

## **Friends School of Minnesota Statement of Philosophy and Practice**

### Quaker Identity

Friends School of Minnesota is a Quaker school. We are grounded in the values and practices of the religious Society of Friends, including community, simplicity, equality, peace, integrity, and silent reflection. Quakers believe there is within each individual “that of God,” an inner light or divine seed, a center from which each of us grows to reach our highest potential. The school provides a holistic education, nurturing the physical, intellectual, spiritual, and social development of children.

Our Quaker identity guides us to a progressive educational approach. Two tenets of Quakerism, in particular, connect Quakerism to progressive philosophy:

- 1) Each human being has a Divine spark through which greater spiritual wisdom can be experientially accessed, and
- 2) Truth seeking is a process of continuing revelation within a gathered community.

Irene McHenry, 2004

These beliefs tie us to a philosophy that sees learning as a process more than an outcome, and that recognizes the social context of learning.

### Progressive Education

Our purpose as a school is to guide children to develop their capacity, grounded in Quaker values, to engage fully, effectively, and positively in global society. We believe children learn best when they are engaged with real and meaningful ideas and materials, and work with others in a diverse community to solve problems and answer questions. We teach children how to learn in addition to teaching rich content, with the goal of creating lifelong learners.

### Essential tenets of Friends School of Minnesota’s Quaker/Progressive approach:

1. Our approach is child-centered; we recognize that children’s questions and interests, as well as their needs, are essential elements of curriculum.
2. We see each student in a holistic way. We nurture the physical, intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic, and social development of children. Our program fosters a deep and strong sense of self.
3. We ground our program in a deep understanding of child development, along with knowledge of each student. We meet the students where they are.
4. We believe that active, hands-on projects engage a wide variety of learners in experimenting, deliberating, creating, and constructing knowledge.
5. We see learning as life itself, and not preparation for life. We connect students to the world in many ways, including through trips and experiences with people, organizations in the community, and the environment.

6. We connect Quaker values to student experience through a commitment to looking at the world through a social justice lens. Students become aware of wider community needs and their own capacity to make a difference through curriculum, service projects, and service learning.
7. We are committed to teaching peace. Staff and students practice nonviolent conflict resolution. We study nonviolent movements for change, and we expect students to solve problems respectfully.
8. We emphasize environmental education, helping students develop awareness of the interconnectedness of all living creatures and the Earth. We instill a sense of stewardship in our students.
9. We believe the arts are a critical way of experiencing and expressing humanity, and interpreting our experience. We emphasize the arts both as disciplines and as important components of all curriculum areas.
10. We value and practice silent reflection. Developing the capacity to thoughtfully reflect on our own and others' thoughts and experiences is essential to our Quaker progressive program.
11. We value deep thinking and higher order thinking skills, over covering excess content. Rich projects, integrated thematic units, and projects that begin with inquiry help students develop critical thinking skills. Our strong academic program gives students skills, knowledge, and conceptual understanding across the curriculum.
12. We believe the social context of learning creates the vital conditions in which students ask questions, generate ideas, and solve problems. A diverse classroom and school community provides the richest context for meaningful learning to take place.