

Friday, September 27, 2013

*[T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*  
Galatians, 5:22-23.

Dear Parents,

Sam Caldwell, in his pamphlet “Toward a Clearer View of Quaker Education” notes that, in response to the question of what is Quaker about a Quaker education, the standard answer involves a list that includes

- i) a belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual,
- ii) a high degree of personal caring,
- iii) trust in what people can become with love, respect and a minimum of guidance,
- iv) a listening, compassionate, supportive environment,
- v) a high social consciousness and humane attitudes,
- vi) an experienced-based approach that emphasizes dialogue, as contrasted with an authoritarian or dogmatic approach,
- vii) the use of consensus in decision-making,
- viii) an emphasis on traditional Quaker values, such as nonviolence and simplicity and
- ix) weekly meeting for worship.

He notes however, that much of this list does little to differentiate Quaker education from other enlightened progressive education, save for the last few items on the list. I would emphasize however that a distinguishing feature of Quaker education is that we believe that education is inherently a spiritual as well as intellectual endeavor, and as such, we see the fruits of the spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in our students, our faculty & staff and our families every day.

This is wonderfully illustrated by the class charter drawn up by T. Jill’s ½ class this week:

*Be loving to everything – animals, nature and people.*

*Be respectful to everyone and be responsible with materials.*

*Make the best of yourself while working, by focusing, and trying hard, and encouraging each other.*

*Try to be joyful, confident, hopeful and have fun.*

It is also illustrated by the thoughtful examination of the meaning of peace by the ½ class, as part of the school’s observation of the International Day of Peace. Examples of what our first and second graders wrote include “Peace is love; peace is quiet;” “I think that love will help to spread peace;” and “Peace respects God. Be kind. Help the world.”

Humor is also an essential element to life. This morning at Gathering, the ½ classes shared the book they wrote called “Don’t Let the Kids Run the School,” modeled after

the book they read together called “Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus,” by Mo Willems. As with our other grades, the ½ classes are showcases of strong academics, and high expectations. In math, they are learning how to tally and sort by various categories. In language arts, they had an author mini-study on Mo Willems and are reviewing what an adjective is.

I have been mentioning things that you can do at home to help support your child’s learning, including reading time, and plenty of rest. Although many of us have very challenging work schedules, another thing that can help is to sit down to have a meal as a family as often as is possible. The ritual provides stability, teaches the art of conversation, gives your child insight into the adult world, and gives you insight into your child’s world. It is also more likely that the meals will be healthier, you are more likely to hear about difficulties your child has, and it can make a more calm atmosphere. There is also a correlation between family dinners and academic success. See the Family Dinner Program, <http://thefamilydinnerproject.org/resources/faq/>

Have a wonderful weekend.

Sincerely,  
John McKinstry