

Weekly Notes
October 23, 2015

Dear friends,

Last night's event, Quaker Values in School Life, went very well. We had a large turnout (over 35 adults) and it was a great way to have conversations about the beliefs that underlie what we do here at LFS and how these values are manifested throughout the school. Parents and staff spoke to what drew them into the school in the first place, such as the strong academics, and the sense of community and family. Our parents also spoke to what they have seen in their children that reflects the values of the school, such as the care children show for each other and the earth, their ability to solve problems peacefully, their learning through direct experience, the place of meeting for worship, the opportunities for service, and a strong sense of community.

The pedagogy of LFS, as in most Friends Schools, is based on certain principles. First, there is learning through inquiry. Rather than teaching answers, our teachers pose questions that engage our students in their own process of inquiry, discovery, observation and discussion. As a way of developing critical thinking, we engage students through questions which have no one right answer.

Second, there is learning through reflection. We engage in making students aware of the process of their own thinking and growth, (metacognition is the term of art.) We give time and energy to reflect about what one has learned from one's own experience.

Third, there is learning through collaboration. Our school culture believes that education is essentially about relationships. One of the ways we encourage collaboration over competition for example, is that we deliberately have report cards that contain descriptive narrative reports rather than grades, ranks or standardized test scores. We encourage collaboration through being open to a full range of voices, through being comfortable with ambiguity, disagreement and complexity, and by embracing new learning as part of our belief in continuing revelation. This long-standing Quaker principal is also buttressed by the educational research which says that education functions best in a social context.

Fourth, there is learning through experience and service. We emphasize the value of life experience in the world outside of the classroom with critical reflection on that experience. This flows directly from the question of George Fox "What canst thou say?" When this experience is in the form of service, we hope that our students will take greater responsibility for their own lives and values. Learning through service also prepares our students to do service throughout their lives, which, the research shows, is linked to great happiness and success in life.

One of the requests that came out of the event was that there be made available a glossary of some of the terms that are unique to Quakerism. I attached such a glossary to these weekly notes.

I want to thank all the people who helped make the event possible, including the Quaker Life Committee (Phoebe Titus, Dana Robinson, Joan Broadfield, Nancy Werner, Jill Bean, Narissa Bajjo and Adiam Temesgen) which planned the event, and the cooks (Phoebe Titus, Dana Robinson, Joan Broadfield, Harsha Cooke and Adiam Temesgen) who prepared the delicious dinner. A special thanks to our teachers who also came out last night, and for the child care staff (Nancy Crickman, Dawn Danks, Brad Hajjar, Joan March and Alec Sena) who took such great care of our children.

Have a great weekend.

Sincerely,
John McKinstry