



FRIENDS SCHOOL OF PORTLAND

inquiry • reflection • action

January Newsletter 2010

207-781-6321 Mackworth Island, Falmouth ME 04105

www.friendsschoolofportland.org

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Link to Giving & Donations Online
<http://www.friendsschoolofportland.org/giving>

Admissions Parent Information Session, Wednesday, January 13th, 6-7 p.m.

Admissions Open House, Saturday, January 23rd from 10-11:30 a.m. followed by The Escapists, improv comedy.
 They are returning for the second year. The performance is **FREE** and all are welcome to attend.

Admissions Tour the Classes Days, Thursdays, January 21st & 28th, call for an appointment 781-6321



Preschoolers make art & get a wagon ride to aftercare from an older buddy

Two easy ways to give to FSP from other pockets!

We're halfway there! TD Bank will donate over \$1000 to FSP if just 25 more individuals name the school in their Affinity Membership Program using any existing or new savings or checking account. Just call 207-774-5691 or go to <http://friendsschoolofportland.org/giving> for more details.

What if FSP earned a donation every time you searched the Internet? Or if a percentage of every purchase you made online went to support the school? Well, it can. FSP has been registered with GoodSearch.com for the past two years, but we haven't informed new readers.

GoodSearch.com is a Yahoo-powered search engine that donates half its advertising revenue, about a penny per search, to charities its users designate. Use it just as you would any search engine and the donations pile up. GoodShop.com is an online shopping mall which donates 30% of each purchase to your favorite cause! If you download the GoodSearch Friends School of Portland toolbar, our school will earn money every time you search or shop online – even if you forget to go to GoodSearch or GoodShop first! Add Friends School of Portland to the toolbar at <http://www.goodsearch.com/toolbar/mode/>

Calendar

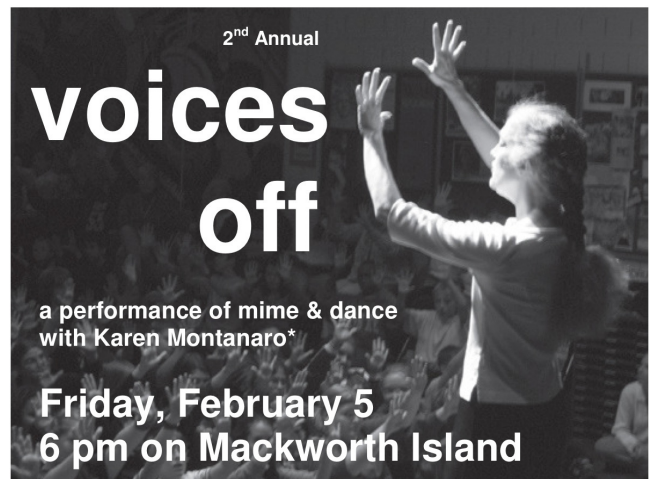
Wednesday	January 13	6-7 p.m.	Prospective Parents Information Session
Friday	January 15	5:30 p.m.	Community Potluck & Student Performances
Thursday	January 21	6 p.m.	Parents Association meeting
Saturday	January 23	10-11 a.m.	Admissions Open House followed by The Escapists ~ improv troupe
Friday	February 5	6 p.m.	Voices Off – a performance of mime/dance with Karen Montanaro & FSP/GBSD students

News

Karen Montanaro returns this month as a visiting artist. Workshops for students at FSP & GBSD begin January 19th. Her residency is made possible with grants from the Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and from the Rines/Thompson Fund of the Maine Community Foundation. See details at right or download a poster to send from the web <http://friendsschoolofportland.org/news-events/mime-movement-workshops-return>

The **4th Annual Auction & Brunch** is Saturday, March 27th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. To donate an item or service, call the school 207-781-6321 or go to the website for a donation form. <http://friendsschoolofportland.org/4th-annual-auction-brunch>

Parenting for Peace will present the third in its speaker series on Tuesday, May 11th, at Hannaford Hall in the Abromson Community Education Center at USM, Portland, Maine, featuring Sandra Steingraber, an award winning ecologist, Cornell University professor, and Ms Magazine Woman of the Year. The title of her talk is "The Ecology of Hope: Reflections on Parenting, Activism, and the Environment." Here is a link to one of her articles: <http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/4259/>



* in collaboration with the students from Friends School of Portland & Governor Baxter School for the Deaf

Tickets at the door:
\$10 adults
\$5 under 18

FREE for FSP & GBSD students, families, & staff
ASL interpretation will be provided



For more information go to www.friendsschoolofportland.org or call 781-6321
Funded in part by a grants from The Foundation for Maine's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children and The Rines/Thompson Fund of the Maine Community Foundation

Reflections from the Head of School

This is the height of our admissions season. We have had several information sessions, one open house, and will have another on Saturday, January 23rd which will also feature The Escapists, an improvisational comedy troupe. With both current and prospective families in attendance, these turn out to be rich community events and present our best advertising.....our parents. Word of mouth is far and away the most effective, most cited method of telling the story of what Quaker education is about. We have learned to invite at least one parent to each of our information sessions to tell their story. It is always a revelation to me to hear the authentic voices of parents as they convey their children's experiences. Sometimes, we are even able to have one of the children talk about school. These are incredibly affirming moments and I come away from them confident that as a school, we let our life speak.

The message that I hear most from parents is that their children love to come to school, to the point that some are disappointed when the weekend or a holiday comes along. High praise indeed! One parent compared the school to summer camp. Though I was taken aback at first, wondering if this was a desirable image for an academic institution, I realized that it, too, is high praise for our students to compare the school to the fun that they have at camp as long as the learning is taking place. So why do students feel this way?

I believe the holistic approach to education that has been a hallmark of Quaker education has a lot to do with it. As teachers present academic content, they also use art, theater, music, and movement as instructional methods. It is not unusual for a class to take a sprint to the apple tree and back to get the juices flowing as a class transitions from discussion to reflection. What is special, too, is the safety for students to be their authentic selves. They are appreciated by adults and peers for who they are. The talents and interests peculiar to them as individuals are embraced and even celebrated. Do we accomplish this every day in every way? No, but it is the fundamental ethic of Quaker belief to go about our daily lives "answering that of God" in one another. The core belief in equality implores us too practice mutual respect and live with compassionate care. I believe that we do that at Friends School of Portland, and that our students learn from what we do. That is, we practice the transforming power of love.

~ James Grumbach, Head of School



The after school boat building class, directed by Clint Chase, began two “6 hour” boats in late October. That is how long it should take to build them, not how long they will float.



They are closing in on the final steps of assembly this week.

Learning Update

One of the educational “best practices” is *differentiation*. Small schools and wise teachers have been practicing it for years, and we at Friends School of Portland have small classes so we can, indeed, differentiate. What does it mean?

It means that we take into account different learning styles and needs as we plan because we don’t expect all children to learn the same thing the same way at the same rate. Some children favor kinesthetic learning in which their hands, feet, or whole bodies can move and touch and feel. Some children favor auditory learning and need discussion, oral memorization, and songs to help them. Others are more visual learners and need to see pictures, diagrams, and labels. Children who are highly social need collaborative activities to use that sociability as well as quiet time, sometimes at home, to focus without distraction. Children who process more slowly than others need thinking time to put together all they have taken in. None of these learning differences indicate more or less intelligence.

When we differentiate skillfully, we try to make it seamless. Differentiation is not the same as *individualized instruction*, in which all students have their own assignments. We typically give the same introductory lesson to everyone in the class or a small group by explaining, demonstrating, asking students to talk to each other, writing as we talk, having students do what we did, or write or draw what they are learning or wondering. As children begin to work on their own, we respond to their efforts based on what we know about each student. For example, in writing, if this is a student grappling with organizing his thoughts, we will help him with a short outline and paragraphing. For another student, we may focus on developing her ideas more fully with specific language and imagery. We try to offer choices to students as much as possible so they will choose a mode that feels natural to them or, as they mature, try a mode that they haven’t tried much in the past.

Next time you walk down our hallway, pause at the displays of student work and see if you can identify which senses and which kinds of interaction might have gone into that project that work represents. You will get a whiff of differentiation. ~ *Mary Tracy, Curriculum Coordinator*

Excerpts from class newsletters:

From Preschool teacher, Lea Sutton: The Midwinter Garden of Lights was a highlight. Although the children had been given a chance to light, carry and set down a candle during class, none of them had experienced the spiral before. To see them negotiate the journey with care, solemnity, and confidence was truly inspiring. I am so very grateful to Lee Chisholm and the 7th and 8th grade students for making it possible for us all to have the concrete knowledge that each person’s light contributes to transforming the darkness.



From 1-2 teacher, Katie Spirer: We wrapped up our shelter unit just before vacation and our final discussion about what we had learned during this study confirmed for me what a valuable theme this has been. This month, we studied shelter over time, which included looking at how people lived long, long ago versus long ago versus today. A project manager at a local “green” design firm spoke to our class about how her company educates builders and buyers about ways that they can build environmentally-friendly homes and buildings. A highlight of the unit was our Habitat for Humanity project that we did in collaboration with the kindergarten class. Our classes learned about the organization and how it helps



people build homes, we visited a work site in Freeport, then we put together a care package for the Habitat volunteers. Together, our classes brainstormed what types of items we could include in the care package that would help encourage and inspire the workers and we decided on motivational cards, a hand-knit scarf, and hot chocolate. Our culminating activity was a Dream House project, in which the children planned and built their ideal homes using a variety of materials such as tiles, popsicle sticks, cardboard, carpet squares, etc. The results were incredibly diverse and showed both creativity and a solid comprehension of the material that we covered over the course of the unit.

From 5-6 Social Studies teacher, Jonathan Ewell: We have entered into an exploration of the vast and fascinating world of Ancient China. The students have had a chance to survey selected books with topics that include mythology, religion, astrology, history, science, geography, and writing, and have reflected upon which of these topics is most interesting to them. We will spend our time learning about Confucianism, geography, the Chinese zodiac, and the procession of dynasties. We will also have a visit from Ellie Chase, who will talk about her recent odyssey to China to adopt her daughter, Jia, and will look at what China is like today. The past few classes have involved a glimpse into yin and yang energies, with the students creating their own customized yin/yang symbols as a way of familiarizing themselves with Taoism and its belief in the interdependence of opposites, which, really, are not opposites because they exist within each other and can't exist without each other and are somehow part of the same thing and...and... Needless to say, there have been lively, fascinating discussions as a result of this topic. The concept of balance, central to the symbol and its meaning, is also a major theme of our study of China, and, in fact, the whole year, as we look at ways in which people have gained and lost balance with each other, with the earth, and with their understanding of the unknown. The quest for systems of measuring



time, of regulating societies, of ensuring basic needs, and of establishing roles within a group, may be viewed as a quest for balance. It is the dynamic quality of life that keeps this quest interesting, and the movement from inquiry to reflection to action, round and round, that keeps these students busy!

Four 5th & 6th grade students also performed the story of Rumpelstiltskin



From 5-6 Science teacher, Jamien Jacobs: Science is moving in many interesting directions these days. Last week I introduced a new assignment, “Science in the News”. In a nutshell, students find and read a science related article, summarize it in their own words, ask two questions not addressed by the article, and then present their article to the class. Today, class was led by students who taught us about methane on Mars, a new species of bioluminescent (glowing) fungi found in Brazil, and the discovery of a new dinosaur species in South Africa. The presenting students did a wonderful job! The audience was equally amazing! I was so impressed by the respect everyone showed each other, by the thoughtful questions and comments that were raised, by the presenters’ ability to think on their feet and formulate responses, by other students chiming in and sharing their own related knowledge, etc. Discussions ranged from the very essence of scientific investigation (importance of perseverance and thoughtful questioning) to the nitty-gritty of gene splicing and cloning, to the ethics of whether we *should* do things even if we are *able* to them. One student even came up with a story idea that could be made into a major motion picture! If you were a fly on the wall today you would know that the world is going to be in excellent hands with these students as our future leaders. I look forward to more of these amazing conversations as each and every student has a turn to lead our class during the month of December.