



## IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

Monday, April 1-Friday, May 17

**MCAS**

(see schedule under Hot Topics)

Tuesday, April 2, 6:00pm - 7:30pm

**Friends of Mission Hill School Meeting**

Friday, April 5, 6:00pm

**MHS Family Movie Night!**

March 29, 2019

Volume 22, Issue 23

## American History Struggle for Justice

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

“American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it”. - James Baldwin



Mission Hill students are studying American history in this last trimester of the school year. The annual MHS American history theme always focuses on the struggle of a particular people or feature of Democracy. We name the struggles as well as the triumphs of the people in our nation. This spring our teaching of American history is intentionally through the perspective of the African-American. This perspective is as intentional as the mainstream telling of American history that often leaves out the contributions and the many stories of those that were not white men. Mission Hill staff see it as our responsibility to add information to our student's knowledge base that they might not otherwise get through popular culture or a traditional history course.

As Baldwin says there are beautiful and terrible things that are part of this history. Our study of history in this way might bring up conversations or questions around the treatment of people based on race that can be difficult to address at home. I ask that you listen to those questions and not dismiss them.

Admit when you are stuck and that you have learning to do as well. Here's a way to think about this through the words of Beverly Tatum.

"Prejudice is an integral part of our socialization, and it is not our fault. To say that it is not our fault does not relieve us of responsibility, however. We may not have polluted the air, but we need to take responsibility, along with others, for cleaning it up."

- Tatum, Beverly (2016) Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria

Issues raised by children provide an opportunity to "clean up polluted air". The prejudice, discrimination and racism that African-Americans face has a history, that is American history. It is not a separate history. As we find connections to our past and one another through educating ourselves and teaching our children, I hope the racial divides that are present among us as adults are fewer for the young people in our lives.

For your adult learning and to assist you in the preparation of responding to your children when they ask questions about race, I encourage you to watch this documentary, Racism: A History.

Here is the link <https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/racism-history/>. As always, I am here to discuss this topic with you. Let me know if you'd like to talk.

*Ayla Gavins*

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**Save The Date:**

**Mission Hill Family Movie Night  
Friday, April 5th starting at 6:00 pm**

**\*Children Must be Accompanied by an adult  
Stay tuned for more details**

### **LEARNING COACH, GRADES 1-4 JOEL**

A parking lot is a place to keep vehicles. We use a parking lot in our classroom too. Our parking lot guards the vehicles of knowledge: Questions! When students have a question that is a bit off-topic, or there is simply not time to answer in that moment, they write it down on a post-it note and place it on our parking lot poster. This keeps the question available to be addressed later, instead of forgotten or ignored. These questions are used to guide areas of research and future thematic learning. Here are some questions from our "Ancient Egypt Parking Lot":

- "What does cat have to with Egypt?"
- "What is a B.C.?"
- "Who were King Tut's Mom and Dad?"
- "How did they get Animals?"
- "How did they get gold?"
- "How did the MFA get its' artifacts?"

-Joel,  
*Learning Coach, grades 1-4*

### **LEARNING COACH, GRADES 5-8 KATHY B.**

A song I use in class states, "Language is power and that's

the truth". I love learning new words and languages; all of it opens my mind to how big the world is and all the ways people live in it. These are the reasons I am enthusiastic about a vocabulary website called Quizlet.com. Since teaching strategies for learning is as important as teaching content, introducing students to this website is exciting. Quizlet includes all domains of learning-audio so students can hear the word and its definition read out loud; images that connect to the words, practice with flashcards, writing, spelling, tests, and matching games; and there is a live team game which supports learning while producing friendly competition.

We've been using Quizlet in our 7/8 word study classes and the 5/6 classes with the novel, *Wonder*. Word study is a time for students to learn the origins and meanings of prefixes, root words, and suffixes to help them make meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. As students get older, they encounter complex words making this a necessary skill for them to possess. With the book, *Wonder*, I posted new vocabulary each week with pictures for students to study. Quizlet is a wonderful tool that is free for anyone to use. Ask your student to show you the words they're studying. An added benefit is that if you're studying for a test there may be a word

set you can use because there are diverse topics on this website. Enjoy!

-Kathy B,  
*Learning Coach, grades 5-8*

### **LEARNING COACH, KINDERGARTEN LEILA**

Last month, I wrote about some takeaways from the PEAK Conference on Inclusive Education. This month, I've been thinking more about how inclusion is integral to our mission at MHS. Looking at our mission statement, two sentences stand out:

*The school, as we see it, will help strengthen our commitment to diversity, equity and mutual respect.*

*We must expect the most from everyone, hold all to the highest standards, but also respect our different ways of exhibiting excellence.*

These sentences can mean so many things to each of us. To me, they mean inclusion. Everyone belongs in our community. Everyone deserves equity and mutual respect. Everyone should be held to the highest standards, although those standards might look different based on the individual. There are many ways of exhibiting excellence.

those who exhibit their excellence in unique ways. Inclusion isn't always easy, but it is critical to our mission, and to creating the democratic society we want for our children.

*-Leila,  
Learning Coach, Kindergarten*

### **LEARNING COACH, GRADES 5-8 VANESSA**

For the two weeks before February Break, I had the privilege of working with Major Skillz (Abdi's and Courtney's class) during their theme time. My focus during my time with them was geography. We started with discussing basic geography terms (e.g., latitude, longitude, equator, etc.) and how they applied to maps and globes. Since some of the terms were new and a bit abstract, we created flashcards with the geography term, definition, and a picture that related to the word. Then we took our new geography knowledge and applied it to a map of Nubia after the New Kingdom. Students had to find various latitude and longitude lines, find cities based on their cardinal directions in relation to other cities, and find various landforms and map features. Students are now working on creating their own Google map that will feature between 8 to 10 Nubian geographical locations from a

bank of approximately 25 locations. They must locate and "pin" the location on their map. Their location pins will include a picture or video of the location and then students will write a brief description or fact about each location. The personalized maps will then be made public, so Major Skillz will have a Nubian digital map collection to share with the whole school community at the curriculum breakfast.

*-Vanessa,  
Learning Coach, grades 5-8*

### **ART JEANNE & MEG**

**Collars, Cobras and King Tut**  
The students have been hard at work exploring and examining artwork and artifacts from the Kingdoms of the Nile. Students have been looking at various facets of these ancient civilizations. One of the areas students investigated through art making was adornment. Students began by looking at collar necklaces, a popular piece of jewelry worn by Egyptians. Students created their own collar necklaces, focusing on using pattern and including images from Nubian and Egyptian iconography.

Continuing in the same line of wearable art, students then looked at diadems, a crownlike

headpiece worn by both Egyptian and Nubian royalty. Students included cobras in their diadems, noting that these animals symbolized protection of the king or queen's power. The number of cobras on the diadem indicated where the pharaoh in power was from. Two cobras meant that the ruler was of Nubian descent.

Most recently, students created drawings of one of the most recognizable images of art from ancient Egyptian, the funeral mask of King Tut. It was discussed that this funerary mask was meant to resemble the mummy whose face it covered. Students created drawings of King Tut using metallic crayons and colored pencils, recreating the shining surface of his well known mask.

Students rounded out the theme by exploring paddle dolls, metal tooling and clay. The clay unit was heavily influenced by Nubian pottery. Nubians were well known for their handbuilding clay techniques. Students created pinch pots and then added surface decorations. Some students even decided to create lids or handles for their pots.

*-Jeanne and Meg*

**SPOT**

## **MARION & ALEXIA**

This month during our SPOT (speech/OT) our sessions  
**CLASSROOM NEWS**

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sessions, students were first presented with a picture of a block pattern for 10 seconds to memorize. When the visual was removed they had to go through a short obstacle course. At the end were lying on their bellies on a cushion. Each of them had to recreate the pattern with colored cubes. When finished they were shown the picture again and were asked to self-reflect on their end product. In addition, students were asked to give each other feedback. After this activity, students sat at the table and took turns explain all the steps of this activity including details. They had to listen to their peers' descriptions in order to add or describe the next part. This activity promoted following instructions, sequencing a motor task, memory and retelling the events in order with details. The students enjoyed it and worked toward their objectives.

*Alexia,*  
Speech-Language Pathologist

*Marion,*  
Occupational Therapist

included fun but functional activities that address student objectives. During one of our



## **MUSIC CARA**

As we transition to our new theme, all students grades K-8 are beginning to explore the music of African-Americans' Struggle for Justice. We are just beginning to do this through singing, movement, and the use of instruments. Grades K-2 are learning about the universality of *We Shall Overcome* through the use of movement to convey meaning. Grades 3-6 are experimenting with improvisation--a fundamental element of the blues, a genre that originated from African-American culture and formed the foundation of 20th century American popular music. Grades 7-8 are continuing their

work on keyboards, with an eye towards composition in April.

*-Cara*

## **THEATRE ARTS PAUL**

The theatre schedule just switched along with the new theme! Classrooms that have not had theatre hitherto, are now seeing Paul weekly. We are having lots of fun experimenting with creative call-and-response routines, and we are spending a lot of time in these first few weeks focusing on team-building games and activities. Theatre requires the ultimate in support and respect in order for students to feel confident enough to put themselves on the line. Very quickly we will transition into Improv. In addition, Paul has installed a mini Banjo History museum in the theatre room, and we will utilize the museum to explore character and theme related to the development of the banjo in the United States.

*-Paul*

Ayla Gavins, Principal  
Deborah Meier, Founder

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**2019 MCAS SCHEDULE****Grades 3 & 4**

Subject	Session	Date
ELA	#1	Thu, April 4
ELA	#2	Tue, April 9
Math	#1	Thu, April 25
Math	#2	Thu, May 2

**Grades 5 & 6**

Subject	Session	Date
ELA	#1	Tue, April 2
ELA	#2	Mon, April 8
Math	#1	Wed, April 24
Math	#2	Tue, April 30
STE (5th grade only)	#1	Tue, May 14
STE (5th grade only)	#2	Wed, May 15

**Grades 7 & 8**

Subject	Session	Date
ELA	#1	Mon, April 1
ELA	#2	Wed, April 3
Math	#1	Mon, April 29
Math	#2	Wed, May 1
STE (8th grade only)	#1	Mon, May 6
STE (8th grade only)	#2	Wed, May 8

BPS parent Lisa Jeanne Graf and BPS teacher Neema Avashia, started a petition to The Boston Public Schools and The Boston City Council called:

# Build BPS Right!

To sign the petition visit:  
[change.org/p/help-build-bps-right](https://change.org/p/help-build-bps-right)

## Our Goals include:

- Enshrining a community-centered process for changes to school buildings and school communities
- Creating greater transparency around decision-making
- Enacting an equity analysis at each stage of the process to ensure fair treatment of vulnerable student populations



**Please sign our petition in support of the following proposed policy changes, which can be enacted by both the BPS School Committee and the Boston City Council:**

- Votes on school building closures and school community closures would be conducted separately. The closure of a building would not automatically also result in the cessation of a school community.
- Renovations of school buildings would be for existing school communities, who shall be given right of first refusal once the space is fully and newly constructed.
- If a building is sold or leased, the money will go into a fund that will only be used for costs for BPS buildings (buying, construction, repairs or maintenance).
- A building currently owned by BPS cannot be used in the future for a charter school.
- If a school building is not being used by students currently and is in disrepair, it must have a plan within 12 months for it to be repaired or rebuilt. A school building cannot be out of service for a year or longer, without repairs or rebuilding beginning.
- A proposal for a school community closure shall include a financial impact statement with a detailed statement of the financial impact to the district, and the cost to obtain and operate viable swing space. An equity analysis would also be included, as well an impact mitigation plan for affected students.
- If it is determined that a school (building and students) needs to close, then the following options would be possible for those school communities:
  - (a) The school community could choose to merge with another school where they are active participants in the step by step process of the merge and relocation.
  - (b) The school community could choose to stay together as an intact school community but not add new students in the lower grades so that over time the school would be phased out. Staff would stay part of this school community until the students graduate.

To read more details:

[lgraf.com/BPS/Policy\\_Changes.pdf](https://lgraf.com/BPS/Policy_Changes.pdf)



La madre de BPS, Lisa Jeanne Graf y la maestra de BPS, Neema Avashia, iniciaron una petición a las Escuelas Públicas de Boston y al Consejo de la Ciudad de Boston llamada:

# Build BPS Right!

Para firmar la petición visite:  
[change.org/p/help-build-bps-right](https://change.org/p/help-build-bps-right)

## Nuestros objetivos incluyen

- Impulsar un proceso centrado en la comunidad para los cambios en los edificios escolares y las comunidades escolares.
- Crear mayor transparencia en la toma de decisiones.
- Requerir un análisis de equidad en cada etapa del proceso para garantizar un trato justo a las poblaciones estudiantiles vulnerables.



Le pedimos que firme nuestra petición en apoyo de los siguientes cambios propuestos, que pueden ser promulgados tanto por el Comité Escolar de BPS (BPS School Committee) como por el Boston City Council:

- Los votos sobre cierres de edificios escolares y cierres de comunidades escolares se llevarían a cabo por separado. El cierre de un edificio no implicaría automáticamente el cierre de una comunidad escolar.
- Las renovaciones de edificios escolares serían para comunidades escolares existentes, a las que se les otorgaría el derecho de preferencia una vez que el espacio esté completamente construido.
- Si un edificio se vendiera o alquilara, el dinero se destinaría a un fondo que solo se usaría para costos relacionados con edificios de BPS (compra, construcción, reparaciones o mantenimiento).
- Un edificio que actualmente es propiedad de BPS no se podría utilizar en el futuro para una escuela autónoma (charter school).
- Si los estudiantes no estuvieran utilizando un edificio escolar actualmente y el edificio estuviera en mal estado, debería

haber un plan para repararlo o reconstruirlo dentro de los siguientes 12 meses. Un edificio escolar no podría estar fuera de servicio por un año o más sin que comenzaran las reparaciones o la reconstrucción.

- Cualquier propuesta de cierre de una comunidad escolar incluiría una declaración de impacto financiero con una declaración detallada del impacto financiero para el distrito y el costo de obtener y operar un espacio provisional viable. También se incluiría un análisis de equidad, así como un plan de mitigación de impacto para los estudiantes afectados.
- Si se determinara que una escuela (edificio y estudiantes) debería cerrarse, entonces las siguientes opciones serían posibles para esas comunidades escolares:

Para leer más detalles:

[ljpgf.com/BPS/Policy\\_Changes.pdf](https://ljpgf.com/BPS/Policy_Changes.pdf)