



Jennifer McNally <jen@friendsschoolportland.org>

Newsletter--December 2017

Friends School of Portland <jen@friendsschoolofportland.org>

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Reply-To: jen@friendsschoolofportland.org

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

Newsletter December 2017

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.

Important Dates

Dec 20-Jan 1: Winter Break
Jan 2: Classes Resume
Jan 6: Admissions Open House, 10am
Jan 8: Fundraiser at B.GOOD Portland, 6-9pm
Jan 11: Alumni & Middle School Evening, 6pm
Jan 15: No School, MLK Day
Jan 24: Board Meeting, 6:30pm
Jan 31: New Student Applications Due

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From Jenny

Dear Friends of FSP,

It's the day before the Winter Solstice, and I watch the red-cheeked

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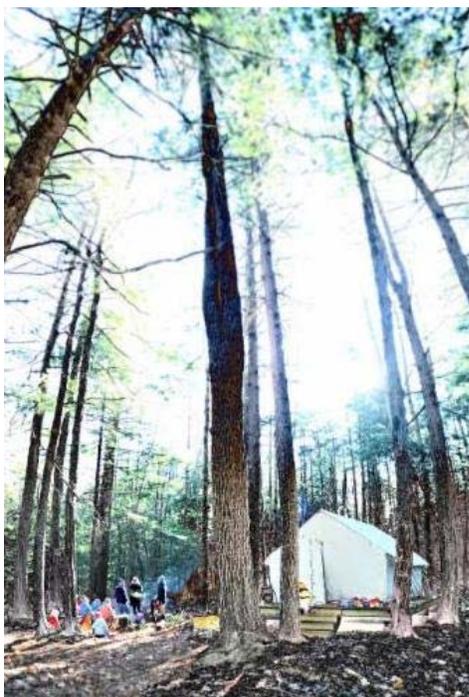
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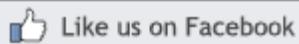
sledders come in for a warm snack a few minutes earlier each afternoon. Despite night's early onset, the energy of our students keeps the lights bright around here. Classroom projects abound: Greek gods and goddess puppets have been marching through the front door this week; first and second graders carry in a vegetable to add to the classroom pot of stone soup; elaborate graphic novel pages depicting the French Revolution make their way to the 5-6 classroom's bulletin board.



Energy shines outward, as well. Bake sales to support those in need in Puerto Rico and book drives for a Portland preschool take prominence in our daily announcements. Toothbrushes and detergent and toilet paper are collected and distributed to the New Mainer community.



And friends of FSP send their good wishes and thanks, lighting up our days. "Our child is feeling loved and held here." "As we struggle through the daily routines of making sure boys have mittens and lunch boxes on the way out the door and reminding them to sneeze into their elbows, it can become easy to become a little complacent about the wonderful place we are privileged to be able to bring them each day--FSP. But when we stop and think about what an amazing place the school is--how lucky we are that our boys are surrounded by such wonderful, outstanding teachers...we are grateful." Writes a grandparent, "I am happy



to support Friends School and the great work that happens there every day."



That gratitude works both ways. Thanks to each of you for being part of the steady light that emanates from our small school.

Jenny

A Lesson in Math & Stewardship by the 5th/6th Grade



In early September, Puerto Rico--which is an island that's part of the USA--was hit by Hurricane Maria. The island suffered a lot of damage. After a few weeks, we started to hear less about the problem, but that didn't mean things were fixed; they are still having big problems with electricity and clean water, among other things. Along with the 1st/2nd grade classes, we decided that we would try to raise money to donate to help the people in Puerto Rico. We chose to sell lunches to people at school.

We wrote emails and visited businesses to try and get supplies donated. We were given sandwich fixings, cheese, bread, meat, greens, drinks and fruit. Families in our class brought in peanut butter, jelly and vegetables.

In math class, we tried to estimate how many sandwiches we could sell for different prices--we wanted to charge enough to make plenty of money, but not so much that people didn't want to buy a lunch. In the end, we decided \$7.50 was reasonable; our teacher rounded this up to \$8.00.

We made the lunches in pairs. Each pair was responsible for about eight lunches, but we worked quickly and had extra food so we were able to make a bunch more lunches to donate. We also included a fact about Puerto Rico in each lunch.



We made about \$500 to donate to Global Giving--an organization that works on different projects in areas that have been affected by disasters. Then we used the Quaker decision-making process to decide exactly which project we wanted our money to support. We also made about 40 extra lunches which we were able to donate to the Preble Street Resource Center to feed local people who need a little more to eat.

Our 1st and 2nd grade buddies had a successful bake sale on that same day, raising over \$200 to add to our \$500. This project also helped them practice their money math skills, because the students made change for people.

We think this project was about stewardship--taking care of people nearby and far away, community--creating a positive energy inside our classroom and throughout the school, and equality--trying to do something that everyone has access to.

Reflection on Curriculum **Nell Sears, Director of Studies**



Each Tuesday morning, our classrooms take turns sharing something they've been learning about, tying that learning to one of the Quaker values.

Last spring the faculty decided that we would work together this year on reviewing and revising our social studies and science curricula and instruction with three specific lenses: anti-bias pedagogy, multicultural/equity pedagogy, and inquiry pedagogy. Through this work, we will deepen our capacity to make teaching at learning at FSP more immersive, more engaging, more just, and more equitable.

We have begun our work together by reading about these three approaches and creating from the literature guiding questions that will allow us to reflect on our curriculum and instruction. It is striking to notice how these approaches dovetail with Quaker pedagogy-- in each one can see the centrality of self-examination, of critical thought and dialogue, of listening, of asking and thinking through questions together, of respecting each child's gifts.

Identity Study in the 7th/8th Grade



This fall, our 7th and 8th grade students went on a field trip to different areas of downtown Portland to conduct an informal survey of how Portlanders describe their own identities. Students compiled and analyzed the data and used it as a launching point for their inquiry into themes of identity. Students discussed different identities as well as issues like under representation in a data set. The larger and bolder a word it, the more times it appeared in the data set.

This study corresponded to the students' reading assignment, in which they paid particular attention to passages describing how the main character sees him/herself, how the main character's identity conflicts with other's perceptions of him/her, and how having a 'voice' relates to identity, among other topics.

Later, students studied the poem "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon and were inspired to write their own poem, with each student contributing a few lines:

Where We're From

I am from

The boat my ancestors crossed on and the baby that survived

I am from the freezing cold ocean waves crashing onto me, pushing me into the sand

From good books in front of a fire

From playing outside until I can't feel my hands

From wildflowers blowing in the wind

From harsh green skies

From worn out sneakers

From nearly unstoppable laughter...[\[click here to read the full poem\]](#)

Annual Fund



"I have this path memorized," says a Kindergartner, as he and a classmate pull a wagon piled with donated wood to the Outdoor Classroom. Small feet travel confidently through the forest as part of everyday learning.

Our oldest graduates, now a year out of college, reflect on the difference this route has made: "Lessons I learned at FSP--resilience, pride, respect, and self-awareness, to name a few--were pivotal to my success," writes Quinn, as she sets out on a Fulbright Fellowship Teaching

Program in Malaysia.

Gradually and carefully, more young people are becoming part of a "community of deeply caring individuals educating a person for life, not just high school," as one graduate puts it.

Friends like you have helped make this possible. Please consider giving to FSP's Annual Fund, which provides significant financial aid to a third of our students, funds field trips to explore and serve, and allows our culture of joyful learning to thrive. **Every gift brings us closer to our goal of \$120,000.** Thank you for helping our students learn to care for people and the earth. Together we are helping children find their path.

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"Emergent Curriculum" in our Kindergarten



An emergent curriculum focuses on letting children's interests drive their learning experiences. In Kindergarten at Friends School of Portland, our teachers pay close attention to what captures their students' interest, and when a clear trend emerges, the teachers design a variety of classroom activities around that topic.

During the second week of school this year, our Kindergarten teacher noticed that the children were very interested in the many mushrooms they came across on the forest floor, so this became the focus of their first unit of study. The students read books about mushrooms, learned from multiple mushroom experts, made spore prints, and kept journals of their observations in the woods. They even grew their own oyster mushrooms in the classroom, noting each day how the mushrooms were developing.



After several weeks of study, students created a guide to foraging mushrooms in the Friends School woods. And to cap off the unit, they created an extensive "mushroom museum," featuring clay mushrooms, art, facts, games, and individual reports on different varieties of mushrooms. The museum even contained a gift shop that sold handmade mushroom art note cards, with proceeds donated in support of mushroom research.

Today a Commendation from the Maine

Mycological Association came in the mail for the Kindergartners "in recognition of their considerable accomplishments."

[Click here to see it.](#)

Alumni News

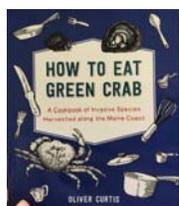


Saharla Farah, 2015 graduate of FSP and currently a student at Deering High School in Portland, has been elected for a second term as student representative to the Portland Public Schools School Board. Saharla visited our 7th/8th grade classroom last year to talk about her experience with the organization Seeds of Peace.

Graham Howard (class of 2010) is now a junior majoring in computer science at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ.

Cecilia Howard (class of 2012) was awarded a George Mitchell Scholarship to support her molecular biology studies at Johns Hopkins University. Her love of the outdoors is expressing itself through her leadership role in the JHU Outing Club, where she leads kayaking trips.

Tristram Howard (class of 2012) still loves the outdoors, but his time at University of Rhode Island is often full with other activities. He's in a five-year intensive Chinese program with a major in ocean engineering, plus service on the Student Senate.



Congratulations to 2014 FSP graduate and current Baxter Academy student **Oliver Curtis**, who recently published a book in conjunction with The Telling Room's Young Emerging Authors program. Oliver wrote a cookbook of recipes incorporating many of Maine's invasive species. Visit [The Telling Room's website](#) to learn more or to purchase Oliver's book. Oliver and his book were also featured in the Fall 2017 issue of Edible Maine. [Click here](#) to read the article.

Rylee Sinclair (class of 2014) is a senior at Baxter Academy and a fellow in The Telling Room's Young Emerging Authors program. This year, she is working on writing a coming of age fantasy novel about a pair of psychic twins dealing with the after-effects of a heroic, though traumatic, quest--a process that takes them back to the small New England town where their lives were forever changed. She hopes to publish her novel by next summer!

Congrats to **Julian Bernard** (class of 2014) on his early acceptance to Yale College!

Admissions Open House--January 6



Come learn more about us on Saturday, January 6th, 10:00am-12 noon. Tour our energy-efficient school

building, meet the teachers, spend time in classrooms, and talk to current parents and students. Learn more about Quaker education and get a feel for our *culture of joyful learning*. Our Head of School and Director of Studies will be on hand to answer your questions. This event is for families with children entering preschool through 8th grade. Prospective students and their siblings are welcome! If you would like to attend, please [click here to RSVP](#) or [email Jen McNally](#), Admissions Director.

Friends School of Portland, 11 U.S. Route One, Cumberland Foreside, ME 04110

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