

Spring 2023

Higashi Highlights



www.bostonhigashi.org

*Helping children with autism
exceed expectations since 1987*

(781) 961-0800

Program Director's Perspective



Dr. John Maina

Highlights

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FOLLOW US ON
SOCIAL MEDIA!



We are on a Roll!

The famous saying,
"I am because we are and since we are I am"
defines the Higashi spirit!

The spring semester is always a time of transition and growth. As the bleak winter weather makes way for more temperate, sunny days, we too mark the changes by annual events and rites of passage.

April is Autism Acceptance Month. At Boston Higashi School we celebrated the month by inviting our parents and families to our first ever Autism Acceptance Month Walk along our school's beautiful and therapeutic nature trail. The students were also able to visit a police armored vehicle and try on police emergency response gear for size, all the while lively music streamed from our stereo system, setting the tone for a day of fun. It was such a great event and the weather could not have been better! We look forward to making this event a permanent part of the Higashi calendar.

The class of 2023 will soon be graduating. They have demonstrated that working together and following their teachers' guidance made a difference in their learning outcomes. We are thankful for the opportunity to build a solid foundation for a brighter future for them. They leave great memories in our hearts and minds. We truly wish them all the best in the next phase of their lives.

We hold our students to extremely high expectations. We also believe in them and their abilities. As a result, our students have been able to surpass expectations in a wide variety of areas. These include but are not limited to academics, employment education, and physical exercise, to mention a few. Indeed, what our students are able to achieve is inspiring.

This year's Road Race was great! A good number of students were participating in this event for the first time. Kudos to our parents, families and well wishers for cheering the students on as they showcased their athletic prowess. The family leisure run was also a hit, with many families even choosing to run with their students. As the Director of Programming (and also a proud father of an Emergence Program student), I participated in the family run. Even though I was not the fastest, I was glad to participate!

Our students have grown to be very talented, and we are going to maximize their potential in all areas of their school endeavors. We thank our parents and families for trusting us to educate and care for their wonderful children and young adults. This spring season has provided many opportunities for our students, staff, and families to interact freely in the Ubuntu spirit of "I am because we are, and since we are, I am." I can think of no better word that exemplifies the Higashi spirit like this togetherness.

We will continue to collaborate with you all!

Community Partners

Now that the warmer months are upon us, there are a variety of opportunities to volunteer and contribute to the growth of the Higashi Campus, including working on the Daily Life Farm, the outdoor classroom and the Evan Henry Trail. This is an excellent opportunity to give back to the community, meet new people, and learn more about our autism community. Recent support from Teamsters Local 25, the Norfolk County Sheriff's Department, Eastern Bank, and students from the Milton Academy, has been invaluable in advancing the mission of the Farm. With the continued support from volunteer groups along with corporate groups like our friends at the Mitsubishi Corporation, we can continue to make meaningful progress and inspire others to get involved. We'd also like to thank Rita and Bob Coletti along with Gray, Gray, & Gray LLP for donating enough reusable bags to each of our students. These bags came in the perfect time for students to utilize for carrying their costumes and outfits for Annual Celebration!

If your group is interested please contact Paul Fanning at paul.fanning@bostonhigashi.org.



Parent Association

It's been a busy few months as our Higashi families launch into spring and feel so grateful to resume wonderful family events that we can enjoy with our children. In April, parents were absolutely thrilled to participate in the Spring Fling Dance and got to see our kids all dressed up, dancing, and having a great time. Not only did we enjoy spending time with our kids, but also reconnecting with other parents that we just haven't seen too much over the last three years. We are thankful!

April brought the Autism Acceptance Walk in honor of Autism Acceptance Month. Parents, teachers, and children alike enjoyed meandering around the nature trail on a beautiful day. The real highlight for many was the Touch-a-Truck event in the parking lot after (and during!) the walk. A fan-favorite was being able to climb into the SWAT vehicle and meet Officer Dan. Climbing on the police motorcycle,

up into the big CAT tractor, and taking a hayride were pretty awesome too!

In May it was time for the much-anticipated Road Race, where everyone's a winner for finishing the 2K course. Special shout-outs to all the first, second, and third place finishers in their respective age groups – WAY TO GO! We were blessed with a sunny day and a great family turnout! Families in the older age groups are counting down the days to Formal Dance at Lombardo's on June 8th, where all the Emergence Program young men will be wearing tuxedos, the young ladies will be wearing their best party dresses, and all these dapper young adults and their guests will dance the night away.

Lastly, calling all volunteers! If you would like to get involved please email Kate DeVane at katehap5@comcast.net.



Welcoming Back Favorite Traditions in the Residence

The residential program embarked has on a mission to restore the community, recreation, and leisure activities that existed before the pandemic. One of the activities that has made a comeback is rollerblading. This is a very popular indoor/outdoor activity with our students. It allows them to diffuse energy, learn new skills, and challenge themselves in a fun environment.

The residential program has brought back several other activities that were popular before the pandemic. Students can now go shopping in-store for various activities, such as cooking and buying decorations for their divisions. Bowling is another popular activity that students look forward to. They enjoy playing competitively with their teachers. Movie and Bingo nights are also back, and these activities continue to enrich the quality of weekend nights. They provide opportunities for students to practice going to movie theaters, a skill they can generalize so as to have fun with their families.

In April 2023, parents, community members, and BHS alumni were finally able to fully participate in school and residential events with the students. Parents and students enjoyed the Spring Dance and the new Autism Acceptance Walk. The Residential Program looks forward to welcoming parents, guardians, and the community back to campus to have fun with the students. We are back!

Formal Dance

On the evening of April 5th, we had a fantastic time at our Spring Fling semi-formal dance! The school gymnasium was transformed into a magical place with colorful decorations, bright lights, and vibrant music. As soon as the doors opened, the excited chatter of students, parents, and staff filled the room. The DJ played some great music at a loud volume that got everyone moving and grooving. Everyone came together to celebrate a special occasion that brought together Older High School, Emergence Program, and Parents for the first time in a long while!

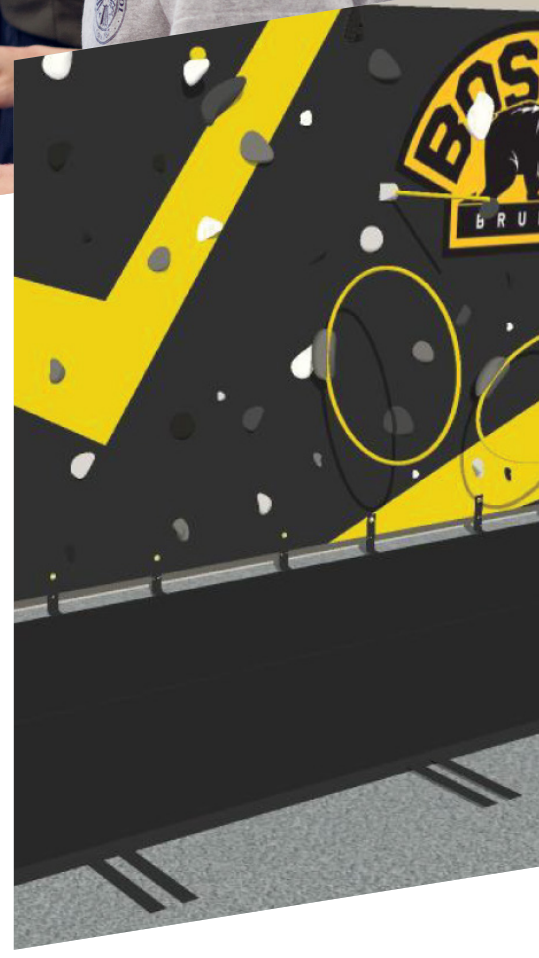
The atmosphere was lively and energetic, with everyone enjoying themselves and dancing the night away. The dance floor was packed with students showing off their best moves, parents swaying to the rhythm, and staff members letting loose after a long day at work!

The event was a huge success, and we hope to have many more like it in the future. Bringing people together in a fun and joyful atmosphere is what we aim to do at our school. We are grateful to everyone who came out to support us and create lasting memories.



Campus Highlights

Continuing to Thrive





As Spring arrives and new life is sprouting all around us, so too is the Boston Higashi School and its surroundings. Our campus continues to grow, so let's catch you up to date on the latest developments.

Renovations to DeSales Educational Building now complete:

After almost 13 long years of planning, demolition and construction, renovations to the entire DeSales Educational Building are now complete. Beginning in 2010 with the construction of the Mitsubishi Library and recently ending with the demolition and construction of 9 new classrooms, a science room, and art room on the second floor, over 70,000 sq ft of state-of-the-art living and learning space has been created. All Higashi students from elementary to high school have the opportunity to attend classes in beautiful, spacious, bright, colorful classrooms equipped with all the technology enhancements in place to maximize their educational experience. Planning and execution of this major undertaking could not have taken place without the extraordinary patience and cooperation of all our staff.

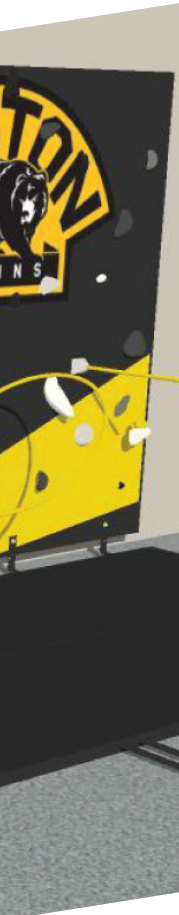
New Storage and Retail Shed at the Higashi Farm:

This past fall construction of a 240sq ft shed at the Daily Life Farm was completed. The shed will have multiple functions – equipment storage, classroom and meeting space, a refrigeration area for harvested crops and the primary point of sale to members of the public. The shed in of itself will provide numerous vocational training opportunities for our students and members of the Continuing Adult Education Program (CAEP). We are extremely excited about all the vocational, social and recreational opportunities that continue to evolve with the Daily Life Farm.



New Climbing Wall for our Younger Students:

Thanks to the generosity of the Boston Bruins Foundation a 20' x 8' traverse climbing wall is currently being constructed off-site by Rockwerx Climbing Walls in Barre, MA. This exciting development was the brainstorm of the Higashi PE Department and will become a reality in the upcoming months. The wall will be branded in the Bruins black and gold, highlighted with their well-recognized bear logo. The wall will serve as a training site for younger students who can eventually transfer their climbing skills to the larger and far more challenging Central Rock Gym, here in Randolph. Many thanks to the Boston Bruins for their continued support, who despite a disappointing ending to their season, will always be champions in our eyes.



Road Race 2023



Our annual Higashi Road Race event was a tremendous success, with a large and energetic crowd of parents, teachers, and friends cheering on all the students as they ran. The students had been working hard in recent weeks to prepare for this highly anticipated event, putting in countless hours of training and practice to ensure that they were in top form on race day. With the added support of their loved ones lining the sidelines of the racecourse, the young athletes

were able to dig deep and find the strength and determination they needed to push through to the finish line. As the day progressed, the excitement and energy of the crowd continued to build, culminating in some truly thrilling finishing results that left everyone feeling proud and inspired. We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who came out to show their support and make this year's Higashi Road Race such an unforgettable event. We couldn't have done it without you!



Autism Acceptance Walk



In late April, we hosted our very first Autism Acceptance Walk for our families and alumni! Despite the dreary weather, we were thrilled to see such a wonderful turnout, and the event was a huge success. Our Residential staff played a vital role in leading the event and ensuring that everyone had a great time. We had so much fun with the attendees, and we even had a visit from local PD and SWAT vehicles, the Teamsters truck, and several construction vehicles.

As we celebrated the end of Autism Acceptance Month, we realized how important it is to continue raising awareness about the needs of the autism community. Our hope is to expand on this event in the future and provide even more opportunities for families and alumni to connect, learn, and grow together. We truly believe that events like these are essential for building a strong and supportive community, and we are proud to have hosted such a successful event. We look forward to continuing to work towards our mission of promoting autism acceptance and creating a more inclusive world for all individuals on the autism spectrum.



Spring Fling Vacation

Our Spring Fling Vacation program was a huge success and filled with plenty of fun activities! Our friends from Gnome Surf returned to teach high school students of all ages how to surf. In the morning, students rotated between stations in the gym to work on stretching, balance, and standing on surfboards. After a nice lunch, they practiced their newfound skills in the pool. The staff at Gnome Surf were super friendly and matched the energy of our students! They are an incredible team of dedicated people, and we look forward to working with them again soon.

The second week of vacation began with a fun activity led by our own Higashi parent, Kate DeVane! She brought in plants, dirt, and cameras for students to add to the flower pots they made in the first week of art activities. Students loved playing with the dirt and planting flowers to create a special gift for a loved one at home. The fun didn't end there as we even had animals on campus for students to pet and interact with! Some overcame fears while others lived out their dreams. Students enjoyed their time with the goat, lamb, chicken, and bunnies! This was one of our most exciting camps to date!





BOSTON HIGASHI SCHOOL
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Upcoming Events

Events

- 6.8 **OPEN HOUSE**
10am-12pm
- 6.22 **ANNUAL CELEBRATION**
Wednesday Show
- 6.21 **GRADUATION**
10:30am
Followed by luncheon
- 6.25 **ANNUAL CELEBRATION**
Sunday Show
- 6.26 **SUMMER VACATION**
June 26-30
July 1-7
- 7.10 **DAY PROGRAM REOPENS**



Friendly Farewell

We are bidding farewell to two long-time members of the Higashi team, Kaname Ueno and Yumiko Mori. Although we're sad to see them go, we wish them all the best in their next chapter of life in Japan. Over the years, they have touched many lives as friends, mentors, teachers, colleagues, and more. Yumiko has made an excellent contribution to the Alumni community through her work in the CAEP program, and Mr. Ueno has been beloved by his students and peers for his infectious energy. They will both be missed, but we're grateful for the many years we've had with them.

