

Newsletter
MAY/JUNE
2010

207-781-6321

Mackworth Island
Falmouth, ME 04105

friendsschoolofportland.org

Upcoming Events Calendar

Friday, May 7th
11:00 am - 2:00 pm
Grandparents and
Grandfriends Day!

Tuesday, May 11th
7:00 pm
Parenting for Peace
"The Ecology of Hope:
Reflections on Parenting,
Activism, and the
Environment."
Presented by Sandra
Steingraber

Tuesday, May 18th
5:30 pm
Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, May 19th
"Commute Another Way to
School" Day

Friday, May 21st
Advisory Committee Annual
Meeting

Friday, May 21st
5:30 pm
Community Potluck Dinner
& Choral Performances

Tuesday, June 8th
Island Day
Tri-school Day of Service &
Celebration

Tuesday, June 8th
5:30 pm
Board of Directors Meeting

Friday, June 11th
1:00 pm
Farewell Assembly
7:00 pm
Commencement



**FRIENDS SCHOOL
OF PORTLAND**
inquiry • reflection • action

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News

Friends School of Portland students are published authors!

6th graders **Sinead Scott** and **Madeline Curtis** are contributing authors in the Telling Room's new anthology *Can I Call You Cheesecake? 35 Stories and Poems about Food*.

FSP 8th grader **Emma Jordan** and her sister, Breakwater 5th grader Robin co-authored an article about raising backyard chickens. The article will be featured in the July/August issue of New Moon magazine.

Congratulations to all of our authors!

Join Us



FRIENDS SCHOOL OF PORTLAND
Parenting for Peace

The Ecology of Hope

Reflections on Parenting, Activism, and the Environment

Featured Speaker: Sandra Steingraber

Tuesday, May 11, 2010
7:00 pm

Abromson Community Education Center, Hannaford Hall
USM, Portland Campus

FREE AND OPEN TO PUBLIC

Funded in part by a grant from the Ceres Foundation.
A special thank you to the USM Women and Gender Studies Program, The Environmental Health Strategy Center, Physicians for Social Responsibility and the Natural Resources Council of Maine.

Reflection from the Head of School by James Grumbach

What, no mud season? For those readers who live outside of the northeast, I should explain what has happened this year. Winter ended in Portland with a heavy rain on January 25th. In some ways, this is a metaphor for the fourth year at FSP. It has been a year marked by wonder and calm. We have routines, traditions even, and seem to be humming along. That is not to say that we have grown complacent, rather the anxiety of being brand new and wondering if we will really make it has dissipated earlier than expected, like the snows of January. Are there still challenges? To be sure, enough to keep us as busy as ever, but there is a growing community to help us meet those challenges.

At this time of year, even as the days get longer, our time seems short, which in fact it is, and it prompts a look back over the year, yet there is so much to come in the six remaining weeks. We are expecting our usual bevy of grandparents and "grandfriends" on May 7th to join us in classes and at the all-school talent show. The Parenting for Peace panel discussion of the fall will have its complement on May 11th when author and ecologist, Sandra Steingraber speaks on the Ecology of

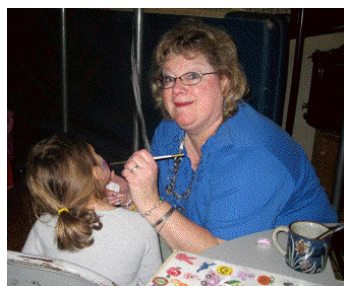
Hope. A workshop for educators precedes the lecture. The Advisory Committee will gather on May 21st to help us look at financial sustainability. Later that night, the last community potluck dinner of the year will feature choral performances under the direction of Ellie Chase, our music teacher. Three of our five 8th graders who started looking at boarding schools in the fall, are beginning to crystallize their decisions even as they make plans with their classmates for Commencement on June 11th.

Our admission efforts to increase enrollment, which started in earnest in November, are on track as we experienced our best ever retention of current families and are coming close to filling every class. The 5th-6th grade class is larger than one section, so we will split it in two creating room for even more middle school children next year as our enrollment edges towards 90 students. Some staff roles will change for next year, but we will retain every lead teacher and add a couple of new faces. We are taking the first steps to begin the self study for accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, an 18 month process that we expect will culminate with a visiting team

in the spring of 2012.

What have I left out? After school activities that include Aikido, seamanship, and diamond sports; a fabulous 7th-8th grade class play, the story of Aladdin in rhyme, directed by Lee Chisholm; a visit from Drive By Press arranged by Celeste Henriquez and Maine College of Art; several Outing Club adventures; the 5th-6th grade trip to Boston; Kindergarten hosting another preschool, Roots & Fruits, to build fairy houses; the upcoming 3rd-4th grade overnight at Chewonki; the upcoming 8th grade class trip to Washington, D.C.; Island Day, our second annual tri-school day of service and celebration; the third year for Friends School Summer Adventure Program and the second year for the Computer Camp; summer workshops for Brain Gym and the Maine School Forest Network, which we were invited to join....and this is just a partial list!

It is a time to give thanks, yet again, for all of the labors of teachers, staff, parents, friends, and, of course, the children who make us who we are. And, finally, it is time to look forward to a more leisurely summer pace to recharge batteries and get ready for our 5th year anniversary!



Thank You

Big thanks to all who helped, donated, bid, and participated in the 4th Annual Auction & Brunch on March 27th. We grossed \$19,000 which goes to support our tuition assistance budget. As the end of the school and fiscal year approach, please consider a donation (or second donation). Every unrestricted dollar goes to help families afford a Quaker education.

[Donate](#)

4th Annual Auction and Brunch Were they the high bidders?

Looking Forward

Grandparents and "grandfriends" are invited to visit classes and join us for the all-school talent show on Friday, May 7th starting at 11 a.m. Please contact John Marble if you plan to attend. 207.781.6226 or john@friendsschoolofportland.org

Learning Update by Mary Tracy

During a recent lesson with the 5th-6th grade, I learned that monsoon means “seasonal wind.” All this time, I thought it was another name for a tropical rainstorm. Aha! A bonus learning that brings to mind this time of the school year – it feels like a seasonal wind that rushes in with a speed and energy that seems to be all its own. When we catch our breath, we realize how much we have learned from the children.

“Too often to enumerate are all the times that the children show true empathy for their classmates who are unhappy,” reports Lea. “I will be in the middle of comforting and a small hand will come forward with a soft pat or with a token offering (a leaf, or a soft toy) for the unhappy one. These gestures are very likely to be more effective than anything I can say or do. They are nearly always wordless.”

Kindergartners have taught that sometimes the best learning moments come from an opportunity in front of us. As for 6- and 7-year-olds, Katie points to their independence: “Most people don’t give them enough credit and assume that they need constant guidance and scaffolding when they are actually really good at remembering routines (better than I am a lot of the time) and take off on projects with little guidance from me. I’ve begun planning less structured projects

because they seem to enjoy the flexibility of a loosely outlined project.”

“The 3rd-4th grade children have proven that life’s great truths are often answered by the contents of one’s lunch box,” writes Nicole. “One student claims that true happiness can be determined by the number of cookies that have been packed. Another insists that equality is ‘everyone getting to eat the same amount of candy the day after Halloween.’ Some save the best for last, others take their lunch by the horns and dive straight in for dessert during snack time. The contents of lunch boxes have allowed students to consider what is valuable to them, and what is disposable. As one student suggests, ‘the character of your friends can often be determined by what they are willing to sacrifice from their lunch when you forget your own.’ For some, the consistency of ‘Tuna Thursdays’ is enough to get you through the week.”

When 5th and 6th graders began learning about reading comprehension strategies, they were asked to write what they already knew about each strategy and to check VC for very confident, MC for medium confident, or NC for not confident. Part way through this exercise, one student was inspired to add a new key: “VVC very, very confident, SWMC somewhat more confident, SOC sort of confident, and NECTC not even close to

confident.” How silly to reduce something so complex and significant as confidence to only three levels.

Moving outside the classroom, Jill talks about her bike rides from South Portland, often with some of our older students: “I’ve learned that students’ quest for knowledge and information extends beyond school walls and schedules. It has been my honor to bring teaching to my bike commute this year. Some days we just ride in quiet, but some days there are teachable moments created by various pieces of the ride. A headwind on the drawbridge teaches us perseverance. A late start teaches us to honor our commitments and to work hard to make things right when we fall short in our commitments. A fellow cyclist with bike trouble teaches us to take opportunities to help one another on the road. The lesson I’ve learned from my fellow student commuters is that we don’t cease to be teachers, and students, when we leave this place.”

In a few fast weeks, the end-of-school monsoon will become a relaxing breeze. And these children will seize the moment to do wonderful things on their own, lending a hand, divining meaning from the ordinary, and feeling VVC. Teaching and learning will hum through the summer air.



1st - 2nd grade visit the NOAA weather station in Gray, flying twirly things that they made, and doing research on how to make a fruit salad

Summer Programs

A few spots are still available in the Computer Camp.

Don't miss out on this opportunity! Register your child(ren) today!

For more information please visit www.friendsschoolofportland.org/friends-summer-computer-camp

Excerpts from Class Newsletters



Children's Theater Puppet Show



FSP Kindergarten hosts Roots & Fruits Day



Kindergarten Playwrites: During one outdoor adventure, Billy and I watched all the children playing together on a rocky hill. The children imagined the hill was a castle or boat. The children took different roles and there was a king, knights, cats, princess, etc. It was a wonderful display of the classic “boy” and “girl” play coming together. The story emerged with everybody and all ideas included. We decided to make our own simple costumes and act it out. First, we did the play for ourselves...They did such a great job working together, that we decided to present it to grade 1-2, our buddies in 3-4, and grade 7-8. It was another “warm fuzzy” moment watching the children include each other and work together.

1st- 2nd grade authors: After months and months of writing about small moments from our lives, we have shifted to non-fiction writing. We began with a short unit on How-to stories and are now working on writing All-About stories. The children are always eager to share their knowledge and expertise about a variety of subjects ranging from animals to sports to cooking to the more abstract “How to sneak up on your teacher” or “How to annoy your sister.” It is a fun, hands-on unit as the children are eager to act out each other's stories to determine whether there are sections that need more detail or clarification. Our All-About stories focus mostly on topics we already know about although there will be some research involved in order to verify information.

If I Were In Charge of the School, by Otto Wolyniec, 2nd grade

I would not change anything, I think the school is perfect the way it is!

We get two recesses every day.

Art on Monday (great!), Gym on Tuesday (super!), Music on Wednesday (woohoo!), Gym on Thursday (yes!), and a super fun assembly on Friday! What more could you ask for? (Nothing in my case!)

Great teachers, great person in charge, there is nothing that isn't perfect!

I've spent a year and half here and I think it's the best school in the world!! I hope I can stay until the eighth grade!

3rd -4th grade on time: In math we are diving into time. The class has enjoyed working with “faux schedules” that include what we would do on our dream day. So far we have been practicing telling time, converting units of time and figuring out durations of time, and understanding time in more relative ways. For example, how many times can you say your ABC's in a minute...or how many times can you snap in one second or how far can you drive in a full day?

5th -6th grade scientists: Using ramps and cylinders, students are off and running, learning about scientific inquiry and experimental design. It is wonderful how such simple, and fascinating, systems can generate so much great material for learning about science. With ramps and cylinders students are learning to pose questions, state hypotheses, design experiments, identify and control variables, generate data, organize data, graph data, use data to make predictions and ultimately, to work collaboratively to use their data to solve an as of yet undisclosed challenge.