

Mission Hill School News

Letter from Child Street

Under Review

Dear Mission Hill Families, Students, Staff and Friends,

Mission Hill School is involved in several different types of reviews this spring. Our staff peer review evaluations are coming to a close and will be written soon. You, as parents and caregivers, will be asked to participate in some way to provide feedback or questions for teacher reflection. You may be asked to do the same for me as part of my review.

Mission Hill will participate in a School Quality Review process at the end of May. This will involve a team visit for several days. The team, consisting of a BPS teacher, a BPS administrator, and a community member will observe the school in action, interview members of our community and look over evidence for certain practices that support the mission and vision of the school. They will write a report that includes recommendations and commendations. The feedback will be reviewed by the

Superintendent and will guide our school's next course of action for improvement.

The kindergarten team has been busy completing tasks necessary for re-accreditation, a review of our early childhood program done by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Although our visit from NAEYC won't be until September, our school team goal is have all the requirements completed this spring. If you have a child in kindergarten you may be asked to complete a survey or to be interviewed as part of this process. We'll let you know next year if we've met all the criteria for our second accreditation.

Students are beginning to prepare for portfolio exhibitions and recollections. They review past work, reflect on their growth and put new learning into current work. We'll witness the presentation of the student work in grades six to eight and celebrate each presenting child. Invitation or permission is required for attendance at these reviews.

All of these reviews bring a certain kind of energy into the school. We all want to present our best work, to be known for what we do, to get feedback for improvement and to be celebrated. We are all vulnerable when under review as we put ourselves out there. At the same time we know that this is the way to get a second opinion on the things we wonder about. Are we on the right track? Are we using our time together well? Are the students learning what we think we are teaching? Is our school environment

welcoming? Are student work habits becoming stronger? The wonderings are endless. With all the feedback coming our way, we'll have a lot to consider as we end one school year and begin another.

~Ayla Gavins

REMINDERS

April

Fri. 4/18 - 4/26: No School

Mon. 4/28: Grades 3&4 to Farm School

Tue. 4/29: Grades 1&2 to Farm School

Wed. 4/30, 9:30-10:30:
Apprentice
Learning Celebration

May

Thu. 5/1, 5:45: Spring Music
Concert at Roland Hayes

From the Classrooms

Room 108

“Try it!” exclaimed Dixon. He was offering me a “taste” of his bowl filled with small rocks. “Delicious!” I replied as I pretended to indulge in the treat he had created. We have heralded the coming of spring by spending more time outdoors. It feels great to be with the children in the South Playground. The children are busy making mud pies and mud muffins - and all kinds of salads and soups. Experimenting with water, dirt and sand is all part of the adventure. The children use our collection of “mud kitchen supplies”: stainless steel bowls, colanders, muffin tins, pots and pans. We have a few coveted wooden spoons and other big mixing spoons – however, if you have any extra or old big kitchen spoons, scoops or ladles lying around, we could definitely use them! Also, please send in rain boots if you have them, and extra clothes for when your child gets extra muddy. As we say in K0 – dress for mess!

~Geraldyn Bywater McLaughlin,
Donna Winder & Angel Nasseh

Kindergarten

Room 106

Andrew from the Boston Nature Center was back again. How lucky we are to have these resources. He helped us get ready for all the planting we want to do this spring.

The children worked together to assemble our new raised bed. Andrew did not give them a lot of instruction. Instead he asked

questions like, “How do you think this fits together?” and “What should we do next?” This way of questioning is important because it allows students to show their thinking and work together to solve a problem.

The children assembled the raised beds, put in a layer of weed blocker, and added some soil. We need about three more bags of organic soil. If you would like to contribute soil we would be very grateful.

Our seedlings are doing well under the grow lights and soon will be ready to be hardened off. We now are expanding our ability to grow food at Mission Hill. Last week Amishai’s family donated large planter. We are so happy to be able plant more vegetables in them this spring. We hope to be able to eat some things this spring and some more in the fall.

~Kathy Clunis D'Andrea

Room 107

March reports serve as another time for students to reflect on the likes, dislikes, challenges and victories of their time in school. Here is what they had to say:

“I like math games. My favorites are when you have to roll the dice.”

“I’m trying to be a good friend. I try to be nice.”

“I like reading sometimes.”

“My favorite thing to do is to cook with Jada.”

“I like to draw about my family.”

“Building with Mobilos is easy but building with Legos is hard.”

“I like to draw about Star Wars.”

“Going down the slides is easy but doing the monkey bars is hard.”

“Playing is easy but making Autobots is hard.”

“Sometimes I suck my thumb when I read.”

“I like board games.”

“Making fish for the Taíno ocean was easy but building the boat was hard.”

“I know how to read a little bit and it makes me happy.”

“I feel good about math because it teaches me new stuff that I didn’t know.”

“I am a good friend because I help people when they are hurt...I make a lot of good choices and I feel good about that”

“I like counting.”

“I feel mad about reading because the books take too long.”

“I am a good friend because I play with my friends when they ask me to.”

“Playing outside is easy but making the house for the Taíno was hard.”

“I think reading is awesome!”

“I’m a good friend because I’m a giver and a sharer.”

“Talking to friends and teachers is easy but it is sometimes hard for me to agree with my friends on certain things to do.”

“I sing because I’m happy!”

“I feel good that I can write my name.”

“Yeah. Why not? I’m a good friend because I can make everybody’s things back because I saw how they made it.” [Play with Mobilos]

“I like the Cat in the Hat game.”

“I think I can do a better job at making good choices.”

~Jada Brown
& JoAnn Hawksworth

Room 109

Hello Mission Hill!

This week the Original Stars are doing some comparing and contrasting of the Wampanoag Tribe and the Taíno people. We are looking at their homes (*wetus*), which are similar to Taíno *bohios*. Both are round, and use straw for shelter and shade. The Wampanoag built these houses on the coast during the summer, and moved inland during the winter, into warmer *wetus*. We also have been learning about what the Wampanoag people ate. Their three major crops were called “The Three Sisters”, and referred to corn, squash, and beans. The Taíno ate all of these foods as well! At the beginning of next week we will be making *Sautauthig*, which is a traditional Wampanoag cornmeal porridge with blueberries. Hope you are all enjoying the nice weather!

~Liz Borson

Grades One & Two**Room 204**

In my last newsletter, I wrote about all the wonderful play that was happening during project time. I sat back and watched again. I was just as amazed this time as I was the last, at the creativity and sheer joy that emerged.

Legos and painting hummed along as usual. Buildings slowly rose from the rug and abstract paintings took center stage at the easel. As I looked in the corners of the room, I realized they were being inspired by each other. The

planning of two weddings was taking place. The wedding by the cubbies was being planned by Shirley, Fatemah, Maryam and Michelle. Michelle was the bride-to-be and Shirley and Fatemah were the dress designers. A beautiful mixture of Nigerian and Kuwaiti fashion emerged.

The second wedding was not only planned but actually took place. Standing atop an altar of blocks, Arianny and Alejandro held hands. The rings (circles of cut out paper) were handed to them and they put them on as Shirley (now finished with her first wedding) officiated. “May God bless you and make you have good children” she said as an audience/congregation looked on. What a wonderful blessing to give. It is me however, who is blessed by their presence every day!

~Jenerra Williams

Room 205

As a student teacher at The Mission Hill School I am constantly learning from the teachers around me. I observe their positive and effective teaching strategies and try to emulate that when I am teaching. This past week in Ashleigh’s 1st and 2nd grade classroom, I kicked-off our “Peopling of America” theme with a lesson on culture. The students and I started our lesson with a movement activity that highlighted the differences and similarities we all have in the classroom. We read different books about culture and then explored the meaning of the words *ancestor*, *tradition*, and *culture*. The students were then asked to make paper dolls of their family members while keeping in

mind their cultural differences. They responded very well, sharing their different cultural experiences by using their creativity skills. The students enjoyed learning about their peers’ ancestors, traditions, and cultures. Their paper dolls showed true effort and radiated with all sorts of colors. Overall, we enjoyed discussing the meaning of culture as a whole and as individuals.

~Eva Roberts

Room 217

“This is the Leaning Tower of Puerto Rico,” Brianna exclaimed during project time last week. Students diligently made flags of Puerto Rico and the United States. They placed the flags on the top of various buildings they created with the class to represent a growing, thriving city. Although students were not aware of the direction our theme work was heading, the play in the block area set up a beautiful foundation for work we engaged in later last week. The class took a walking field trip around Jamaica Plain to document what businesses and

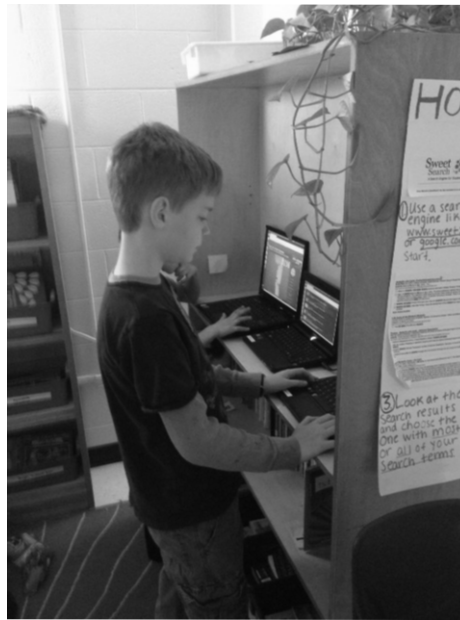
buildings are found near our school community. As the week progressed, students added more to the block area and made contributions to our bulletin board, where we are making a map of Centre and South Street. This initial research will help us with our theme work – understanding why and how people move. Their block play enriched our conversation about buildings in cities and helped students develop both a three-dimensional and two-dimensional understanding.

~Emma Fialka-Feldman

Grades Three & Four

Room 207

Have you ever wondered what Project Time looks like? We use this term a lot at Mission Hill and I'm sure you have heard it at home. Here are some pictures to showcase some of the many things we do during this time. I hope you enjoy them!



~Robert Baez

Room 216

The Clever Cats are working together to understand “Why do our hands and feet fall asleep?” They began by brainstorming their ideas and experiences about the blood flow and nerves inside of our bodies. They shared their different interpretations of how it feels when they are asleep. “It feels like insects crawling up your leg”, one student expressed. Other students explained that “it

feels like pins and needles” and “like you are stepping on rocks barefoot.” They began by discussing the different things they do that helps wake it up such as “stomping” “stretching,” and “elevating it”.

The most valuable part of these discussions was the way the students were listening to each other’s ideas and responding to them. By listening to each other’s ideas, students gained a greater understanding about why our body parts fall asleep. The Clever Cats also drew what they imagined happening inside their body when it falls asleep.

To the right: a student drew the nerves and blood flow inside legs and arms and pins and needles on the outside. In the key there are blood cells and nerve twitches up and down the leg.

~Selina Ruiz
& Melanie Centeno

Grades Five & Six

Room 210

If you had walked into our room during the final week of our Taíno unit, here is what you would have seen:

A student bent over his computer brainstorm document, puzzling. "I know what I'm supposed to do, there's just this part I'm having trouble with." Three students huddled together, strategizing the best way to distribute tasks.

Three other students floundering, unsure how to refocus their group from play to work. One student clicking

'send' on an email to select Mission Hill staff, asking to borrow musical instruments. Two students in the hall, paint on hands. "You do it. If I do it, I'll mess it up, and it'll be horrible." Four others on the rug, computers on their laps. An adult is checking in with them about paraphrasing. "Wait," says one student, her eyes closed, imagining a passage in her own words. "Can I say, 'The Dominican Republic is part of Hispaniola?'"

At the end of this unit of study, students had produced Taíno resources for all ages including video, website, historical fiction, music, models, picture books, and games—all resources that the school can use in the years to come.

~Nakia Keizer

Room 215

Coming next week

Grades Seven & Eight

Room 213

If spring is in the air, then portfolio season is soon to follow. This week we watched some video clips of 7th and 8th grade portfolios. One student's response: "I can't talk for two hours about my work! What am I going to say?"

But we do find students have a lot to say about their work, themselves as learners, their strengths and challenges, and their passions. A reflective stance is built into the learning process throughout the Mission

Hill years. Families are often the ones surprised by portfolios, noticing how their young ones have grown up, fielding questions, explaining projects, and accepting responsibility. It's an incredible process.

Dani Coleman, portfolio coordinator, will soon contact families to set portfolio presentation dates from late May through mid June. Portfolios are scheduled at 7 am, 10 am, 1 pm, and 4 pm, and last two to two and a half hours each. A committee comprised of student, family, peer, teacher, adviser, and external community member gathers to review the student's work and provide feedback using content area rubrics. The presence of Mission Hill Habits of Mind and Work throughout the work is noted, and strategies and supports for continued growth are identified.

All this means you should expect your child to be busy with schoolwork the next few months! April vacation week is prime reading time for those who need more entries for their booklist. Please ask your child what they are working on and provide quiet time at home as needed.

~Ann Ruggiero

Room 214

Coming next week

Hot Topics

Parent University!

Dear families, the Office of Family and Student Engagement (OFSE) invites you to Parent

University on May 3rd from 8:30 am - 3:45 pm at Northeastern University's Student Center. For the first time, the OFSE is partnering with Urban Pride to offer families a variety of workshops to support the diverse learning styles of ALL children.

For more information and to register, please visit us at bpsfamilies.org/parentuniversity

Courtney's Corner

Check out Courtney's Corner for information on various programs and resources for you and your family.

Rincón de Courtney

Mira la información que esta fuera en el "Rincón de Courtney" para información sobre varios programas y recursos para ti y tu familia.

Water Bottles for Sale:

Have you misplaced your cup for school? Are you thirsty? If so, you may want to buy a water bottle for only \$2.00. They come in 3 colors: blue, green and pink. We will be happy to personalize it with your name, in case it gets lost. If you are interested, stop by the main office and see Joni or Amina.

WASH YOUR HANDS!!

Just a friendly reminder to wash your hands, in an effort to stop the spread of the many germs that are around. Don't forget, you can sing the following song TWICE while scrubbing with soap:

*Tops and bottoms, tops and bottoms
In between, in between
Making lots of bubbles, making lots of bubbles
Now they're clean, now they're CLEAN!*

The Right Key

The Helping Hands of Room 108 are looking for keys to add to our classroom collection. We have small sets of keys that the children love to use as props for play. Please bring us all those keys you have lying around that you know longer have a need for. Thanks. Key rings are also welcome.

It's Time to Get Growing!

Calling all MHS families and community members: We are looking for help of all kinds to cultivate, care for and create beauty in our outdoor spaces this spring. Have ideas? Like playing in the dirt? Looking for a fun family project? Please let us know if you are interested in brainstorming, organizing, or working in the MHS garden this spring. Contact Brad to get on the list! (617-635-6384 or bkershner@missionhillschool.org).

**Mission Hill School**

A Boston Public Pilot School

Deborah Meier, Founder

Ayla Gavins, Principal

20 Child Street

Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

617.635.6384 (office)

617.635.6419 (fax)

www.missionhillschool.org