

Friends Seminary Report to New York Quarterly Meeting  
October 23, 2011 (Revised)

“...silence opens us to change; study helps us to know the world; service challenges us to put our values into practice.” (Friends Seminary Mission Statement)

*SILENCE*

- Meeting for Worship remained the central and defining moment of community for our students and staff who met by division for a total of seven periods of worship weekly and for our alumni who return to Meetinghouse by the hundreds each May for Reunion (and for other community moments like weddings and memorials), speaking of the impact that the School’s education and values have on their daily lives.
  - In the past year, we know of 3 alumni, across faiths, who have been married in Quaker ceremonies, demonstrating the abiding impact of their experiences at Friends Seminary
- Work on Friends Seminary’s own Faith and Practice continued through the year in an inclusive process. A draft will be presented to the School Committee by the end of 2011.
- The School Committee and its members dedicated much of the year to maintaining an open dialogue and improving relations with 15<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting and the Quarter and discussing incorporation. We remain fully committed to that objective. We participated in the following committees/meetings:
  - 15<sup>th</sup> Street/Friends Seminary Care Committee
  - Ministry and Counsel Clearness Committee with 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Trustees and School Committee
  - Ad Hoc Group for Trustees and School Committee Working Relationship
  - Property Task Group
  - Trustees’ Property Sub-Committee
  - Shared Space Analysis Group

*STUDY*

- We celebrated our 8th Annual Peace Week, “Educating for Peace: Friends Seminary and 225 Years of Quaker Education,” which included a panel of prominent Quaker educators.
- We continue to be guided by our strategic plan, “Planning for the Future: Celebrating Friends Seminary’s 225<sup>th</sup> Year.”
  - We focused on science, math and technology programs by increasing the amount of time Lower School students spend on these subjects
  - We hired a dedicated Lower School technology integrator
  - We appointed noted physicist and director of the Hayden Planetarium, Neil deGrasse Tyson, as our Visiting Scholar.
- Welcomed 37 students into the Arabic language sequence, which celebrated its third year. 48 students, almost 1/5 of the Upper School, are enrolled in Arabic I-IV. A trip to the Middle East this spring is fully booked with 18 students and 4 chaperones. The Ramallah portion of the trip is being hosted by Ramallah Friends School.
- Conceived and planned for a pilot program that would put iPads in the hands of all faculty and students in grades Kindergarten, Five and Nine. We see iPad use as consistent with commitment to
  - Equal access (School purchases them so access is not determined by means)

- Sustainability (many textbooks are online)
- Affordability (there is a savings to buying ebooks)
- And health (lighter backpacks!)
- Received the Black Board Award for our Diversity Program, given by a collective of neighborhood newspapers including the Westside Spirit and Our Town. Both Private and Public schools are recognized.

### *SERVICE*

- Celebrated the School's 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by focusing on our history, values and place in the City, including a proclamation presented by Mayor Michael Bloomberg, echoing a similar moment 25 years ago when Mayor Koch helped celebrate our bicentennial.
- With the strong cooperation of Trustees, and taking advantage of historically low borrowing rates, the School consolidated and refinanced debt at a highly favorable long-term rate, allowing for more predictable long-term financial planning. This new debt is guaranteed exclusively by School revenues. No property is involved.
- Friends Seminary welcomed 699 students; our plan to grow and stabilize enrollment is progressing as planned.
- Our student body reflected a diverse population, including 206 children of color, representing 29% of the total student body.
- There were 11 Quaker children in attendance, representing 2% of the total student body.
- We admitted our first student who is completely confined to a wheelchair. We celebrate and embrace this opportunity, which was only possible after the modifications we have made to our physical space in the past few years. At the same time we acknowledge that some significant further modifications will be necessary in the future in order that this child and others take full advantage of the opportunities available at School.
- It was a privilege to offer 26% of our student body financial aid, for a total dollar amount of \$3,580,900.
- Currently, out of 158 employees, 24% identify as of color and 4% are Quaker. Andy Doan, whom many in the NYQM know as a member of Morningside Meeting, joined our faculty as a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher. We increased our faculty/staff recruiting program by attending several job fairs at historically black colleges and by participating in a Philadelphia Area Consortium which included that area's Quaker Colleges.
- All students, along with faculty and staff, once again participated in a day-long, school-wide service day at over 30 sites across the city. Projects included:
  - our students creating care packages for hospitalized children at the Starlight Foundation;
  - clean up and gardening at the Quaker Cemetery;
  - serving meals to seniors at the Carter Burden Center;
  - rebuilding bikes for low-income recipients at Recycle a Bike;
  - and of course gardening and cleanup at Stuyvesant Park.
- We re-evaluated and expanded the job of community service director and appointed our first Director of Service Learning and Public Purpose. We are refocusing from "community service" and the counting of hours to "service learning," where service is integrated into the education experience. This year, for example, 9<sup>th</sup> graders will "blog" about their service; hours of service will not matter as much as their understanding and appreciation of service, and their personal growth as a result of service.
- As an example of our continuing focus on service learning, our 9<sup>th</sup> grade history classes took part in a service-learning project focused on the Millennium Development Goals and the

global poverty crisis. After researching and writing about the issue, students designed and taught lessons about global efforts to eradicate poverty to grades K through 5<sup>th</sup>. The entire 9th grade Skyped with Professor Jeffrey Sachs to discuss the Millennium Development Goals/global poverty. 9<sup>th</sup> graders then Skyped with a class from the Mansoman School in Ghana.

- We recently found out that the Shelter at Rutherford place is losing its \$53,000 food grant from Partnership for the Homeless. The School has offered to respond with a cash donation, and also to take responsibility for supplying supper for 12 guests and volunteers every night that the School is in session. This commitment will continue in perpetuity, as long as the School is able. We are happy that as a private Quaker school we have resources that can be deployed quickly: People, materials and funds. Our notion of public purpose is centered on connecting our school to the Quaker community, and to society, in numerous and meaningful ways.
- And we concluded negotiations with our faculty association, which addressed the length of the Lower School class day, competitive and respectful salary and benefits, and other items. A three-year agreement was reached, to mutual satisfaction.

---

### Friends Seminary Mission Statement

*Friends Seminary educates students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, under the care of the New York Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. Through instruction and example, students follow their curiosity and exercise their imaginations as they develop as scholars, artists and athletes. In a community that cultivates the intellect through keen observation, critical thinking and coherent expression, we strive to respond to one another, valuing the single voice as well as the effort to reach consensus. The disciplines of silence, study and service provide the matrix for growth: silence opens us to change; study helps us to know the world; service challenges us to put our values into practice. At Friends Seminary, education occurs within the context of the Quaker belief in the Inner Light – that of God in every person. Guided by the ideals of integrity, peace, equality, simplicity, and our commitment to diversity, we do more than prepare students for the world that is: we help them bring about the world that ought to be.\**

*\* This last sentence is adapted from Faith and Practice: The Book of Discipline of the New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (1974).*