



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

Monday, April 20
No School - Patriots Day

Tues-Fri, April 21-24
No School - Spring Break

Find resources and the latest information at
<https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/coronavirus>

April 17, 2020

Volume 23, Issue 28

Hope and Community

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

In the last newsletter Jenerra and Geralyn put forth the idea that “In some ways, being apart has given us new ways to come together.” This idea really resonated with me and was something I’d been thinking about but was having trouble putting into words. (Thanks Jeneralyn!) There are so many negative and scary things happening in the world, especially lately. It’s difficult to find hopeful things to hold on to, but that’s something we all really need.

If you read my last newsletter entry you may have recognized that I am a rather prolific worrier. I’ve been challenging myself during this trying time to find hope in my daily life and in my community. It’s so easy to focus on the bad, but the good is there. I’ve heard so many stories of families hosting Friday Share, which is something that keeps our community alive. Caregivers have been working tirelessly to become teachers and create some sense of normalcy and routine. Families are checking in on one another. Teachers are giving even more than they already were (which is a lot!). In Mission Hill School meetings and outside of them, teachers have made every effort to check in on one another and the families they work with, to make them feel seen, appreciated, or simply to make them laugh.



Communities are putting teddy bears, chalk drawings, rainbows and more in windows and outside of their homes to share with families on nightly social distancing walks. My children are working hard to stay a part of their classroom communities and sustain relationships that they’ve spent years building. As a family, we’ve received delicious baked goods made with love, and have shared them with others. My community is having coffee hours, sing-a-longs, and socially distant dinners. Old friends have been reaching out. Families and friends have been finding any and every way to connect at a distance. People have been creating, baking, crafting, and making as much as they can, doing things that are new and revisiting old skills. Our community members have been giving their all, and in many cases going beyond.

I hope. I hope that we will find a way out of this that leads to growth in every way. A better understanding of ourselves, each other and our needs, both individually and collectively. I challenge you to find hope in every day, too.

With hope,

Sarah Kaney (Special thanks to Jeanne for sharing the photo)

Priya Kumar
Learning Coach

As we struggle to live life under a pandemic, slowly we are learning to adjust to this “new normal”. While it has not been easy, I believe it has made us all take a step back and consider the things that truly matter to us.

Hope and the support of our community is what is going to help us get through these difficult times. Instilling hope in students is not just about wishful thinking. It is about setting clear, attainable goals, developing multiple strategies to reach these goals and staying motivated to achieve these goals when the going gets tough. We can use this difficult situation that has been foisted upon us to develop and strengthen our mental toughness and ability to persevere. Focusing on clear goals also helps to distract us from feeling overwhelmed. For example, I’ve asked all my students to focus on a goal of moving up at least one reading level.

Strength of community is important during this time as we realize we all need each other in one way or another. Whether it is cheering up someone who is feeling down, or cooking a meal for someone in need, we ARE the collective community. This is a great time for students and adults alike to discover our individual roles within our

community so we can build hope for everyone.

Joel Webb
Learning Coach

First of all, I hope that people are coping well with this very difficult situation. I, like so many of us, have witnessed more collective despair and devastation in these past weeks than any other time in my life. Simultaneously, I’m also noticing some beautiful things throughout my community and around the world. That is the generous acts of spirit and good deeds that people are doing for their communities daily. In our individualistic country, the sense that we truly are in this together is different and positive. When we all can be affected, our ability to see ourselves as the sufferers increases our ability to empathize with them. In this way, this collective pain is bringing out the best in many people. I see it in the uplifting messages on the sidewalks, the “teddy bear hunts” in the windows, and the neighbors, friends and families making sure each other’s needs are being met. In these hard times, there is more opportunity to do good than ever before. I hope we can all work to notice and hold on to these silver linings.

Joel

Marion Sitomer**Occupational Therapy**

In addition to coping with the intensity of the COVID-19 situation surrounding us and keeping our sanity while stuck at home, our students are also adapting to doing school work under these circumstances. MHS students in the 5-6th grade actively learn and improve their keyboarding skills using typingclub.com and NoRedInk. By 7-8th grade they type many of their assignments. The app Read & Write for Google offers many extra word processing features for students who need support with spelling, forming sentences, definitions, punctuation, and phonics. Some students who have fine motor issues or have difficulty constructing written sentences are using voice-to-text to get their thoughts down on paper. Those who are poor spellers can use word prediction that suggests words as you are typing. R&W is available to all students through their BPS Google accounts. This may be a good time for your children to explore resources for improving their typed work. Check out this [short video](#) to learn about it. I’ve sent it to some of your children through Google Classrooms already.

Alexia Salata
Speech and Language

This past month has definitely been a time of adaptation to our new living situation. Simple things like completing

schoolwork with our children or creating activities for them given our limited resources is now a huge challenge, which just one month ago seemed so simple. Thanks to the tireless efforts of so many people, now most of the Boston Public School students have access to computers and the internet, which are essential tools for continuing education during this time of social distancing. This is the primary reason that I decided to connect with my students mostly through a platform called Nearpod! Through Nearpod, I have been able to share activities with my students, which they are able to access and complete on their computers or tablets. Specifically, students are able to log into the given activities by entering a code I share with them, and they are able to complete them at their own pace. After students submit their work, I am able to access their responses and give them feedback. For example, here is a preschooler's response about a Dog's Colorful Day activity I had shared!

-Alexia (SLP)



Ms. Cara
Music

Despite the challenges we have all faced during this difficult time, there is one thing that has remained consistent: the power

of community. I have spent the last few weeks connecting with students about music through Google Classroom and a variety of online video calling platforms. The medium may have changed, but the desire to connect, share, and support one another remains.

On a call with The Rock Stars yesterday, I asked the students about the music they had been listening to, singing, or making at home. We suddenly saw a mad dash in 10 different Zoom thumbnail screens as the first and second graders excitedly grabbed ukuleles and guitars. They held their instruments up to show one another. We heard a few impromptu solos in the background, and for a moment, the "mute" button was irrelevant. I had to scan the screen a few times to figure out which student was plucking *Yellow Submarine* on guitar. I couldn't stop smiling.

The enthusiasm to connect over music and creativity has remained strong in our Mission Hill community, and it is a constant source of joy to me to see it.

- Ms. Cara

Meg Walker
Art Room

During my time at home, I've found myself a bit glued to the news, hungry for information and updates on the pandemic that's changed every aspect of our lives. While I feel the need to be informed, it comes with a

cost. Watching the news can be an emotionally exhausting exercise. In order not to let the sadness and the heaviness of the situation completely overtake me, I've tried to find the goodness that's still happening all over the world.

One of the places I've found some good is in John Krasinski's at home news show, *Some Good News*. Krasinski may be best known for playing Jim on *The Office*. In his latest creative endeavor, Krasinski highlights good things that are happening in a time when it can feel like good things are few and far between.

If you'd like to get a dose of good things, I highly recommend you check out SGN (Some Good News) by going to www.somegoodnews.com. I won't spoil it for you, but episodes include a big surprise for a young Hamilton fan and an amazing tribute to the hardworking health professionals from Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston.

I hope all of you can find some good news amidst the hard stuff.
- Meg

Jeanne Rachko
Art Room
The Power of Hope

One artist we are learning about this month is Yayoi Kusama. I first encountered this artist

when I was in art school in the 1980's and have been inspired and influenced by her ever since.

Yayoi Kusama is a Japanese artist who is sometimes called "the princess of polka dots." She is 91 years old and is still creating. In her lifetime she has explored her creativity through painting, drawing, performance, poetry, fashion, film and is best known for her sculpture and installation multisensory experiences. Recently she had a show, *LOVE IS CALLING Infinity Mirror Room* at the ICA in Boston.

Her story is one of hope and resilience. From the time she was a young child she knew she wanted to be an artist. Her family did not support her choice and she was not encouraged to pursue her art during her childhood. She had to create and eventually did attend an art school.

In her twenties she left Japan for New York. There she met a community of like minded artists and performers during the avant-garde scene of the 1960's. She influenced an art scene that was still male-dominated and pioneered performance art in the late 1950's. She was also one of the first artists to experiment with performance and action art.

She was determined to be seen as an artist and spent her lifetime pursuing her dream. She dared to be bold, brave and unconventional. She continued to persevere and make her mark through her art in a time in

history when women were not taken seriously in the art world. She didn't let this stop her from her art, her heart...she did not give up hope.

She said:

"Our earth is only one polka dot among a million stars in the cosmos. Polka dots are a way to infinity. When we obliterate nature and our bodies with polka dots, we become part of the unity of our environment."

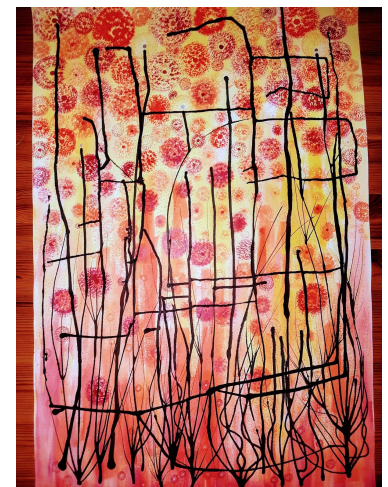
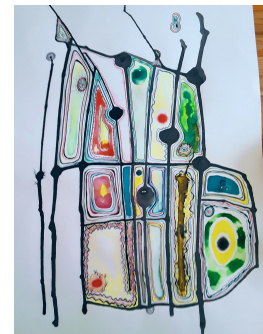
I have recently used her story to inform and inspire works of art with some of my classrooms on zoom.

We watched a slideshow about her life and art. I asked students to make art inspired by what they had seen & heard, in any way they wanted. After all, she did not let one medium confine her in her need to create. She expressed and still expresses herself in many artistic mediums.

It's not the materials that make art, it's the intent, the process that impacts us.

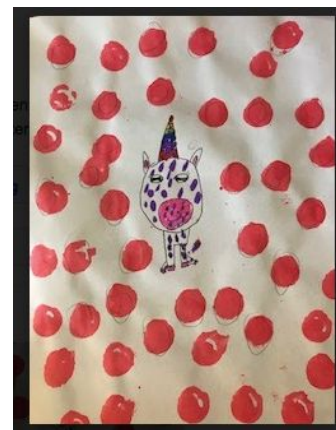
I look forward to seeing how Yayoi Kusama inspires your creativity.

Here is some of my work sparked by her spirit.





Student artwork inspired by
Yayoi Kusama



Thank you, Yayoi Kusama!

- Jeanne Rachko

EVEN MORE SCHOOL-WIDE NEWS

Special Website from Our School Nurse, Georgie Marks

I hope you are all staying healthy during this difficult time. I miss you all and hope you can use this site as a resource for health related questions or for those who just want to check in.

CLICK HERE For [Nurse's Virtual Page](#)

<https://sites.google.com/bostonpublicschools.org/muniz-mhsnurses-office/>

-Georgie Marks, PhD, APRN

Chromebook Repairs, Learning at Home, Food Distribution Locations and More...

Check out <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/coronavirus> for a ton of resources available to you on the BPS coronavirus website. You can report a damaged Chromebook, find the latest list of food distribution (school-based and citywide) locations, and access the latest information related to coronavirus and school closure at <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/coronavirus>. Please know that there will be continued food distribution during school vacation week.

Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin and
Jenerra Williams, Co-Teacher Leaders

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



Mission Hill K-8 School
A Boston Public Pilot School

WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG

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



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Fresh Truck Box Program

How It Works

About Fresh has partnered with **Katsiroubas Bros. Produce** to leverage their fleet of 65-refrigerated box trucks, 200-person labor force, and their international supply chain network to offer pre-packed '[Fresh Truck Boxes](#)' with a week's worth of healthy food and grocery staples to the Boston households vulnerable to food insecurity during the lockdown. Boxes will be provided to households at no cost.



'Fresh Truck Boxes' will be distributed to households through
1) hyper-local pickup sites and 2) direct-to-doorstep delivery.

LEARN MORE: <https://www.aboutfresh.org/fresh-truck-box-program-overview/>