



Hanlon School Newsletters

Jan 2020

From the Desk of Mrs. Cronin:

January 27, 2020

Dear Hanlon Families,

It was a musical day at the Hanlon School!

Thanks to the generosity of the Foundation for Westwood Education, Tony Vacca, international percussionist and composer, brought his World Rhythms program to our school. Students in grades 3, 4, and 5 participated in a multicultural, hands-on, ensemble workshop. Using djembe drums, gongs, rattles, bells and other percussion instruments, students learned call-and-response patterns, chants, and signals in order to play 5 different sections in a percussion ensemble. The pieces learned in the workshops connected rhythms from African, Caribbean, and American traditions. This afternoon, the entire school was treated to a concert featuring Mr. Vacca and his 5th grade student ensemble! Mr. Vacca spoke with children about his travels throughout Africa, teaching them about the instruments and musical culture that is found in places like Senegal, Ghana, and the Cote d'Ivoire. He shared messages of diversity, generosity, and the humanity that connects us together. [Here is a link to Mr. Vacca's website for interested families.](#)



Students in the K1K and 1S classrooms also spent the morning learning about and experimenting with sound. Thanks to the generosity of our PTO, the Discovery Museum

brought their Sound Enrichment Science program to Hanlon. Children explored the properties of sound by plunging vibrating tuning forks into bowls of water, watching ping pong balls react to vibration, and creating their own musical instruments. We are very fortunate to be able to bring programs like these to Hanlon, thanks to donations to



the FWE and PTO from our families and Westwood residents.

As we gear up to honor and celebrate Black History Month, I wanted to share two resources: [Here is a link to a brief, 20 minute podcast about talking with young children about race](#).

While many adults are uncomfortable discussing race, and some find it easier to brush off the innocent questions and comments of their children, we know that it is particularly important to tackle this topic early, honestly and in age-appropriate ways. The podcast linked above gives some helpful examples and tips for parents. The next resource is something I have shared in the past. Here are three book lists with picture books and

chapter books that you can borrow from the Hanlon Library and classrooms, or from the Westwood Public Library: [K/1 List](#) [2/3 List](#) [4/5 List](#) The books have characters from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and are great to read aloud at home with your children. The lists were compiled by a group of Hanlon parents, vetted by the WPS librarians, and purchased by WPS for all classrooms at Hanlon. I hope you'll check some out!

Jan. 11, 2020

Dear Hanlon Families,

In a recent staff meeting, I asked the Hanlon teachers to think about a lesson from their own childhood elementary experience that still stands out in their memories today. I ask you to do the same. What made that learning experience stand out for you? For our staff, the experiences they remembered were primarily hands-on, collaborative, or those with a real-life purpose. One of our priorities as a district is to provide students with meaningful, authentic learning opportunities. We know that students learn best when they are engaged in a task. Students who are engaged are attracted to their work, willing to persist despite challenges and obstacles, and they take visible delight in accomplishing their work. Learning experiences that engage students are something we strive for here in Westwood.

On Thursday, students in first grade, fifth grade, and kindergarteners in K1K were treated to a particularly authentic experience in science. Thanks to the vision of our Science coaches and the generosity of our PTO, the Boston Museum of Science brought their inflatable planetarium, Starlab, to the Hanlon gym. As they sat inside the darkened dome, students learned about the sun and how it is similar and different from other stars. They watched how the rotation and orbit of Earth changes how the sky looks. They identified constellations and discussed lunar phases that occur over the course of a month. It was fun to hear students gasping, ooo-ing, and ahh-ing as they experienced the night sky, right in our gymnasium. In all of our teaching here at the Hanlon, we aim to provide students with meaningful, authentic learning experiences that they will remember.



Our next Spirit Day will be Thursday, Jan. 16th: Pajama Day. Remember to send children with warm layers for recess and/or Ex. Day. Bathrobes are fine, but please leave the slippers at home for safety.

The Winter Session of Mini-Courses begins on Monday, Jan. 13th. Many thanks to Ada Zhong, Kristin Butters, and Brian Gorman for all their behind the scenes work in getting the courses up and running.

SEPAC is hosting an event for parents on Monday, Jan. 13th: Understanding the IEP. A detailed flyer is available in the Announcements Box to the right.

Save the date for Bingo Night: Friday, January 24th from 6:30-7:30 in the Hanlon Gym. A detailed flyer is available in the Announcements Box to the right.

MCAS dates for Grades 3, 4, and 5 are published in the Announcements Box to the right, and on the district calendar. Families in grades 3-5 should make every effort to avoid making travel plans that involve the following dates: March 31, April 2, May 5, 7, 12, and 14th. If you know in advance that your 3rd, 4th, or 5th grader will not be in school on any of those days, please contact Ms. Cronin so that make-up plans can be made.

If you need to contact the Main Office for attendance/dismissal changes or if you have questions, email hnooffice@westwood.k12.ma.us or call 781-326-7500 x8424

Hanlon School on Twitter

Follow @HanlonSchool_ps to see photos of our #HappyatHanlon kids!

School Committee

Did you know that Carol Lewis is Hanlon's School Committee Representative? If you have questions, contact Ms. Lewis at clewis-sc@westwood.k12.ma.us

**Hanlon Elementary School, 790 Gay Street, Westwood, MA 02090 781-325-7500 x.8424
Sarah Cronin, Principal**

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