

Summer 2024

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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NEW ONLINE SCHOOL STORE



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Our Roots Run Deep

As we embark on the 2024/25 School year, I am filled with gratitude and joy for our collective achievements as a school. Our unwavering focus on improving students' learning outcomes has resulted in remarkable progress across various areas. We remain committed to providing effective training and development opportunities for all staff cadres, with the ultimate goal of enhancing their performance and productivity. I am honored to lead such a dedicated and hardworking team of professionals as their Director of Programming. Our supervisors and master teachers continue to provide exemplary leadership, ensuring that we consistently meet our goals and objectives.

I'm excited to announce our new team leaders: Patrick Idima as Division Director and Paul Schell as Master Teacher. We also welcome Tara Weitecha as our Human Resources manager. I'm confident they'll drive our program to greater success. Our year was marked by joyous celebrations. On June 13th, we commemorated the auspicious occasion of the Emergence Program graduation. Among the celebrated graduates of the class of 2024 was my son, JoeMark. His dedication and remarkable achievements, along with those of his fellow graduates, filled me with immense pride and admiration.

Throughout the year, our school witnessed a series of remarkable events. Among these was the inaugural Academic Achievement Day, during which students and staff showcased their talents and abilities, leaving parents and families truly impressed. Another highlight was the Higashi International Festival, where students and staff, adorned in splendid Japanese "kimono" attire, performed enchanting dances. Additionally, the residential staff, dressed in traditional regalia from their home countries, added to the vibrant display of cultural diversity. Our school's diverse international community was beautifully represented, with each country showcasing unique aspects of their cultures.

With unwavering confidence, I firmly believe that our school will persist in upholding the loftiest ideals of professionalism, diligence, and collaborative spirit. Consequently, I am steadfast in my commitment to collaborating with each team member as we collectively navigate Boston Higashi School toward even greater heights. Inspired by our theme for the new academic year, "Our Roots Run Deep," we shall continue to seek guidance from the profound words of our school's founder, Dr. Klyo Kitahara: "Within every child dwells a bud of self-identity. The essence of education for a child with autism lies in diligently searching for this bud and nurturing it with unwavering care and compassion."

Summer Fun

It's been another exciting summer at Higashi! Our Older High School students showcased their entrepreneurial spirit at a fantastic bake sale, transforming our hallways into sweet shops filled with delicious treats. The event was a huge success, thanks to their hard work and creativity. Meanwhile, our Jazz Band continued to spread joy throughout the community, performing at the Juneteenth Celebration and Pappas Rehabilitation Hospital for Children. Their music brought smiles to everyone and strengthened our bonds with the community. We're also thrilled to share that our partnership with Tufts Dental is thriving. Our staff had the opportunity to share their expertise on autism with their students through an informative workshop. On the farm, our students are enjoying the sunshine and reaping the rewards of their hard work. Our strawberry harvest is just the beginning of what promises to be a fruitful season. And finally, a big thank you to Uniqlo for their continued support of our Emergence Program. Our students had an unforgettable shopping experience and left the store feeling confident and stylish. We also want to extend our deepest gratitude to the Teamsters for their incredibly generous donation to our food pantry. Their support will make a significant difference in the lives of many. It's been a summer filled with growth, collaboration, and community spirit. We're excited to see what the next week brings!





Summer of Smiles

They say smiles and laughter are contagious—and this summer at the residence, we had an epidemic of fun! Students, families, and teachers enjoyed each day to the fullest. From lavish birthday parties and baseball games to swimming, cookouts, and trips into Boston to see *Les Misérables*, we were up and about, making the most of every opportunity to spend time together. Each event felt like a long-overdue celebration, a chance for the entire Higashi community to come together as one family.

This season marked new joint events, such as the International Festival in July. This day allowed our school and residence to showcase the unique cultures and backgrounds of our students, families, and teachers. From Egypt, Japan, Kenya, Canada, and everywhere in between, Higashi was well represented.

Each residential division also hosted its own Family Day event, offering a chance to celebrate as a community, both on-site and off. Middle School and High School B spent time with the New England Knockouts at Campanelli Stadium in Brockton, enjoying a day at the ballpark with parents and extended family. One student even brought 26 family members to watch him throw out the first pitch, a moment that brought many to tears. All students joined the players on the field for the national anthem—a Boston Higashi School first! EP Boys enjoyed bowling and a Chinese buffet, while EP Girls had a pizza party and pool party. The EPG division was a heartwarming sight, with families arriving already acquainted with one another, a testament to the strong bonds formed throughout the year. Junior High, High School A, Young Adults, and the Girls divisions hosted on-site cookouts, where students, families, and teachers grilled to their heart's content.

Swimming was a highlight of the summer, with students taking to the Higashi pools two or three times a week or more. This frequent practice paid off, as many students made significant progress in their swimming skills. We witnessed a particularly inspiring moment in August when a student who had been learning to swim for years challenged himself to swim in the deep end on his own. With determination on his face, he lifted the rope separating the shallow and deep ends and completed three laps of the pool unassisted. His mom, watching via FaceTime, witnessed her son achieve what was once thought impossible—a perfect example of our mission statement coming to life as students take on challenges, overcome obstacles, and gain confidence from their own success.

The residence is always a special place, but this summer truly brought out the best in everyone. We learned, celebrated, and grew together as a family. Although we said goodbye to some students who aged out and teachers who moved on, the memories of Summer 2024—the Summer of a Million and One Smiles—will stay with us forever.

Academic Achievement Day

Our Academic Achievement Day was a celebration of student growth and success. Parents joined us to witness firsthand the engaging learning environment that nurtures their child's development. Students were recognized for their accomplishments with certificates and showcased their talents through interactive activities.

Holbrook Campus was abuzz with excitement as we celebrated our students' achievements in two unforgettable events! Our Annual Bike Race and Academic Achievement Day came together to create a truly memorable day.

Students shone as they unveiled their incredible new Outdoor Space - a result of their hard work and dedication throughout the year. This vibrant area is a testament to their creativity and will be a cherished gathering spot for years to come.

The Bike Race was full of thrills and cheers as students (and even some staff!) competed for the win. While the competition was fierce, the true victory was the joy and camaraderie shared by everyone.

It was a day filled with pride, laughter, and a strong sense of community. We're incredibly proud of our students and grateful for the support of our parents and staff!



International Festival

Power of Community





Our inaugural International Festival was an unequivocal triumph, a vibrant celebration that united Day and Residential staff in creating an unforgettable morning at Higashi. The event transformed our campus into a global village, as booths representing the diverse home countries of our staff showcased a rich tapestry of cultures. Each booth offered a unique window into different worlds, inviting attendees to explore, learn, and appreciate the beauty of human diversity.

The Student Voices segment proved to be a powerful and inspiring highlight. Young individuals courageously shared their cultural heritage, their voices echoing with pride and passion. Their personal stories and insights enriched the festival experience, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of different backgrounds.

Beyond the cultural immersion, the festival offered a wealth of family-friendly activities. Exciting touch-a-truck demonstrations, made possible by the generous support of the Teamsters and local Fire and Police departments.

A delightful array of international snacks tantalized taste buds, offering a culinary journey around the world. From savory to sweet, there was something to satisfy every palate. And as if the food wasn't enough, the infectious energy of the cultural dance performances left everyone captivated. From the graceful movements of the traditional Japanese Bon Dance to the dynamic rhythms of Kenyan and Cameroonian dance styles, the stage came alive with color, movement, and joy.

The resounding success of our inaugural International Festival is a testament to the power of community and the richness of our shared human experience. This extraordinary event will undoubtedly be cherished as a milestone in our organization's history, inspiring future celebrations and fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity.



Graduation



This graduation ceremony was a truly momentous occasion, filled with a sense of profound pride and accomplishment. We celebrated not only a remarkable group of young individuals but also a significant milestone for our Holbrook campus.

This class was exceptional in every sense. They were more than just students; they were active contributors to our community's growth and development. Their dedication to shaping our campus through their involvement in the design and construction process is

a testament to their character and vision. The tangible legacy they have left behind will inspire future generations of Higashi students.

Their leadership qualities and initiative were evident throughout their time with us. They consistently demonstrated a maturity and determination that set them apart. These invaluable traits, coupled with their academic prowess, have prepared them admirably for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

As we bid farewell to these exceptional young women and men, we are filled with a sense of optimism for their futures. We are confident that they will continue to achieve great things and make a positive impact on the world. The Boston Higashi community is incredibly proud of all they have accomplished and will always consider them part of our extended family.





Stars & Stripes

Our Stars and Stripes Vacation program kicked off with a bang thanks to our talented teacher, Frank! He brought the UMass Dartmouth Kekeli Ensemble to the school, and their high-energy performance had our students dancing in the gym. Students were invited up to use drums, causing infectious rhythms that created an unforgettable start to our week.

The week culminated in a patriotic celebration as we joined the Randolph community for the 4th of July parade. Our school spirit shone bright as our Jazz Band filled the streets with music from a dazzling float, while students handed out treats and waved to cheering crowds. It was a day of American pride and community spirit!

To wrap up the program, we cooled down with refreshing water games and indulged in delicious ice cream treats. Our culinary students even got creative by making their own frozen yogurt! It was the perfect end to a fun-filled and memorable vacation program.



Summer Sizzler

The first week of our Summer Sizzler vacation program was an absolute blast! Our students had a fantastic time soaking up the sunshine by the pool and participating in a variety of fun activities. The pool area was filled with laughter and the sound of splashing water as the kids enjoyed their swim time. From whipping up delicious treats like crispy french fries to indulging in creative pursuits set to a relaxing soundtrack, there was always something new to discover.

To add an extra dose of excitement, we combined our music and art lessons for some truly unforgettable green screen music video experiences. The kids unleashed their creativity and had a blast as they starred in their very own music videos. It was a fantastic way to combine learning with fun and create lasting memories.





BOSTON HIGASHI SCHOOL
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Upcoming Events

Events

9.3 **FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

10.10 **ANNUAL GALA**
6pm - 9pm

10.11 **OPEN HOUSE**
10:30am - 12pm

10.19 **SPORTS DAY**
8:30AM - 1:30PM



10 Years of Impact

Engage | Empower | Enable

Join us for a momentous occasion! The Boston Higashi School is thrilled to celebrate its **10th Annual Gala**. For a decade, your unwavering support has empowered us to create a world of opportunity for children and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Together, we've achieved incredible milestones:

We anticipate surpassing \$2 million in Gala fundraising

Transformed our learning environment

Beyond facilities, we've fostered a culture of empowerment:

Technology for All

Expanded Programs

Lifelong Support

Our journey continues! We're committed to creating even more impactful programs and expanding our reach. Please join us for an unforgettable evening as we celebrate our 10th Annual Gala.

We are incredibly grateful for your continued support. Together, we're making a difference in the lives of our students.

10th Annual Gala
October 10, 2024
Granite Links



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