

Letter from the Head of School

We are all educators: we all create attitudes and influence opinion, help or hinder spiritual nature. We must keep clear, amidst many activities, our central purpose. Beyond the beautiful and creative arts, the useful and practical subjects, the concern with science and culture, the soul awaits God's quickening breath. Without it humankind dies.

—From "About Friends Schools" in *Governance Handbook of Friends Schools*, 2002

In a recent article in "Education Week," Yale professor of psychology and education Robert Sternberg reminds the reader about the corporate scandals of the past year and points out that the individuals who were responsible for the downfall of these companies were smart and well-educated. He uses this observation as an entry point for arguing that schools do a disservice to young people by teaching them to "be intelligent and knowledgeable, but not how to use their intelligence and knowledge" and that "Schools need to teach for wisdom, not just factual recall and superficial levels of analysis."

As a Friends educator I greatly resonate with this call to educate for wisdom, and I'm pleased to see this sentiment in the pages of a major education periodical. When I meet with parents who are considering Friends School for their children I explain how over their child's nine years at the school our teachers will help them become literate, mathematically competent, knowledgeable about many topics in humanities and science and in general very well pre-

pared for entering high school. I then add that there are a great many schools that are also capable of doing this, but that what makes our school unique is the moral-ethical culture of the school, a culture that comes from our identity as a Quaker school. The Quaker testimonies of peace, justice, simplicity, integrity and community are central to how all in the school community relate to one another, to the broader community and to the earth. It is through this commitment to Friends' values and how they inspire our daily life at the school, through the insights that come from our weekly meetings for worship, that Friends School of Minnesota seeks to go beyond the teaching of knowledge and skills to impart at least the beginnings of wisdom.

One of the great strengths of the accreditation process in which Friends School engages is that the school is evaluated both in terms of the norms of academic expectation and the uniqueness that comes from our own mission statement. Once every seven years, a team of educators from different schools spends four days at FSM. They use our mission statement and self-study as a guide as they assess all facets of the school. In the summary section of the 2002 accreditation report, the visiting team noted how much the school had grown since the previous accreditation visit and wrote that:

[while] the physical surroundings

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Peace Site

This past September, Friends School was recognized as an international peace site and also erected a peace pole which proclaims in eight languages the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth." During the dedication ceremony, eighth grader Anna Nation spoke the following words:

Being a peace site is about living in love and harmony. It means using peace over conflict. It means keeping a close community by showing others you care. It means loving each other, loving yourself... My hope for Friends School of Minnesota as a peace site is that it always lives in peace and justice, and that we love each other as a community.

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From the Head

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and size of the student body have undergone remarkable change, FSM has remained true to its original vision. Celebration of diversity and support of nonviolent conflict resolution are central tenets of the FSM philosophy. This is reflected in the school's mission: to prepare children to embrace life, learning, and community with hope, skill, understanding and creativity. [The commitment] to Quaker values of peace, justice, simplicity, and integrity is obvious. Indeed, in the recent ISACS survey of constituents, 96.3% of the students, and 100% of the current parents, faculty, staff and administration, alums, and board agreed that the school has a strong commitment to moral values and character development. Similarly, 100% of the respondents, every individual in each category, agreed that the school has a caring and community environment.

In the report's summary, FSM is commended for how the school community reflects its mission; for the dedication, passion and sense of mission of its faculty, staff and administration; and for the sense of loyalty and care which pervade the school. The School Committee, our board of directors, is commended for its leadership in relocating the school in its current home and for the expansion to eighth grade. The school's conflict resolution program was also cited as a major achievement, particularly in how our new summer institute for teachers is spreading the impact of FSM.

The major recommendation of the report is to significantly increase the school's fundraising efforts to better support the school's educational program. The school was also encouraged to develop and implement a technology plan consistent with our own education philosophy and to hire additional professional staff,

such as a psychologist and learning specialist, to better meet the needs of all our students. In addition, the team suggested we take steps to more fully implement our aim of evaluating student performance with authentic assessment procedures.

The visiting team report provides Friends School with a valuable snapshot of the life of the school. The strengths of our distinctive approach to Quaker progressive education are affirmed. The recommendations we have been offered for how to enhance this approach will guide us as we develop our new strategic plan over the coming months. Taken together, the commendations and recommendations provide an outline for the school's growth in the coming years as we complete our second decade of guiding students to acquire knowledge, skills and wisdom.

—Mark Niedermier,
Head of School

Alumni News

Class of '93

Jenna Buesher now lives in Vancouver, Washington, and studies graphic design at Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland, Oregon.

Class of '96

Edwin Holmvig-Johnson is a religion and political science major at Luther College. At the college's radio station he is director of community affairs broadcasting. Edwin also volunteers as secretary treasurer of the Luther College Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Allies Club.

Ben Birnbaum is a physics major at Washington University in Saint Louis and he is doing volunteer work as a tutor at a local high school.

Class of '97

Lizzie Cavanaugh-Broad is a senior at Highland Park Senior High and is planning to go to college to study neuroscience next fall, though she hasn't decided where yet. Lizzie works at Games by James in the Mall of America, but

also volunteers at the Science Museum of Minnesota and performs with Circus Juventas.

Class of '02

Patrick Raines is a freshman at Mounds Park Academy and reports that biology is his favorite subject. He also spends a lot of time at the Como Zoo where he has two volunteer roles. He is a junior docent and an animal enrichment volunteer specializing in grizzly bears.

Alumni Party

The annual alumni party will be held on Friday, March 21st. Alumni are invited to attend the middle school volleyball game at 5:00, enjoy a pizza dinner at 6:00 and then participate in the second annual alumni versus staff volleyball game.

Send information for the Alumni Notes section of the Friends Circle to Mark Niedermier at the school address or e-mail at mfnsmhead@aol.com.

Faculty Complete Academic Program Self-Study for Accreditation

The process through which Friends School maintains its accreditation with the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) entails completing an institutional self-study once every seven years. The academic program portion of the self-study may be organized by traditional academic departments (language arts, math, etc.) or in some other manner which better establishes the connection between program and school mission. The faculty of Friends School chose to examine the school's program in a way that would most closely match the way the school looks at students and curriculum in everyday practice. Since teachers try very intentionally not to segment curriculum into strictly separate subject areas, it was consistent to examine the curriculum by looking at each individual subject area in relation to the broader goals for Friends School students. Faculty did not want to divide its inquiry by looking at the Lower School program and the Middle School program separately, because of the value placed on the

continuity of the Friends School experience from kindergarten through eighth grade. The faculty felt that one of the goals for the self-study process was to evaluate whether the educational program worked consistently throughout the school. Because the school does not identify its program as "outcome-based" or "thematic" or fitting into any of the other frameworks suggested by ISACS, it was clear that a unique framework for studying the school program was needed. Since the school is committed to looking at "the whole child" in planning curriculum, the approach to self-study would have to encompass the whole child's learning without unnecessarily segmenting it.

Inspired by these commitments, faculty engaged in a process of identifying together what students should learn, know and be by the time they leave Friends School. Faculty wanted to come to some agreement about what skills, knowledge and character traits are most important for students to develop during their Friends School experience. The faculty engaged in brainstorming sessions, making metaphors, discussing ideas in small groups and creating charts of shared ideas. Through these activities the faculty identified the many broad kinds of learning expected of students. The faculty discovered surprising and satisfying levels of agreement about many of the school's top priorities. These areas of learning seemed to fall naturally into clusters, and so they were grouped into categories. The categories of learning became the areas for the self-study: Creativity, Aesthetics and the Arts; Problem Solving; Literacy; Intrapersonal and Spiritual Awareness; Global Awareness and



Block print from Wolf Ridge
by Kaitlin Ziehr, 8th grade

Social Consciousness; The Natural World; Community; Health and Physical Development; and Assessment.

Faculty members were then asked to identify two of the categories of learning about which they were most interested in studying, evaluating and writing recommendations. In this way, each faculty member worked on her/his own areas of greatest expertise, interest or concern. These subcommittees, typically composed of two to four faculty members each, including both Lower School and Middle School teachers, met separately to develop their reports. The subcommittees then presented their written reports and recommendations to the full faculty for open discussion and suggestions for revisions. Rich discussions were held about each of the various areas of learning. The subcommittees incorporated the suggestions from the full faculty into their final reports.

At the end of this process, faculty members reported feeling glad to have spent the time to develop the categories for inquiry into the school's program. The process,

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Poetry, art and writing:

Friends School children

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PROFILE

The Eckhoff-Bennett Family

“We love Friends School because of its strong sense of community and commitment to nonviolence,” shares Karla Eckhoff. The Eckhoff-Bennett family is truly invested in FSM—they are the first family to have four children attending Friends School at the same time!

The Eckhoff-Bennetts have gradually become very involved in the school. Daughters Danielle and Kaylie were the first to attend FSM, enrolling in the fall of 2000. Within two years, Emily and Jordan joined them. Bob [Bennett] serves on FSM’s development and technology committees and Karla is now the front office receptionist at FSM.

They tried both public schools and home schooling before coming to FSM. “We met many dedicated teachers in the public schools, but the classes were so huge that they just couldn’t give the kids the kind of personal attention they get at FSM,” says Karla. The school’s small size creates a community atmosphere that the children can sense, “although they might not express it that way,” laughs Karla. “The kids enjoy the feeling that everybody knows everybody at FSM.”

When asked what she hopes her children will take away from FSM, Karla responded “I want my children to be self-confident and live and speak their values.”

Faculty Completes Self-Study

continued from page 3

though time-consuming, required articulating in more specific terms than the broad Goals and Philosophy what it is the school is trying to accomplish with students. At the same time, it allowed faculty to bring values to the forefront, examining deeper learning goals than the skills and knowledge described in traditional academic benchmarks. It created new unity among the staff, bridging the gap that sometimes has occurred between Lower School and Middle School, by identifying shared purposes. This was a necessary component for studying FSM’s program from kindergarten all the way through eighth grade in order to improve the continuity of programming to meet shared overall goals.

In terms of overall themes that emerged, the program’s strengths can best be summarized by observing that Friends School is an inclusive educational community which invites all children to an intellectual and personal engagement with literacy, problem-solving, world citizenship and the core values of the school. The overall challenge that the program self-study most consistently identifies is a need to review and refine curriculum guidelines in a number of areas, such as spelling and Quaker studies.

At fifteen years of age, Friends School is still a young school. It is from this perspective of a young but increasingly well established school

that the faculty approached the self-study as a valuable opportunity to strengthen a shared vision, as well as to clarify where the school should next turn its attention in order to strengthen educational programming. While the self-study process required great amounts of staff time and energy, looking at the program in such a comprehensive way also built unity, pride and commitment among the faculty. The process asked teachers to put into practice one of the values that is taught to students: the value of honest self-evaluation and deep reflection.



Block print from Wolf Ridge
by Emma Bruggeman, 8th grade

Middle School Student Writing

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Students in Susan Gahan's 7th and 8th grade humanities class are studying the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The following piece is excerpted from an essay by 7th grader Mohammed Ali.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established December 10, 1948 by the United Nations. This declaration guarantees the rights of everyone. To me the most important rights of the UDHR are freedom from discrimination and the right to asylum in other countries.

Freedom from discrimination means to not be separated from the society because of your race, color, gender, language, disabilities, age, etc. The reason I picked this article [to write about] is because recently I watched the movie *Roots* and in one of the scenes a black character tried to register to vote in the early 1900s and was not allowed to vote because of the color of his skin. This is an example of discrimination. People should not be discriminated against because of the color of their skin; it is wrong. All human beings are equal in the eyes of God regardless of their skin, whether you are white, brown, black or blue.

Right to asylum in other countries means that anyone who fears persecution from his or her homeland may seek political asylum. The reason I picked this article [to write about] is because it helped my family stay in the USA. In the year 1990 war broke out in my homeland of Somalia. Many people were killed and some died of hunger. My family went to live in Nairobi as refugees for almost seven years before we were able to come to the USA. My family was able to apply for political asylum because Somalia was not a safe country. This article also

protects people who speak against their home country and government, people who if they went back to their country would be killed and tortured.

I believe that if these rights were violated, a lot of people would be hurt. People would be discriminated against, people would be killed and tortured, people would die of hunger. The significance of these rights is very important to many people in the world, including myself. This is the way I feel about these rights, because it matters to me a lot.

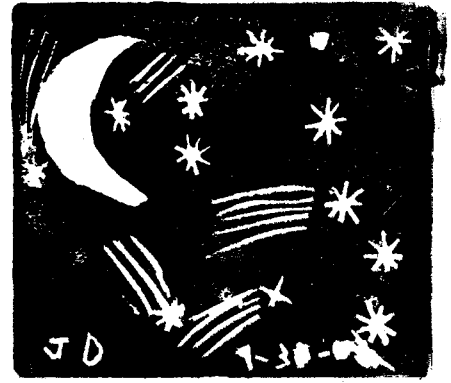
Nature Writing

Students in Lili Herbert's 7th & 8th grade humanities class are studying nature writing as part of the school's environmental education curriculum. The following piece is excerpted from an essay by 8th grader Nino Caliendo.

As the cool wind brushes across my face, I steer towards my next challenge, the hill. But this is no ordinary hill. It's a hill that I have been biking up for years, a hill that today seems like an extra big task, but knowing that home is on the other side makes it worthwhile. As I get my momentum charged to battle this monster, I feel a burst of confidence. As I begin pedaling, I know that this is just another one of those everyday monsters. When I approach the base of the hill I remember all of the times I conquered it before, and I was ready to do it again.

I begin to take off up the hill. Looking forward, straight up at the leaf colored sidewalk, aiming my nose right at the top. I see myself accomplishing my goal, faster and faster... I'm almost halfway. I look around. The wind is against my back, the few leaves blow along with me. I look ahead. The top is close.

I put more energy into pedaling as I near the top. I take one last look back



Block print from Wolf Ridge
by Jonathan DeYoung, 8th grade

behind me to the streets below. It looks like miles below but in truth I'm only two or three blocks up. Looking forward once again, one more burst of energy, just enough to make it to the top. Finally I slow down... I make it to the top. I put on the brakes, stop to take a look around at my accomplishment.

Looking down the streets and sidewalks that are covered with leaves, the sky a clear blue with little wisps of clouds, I'm surrounded by changes. The leaves are changing from vibrant shades of green to warm welcoming shades of reds, yellows and oranges, and then they will fall to the ground to be raked into piles so kids can jump in and then rake it all again. The season is changing; the warm air is changing to cool sharp air that whips across your face. Soon winter will be here and the ground will be covered in snow and the cool air will turn into freezing cold wind beating against your body. But that's later. This is now, leaves changing, and I'm changing. I'm growing into a better person, a better human being. I look out over the hill at the journey I made, the mission I accomplished. I did it, and as I turn towards home I think once again: nature made my mission worthwhile.

Financial Contributors

Friends School of Minnesota gratefully acknowledges the following donors who generously supported the school during the 2001-2002 school year:

Quaker Organizations

Brainerd Friends Meeting
Cannon Valley Friends Meeting
Decorah Friends Meeting
Friends Council on Education
Friends Meeting of Duluth-Superior
Minneapolis Friends Meeting
Northern Yearly Meeting
Prospect Hill Friends Meeting
Quaker Inner-City School Endowment Fund
Saint Croix Valley Friends Meeting
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Cynthia Hoffman
Kathleen and Don Holmes
Janelle Holmwig and Gust Johnson
Anne Holzinger
Sigurd Hoppe
Sally Howard



Bird-Watchers

Last spring, a large number of Friends School of Minnesota middle school students voluntarily got up around 5:30 a.m. so they could go bird-watching with their science teacher, Steve Moe. Roughly half of the fifth and sixth grade student body participated in at least one of the six weekly outings. The students left school on Friday mornings around 6:30 and headed south to the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge in the Minnesota River Valley National Wildlife Refuge. On each 90 minute outing, students hiked and saw a large variety of ducks, geese, and songbirds. The highlight of these Friday morning trips was getting a long up-close look at a beautiful male Cinnamon Teal, a bird that is only rarely seen in Minnesota. Students are already asking if the outings can take place next spring.

Challenge Update

A year and a half ago, an anonymous donor offered Friends School a gift of \$100,000 to be used to reduce the size of the school's mortgage if it could be matched by another \$100,000. So far \$65,000 has been raised toward this match and an additional donor has promised to provide the final \$10,000 once we reach the \$90,000 point.

Once the match is earned the school's mortgage will be reduced by \$200,000 and reamortized to save approximately \$16,000 per year. These savings will go directly to support the school's scholarship fund and educational program. To make a donation, please send a check to Friends School or call Head of School Mark Niedermier at 651-917-0636.

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 Don Irish
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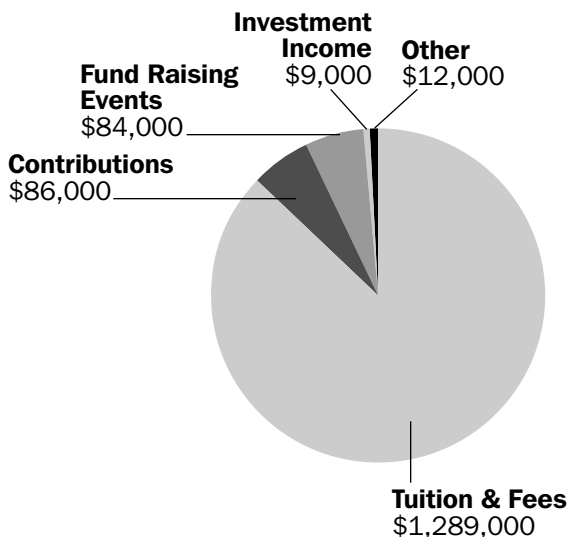
Invaluable assistance was also contributed through numerous gifts of time and in-kind donations. We wish to express special appreciation to the parents of Friends School students, whose generous volunteer support is essential to the life of the school.

Errors invariably find their way into lists of this sort. Please contact the Friends School office if you have been listed incorrectly or omitted. This list contains donations made through June 30, 2002.

Friends School of Minnesota Financial Statement, 2001-2002

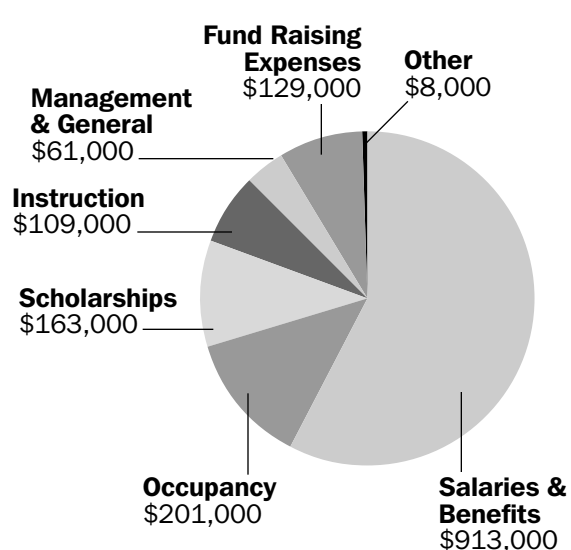
Operating Income

\$1,580,000



Operating Expenses

\$1,584,000



Calendar

Annual Martin Luther King Celebration	<i>Sunday, January 19</i>
Tuition Aid Application Deadline	<i>Monday, February 17</i>
Admissions Application Deadline	<i>Friday, March 14</i>
Alumni Party	<i>Friday, March 21</i>
Grades 3 and 4 Opera Performance	<i>Thursday, April 10</i>
Community Meeting for Worship	<i>Sunday, April 27</i>
Plant Sale	<i>May 9-11</i>
Graduation	<i>Sunday, June 8</i>
ARTS ETC Summer Program Begins	<i>Monday, July 7</i>

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