



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

Newsletter November/December 2011

Our Mission: Friends School of Portland challenges and empowers students to develop their intellectual, physical, emotional, creative and spiritual potential. We honor our students' natural gifts as they learn to enter the world with confidence, competence, joy and a sense of purpose. We are guided by the Quaker values of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, stewardship, and truth.

Upcoming Events

11/19: Admissions Open House, 10:00 am
11/23-25: Thanksgiving Break
12/6: Parent Forum, 6:30 pm
12/13: FSP Board Meeting, 5:30 pm
12/19-30: Winter Break

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Upcoming Admissions Events

Please join us for one or more of these upcoming Admissions Events! [Visit our website](#) for more details, and [email Jessica Eller](#), Admissions Coordinator, to RSVP for an event.

11/19: Family Open House, 10:00 am
12/1: Q & A with Head of School, 10:00 am
12/7: Parent Class Visit, 9:00 am

Service Spotlight

Friends School of Portland is guided by Quaker values, one of which is stewardship. We practice stewardship in our immediate community by caring for our school building and outside areas at the end of each week. Each class also learns to care for the world in different ways.



Fifth and sixth graders work to remove invasive bittersweet.

This fall, the 5-6 science class is undertaking a habitat improvement project on Mackworth Island, led by middle

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Make a Donation

Gifts from individuals contribute directly to the financial aid that is awarded to families in need.



Close Buy Gift Boxes

Looking for Maine-made holiday gifts? Check out Close BuyCatalog's unique gift boxes. There are 9 to choose from, and 5% of your purchase will benefit FSP. Just [visit the Close Buy website](#), and choose Friends School of Portland at checkout!

school science teacher Jamien Jacobs, and funded by a grant from USM's Casco Bay Estuary Partnership. Read more about the project on the [FSP website](#).



Teacher Nicole Borrasso watches a fourth grader stencil a storm drain.

The 3-4 class recently took to the streets surrounding the causeway to Mackworth Island, stenciling storm drains to remind residents that they empty into Casco Bay. [Click here](#) to learn more about their efforts to keep pollution out of Casco Bay, and to see a related news piece that aired on CTN5.

Why I Give to FSP

Friends School of Portland is lucky to have a wide and varied network of supporters whose donations contribute directly to the tuition assistance awarded to families in need. In their own words, some of our friends describe why they give to FSP:

"I give to FSP because of the value that the school brings to my family. I know that charitable giving allows other families to use the school that might not otherwise be able to. Finally, it makes me feel good to give." - *FSP Parent*



Fourth graders plant pinwheels on the beach in honor of the International Day of Peace, 9/21/11.

"I heartily believe in FSP! The staff and culture of the school give children a marvelous boost to their confidence and curiosity before they start book-learning. I also appreciate the value of being in Silence, with a child finding plenty to think and feel about, quite by her/himself. Our world NEEDS young people with those qualities!" - *Member of Portland Friends Meeting*



FSP students head to the beach with their pinwheels.

"I believe that we need tomorrow's citizens to have the skills that are reflected in Quaker education, and in FSP in particular - the ability to problem solve, to peace make, to be curious, to maintain relationships across difference are core elements of character that we need in our leaders. I am hopeful that kids will leave FSP both grounded in themselves in a deep way and confident that they can be part of the solution to the problems facing our communities. During these stressful times, we need spaces where hope is cultivated." - *FSP Board Member*

Reflection by James Grumbach, Head of School

So much can change in just 60 days! In my last reflection, I could foresee the arrival of the accreditation visiting team and the Parenting for Peace events, but, as many of you already know, my decision to make this my last year at FSP was not yet public. "Retire" still doesn't feel like the right expression, but I am ready to do less. We had also just received the "call for offers" from the Town of Falmouth to purchase the elementary school buildings and land that they vacated last June. The cross-country team was just forming for its fourth season. They were the first group to use our new-to-us 2001 GMC minibus, nicknamed Moby (you have to drive it to fully appreciate the reference) and we think it helped the team coalesce.



The cross-country team boards Moby, FSP's new bus.

Well, what can be said of all of this? Cliché though it is, life is full of changes and a few surprises. What is most heartening is the knowledge that the school is resilient and has resources to embrace all of this, while maintaining its daily routines, which in and of themselves are quite remarkable as some of the other items in this newsletter will attest. As the NEASC team remarked, FSP has created "a culture of joyful learning" based on Quaker values and a place-based approach to its curriculum. That really says it all and I would stop except some of you undoubtedly have a few questions.

First, on a personal level, I intend to remain in Portland now that my wife, Pam, and I are once again living under that same roof after a 4-year commuter relationship. Happily, by next June, three of our four children and two of our three grandchildren will be living in the area. I have no plans to leave, but I will want and need to do something productive with my time, and I will want to stay in touch with the many friends that I have made at FSP. I am confident that FSP will attract very capable, qualified candidates for the position that I am leaving. I can tell them what a true blessing it is to be in this community. The search committee is chaired by Rob Levin, President of our Board of Directors, and more information is available on the website. Please spread the word to those you know who might be interested.

Regarding the possible relocation of the school, of course, we all love the unique setting on Mackworth Island, but there is growing excitement over the opportunity to have greater control of our future. We have not been able to secure a long-term commitment from the state beyond 2014 and feel that continuing with 2-year lease terms is not in our best interests. The Falmouth location is well-situated near an I-295 exit,

making it as accessible to our current families and, perhaps, a little more convenient to families in the Lewiston area. Our offer will include options to preserve much of the 10 acres of woods on the Falmouth site along with the associated nature trails and vernal pools.

Still, there is no certainty about the acceptance of our offer and I may be reflecting in the next newsletter about more remarkable and unforeseen changes. As a community, we remain hopeful and secure in the solid foundation that we have built. We are confident that we are living our mission and will provide a Quaker education wherever we are. And, should we move, Moby stands ready to bring us back to the island for regular visits.

Learning Update by Mary Tracy, Director of Education

As most of you know, we have spent much of the last year and a half conducting a thorough self-study to assess how well we meet the accreditation standards for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Independent Schools. We were visited this October by a group of five caring and thoughtful educators from other New England schools, including Lincoln Friends



The 7-8 class is all smiles after a poetry workshop with George Chappell.

School in Providence, Cambridge Friends School, and Berwick Academy. The final, official decision about our accreditation won't come until February, but the chair and assistant chair of the visiting committee met with James Grumbach, Rob Levin (clerk of our Board), and myself to review major commendations and recommendations. The school lives its mission fully, we were told. That's a tribute to everyone who is part of our community - families, students, faculty and staff, board, and the many supporters we are fortunate to have. We have accomplished a remarkable amount and done notably well since this idea crept into conversations among the Portland Friends Meeting community. It was clear to our visitors that students thrive here and that our faculty is our greatest asset.

We are poised, they continued, to become a "great school," one that could make a significant contribution to the region. And with that came clear advice to think boldly about the kind of school we could become and the investment that calls for. We know that a new location, no matter where, requires an investment of planning, time, and money. It brings with it the prospect of bringing to life various curriculum dreams. Think what would happen if science, music and art each had rooms just for their subjects and equipment to support student learning in those areas.

Investing in people also matters: how do we retain our dedicated faculty and staff and keep growing professionally? How do we bring students and families to us to both enrich our community and to spread our effect? How do we widen the ripples of influence our school may have on educational conversations in our region? In one pivotal year, we find ourselves at a powerful starting point for location, leadership, and learning. Life is never dull around here!

Cross-Country Victory by Coach John Marble



The FSP Cross-Country team warms up before a meet.

Friends School of Portland's Cross-Country team had a fantastic fall season! The team motto was "Run Well/Have Fun!" and the team did just that. In the first meet of the season, the girls lost to one team but beat another to record the first interscholastic victory ever for FSP. The next week the girls won the entire meet; another first for FSP. However, the highlight of the season was hosting a home meet on Mackworth Island. The team crafted a 2.5K course over the fields and trails of Mackworth Island and hosted runners from five different schools. The meet took place on a beautiful, sunny autumn afternoon and everyone - runners, parents, and coaches - commented on what a nice course we had designed. The girls again won the entire meet. The fleet Foxes were able to field only three boys, and Cross-Country requires a minimum of five to score as a team, but each runner ran well and improved with each meet. Their pacesetting efforts were definitely noticed and there's good reason to hope that the boys will field a full team in 2012. While the entire team demonstrated great running ability, perhaps their greatest display was the positive regard they showed for one another and their competition at every meet. The athletes received numerous compliments from other schools' parents and coaches on their enthusiasm and sportsmanship. Great job, Foxes!

Sportsmanship in the Community

Friends School students Liam Ireland and Ian McClure-Chute recently completed a fun and exciting fall season with the Portland U10 boys' travel soccer team. The team was undefeated in three tournaments and finished with 18 wins, 2 ties, and 2 losses. Both boys played major roles in their team's success, with Liam on offense and Ian on defense, and both were complimented on their superb sportsmanship and teamwork. "Every team needs players like Liam and Ian," said Greg Reid, who coached the boys with Todd Sniper. "As individuals, they push themselves to develop skills and play smart, skillful soccer." Liam's father, Sean Ireland, comments: "The boys modeled good sportsmanship in winning and defeat and we were all so proud of the way they represented the Friends School during the season. There is no better [affirmation] than to have other parents ask and comment about where your children go to school based on how they handle themselves in certain situations. It was also evident that they were classmates and had a special bond and camaraderie - always making sure to encourage and compliment and look out for each other." The ways in which the boys showed kindness and respect to their teammates and competitors is just one example of how FSP students are reaching beyond the school to make an impact in our surrounding communities.



The Portland U10 boys' travel soccer team.



An FSP second grader dribbles the ball in a game against Breakwater.

Student Reflections on Power

Power was a common topic around the school this fall, as we reflected on the way people use power, and how we ourselves can feel powerful. Nicole Borrasso's 3-4 class wrote about power in their journals, answering the question: "How do I feel powerful in my life? Why?"

Here is one student's thoughtful response: "I feel powerful when I overcome things, like when I learned to read or ride a bike. It feels so... big and powerful! And when I have the power to make my own decisions. I've never felt truly powerful, but sometimes close to it. Like when I swim, I can decide myself where to go and what to do. Sometimes being the oldest person can make you feel powerful. When I draw I can make whole worlds and chose what happens to/on them."



The 5-6 class displays their drumming skills at assembly, led by guest percussionist Eric LaPerna.

"I feel powerful when I'm drawing because I can decide what it looks like and it can't move around unless I change it. The drawing comes from the tip of the pencil."

"I feel powerful when I try something new because I feel responsible and optimistic. I feel powerful when I read because I feel happy and good is more powerful than bad."

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