



## IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

*Family Council Zoom Gathering -  
Monday March 30 8:30pm*  
(see details on the last section of the newsletter)

*All Boston Public Schools are closed until  
May 4th due to the pandemic.*  
Find resources and the latest information at  
<https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/coronavirus>

March 27, 2020

Volume 23, Issue 26

### Humanity

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

Last week we had a tremendous positive response from families about the weekly newsletter. It was a true indicator to Jenerra and myself that keeping up this weekly tradition will help our community stay connected and feel supported in these uncertain times. The format might look a little different some weeks, and we ask you to be flexible about your expectations. This week, we have news from our specialists and teachers outside of the classroom.

Keeping our humanity and grace in the middle of all of this, is one thing we are working hard at. For example, our March report cards were due to be sent home today. It became clear to us as school leaders, that given how much the lives and jobs of our teaching staff has changed in the last two weeks, it did not make sense to keep this deadline in place. It just was not reasonable. Our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) made the decision to extend the report card writing time one week, and we thank you for your patience and understanding.



Our humanity comes into play when thinking about the learning that is happening now. At Mission Hill School we understand the importance of taking care of students' social/emotional needs as well as their academic needs during this unprecedented time of school closure. We aim to help students and families find the right balance. What this balance looks like will be different for everyone. Our staff is working hard to collaborate with each other and our families to provide learning opportunities that help all students move forward academically and get all their needs met.

As with your students, that humanity comes into play with us as adults as well. Whether it is another adult in your household, a colleague, your child's teacher, the person on the other end of the phone trying to help you find answers to your questions or fulfill a need, remember humanity and extend it. When we all do this, we are all better - in the smallest and largest of ways - no matter what is going on around us.

*Jenerra Williams and Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin*

**Priya Kumar**  
**Learning Coach**

Never could I have imagined that the world would face a situation like we are in today. COVID-19... A global health crisis!?! These are confusing times for all of us. All I want to do right now is wrap my arms around my students; shelter and protect them. However, this is not helpful for anyone due to the need for social distancing. There are things that we can all do to help. Children worry more when they are kept in the dark. We should talk to our kids about coronavirus. Our goal should be to keep children informed and get fact-based information. Just make sure the information is developmentally appropriate. Don't overwhelm them with information that is beyond their understanding. Answer their questions. It is also OK if you do not have the answers to everything. Being there for our children is what matters most right now. Be reassuring and focus on the positive aspects of what you are doing to stay safe. When children feel like they have some knowledge and control, they are likely to feel happier and calm. We're all in this together!

**Joel Webb**  
**Learning Coach**

Have you heard the phrase "Stay Safe and Sane" this week? I have, quite a few times in fact. I think it reflects two important goals at

this time, in their precise order of importance. What would be next after "sane" in this phrase? Maybe it would be "and learning". We are all aware of the challenges that this global pandemic is causing. For some, our suffering is anxiety about what may happen to ourselves or our families and empathy for others who have fallen ill or been hit with hard times. For others, the suffering is closer; and they are already enduring these hardships. However, if you have the luxury of staying safe AND sane, let's work on "and learning". You will continue to hear from your teachers about our ideas for learning. Please share what is working for you or what you would like support with. We are here to support you and we will need your support in this challenging time as well. We will work through this together as a community.

**Sarah Kaney**  
**Learning Coach**

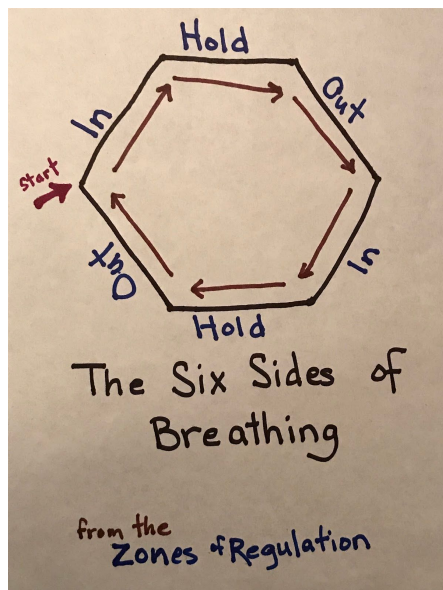
As a teacher I spent a lot of my time wondering how best to play my role, both directly with students and as a member of the Mission Hill School staff. I was just starting to settle into my newish role as Learning Coach sub for Vanessa when this strange new reality of working from home set in. I now find myself worrying a little extra, and trying to figure out how best

to serve our students and community during this time. I don't have any easy answers, but I am dedicated to this role both as a teacher and a parent within our school community. A while ago, fellow Learning Coach Joel sent out a call in the newsletter asking for thoughts and suggestions for what readers would like to hear about in his columns and I really liked that. In an ode to that newsletter ask, and in an effort to be a better community member during this time, let me know how I can best help you (as a listening ear, to help find resources, educational or otherwise, or to lend a hand wherever need be) by emailing me at [skaney@missionhillschool.org](mailto:skaney@missionhillschool.org). We're all in this together.

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

I have written newsletter articles about the Zones of Regulation a couple of times this year. While we are home through this difficult time, we are all bound to have times of feeling antsy or

anxious, and get in the Yellow Zone. The central theme of the curriculum is for individuals to identify and use specific self-soothing strategies that work for them. You and your children may already know what calms you. Some people like to breathe deeply, hang out in a cozy cushiony nook, draw, go for a run, or meditate. The Six Sides of Breathing is a Zones strategy for helping children keep their breath slow and even. Draw a picture of a hexagon and place your index finger at the left most corner. Move slowly up the first side while breathing in slowly and calmly (not hiking up shoulders or tightening face/neck muscles). Keep moving your finger along the top at the same speed and hold breath calmly. Breathe out gently through your mouth for the next side and start the cycle again as you go around. You can do this together with your child to share feeling safe and calm.



### **Alexia Salata**

#### **Speech and Language**

And then came the Coronavirus... These are definitely challenging times that we are experiencing. Who would have thought that a time would come when we would be expected to stay home for an extended period in order to keep ourselves and families healthy? Even though school is closed, thankfully we live in a time when our kids have access to so many online resources. As parents, however, we should always remember that other than academic skills, there are many other areas we can support our children with. This seems like a great time to help our children with some of the more functional everyday activities that we would otherwise not “have the time” to focus on. For example, this is a great opportunity to spend some time with kids in the kitchen and have them help with cooking/baking. Such an activity can target so many skills: following directions, problem solving, counting, describing the different ingredients/ smells/ textures etc. I hope you all stay healthy and creative!

**Ms. Cara**

### **Music**

From experimenting with creative notation in composition to showcasing student talent at our Coffee House performance, Mission Hill's students continually impress me with their creativity and talent. Now as we find ourselves in uncharted territory, MHS teachers are shifting to a more technology-driven remote learning model. Music class is going 100% online -- and our students have already begun to make the leap!

As many of us migrate to Google Classroom, students have more opportunities to share what they create on these platforms with their teachers and peers across grade bands. Many students have already explored online music platforms such as Dotpiano, Groove Pizza, and Soundtrap. I will be sharing and posting weekly activities on Google Classroom so that students can continue to make music at home on their own or with family. Now more than ever, I aim to support giving students a chance to utilize music as a creative emotional outlet during this time. Be safe, be healthy, and make music!

- Ms. Cara

### **Meg Walker**

#### **Art Room**

##### *The Healing Power of Art*

It was a bit of a challenge knowing what to write for this week's newsletter. Things have changed so drastically over the past week. It seems like a



lifetime ago I was in the art room with my students creating work around Ancient China.

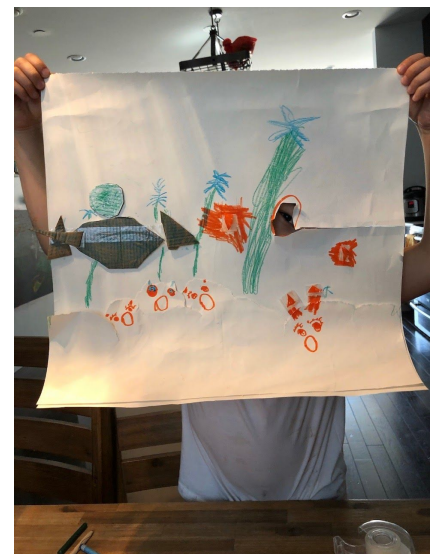
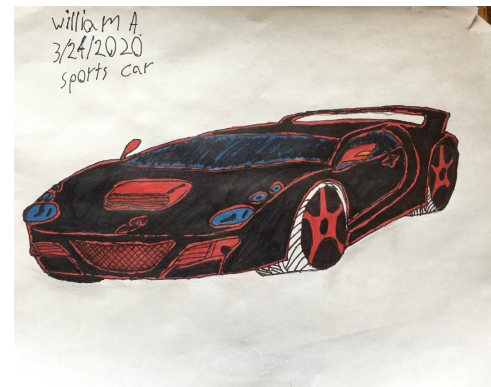
Like many of you, I'm trying to process and adjust to what our "new normal" has become. Lots of time inside, teaching remotely, homeschooling my two young children. Through all of this uncertainty and anxiety the one thing I've leaned heavily on is creating art. Art has often been a form of therapy for me, allowing me to temporarily disconnect from the weight and stress of life. There have been numerous studies done on the benefits of creating art to reduce stress and encourage relaxation, and the good news is, you don't have to be a professional artist to get these benefits. An article written by Harvard Health Publishing states:

*The beneficial effects of creating aren't dependent on a person's skill or talents. "It's the process, not the product," says Megan Carleton, an art therapist at*

*Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH).*

You don't need fancy supplies either. Doodling on a piece of scrap paper, coloring in a coloring book or just experimenting with different materials is a great way to get started. I encourage all of you to use this time to find your inner artist and lose yourself in the power of art. I know I will.

Stay safe and healthy,  
-Meg



## **EVEN MORE SCHOOL-WIDE NEWS**

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### **Family Council Zoom Gathering - Monday March 30 8:30pm**

Dear Mission Hill Families,

We hope you are all holding up in these strange times.

The Family Council executive team would like to maintain \*virtual\* space for us to connect. As we said last week, we are deeply committed to ensuring that we move through this as a community – showing up for one another with care and love.

We had some Zoom meetings last week that seemed helpful for participants and will be hosting another Zoom conference next Monday, March 30 at 8:30pm. This one is an adults only meeting, for caregivers and family members to connect and speak freely. The link and instructions to join are below..

We're hoping to run Zoom activities for students too! Several parents brought up the idea of parents hosting activities and in fact have a skill-share list where you can sign up if you'd be willing to run one. Maybe you can run a sing-a-long or knitting club or a storytelling session or teach everyone 5 awesome crafts to do with a piece of paper. Just list what you'd like to do and we can figure out logistics later.

The list can be found at:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i2gMNBx0dHecg74l8wVMBqyc9jQHbUSNgSZ55GgMFXg/edit?usp=sharing>

Below you will find information on how to join the Zoom call as well as a quick tutorial on how to use Zoom.

### INSTRUCTIONS TO JOIN THE ZOOM MEETING

Please click [here](#) for instructions on how to join a Zoom meeting. If you are unfamiliar with Zoom meetings, you can also [join a test meeting](#) to familiarize yourself with Zoom.

#### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://onegoalgraduation.zoom.us/j/982254086>

Meeting ID: 982 254 086

Please share this email with other families so we are able to connect with as many families as possible and we hope to see you next Monday.

Thanks everyone,

Jason, Sylvie, Alicia and Liz

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

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



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