

Fall 2022

# Higashi Highlights



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800 North Main Street  
Randolph, MA

*Helping children with autism  
exceed expectations since 1987*



[www.bostonhigashi.org](http://www.bostonhigashi.org)

# Program Director's Perspective



Dr. John Maina

## Highlights

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### Leadership Influences Learning

I am honored to step into this new role of Director of Programming at the Boston Higashi School. Indeed I have some big shoes to fill, after 15 years of leadership by Principal Deborah Donovan. Like her, I too have a personal connection as a Higashi parent. My son Joemark is currently in the Emergence Program, and has been at Higashi since 2017. My own Higashi journey began in 2007 when I started as a Residential Instructor, and I have had the pleasure of teaching many of your sons and daughters over the years. I have also learned a great deal from them, and I am excited for the next chapter at the Boston Higashi School.

I am proud to announce that the 2022/23 school year has started on a good trajectory with our staff exuding confidence and optimism in the progress of our students. I am incredibly proud of the great work our staff have been doing to ensure the students are learning in a nurturing environment. We have continued to succeed in our goal of helping our students learn to reach their full potential as a result of outstanding leadership from our teams. Promoting leadership in our educators will not only improve their overall performance but also influence students' learning outcomes. I will continue to lead, support, and serve as a role model for staff in our endeavor to be the best program for children and young adults diagnosed with autism in the commonwealth of Massachusetts. Our leadership team is focused on ensuring sustained improvements in students' learning outcomes through ongoing, hands-on and job-embedded training for our staff. The office of Director of Programming will continue to coordinate the implementation of the BHS 2022/23 Action Plan, which stipulates our short and long-term goals. This plan has been harmonized with the overall vision of the Training and Curriculum Departments to ensure a cohesive implementation of envisioned programs for improved learning outcomes.

Additionally, the Residential Program continues to do well. The students have returned to community trips. With all the safety protocols observed, students have had the opportunity to return to seasonal community trips like pumpkin picking, visits to the Plimoth Patuxet Museum and shopping at the local supermarkets. I am happy to report that the variety of community sites will continue to steadily increase as we move forward. It is, therefore, great that we are getting back to "normal" with more community outings, group activities, and job sites for our older students. I thank the new Residential Director, Kariuki Muriithi, and his team for recently investing in the training of a large group of newly hired residential staff to prepare them to work successfully with the students and implement the residential programs.

As a result of my daily walkthroughs, I am continually inspired by our staff's efforts and their great love for the students. A great example is seeing Courtney, one of our newest classroom teachers in Older High School, working closely with her students. Courtney has a sibling who recently graduated Boston Higashi School, and now to see her working here with such passion and dedication has been truly inspiring. Indeed, I am looking forward to seeing all of our staff continue to thrive in their roles. The more we grow together as educators, the better we can support our students. I call upon all our staff and those in leadership positions to embrace the mantra "leadership influences learning" as we continue to provide a truly unique educational service to our students.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Executive Director, Mr. Mike Kelly, for investing in the physical development of the program. The state-of-the-art classrooms on the second floor of the De Sales Building and other recently updated classrooms, music and jazz band studios will provide our students and staff with a nurturing and creative space for teaching and learning. The leadership of Boston Higashi School is grateful for the generous support from our parents, donors and well-wishers. On behalf of our school, accept my sincere appreciation for all your efforts in advancing the learning outcomes of our students.

# Back to School

Autumn brings with it many good feelings and one such feeling that can't be beat is that of the first day of school. Though we may be here all year, staff and students get to reset in September for a new school year! The first day for us might have brought gloomy wet weather, but that did not stop the excitement from filling the halls of Higashi. New decorations, new classrooms assignments, new renovations, and everyone was ready to get going! This school year has some big plans for our students and should be one for the record books. We cannot wait to see what achievements our students will reach this year and we look forward to sharing them all with you!

Heading back to school brings with it other traditions that we cherish annually. One such tradition is the annual golf tournament fundraiser held by the Iron Workers Local 7. A team of retired Iron Workers have pledged over \$7,000 to Boston Higashi. Jim Lawlor, grandfather of a Higashi Alumni, organizes this group each year and we couldn't be more thankful for this continued connection.



## Local 7 Iron Workers





## A Fall Season Like No Other in the Residence

The Fall season in New England is undoubtedly the most beautiful time of the year with the multi-colored foliage brightening the environment. At the Boston Higashi Residence, students visited local state parks to enjoy the views, take pictures and learn about the season. No doubt our students and staff have made enough memories to last the upcoming winter season.

All the residential divisions took time to visit the Nihtila Farm in Holbrook for the annual pumpkin-picking activity. While at the farm, our students did not just pick pumpkins but also had a fun hay ride and an opportunity to pet farm animals. Each visitor also got a free apple from the farm management. Back in Residence, the students and their teachers engaged in the pumpkin carving activity. The resultant Jack-o-lanterns were in turn placed near the entrance as seasonal decorations.

After a two-year hiatus, the annual Costume Open House and Party kicked off with the younger divisions engaging in trunk-or-treat as well as visiting the Haunted Hallway within the school. Older divisions gathered in the school gym for a fun-filled dance party. It was a great moment to see all the students and teachers adorned in their most creative costumes enjoying the evening. A great shout-out to the Chartwells staff for hosting our students and teachers for a sumptuous Thanksgiving Dinner.

# Parent Night

For the first time in several years we were able to host our Parent Night inside the halls of Higashi! What an incredible feeling it was to welcome our students' parents back into the building after so much time away. For many new parents, it was the first time that they were able to walk around and see the classrooms. Like many, we were beyond thrilled to smile and laugh with each other in person and no longer behind a computer screen! After the introductions of the leadership team at Higashi, parents broke off into groups to join the teachers of their student's division. Some parents were encouraged to play ice breaker games to loosen up while others even learned (and sang!) our school theme song! Having nights like this on our campus is so important to who we are and what makes up our Higashi Family. Not only do parents get the opportunity to meet all of the wonderful staff that work with their children but they also get to have conversations with other parents in similar situations to their own. We cannot wait to continue inviting parents back to our campus for more events!



## New Job Site Opportunities

We have several new job sites on campus this year with two of them getting started right away. Now open on Mondays and Fridays is our Sundae Fundae Cafe! Led by Frank Okoye and the team in Older High School, students now have the opportunity to practice working in a coffee shop type setting. Students begin the process by making shopping lists, going to the store and stocking the cafe before taking any orders! Twice a week a team of students will head down to the cafe to prepare coffee and treats for staff to enjoy during their afternoon breaks!

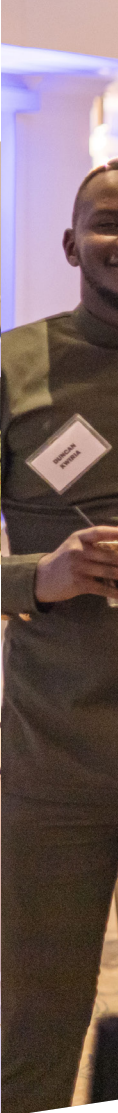
The student workers behind the counter at the Sundae Fundae Cafe can be seen looking professional in aprons with the student created logo printed front and center. This is made possible by yet another new job site at Higashi, our very own print shop! Equipment like heat presses and image transfer paper allows students to create shirts, bags, aprons, you name it, with their own designs! You'll be seeing more and more custom made apparel and accessories in the halls of Higashi as students are hard at work in our new job sites!

# 8th Annual Gala

*Where the Magic Happens*



Scan QR to watch videos played at the Gala





What a great feeling it was to finally be back with the Higashi Family for this year's 8th Annual Gala "Where the Magic Happens". This year's event was the best ever raising \$350,000 with over 300 people in attendance! It has been almost three years since we last gathered and we could not have dreamed of a more exciting and compelling reunion.

With the enormous support of our sponsors, almost 200 Higashi employees were able to attend and wow, did they ever have a good time! Our staff has been working so hard for the past three years and the Gala was their first opportunity to celebrate each other, and all that they have accomplished. The Higashi Family has never been stronger and more united.

The event showcased all that makes Higashi great. With compelling videos from parents Tricia Dandrow and Mike and Diane Wilcox the audience was taken on the emotional journey many families go through parenting a child with autism. Special presentations to Principal Deb Donovan and Jazz Band Director, Kaname Ueno for their brilliant years of service, brought the audience to its feet on several occasions. The return of the Jazz Band was a welcome sight, and none of us will ever forget the special performance by Ellery Luy and Mr. Ueno – they brought the house down with rousing ovations in the most memorable performance in the eight year history of the event.

Jackie Bruno, Award Winning Journalist and former News Anchor/Reporter for NBC Universal and first-time Gala Emcee did a fantastic job! Seamlessly navigating a very busy, emotional and moving agenda – we can't thank her enough for standing in for long-time friend and emcee David Wade. And how can we forget newly elected Teamster Local 25 President, Tom Mari for upping their \$100,000 gift to \$125,000 to help the Teamsters reach \$500,000 in lifetime donations to the school. Who could ask for anything more?

We remain forever grateful for the continued support and loyalty of all who participated in this year's event. The sponsors were amazing and their generosity was boundless - their friendship means the world to us and their contributions play a significant role in the advancement of our beautiful campus. To all our staff who attended, your presence made the night extra special and we all can't wait until we do it again!



# Sports Day



It's hard to imagine that our first major school event of the new school year has already come and gone. Everyone anxiously awaited for the day to come as we asked parents to join our students on the field for the first time in years! With the green light given, parents arrived in what was one of our favorite Sports Days to date!

It's a good thing that the weather cooperated and allowed us to enjoy the turf field because the level of excitement could not have been

contained indoors! Parents and families arrived early and ready to go. Students proudly marched out to the field, ready to show their parents what they have learned in the new school year.

With each division stepping up and introducing the game to parents, the high energy never wavered. This event proved to be one of the most joyful times in recent memory on the Higashi campus. The best thing that was on full display this year, smiles. It was so heart-warming to

see the smiles on our students and family members as they competed together in our Sports Day games!

We are excited to see this trend continue throughout the school year as we invite parents back on campus to join us more and more!





# Field Trips



To get into the fall feelings, Elementary division took a field trip over to Ward's Berry Farm! Students piled onto a bus with excited jitters as they headed out for their first field trip with all of their friends and teachers. At Ward's Berry Farm, everyone gathered and listened to the staff before picking their seat on the hay ride! A fun and bumpy ride that took everyone around the entire farm ended in a large pumpkin patch.



Before running into the field to collect pumpkins, students had the opportunity to try the Corn Maze! As they entered the maze, staff from the farm handed them vegetables to carry. This seemed a bit confusing at first, but students were determined to find their way through that maze! Turns out that the prize at the end of the maze were some hungry pigs, the vegetables made sense now!

After feeding the pigs some lunch, students headed out to the pumpkin patch to find their favorite gourd. The day was perfect in so many ways. Pumpkins were brought back to campus and used in various academic lessons, making this field trip an incredible learning experience!



# Fall Festivities

Dances, parties, parades, nature walks and haunted hallways! We had it all here on the Higashi campus for some fun filled fall festivities. The end of October brings with it a lot of reasons to celebrate. Students in both our Day and Residential programs jam pack those final days with plenty of activities.

In Residence, we held our first dance parties of the school year. This time with a bit of a spooky twist! While the oldest students in our Emergence Program enjoyed an evening of dancing in the gym, our High School programs set up their classes with different spirited games to play. Meanwhile the younger students participated in a music jam fest in Marble Hall, while taking turns going out into the Haunted Nature Trail.

While on the Day side of our program, students in the younger divisions enjoyed a Costume Parade! Parents were invited to not only spectate, but also to participate in our Trunk or Treat. Once again, we had parents show up with decorated car trunks and candy ready to hand out! Here at Higashi, our students are always ready for a good time and they sure know how to bring the energy!





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# Upcoming Events

## Events

- 12.14 **WINTER PARTY**  
6pm-7:30pm
- 12.14 **DANCE PARTY**  
6:30pm-7:30pm
- 12.20 **WINTER MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
10am - 12pm
- 12.21 **WINTER VACATION**  
Dec 21 - Jan 2
- 01.23 **DAY PROGRAM RESUMES**  
8:30am - 1:30pm



## Thank You Teamsters



We are incredibly proud to reveal our new turf field dedication to the Teamsters Local 25! Over the past several years, the Teamsters have donated over \$500,000 to the Boston Higashi School. We are so thankful to every member of their team for their dedication and support and are overjoyed that this special partnership will continue for years to come. Tom Mari, Teamster President, and his team came to our campus to see the boulder engraved with their logo placed at the entrance to our athletic field. Many thanks to Tom, former President Sean O'Brien and every Teamster out there for always being by our side!