

The statement of purpose van Mission Hill, een public school in Boston:

'The task of public education is to help parents raise youngsters who will maintain and nurture the best habits of a democratic society be smart, caring, strong, resilient, imaginative and thoughtful. It aims at producing youngsters who can live productive, socially useful and personal satisfying lives, while also respecting the rights of all others. The school, as we see it, will help strengthen our commitment to diversity, equity and mutual respect.

Democracy requires citizens with the capacity to step into the shoes of others, even those we most dislike, to sift and weigh alternatives, to listen respectfully to other viewpoints with the possibility in mind that we each have something to learn from others. It requires us to be prepared to defend intelligently that which we believe to be true, and that which we believe best meets our individual needs and those of our family, community and broader public — to not be easily conned. It requires also the skills and competencies to be well informed and persuasive—to read well, to write and speak effectively and persuasively, and to handle numbers and calculations with competence and confidence.

Democracy requires citizens who are themselves artists and inventors — knowledgeable about the accomplishments, performances, products and inventions of others but also capable of producing, performing and inventing their own art. Without art we are all deprived.

Such habits of mind, and such competence are sustained by our enthusiasms, as well as our love for others and our respect for ourselves, and our willingness to persevere, deal with frustration and develop reliable habits of work. Our mission is to create a community in which our children and their families can best maintain and nurture such democratic habits.

Toward these ends, our community must be prepared to spend time even when it might seem wasteful hearing each other out. We must deal with each other in ways that lead us to feel stronger and more loved, not weaker and less loveable. We must expect the most from everyone, hold all to the highest standards, but also respect our different ways of exhibiting excellence. We must together build a reasonable set of standards for our graduates so that they can demonstrate to us their capacity to meet this mission'.

Mission Hill Curriculum

'Central to teaching and learning at Mission Hill School is an integrated curriculum that attends to the academic, intellectual, artistic, social, emotional, and civic growth of each student. The school-wide themes are woven into social studies, literacy, science and the arts. While mathematics is taught as a discrete content area, it too may connect to thematic studies through activities such as graphing data collection or the study of Ancient Greek mathematicians. Students study thematic topics over a four-year rotation. Each student experiences the full range of 12 themes from Kindergarten through third grade, and then a second time, from fourth through seventh grades.

Middle School students follow the schoolwide curriculum to a lesser degree as they prepare for their portfolio requirements necessary for graduation. The

reflective process embedded in portfolio work at each grade level further helps students to see connections between topics, disciplines, and their own learning. Students develop competency in making choices and articulating their reasons for those choices, culminating in the portfolio presentation as a critical graduation requirement.

It is the school's belief that students learn best when engaged in meaningful topics where the focus is on depth as opposed to breadth. The idea is that a student will learn some things well, rather than a great many things with little understanding'.

The Mission/ Philosophy van The Neighborhood school in New York, een reform school in New York:

Our practice is based on what we understand about children:

- All children are curious about the world and want to learn!
- Children learn by having experiences with each other with materials and the environment.
- When school is integrated with the rest of the child's life, it makes sense and becomes meaningful.
- Children are capable of contributing to the group, learning cooperatively and being peaceful productive members of the both a democratic classroom and the larger school community.
- Children engage in learning and demonstrate what they learn in many ways.

With the deep belief in the remarkable capabilities of each child we build on their strengths whether they are academic, artistic, physical or social. We provide a safe and motivating environment for them to try new experiences to build on their strengths and to go further in the areas where they need improvement. We provide a place where their natural capacity for discovery is stimulated and their innate and natural curiosities are focused into a context for learning about themselves and their world.

We encourage them to make connections, explore their interests, make good choices and be self-confident about their abilities through the curriculum.

Children are provided the opportunity to integrate a wide range of skills and subject matter through a core curriculum. In this way, children study the history, natural and physical environment, geography, culture and people of a particular location and time to learn and think critically about themselves and others.

A typical first/second grade curriculum might focus on services in the neighborhood (fire station, police department, post office, etc.) or the buildings of New York City. Within the study there are field trips, rich literature, writing experiences, math activities and extensions and enrichment in the arts.

Our entire curriculum has a strong emphasis on developing research skills, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and socialization. As children

grow and move on to the upper grades they go from studies of their immediate environments to the larger city and its history as well as other geographic areas and their histories.

We look at the children and measure their growth and development on an individual continuum. Regular curriculum letters, Principal's weekly letters, individualized progress reports, portfolios and family conferences provide avenues of communication between school and families. Teachers use techniques of assessment such as anecdotal notes, running records and writing and math samples to analyze individual student's progress and make decisions about class instruction.

As facilitators, we help the children come up with solutions and solve problems. Conflict resolution provides techniques for teaching children how to be peaceful members of a multicultural, non-sexist learning community.

School wide policies and practices are formed collaboratively and dynamically to provide a cohesive, unified, thoughtful environment for children. We are self-reflective and reevaluate our policies periodically in an effort to meet the needs of our children and ever evolving community.