School as a Protective Factor

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

How can school act as a protective factor for children, and not a risk factor? This is the question that Amina Michel-Lord and I posed to a group of educators at the Progressive Education Network (PEN) National Conference in Minneapolis, MN last week. Danny Flaherty, Cleata Brown, Amina and myself travelled to PEN to present and to learn with other progressive educators from across the country - including past Mission Hill School principals Deborah Meier and Ayla Gavins!

School as a protective factor is an idea we have been working on at Mission Hill School, and it stems directly from our two-year partnership with Boston Children’s Hospital Training and Access Project (TAP). Our two years with TAP/Children’s Hospital has helped us to create a well-organized and easily accessible system of behavioral health supports. We have many Tier 1 supports - these are supports that are in place for all students and can help keep smaller problems from becoming bigger ones. These include our Peace Corners in every classroom as a place for students to go to safely work through and manage strong feelings. 80% of students have their behavioral health needs met through Tier 1 interventions. Tier 2 are more targeted interventions that are helpful to some students, some of the time. At Mission Hill this includes our Doc Wayne therapeutic sports program in 4th-8th grades. For a small number of students we have additional Tier 3 support, which includes individual therapy or a therapeutic mentor.

Our newly formed SEAL (Social Emotional and Academic Leadership) Team guides and oversees the whole system of support. The SEAL team includes Co-Teacher Leaders Geralyn & Jenerra; classroom teachers from all the grade bands: Kathy D, Jada, Ashleigh, Amina, Nakia, Kathy B; Art teacher, Jeanne; Occupational Therapist, Marion; Learning Coach, Joel; Nurse, Georgie; and school psychologist, Alyssa Alvarado. Attached to this week’s newsletter is our new four-page document, Accessing Behavioral Health Supports at Mission Hill School, which was created in partnership with Boston Children’s Hospital. It is also posted on the resource page on our website.

Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin
KINDERGARTEN

K0 Room 108
Quéla, Liana, Donna & Sarah
K0 students have been learning about the four seasons through doing some of their own seasoning! (*ba dum tss*) In the past week students have been immersed in Fall related activities including making their very own apple pie. Following pie making, students expanded their learning about Fall to include weather characteristics of Summer, Spring and Winter. One book that helped us learn the four seasons was *Chicken Soup with Rice* by Maurice Sendak, which we read along with the Carole King song. From lines such as "In January it's so nice, while slippin' on the slidin' ice" to "In August it will be so hot I will become a cooking pot" this story was loved by all students as they spotted fun pages filled with sun, wind, clouds, and snow. The fun continued when we made our own chicken soup with rice and enjoyed it as a class. We enjoyed reading the story *Rice Around the World* prior to making our soup and hope to make some strong connections to our future study of China!
-Sarah, Quéla, Liana and Donna

K1/K2 Room 106
Kathy & June
Last week we went back to the Arboretum. Before we went we reviewed our Arboretum words and thought about what we might see this time. This time we were led by our student teach Yuliza. She had a special project in mind, nature art. Yuliza gave each child a bag to collect nature materials. Children collected a variety of leaves, wood chips, and seeds.

They used the materials they collected to make collages. Ailey: This is a fairy having a dance party." Walter: "I made a very very nice picture about leaves. It turned out to be a ginormous tree with giant leaves." Xander: "I made trains chugging." Come by and visit room 106 to see all our nature inspirations.

We did one more thing before we left the Arboretum. We read the story walk that is on display (It starts near the main building). It was one of the highlights of the trip. The book was titled *Kate, Who Tamed the Wind* by Liz Garton Scanlon.
-Kathy & June

K1/K2 Room 107
Jada & Manny
After defining Earth both as the planet that we live on and another word sometimes used for soil, we began to think about what things are a part of/make up Earth for our class mural. Our students said the following:

Beck: A volcano is a part of Earth. It is spouting.
August: This is the map to find the treasure chest. The treasure chest is a part of Earth.
Abubakar: A big house is a part of Earth.
Jonathan: The center of the Earth has lava, melted metal and not melted metal.
Josue: Tomatoes and carrots, humans and rain are a part of the Earth.
Gio: A super super big boat is a part of the Earth.
Maeve: This is the lava at the center of the Earth.
Alysha: I made a kitty and another kitty. The tree with ice cream will turn into apples. Yummy! Kitties and trees are a part of Earth.
-Jada Brown and Emmanuel St. Vil
K1/K2 Room 109
Katie & Courtney M.
Room 109 has been especially enjoying math this year! Each day, children work with a partner at a rotation of math stations. At the end, the children gather on the rug for “problem solving.” The first few days, the problems were mostly about partner work. *What if my partner doesn’t share the materials?* As children gain skills for partner work, our hope is that the problem solving will focus more on mathematical problems. Last week, we saw a mathematical problem arise in the survey station.

At the survey station, children use a clipboard and paper to survey the class about a question, for example, “Do you like wind? Yes or No.” They collect the data and compare the results. The survey station children were asking classmates, “Do you want to be on the winning team?” We discussed if the response with the most results “wins.” The children decided that it isn’t winning or losing if you say what’s really true for you. If you really *don’t* like wind, but most children do, it’s not losing to give an unpopular answer. With this, we are beginning to appreciate data and comparison!

-Katie

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GRADES 1 & 2

Room 210
Ashleigh, Alana & Stephanie
Introducing...Cocoa Kindness.
After a couple of weeks of getting to know each other, brainstorming ideas, and generating persuasive arguments to convince classmates, we now have a class name. Part of our class name represents our beloved class pet, Cocoa Bean the guinea pig, and the other part of our name represents the kindness we want to spread throughout our classroom, school, and community. We felt this name also connected nicely with our four school-wide kindness agreements: Be kind to yourself, be kind to others, be kind to our materials, be kind to our school. It was important for us to choose a name that would describe our class well and be unique to who we are as a community.

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Room 216
Danny, Felicia & Destiny
In our opening meeting on the farm, Carmen said “Clap your hands if you’re Farm School. Clap your hands if your Mission Hill. We have a relationship here, so I think we all are Farm School, and Mission Hill too.” This week I went with Ms. Coleman and her 5th and 6th graders to the Farm School, my first time going on the three-day trip with students. While there, I saw excitement as students cared for the animals, from Ashton helping move the turkeys’ houses to Jayden feeding a baby lamb with a bottle. I noticed hesitancy at trying new things, followed up by plenty of success: Majadi became an expert at cleaning the vegetables for lunch, and Darrius and Jimmy worked together to build a teepee of sticks so we could roast s’mores. I reconnected and reminisced with Jack and Moxie, who were both in my class three years ago(!). I could go on and on.

Finally, I want to give appreciation to the farmers who supported us through the whole trip. The thought and care the farmers put into everything from the food to the evening activities meant a lot to us. As I return to Mission Hill, I know that I am Farm School too.

-Danny Flannery

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GRADES 3 & 4

Room 207
Amanda & Amina
Last week Geralyn, Cleata, Danny and I headed to Minneapolis to
attend the Progressive Education Network (PEN) conference. Geralyn and I presented the work we’ve done at Mission Hill to support students and families with behavioral health. Danny presented work he’s done for the Struggle for Justice Through the African-American Lens.

We talked about how important relationships are at Mission Hill and that includes adult relationships. The conference was fulfilling professionally and the time the four of us spent together allowed us to build our personal relationships. We talked about work and we had time to laugh and let go. I learned about everyone’s families through stories about growing up. I learned who enjoys a good nap as much as I do and I learned that we all have a great appreciation for an inexpensive yet delicious meal of pasta!

During the conference, I also spent time with Ayla, our former principal, as well as Deborah (Debbie) Meier, our founding principal. It is always amazing to be able to spend time with these extraordinary women!

While I enjoyed my time away, I have been inspired and am ready to get back to the important work we do.

-Amina Michel-Lord

Room 212
Cleata & Ayan

At the beginning of each school year, we ask students to reflect on their past school year regarding what went well for them, what they would like to change and what goals they have for the new year. This activity is generally penned as “My Hopes and Dreams.” This year as students shared their hopes and dreams, I also reflected on my past year and made professional and personal goals for the new school year. My hope is for all my students to bloom at their own pace as I allow them the space and resources they need to develop into individuals who are unafraid to be who they are and take risks to beat any opposition they meet along the way. My dream is to see them long after they have left 3rd and 4th grade shouting across the aisle at the supermarket, “Ms Cleata, it’s me! Look, it’s me!” I would give them a warm embrace and smile with pride to see them still blooming, still flowering in the real world.

-Cleata Brown

Room 215
Leila & Kat

One of the amazing things about third graders is how eager they are to try new things. Kat and I teach a mixed third grade math group from two different classes. In listening conferences, many families have expressed surprise at how quickly we’ve jumped into multiplication. Isn’t the beginning of the year all about review? Not with this group! While we have some built-in time for review of place value, addition, and subtraction (especially during Passport Math), we have been diving head-first into multiplication since the second week of school. And, you know what? These third grade students are eating it up! They know how to solve problems by drawing pictures, skip counting, and using a hundred chart. Some of them have already memorized several multiplication facts, and a few have started challenging themselves with self-timed quizzes during their independent work time. So, if you want to learn new strategies for solving 3x6, talk to a Mission Hill third grader!

-Leila

GRADES 5 & 6

Room 203
Ms. Coleman & Frances

Editor’s note: Please enjoy photos from Room 203’s time at the farm throughout this week’s newsletter. This week’s news was sent from Ms. Coleman on their final day at The Farm School:

“What a time we had! We made history as the first ever farm school breakfast with milk products all from the farm.”
**Room 205**

**Nakia & David**

Students from 205 hanging out in the Enchanted Forest at the Farm School this week.

-Nakia

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**Room 213**

**Jenna & Courtney D.**

I am excited to announce that Sole Train Practices are up and running (no pun intended) at Mission Hill! Sole Train is a nonprofit organization that seeks to empower youth through running and is active in 30 Boston Public Schools including, for the first time, Mission Hill. Young Soles (students) along with Old Soles (adults) will be practicing every Wednesday afternoon with the ultimate goal of either running 5 miles or a half marathon at the Run to Remember in May. By participating, Young and Old Soles will not only improve their physical fitness but will learn how to break down and work towards a challenging goal (completing the race) while supporting each other along the way. This past week we held our second practice and despite the fact that the rain kept us inside, the enthusiasm amongst the students was electric; we certainly have an energetic group of Young Soles! We ran several laps around the gym and played a spirited game of “Fishie, Fishie Cross the Ocean”. Our running community may be just forming but I can already tell that it is going to be an amazing year!

-Jenna & Courtney D.

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**Room 214**

**Kathy B. & Ayanna**

When there is a job to do, everyone wants to understand how to do it, and why they’re doing it. In Humanities, we started the year by unpacking a few of the Massachusetts English Language Arts learning standards for reading and language. I wanted students to understand the importance of reading text carefully, focus on finding text-based evidence to answer questions, and build vocabulary. We worked together to learn the standards, then write them in more familiar language to guide our work.

At one point, someone commented, “This is easy, we just need to find different words than we usually use.” Maurice added, “We’re gonna learn a whole new vocabulary this year.” My hope is that this work will encourage students to understand how each assignment is increasing their knowledge and preparing them for the next academic challenge across the curriculum.

-Kathy B. & Ayanna
Holidays at Mission Hill School
Every fall we like to remind our community that there are many things we celebrate at school - such as our Theme Breakfasts to showcase work. We celebrate Acts of Kindness every Friday at Friday Share (families are welcome 9:45-10:15). We welcome families to teach their child’s classroom about traditions and culture. Please also know that we do not celebrate holidays and birthdays at school. Please let us know if you have any questions about that.

We Can Help
Please let us know if and when your family is experiencing food insecurity during times when school is not in session (weekends and/or school vacations). We can help you. You can call or email our Co-Teacher Leaders or Georgie Marks, our school nurse. Call us at 617-635-6384 or email us (see below).

Jenerra Williams: jwilliams@missionhillschool.org
Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin: gmclaughlin@missionhillschool.org
Georgie Marks: gmarks@missionhillschool.org
Accessing Behavioral Health Supports at Mission Hill School

PREVENTION SUPPORTS

1. At the end of school year:
   - Age bands met to establish classrooms for the upcoming year.
   - Meet with current teachers in June to discuss classrooms for next year and review current behavioral health supports.
   - If a student is currently receiving behavioral health support:
     - Outreach families over the summer phone call/letter in the mail.
     - The purpose is to collaborate with families to support the student.
   - If summer outreach doesn’t happen, make sure you connect the family before school year starts.

2. At the beginning of school year:
   - First week letter with teachers:
     - Include ways to collaborate with teachers.
     - Make sure you are providing an outline of support to your current teacher:
     - If something you are supporting your student in the community with behavioral health, it will be helpful for us to collaborate with the teachers as well.
     - Make sure the teacher receives a signed release of information to collaborate with the provider.

3. Plan for Tier 1 Supports:
   - See supports on next page

PROCESS AND CONSIDERATIONS

WHY USE A TIER SYSTEM OF SUPPORT?

It is effective and efficient. It streamlines meetings and helps reduce time for teachers - starting with a meeting with your age band, then moving forward and bringing in the other people that support the student. When we have a clear system, students are better able to receive the services they need and teachers are better able to ask for support for themselves, the student families. Ours is a system of support and collaboration.

START AT TIER 1

- Monitor progress of strategies within your system of support (Age Band/Grade/Subject/teacher, Tier 1 support).
- Allow 4 weeks for the strategy to stabilize.
- Make sure that at 4 weeks you check with the system of support you have been a go to.
- If it wasn’t effective, go to a higher level of support.

AT TIER 2

- Monitor progress of strategies within your system of support (Outside supports, Class Teacher, other Tier 2 supports).
- Allow 4 weeks for the strategy to stabilize.
- Make sure that at 4 weeks you check with the system of support you have been a go to.
- If it wasn’t effective, go to a higher level of support.

AT TIER 3

- Monitor progress of strategies within your system of support (Action Team).
- See Action Team Protocol.
- Allow 4 weeks for the strategy to stabilize.
- Make sure that at 4 weeks you check with the system of support you have been a go to.

CONSIDERATION FOR ALL LEVELS OF SUPPORT:

- If you see an increase in intensity and frequency of a behavior reach out to ACTION TEAM. Fill out a referral form. At the Action Team meeting the team of specialists can offer support to the student needs.
- If there is a crisis after an Action Team, follow up with the Action Team to show the student to avoid any further crisis.

You may go through each tier quickly at teacher judgement - a few days or weeks. When a student’s behavior is escalating in intensity or frequency you can move through the tiers for higher levels of support.

Looking for more? Check out TAP Online Free Trainings:

1. An Introduction to Social Emotional Development: What Can We Expect in the Classroom?
2. An Introduction to Behavioral Health in Schools: Supports for Students
3. Managing Behavioral Health Crises in School
4. Understanding Trauma and the Impact on Learning Part 1: Definitions and Effects on the Brain

For a full-sized version please see the MHS website. For a paper copy, check in the main office.
Please join us for our monthly Family Council Meeting!

Wednesday, October 16, 2019
Mission Hill School Library
*Carolina Street Entrance - MHS Library is on the second floor*
5:45 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

We will have an open conversation with our Co-Teacher Leaders and will be viewing two chapters from *A Year at Mission Hill*

*Childcare and dinner will be provided*

The Family Council operates on a limited budget and want to ensure we have **sufficient food and childcare for all.** Please **RSVP** by emailing the **familycouncil@missionhillschool.org** by October 11th.