



## IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

February 3rd - 7th

**Black Lives Matter at School - Week of Action**

February 3rd-5th (note the revised dates)  
**7th-8th Graders to the Farm School**

Wednesday, February 5th, 9:30am

**Friends of Mission Hill School (open to all)**

Thursday, February 6th, 5:45 - 7:30pm

**Family Council (open to all - see flier attached)**

January 31, 2020

Volume 23, Issue 19

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

*For the final newsletter of every month we have been featuring voices from outside the classrooms. We hope this is helping to give you a more comprehensive look into our school. As we study our school-wide theme of Ancient China, the work of our art room team, Jeanne Rachko and Meg Walker, becomes a thread that connects us K0-8. They are helping students to transform our space to reflect the art and culture of China. Throughout January, that process has begun. When you can, please come by and experience this transformation for yourself.*

### The Art of Calligraphy and Chinese Writing

News from the Art Room

Chinese writing and calligraphy are two different things. Calligraphy is a fine art form that takes many years of practice to perfect and is made with ink and a brush. Calligraphy is the art of creating Chinese characters in a painterly style and has been an art for thousands of years.

This writing is the construction of Chinese characters with a pencil, pen or marker. The evolution of Chinese writing has evolved over six thousand years and was originally found on pottery, carved on turtle shells, animal bones and later carved on bronze and stone.

Chinese characters are considered logograms. A logogram is a sign or character that represents a word. This is different from written languages which use letters to compose words. There are over 10,000 different Chinese characters. Our students have been practicing Chinese characters in books/journals, on hand scrolls and banners and on different kinds of fans and lanterns.



Students in 5th/6th and 7th/8th grade created banners with their names in Chinese characters. Students initially expressed doubt in their ability to recreate their names in the sometimes complicated characters. After some encouragement, they soon realized they could master making the marks. This sense of accomplishment and pride fueled more practice making Chinese proverbs. We will eventually use ink and bamboo brushes to create hand scrolls and hanging scrolls inspired by nature and the art of Calligraphy.

*Jeanne Rachko & Meg Walker*



## SCHOOL-WIDE NEWS

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### **Vanessa Learning Coach**

During January and February of every year, all students in Massachusetts who are English Language Learners (ELLs) take an assessment called ACCESS. ACCESS is administered to ELL students from kindergarten to grade 12, to assess their progress in learning English in four domains: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. The results of this assessment are used to assign students an English Language Development level, which are numbered 1-6 ([Can Do Descriptors for each level](#)). I have learned over the years that many of the instructional strategies that are recommended for use with ELL students are best practice teaching for all students. One of my favorite writing instructional strategies that is recommended for ELL students is called Write Around. For this strategy, students are broken into small groups and each is given a piece

of paper and they all have the same writing topic. Each student writes a topic sentence and then passes their paper to the right. They read the sentence that is there and add one sentence. At the signal, they pass their papers to the right again and repeat until they have a decent amount of writing. The group then collectively decides which writing piece to edit and revise as a whole group. It is always interesting to see which piece of writing students choose and then hear their finished product. This is a fun activity that can be tried at home to get the whole family writing together. Give it a try and send us your final drafts!

### **Joel Webb Learning Coach**

Some of you may have noticed that I am writing regularly in the newsletter this year. Perhaps *somebody* even noticed that this is a change from years past. There is a reason for this and it is not because over the summer I

generated a large backlog of newsletter articles that I just had to get off my chest. The reason that you are seeing new writers is due to an agreement (made by consensus as all of our decisions are) we made last year. Our reasoning, as I recall, was to allow more voices to be heard and take the burden off only a portion of our community. That being said, I'm new at this newsletter thing. I need some help. I'm not sure what YOU want to read about. Please drop me a line at [jwebb@missionhillschool](mailto:jwebb@missionhillschool) and let me know what you'd like to know more about. I'll do my best to accommodate.

### **Priya Kumar Learning Coach**

As we welcome a new year and a new decade, we look forward to making resolutions and new beginnings.

However, there are also aspects of the new year that students and teachers don't always look forward to...TESTING.

Although not 'fun', testing provides important information to teachers, parents and students alike. Testing allows teachers to evaluate student learning, skill level growth and academic achievements at the end of an instructional period.

The best thing we can do to support students is encourage them to be well prepared and try their best. This includes having good nutrition and adequate rest. Explaining to children that tests are a part of life and something all of us undergo throughout our lives. This can help to ease their fear. Encourage your children to look at tests as a challenge and an opportunity for demonstrating their learning. Positive results begin with a positive attitude.

**Alexia Salata**  
**Speech Therapy**

Who said that speech-language therapy has to be boring? On the contrary, it should be engaging and fun! Learning should be an enjoyable experience, no matter if students work on their articulation skills, their ability to express themselves more

efficiently when interacting with others, or working on improving their comprehension skills by learning and utilizing new strategies. Sure, students get to learn new skills and get to practice those skills through work. But during our sessions students also get to participate in some activities that are fun and interesting to them. Each activity is carefully chosen depending on the students' age, developmental skills, and areas of interest. For some this might be a game. For others it might be the use of technology and for others, the use of arts and crafts. Making sessions fun keeps students engaged, motivated and increases their willingness to attend and complete presented tasks at their best ability. In addition, it increases their ability to learn novel tasks and practice them without feeling intimidated or overwhelmed. As we all know, kids learn best when having fun!



**Marion Sitomer**  
**Occupational Therapy**

With increasing emphasis on academics and technology all the way down to K0, the physical act of handwriting is not being

taught as much as it used to. Students receiving occupational therapy services for fine motor issues are not the only ones who can benefit from adaptations to help them write legibly and neatly. Here are a couple of easy strategies that may be helpful for your child, especially if they are still working on mastering the skill.

*Slant Boards:* When the writing surface is tilted up, your wrist is in a better position for holding the pencil and controlling your fingers. It also raises the paper up so you don't have to lean forward as much to see it. I like to make them from empty looseleaf binders (less expensive than buying them).

*Hand Warm-Ups:* "Wake up" your hands with a few quick warm-ups. You can also use some of them for hand and finger strengthening if you do them a few times throughout the day over time.

Here are a few: squeeze or pinch Playdoh or roll or squish tiny balls of it between your thumb and index finger; clap or rub your hands together quickly; put your palms together and elbows straight out to the sides then press your palms together; and make open round circles by touching the tip of your thumb to the tip of each finger.



## MORE SCHOOL-WIDE NEWS

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### Friends of Mission Hill School Meeting

The next meeting of FoMHS is Wednesday Feb 5th at 9:30am in the MHS Library. We will be discussing grant writing and event planning and the more voices the better. There will be light refreshments.

### Family Council Meeting: Wee the People Workshop on Equity Vs. Equality

Tanya Nixon-Silberg, new to the MHS community and also the co-founder of Wee The People, has agreed to run a workshop on Equity vs Equality geared towards adult family members. This workshop, scheduled for Thursday, February 6th at 5:45 pm, will give us a boost on our anti-racist work through Family Council. It is never a bad time for this work, but it is especially good timing as it falls in line with Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action.

### Painting Night

Saturday, February 29th from 7-9PM at St. John's Church, 1 Roanoke Avenue, Jamaica Plain.

Join your friends from Mission Hill School for a night of guided painting. We will create original compositions with instruction from two MHS parents/art teachers.

### Family Conferences Update

At Mission Hill School we traditionally hold Family Conferences in February. However, this year the district is requiring both Co-Teacher Leaders to attend the Standards Institute in Orlando the week of February 10th-14th. All leaders of the 33 transformation schools must attend. b Therefore, we have pushed the Family Conferences to March 2nd and March 3rd. Please be on the lookout for communication from your classroom team about your specific time and date. If you are curious about the Standards Institute, the website is [www.standardsinstitutes.org](http://www.standardsinstitutes.org).

Jenerra and GERALYN will be attending along with our Superintendent and the instructional leaders in the district.

Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin and  
Jenerra Williams, Co-Teacher Leaders

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Deborah Meier, Founder  
Ayla Gavins, Former Principal  
Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent

Mission Hill K-8 School

A Boston Public Pilot School

[WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG](http://WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG)

*This newsletter, and an archive of past newsletters, is on our website.*

20 Child Street  
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130  
(Carolina Avenue entrance)  
T 617-635-6384  
F 617-635-6419





PLEASE JOIN  
FAMILY COUNCIL AND  
WEE THE PEOPLE

## BLACK LIVES MATTER IN SCHOOL WEEK OF ACTION

A workshop for families

**February 6, 2020**

**5:45-7:30PM**

**Mission Hill School Library**

Childcare and dinner will be provided.  
Family Council operates on a limited budget and we want to ensure we have enough food and childcare for all. Please RSVP by emailing [familycouncil@missionhillschool.org](mailto:familycouncil@missionhillschool.org) by February 4

# THE 13 BLACK LIVES MATTER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

<b>COLLECTIVE VALUE</b>	Valuing all Black lives, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status or location
<b>DIVERSITY</b>	Acknowledging, respecting and celebrating difference(s) and commonalities
<b>RESTORATIVE JUSTICE</b>	Intentionally building and nurturing a beloved community that is bonded together through a beautiful struggle that creates justice for all in restorative, not depleting, ways
<b>GLOBALISM</b>	Seeing ourselves as part of the global Black family and understanding how we are impacted or privileged by our positioning in the world
<b>BLACK VILLAGES</b>	Disrupting the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement by supporting each other as extended families and "villages" that collectively care for one another
<b>BLACK WOMEN</b>	Building a Black women affirming space free from sexism, misogyny, and male-centeredness
<b>LOVING ENGAGEMENT</b>	Embodying and practicing justice, liberation, and peace in our engagements with one another
<b>EMPATHY</b>	Practicing empathy by engaging comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts
<b>QUEER AFFIRMING</b>	Freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking to create a queer-affirming network
<b>TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING</b>	Embracing and making space for trans brothers and sisters to participate and lead, while being self-reflexive and doing the work required to dismantle cis-gender privilege and uplift Black trans folk
<b>UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK</b>	In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we need not qualify our position. Loving and desiring freedom and justice for ourselves is a necessary prerequisite for wanting the same for others
<b>BLACK FAMILIES</b>	Making our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children and dismantle patriarchal practices
<b>INTERGENERATIONAL</b>	Fostering an intergenerational, communal network free from ageism

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/what-we-believe/>

**WEEK OF ACTION DEMANDS**

- ★ **END ZERO TOLERANCE** RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN ALL SCHOOLS
- ★ **HIRE BLACK TEACHERS**
- ★ **MANDATE BLACK HISTORY & ETHNIC STUDIES**
- ★ **FUND COUNSELORS NOT COPS**