

Spring 2026

Higashi Highlights



www.bostonhigashi.org

*Helping children with autism
exceed expectations since 1987*

(781) 961-0800

Executive Director's Perspective



Mike Kelly

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Higashi Highlights!

During the month of March, we hosted Academic Achievement Day where parents had an opportunity to meet with classroom teachers while students showcased their academic excellence. On March 25th the Higashi Jazz Band performed at the Teamsters Local 25 Autism Gala at the Encore Casino in front of more than 1,500 people!

April brought not only springtime showers, but more importantly, Autism Acceptance Month. At Higashi we celebrate autism in action. It is no coincidence that our annual Formal Dance and Ladies Day of Beauty are held during the month of April.

Following the "Spring Fling" Vacation Program, our students and staff set their sights on the 39th Annual Celebration Stage Performance at the Weymouth Middle School auditorium. It is always a very special event for not only the staff and students who display their talents, but more so for all the families in attendance who have the opportunity to see first-hand the triumphant efforts and courage put forth by their children.

While Annual Celebration was taking place in Weymouth, our Emergence Program was in Norwell participating in the annual Evan's Run 5K Road Race which raises funds for Autism Awareness. 28 Emergence students and 19 staff showcased their athletic abilities and community outreach.

As we wind down from the Memorial Day weekend, we have much to look forward to as we begin to close out the school year. Graduation Day for our Emergence Program will be held on June 11th. The "Stars and Stripes" Vacation Program will follow and we hope everyone enjoys a spectacular July 4th. The Higashi International Festival on July 25th will be the final event of the school year.

Please join me in taking this opportunity to thank our very dedicated staff for making this school year and all the special events we enjoy a huge success.

FEATURES

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- 10. **FORMAL DANCE**

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Highlights

Playground Update

The development of our new playground is progressing steadily. Following the completion of tree clearing, excavation, and soil removal, the assembly of the new equipment has commenced. Providing the project remains on track, we anticipate completion by July 01. Details regarding the dedication ceremony and grand opening will be announced soon; please stay tuned.

Liberty Cares

For the third year running, energetic young volunteers from Liberty Mutual dedicated an entire morning to working on the Higashi farm. These employees visit each spring to support our mission and provide hands-on help. We are truly grateful for their steadfast commitment and ongoing support!



Higashi Food Pantry

The Higashi Continuing Adult Program (HCAP) has flourished, nearing full capacity much earlier than anticipated. On May 25, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) issued the School a two-year certification and license, officially authorizing it as a state-approved Community Based Day Services (CBDS) provider. Currently, the initiative is thriving through collaborations with seven local communities to deliver food to homebound residents. We extend our sincere gratitude to Megan Loftus and her team for their dedication in developing and managing this pioneering, unique program at the Boston Higashi School.



Teamsters Gala

Teamsters Local 25 hosted their Annual Gala for Autism on Saturday, April 25th at Encore, drawing a record-breaking crowd of more than 1,500 attendees. A standout moment of the night was the performance by the Boston Higashi Jazz Band, which, under the direction of Yoshino Stanbrook, delivered a 25-minute set that earned a vibrant standing ovation.

Following this event, the school was honored at Tuscan Kitchen in Boston on Tuesday, May 19th, with a \$100,000 donation from the Gala's proceeds. This marks 11 years of continuous support from the Teamsters, whose financial contributions and dedicated volunteer work remain vital to our mission. We are deeply grateful for their unwavering friendship and extraordinary commitment.





Right on Time for Some Good Weather

Happy Spring—and welcome (almost) to Summer! Our pools are officially open, and the students are maximizing every ounce of daylight to splash around and have fun.

Over the past couple of months, our divisions launched a fantastic new initiative designed to bring families right into the heart of our daily routines. The goal was simple but impactful: invite parents to join in on the staple activities our students do every day, giving everyone the tools to practice key skills together.

From rollerblading and cooking to movie nights and swimming, these familiar activities are about so much more than just having fun. They are the core of our Daily Life Therapy approach. Within these moments, our students practice essential life skills, such as:

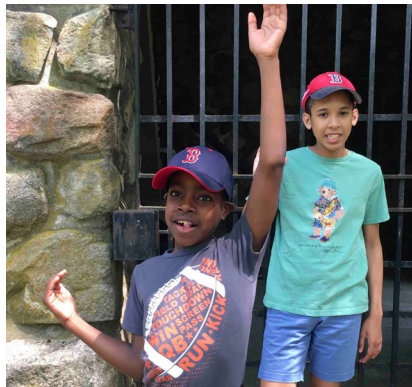
- Waiting patiently for a turn.

- Socializing with peers and adults.

- Celebrating small successes on the way to bigger milestones.



Our older students in the Emergence Program took this training out into the community with a trip to the bowling alley! Coordinating an off-site event of this scale was a major feat, but our residential teachers and students threw absolute “strikes.” The event was a wonderful way to show parents how community outings can be planned and successfully enjoyed with their young adults in the near future.



Looking Ahead to Summer

What do we have in store for the sunny months ahead? We are currently planning cookouts by the pool. After all, nothing quite says summertime like good food, great company, and pool days with family. Stay tuned for dates!

In closing, a massive thank you to our residential parents for making this recent training period our most well-attended initiative to date. Across all divisions, we saw an incredible 75% to 80% turnout rate! We were absolutely thrilled to have you here and want to keep this momentum going. Please let us know what activities you would like to learn about or participate in next. We are always looking for new ways to support and collaborate with our families!



Autism Acceptance Walk

Despite some chilly weather, spirits were incredibly high, and the campus was filled with smiles. Students, families, and staff gathered on the back field before setting off onto the Nature Trail for a scenic, crisp walk around campus.

To add an extra spark of excitement to the day, we issued a community-wide challenge: everyone was asked to keep track of the number of laps they walked so we could pool our distances together and see how we measured up against a full marathon. Our community didn't just meet the challenge—they absolutely crushed it! By the end of the event, we had officially achieved and surpassed the equivalent distance of the legendary Boston Marathon.

It was a beautiful day of connection, movement, and achievement. More than anything, it was the perfect way to celebrate the incredible students who make Higashi a brighter place every day, simply by being exactly who they are.



39th Annual Celebration

An Afternoon of Pure Brilliance





Our 39th Annual Celebration was an absolute sensation! The auditorium was packed to the brim with families, friends, and community members who brought an incredible, electric energy to cheer on our amazing students. The room was buzzing with anticipation, and our students delivered a performance that no one will soon forget.

While our students were the stars of the event, the foundation of this spectacular showcase was built over months of quiet, relentless dedication behind the scenes. This unforgettable afternoon was made possible by the tireless efforts of our phenomenal faculty and staff.

The show kicked off with lively music performances that had the entire audience clapping along, setting the perfect high-energy stage for an unforgettable physical showcase. The crowd was treated to jaw-dropping physical feats—including unicycles, gymnastics, basketball, and balancing discs—the room was filled with cheers, happy tears, and endless pride. We even closed out the event with a beautiful, calming yoga session to center us all after an action-packed show.

Pulling a show of this magnitude together takes an immense amount of teamwork, coordination, and grit. Seeing the immense pride on our students' faces—and the joy in their families' eyes—made every single hour of preparation worth it.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to our dedicated staff for their exceptional hard work, and to the wonderful families and friends who came out to support our incredible Higashi students! Your love and encouragement make moments like this possible.



Spring Vacation



The beautiful weather provided a perfect backdrop for our Spring Vacation program, allowing students to spend plenty of time outdoors. As always, the on-campus petting zoo was a major highlight. Students loved visiting the goats, chickens, ducks, and bunnies; the newborn baby bunnies, in particular, captured everyone's hearts!

Our Daily Life Farm was also in full swing. Rather than taking a break, students worked hard

to prepare for future harvests by clearing rocks from the soil and planting new seeds.

The excitement continued indoors as well. Students enjoyed dancing in the music rooms and participating in an exciting surfing clinic. We were thrilled to welcome our friends from Gnome Surf, who worked with our younger students on balance and warm-up drills in the gym. These skills were put to the test later that afternoon as

students headed to the pool for real-life surfing! Looking back, it is incredible to see how much our Boston Higashi School community accomplished in just one week.



Formal Dance



The memories of the Formal Dance continue to bring smiles to everyone at Boston Higashi School. As our signature version of prom—hosted by the Emergence Program—it was an evening defined by joy, elegance, and celebration.

The festivities began with students “dressing to the nines” and enjoying an early dinner before heading to the stunning Tiffany Ballroom at the Four Points by Sheraton Norwood, where our graduates received the full VIP treatment. Arriving via a special trolley ride, the graduates were greeted by a sea of cheering peers, staff, and families in a grand entrance that set the tone for an evening where every student felt like the star of the show. Once inside, the energy in the room was electric; the dance floor was never empty, and the joy became even more contagious as families joined their students to share in the rhythm.

The Formal Dance was a milestone evening that captured the very best of Boston Higashi School, leaving us with memories of laughter and music that will be held dear for years to come.



Ladies Day of Beauty

The Ladies Day of Beauty serves as a cherished annual tradition at Boston Higashi School, offering a beautiful prelude to the excitement of the Formal Dance. This afternoon of pampering brings together our female students and their families for a celebration of community, confidence, and self-expression. Hosted by our dedicated Higashi staff, the event begins with a festive luncheon that sets a joyful tone for the activities to follow. The room is always filled with laughter and anticipation as students rotate through various stations designed to make them feel their absolute best.

From the creative process of designing their own custom corsages to the relaxing experience of receiving fresh manicures, every detail is centered on celebration. The transformations continue at the hair and makeup styling stations, where staff work carefully to help each student's personality and style shine through. It is a truly magical experience to witness the bond between families, staff, and students during these quiet, supportive moments of preparation. By the time the afternoon draws to a close, the sense of poise and the glowing smiles on the students' faces tell the whole story, leaving our community with beautiful memories of a day dedicated to beauty, both inside and out.





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Upcoming Events

Events

- 6.11 **GRADUATION**
10:30am-1pm
- 6.18 **LAST DAY OF SEMESTER**
- 6.20 **SUMMER VACATION**
June 20 - July 5
- 7.6 **DAY PROGRAM REOPENS**
- 7.25 **INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL**



Evan's Run A Resounding Success

Our second year having our entire Emergence Program participate in the annual Evans Run was a resounding success! We were thrilled by the increased parent involvement this year; having so many families cheering from the sidelines made a wonderful difference for our Emergence Program students. Thank you to all the runners, families, and staff who came out to support this fantastic event!

