

Higashi Highlights



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800 North Main Street
Randolph, MA

*Helping children with autism
exceed expectations since 1987*



www.bostonhigashi.org

Program Director's Perspective



Dr. John Maina

Highlights

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A School in Pursuit of Excellence!

As the seasons change, our students continue to embark on a journey of intellectual transformation. With the hard work and dedication of our staff, we have created a nurturing environment that unlocks the potential of students and positively impacts their educational journey. The newly renovated second floor of our DeSales building has created a modernized educational space to enhance concentration and comfort. As you make your way through the classrooms, you can sense the joy and excitement in our students. Not only are they happy to be here, but they are surrounded by tenacious teachers who continue to go above and beyond to help them feel supported and motivated to reach their full potential.

Recently, Middle School students stopped by my office with an invitation to a Thanksgiving dinner. As I entered the small cafeteria to honor their invite, I was happy to see a spot reserved especially for me, surrounded by my jovial Middle School hosts. Their kind gesture is something I will treasure for a very long time. Moreover, school events like Sports Day, Road Race, Parents Night, Costume Parties, and Friendsgiving continue to be a great success at our school. I have truly enjoyed seeing the parents and families participate in these activities as well as the students' efforts and perseverance. Not even the weather will stop us from making the best out of these special moments! Indeed, it was great to see our students and their families participate in the 2023 Road Race in spite of the heavy downpour on that day! This exemplifies the Higashi spirit of "WE CAN DO IT!"

This year's school events have continued to strengthen our collaboration internally and externally. To this end, I want to thank our generous donors for making our 9th Annual Gala a huge success. With your contribution we will be able to move our Health Center to a new, more spacious location. This space will provide for improved delivery of health and clinical services in a student-friendly environment. We are also in the conceptual phase of developing a day program to serve our alumni. This aligns with our goal to ensure our students continue to thrive even after they exit our program at the age of twenty-two. To this end, we are collaborating with the Department of Developmental Services and other partners to make this long-cherished dream become a reality.

We take great pride in being one of the best programs in the state of Massachusetts and we are resolved to lead the way!

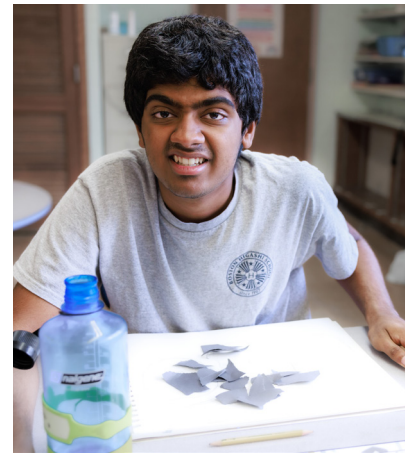
Back to School

School's back in session, and Higashi is already buzzing with excitement! Students arrived on the first day energized and eager to tackle the year ahead. Teachers were thrilled to welcome them back to their new classrooms and peers, and everyone was eager to get going.

The creative team of teachers at Higashi never slows down, and they wasted no time implementing innovative and engaging lessons. Between getting ready for Sports Day, students could be seen all over the beautiful campus learning math, science, art, and more.

Students in older divisions jumped right back into their job site routines, where they learn valuable skills and contribute to the school community. The Sundae Fundae Cafe reopened with fresh vegetables from the Daily Life Farm, and students were busy harvesting, making T-shirts, and sorting recycling across campus.

It's been a bustling time at Higashi, but the school wouldn't have it any other way. The positive energy and excitement is infectious, and everyone is committed to making the new school year the best one yet.



Parent Association

It's been a busy few months at the Boston Higashi School, as the staff and administration (as usual!) packs in the fun. September was back-to-school and we welcomed new students and saw the moving-up of others. October was loads of fun with Sports Day for Elementary through Older High School, and the Golf Outing - held at Stone Meadow Golf Club in Lexington, MA - for the Emergence Program (EP). The Higashi students and staff never cease to amaze us all and the EP group definitely has some golfing ringers!

What would October be without the annual Costume Party and Costume Dance! Our kids enjoyed dressing up in costume, playing games, and dancing with their families. Our youngest group also got to trick-or-treat, such fun!

Road Race came our way in November and after much practice, all of our students were winners and tried their best on the 2K course. A little rain and cool temperatures could not slow our Rock Stars down!

Be on the lookout for the Parents Association Holiday Fundraiser. This

is our big push for the year and money raised goes towards the purchase of Staff Holiday Gifts to say "Thank You" to those who take such good care of our children. This year we hope to raise \$9,000!

Please contact PA President, Tricia Dandrow, at bostonhigashipa@gmail.com if you would like to volunteer for our Staff Holiday Gift Wrap Day on Sunday, December 17th. (Many hands are needed, it's a big job!) We wish everyone a joyous, healthy, and happy holiday season.



Endless Possibilities in Residence

A new school year has ushered in a fresh spirit of openness, brimming with endless possibilities for our students and families at the residence. We've welcomed new students, embarked on exciting community excursions, and discovered innovative ways to share our students' experiences with their loved ones. We've embraced two new residential receptionists, strengthened our team with the addition of dedicated supervisors and master teachers, and unwaveringly pursue our aspiration of becoming the premier Residential School in Massachusetts. A palpable sense of togetherness, purpose, and hope permeates our home.

This semester has been packed with exciting excursions, including trips to the zoo, farms, exploring Plymouth Plantation, golfing, bowling and hanging with friends at the arcade. We've also invited families to campus on a weekly basis to share in experiences like Friendsgiving and movie nights. We've hosted family-sponsored birthday parties, and we're developing plans to collaborate with families in running new activities during residential time. Back at the residence, our students have enjoyed cooking, shopping, swimming, hair salon visits, music sessions, art projects, and roller-blading. We've also enhanced our evening activities by introducing campfires with smores after culinary arts. Despite the challenges of regaining momentum post-pandemic, we're making steady progress, one step at a time.

From all of us, to all of you, please have a happy and healthy holiday season.



Community Partners

The new school year has started off with a bang at Higashi, and we're excited to have our community partners by our side!

We kicked off the year with our annual Golf Tournament with the Iron Workers team, which raised a significant amount of money for Higashi. Our friends from Uniqlo invited our Emergence Program students to an exclusive shopping trip before store hours so they could pick out new clothes for the fall season. We also had the pleasure of hosting a group of students from Showa Boston for an extended tour of our Day Program.

Even our friends from Japan paid us a visit! Mr. Yukata Aso, and Mrs. Akiko Furusawa, a psychologist from the Mikoshiba Clinic, toured our campus and spent time with our students. Hitomi Okada also led a special art lesson for our Middle School students teaching them how to create and paint miniature clay donuts.

We're grateful for the support of our community partners, and we're excited to invite more people to see the magic of Higashi this year.



3. Iron Workers Local 7

1. Hitomi Okada

5. Showa Boston Students

2. Mr. Yutaka Aso

2. Mrs. Akiko Furusawa

4. Uniqlo

5

9th Annual Gala

**WHERE HEALING & COMPASSION
COME TOGETHER**





The Boston Higashi Schools 9th Annual Gala, themed “Where Healing and Compassion Come Together,” was an outstanding success, raising over \$312,000 to support the construction of a new health services center. Over 300 individuals, including families, friends, staff, corporate donors, and business leaders, gathered to demonstrate their unwavering support for the school’s mission.

Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, nearly 150 Higashi employees were able to attend the event, enjoying a night of relaxation and camaraderie. Their dedicated work throughout the year makes an evening like this all the more meaningful, and the solidarity of the Higashi Family is never more evident than at the Annual Gala.

The event showcased the very essence of what makes Higashi so exceptional, featuring captivating videos from staff and parents, along with a mesmerizing performance by the Jazz Band. A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Higashi Hero Award to Residential Director of Student Services, Chris White, who received a thunderous standing ovation from the audience. Chris’ dedication and compassion are widely admired, and this recognition at the Gala was a testament to his exceptional contributions. Additionally, the Higashi Community Hero Award was presented to Kurt Pappalardo for his outstanding work with Bob’s Discount Furniture, supporting various projects at the school over the past several years.

Special appreciation goes to first-time emcee Brittany Johnson, Investigative Reporter for WCVB5, who masterfully guided the event through its busy, emotional, and compelling program. Brittany also excelled in conducting the needs auction, helping to raise several thousand more dollars for the health center project.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who participated in the 9th Annual Gala, and we eagerly anticipate celebrating our 10th Annual Event next year!



Sports Day 2023



Sports Day 2023 was a huge success, with record attendance from parents and families! Everyone came ready to participate in the events, and the day was filled with friendly competition and excitement. Students had the opportunity to showcase the hard work they've put in since the start of the school year, and their smiles said it all!

Practice for Sports Day starts as early as the first week of the new school year, starting with the very basics. What looks like a very fun

and engaging event for families to join, is only that way due to the hard work our students put into their PE lessons. Students work on posture, lining up, listening and following rules. It's also important to work on what to expect when family members join us on the field. Despite all of this preparation, our students always show up and blow away our expectations.

Higashi students were thrilled to invite family members onto the field to join them for new and returning

fan favorite games! Showing their parents how it's done, teams set out to win it all!

Once the relays, races, and skill showcases are settled, everyone is invited back onto the field for our traditional folk dances. This gets everyone out of the competitive mindset and back into the fun loving smiley versions we love so much!

We look forward to seeing an even bigger crowd next year!



Annual Road Race



The Annual Higashi Road Race, despite the uncooperative weather, turned out to be a resounding success. Our students, with an unmatched determination and resilience, stepped out to conquer the races, showcasing their remarkable progress since the start of the school year. Despite the persistent downpour, their spirits remained high, fueled by the unwavering support from the families in attendance.

The races kicked off with resounding cheers from the crowd, the energy palpable as our students lined up at the starting line. As the starting whistle blew, they bolted off, their eagerness evident in their every stride. The rain, far from being a deterrent, seemed to invigorate them, adding an element of challenge and excitement to their endeavor.

As they crossed the finish line, their faces beamed with pride, their hearts filled with accomplishment. The applause of the crowd echoed around them, proof of their perseverance and remarkable achievements. The rain, which had once challenged them, now seemed to applaud their resilience, adding a touch of drama and triumph to the day. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who came out to support our amazing athletes, their presence of support and encouragement is what makes Higashi a truly special place.



Fall Festivities

This Fall has been a whirlwind of fun and excitement for our students, with a calendar packed with activities that make it hard to believe we've fit it all in! One of our most beloved weeks is when the entire school community embraces the spooky spirit, transforming our campus into a hub of spirited festivities.

Our week kicks off with an electrifying evening dance party, where students unleash their creativity in their favorite costumes. Older students gather in the gym for an unforgettable night of dancing, while younger ones join the fun in Marble Hall, where they sing, dance, and play spooky-themed games. The night culminates in a Trunk or Treat event, organized and hosted by our dedicated parent volunteers.

Later in the week, the younger students headed outside to showcase their spirit in a festive costume parade. After two spirited laps around the track in front of their cheering families, everyone gathers for a thrilling adventure through our Haunted Nature Trail. Emerging from the woods, students are greeted by another group of enthusiastic parent volunteers, who have transformed the area into a wonderland with spooky decorations and an abundance of candy!





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Upcoming Events

Events

- 12.1 **OPEN HOUSE**
10am - 12pm
- 12.2 **SIBLING DAY**
9:30am - 12pm
- 12.13 **WINTER PARTY**
6:30pm - 7:30pm
- 12.19 **WINTER MUSIC FESTIVAL**
10am - 12pm
- 12.20 **WINTER VACATION**
Dec 20th - Jan 1st



Unsung Heroes



This Fall, we held a number of events on campus, many of which involved cooked meals. In the two weeks leading up to Thanksgiving, our dedicated kitchen staff provided meals for each and every division in Residence. This meant many extra hours of work behind the scenes to make these events possible. We want to express our deepest gratitude to the staff working behind the scenes at Higashi. With their support, each of our students had the opportunity to spend Thanksgiving time with their families. So thank you to our dedicated staff for everything they do. We are incredibly grateful for the hard work and dedication of our kitchen staff. They are an essential part of our school community and we are so lucky to have them. Thank you for everything you do!