



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- Thursday, March 12, 2015
Family Council Meeting 5:45-7 pm
- Tuesday, March 17, 2015
Evacuation Day: This is a School Day
- Friday, March 20, 2015
Movie Night at MHS! 6-8:00 pm
- Saturday, March 21, 2015
Springfest: Family Fun Day 10 am-3:00 pm

March 6, 2015

Volume 18, Issue 20

Spreading Innovation

Dear Families, Students, Staff, and Friends,

If you had the opportunity to go to Washington DC and speak your mind to Arne Duncan, the Secretary of Education and his assistant, Deb Delisle, what would you say? What if you could talk to the Chief Policy Officer, Jackie Gran, who heads up the development of new school leaders? How about Richard Culatta, the Director of Educational Technology? Or Ted Mitchell, Under Secretary, leading the national policy work on teacher preparation? What would you say to these decision makers and their advisors?

Most educators only dream of such an opportunity. On March 2 and 3 this became a reality for me. When I got the invitation a couple of weeks ago to go to Washington, I did not think it was real. I called the number on the invite to see if it was just a spam e-mail. The video series about our school, *A Year at Mission Hill*, and news about teacher leadership by way of *Teacher Powered Schools* made it to the ears of Jill Levine, Principal Ambassador in Washington DC. As a result, I was one of 15 principals from across the country invited to a roundtable discussion about innovation in our nation's schools—truly an honor.

In addition to gaining from all the visionary talk and policy discussion I walked away with some specific things to share. I took note of great interview questions for hiring new staff that other principals use. I enjoyed experiencing a mini Ed Camp (a way of providing choice of topic in learning) and will introduce it as a new format for some of our staff professional development sessions. I also have contact information for the nation's decision makers on education issues that I did not have before.

So what next? The first step is to meet with our decision makers in Boston Public Schools. I plan to follow up on a theme of questions that many of the people named above asked me and the other principals. How is innovation scaled up? What are my plans to do so? What are the obstacles to scaling innovation? How are innovative teachers, school leaders and school communities protected and sustained? What gets in the way of making innovation possible? There are many answers to those questions that I won't get into here, but I am sure you can imagine.



US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and Ayla in Washington, D.C.

KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

How does snow compare to sand? One way we are connecting with the school wide theme of Kingdoms of the Nile is to play with and explore sand in our classroom. We have multiple sand tables and have added small toy replicas of animals that you would find along the Nile. We are learning that these animals are different than animals you will find in Boston's Charles River. Students have dug, poured, built and pretended. This week we decided to investigate the sand a little bit closer - using tools such as magnifying glasses and our own hands. We also filled four big tubes with snow for investigation. Comparing sand - which we know is along the Nile - with snow - which we have tons of in Boston right now, was one way to give a concrete experience for our youngest learners. You can find our descriptive charts comparing snow and sand hanging in our classroom. The investigation led to some great questions such as: Can sand ever be cold?

-Geralyn Bywater McLaughlin

Room 106

It feels good to be back in the swing of things. After delving into many exciting topics such as the desert, mummies, and pyramids, we are now beginning to look at the people who lived in Ancient Egypt and Nubia. We began by asking questions about how they lived. What did they eat? What did they wear? Where did they work? The Sparkling Birds are excited to continue their unit study. We have also begun a new literacy topic. Word families! We began with the "at" family. We read a poem

about a cat named Pat, and a story about a bat named Stلالuna. We then brainstormed other words that end with "at". We are practicing writing the words and drawing pictures to accompany them. I am excited to introduce other word families to the students.

Fingers crossed for some snow melting this week! We are taking many movement breaks throughout the day to help everyone release some energy, but are looking forward to some much-needed outside time.

-Liz & Stephanie

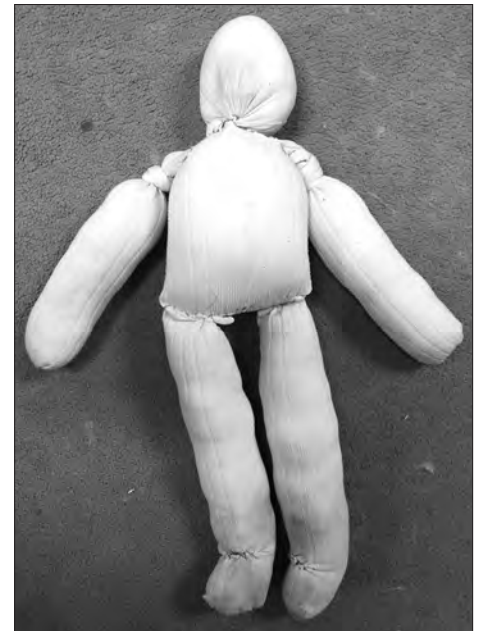
Room 107

*I'm playing drums like the Nubians!
Look! I'm the pharaoh!
I see hieroglyphs in there!
I have the mummy case!*

On Monday we began our day creating replicas of Nubian necklaces and pharaoh headdresses. We continued to work on our desert scenery, explored a toy replica of a pyramid and put the finishing touches on fish we have been sewing for our Nile River. Later, we learned that greyhounds were a part of Nubian history and while initially used for hunting, they were later kept as pets. In addition, ostrich feathers were used in headdresses and special ceremonies. We were all excited to witness ostriches being born and were captivated by their first few minutes of life. We then compared the size of an ostrich egg to that of a chicken's egg and realized just how massive it is. Later, we compared the height of the mother ostrich (seven feet) to our new six foot tall volunteer named Brendan and wondered how standing next to a seven foot bird would feel. With each project, excitement about Nubia grows. Now

on to the next challenge, trying to building a pyramid.

-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth



A sock doll, created by students in Room 109.

Room 109

The Rainbow Fire Dragons have begun to work on their culminating project. The children have been developing plans to make a model mummy and mummy case! This week they completed the first step of the project- sewing up a sock doll. In case you want to try at home...

- *First you got to gather leggings, fluffy stuffing, thread, and a needle.*
- *Cut the legs into two pieces.*
- *Sew up the ends of the leggings and stuff them with the fluffy stuffing.*
- *Stuff another legging in the shape of a ball. That's the head.*
- *Sew the top of the tights and one of the leg holes. Stuff it with fluffy stuffing and then sew it closed.*
- *Then you sew the pieces together in the shape of a person.*

- *Have a grownup sew the bottom in the shape of feet.*

Next week will we will share how we wrap our mummy!

-Jenny Goldstein

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 204

“What do you notice?” This was the question that guided our work as we looked at pictures of Egyptian and Nubian artifacts on the Museum of Fine Arts website. This was preparation for our much anticipated field trip to the MFA. This protocol for looking at art is called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). The name of the artist and piece of art are hidden, no information is given about the piece and there are only two questions that are asked: “What do you notice?” and “What do you see that makes you say that?”

At first there were only a few hands, but as their classmates shared, others students were inspired to join in and make their own connections and build off of previous comments.

“The hair looks like a lion.” -**Typrese**

“It looks like she I wearing a crown because there is a big thing on her head.” -**Michelle**

“The man looks like a king ‘cause he has a big hat” -**Juel**

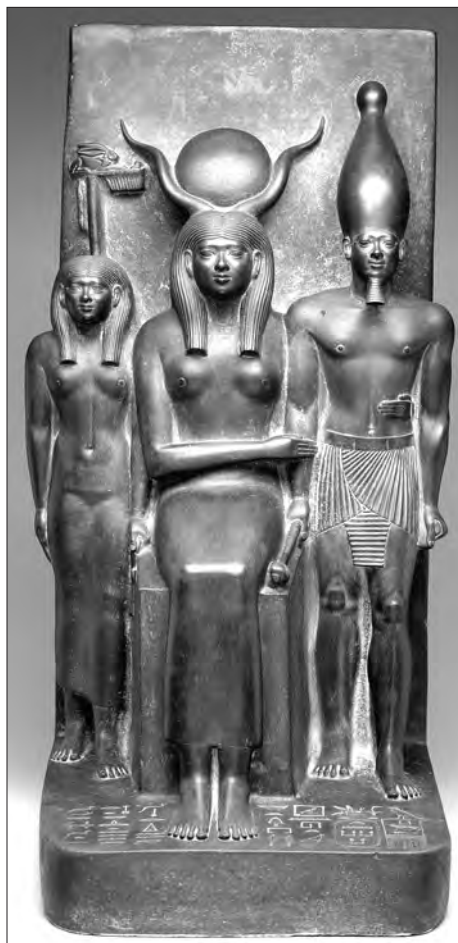
“It looks like she’s wearing a skirt because you can’t see her legs” -**Shirley**

We look forward to sharing news about our MFA trip next week!

-**Jenerra Williams**

Room 205

Room 205 has become inspired by our various museum visits over the past few weeks. We have gone to the Museum of Fine Arts twice, as well as the National Center for Afro-



Grade 1/2 students observed this statue of Hathor at the MFA.

American Artists in Roxbury. In a few weeks, we are going to create in Museum in our classroom to teach people about the lesser-known, but still important, kingdom of Nubia.

Each day at project time we work in groups focused on art, writing, building, and daily life to research, explore, and create. Here is part of a conversation from the writing group: **Cyrus:** Someone else wrote, but they traded with the Egyptians. Then they found out about writing. (He is referencing the Sumarians)

Anand: Only a few people did the writing.

Milo: They were called scribes.

Lenardo: They use paper out of

papyrus. And they used a pen. They made hieroglyphics which are hard to read.

Braxton: The ink had gum, water, and soot. Wait, is that like chewing gum?

By remaining in the same groups every day, our class has been able to become deeply immersed in the kingdoms of the Nile.

-**Kate Needham**

Room 217

There is a lot of noise in the public how best to assess children. Some people want standardized tests with bubbles to fill in in order to compare the scores to other test taskers. Some people want observations with detailed checklists about what teachers should see a child do. Less conversation is about what we assess. In a recent Boston Globe article titled “7 things every kid should master,” Susan Engel a college psychologist gave her insight and synthesis of research. She said that if tests were really good they’d measure “what abilities students really need.” She listed: reading, inquiry, flexible thinking and the use of evidence, conversation, collaborations, engagement, and well-being as abilities children need to develop in school. After many wonderful family conferences, I hope you saw evidence of your child not only becoming a more confident writer, reader, and mathematician, but also heard about ways your child is developing skills to be a citizen in their classroom, community and world.

-**Emma Fialka-Feldman**

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 207

Last week, the Spectacular 16

CLASSROOM NEWS

visited the Museum of Fine Arts. The energy level was palpable from the beginning of the trip all the way to the very end as we walked back through the doors of Mission Hill. Students made observational sketches and notes of the artifacts they found. Some of the Spectacular 16's favorite pieces were a beadnet dress found on a mummy in Giza, the ancient Nubian jewelry collection, and the collection of mummies. With all of the snow days it has been challenging to maintain our momentum with theme work. This visit (along with a second guided visit planned for next week) has been just what we need to reenergize and refocus our learning about Ancient Nubia and Egypt.

-Kristina Voss

Room 212

We have been fortunate to have Barbara Brown visit and talk to us about Ancient Nubia. Barbara is the Director of Outreach for African Studies program at Boston University. While here, she discussed why the MFA has Nubian statues in the basement and showed us a map of Africa and its comparison to other countries and continents.

One student inquired "Why don't we write a letter to the MFA to ask if we can see the other Nubian statues?" Another student asked, "Why don't we just stay in the MFA and not leave and until our request is met?" First, we must ask, second we must understand why we feel this is so important to us, and then we must present strong reasoning. We are excited about asking if we can have an exhibit dedicated to Ancient Nubia as there once was.

-Sarah, Heron, Brendan, & Josh



The Spectacular 16 visit the MFA.

Room 216

The super fantastic students in room 216 have been hard at work studying Ancient Kingdoms and dissecting our essential questions. We're grappling with the idea of what can be learned from ancient cultures and what technology was created and employed at the time of the ancient kingdoms. We're also working to illuminate the relationship between

Egypt and Nubia – and it ain't easy! Literature circles are zooming along and the growth in students' overall literacy ability is evident and impressive. Currently, a small group is working on a project in order to present their book to the class and during our next share. This non-traditional "book report" will contain, among other things, various dioramas to illustrate turning points in the story.

Please stay tuned! As soon as these magnificent works or art are on display, we will share their location publicly!

-Alicia & Shaina

GRADES 5&6

Room 215

The author of the novel we are reading right now, Katherine Paterson, is driven to writing to explore the experience of being an outsider in *Bridge to Terabithia*. She recollects, "I was not only a child, I was, better still, a weird little kid, and...there are few things, apparently, more helpful to a writer than having once been a weird little kid." In Room 215, we look for imagery, languages to express our differences and to develop the social repertoires for creating spaces where these differences have opportunities to flourish. We look forward to next Wednesday's (March 11th) "Don't B. Afraid to B. Different" all-day teach-in for Grades 5/6, when students participate in workshops that they have selected. These workshops will give us opportunities to reflect and envision together how we embrace being different.

-Abdi, Angela & Carlos



Room 210

Enjoy the photos from our trip last week to Farm School!

-Nakia, June, Meron, & Elsa

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

As a class, we read *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson. We studied the narrative structure, including setting, plot, characters, conflict, point of view, and theme. Now we are putting that knowledge to work as we write our own stories. The stories are wonderful and as varied as our students. Here are excerpts to enjoy.

Autumn: Today is the first day of school. I'm a freshman. My name's London. I'm not excited to go but I bet everyone else is. Every year I see the same people, but they don't see me. It's like I'm invisible.

Laneah: Usually in some movie this would be the part where the narrator or main character says, "The only thing that stood between mother and I was an awkward silence," but instead was a bunch of noises. Behind me was a flatscreen tv, that still played Maury. The squeaking of the rocking chair, the tv, both my mom and my breathing, a bunch of hospital technology, and the ringing of

calls being answered by workers.

Gianna: There's been a lot happening lately and Johnnie is one of the only reasons for my happiness. The one thing that could've made my life worse at school happened. Skyler decided she was too good to be friends with Adji and me. She's the new third member to Ariana and Haley's little clique, and I think we all know there's almost no way that could end well.

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

The students had a great time visiting the library last Tuesday. They have been reading their novels daily and it is a joy to see them engrossed with their books. I can tell they love their choices by the captivated looks on their faces as they read. The room is in total silence-you can hear a pin drop. All students are on task.

When asked what they liked about their book these were some responses.

Aniya (*Bun Head*): It's about dancing and I find it interesting because the main character starts off as a regular ballet dancer and after she went on stage for someone else she became the talk of the week and I also love dancing."

Aujanae (*The Lying Game*): "It's a mystery and I find it interesting and

it has a lot of details."

Alpha (*The 5TH Wave*): "It is about Aliens and Tobias recommended it."

The students are so gripped by what they are reading that they try to continue during other instructional times. They can't wait to find out what's coming next!

When the students have completed their books they will use a form to write a summary and review of the book(s) they have completed. The reviews will be discussed among the class and then they will create a graph to show likes, dislikes, favorite books, and characters.

-Carol East-José, Reginald Toussaint & Emmanuel St. Vil

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

Important Date/Schedule Changes

- March 17, 2015 (Evacuation Day) will be a make-up snow day: There will be school!
- The Family Potluck Breakfast to celebrate our study of Ancient Egypt & Ancient Nubia has been changed to Thursday, April 2, from 9:15-10:15 am
- Due to snow days and the extension of the school to the end of June, second trimester report cards will be sent home on April 2, 2015.



Principals at Ed gathering in Washington, D.C.

Outdoor recess is BACK!

Starting on Tuesday, March 10th ALL children (there will be no gym option) will be sent outside for recess as long as the temperature is above 30 degrees. Please send your child to school with the appropriate winter gear (boots, hats, gloves, snowpants, change of clothes) so everyone can enjoy the wonders of snow!

Ping Pong Table Fundraiser Needs Your Support!

Wellness Coordinator Laura Golitko has a project up on DonorsChoose.org to purchase ping pong tables for MHS Wellness. Please consider a small donation and share with friends and families!

<http://www.donorschoose.org/we-teach/2638507>.

The project is open until April, 2015.

Family Council News

March 12, 2015: Family Council working meeting. Urban Improv switched dates, so this date will be used to organize the group.

April 1, 2015: Outside the Lines. Our second meeting for families with children with special needs and anyone else who wants to be part of the discussion.

March 20, 2015: MHS Movie Night. A quick flick for younger children followed by The Book of Life for the feature presentation. The night will run from 6-8:00 pm and we need volunteers for set-up, clean-up, and running the event. Email Bridget Lee at bridgetelee@gmail.com if you are interested and let her know what shift you can do: one hour between 5-9:00 pm. Even if you can't volunteer please try to attend this fun family event!

Ayla in Washington, D.C.!

Earlier this week, Ayla joined a small group of principals from around the country to meet with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and other senior U.S. Department of Education officials for two days of learning and advising, as part of the new Principals at ED effort (see page one to read about her experience).

The goal of this program is to bring groups of highly innovative and successful principals from across the country to the Education Department to learn more about federal programs and to share experiences from their jobs as school leaders.

Ayla Gavins, *Principal*
Deborah Meier, *Founder*

John McDonough, *Interim Superintendent*

Mission Hill K-8 School
A Boston Public Pilot School

WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG

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F 617-635-6419

Prizes, Raffles,
Activities, and
other Incentives



Yoga
100 Mile Club
and Others

Springfest

Come join us for Healthy Family Fun Day!

Saturday
March 21, 2015
12:00–3:00 pm



*Mission Hill School
30 Child Street, Jamaica Plain*

In collaboration with Boston Public Schools



KohlsHealthyFamilyFun.org

We WILL attend

of people attending

We WILL NOT attend

Student(s) Names: _____

Classroom Teacher: _____