

MERRIMAC HEIGHTS ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

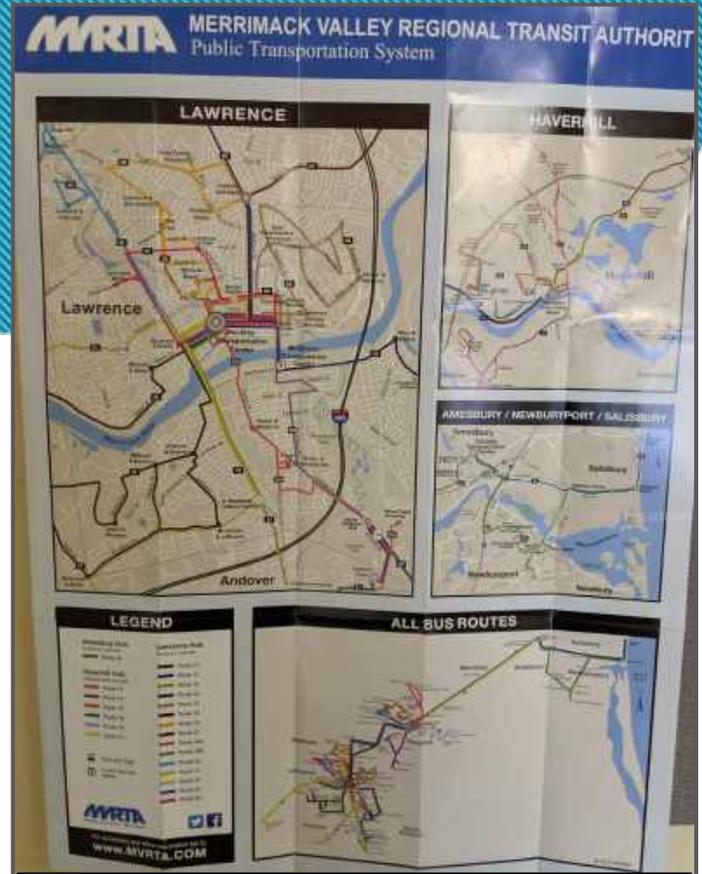
CURRICULUM NEWS AND EVENTS NOVEMBER 2019



We went to the **Mapparium** in Boston, a 3-story high globe made of stained glass. Visitors enter and cross through the center on a bridge. The last update to the map was made in 1935 so we can see where Russia was located.

We then went to the Boston Public Library where we visited the **Leventhal Map and Education Center**. Students examined several types of maps and discussed how each map-maker has a purpose and point of view, resulting in some very unusual maps.

Now that we've reviewed our geography and refreshed our map skills, the history classes will dive into specific ancient cultures. First stop Africa!



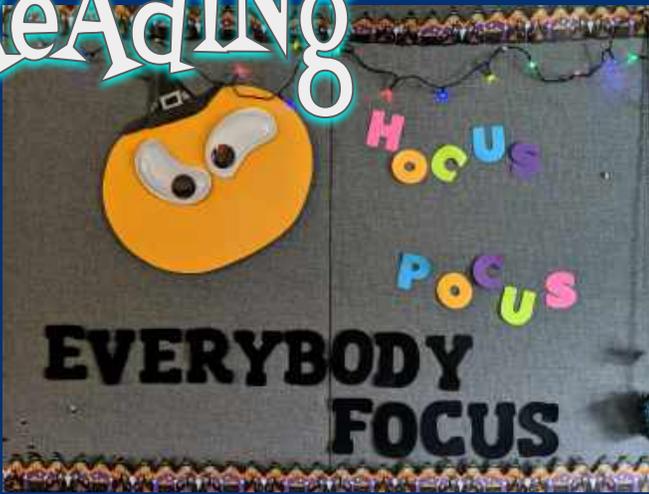
The Transitions group of students put their map skills to a practical test. Each student was challenged to plot a route to a given destination and take the group there. They traveled by bus.

In preparation for our adventures students completed a variety of activities in the days before the trips. We had a lot of fun playing with prepositions - those pesky little words that mean so much - and pieced together a wall sized world map. Then we explored Google Maps and freaked everyone out by looking into the backyards of their homes using satellite imagery!



Empowering students for a lifetime of success

ReAdiNg



This month's vocabulary words describe tastes. Salty, citrusy, bland, peppery, sugary, savory, tangy. Next month's words will describe smells.



PEPPERY tangy
sugary



The book club is in action! Erik, Amanda, Katie, and Allison took a short walk to the Merrimac Public Library. We met the librarians, explored the exhibits and, of course, borrowed a few books! The library has a wide array of offerings including movies, music, magazines, online resources. We look forward to more trips together!

PHOTOGRAPHY CLASS

A group of students took on the challenge of bettering their photography. Ms. Leanne focused the class on how to arrange their image in the viewfinder to get a composition that adds to the success of the photo. Here are two examples.



These cue words help a student state what they see or know. Next time your child gets tongue-tied, try asking, "what's the shape?"

SIZE	WHAT	COLOR	NUMBER	SHAPE	WHERE	SOUND
WHEN	BACKGROUND	PERSPECTIVE	MOVEMENT	MOOD		

Found on a classroom wall: Visualizing & Verbalizing©'s "Structure Words".



A student observation: It's kinda cool how numbers are like colors. If you mix 2 colors together you get another color. And when you mix 2 numbers together you get another number. (KB)

Meet Ms. Amanda!

Amanda Durell recently joined MHA as a Speech and Language Pathologist. She is a graduate of the Communication Science and Disorder program at UNH, where she also studied psychology. She is particularly interested in helping clients with stuttering or language difficulties.

Amanda came to work at MHA because the size of the school meant she could get to really know her students and make a meaningful difference in their lives.

She admits to a couple of passions outside of school. One is snowboarding up at Sugarloaf; she even worked one winter as a snow maker. Amanda loves to travel and recommends the incredible diversity and Gothic architecture of Barcelona, Spain. When kicking back at home she may go horseback riding or spend time playing piano.

Next time you're at MHA tell her Hola!



The PHYSICAL SCIENCE CORNER

The Word of the Month: *element*

The Local Definition: Elements are the tiny things that all matter is made from.

One way that we sort matter in Physical Science is to talk about chemical elements. We are focusing on 6 of the most common: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulfur, and helium.

An element is a pure substance made from a single type of atom. They are the building blocks for all the rest of the matter in the world.

If you want to play with elements, check out the activities at this website.

<http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/chemistry.html> Make fake snot!



Did you hear about our adventures with exploding pumpkins? In an effort to demonstrate the power of chemistry, Ms. Bri filled a pumpkin with a gas then added a flame through a side hole in the pumpkin. The pre-cut jack-o-lantern eyes and mouth then hurriedly and loudly popped out. While video was recorded, it was deemed to look too much like a clip from a disaster movie to post. The family website contains another video looking at other chemical reactions.

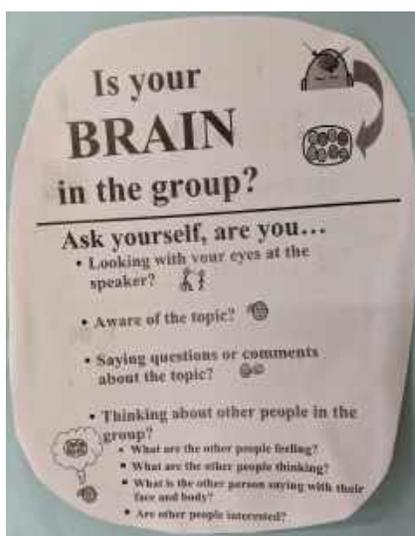


Do you know Mr. Erik?

Erik Pearson is MHA's occupational therapist. He meets with students individually and in groups, and this year has a class we are calling Daily Living Skills in which students are working on the skills that will build their confidence and independence.

Erik studied occupational therapy at Baypath University in Longmeadow, MA. As an intern he worked in a public school with preschool to HS aged students and in a mental health community resources facility with adults aged 25 to 70. His good friend and co-worker, Joanne McCarthy let him know MHA had an opening for an OT and he started here last fall.

Erik most wants to see students do things for themselves and to share in their excitement when they successfully meet their goals. In his off hours Erik enjoys opportunities to share experiences with others, whether skiing or jigsaw puzzle building.



You've probably heard the question often asked at MHA: **Is your brain and body in the group?**

The kids have been taught to monitor how they present themselves in different situations. It is a basic practice of Social Thinking. They are expected to show their brain is present by making comments or asking questions about the topic and thinking about what others are feeling or thinking. Their body is expected to be in the group's space, turned toward the speaker, and their eyes on the speakers. Some of our students don't know how to use their brain or body in group situations so we tell them, specifically. Even when the topic is of little interest, each person in the group is expected to demonstrate this simple level of participation.



Holiday Gift Bag



Toy Drive! This year MHA will participate in the Holiday Gift Bag Program to bring gifts to a local girl and boy in need. Students will receive their gift "assignment" in early November. Please encourage your child to earn money and purchase the gift themselves to make this a learning experience. Household chores, raking leaves, or cleaning out the car will give them a sense of connection. **We kindly ask that all donations are brought in no later than December 12th** so students in the transition group can drop the donations at Community Service of Newburyport, Inc.. Direct any questions to Ms. Lucy at LFracasso@merrimacheightsacademy.org.

This newsletter At MHA we are always doing something: individuals, groups, classes, and the whole school. In an effort to share some of that with parents we have created a newsletter which will be shared via email as a PDF on the first of each month. It will contain students' first names, photos, and information about what students and teachers are up to. If there's something you'd like to know about, please send us a request.



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Family website:

<https://sites.google.com/merrimacheightsacademy.org/mhaforparentsandkids/news-events>



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