



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Friday, March 17, 9:45-10:15 pm
Friday Share: Jenerra & Reginald
- Friday, March 24, 9:45-10:15 pm
Friday Share: Abdi, Cleata, Geralyn, & Kathy
- Thursday, March 30, 9:15-10 am
Ancient Greece Curriculum Breakfast
- Thursday, April 6, 5:30-7 pm
Family Council Meeting at MHS

March 10, 2017

Volume 20, Issue 19

Two Big MHS Community Events, Fall 2017

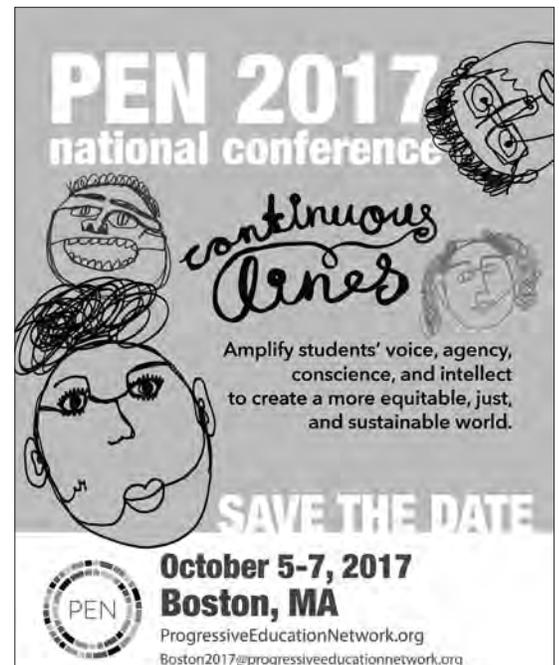
Dear Mission Hill School Friends, Families, Students, and Staff,
Mark your calendars for October 5-7, 2017. The Progressive Education Network (PEN) conference will be held in Boston, and Mission Hill is chairing the planning committee for this event. We need all hands in our school community on deck for this gathering.

For the past 10 years or so PEN has brought together thousands of educators for learning, teaching and inspiration. This national organization chooses a city each year to host this conference. We were honored when chosen and are thrilled about the potential of this event as a cross-generational learning experience with a blend of learning formats.

We need you. Before the conference takes place we need help putting conference information packets and folders together, hundreds of packets and folders. On October 5 our school will receive a group of visitors for a tour. It would be great to have parents or students speak with our visitors. Consider volunteering at the Back Bay Events Center, the conference site, during this event. Volunteers are needed to help participants register, navigate the city, give participants registration materials and answer general questions. You could also lead a workshop or be on a panel. Student and parent/caregiver workshops are welcomed! If you are interested in leading a workshop connect with Ashleigh and Jenerra.

I can just feel in my bones how wonderful this conference is going to be. It will take our fullest community involvement to make it as good as it can be. Read more on the PEN website: <https://progressiveeducationnetwork.org/>

There's another reason for us all to come together in a big way. Mission Hill is turning 20 years old! Next year will be full of celebrations small and large. Would you like to be involved in planning? Would you like to be involved in the actual events as a volunteer? If so, please let Amina know. More information and dates to come. Keep a lookout for news about ways to be involved.



KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

“Wow! How great that you are all playing outside. It is so good for the kids!” This comment came from a speech therapist who comes to Mission Hill School a few days a week. It was a rainy day and the children were running and splashing about. She always sees us outside playing in all kinds of weather: rainy, snowy, sunny and more. I totally agree with her. Spending time playing outside has many benefits for young children (and for everyone, really). In nature, stress levels go down and the whole body is engaged. All the learning that we do inside, can also happen outdoors. Language develops as students share ideas, create imaginative play scenarios and negotiate. Students experiment with what they find: ice, snow, slopes, mud, rocks, the wind, and more, in engaging and playful ways. The weather is almost never a deterrent, as we have extra rain and snow gear on hand. If you are looking for ways to support our outdoor explorations, please consider donating old pots, pans, spoons, etc...to add to our mud kitchen. For more info on the benefits of outdoor play, check out *The Last Child in the Woods* <http://richardlouv.com/books/last-child/> and *The Family Play Plans* at TRUCETeachers.org <http://www.truceteachers.org/resource-family-play-plans.html>.
-Geraldyn and Donna

Room 106

Alyssa, “Kathy, my mom wants to know when the play is.”
Kathy, “Did you make your puppet? Did you practice the play?”
Alyssa, “Ummmm . . . no.”
Kathy, “Ok, let’s do those things first

and then plan the date for the play.”
To say the children are excited about performing *The Lion and the Mouse* is an understatement. The children have started making their puppets, costumes, and backdrops. Some groups drew puppets with pencils, pens, and crayons. Other groups made their puppets using a mosaic style. Another group made the characters out of clay.

The class and I made a plan. Each group will perform their play for our class and get feedback. They will then perform it for another class and get feedback. If time allows they will also perform it for our turtle Georgie. Finally, all the groups will share their pieces at our theme breakfast. I am looking forward to see how they incorporate the feedback they are given into their plays.

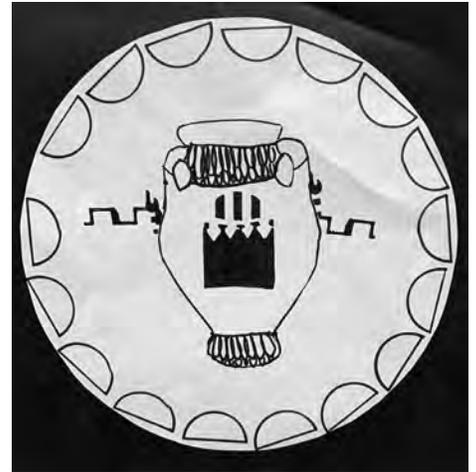
-Kathy D’Andrea

Room 107

Last week we took a moment to delve deeper into the stories of the Greek



Poseidon, portrait by Elias and Marquell.



Shield with Grecian Urn by Shawn.

constellations. After a quick reminder that constellations are groups of stars that form a picture, we took down the night sky that students painted before the break. Attached to the night sky were enlarged constellations spaced sporadically throughout. As we sat together on our rug, students chose a constellation they wanted to know more about. We then read the story of how that constellation came to be and the person who chose it poked holes through each of the stars on the paper as we counted along. We noticed right away that some constellations had many stars and others had only a few. Once we were done, we placed the night sky back up over our window. When the lights were turned off to request students attention, G’Mauree began jumping up and down, pointing to the back of the room saying, “Look!” Other students turned around and the class erupted in excitement. They finally understood why we did what we did and saw the finished project twinkling in the dark. We also found out that not only are we able to see our constellations inside during the day but we can see them from outside after the sun sets. Stop on by and see what constellations you can find.

Also, try out the free apps like Sky Map and join us in skygazing.

-Jada Brown & Kenisha Epps

Room 109

This week we have focused on finishing up our project for our presentation at Friday Share. We put final touches on our large collages of the Lion and the Mouse story. And students practiced oral storytelling to retell the story of the Lion and the Mouse. They used their knowledge of the many Lion and the Mouse stories that we have been reading. Retelling is an important reading comprehension skill. It is important for students to develop skills in reading comprehension while also building skills in decoding and alphabetic knowledge. The Lion and Mouse is part of the large volume of stories known as Aesop's Fables. These fables are from Ancient Greece and were passed down through oral tradition. Our practice of listening to many versions and the creating and retelling our own also mirrors this tradition.

-Deborah & Stephanie

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 205

At the beginning of our study of ancient Greece, students shared wonders. Some of their questions were "How did they think of so many myths?" "Why don't they believe in one god?" "Why are the Greek stories so scary?" "What powers did the Greek gods have?" and "Are Greek gods real?" So many of their questions connected to learning more about gods, goddesses and myths that we decided to study the stories of ancient Greece for the last few weeks of this theme. We have learned that the myths are made up stories



Josie, Jack Ozro, Gabriel and Theodore build a house.

to help the people of ancient Greece understand certain things about life such as why there are seasons or why bad things happen sometimes. This week we have been looking closely at the myth Pandora's Box and preparing to turn it into a class play. We hope to share our play with everyone at the curriculum breakfast on March 30th!

-Ashleigh L'Heureux

Room 216

This week the world's first professor of play was appointed at Cambridge University, in the role of "encouraging more playful learning in schools". I'll confess that when I first came to Mission Hill, I was not sold on the idea of play as part of the learning process. Last year as a student teacher, the Project Time choices I gave students were inextricably tied to our themes. It took time to come around on the power of play in schoolwork; most helpful for me was observing students' work when they had the opportunity to play freely and work on what they're interested in. I am

always amazed by the amount of purposeful work students engage in when given that freedom, from making books and "homework packets", to last week building a large "house" out of wooden blocks. Incorporating play into the school day requires trust that students will use their time well when given time to explore, invent, and create; in turn students have to develop the understanding that choice time needs to be used purposefully. This year I have seen my students get "better" at playing—using a wider range of materials to help bring ideas in their imagination to life with greater clarity. The skill sets and mental flexibility they are forming through their play help them show what they know across all subject areas, and now I am always looking to make space for play in our classroom.

-Danny Flannery

Room 217

Why should first and second graders re-write the Greek myths? Why should we publish a book about

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myths if we are only 6, 7, 8, and 9 years old? Does it matter?

We should do it to help our mom's and dad's understand. –Jordan

I want to make it easier to understand the stories, so that everyone can hear them. I also think some of the words, are too hard. We write them and they still mean the same thing, it's just told in different words. Sometimes, you kind of can't understand the myths. –Julia

To show people how smart we are! –Gerson

So that it's easier for us to understand the book. And it shows our families the work we did. –Wren

We are doing it to show kids our work. I want them to know the myths too. –Warlin

I don't like the myths, they are too hard. Maybe this makes it easier for kids. –Yediel

–Kate Needham

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 203

Last week J & J's Geniuses received a special gift: a new student. With a bright smile and a firm handshake, he made my acquaintance Wednesday morning before school started. He got a quick tour of the classroom and asked a few questions. He was excited, confident and ready for all that the day would bring at his new school. I am happy to say that at the end of the day, when asked how his day went, he replied with a huge smile and a definite "good!" We are so happy to welcome our new third grader, Jaiden S. and his family! We are looking forward to showing him the ropes and helping him settle into his new home here at Mission Hill School. Welcome Jaiden S.!

–Jenerra Williams



Jasmine adds leaves to a golden crown.

Room 204

Coming next week!

–Cleata, Mayra, and Ryan

Room 207

Coming next week!

–Amanda & Amina

GRADES 5&6

Room 210

"Nakia we need to have one of those meetings" said one of our students, slightly annoyed but very matter of fact. I responded with "sure, why don't you go ahead and call it, lead it". She then used a universally accepted call to get her classmates attention, "Ago..." "Ame" they replied. "Everyone come to the meeting area so we can talk. I handed her the talking piece, and she began. The "those meetings" she was referring to is our Restorative Justice meeting. There are a set of protocols

that we follow and they can be used for anything ranging from a simple check - in to larger issues that impact the whole community. I love the fact that students feel comfortable not only participating, but initiating such gatherings.

–Nakia & Manny

Room 215

Neuroscience is catching up to the mores and teaching at Mission Hill School. The field of whole-brain science is substantiating what we believe each child should have: play, connection, wonderment, diversity and meaning, and also, rest. Yes, rest, or mindful rest. Dan Siegel in No-Drama Discipline (a book that each parent must have) describes persuasively how our receptive neurons (and not our reactive neurons) are activated when we pause, breathe, take a moment. Mindful rest sup-

ports us by quieting the brain so that our more reasonable, problem-solving, connected selves have room to operate. I have observed students walk into class after recess/lunch upset, even fuming or noncommunicative, and emerge responsive, more open, feeling optimistic because they have had 8-10 minutes of quiet, with classical music playing in the background. It takes consistent practice to become comfortable and familiar with one's body and brain at rest; the DragonFlies are very protective of their time to regroup, refresh and reset their brains.

-Abdi, Kat, Carlos and Room 215-DragonFlies

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

Last Friday morning, students, families, teachers, and advisors gathered to learn more about the 7th and 8th grade portfolio process. The 7th grade families seemed as excited as their children for what lies ahead. And experience tells me they won't be disappointed.

When portfolios are discussed in class, the 8th graders are a great source of both information and wisdom. Recently, I heard 8th graders explain the Beyond the Classroom portfolio, the role of the advisor, and the portfolio checklist to 7th graders. All of this is information that could be read in documents. But wisdom is shared when the 8th graders say, "Make sure you meet your deadlines!" "Don't avoid your advisor – they want to help you." "Note cards are really helpful so you don't forget what you want to say when you get nervous." These words of wisdom, with the authenticity of peers who have lived through the process, are

received soberly by 7th graders eager to have a good portfolio.

We know kids want to succeed so we put structures in place to guide them through the portfolio process. Frequent check-ins and interim deadlines, communication with families, a supportive yet no-nonsense advisor, and collaboration with peers to review work and practice presentations are all part of the process.

-Ann Ruggiero, Elsa Batista & Letta Neely

Room 214

As a class, we are reading *The Lightning Thief*. We all like the book, but not all of us like the idea of reading as a group. Some students really got into the book and read ahead, yet others only read a couple of pages a day. However, we are all in agreement that it's an exciting book.

There is also agreement on another topic, students don't like writing summaries at the end of each chapter. For some, it's because they get



Zeus, portrait by Destiny and Jorge.

caught up in the book, read ahead and then have to re-read some sections when writing the "chapter review". For others it's because it gets in the way of their reading. I get a lot of information from their chapter reviews. Most importantly, it gives me a chance to see how students are interacting with the book, what they understand and what they do not understand.

There are many benefits to reading as a group, slowing down the process and making meaning together. However, reading a book in a class can be seem very unnatural. I get it. It seems like work and reading should be fun. I will continue to think about how to get students to reflect without getting in the way of them enjoying a book.

-Reginald Toussaint

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

Opting Out

For the past few years, my sons have opted out of the state tests. Many MHS students/families have also opted out, for a variety of reasons.

This year is different for our family. I talked with my sons about how our school has been impacted by students who have opted out. This impact has not been good and we want to help get MHS back on solid footing so that we can stay in the fight for democratic and inclusive education for students. For us right now, the best way to fight back is to stay in the game...and have a strong showing.

If you want to talk with me more about why my sons are opting back in, please reach out. geralynbywater@gmail.com

In case you missed it, Ayla wrote an informative newsletter about this

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topic in March 3.

Onward!

-Geralyn (parent of Zack and CJ in 7th grade)

Camp, Camp, Camp!

Camp Season is upon us. Check out the Summer Programs page under Family Resources on the MHS website. Courtney updates programming with new information throughout the year. If you'd like her assistance, fill out the Summer Is Coming survey found on the Summer Programs homepage. She also has a Courtney's Corner page with year-round resources and city-wide events.

Get your camp physical!

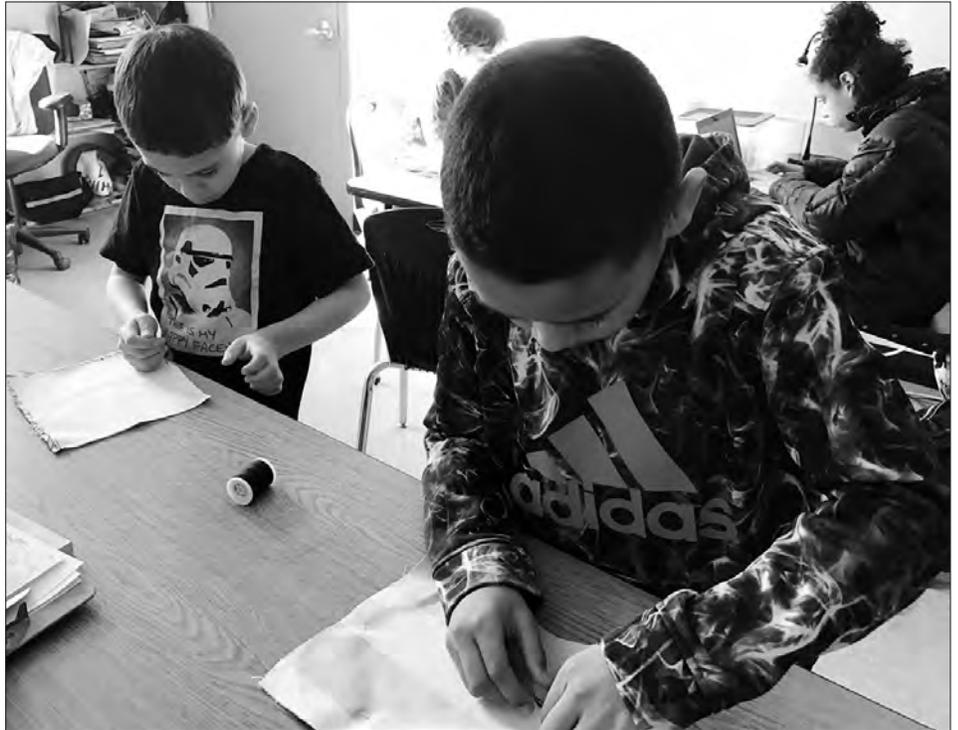
Don't forget that camps all require a medical examination by a licensed physician within 12 months preceding camp. This is a state requirement for all children attending camp, so book your child's appointment now. Remember, Georgie needs updated copies of physicals as well, so drop a copy in her mailbox after your appointment.

Scholarships available!

Looking for scholarships for summer opportunities? Courtney has a limited number of scholarships available to various programs throughout the city such as Hale Reservation and Farm School. Contact her immediately to be considered. Most programs also offer financial assistance but it may be a separate application. Always ask if they do!

Family Council News

Please join us for our second Urban Improv Family Program, which will take place on Thursday, March 9th,



Yediel and Warlin sew pillows in the Project Room.

and the next Family Council meeting, which will be held on Thursday, April 6th. More details to come!

Babysitting and dinner will be provided for the meetings. Please RSVP for babysitting: familycouncil@missionhillsschool.org



Cyclops shield, by Max.



Ali, Christian and Lynka make cookie dough in the kitchen at Farm School.

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

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Saturday, March 11th, 2017

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**For more information, contact the
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