

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Good News About Neighborhood Schools, Inc. Vol. 21, Issue 1 * Winter 2023

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Learning Fair

Thursday, April 13th

6:30pm

Forest Hills Covenant Church



34 Peter Parley Road
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
(617) 522-0880

www.neighborhoodschooljp.org

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Purposefully Small

by Tricia Morrow, Director



"It feels like...home," a sixth grader says as they reflect on their NS experience. When the founding team opened NS in 1986, I remember thinking that a house seemed just right for creating a learning space where worry-based stomachaches would be infrequent. Keeping classes small enough for everyone to be known, and reassuring kids that we would help them learn what they are ready to learn, seemed rightly held in a house. Social-emotional and academic needs can more readily be met in a small setting led by skilled, caring educators committed to social justice.

Who feels at home in that small school matters. In the earliest years of NS, nearly all students were children of color. Founding student, and current parent Aba Taylor remembers, "It was a Freedom School. A small group of black and brown kids with two white women (Joyce and Tricia) who loved us." The other founding teacher, Donna DeVaughn, who also dearly loved the founding children, is African American. Donna moved to public school during NS's first year in order to provide for her family and returned to NS a decade later. Shari Zakon Feibel joined staff in 1989 and being a teacher who is Jewish deepened our diversity. Shari continues to support students at NS in 2023.

What was in the "secret sauce" in NS's early years? We spent a lot of time teaching kids reading and math "nose to nose" (as founder Joyce Mallory describes diagnostic/prescriptive teaching), talking with parents about their children, handling conflicts on the playground, exploring Boston, and singing and reciting from "*Free to Be, You and Me*". We studied Black History and the cultures of our students' families, noticed stereotypes and prejudice, promoted gender equity, practiced non-violence, countered materialism, and created short musical plays reflecting our values. An alum who enrolled in 1988, and now writes our plays and teaches SEL (social emotional learning) and music at NS, Johnny Blazes, remembers how we took the show on the road from JP to City Hall, with children presenting sidewalk serenades. We made plenty of mistakes as we lived out Donna's mantra, "It's all about love."

Who feels at home at NS in 2023? Who needs and can access a purposefully small school located in JP? These are important questions as we reflect post pandemic and set a course for the next decade. We're surveying parents, listening to students, and talking as teachers and leaders. **What's our collective vision beyond founders?** We're meeting monthly as a Leadership Committee (Jeremy Phillips, Aba Taylor, Jocelyn Heywood, Eleanor Chin, and Tricia Morrow with teacher representatives Haeli Warren, Malena Castilla, and Malika Walker). If you have insight to share, we're listening.

Winter Forecast



LEVEL ONE

by Tracy Pimentel and Cait Palm

The children of Level One have relished learning about the fascinating lives of backyard birds this fall! Learning about some of the ways birds have adapted their bodies to survive in extreme weather in order to be wonderful mates and parents never ceases to amaze us. We continue our “Bird Year” this winter with a unit on penguins, Tracy’s favorite bird! We brainstormed what we already know about penguins and read books on their life cycle. We will focus on individual penguin species, highlight their admirable parenting ways, learn about their habitats around the world, and how their bodies and diets have adapted to change in climate and environment.

Image: Level One students work together on a penguin-themed scramble puzzle – it’s quite challenging!



LEVEL TWO

by Rachel Shapp and Jordan Bates

This winter, Level Two is launching two new units of study! With our lab coats and safety goggles firmly in place, our young scientists will explore light waves and how different materials interact with light. In social studies we are beginning a biography unit. We will learn about many different kinds of people – activists, scientists, inventors, performers, athletes...you name it! What inspired these folks? How did they make their mark? What can we learn from them? Join us at the Learning Fair once winter’s cold has dissipated to see the fruits of this learning!

Image: Level Two starts their light unit, exploring the ways that light may be used.

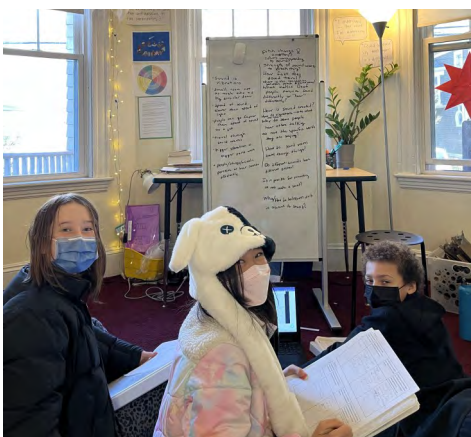


LEVEL THREE

by Malena Castilla

Level Three-ers are currently hard at work transforming all their biome research into a visual presentation with their partner. We can’t wait to share! From there, we’ll be connecting our understanding of the environment with actions and practices in our school community. Along with more Earthy learning, we’ll be diving into data, and consider how we can take responsibility as a Level within Neighborhood School. More on that shortly, so stay tuned! In the meantime, ask your Level Three-er which of the Greenglass House’s guests, from our current read-aloud, *Greenglass House*, they think is most suspicious...

Image: Level Three students and their Reading Buddies



LEVEL FOUR

by Lisa Nam and Haeli Warren

Level Four is embarking on a thematic unit about immigration - the history of immigration policy, current events related to global refugee crises, and ways to build solidarity with migrants around the world. Our literacy book is set in Central America, and we will be exploring the rich culture of Indigenous Maya peoples, the resilience and peacemaking of Guatemalan communities, and the nuanced history of Central American/U.S. relationships. In science, students will build scientific data collection and communication skills around the study of sound and music, and “new to us” visiting music teacher, Lisa Masotta, returns to NS this winter to help us write our own music. And of course, it is time for Grad Projects to begin!

Image: Level Four students working in groups to explore the qualities of sound.

Afterschool Update

by Malika Walker, Afterschool Coordinator

This winter season, the children can look forward to an introduction to new winter-themed activities, ice projects, craft club, and fun in the snow! It is important to create an environment where students can pursue their interests, have meaningful engagement, and grow in everyday skills. The goal of Afterschool is to provide the students with a joyful experience in a multitude of ways. This program is something I craft with passion and intention. I enjoy the kids bringing their smiles and individuality to the activities that I plan. I welcome their squeals of excitement accompanied by running feet when I announce that, "Inside is open!" The relaxed time together allows for me to get to know the students and for them to bond with one another. It is a fulfilling and heartfelt time, full of laughs and all the things kids say! Afterschool at Neighborhood School has a bit of magic to it, and that's how we like it!



A Level Four student teaching a Level One friend the game of Mancala.

Common Cents

We are nearly half way to achieving our giving goal for the 2022-2023 school year. We extend heartfelt thanks to all friends who have responded to our call for "full share" giving. Raising another \$100k by May 31 will take community networking and creativity. Do you (or does someone you know) have access to a family foundation or matching grants and care deeply about one or more of our three funding priorities?

- **Fair Share Tuition** credits keep economic diversity alive and growing among NS families.
- **Increasing teacher salaries and funding professional development** makes NS a great place to work.
- **Arts funding** covers costs associated with creating an **original biennial play** (theater rental, technicians, directors, etc.) and takes the message and mission of NS into the community.

Please contact Tricia Morrow (tmorrow@neighborhoodschooljp.org) or Kaitlin Harris, NS alum and Development Committee Chair (kaitlinmay3@gmail.com) with leads to conversations and/or grant opportunities.



A Level Two student exploring possibilities through 3-D structure building.

2021-22 Contributions

The NS Community donated \$167,000 last school year! Our sincere thanks to the more than 180 individuals who contributed to the Annual Fund in support of the 2021-22 Neighborhood School Fair Share Tuition Fund.

2022-23 Annual Fund contributions are underway and donors will be publicly acknowledged in the Fall 2023 issue.

Aba Taylor	Greg & Kim Heaton	Matt Gillman & Eileen Costello
Adrienne Drucker	Gregory Morrow	Matt Sly & Anna Groskin
Alfred & Keila Kiranga	Haeli Warren	Max Braverman & Maggie Jensen
Alfred & Sarah Gracombe	Haskell Werlin & Connie Barbour	Max Gruner & Amy Loyd
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