

We're Learning Here!

By Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed.D.



(Amika Kemmler Ernst is a retired BPS New Teacher Developer with extensive experience as a classroom teacher, curriculum developer, and graphic artist. Her "We're Learning Here" Project features images of everyday learning in our public schools, along with the words of the students pictured.)

Haley Pilot School

The Haley Pilot School is on American Legion Highway in Roslindale. It currently serves 380 students in grades K0-6. Visiting the first full week of this new school year, I noticed routines and expectations were being clearly taught and reinforced daily.

Kindergarten students start the day in specialist classes. K0-K1 children are sitting in a circle with Health teacher Angel Scott, learning to share as well as gaining skill in rolling and catching a beach ball between their legs. Next door, Dance teacher Djenaba Reynolds is leading her K2 students in basic merengue steps. A little later I get to watch Dan DeHart do his musical magic with first graders.

Emma Bullock in K1 offers to take me outside to visit the raised garden beds along the side of the building and invites a few children to join us. They collect small ripe cherry tomatoes and find two large cucumbers ready to pick – such excitement and pride!

Students in grades 1-3 are focused on a variety of literacy activities. Sara Stuart's third graders are learning about how their classroom library is set up before selecting independent reading books. I was particularly interested in the

ways fourth graders were using a matrix (I'd call it a rubric) and playing a whole-class game to learn about specific behaviors, aligned with the Haley's core values, expected in various parts of the school.

At the end of the day fifth and sixth grade students are in math classes. Sue Young is working with a fifth grader on finding the volume of a cube, while Jon-Mychal Bowman is helping one of his sixth graders with a question about "decomposing" complex two-dimensional shapes to find their areas.

Throughout the building, despite a long morning of MAP testing in grades 3-6, students seem full of enthusiasm for the year ahead. In addition to diving into content, many classes are also working on ways to share their individual and collective identities with colorful posters, quickly appearing on hallway bulletin boards. How does **YOUR** school start the new year?

Warmest regards & appreciation for what you do every day,

Amika

Amika Kemmler Ernst, Ed. D.
Amika45@gmail.com



I was looking for and picking little red tomatoes in the school garden. Ms. Bullock was helping me. I like being in the garden! This year we are learning to count, listening to stories, and making new friends.

Ruxton Patterson, K1

We are practicing rolling and catching a ball. We are learning to listen, to share, and to sit "crisscross applesauce". We are also learning about feelings and getting to know one another.

K1 students in Angel Scott's health class



Mr. DeHart is playing the guitar and we are singing. We are learning patterns in music by clapping and using rhythm sticks. We are learning how to sing the whole "Hot Cross Buns" song! We want to learn how to play all kinds of instruments!

Students in Dan DeHart's Grade 1 music class



We are in dance class with Ms. Djenaba. We learned we have to warm up before dancing, and we're learning to dance the merengue! We sing and spin around and take two small steps. We want to learn more dances this year, like ballet and hip hop.

Students in Erika Barros' K2 class



This is in math class with Ms. Young, who was helping me with my assignment. We are learning how to figure out the volume of a 3-dimensional shape using cubes. I'm also learning to be more persistent when facing a new subject.

Jade Duvert, Grade 5



I am working with Ms. Nemeth on my English, because my first language is Spanish. I'm learning to read, write, and speak better English this year. I just learned the names of animals! I like baby monkeys especially, because they're cute and do funny things!

Arabellys Santana, Grade 3



I'm doing an assignment in math class, and I asked Mr. Bowman for help with it. We're learning how to figure out the area of complex shapes by decomposing, breaking each shape into its parts. In Social Studies we're learning about early human development, which I think is interesting.

Jean Charles, Grade 6

We are playing a game about what we do in this school to build community, using our PEACE values: Positivity, Expectations, Acceptance, Community, and Engagement. We used a matrix to see how they apply in different places, like the hallways or cafeteria, as well as the classroom. We're also reading and writing rhyming and free verse poetry, learning about topics (what it's about) and themes (the moral or lesson) of poems.

Alice Rowles & Dayna Jones, Grade 4