

Spring 2025

Higashi Highlights



www.bostonhigashi.org

*Helping children with autism
exceed expectations since 1987*

(781) 961-0800

Program Director's Perspective



Dr. John Maina

A School On A Mission!

As we approach the final quarter of the 2024/2025 school year, there's a deep sense of excitement and reflection as we look forward to the graduation ceremony for our Emergence Program, set for June 12, 2025. It fills our hearts with joy to see the incredible growth and transformation of our graduating class throughout their journey here at Boston Higashi School. We are proud of each of them and look forward to celebrating this meaningful milestone together!

The 38th Annual Celebration event, held at the Weymouth Middle School auditorium, was a great success. The students' performances in music and physical activities were outstanding, leaving parents and visitors thoroughly entertained and impressed by their children's talents. The students truly showcased their abilities to an enthusiastic audience. I would like to congratulate our event committee and staff for organizing such an amazing event!

Earlier this year, we hosted a highly successful Academic Achievement Day, during which parents had the opportunity to meet with classroom teachers and other educational teams involved in the learning process. The Academic Achievement Day reminds us of Dr. Kitahara's passion for academic excellence.

We have welcomed new staff members, primarily from Japan and Kenya, who have quickly adapted and are committed to fostering effective teaching and learning. They are showing great promise, and I wish them all the best at our school.

Our new health center is now fully operational, providing an excellent space for delivering nursing services. The center includes offices for the Head Nurse and Nurse Practitioner, as well as areas for medication administration and rooms for students who need observation or separation.

The students' elections for leadership positions were well-coordinated, highlighting the various strengths and potential of the candidates during the campaign process. Each candidate put in a tremendous effort to promote their agenda, and I am very proud of all of them.

Lastly, the school grounds look fantastic this time of year! In view of the foregoing, I would like to extend my gratitude to our Facilities Manager and his team for their diligent care of our school's physical infrastructure and grounds.

Highlights

FEATURES

- 4. **RESIDENTIAL NEWS**
- 6-7. **ANNUAL CELEBRATION**
- 8-9. **SPRING VACATION**
- 10. **FORMAL DANCE**

ONLINE SCHOOL STORE



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Growing Partnerships

We're thrilled to announce a blossoming new friendship with David Sarlitto, Director of the Ocean State Job Lot Foundation, an introduction made possible by the generous Boston Bruins Foundation.

This partnership has already brought incredible benefits to our program. The Ocean State Job Lot Foundation recently donated 20 brand-new bicycles, providing wonderful opportunities for recreation and mobility for our students. In addition, they kindly offered our staff special shopping sprees at their Avon store. Akiko was able to procure \$1,250 worth of essential equipment for our farm, while Chris White and Hide Nishizawa secured \$1,250 in much-needed pool supplies and equipment.

The support continues! In the coming weeks, Ocean State Job Lot will be delivering a pallet of pool shock and stabilizer, and they've committed to supplying free pool chemicals for the foreseeable future.

We are truly blessed to have found such a dedicated community partner, one committed to significantly improving the quality of life for individuals with autism.



Gifts of Mobility & Music

This Spring season at Higashi has been filled with both artistic enchantment and academic triumph!

Our students were captivated by the mesmerizing musical artistry of Medusa. Their innovative take on the Western string quartet, infused with mystical undertones, wove a spell over the audience.

In the same week, Higashi's Academic Achievement Day was a huge success! Parents loved the amazing Art Show, showcasing our students' incredible creativity, and were so proud to see their children's progress displayed in the classrooms. It was a truly heartwarming day, celebrating the hard work and dedication of our students.

Teamsters Gala

On Saturday, March 29th, the Boston Higashi School Jazz Band delivered an outstanding 20-minute performance at the Annual Teamsters Gala for Autism. Playing to a massive crowd of 1,500 at the Encore Boston Harbor, the band showcased the remarkable progress they've made under the expert leadership of Music Teacher, Yoshino Stanbrook.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Teamsters for their unwavering support of our school and for providing our talented students with such an incredible platform to shine!





A Season of Growth & Activity

The Residence truly blossoms in Spring and Summer! Despite fluctuating weather, students and staff from Middle School to the Emergence Program enthusiastically engaged in a wide range of activities on and off campus. This season also brought significant changes: 4 residential teachers transitioned to the Day Program, while 4-5 new residential teachers joined our overnight and afternoon teams. Additionally, new residents were welcomed, and 10 students successfully transitioned to their next divisions. Our commitment to putting students first led to a very successful season, even as we continuously strive for improvement.

Our **Middle School Division** continues to excel, recently celebrating their first one-inning T-Ball game where all students hit and fielded. Students and staff proudly secured baseball shirts, with staff enthusiasm rivaling the students'!

Junior High has made extensive use of the Library, visiting multiple times weekly. Guided by our head librarian, students enjoy pre-set daily stations. Embracing spring, the library transformed into a vibrant bird sanctuary.

The **Girls Division** has made significant strides in teamwork and rollerblading skills. Managing 13 unique young women presents challenges, but dedicated staff work tirelessly to ensure each girl's individuality shines.

High School A has been a hub of culinary creativity. Their stir-fry activities generated incredible aromas and fostered a competitive spirit among cooking stations, fueled by staff excitement.

High School B dedicated this semester to athletics and vocational skills, crucial for teenagers. Through activities like swimming, cafeteria setup, and cleaning, students gained invaluable life skills, strengthening their independence and self-esteem.

Our **Young Adults** are preparing for their next chapter, honing vocational opportunities. This spring and summer, they are launching a weekend car wash service, offering practical experience for future careers.

The **Emergence Program**, our oldest students, focuses on preparing for the world beyond Higashi. Recent months included collaborations with CAEP graduates and active community engagement, such as volunteering at the Randolph Food Pantry, attending the Japan Festival in Boston, and participating in the school's annual Evan's Run, a 5K race honoring a former student.

It is truly a privilege to teach and engage with our students daily at the Residence. As the students continue to grow, we also continue to grow as teachers. For every lesson your child learns from us, we undoubtedly learn three or four in return! Thank you from everyone at the Residence.

Autism Acceptance Month

The spring season at Higashi was exceptionally busy, marked by a wide array of significant events and initiatives both on and off campus.

During Autism Acceptance Month in April, we were thrilled to spotlight our partnership with New England Disabled Sports. Through this collaboration, a dedicated group at Loon Mountain Resort provided an unforgettable experience for some of our students and their families, offering professional instruction in adaptive skiing.

We were also pleased to feature our Food Pantry, which gained wider recognition through the assistance of Logan Hall at WBZ News. Concurrently, the Teacher's Room underwent a complete renovation, where our community rallied together for our Fund a Desk Campaign in which we are thrilled to share the results: we raised over \$15,000!

Our Jazz Band maintained a highly active schedule, with a notable performance at the Autism Rocks Event, hosted by The Arc of South Shore.

The month concluded with the distinct honor and privilege of welcoming Dr. Temple Grandin, who presented "The Way I See It." As an enduring inspiration to our community and the broader Autistic community, the opportunity to hear Dr. Grandin speak and meet her in person is an experience we will cherish for years to come.



AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH
Boston Higashi School


MODERNIZE
Replacing 80 outdated desks with contemporary workspaces.


IMPROVE
Creating a comfortable and inspiring environment for our dedicated educators.



5

Annual Celebration

Unforgettable Performances
& Higashi Spirit





Our students recently made a triumphant return to the Weymouth Middle School stage, performing with immense joy and pride for the grand finale of our **38th Annual Celebration**. This cherished event, a testament to months of dedicated hard work, once again proved to be an incredibly rewarding and unforgettable experience for our entire community.

Hours before the auditorium doors even opened, the lobby buzzed with anticipation as parents eagerly gathered, their excitement palpable as they awaited the chance to find their seats. When the moment finally arrived and the show began, it became abundantly clear why their presence truly makes such a profound difference. With a packed house cheering them on, our students delivered an absolutely incredible performance, radiating an infectious energy that is simply indescribable unless experienced firsthand.

Higashi staff, with their beaming smiles, supported our students as they rocketed across the stage on stilts, gracefully balanced on beams, bounced with incredible skill, and danced together on discs, shining exactly as they're meant to. The music, as always, was a pure joy. From singing and dancing to classics from Annie to adding unique flair to "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," there was something to delight everyone. It was hard to keep our eyes dry witnessing the pure enthusiasm pouring off the stage, with the venue enhancing every sight and sound.

Beyond the main stage, the cafeteria buzzed with activity as our Older High School students proudly sold Higashi merchandise. Not a moment of the afternoon was wasted; every interaction brought a smile, making the entire event a truly happy and memorable experience for all.



Spring Vacation



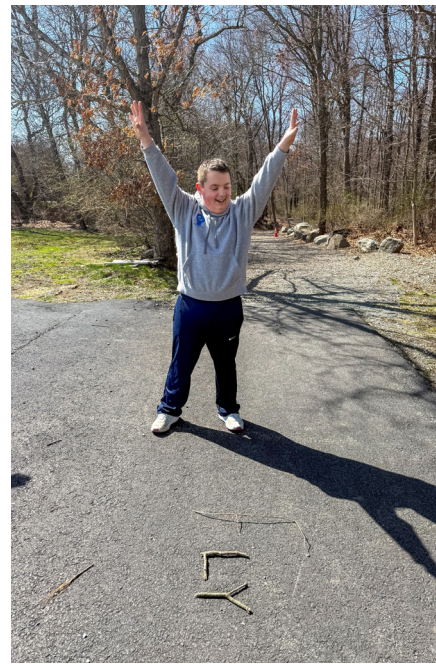
Our Spring Fling Vacation Program was an absolute blast, filled with engaging activities and beautiful spring weather!

Week one kicked off with students diving headfirst into campus fun, enjoying a delightful petting zoo and creative art projects. Our outdoor spaces buzzed with excitement as students released butterflies they'd carefully nurtured from eggs during recent lessons. Others embarked on playful scavenger hunts on the farm, joyfully digging for hidden treasures

in the soil!

The excitement continued as a beloved tradition, Gnome Surf, made its triumphant return! This unique and incredibly fun activity saw our Younger and Older High School students first honing their core strength and balance in the gym, practicing their stance and movements on dry land. Then, with newfound confidence and a spirit of adventure, they hit the pool! Using Gnome Surf branded boards, they learned to "ride the waves" in our pool, mimicking the thrill of

surfing in a safe and supportive environment—all in true gnome style, of course! It was a fantastic program, now officially in the books, leaving everyone with smiles and improved skills!





Formal Dance

The annual Formal Dance was a night of pure enchantment, thanks to the tireless efforts of the Emergence Program. The transformation of The Tiffany Ballroom at the Four Points by Sheraton Norwood was nothing short of breathtaking. The students and families arrived like veterans of the event despite being in a new venue. Students arrived in style, alighting from the trolley like royalty. The men looked dashing in their fitted tuxedos, while the ladies positively sparkled after their Day of Beauty – their smiles outshining even the most dazzling jewels.

Laughter filled the air as the night unfolded. The music pulsed with energy, and the dance floor was a kaleidoscope of swirling gowns and elegant suits. Every moment was a memory in the making, a treasure to be tucked away and cherished. Family and friends made this event feel so special as the night unfolded into a brilliant show of pure joy!

A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. Your dedication and hard work ensured that this Formal Dance will be etched in the minds of our students forever. It was truly a night to remember!



Ladies Day of Beauty

The Ladies Day of Beauty is a cherished tradition that transforms our campus into a haven of pampering and joy. This special event treated our female students and their families to a delightful luncheon, setting a warm and welcoming tone for the afternoon. Following the delicious meal, the true magic began with a luxurious spa experience. Our dedicated teachers, showcasing their versatile talents, transformed into skilled stylists and beauticians. With immense care and enthusiasm, they offered an array of services, including relaxing manicures, refreshing pedicures, and flawless hair and makeup artistry. Every detail was attended to, ensuring each participant felt special, cherished, and absolutely beautiful.

As always, Odete and her incredible team were instrumental in orchestrating this enchanting day. The giggles, shared stories, and visible transformations throughout the Ladies Day of Beauty built a wonderful sense of anticipation and confidence, perfectly setting the stage for the glamorous Formal Dance that followed. It was a time where self-care, community, and celebration beautifully intertwined, leaving everyone with cherished memories.





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Upcoming Events

Events

- 6.12 **GRADUATION**
10:30am-1pm
- 6.20 **LAST DAY OF SEMESTER**
- 6.21 **SUMMER VACATION**
June 21 - July 6
- 7.7 **DAY PROGRAM REOPENS**
- 7.26 **INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL**



Evan's Run A Resounding Success

Evan's Run, a cherished Higashi tradition, saw a thrilling first this year as the entire Emergence Program Division proudly represented us at the event. Our dedicated EP students had trained relentlessly, rain or shine, in preparation for May 18th, and their efforts truly paid off. Everyone who participated did a great job, showcasing their hard work and dedication. The enthusiastic cheers from those who came out to support our oldest students made a real difference as they competed.

