs our country, state and city. As we continue to be inundated with upcoming election coverage, the Nerd Squad will continue to share their voices about what they notice about campaign signs, television commercials, news coverage, T-shirts, bumper stickers, buttons and conversations about the election.

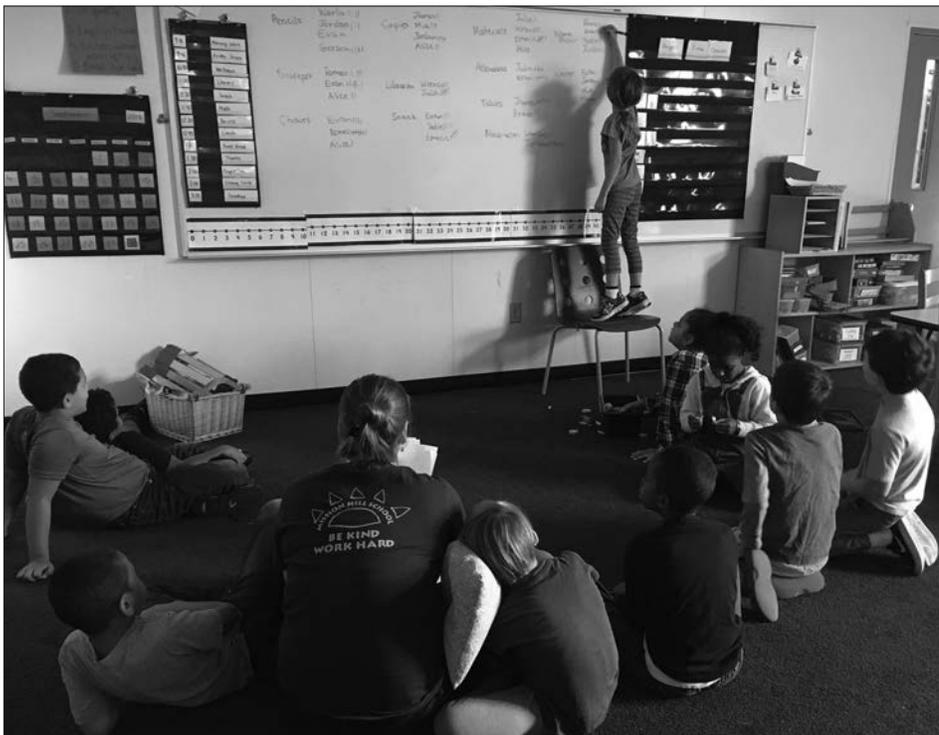
*-Mayra Rivera & Cleata Brown*

### Room 207

Webster’s Dictionary defines ‘Listen’ as “To hear what someone has said and understand that it is serious, important or true’. It also defines ‘Conference’ as “A meeting of two or more persons for discussing matters of common concern”. That is exactly what has been happening this week as we are holding Listening Conferences. Amanda and I are excited to hear from our students and their families as they share important information about the student. We have heard about what has gone well with the start of school with hopes, dreams and aspirations for the year ahead. We have heard about challenges- some that have been overcome while others are still works in progress.

Amanda and I are always energized after meeting with our students and their families. We feel like we have learned some insight that will help us make sure all our students have a productive year. We are looking forward to the growth and learning that we are sure to see and to the many special moments, both large and small, that this year will bring.

*-Amina & Amanda*



*Julia tallies up the results from the ballot vote.*



*The many examples of community building through play in room 216.*

### GRADES 5&6

#### Room 210

Stay tuned next week!

-Nakia & Manny

#### Room 215

The power of words: the legendary

story of Malcolm X memorizing the dictionary while in prison, with words he reinvents himself; when experience overwhelms words help. This week, the 5/6 classes were invited to join Vocabulary.com, an interactive website that exposes students to vocabulary. 100 words all middle

schoolers should know, vocabulary from Beyonce's album, Lemonade, or from the recent presidential debate are among the exercises students do. English Language Learners and all students need informal and structured exposure to words. We hope that this website will support students at school and home to play with words, compete against each other - though the real winners are those who use these words in their speaking and writing. So, in addition to reading aloud for 30 minutes, our students are encouraged to go on their accounts and do their vocabulary assignments for 20 minutes at home.

-Abdi & Carlos

### GRADES 7&8

#### Room 213

A significant annual event happened at Mission Hill School last Friday. All students, from kindergarten through 8th grade, voted for students to represent them on our Mission Hill School Governing Board. Nine 7th graders wrote and delivered statements at Friday Share. Classes returned to their rooms to vote. Picture ballots of the candidates were used so even our non-readers had a voice in the process.

Current board members, 8th graders Ali, Christian, and Ella, explained that the candidates would read their speeches to persuade students to vote for them. We have never had so many students willing to serve their community on the Governing Board. We thank Anais, Caleb, CJ, Didi, and Zack for their willingness to serve. And we congratulate Henry, Nataliah, Nora, and Tato for being elected to the Governing Board.

Recess and lunch were the hot topics

focused on in the speeches as the students suggested improvements for our school. Caleb, thoughtful as ever, ended by acknowledging that even as he shared improvements for the school, he also wanted to state that we all have ways we need to improve ourselves.

-Ann Ruggiero, Elsa Batista & Letta Neely

**Room 214**

Halfway through geography class, Diontae yelled, "That's it! I give up!" The sound from the chromebook indicated he had clicked on the wrong state. Then he peeked at the globe in front of him to double-check his answer. To his right, Giselle and Didi are huddled over a map of the United States, going back and forth between their chromebooks and the map as they try to memorize the location of the midwestern states.

One of my goals every year is to help students become more familiar with maps. I've tried many different approaches with moderate success. This year, I decided to make better use of the the the chromebooks. So far, this is the most engaged students have been during geography. Interestingly, it's not because of the online sources but using the online sources along with globes and maps. Most students use the maps and globes to help them memorize the location of the states then take an online quiz to test their knowledge.

It's been great to see how well old and new technologies are merging.

-Reginald Toussaint

**SCHOOLWIDE NEWS**

**MHS T-Shirts For Sale**

Come by the Main Office before they sell out! \$10.00 - One Price Fits All! Youth XS - Adult XXL

**Piano Lessons!**

Free piano lessons are available for children ages 6-18 at the Dudley Branch BPL on Saturdays, beginning October 1 at 9am. Pre-registration is required. If interested, please contact: carlosmvargas.pianist@gmail.com.

**Governance Board Reps**

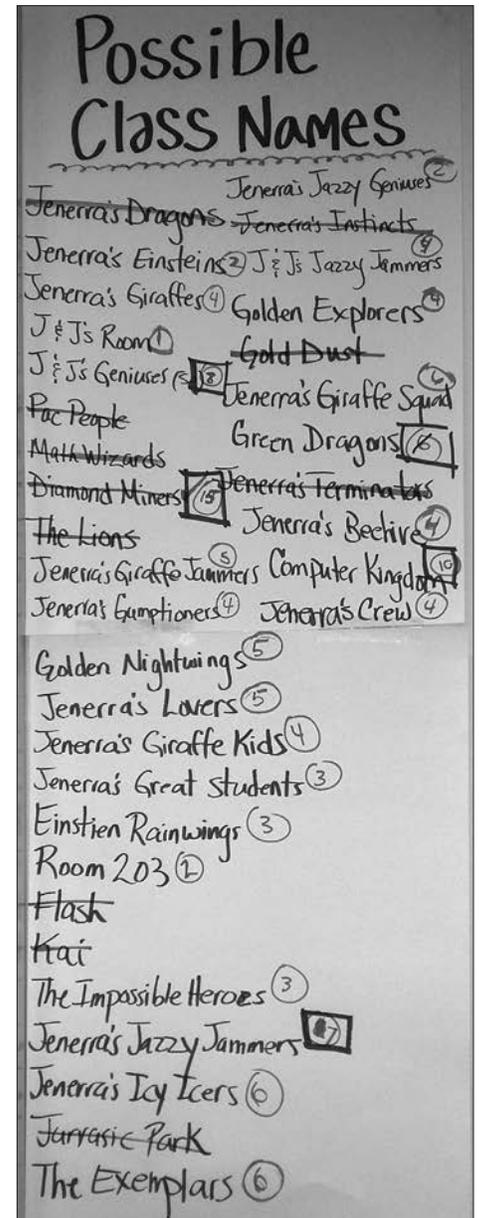
Please extend congratulations and announce to your classes that Henry, Nora, Nataliah, and Tato will join Ali, Christian, and Ella on the Governing Board. Please also extend your thanks to Anais, Caleb, Charles, Didi, and Zack for their fine speeches and willingness to serve their community.

**The Project Room**

The Project Room is off to a great start, with children exploring the new Lego WeDo 2.0 Robotics sets and checking out some other new additions to the room. Generous donations have been made, some from current families, and some from former students! Thank you, thank you to all who have supported the work in this creative learning space.

Right now we are all set for fabric, yarn and sewing supplies. If you would like to spend time in the project room, doing a specific activity (electric circuits? sewing or knitting? making cool stuff out of duct tape? do you have a great idea?), drop a

line to Dani and we will set something up [dcoleman@missionhillschool](mailto:dcoleman@missionhillschool).



The list of potential class names Jenerra's students came up with. They are slowly being narrowed down, using habits of mind, research and perspersuasive essays and speeches to help prepare for an informed vote. Stay tuned to find out which name wins!

<p>Ayla Gavins, <i>Principal</i>                  Deborah Meier, <i>Founder</i>                  Tommy Chang, <i>Superintendent</i></p>	<p>Mission Hill K-8 School                  A Boston Public Pilot School  <a href="http://WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG">WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG</a></p>	<p>20 Child Street                  Jamaica Plain, MA 02130                  T 617-635-6384                  F 617-635-6419</p>
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