

Newsletter
MARCH/APRIL
2010

207-781-6321

Mackworth Island
Falmouth, ME 04105

friendsschoolofportland.org

Upcoming Events Calendar

Tuesday, March 9th
Board of Directors Meeting

Friday, March 12th
Professional Day
No Classes

Thursday, March 18th
Parents Assoc. Meeting

Saturday, March 27th
4th Annual Auction & Brunch
10 am to 2 pm
To donate an item or
service, call the school
207-781-6321 or go to the
website for a donation form.

Friday, April 2nd
Drive by Press
8:30 am to 10:30 am

Tuesday, April 13th
Board of Directors Meeting

April 19th - 23rd
School Vacation

Tuesday, May 11th
Parenting for Peace
"The Ecology of Hope:
Reflections on Parenting,
Activism, and the
Environment."
Presented by Sandra
Steingraber, The third in its
speaker series at Hannaford
Hall in the Abromson
Community Education
Center at USM, Portland,
Maine.

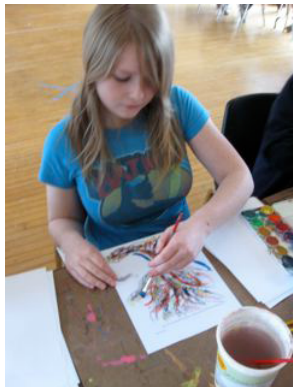


FRIENDS SCHOOL OF PORTLAND

inquiry • reflection • action

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Making prints with MECA



News

Friends with MECA

On Feb 23, five Junior printmaking students from MECA and their professor Adriane Herman came and worked with our 5th-8th graders on activity books with written prompts for the students to respond to with spontaneous sketching. The 2 1/2 hour class was a big success, we all had time to have conversations on how college art students make their art and how they approach new projects. We will continue this collaborative art project with MECA at their printmaking studio on March 16th.

Looking New

FSP is pleased to announce that our newsletter, redesigned by new Marketing Consultant Jennifer Foy, will be published bi-monthly.

Congratulations!

FSP 8th grader, **Emma Jordan**, had her art work selected by the **National Youth Art Month exhibit at the Portland Museum of Art**. The Museum's exhibition, running from February 27 through April 4, 2010, will showcase more than 100 works of art by students throughout the state, from elementary school through high school. All participating students will receive certificates of recognition. An exhibition celebration will be held at the Museum on Saturday, March 6, from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Admission is free to the public and refreshments will be served.

4th grader, **Sam Davies**, won third place for **ages 10-13**, in the Portland Flower Show essay contest. Great job Sam!

Reflection from the Head of School by James Grumbach

Frank McCourt, the Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Angela's Ashes* wrote that, in America, "teaching is the downstairs maid of professions, told to use the backdoor or servants' entrance." His celebrity came late in life, after 30 years of teaching in New York City schools, what he refers to as his "second act." In his book *Teacher Man*, he notes that only after his recognition as a writer was his opinion sought on teaching (and a multitude of other topics on which he was less qualified to comment). He underscores that those who teach "will not be celebrated."

Recently, a substitute teacher at FSP, an experienced professional, but relatively new to substituting, came into my office at the end of the day, dramatically collapsed on the floor, and said, "teachers don't get paid enough." That is the case for most who follow their calling to teach, and, I believe that for the best teachers, it is a vocation: an innate compulsion to teach, to help, to guide, to nurture, to be with children. Without classroom experience, it is difficult to understand the multitude of skills and reservoir of energy that it takes to be an effective teacher in a classroom full of even the most wonderful children (and certainly FSP

students are most wonderful). Teachers in our society are under-celebrated and, hence, under-valued.

The past few weeks, I have had the opportunity to do a little teaching with four 5th graders studying the wonders and challenges of fractions. Though I taught math for over 30 years, this was my first experience with elementary school teaching. Again, I have been reminded that teaching is much more of an art than a science, and is very much about the relationships that are formed between the individuals that come together, students and teacher, to spend time together to learn...from one another. I have always believed that the relationships among students and teacher are the essence of a school and the role of the administration is to facilitate that.

Fortunately, I hear FSP parents praising our teachers all the time. I hear, too, how most of our students, most of the time, are eager to come to school. There is a causal correlation. Our teachers, no matter what their experience level or their individual approach to teaching, share a common purpose to create a Quaker school, a dedication to working as a team, the freedom

to develop engaging curricula, and a belief in answering the Light within each child.

The challenge that we face as a community is to celebrate and value our teachers who fundamentally are the school. For an independent school the tension is between the cost of tuition, the largest source of income, and teachers salaries and benefits, the largest expense. This year, we created a Personnel Committee, with representation from the board of directors, administrators, and teachers, to take on the issues around compensation. This committee has focused on creating a salary scale and will soon take a proposal to the faculty and then to the board for approval. It will provide a level of transparency that will allow all involved to more easily frame queries about starting salaries, a living wage, and income expectations over the course of a career. The Personnel Committee has also begun to look at equity issues related to benefits, starting with the question of ensuring that every employee has health care.

The Personnel Committee's loftiest goals would preclude the need for FSP teachers to find a "second act" to feel celebrated and valued.

Discovering a world of symmetry with the 3rd-4th grade



4th Annual Auction & Brunch • Saturday, March 27th

We are in the final stretch of preparations for FSP's 4th Annual Auction & Brunch. **Admission is free.** Doors open at 10am. Come early and bid often! The kids will enjoy magic shows and face painting while the grown-ups can bid on great items, including vacation getaways, spa and restaurant gift certificates and much more! Keep in mind, the auction closes at 1 pm, but the festivities continue until 2 pm.

Want to help?

Collect items for auction! The donation deadline is 3/13. Donations forms are available online. Volunteers are needed for clean-up.

Learning Update by Mary Tracy

One of the practices common to Friends meetings and Friends schools is holding a meeting for business. In a spirit of equality and respect, reports might be given from committees, the budget discussed, an action decided upon, or any number of issues that arise in an organization might be addressed. Most Friends meetings have a clerk or co-clerks for a year, who facilitate the meetings for business and bring spiritual depth and leadership to the meeting in many ways. There is also a recording clerk selected for the year who, in the process of taking notes of the sense of the meeting, will help the participants keep track of their ideas, and by careful wording, make sure the spirit of the actions and decisions is reflected accurately. When decisions are to be made, Friends strive for a sense of unity. This is slightly different than consensus and very different than voting. We aim for a decision that all can uphold, believing that it is worth the effort to have everyone's support, rather than have

those who were out-voted, feel unheard or disregarded. Often times, the minority view will lead a group to a new and creative solution to a problem.

At our school, the 5th-8th grade classes have just completed a series of meetings for business for the purpose of choosing community service. To begin, a nominating committee was formed and met during some lunch times to consider whose names to bring forward to the full meeting for clerk and recording clerk. Jonathan Ewell, the faculty advisor for the committee, was impressed with the thoughtfulness and insight that committee demonstrated. As in all group endeavors, there was some dissension about the nominating committee's recommendations; concerns were heard and responded to in a way that allowed the decision to move forward. The 5th-8th grade group then met twice, ably facilitated by their clerk, to consider the needs of the wider community, narrow their possible service projects down to three, and start to brainstorm

particular kinds of projects. The group sat in a large circle during these meetings, with the clerk part of the circle and with faculty and James present, but rarely participating. The three areas of need were Haiti, Kakamega Orphan Care Center in Kenya (a Quaker-supported residence for AIDS orphans), and homelessness in our local community. The groups then were to meet as separate classes to decide what to do; that is still in progress. These class meetings will mirror at least two important aspects of the larger meeting – students will help facilitate them and the tone of respectful listening and responding will be maintained. Class meetings like this begin with the youngest children in the school learning to listen and take turns, being asked to share their thoughts about issues that affect them, and being able to bring up ideas and issues of their own. It is one way to “be the peace in the world we wish to see,” as Gandhi said.



Recycling - Helping FSP do our part



Learning to build a fire the Wabanaki Way

Stepping Back

Each fall, the Board of Directors has a retreat. In October, they spent their time together sharing their thoughts on six strategic topics related to FSP: tuition, financial aid, diversity/inclusivity, salaries & benefits, location, and size (class & school). The goal was to simply see where there was common agreement and to propose some next steps. The Board members enjoyed the time to discuss these related topics and realized that they wanted to hear other community voices. Similar retreats took place with the faculty and staff in December, and with parents at the end of February. One of the results was that each group identified the

three topics that engendered the most interest. All three groups focused on size and location. Though the retreats were not aiming to reach conclusive agreement, the weight of the discussions was to remain a small school (under 100) with small classes (generally under 15), and to remain on Mackworth Island. The Board and faculty also spent time on diversity/inclusivity, and each added a topic: the use of the Potter bequest and curriculum, respectively. The parents added parental involvement and, for their third topic of focus, discussed curriculum. More complete reports including suggested “next steps,” will soon be available.

Excerpts from Class Newsletters

Kindergarten on Ice



Kindergarten Ice Explorers: The big adventure was on a day we were exploring the woods with preschool. The soft frozen ground began to crush under our feet. The ice had frozen in layered columns. The magic began. Some children thought they were magical crystals and others were convinced we had found a rare mine. This experience was a great opportunity to explore and experiment with ice. The children were invited to make their own ice crystals, later they were each invited to make their own ice experiment. With big blocks of ice, squirt bottles, food coloring, and salt, the experiments began. Soon, tunnels were formed and the dramatic play was enhanced by the addition of plastic sea animals. The children enjoyed sharing their creations and ideas, and once again learning was driven by the wonderful environment we are blessed to have on Mackworth Island.



1st-2nd grade
reading & writing celebration



1st- 2nd grade visit by the Wabanaki: We had a terrific visit from Barry Dana, the former chief of the Penobscot nation, during which he told stories, demonstrated how to build a fire, showed us a few birch bark tools from his large collection, and answered questions. We will study Pourquoi stories, then write our own! We will end the unit with an exhibit of all of our Native American crafts and a traditional (mini) feast.

3rd -4th grade Queries on Symmetry: How does symmetry affect my life? Where can you find symmetry in nature? Why do we need symmetry? Why isn't everything symmetrical? What do we do with symmetry? What is it for? What would our bodies look or feel like without symmetry?

Busy in the 5th -6th grade class: Along with a new year have come many new things for the 5-6 class. They are learning about fractions and decimals, a very hard bunny riddle and a timeline of all the earth's biggest events, and group presentations on evolution. Once a week they take out their new hand puppets where they have mastered all the puppet's emotions, done some improvisation, and acted along to nursery rhymes. But when they are not doing any of this, they are knitting for either the homeless or the animal shelter. As you can see, there is a lot of cool, new stuff going on in the 5-6 room.