

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Good News About Neighborhood Schools, Inc. Vol. 22, Issue 1 * Fall 2023

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Winter Concert

Wednesday, December 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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It's A Play Year!

by Johnny Blazes, *Drama, Rock Band & Rap Around Teacher*



"If Indigenous wisdom could be medicine for a broken relationship with the earth, the moral obligation to share the healing must be paired with a prescription to avoid misuse. I hope to inspire an authentic revitalization of a relationship with the land, not by borrowing it from someone else but by finding your roots and remembering how to grow your own."

— Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults*

As their drama, music, and social-emotional learning (SEL) teacher, I see intimately how much anxiety this generation of children carry as they face an uncertain future, particularly as the global climate crisis looms larger each day. To process their fears—and our collective fears as a Boston community—we will be using *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer, adapted by Monique Gray Smith, as a starting point for this year's play. Prof. Kimmerer is a botanist, educator, and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Her book braids together Indigenous worldviews of gratitude and reciprocity, scientific knowledge about plants and ecosystems, and the history of how Indigenous culture and agricultural wisdom were nearly exterminated.

In creating this year's play, students in Levels Two through Four will gain an understanding of how reciprocal relationships with the earth can offer a way forward towards ecological restoration and slowing or stopping climate disaster. They are already articulating their own ideas about gratitude, reciprocity, consumerism, interconnectedness, and "becoming native" to a place.

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While Level Four is helping me co-create the script through their poetry, character development, dance, and improvisation, Level Three is growing in their abilities to listen, cooperate, and co-create through tableau, rhythm, and movement. Level Two will join the process in the winter, creating a short vignette that highlights their playfulness and spontaneity, as well as their natural affection for the plants and animals we share a planet with. As Robin Wall Kimmerer writes, “All flourishing is mutual”!

Along with many community partners and collaborators who are supporting the kids’ learning about botany, Indigenous culture, and more, we are very fortunate to be teaming up with the **Museum of Science Boston** this year in collaboration with their Center for Public Science Learning. Their science education team will be collaborating with us to help us understand some of the science of climate change, and our show will be performed at **Cahners Theater** in the **Museum of Science Boston** in **March 2024**. One showing will be mostly reserved for school groups and museum visitors, with the second show reserved for NS families and friends. There may also be some opportunities for the students to perform excerpts of the show again as well, so stay tuned!

Financial sponsorship helps us create a show with beautiful sets, costumes, lights, and music to match the imaginations of our beautiful children! If you know an individual or business that would like to sponsor at the \$250, \$500, or \$1000 level—or if that individual is you—please reach out to Johnny at jblazes@neighborhoodschoolip.org to find out how to share your gifts. ✨

Classroom News



Image: Moving our bodies during Morning Meeting by greeting one another in German!

LEVEL ONE

by Tracy Pimentel

This fall, the children of Level One explored the topic of families. Thinking about who is part of our immediate family, family members we recognize as our “extended family,” and reflecting on what family means to us has sparked some interesting conversations for us. Extending our learning to move beyond our families by thinking about some of our strengths has carried us through the month of October. Diving into our year-long study of the rainforest is the plan for the winter and spring months! Examining the world map and its continents, distinguishing between temperate and tropical regions, animals, and the multiple layers of the rainforest should keep our minds intrigued! Looking at ways climate change activists are helping with global climate change issues (deforestation, drought, forest fires, less rainfall, etc.) will empower our young citizens to take action steps in caring for the beautiful world we live in, rainforests included!

LEVEL TWO

by Laurie Bozzi

Days in Level Two are filled with community building, friendship, and lots of learning! In math, we have been playing “chip trading.” In it, children roll dice, collect one color chip then trade that color for another color once they accumulate 10 chips. Then when they have 10 of the next color, they trade up again. Periodically, they calculate how many points they have. It’s a vehicle for practicing adding, multiplying, skip counting, and understanding place value (as well as many other things). And it’s fun! We are also studying bats and discovering the essential role these flying mammals play in ecological balance. Field trips to the Franklin Park Zoo and Peabody Essex Museum allow us an opportunity to observe two kinds of bats in person.



Image: A chip-trading transaction in action!



LEVEL THREE

by Malena Castilla

Tidbits from Level Three! We loved our field trip to Lowell, which offered a glimpse into the historical workings of the water-powered mills, a trolley ride, and a workshop time engineering carts. Based on a poem on bats, students will each be writing their own animal poem as they dig into poetic structures like the rhyming couplet, explore alliteration, and count syllables. Ask your Level Three-er what they think Captain Sangra might reveal to Sai in the scene from our current read-aloud “The Last Mapmaker,” a title connected to our broader theme critically considering storytelling in mapping, cartography, and geography.

Image Left: From the Field Trip to Lowell, Engineering Workshop Teamwork



LEVEL FOUR

by Lisa Nam and Haeli Warren

In our thematic study of botany, ecosystems, and Indigenous wisdom of plants, Level Four has been guided by the text of *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. An example of a chapter is “Maple Nation: A Citizenship Guide,” which explores the science of the carbon cycle, the civic responsibility of humans to play a more reciprocal role in the carbon cycle, and the beauty of receiving maple trees’ gifts with gratitude. Alongside reading that chapter, students collected botanical data from Franklin Park to measure carbon storage in trees. Finally, students used this learning to participate in a rally about reducing fossil fuel infrastructure in Massachusetts. They had the opportunity to write and deliver letters to Governor Maura Healey about this issue.

Image Above: Level Four participated in a Climate Strike on September 20th at the State House.

**Common Cents:
Leadership Transition Update**

We've reached a critical moment in leadership succession work at NS. Tricia's plan to retire in June 2025 is inspiring teachers to take a key role alongside Board members and Sustainers this year. In their September letter to current parents, teachers wrote, *"Finding a new administrator to lead NS into its next chapter is not something that we take lightly, because NS is more than just another job, or just another school. It is a genuinely unique place, with a leader who not only teaches children and adults that learning is a process, but models it herself with her constant striving towards her own growth.... Like everything at NS, we will do this in our own singular way! We are approaching this search with lots of care and thoughtfulness. We're taking steps this year to envision and enact plans so NS can thrive beyond the founders.... Our goal is to find a leader for next fall so they can work alongside Tricia, immersing themselves in knowing the extraordinary place that NS is—and has been—to and continue the legacy of the founders and veteran teachers."*

We need a commitment of **\$100,000** from friends of NS by March 15 towards funding our next leader “a year early” to ensure a smooth transition. This amount is **in addition to our Annual Fund goal of \$145,000** by May 31. If you or someone in your network has the capacity to give a substantial **Leadership Gift** to NS this year, please reach out to Tricia. **Now is the time to fund NS beyond its founders.**



Image: Level Four soaked in the goodness of Farm School during their three-day/two-night visit.

2022-23 Contributions

The NS Community donated \$135,000 last school year! Our sincere thanks to the more than 130 individuals who contributed to the Annual Fund in support of the 2023–24 Neighborhood School Fair Share Tuition Fund.

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