



## IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- December 12-16 (times TBA)  
*MHS Book Fair!*
- Thursday, December 15, 5:00-7:00pm  
*Governance Board Meeting*
- Friday, December 16  
*Friday Share: Art Share*
- December 23-January 3  
*Winter Break: No School*
- Wednesday, January 4  
*All Students Return to School*

December 9, 2016

Volume 20, Issue 11

### *A Conversation Among Friends, Critical Discourse*

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

For the past 19 years members of Mission Hill School staff have attended a conference called the Fall Forum. The Fall Forum was the annual gathering of the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), where educators shared ideas about educational policies, shared questions about creating optimal conditions for teaching and learning, and shared stories about life in schools. When Ted Sizer began the Fall Forum he described it as a conversation among friends. His wife, Nancy, addressed us at this year's final Fall Forum, letting us know that Ted never imagined that the conversation would still be happening some 30 years later.

CES schools hold 10 Common Principles as core values, listed here. You can find a more complete description of each principle at <http://essentialschools.org/common-principles/>

1. Learning to use one's mind well: The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well.
2. Less is more: depth over coverage. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge.
3. Goals apply to all students: The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary.
4. Personalization: Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent.
5. Student-as-worker, teacher-as-coach: The governing practical metaphor of the school should be "student-as-worker", rather than the more familiar metaphor of "teacher as deliverer of instructional services."
6. Demonstration of mastery: Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks.
7. A tone of decency and trust: The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation, of trust, and of decency (fairness, generosity, and tolerance).
8. Commitment to the entire school: The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline).
9. Resources dedicated to teaching and learning: Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include student loads that promote personalization, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per-pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent.
10. Democracy and equity: The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies.

Mission Hill School was born as a Coalition School. You can imagine how difficult it was for me and others who have been long time affiliates of the organization, to witness this last CES gathering.

A friend and colleague, Sunny Pai, introduced a new conversation at the conference. This new conversation is a shift from a conversation with friends to a critical discourse. This new discourse includes people with opposing views about education. We are in the beginning stages of this new conversation. I invite you to join us as we think about new ways to connect and gather. Write to [agavins@missionhillschool.org](mailto:agavins@missionhillschool.org) if interested in joining.

## CLASSROOM NEWS

### KINDERGARTEN

#### Room 108

One of our favorite books is *The Peace Book* by Todd Parr. In the book, Parr describes peace in many ways - including, "Peace is reading all different kinds of books." In room 108 the children have been getting good at reading to themselves. Enjoy these pictures of the Dinosaurs reading different books - and spreading peace through reading!

-Geralyn & Donna

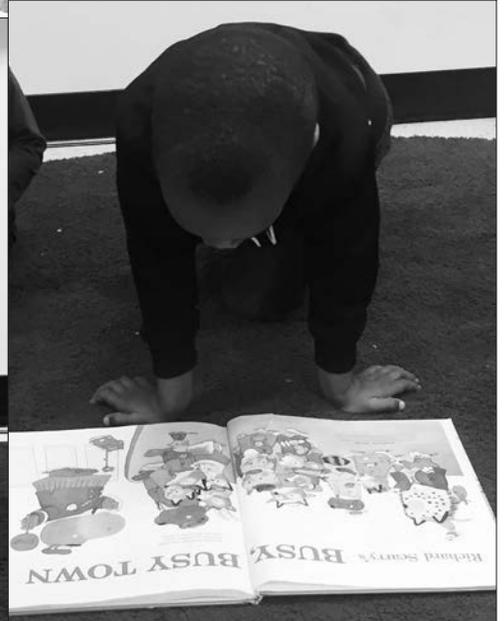
#### Room 106

This week was Caity's take over week. She created a multidisiplinary unit on winter. She used the book *The Mitten* by Jan Brett as a focus for her work. Caity read the book multiple times to the children. They learned about the setting, the characters, and the plot.

After hearing the story, teams of children designed a puppet theater in the block area. They shared their needs with Caity and collaborated to meet their goal. In the art studio children created puppets from the story. They outlined their characters using black pen and added color with different mediums.

The children planned how to put on their play and who they would invite with Caity. They also discussed how they would share information with friends and families. Danae said, "We could text people and let them know." Lola said, "We should send an invitation."

Rehearsals for the play are underway. The children are very excited about their production. While that is happening there are many other winter-related projects happening. Children made snow using shaving



Clockwise, top L: Sabina, Marissa, Liam and Emerson practice peace through reading.

cream and baking soda, are retelling the story of *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, creating a mural of a winter scene, and telling oral stories about winter adventures. Thank you Caity, for a wonderful week.

-Kathy D'Andrea

#### Room 107

After finding out that there aren't just two political parties represented by animals (Democrats-donkey and Republicans-elephant), last Thursday

we decided to visit the zoo to see those animals up close as well as find the owl for the Modern Whig party and the Eagle for the Constitution party. The weather could not have been more beautiful at 60 degrees on December 1. As we walked around the zoo, we were able to find the donkey, the owl, a picture of an eagle but no elephant. However, we did find an animal from last years' China scavenger hunt. The red panda is at the Franklin Park Zoo! Seeing it up

close was amazing!

In connection to our zoo scavenger hunt, this week as our students took to the podiums for their presidential speeches, we noticed Emma mumbling something. As Linda and I listened closer while Vidania decided which podium to stand behind, we realized that each time she stood behind the podium with the donkey political hat, Emma would giggle and say, "You're Hillary." When she moved behind the one with the elephant she'd say, "Oh. Now you're Trump." ...Just another event confirming the Working Presidents connections to this theme.

*-Jada Brown & Kenisha Epps*

### Room 109

In preparation for our curriculum breakfast we created a list of many of things we had worked on or learned during the past few months as we studied Kindness and Community.

Here are few excerpts:

How to take care of each other

How to be a kind community

Being ourselves and being part of a community

Painting self portraits with "people paints"

Noticing (observing) things in our playground

Visiting the Arboretum

Noticing things on the way (to the arboretum)

Talking about the election

Doing an apple tasting and voting on our favorites

Voting on "buildings" for our classroom. The Hospital and JP Licks won the vote

Making a mural of the other buildings

And we also.... sang, danced, played, explored, solved problems, learned



*Kaysha and Emily search the sky looking for eagles at the Franklin Park Zoo.*

about our names, learned letters, numbers, days of the week, months, patterns, and calendar!

*-Deborah & Stephanie*

### GRADES 1 & 2

#### Room 205

This week we focused on using our voice in different ways and sending messages through song, art, dance, and poetry. We listened to several songs and thought about the messages they sent to us. We watched dances and thought about how movement can communicate a message, and we looked closely at art and poetry to determine the messages within those types of voice. Some of the common messages that came through were: be kind, no more fighting, be yourself, never give up, I can do it, and you are special. After being inspired by other people's work, students chose how they wanted to use their voice and what message they wanted to send. Some students worked in groups and others chose to work by them-

selves. Some students chose to write songs, or create dances; some created powerful pieces of art, and everyone wrote poems.

Here is a poem from one of our students:

Being Kind

Being kind is hugging.

Being kind is being true.

Being kind is helping.

Being kind is saying nice words.

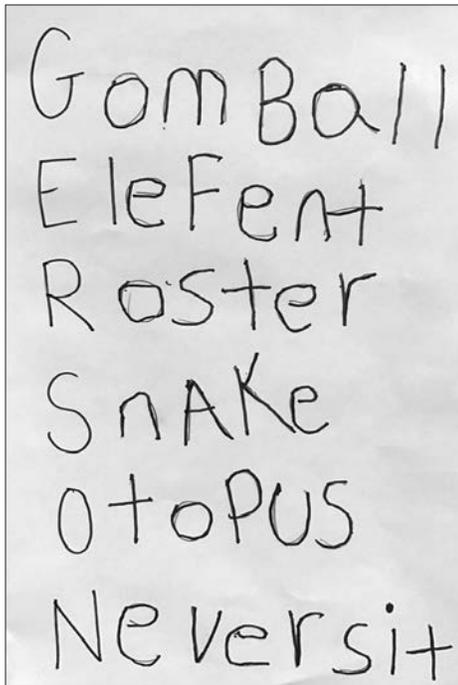
Being kind is listening.

-By Jediah

*-Ashleigh L'Heureux*

#### Room 216

On Tuesday we completed our second set of trials in our class courtroom, this time drawing inspiration from cases taken up by the Supreme Court of the United States. After all of the evidence was presented and closing arguments were made, the Justices discussed the case and made their votes. Below are some excerpt from Justices' written opinions for the case of Plessy v. Ferguson:



*Gerson's acrostic name poem.*

"I decided with Plessy because they said it was separate but equal, but it wasn't." - Moxie

"Plessy should be able to sit in any car he wants to, it's not fair." - Natalia

"Ferguson said it was separate but equal but it wasn't. Ferguson was not right." - Darby

Students were shocked to hear that in 1896, the Supreme Court sided with Ferguson 7-1 and upheld segregation under the idea of "separate but equal." We had a discussion about whose voice was heard by the Supreme Court, and how the court's decision silenced the voices of people of color until the decision of Brown v. Board of Ed. overturned Plessy v. Ferguson in 1954. We will continue exploring how the court system can silence voices and help voices be heard in our final set of trials for this theme.

*-Danny Flannery & JoAnn Hawkesworth*

**Room 217**

Report writing is a huge, daunting

task to take on. How can one take on communicating to families all of the growth and learning that has happened in three and a half months? Students have all grown so much as readers, writers, mathematicians, explorers, thinkers, and community members. The first and second grade team has been talking about all of the evidence we pull from to write reports. We read and critique one another's comments for students and families to make sure we communicate the messages we intend to. We could spend weeks writing reports full time to make sure all of the details get included. It is stressful to try to sandwich both ends of the work day with report writing but when they are all done, it feels like I have reflected on all of my students in a way that only happens during report season and I am grateful for it- and ready for vacation!

*-Kate Needham*

**GRADES 3 & 4**

**Rooms 203**

As our democracy theme comes to a close, we are revving up for final projects. Our last question is: What can you do to influence your community? They have decided how they want to use their voices to help the people/places around them. Below is a list of groups and the projects they are working on.

**Homelessness** - Anna, Jaiden, Armani, Gimar, Luis & Rui are planning a yard sale with proceeds to go to The Pine Street Inn.

**Animals** - Arilis, Cyrus, & Lee will sell hot chocolate to raise money for the World Wildlife Federation to help three endangered species.

**Animals** - Maya, Gianna, Typrese, & Milo will have a bake sale to raise money for the Boston Animal Care and Control and the Save the Whales



*Clockwise, top left: Justices Milan, Moxie, Jack Ozro, Nico, Gabriel, Josie, Neli, Theodore and William D.*

organization.

**Environment** - Peter will make clay bracelets to sell and the proceeds will go to the Mauritian Wildlife Federation to help save the Bois Dentelle plant.

**International** - Shonnie & Braxton have identified an organization in Australia that helps the Aboriginal community. They will collect clothing to send to the foundation.

**Senior Citizens** - Kimberly & Simeon have identified a local hospice and are deciding how they want to bring joy to some of the residents there.

Stay tuned for important news about how you can help!

*-Jenerra Williams & Ji Yun Park*

### Room 204

Recently I asked the Nerd Squad the question, What acts of inequality have you seen or heard of in your community? Adler shared that he noticed that there are girls only clubs or boys only clubs that are not opened to everyone and that they should be opened to everyone. Hiram shared that in his neighborhood the younger kids are not able to play basketball because the older ones are always using the basket ball court. He thinks that there should be a schedule to give younger kids a chance to play. Hiram wants to write a petition to his city councillor to ask them to change the inequality of the use of the basketball courts by making a time for younger kids and a time for older kids to play. Hiram is also proposing that a basketball court is built specifically for children who are in elementary school. Noah shared that he noticed a lot homeless people around Boston and he wants to petition the Mayor of Boston to have jobs, good homes, and good clothing for home-



*Noah from the Nerd Squad addresses homelessness.*

less people in Boston. In our conversations about inequality, students are beginning to think about how they can help to change their own communities!

*-Cleata & Mayra*

### Room 207

The curriculum breakfast was a wonderful way to celebrate our learning. Family and friends joined Mission Hill to see the work our community has done. Though this curriculum is not finished, we were proud of all the hard work Mission Hill students displayed. Our next step in our curriculum is to use our voices in our community. Students thought about what they wanted to change within our community and how they could make change. Initially students shared they would like to stop bullying, lower speed limits in Boston, etc. We then had a conversation, while we looked at the list we created. We started to think about the greater community and the inequalities present. We encouraged students to think about all needs. As students expanded thinking, the amount of people affected by their potential work grew. Some students shared an interest to help the homeless, raise awareness about health, prevent bullying around the city, etc. We hope our class is influenced to

make change that helps many people.

*-Amanda & Amina*

### GRADES 5&6

#### Room 210

Here are some of this month's End of the Week Reflections

Something I want to get better at is....

"Being nice to people when there mad at me or Im mad at them."

"I want to get better at doing better routes in football."

"Something I want to get better at is math because learning math is hard."

"Asking questions when I don't get it."

Something that went well this week was...

"Friday share because i preformde my rap sort of i was a little nervs but i had a grate time."

"I did not get into any friend drama."

Something that did not go well was...

"I let people get the best of me and I broke down on my weakest moments."

I would feel more comfortable if...

"I could express my feelings with my classmates without losing friends which is very important."

"We were aloud to wear hoods in the classroom."

*-5xAtion Classroom*

#### Room 215

Sami the snake arrived in Room 215 cradled in a plastic container last Wednesday afternoon. Andrew MacBlane, Boston Nature Center, surprised us again with another living thing to observe, to inquire about, to hold. "He looks slimy, but he is actually not slimy," Rafael said as he held him. Aahmonyea squirmed at the thought of having to touch Sami; Chrisvely froze; Justin kept it casual, though his breathing

got deeper. Sami had not eaten in 12 days; Jack's mouth dropped when a frozen mouse slid out of a plastic bag and into the container. Mekhai blurted out, "What does it smell like?" A rapid fire of other questions, not fully formed, followed "What?!" "What if?" "How come?" Andrew wiggled his finger just above the mouse to get Sami's attention. He asked, "Look at the size of Sami's head and the size of the mouse. Can you imagine eating something bigger than your head? How is Sami going to get that mouse into its stomach?" Max buried his nose in his sweatshirt, gassed out. Students took notes and made sketches in their science journals. Every Wednesday afternoon for most of the year Andrew will be bringing and growing living things and asking questions in our classroom. We know that there are biologists, botanists and zoologists among us and it is time we started to educate them.

*-Carlos, Kat and Abdi, Room 215*

### GRADES 7&8

#### Room 213

"I was glad I was there with my friends..." "What's a good question to ask?"... "They said they have 900 applications for 80 seats!"... "I saw some kids from my old school!"

I loved the excitement in the air last Thursday evening at the BPS High School Showcase at the Bolling Building. There was such a sense of hopefulness as next year's newest high school students investigated their choices. Our 8th graders, their families, and I were all impressed by the number of schools, the range of choices each represents, and the pride and joy current high schoolers take in their schools.

Finding the right next school is a

lengthy process, with outcomes not in our control. A student could complete all the parts of an application on time and beautifully but still not be selected or assigned to that school. That's why it's necessary to have a number of schools as choices.

In class, we've agreed not to think in terms of "good" or "bad" schools, but rather to use descriptive language to find the ones that seem to be a good fit for each student. I reminded the kids that we control the kind of experiences we have in life – attitude counts for a lot, and hard work and engaged learning can happen in many places.

Please call me if you have any questions about the high school process.

*-Ann Ruggiero, Elsa Batista & Letta Neely*

#### Room 214

Is the world flat?

This question from Nataliah took us on a nice detour. At first, we weren't sure if she was being serious. We all know the earth is round. However, as the conversation continued, we realized that what she was really asking is, how is it that we don't fall off the earth? So, Instead of continuing to study maps, we talked about the earth's rotation, seasons and gravity.

Which led to more questions:

What would happen if the earth stopped moving?

Who created the world?

Are heaven and hell real?

Is God a person?

It's one of the reasons that I love Wednesdays. We meet in such small groups that we can easily change the focus when necessary. It's also a great opportunity to bring up interesting topics and see where it takes us. The best part of the conversation was that

students felt comfortable enough to ask questions and were not necessarily looking for answers.

*-Reginald Toussaint & Frances Pearce*

### SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

#### Apprentice Learning News

Supporters of Apprentice Learning packed the house at the Milky Way Lounge as we celebrated the work of Apprentices and Alumni. Worksite honorees were awarded for their continued support of hosting students year-round. Over 75% of the attendees donated to continue the great work that is being done.



*Mission Hill Alumni Shantel Mercedes and her Site Partner Genevieve Day of JP Knit and Stitch. Genevieve received an award, honoring her dedication to empowering youth through job skills and entrepreneurship.*

#### Governance Board Meeting

You are and have always been welcome to attend our Board Meetings.

## CLASSROOM NEWS

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 15, 2016

Where: Art Room (Room 211)

Time: 5:00-7:00 pm.

### From Nurse Georgie

In the recent weeks many children have been coming in to school sick with a number of different illnesses. We are writing to remind you if your child has diarrhea, vomiting, a severe cold/cough, conjunctivitis, sore throat, and/or a temperature over 100 degrees they should stay home from school, and, for an additional 24 hours after their symptoms go away. Doing so will help us make sure all the students stay healthy. Please read the attached handout for a complete list. Thank you for understanding.

-Nurse Georgie

### Family Volunteers Needed

The MH Family Council needs representatives for BPS SpedPac (Boston Parents of Children with Special Needs) and CPC (Citywide Parent Council). Please email Ari Montgomery if you'd like to volunteer to represent Mission Hill at one of these groups: [aridity@gmail.com](mailto:aridity@gmail.com)

For more information:

BOSTON SPED PAC

7-8:30pm

Richard J. Murphy School

1 Worrell St Dorchester, MA 02122

January 26, February 16, March 30,  
April 27, and May 25

<http://bostonspedpac.org>

CITYWIDE PARENT COUNCIL

6-8pm

Bruce Bolling Building

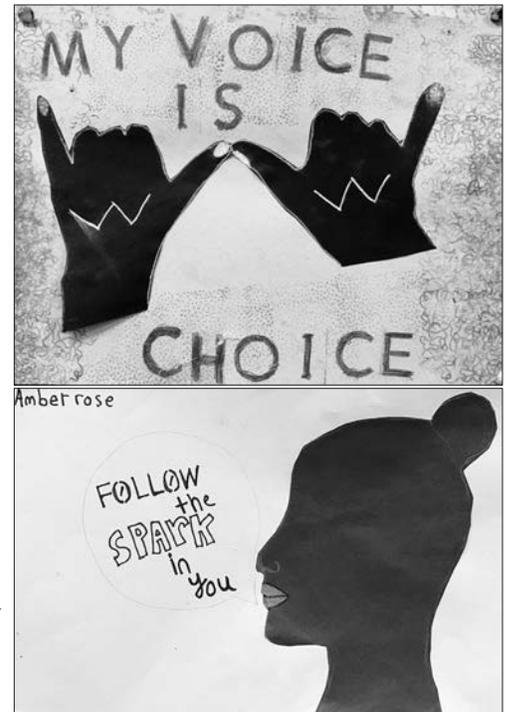
2300 Washington Street,

Dudley Square, Roxbury,

Boston, MA 02119

CPC representatives meet together on the LAST Tuesday of each month during the BPS school year, except for December and June, when the meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of that month.

<http://www.citywideparentcouncil.org>



Wren and Amber's artwork about voice.



Be Kind, Work Hard: Melissa and Skye help with morning buses many days during the week.

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

Student should not be bringing laser pointers to school. If they are seen by staff (meaning they were not left home and are not put away safely), they will be taken from the student and a parent/guardian will be contacted.

A laser pointer may seem like a harmless toy, but it has the potential to do serious harm from afar. Powerful laser pointers can be found in small hand held devices powered by a few AAA batteries and usually have the power output of 10mW. But, there is evidence that the output of some laser pointers easily available for sale is much higher and dangerous.

Why are we concerned about the recent increase in laser pointer used here at school?

There is the chance of misuse, whether deliberate or accidental. Our eyes are highly developed to see in great detail and also in very low light, but these qualities make our eyes vulnerable to damage from laser light. This happens because a laser's light is concentrated into a narrow beam. If aimed at a person's eye from close up, most or all of the light goes through the pupil. The light then is focused by the lens onto a sharp dot on the retina, causing retinal damage. Even blinking may not help prevent damage. If the person was looking straight at the laser, they can be burnt in the center of their vision. In extreme cases of eye damage, central vision could be almost full lost, and the person becomes blind in that eye

A laser can also be a burn hazard. When aimed at the skin, a laser can cause skin burns similar to hot wax burns. Many inexpensive laser pointers do not have an IR filter which can cause them to be more dangerous and more powerful than thought.

Laser Pointer Protocol:

1. Always keep any laser beam away from a person's head and eyes. Never aim a laser beam at another person. Don't annoy people with the laser beam. **DO NOT AIM LASER POINTERS AT A PERSON'S HEAD AND EYES.**
2. Do not shine a laser on or near a stranger. This is unacceptable and is illegal. **NEVER** aim a laser beam at an aircraft, a vehicle, or animal.

Let me know if you have questions.

From,

Nurse Georgie

# It's Dinner and a Board Meeting!

Upcoming Meeting Dates : 3/2/17



Hello Mission Hill families!

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 15, 2016**

**Where: Art Room (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor)**

**Time: 5:00-7:30 p.m.**

# ¡Es comida y una reunión de la junta directiva de consejo de la administracion!

Fechas de la reunión próximas : 3/2/17



¡Hola familias de Mission Hill!

Ustedes serán siempre a sido bienvenidos a asistir a nuestras Reuniones de la junta directiva. Por favor tengan en mente que esta es su invitación oficial para que conozca a nuestros miembros del consejo, escuchar conversaciones importantes de la educación, aprende sobre modos de apoyar nuestra escuela y considerar ser un miembro del consejo en el futuro. Consideramos su presencia valiosa por lo tanto se proporcionarán comida y cuidado de niño. Por favor

**RSVP para el cuidado de niño al 617-635-6384.**

¡Esperamos verle allí!

**Cuando: El 15 de diciembre de 2016**

**Dónde: Cuarto de arte (2do piso)**

**Hora: 5:00p.m.-7:30 p. m.**