



IMPORTANT DATES AND REMINDERS

- June 1-9: *Grade 8 Portfolios*
- June 10-18: *Grade 7 Portfolios*
- Thursday, June 11, 2015
Governance Board Meeting 5-7:00 pm
- Friday, June 12, 2015
Exhibitions and Recollections
- Wednesday, June 17, 2015
School is in Session!

May 29, 2015

Volume 18, Issue 31

Opening our Doors

Every year in September I receive an email from Tokyo, Japan. The sender is a professor of education at Sophia University and a frequent visitor to Mission Hill. The email is always similar, asking in polite, halting English if it would be possible to visit and spend time here during the school year. I always say yes.

Next week, Professor Minoru Sawada will join the eighth grade team, observing and helping record portfolio presentations. This will be Minoru's eleventh time spending a week immersed in our community (it may actually be more-we have lost count!), questioning, observing, forming relationships with students and teachers, and generally absorbing the many aspects of our school that he finds so fascinating. As a teacher trainer, Mr. Sawada is always interested in learning more about progressive public education.

Visitors to Mission Hill are not a new phenomenon but the numbers have grown in the past few years, due to the internet video series *A Year at Mission Hill*, Tom and Amy Valens' television documentary *Good Morning Mission Hill* and the release of former teacher, Matthew Knoester's book, *Democratic Education in Practice: Inside the Mission Hill School*. We welcome between 100-200 educational visitors every year. They arrive in large groups or as individuals and include teachers, administrators, students, and researchers. In past years, we have opened our doors to folks from China, Japan, Africa, Saudi Arabia, Central America, Iceland, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Ireland, Spain, France and many US states. Teachers from local schools, both independent and public (including BPS!), have also taken time to come and learn in our community.

Some visitors seek a glimpse into the world of our school and some are interested in the work and legacy of Deborah Meier (MHS founding principal, author and education activist). They come to meet the teachers and children from the videos, see progressive education take place in a public city school, examine the complexities of governing a school democratically, observe authentic assessment in action (portfolios are one of Minoru's great interests), and then, take back what they've learned to their own countries and classrooms. This is part of the school's responsibility: to open our doors to others, share our best practices and also answer hard questions, and to give of ourselves to others for the purpose of teaching what we believe are best practices for children and families.

Next week, our eighth graders will present collections of work to a portfolio committee consisting of their classroom teachers, faculty advisors, various family members, external community partners, and one enthusiastic and passionate professor from Tokyo, our friend Minoru.

-Dani Coleman
External Affairs Director



Minoru Sawada eating lunch with middle school students during one of his many visits to MHS.

KINDERGARTEN

Room 108

Do you know that story of Ruby Bridges? I shared the story with our class to help them think about the African-American Struggle for Justice. Six-year-old Ruby Bridges integrated schools in New Orleans in 1957. She bravely faced angry crowds of white people who did not want to see the school integrated. Federal marshals were called in to protect Ruby. For months and months she was the only child in her first grade classroom. As I told the story (paraphrasing the written text to make it developmentally appropriate and a bit less scary for our young students) our children listened and tried to make sense of what happened. "It wasn't fair," was what we all agreed. We continue to talk about the story and share questions, thoughts and reflections. Consider reading *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles with your child at home.

-Geraldyn B. McLaughlin

Room 106

Next week we will have Exhibitions at MHS. Exhibitions were started many years ago because we believe that children should show their learning to families and community. This is one of the Coalition of Essential Schools 10 Common Principles. We were also inspired by the Recollections process that our sixth graders participate in. And, in case you didn't know, Recollections were inspired by middle school portfolios. There is clearly a great deal of inspiration happening within our school. To get ready we have been making self-portraits and writing autobiographies. In Warlin's journal he wrote, "I go to the store with my dad. I eat rice

and chicken. I like to play toys with my brother." In Sarah's Journal she wrote, "I am 5. And I like ice cream. I have a sister too. My sister is 8 but I have no brother and a mom and a dad. I love my family so so much. I love them."

Warlin and Sarah shared their work at project time and heard questions and comments from their classmates. One student asked Sarah, "How come you wrote so much about your family?" Sarah replied, "Because I just love them!" Students will share their learning on June 12th during exhibitions.

-Kathy D'Andrea

Room 107

"...and before I be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave, and go home to my Lord and be free."

As several students worked on sewing their quilt code squares for their individual quilts, I asked what the codes were used for. Wren raised her hand excitedly and said, "...to guide them to freedom!" In an instant, students at our quilting table began singing, "Oh freedom! Oh Freedom! Oh freedom over me...." Within seconds the entire classroom joined in, regardless of what they were doing during project time. Jo-Ann and I smiled because where there once was separation, there now was unity.

In conversation, we have spoken about the power of these songs. Not only did they comfort the slaves, they provided a unifying hope, because hidden in many of them (like our quilts) were messages that would help guide them to freedom. For example, Harriet Tubman's nickname was Moses, so Go Down Moses has a double meaning; the drinking gourd from Follow the Drinking Gourd



Self portrait collage: Akim Owens, grade 8.

referred to the Big Dipper; and there is a difference between "Waiting" and "Wading" in the water. Stay tuned!
-Jada Brown & Jo-Ann Hawkesworth

Room 109

The Rainbow Fire Dragons have been thinking about Freedom and what it means to be free.

The children imagined what it felt like to be Cassie flying free, high above the city in *Tar Beach*. I reminded the Kindergartners of this winter, when Evan predicted that the snow melting would be like "FREEDOM!!!"

What does freedom mean to a Kindergartener?

Freedom is happy.

When you're free you can go anywhere you want... to school, to the park, to the beach, on vacation!

Freedom means nobody can boss you around.

Freedom is like nobody can be told what to do.

What makes us feel free?

Playing with my Legos. Going to my friend's house. Going Outside. Going home. Running! Running in my backyard. Taking trips. Playing in the Arboretum.

-Jenny, Meira, Angelina, & Stephanie

GRADES 1 & 2

Room 204

Last week we held our annual music concert. The auditorium was full to the brim - standing room only. Each class from the three year-olds on up, shared a song that they have been working on with Billy, our music teacher, for weeks. Clad in their various versions of concert attire and wearing their excitement and nervous energy on their sleeves, they sang from their hearts! There were also performances by our strings, brass, guitars and steel pan ensembles.

The Magic Explorers chose to sing *Fly Like an Eagle* - the 1977 hit by the Steve Miller Band. It's lyrics share an uplifting chorus of freedom with a



Self Portrait: Peyton Winder, grade 8.

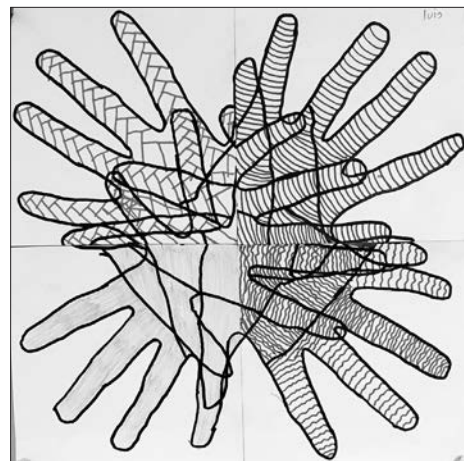
verse that calls for us to help those in need. The Magic Explorers, by vote, decided this would be our concert song and later in the process we all agreed that doing a new arrangement of the song would be interesting. Heron had just taught us the civil rights freedom song *We Shall Not Be Moved* and we decided to add it to *Fly Like an Eagle*. It was a great match and the Magic Explorers did a wonderful job of sharing it at the concert!

Music holds a special place in my life and in my heart. It is experiences like these that I hope will help create that same passion and appreciation for music in our children. Congrats to Billy, Jeremy, Charlton and all the MHS students and staff for a job well done!

-Jenerra Williams

Room 205

After looking closely at many quilt designs, patterns, and fabrics and discussing the importance of colors and symbols, students began creating their own quilt squares for a freedom quilt. They had to use forethought and planning when choosing shapes, colors, and patterns for their design. Nate titled his piece *Screaming Face* and described it by saying, "He's screaming for justice. The yellow dots mean justice and the orange means we're surrounded by struggling." Gianna chose a yellow background for her quilt square and arranged orange triangles with yellow squares together in the middle of her square. She titled her piece *Struggling for Justice Stars*. She explained, "yellow means shining bright and orange means work hard." Anand's quilt square has an orange background with four smaller squares in the middle decorated with yellow stars. He titled his



Hands: Luis Querubin, grade 8

design *Freedom Land* and shared, "I chose stars because stars are a good thing and freedom is way better than segregation and slavery. I chose orange because it's a bright color and an exciting color." Stop by room 205 to see the many other ways we're using colors, symbols, and quilting to tell stories!

-Ashleigh LHeureux

Room 217

Given that our school community is celebrating MHS staff this week, I wanted to take a moment to give gratitude to the colleagues I work with. Tuesday evening the new superintendent, Dr. Tommy Chang, met with Boston Teacher Union members to discuss our "bright spots", challenges, and aspirations for the Boston Public Schools. I am a member of the New Educator Committee that works to support and retain educators who are within their first three years of their careers. Our committee shared that a "bright spot" in our work is the "unofficial mentors" we receive in our schools. These are teachers in schools who make time to support new teachers. At Mission Hill, I have been graced with the coaching and mentoring of many staff members. My colleagues

CLASSROOM NEWS

have taken time to review lesson plans, debrief a challenging day, reread student reports, and help me develop confidence in my teaching. I am a better teacher because I am surrounded, loved, and nurtured by the Mission Hill community.
-Emma Fialka-Feldman

GRADES 3 & 4

Room 207

The Spectacular 21 have worked on a lot of things this year- writing proper paragraphs, adding “juicy details” to our writings, many math concepts including multiplication, fractions and decimals.

After a several incidents of unkind words and unkind actions we are currently focusing on being good friends. At a recent class meeting we discussed what we give to our friends and what we want from our friends:

What I want from friends:

- Respect- kind words and actions
- Kindness
- Friends asking to play a game
- To be treated nicely
- Help solving a problem
- Apologies when needed
- Help if I am hurt

What I give to friends:

- Asking what people need
- Hugs
- Help with school work
- Laughter
- A picture if they are sad
- Playing with people
- Help working out a problem

While we continue to work hard on our classwork we will also continue to work hard on making sure we are kind to all members of the MHS community.

-Amina Michel-Lord & Kristina Voss

Room 216

Enjoy the photos from our visit with Mayor Walsh. He visited Jamaica Plain on Thursday and our class joined Abdi's class to sing and welcome him!

-Amanda, Ayla, & Shaina



GRADES 5&6

Room 210

Coming next week!

-Nakia, June, & Meron

Room 215

We did not read or write enough poetry this year. We experimented with other forms of art making, but not poetry. When we began our justice theme we looked closely at Countee Cullen's (one of the more well known poets of the Harlem Renaissance) “Tableau.” A short poem, 12 lines, split into 3 stanzas, with alternating rhymes, ABAB. We read it aloud, sometimes as a song, playing with the rhythms of the words, emphasizing the end-rhymes, sometimes reading it like an essay. Because we'd spent our year creating spaces to explore differences--responding to these differences with kindness and not fear, Countee Cullen's poem is a find. The central action in the poem is the poet's making meaning of a painting of two boys, one black and one white: “Locked arm in arm they cross the way...” The poet admires, puzzles and even fears for these boys who defy their divided society; they are not real and yet for the poet (and hopefully for us) their courage is real and their solidarity inspires.

-Abdi, Angela & Carlos

GRADES 7&8

Room 213

“Are we cooking today?” “Is it our turn this week?” “Do you know what we're making today?” “Why can't I go, too?”

These are the questions that bubble up in Room 213 every Wednesday. Since April, Neathery Brenzel has run a weekly cooking class for a small group of 7th/8th grade students. Our

class alternates with Reginald's for what many consider the best hour of the week. As far as middle schoolers are concerned, there can never be enough food!

The kids are learning some basic techniques (chopping vegetables for chicken soup) and some easy recipes with readily available ingredients (rice crispy treats). And I think Neathery is learning what we've long known – middle school kids are fun to be with. Although she was uncertain at first about working with this age group, Neathery is a pro: the kids are learning and happy!

We're delighted the kids have a chance to learn skills that will last them a lifetime from a patient and accomplished cook. Your time and talents are greatly appreciated, Neathery!

-Ann Ruggiero & Letta Neely

Room 214

We're on to the homestretch. Portfolio presentations begin next week. Students are responding in various ways to the pressure that comes with making their work portfolio ready and preparing for the presentations. Some have been at their best while others clearly showing signs of being stressed.

One of the hardest aspects of managing this time period is pushing students to do their best without overwhelming them. Which is why I'm always careful when students ask me, "Is this good?" or "Did you like it?" after reading their work. I usually answer something similar to, "of course it's good, it's your work" That's my way of reminding them that the goal of the portfolio process is getting students to produce the best work that they can and to celebrate

that work.

I look forward to the presentations next week.

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

SCHOOLWIDE NEWS

The FOMHS Music Program Campaign Needs Your Support

The Friends of the Mission Hill School volunteer fundraising crew is still working on the campaign to keep our music program going strong. Please consider a donation at any level, and please share the campaign with friends and family! Hear all about our goals by visiting this web page: bit.ly/MissionHillMusic

Get your Camp Physical!

Don't forget that **summer programs ALL require a medical examination by a licensed physician within 12 months preceding the program.** This is a state requirement for all children attending camp, so book your child's appointment now. Remember, Georgie needs updated copies of physicals as well, so drop a copy in her mailbox after your appointment.

BPS Calendar Update

It's official! There will be school on Bunker Hill Day, Wednesday, June 17th. And the last day of school for all students is now officially Monday, June 29th, which will be an early release day. Friday, June 26th will also be an early release day.

Apprentice Learning Update

As we look back on the school year, Apprentice Learning is very happy with work we have seen our 8thgrade apprentices accomplish. They have grown in tremendous ways and we are excited to celebrate them before they graduate. Apprentice Learning will have their annual



Self Portrait: Marvin Pierre, grade 8

Breakfast Celebration on June 15th. It will be a morning of food, music, storytelling, and honoring our amazing 8th grade Apprentices as they prepare to take their work experience out into the real world. Many thanks to our participating businesses and organizations.

Steel Pan Try it Out Days

The Steel Pan program would like to invite all MHS students (currently) in 4-7th grades to participate in two upcoming Try it Out Days. On either Tuesday, June 2nd or Tuesday, June 9th, transportation will be provided from MHS to the Roland Hayes School of Music, by program coordinator, Betsy Caruso. The group will leave MHS at 3:30 for a 4:00-5:15 pm rehearsal. Students may be picked up at Roland Hayes or get a ride back to MHS to be picked up here. The Steel Pan program is FREE and runs all year on Tuesday afternoons. Please RSVP to let Joni know which date you would like to attend as there are limited spaces available for transportation. Other questions? Email Betsy: bhcaruso@gmail.com.



Thank you to our families for the wonderful Teacher Appreciation!



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

John McDonough, *Interim Superintendent*

Mission Hill K-8 School
A Boston Public Pilot School

WWW.MISSIONHILLSCHOOL.ORG

20 Child Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
T 617-635-6384
F 617-635-6419

Percussion Group Try-It-Outs are coming!

If you would like to find out more about the Mission Hill Percussion Ensemble, we will be hosting two (2) try-out sessions for interested fourth through seventh graders.

The try-out days will be on two Tuesdays, after school, at the Roland Hayes School of Music (RHSM). (You only need to come to one try-out.)

Students will depart MHS with the Ensemble to RHSM at 3:30 p.m. and will have a chance to meet Mr. Sarjeant and try playing some steel drums (pans).

Parents may pick students up at 5:00 at RHSM, or may ride back to the MHS after school program with Betsy Caruso.

Interested students may pre-register for the 2015-16 percussion ensemble

Space is limited - we will sign up students on a first come, first served basis.

To register for a try-out, please complete and return the bottom portion of this sheet to Joni Davies at MHS, by Jun 1st.

Student Name: _____

Grade: _____

Date I want to try out: _____ Tues. June 2nd OR _____ Tues., June 9th

_____ I give my child permission to travel to RHSM with the chaperon (Betsy Caruso)

_____ I will pick up my child at RHSM, 55 Malcolm X Boulevard, Roxbury, at 5:00 p.m.

_____ My child will travel back to MHS with chaperon at 5:00

_____ My child is in middle school and will come home independently after the 5:00 release.

Parent signature: _____

Parent daytime phone: _____

Parent email: _____

(please print)

Please call Betsy with any questions, at 617.650.7648, or email to bhcaruso@gmail.com

*Fourth Annual
Mission Hill School*



*"Show Me What You're Working With"
Coffee House!*

When: Friday, June 19, 2015

Where: School Auditorium.



Time: 1:45pm - 3:00pm

(Please note the time change to during school hours.)

**YOU
BRING
THE
TALENT**

Please contact Letta Neely or Jenerra Williams by

Friday, June 12th if you would like to participate.

Families are welcome to attend.



K-5 Exhibitions

*It's our last Curriculum Breakfast
for the year!*

*Hello Families!
The school year has quickly
come to an end.
Come celebrate the
accomplishments of our
students and hear about what
they have learned during our
last theme, the African
American Struggle for Justice.*

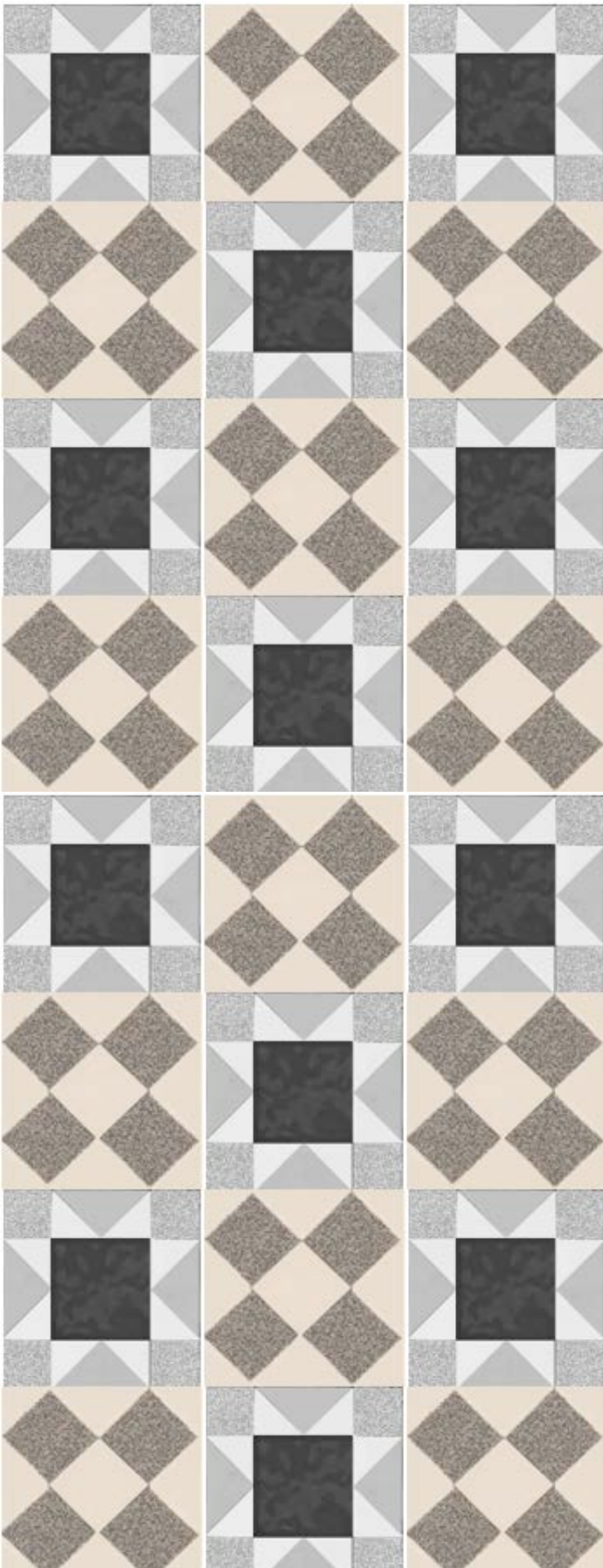
*It's a **potluck**, so bring a dish
to share with our community.*

Date: June 12, 2015

Time: 9:15-10:15

**Where: K-Quad and
2nd Floor**

See you there!



Exposiciones de K-5

*¡Es nuestro último Desayuno del
Plan de estudios para el año!*

¡Hola familias!

*El año escolar ha venido
rápidamente a un final.*

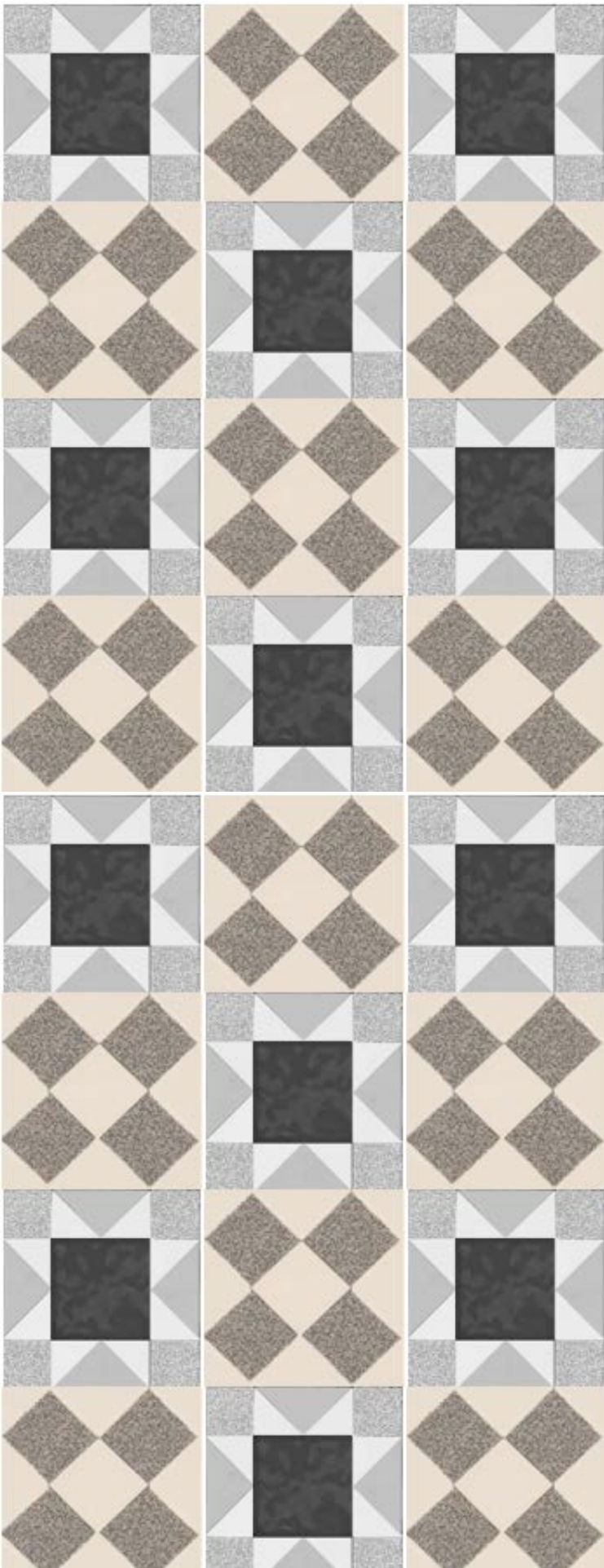
*Venga celebran los logros de
nuestros estudiantes y oyen
sobre lo que han aprendido
durante nuestro último tema, la
Lucha por la justicia
Afroamericana*

*Es una comida, así traiga un
plato para compartir con
nuestra comunidad.*

Fecha: El 12 de junio de
2015

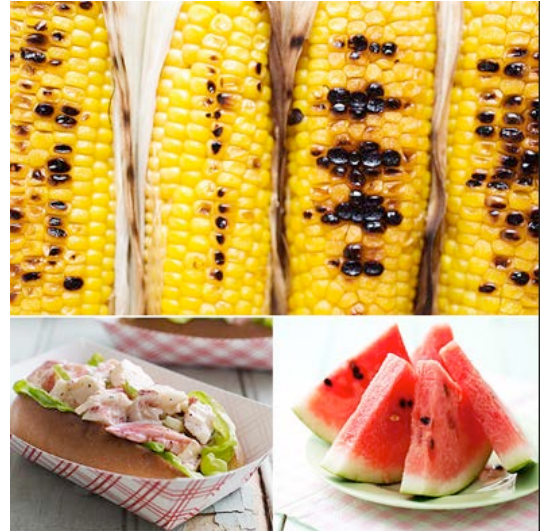
Tiempo: 9:15-10:15
Donde: K-cuatrillizo y
2do piso

¡Nos vemos allí!



It's Dinner and a Board Meeting!

It's our last one of the year...



Hello Mission Hill families!
You are and have always been welcome to attend our Board Meetings. Please consider this your official invitation to come out and meet our board members, hear a little about important conversations in education, learn about ways to support our school and hopefully consider being a member in the near future. We consider your presence valuable so both dinner and childcare will be provided. Please **RSVP with Joni for childcare at 617-635-6384.**

We hope to see you there!

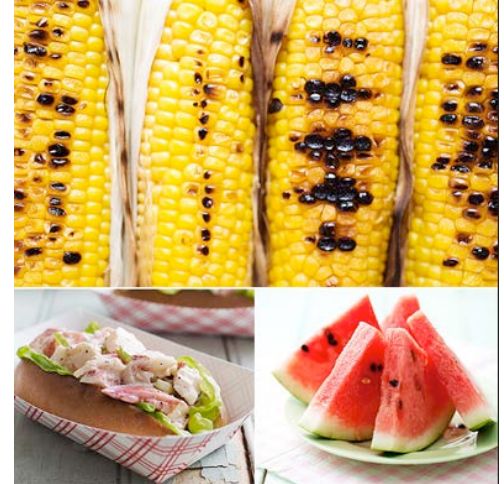
When: June 11, 2015

Where: Art Room (2nd Floor)

Time: 5:00-7:00 p.m.

¡Es comida y una reunión de la junta directiva del consejo de la administracion!

Es nuestro último del año ...



¡Hola familias de Mission Hill!

Es y siempre ha podido asistir a nuestras reuniones de la junta directiva. Por favor piense que esta su invitación oficial sale y encuentra a nuestros miembros del consejo, oye un poco sobre conversaciones importantes en la educación, aprende sobre modos de apoyar nuestra escuela y con esperanza considerar ser un miembro en el futuro próximo.

Consideramos su presencia valiosa por tanto se proporcionarán la comida y la puericultura. Por favor **RSVP con Joni para puericultura en 617-635-6384.**

¡Esperamos verle allí

Cuando: El 11 de junio de 2015

Donde: Cuarto de arte (2do piso)

Tiempo: 5:00-7:00 p. m.