



FRIENDS SCHOOL OF PORTLAND

inquiry • reflection • action

October Newsletter 2009

207-781-6321 Mackworth Island, Falmouth ME 04105


www.friendsschoolofportland.org

Contents

- Calendar
- News
- Reflections from the Head of School
- Learning Update
- Special Subjects Featured

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

NEXT WEEK!



FRIENDS SCHOOL OF PORTLAND

In partnership with Physicians for Social Responsibility

Invites you to **Parenting for Peace**, a discussion with
David Bellinger, Nicole Borrasso, & Kristine Jenkins
 Jeff Peterson, moderator
 ASL Interpreters: Meryl Troop & Jill Andrews


Detox Your Toy Box

Creating Healthier Environments for Our Children & Communities

Tuesday, October 20, 2009
7:00 pm

Hannaford Hall at USM
Abromson Community Education Center

More information at www.friendsschoolofportland.org



Calendar

Thursday	October 15	6 p.m.	Parents Association
Friday	October 16	6-8 p.m.	Outing Club's Maine Harvest Dinner & music
Tuesday	October 20	7-8:30 p.m.	Detox Your Toy Box panel discussion
Friday	October 23	5:30 p.m.	Movie Night
Wednesday	November 12	6-7 p.m.	Parents Admissions Information Session
Saturday	November 14	10-11:30	Family Admissions Open House followed by Michael Trautman, Visual Comedy. <u>All are invited to both</u>

News

FSP students, grade 3-8, were in attendance when a teacher from The REAL School, Richard Meserve, was surprised at a tri-school assembly Tuesday morning with the presentation of a prestigious national teaching award, and a check for \$25,000. Maine Department of Education Commissioner Susan A. Gendron presented the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award in front of students and teachers from FSP, GBSD, and The REAL School, and local and state dignitaries.



Working together, we cleaned up and beautified the garden & courtyard for the coming winter

Reflections from the Head of School

The theme for last month was “inspiration” and the 5th-6th grade class posed the following queries:

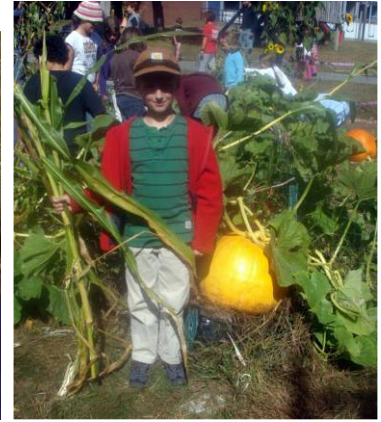
Who inspires us?

What inspires us?

How might I inspire someone else?

I would guess that the answers for many of our children appear below in the section that highlights our special subject area teachers. We devoted this issue of the newsletter to offer a better introduction to these teachers. As a former art and mathematics teacher, I am tempted to take up the discussion of why we find labels, such as “academic”, “special”, “major”, or “minor” to qualify the “subjects” that we teach in our schools. We are all familiar with the news reports that tell of cutting such programs. Suffice it to say that FSP is committed to providing a curriculum in many areas that we feel are “essential” to a well-rounded education. We don’t need to be convinced by the research that underscores the importance of the arts, physical activity, and learning about other languages and cultures. We know that the learning in these areas is as fundamental as reading, writing, and arithmetic. We’ll let the teachers speak for themselves.

~ James Grumbach, Head of School



We harvested most of the vegetables, but the pumpkins are waiting for the first frost

Learning Update

This summer, the faculty chose to learn more about how the brain works and how to plan our days to better meet the student needs. Most schools in the U.S. report an increase in the number of students who have “executive functioning” challenges, and we are no exception. Executive functioning is governed by the frontal lobe of the brain. It helps us plan, prioritize, block distractions, follow directions, and carry out cognitively complex tasks such as composing a story or essay. In children who struggle with these tasks, the frontal lobe may be slower to develop than other parts of their brain. Since the typical school day is full of executive tasks, it can be a long and trying day for these children.

Research shows consistently that physical exercise and the right kinds of sensory/motor input can help. You will find all classes doing more physically active games and exercises throughout the day – everything from toss games in a circle to yoga. We remain committed to our recesses and to encouraging children to run, which has so many benefits – it’s aerobic, it involves cross-patterning, which stimulates both sides of the brain to work together, it puts pressure on the major joints, which helps the nervous system organize, and of course, it is fun and relieves tension. Some of our teachers will attend the Brain Gym course we are hosting as another way to learn more about the brain-body connection. We are also trying different ways of helping children calm themselves and develop their focus. We ring a chime, watch glitter settle in a jar of water, and practice three-part breathing, for example. We ask students to notice how their body feels and think about what they could do to rev up or slow down, whichever is needed at that moment. It’s part of learning to be a learner.

~ Mary Tracy, Curriculum Coordinator



...and we danced together at the Community Potluck Dinner with the Crooked Stovepipe Band

Special Subjects: American Sign Language, Art, Physical Education, Spanish, and Music

American Sign Language (ASL) is thriving at FSP. The newest students have grasped that our community shares this island with Deaf neighbors who use sign language to communicate instead of spoken English. In keeping with our values of community and equality, ASL exposure and instruction are provided to students at every grade level. {John Smith, a native signer and the ASL teacher is currently on an emergency re-assignment at Portland High School and will re-join us in November.}

FSP Preschool classes have ASL introduced at the end of each week to accompany a book they have already read several times. Having familiarity with the story in English, and the illustrations, sets the stage to then see the story in ASL and watch the "pictures" made in the air. After the story is done, the students try to produce a key word or two in ASL. They have made a very lively group of baby owls, flapping and dancing on their branches, and a vibrant gathering of newly emerged butterflies.

Kindergarten students are integrating ASL into their morning greetings, and have mastered the sign names unique to each class mate. What a treat to sit in silence as they greet one another around the circle using only sign language.

FSP 1-2 students are reinforcing phonics and basic spelling practice through mastery of the ASL alphabet. Each week we add new letters, and practice them with a variety of games. We have searched throughout the classroom for our quarry in "letter hunt", and stretched our bodies as well as our minds in "alphabet stretching". The energy level in the room is always good with this group of motivated learners.



The first application of a standardized ASL curriculum happens in the 3-4 class. Vocabulary is introduced in content themes, and students are expressively and receptively communicating in ASL sentences during the first week of class. ASL bingo has been a highlight of class thus far.

It is a pleasure and an honor to manifest our school's Quaker values through ASL instruction. The students have embraced the task and risen to the challenge beautifully. I hope they share my pride in their effort and their work this year.
~ Jill Andrews, ASL Teacher, preschool- 4th grade

~~~~~  
My goal in Art this school year is for the students to learn from other artists' work: how their lives shaped their choices of the subjects they worked from, mediums they worked in, and their inspirations. Students will look closely at all the artistic elements the artists used to build their work like view point, composition, color, mood. With our first artist, the passionate Georgia O'Keeffe, we have discussed her flower series and have learned about her life as an artist with many reproductions of her work, stories of her life, and watching short documentaries and interviews. Our subject in class has been the sunflower. Kindergarteners through 2<sup>nd</sup> graders looked closely at their sunflower from all different angles, chose an area to draw, and then brought color in with oil pastels and colored pencils. We noticed that O'Keeffe used the technique of blending with her colors so we have learned about what blending is and how to blend with pastels and pencil. The 3<sup>rd</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> graders also studied the sunflowers and added jeweler loupes as a tool to see closer into the subject and ask these questions while looking again and again: What else does it remind me of? What else does it look like? Creating these analogies of their findings and allowing thinking and ideas as they work. This approach is from a Seattle based program called Private Eye. In Language Arts and Science, Mary and Jamien are also using this observation approach. It has been an enriching experience for all of us and has brought in a bounty of interpretations and in depth dialogues to our classes.

In my practice of being an art teacher and with my work as an artist, my hope is to assist my students in discovering the pleasures art has for them and to experience all the steps involved in building a piece of art. When I am teaching, I try to make sure that each child will know that the final result feels the best when you discover something new along the way, that they feel safe in expressing their ideas, and for each to know they are already artists.



We are planning on field trips into our local art community. The Space Gallery in Portland has developed a program, "The Alternative Classroom," and is inviting art students to come and experience an exhibit and create art in their gallery space. Soon we will be participating in this and I will be asking for parent volunteers to help chaperone and participate. In the spring we will be going to The Institute of Contemporary Art at MECA. They have a program called "Adventures in Art-School Program" which is an art education program that brings college students to our classroom to introduce a current exhibit and then later a trip to ICA for an exhibition tour and art-making with curriculum connections.



To know what I bring to your children's art program, here is a bit of my background. I was a child who really enjoyed expressing herself through art. I took a lot of art classes and in high school was mostly up in the art room at recess. I went to Philadelphia College of Art and enjoyed every moment of my art education. While at PCA I studied illustration and then after graduating with a BFA I worked as a freelance illustrator for 17 years. I illustrated for advertising agencies, editorial illustrations in magazines, and book illustrations. My medium was watercolor. The last five years before starting a family, I was illustrating mostly for books and children's books, which is still my interest. I am beginning to return to

illustration work and I know teaching is helping me see exciting new directions. I feel fortunate to work at the FSP where everyone is actively creative in all your children's classes.

I look forward to this new school year and getting to know more families. I love talking with families, sharing ideas, listening to suggestions, and answering questions, so feel free to stop by the art room anytime or email me at [celeste@friendsschoolofportland.org](mailto:celeste@friendsschoolofportland.org). I teach art on Mondays and Tuesdays. And if you would like to volunteer in the art room, we'd love to have you.

~ Celeste Henriquez, Art Teacher

My goal in my classes is to help students develop into active children who will grow into active and playful adults. Through my classes I expose students to a wide variety of games and activities that help develop healthy bodies and a strong connection to the outdoors. In addition to developing and building social skills with their peers, Physical Education aims to help students learn and practice skills that are meaningful and age appropriate. Students will be engaged in a wide variety of activities from team sports to cooperative games. Skills such as running, throwing, catching, kicking, rolling, tumbling, and tagging are addressed throughout the K-8 continuum, focusing more on gross motor skills for younger students and group games and strategies for middle school students. My goal is to make Physical Education a comfortable and welcoming place for all and for students to help create this place through awareness of their role in the group and good sportsmanship.



~ Bill Maley, Physical Education Teacher



In the short time that I will be at FSP, Ellie and I discussed the fact that I lived in Cuba until my early adolescence. We agreed that in both music and in Spanish, I should introduce the students to Cuban culture. We will still study the nuances of the language such as greetings, numbers, and certain necessities to communicate, and also include history of events and parts of the musically rich culture of the nation. I chose the fan as both an instrument that is used to refresh oneself on hot days and evenings, but also because it is a great part of Spanish-speaking culture for its use in dance. I would like to thank all of you that have welcomed me into this community with such joy. I, too, feel very blessed to be amongst you. It is a great privilege.

~ Jake Brooks, long-term substitute in Spanish and Music